

COGNITIVE POLYPHASIA IN THE CONTEXT OF SYSTEMIC POWER AND SEMIOTIC POTENCY

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Abstract. Semiotic environment in the functional sense has dual effect on the subject: on the one hand, it directs and constrains the subject through collective semiotic forms (social representations), on the other hand—it provides symbolic resources for subject’s self-determinative activity. This duality may be presented as a tension between systemic power and semiotic potency. Heterogeneity of semiosphere and multiplicity of subject’s relations to the environment are the prerequisites to the phenomenon of cognitive polyphasia. It is possible to differentiate two forms of cognitive polyphasia: positional polyphasia and intra-positional polyphasia. In both forms of polyphasia the main challenges for a researcher are: 1) to describe and explain the effects of interaction of plural forms of knowledge in different contexts and 2) to explain the choice among the potential representational possibilities by a subject in his or her particular relationships with the environment. The social representation theory and the dialogical self theory can be used complementarily for solving these problems. Empirical illustrations are drawn from a study of trajectories of successive acculturation described in biographical interviews of elderly people. Variation of macro-contexts (different levels of normative pressure, monological vs heterodoxic/dialogical context) and specific social suggestions interact with semiotically potent subjects. Various strategies have been applied for coordinating incompatible representations and for maintaining the sense of agency in different contextual conditions. Both positional and intra-positional polyphasia is creatively used for regulating relations with the environment.

Keywords: cognitive polyphasia, holomorphism, holism

A “good dialogue” should be a learning experience that produces innovation, it should recognize and incorporate alterity, and acknowledge the unavoidable role of misunderstandings (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p.174). The social representation theory (SRT) and the dialogical self theory (DST) have the prerequisites for developing a good dialogue—there are similarities in both theories that allow to start a dialogue (e.g., holism and multiperspectivism), and there are differences that create the necessary dialogic tension (e.g., SRT is inspired by modernist ethos of the 1960s, whereas DST is inspired by postmodernist ethos of the 1990s). The research focus of SRT and DST is complementary, each suitable for solving different kinds of problems—

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SRT dealing with the human meaningful environment (collective culture), and DST illuminating the intraindividual meaning making processes (personal culture). SRT describes collective culture as structured (“structuring structure”) and intrinsically related to group processes. The processes of personal culture—mechanisms with the help of which a person uses the system of social representations (social expectations, role prescriptions) for thinking about social objects and meaning making— is the focus in sociocultural approaches (including DST), which analyse phenomena arising from the interrelations between active individual and his culturally organized context. Both approaches (SRT and DST) agree that individual subject and his or her semiotic environment are mutually constitutive and dialogically related, applying the individual-socioecological frame of reference (Valsiner, 2007). In the paper I will use both theories for describing the dialogical relation between sociocultural environment and semiotically potent subject. Outcomes of this dialogue are individual responses to social suggestions, which may result in various forms of cognitive polyphasia.

Spatial metaphors for theoretical description of mind and sociocultural reality that Pierre Bourdieu (1991) calls the “social field” and Hubert Hermans (2002) the “cultural space” or “landscape of mind” allow me to describe the totality of respective objective and phenomenological realities and to elaborate on the metaphoric potential, using spatial terms like distance, direction, orientation, coordinates. In this article I will follow a metaphoric path in sociology and sociocultural psychology and try to synthesize theoretical views towards positioning at two levels: 1) objective location in some integrated wholes (sociocultural landscape and historical process): structural determinism; and 2) subjective positioning in the landscape of mind (*I*-positions, personal construction of meaning): individual semiotic potency.

Interrelated Layers of Reality

Cognitive polyphasia like any other sociopsychological phenomenon results from the dialectical relationship between a dynamic system and its individual components. It consists of interrelated processes on three levels:

1. Processes in the *societal field*: configurations of social relations and relative location in the sociocultural landscape, the coordination of objective external and internalized structures (*habitus*).
2. Processes in the *shared representational field* (collective culture): the change of regulative principles and the hierarchy of representations, the “battle” of ideas and the repositioning in representational fields.
3. Processes in the *subjective meaning fields* of agents, both on the unreflective level (inertia of the *habitus*) and on the reflective level (taking positions in the landscape of mind), through the realization of semiotic potency.

Complementary theoretical models—relational sociology of Bourdieu and Elias, social representational approach, semiotic cultural psychology, DST—with similar methodological underpinnings—holism, relationalism and attention to dynamic aspect—help me to view these three levels as interdependent and complementary. Here I will focus on underpinnings of cognitive polyphasia on different levels of sociopsychological organization—on the level of societal field, in the field of social representations, and in the field of individual meanings.

Processes in the Societal Field: Systemic Power of Objective Configurations

Spatial metaphor for describing social ontology has been used by Pierre Bourdieu (1991) who depicted the social world as a multi-dimensional space, differentiated into relatively autonomous fields of practice. Individuals occupy certain positions in these fields based on the amount and type of capital they possess. The field, as a “space of relations,” provides structure and guides the activities of its agents through sets of enduring dispositions (*habitus*), which in turn generate intentions and actions that reproduce the structural field. There is a structural isomorphism between field and *habitus*, and a dialectical relationship between macro and internalized (embodied) structures, both of which are objective, “albeit located at different ontological levels and subject to different laws of functioning” (Lizardo, 2004, p. 394).

Habitus is conceptualized as an emergent property of the social system, and therefore, fully deterministic and unavoidable. Consequently, an agent falls into *habitus* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and acquires system-specific patterns of perceiving, feeling, thought and behaviour, or a system of habits and dispositions without conscious effort. *Habitus*, as a system of durable dispositions, regulates strategies of action and meanings in the context of the experienced world. Being a generative structure, it has an “infinite capacity for generating products—thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions—whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions for its production” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 55).

Each *habitus*-related position determines a certain viewpoint, or vision of the social world: “Worldviews [...] are views taken from a certain point, that is from a given position within social [...] the vision that any agent has of space depends on his position in that space” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 130). This vision includes not only a “sense of one’s place,” (1991, p. 235) but also a “sense of others’ place,” (Ibid) as well as a sense of distance between these positions. In other words, it reflects a particular position in relation to the societal whole. All positions and respective viewpoints are relational. Although Bourdieu conceptualizes *habitus* as an open system that can be modified through experiences, he stresses the determinacy and stability of the synchronic relations of the *habitus*-field. Bourdieu’s theory enables describing the structural influence, external possibilities and limits of the field(s): how the political, social, and cultural field determine the possible positions the individual can adopt; how the

structure of the field transforms into the individual's habitus—durable dispositions guiding perception and activity, thereby reproducing the conditions that have given them shape.

Analogous relational social systemic constraints deriving from human beings' inevitable participation in dynamic networks of mutual interdependencies with shifting balance of power, have been described by Norbert Elias (Paulle et al., 2012). He demonstrates how these objective figurations as relational wholes shape social practices, shared ideas and self-control patterns among the participants. Figurational chains of interdependencies are “obscured,” invisible to the participants, but nonetheless powerful.

A specific kind of objective position—location in the temporal order—has been analysed in the framework of generations. According to Mannheim (1952), location of a generation in the socio-historical whole creates a specific field of opportunities and constraints. The common social and cultural context in formative years, a similar structure of opportunities during initial socialization, enables to form generational identity and generational consciousness in close birth cohorts. According to Mannheim “the unity of generations is constituted essentially by a similarity of location of a number of individuals in a social whole” (Mannheim, 1952, p. 290). Common location in historical time is an objective fact, irrespective of its acknowledgement and it necessarily forms similar generational major trends and background knowledge (generational habitus).

This layer of reality—system of societal relations—is most basic in relation to other layers—collective symbolic field and individual symbolic field. It is the level of objective interests, resources and barriers. Change in the configuration of relations or location in this field necessarily brings about changes in one's point of view, and any point of view can be kept stable by the stabilization of relations.

Processes in the Collective Symbolic Field: The Power of Ideas

The semiotic level of the society, made up of the totality of meaningful practices and resources of the particular social system, has similar guiding and coercive power over the individual. In terms of dynamics, it could be described as the field of social representations (usually) implicitly or (in cases of conflicts, discussions, contact with the unfamiliar) explicitly guiding the individuals (Markova, 2003). In the broader sense, social representations create a common background of meaning for any interpersonal relations (shared understanding of reality, shared space of potential meanings) and in the narrower sense, serve as the basis for group identity and group world view.

SRT is a holistic model (e.g., Wagner & Hayes, 2005): systemic and hierarchically organized fields of social representations (shared meanings) contain all the symbolic resources that can be used for communication within groups and societies. This symbolic field provides shared intersubjective content and common dimensions of

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meaning, which form taken-for-granted objective meaning structure of one's culture, the so-called interobjectivity (Sammut et al., 2010). Individuals and groups may position themselves differently in relation to these dimensions, in accordance with the representations they use for constructing social objects and interpreting reality. Positioning is linked to a specific set of meaning-making, and meaning-stabilizing systems, which are revealed in beliefs, images, emotions, activities, lay theories, regulative ideas and other forms of collective thought and interaction (see Wagner et al., 2000).

Following Bourdieu's logic, Doise (1994) analyses social representations as implicit organizing principles ("structuring structures"). These abstract underlying principles (categories, dimensions, reference points) reflect the regulative influence of the social metasystem on cognitive functioning, and they organize symbolic relations between social agents. According to these principles, individuals or groups identify and differentiate themselves, choosing their relative positions within the representational field. These structures determine the symbolic space ("representational field"), which delimits the possible choices of symbolic positioning for members of a group. Diversity in the social field means that individuals position themselves differently, engaging with any phenomenon from a particular point of view relative to other agents (Clemence, 2001). Positioning in SRT is predominantly linked to identities—"Identity is first a social location, a space made available within the representational structures of the social world" (Duveen, 2001, p. 268)—and their dynamic interrelations.

Representational fields are not aggregates of elements but dynamic, heterogeneous and hierarchically organized systems. Therefore the positions within them are hierarchically differentiated (being dominant or dominated, central or peripheral) and systemically related (relations of conflict or compatibility). "If an individual or a group takes up one social position it is because there exists another one towards which this positioning is directed and to which it refers" (Elejabarrieta, 1994, p. 248). Taking a position implies entering into certain relations—domination, opposition, alliance, attraction, repulsion, etc.—with other positions.

Representational field is the arena for "battle of ideas for hegemony." The resulting temporary configuration of representations depends not only on the balance of societal forces behind the processes of concerted action and interaction, but also on the tactics of introduction of new ideas, for example, using different communicative genres in mass communication (Moscovici, 1961/2008) or intentional transformation of symbolic systems (Sen & Wagner, 2009). Societal change is accompanied by more or less radical changes in the collective representational field, which acts as a symbolic legitimation of the new social structure, thereby producing new hegemonic representations. At the same time, older layers of representations are preserved in subordinate positions. The contemporary meaningful world is heterogeneous and polyphonic: various representations and rationalities from different cultural and

historical contexts—competing and even contradictory versions of reality—co-exist and interact with each other.

Comparing the notions of habitus and social representation, Wagner & Hayes (2005) point to crucial differences: habitus is a pre-reflective, non-discursive and inarticulate system of dispositions, while social representations are discursive, always potentially verbalized, and actively used in communication. Habitus cannot be communicated, argued, debated, or negotiated, however social representations are inherently communicative, as they emerge and evolve through discourse and argument. In other words, while habitus represents a pre-reflective level of basic habitual tendencies, social representations function predominantly on a reflective, semiotic level. Representational fields generate explicit and implicit *social suggestions* (Valsiner, 1998) that guide the actions of social subjects. In the unreflective form, habitus and social representations function as an irresistible and coercive power. Both the habitus (the interpretive horizon of the practical consciousness) and social representations (systems of thought supporting a certain social order) create an interobjective reality (Sammut et al., 2010) reproduced as a routine and predictable social order.

Thus, we can distinguish two levels of social guidance: the societal field guides its agents via an inert and unreflective habitus; and the more dynamic representational field guides social subjects with the help of social suggestions. Person-environment relations are mediated by a person's relatively stable and unreflective location in the societal field of objective relations, and his or her more reflective and negotiable positioning in the representational field of collective meanings.

Processes on Individual Symbolic Fields: Semiotic Potency

In addition to objective structural and representational fields, the personal symbolic field of each individual provides additional possibilities of positioning. The ability to construct unique personal symbolic fields and to change positions within them are distinctive of human beings. As a result, there is lack of isomorphism between collective and personal cultures. Each individual is unique, while at the same time being influenced by the common collective culture (Valsiner, 2008).

There are bidirectional relations between the individual and the structures of which he or she is a part. On the one hand, an agent is influenced by the structure of fields and the configuration of forces within them (leading to the formation of a certain habitus); however, he or she has potency to choose semiotic tools (available forms of culture) for regulating their activity.

Field/configurations and habitus provide structural constraints on individual choices of activity. The essentially semiotic character of psychological functioning, using signs and symbols as cultural tools for creating meanings, and using these meanings in the regulation of individual experience, behaviour, and relationships to

reality, forms the basis of individual semiotic potency. The semiotic level entails higher psychological functions that regulate people's reactions after the initial habitual reaction has occurred.

Semiotic mediation is the basis for personal agency. With the help of self-(re)constructed semiotic tools (interpretation of the situation, meaning making) a person can transcend immediate contexts. The modification of distance from the present situation—from maximal distancing to total immersion—constitutes a flexible resource for the personality (Valsiner, 1998). Distancing allows for self-reflection and the retention of personal autonomy.

Semiotic self-regulation takes place through a variety of mechanisms: selective attention towards social suggestions (ignoring directions that are contradictory or impractical from the subject's perspective); using cultural forms as personal resources of meaning (e.g., following the example of literary characters in making sense of and planning one's life; see Zittoun, 2007); dialogical positioning; the choice of *I*-positions; or perspectives in symbolic fields (e.g., "I as an observer or as an actor," see Hermans, 2010 and Raggatt, 2007); the creation of self-models shaping identification that the subjects (e.g., cultures) use to interpret the situation. Any cultural object can become symbolic resources for an individual or a group if it is used for a certain purpose, including it in a system of social representations or a discourse important to the group.

Valsiner (1998) describes the phenomenon of "dependent independence" as a situation where an individual, confronting a system of structural (external and internal) constraints created by the social metasystem and habitus, is relatively free to construct his or her own system of meaning, strategies of action, and beliefs. He or she is dependently independent of the environment. The external system of semiotic resources consists of general guiding principles (redundant cultural messages, patchwork of social suggestions) that channel (direct) and constrain (determine) the range of individual choices in particular situations. Sociocultural constraints provide general principles that organize individual cognition and behaviour.

Semiotic potency in personal culture may be realized by resisting external pressures: "Culture (as the system of semiotic operators) guarantees that any person would be ready to resist and counteract social suggestions by the environment" (Valsiner, 2008, p. 279).

Personal semiotic potency may be realized via different means:

- Through the regulation of distance from the immediate situation or social suggestions.
- By constructing/choosing/changing a semiotic field or representational context.

- Through personal (re)positioning within that field, or shifting one's perspective, constructing different *I*-positions.

An individual can modify his or her position in relation to the sociocultural context along various dimensions, the most general being *distance* and *direction*, for example, between being “in” or “out” of the situation, playing different roles, utilizing different tonalities (playful, ironic, provocative...). One may also choose to be regulated by another representational field. Zittoun (2007) argues that the heterogeneity of social knowledge can be used as a resource for personal adaptation. A person may guide and constrain himself or herself through a self-selected semiotic system, borrowed from the semiosphere. The capacity of semiotic potency creates the flexibility for social agents in relation to social influence.

Thus the power of habitus and the power of ideas are not realized through one-sided social determinism, but engage in dialogical relationship with semiotically potent subjects. Configuration of forces and positioning in the social field, as well as the “structuring structure” of the representational field direct and constrain individual meaning making: *I*-positions speak through social representations and stage their inner dramas within the limits of “domesticated worlds” of social representing (Wagner & Hayes, 2005), which are structured according to the organizing principles of some socio-symbolic whole: systems of practice (Shove et al., 2012), figured worlds (Holland, 2010), discourses. Personal positioning may be understood as freedom and duty: The translation of macrosocial influence (general meanings, social suggestions) into the concrete situations, activities and tasks, with which an individual is engaged, and the coordination of macro- and micro-levels. Taking a position means establishing some relationship with the representational whole and other elements within it. There is a potentially limitless number of semiotic contexts, each of which has specific affordances, obstacles and opportunities for the agent, and each of which provides tools for self-regulation and the construction of meaning. The indeterminacy of subjective positioning requires interpretative efforts from external observers or partners of interaction.

Heterogeneity of Meaning Fields and Positions

Heterogeneity of semiosphere and multiplicity of subject's relations to the environment are the prerequisites to the phenomenon of cognitive polyphasia—coexistence of various (and possibly mutually conflicting) forms of knowledge, discourses and practices.

With the growth of knowledge and social division we have all become polyglots. Besides French, English or Russian we speak medical, psychological, technical political languages, etc. We are probably witnessing an analogous phenomenon about thought. In a global manner one can say that the dynamic coexistence—interference or specialization—of the distinct modalities of

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knowledge, corresponding to definite relations between man and his environment, determines a state of cognitive polyphasia [...]. Operative or formal judgements habitually represent one of these dominant terms in a field of personal and group preoccupations, while playing a subordinate role elsewhere (Moscovici, 1976/2008, pp. 190-191).

Human semiotic activity (at cultural, group, and individual levels) can potentially produce an infinite variety of meaning systems. The contemporary meaningful world is heterogeneous and polyphonic: various representations and rationalities from different cultural and historical contexts—competing and even contradictory versions of reality—coexist and interact with each other.

Heterogeneity of meaning fields can be described along different lines observing the coexistences of

- temporally distinguished—old and new meaning complexes, e.g. traditional, modern and postmodern self (Hermans, 2010);
- meaning complexes that are related to different spheres of activity (e.g., pragmatic, symbolic, scientific, aesthetic, recreational, spiritual, ethical, emotional, aspects of meaning);
- different modalities in relation to the world (e.g., communicative genres in Bakhtin's sense);
- different levels of reflexivity;
- various expressions of meaning (behavioural, discursive, symbolic).

The representational diversity described above implies the diversity of possible positions in social and cultural fields. Distinguishing social and personal positions reflects not only different degrees of constancy but also different mechanisms of positioning. Most stable and inflexible are socio-political positions (class, ethnicity, gender, and other stable social identities), more transient and ephemeral are discursive positions (distribution of mutual roles in dialogue). Potentially the most flexible are personal positions (inner play of the what-if game, for example “I as ACTOR” versus “I as OBSERVER”). Macrosocial systemic determinants are more important in social positioning, individual semiotic activity is crucial in personal positioning.

Mechanisms of personal positioning are elaborated in the DST, described as a dynamic multiplicity of *I*-positions in the landscape of mind (Hermans, 2001, 2002). Peter Raggatt (2007) has made an attempt to classify the positionings in the dialogical self (DS). He distinguishes between 1) personal positioning, expressed by personified roles (for example, hero versus villain, happy self versus sad self), and 2) social positioning, which may be discursive (positioning within dialogue), institutional (family, work roles), or socio-political (class, ethnic, gender categories). Each position in the objective

sociocultural space or subjective landscape of mind provides a specific view of that space (Bourdieu, 1990); each position affords a unique perspective, providing the person with different sets of cultural resources. Positioning implies the dialectics of constancy and change: each individual has a unique and fixed existential position (Bakhtin, 1986), to which particular social and symbolic positions are added.

Positional Polyphasia: Manoeuvres in the Representational Field

Moscovici (1961, 2008) uses the term cognitive polyphasia to denote various forms of thinking and speaking about the same phenomena. Depending on the task or activity, different relations to an object and other subjects, a member of society can use different social representations of the same object.

I propose to differentiate two levels of cognitive polyphasia: positional polyphasia and intra-positional polyphasia.

Positional polyphasia stems from a plurality of representations corresponding to various individual and group positions in the societal or communicative field—complementary roles in communication (Gillespie & Martin, 2014), multiple group affiliations, variability of tasks and contexts, variety of intentions in relation to objects and other subjects. Intrapsychically positional polyphasia is represented as mutual *I*-positions in the DS. Positional polyphasia can be analysed on synchronic or diachronic levels. Synchronic polyphasia stems from navigating within the forms of knowledge coexisting on the representational field. Diachronic polyphasia introduces the time dimension—applying historically, biographically or developmentally preceding forms of knowledge. Varieties of positioning theories—psychological positioning within the Self (Hermans, 2010), discursive positioning (Harre, 2012), position exchange theory (Gillespie & Martin, 2014)—point to complexes of interdependent social positions in society and possibility of (mutual) position exchange and movement between positions. Cognitive polyphasia is often conceptualized as a resource for various tasks and conditions (Jovchelovitch, 2015). Representational whole is a dynamic reservoir of multiple representations and rationalities. Although the components of cognitive polyphasia may represent different (or even contradictory) systems of knowledge/rationalities, they are united within the same representational field. Only common organizing principles (Doise, 1994) enable them to relate to each other.

Positional polyphasia can realize its potential if it relies on some social reflexivity—image of the whole a position is part of. The whole may be a society, grasped by sociological imagination (Mills, 1959), relevant representational field, grasped by holomorphic representation (Wagner & Hayes, 2005) or micro-semantic field (Salvatore & Venuelo, 2013)—any relevant pattern of coexisting elements. Image of the whole is necessary for orientation in the field: it enables to locate oneself in relation to others and to grasp the universe of options that are simultaneously offered for meaning making.

Holomorphic meta-representations enable to understand the pattern of the whole semiotic field and thus to determine whether a representation is located in the centre or periphery, whether it is hegemonic or polemical, but also to understand the underlying logic of other actors in the society (Wagner & Hayes, 2005). So a competent participant of a culture or member of a community has some necessary knowledge about the representational systems of other groups whom he or she encounters. Representational field acts as an integrated whole and each of its individual participant has some access to this holism. Competent, semi-competent and incompetent members of a community can be differentiated according to the relative adequacy of their holomorphic representations. Each position entails specific point of view and hence has specific bias in meta-representations. Imagined representational whole functions as a context of potentialities to any actualized representation: it provides both imagined opposites (polemic representation) and imagined allies (positionally close but different representations). Positional polyphasia reflects the ability to navigate in various representational field and use collective symbolic resources for solving particular problems in certain relationships to the environment.

Intra-Positional Polyphasia: Manoeuvres in the Subjective Field

There are multiple variants of performing a position: more or less professionally, in different affective mode, in particular style, with different intensities, in different genres and styles of speech and action (e.g., playfully, dramatically; using humour and irony, romanticizing or poeticizing the reality through elevated style).

Dialogical self theory explicitly considers personal positions and social positions (roles) as interconnected elements of the self as a society of mind. Whereas social positions reflect the way the self is subjected to social expectations and role-prescriptions, personal positions leave room for the many ways in which the individual responds to such expectations from his own point of view and for the various ways in which the individual fashions, stylizes, **and personalizes them** (Hermans, 2010, p. 76).¹

I understand **intra-positional polyphasia** as a potential for multiple ways of performing the same positional role. Plurality of mental formations, speech genres, word meanings, etc., co-exist as potentialities to *play various keys of the mental organ* (Moscovici, 2014) for an actor in a given position. Here I will not analyse such stylistic intra-positional polyphasia but apply a more formal approach.

Changes in the societal environment introduce new rules and constraints, which can lead to tensions between new and old representations, field and habitus. Thus, cognitive polyphasia is inherent to any social change. It emerges both on the levels of social relations and the representational field, in tensions between different positions in

¹ The emphasis (bold) is mine.

a field—horizontal cognitive polyphasia (CP)—but also in the tension between social suggestions and individual (vertical CP). Perceived tensions require a person to choose personal positions in the new whole. The process involves dialogue between the active person and the diverse collective-cultural suggestions, in which the individual chooses a response mode, e.g. buffering, neutralization, ignoring, transforming, or evaluating social suggestions (Valsiner, 1998, pp. 393-394), manoeuvring in relation to discursive practices—playing with them, resisting them, circumventing them, etc. On the one hand, there is more or less explicit social guidance in the form of heterogeneous social suggestions, while on the other, a person actively constructs meanings and conforms or counteracts to (re)socialization efforts. Each social regulator creates at least two possibilities for the agent: to follow the regulation or to transgress it. The open system approach and the concept of semiotic potency imply that within given constraints there is always a range of alternative semiotically mediated responses to any social suggestion (Valsiner, 2007).

In order to formally describe the semiotic transformations of external influence into subjective response, social suggestions can be described as vectors that can be characterized by their direction and strength (Valsiner, 2007). This enables to define possible variability of subjective responses as the result of semiotic modification of direction and distance. Intra-positional manoeuvres can be classified according to their: 1) directionality in relation to the basic choice between acceptance or rejection; and 2) the symbolic modification of distance (between total immersion and rejection). In terms of the modification of distance and directionality, I can differentiate modes of denial (related to distance maximizing), modes of acceptance (convergent directionality of responses), modes of resistance (counter-directionality of responses), and creative transformation (creating new direction of regulators). These basic positions may be regarded as structural basis (“skeleton”) for various figurative forms that different *I*-positions can take. Accepting, resisting, escaping and innovating *I*-positions are relational, always constructed in relation to some external semiotic influence (social suggestions) or other *I*-positions.

The following describes some relatively stable response modes in relation to social suggestions (basic relational positions) (see Table 1).

Table 1
Semiotic Transformations Leading to Basic Relational Positions

		Modification of distance	
		<i>Minimization</i>	<i>Maximization</i>
Modification of direction	<i>Same</i>	Acceptance, appropriation, compliance, submissiveness, resonance	Pretence, detachment
	<i>Opposite</i>	Opposition, negation, resistance	Exit, denial, escape
	<i>New</i>	Innovation, creative transformation	

This typology has much in common with empirical classifications of adaptation to coercive external influence (e.g., Riesman, 1950, Sztompka, 2004, Todd, 2005, Hirschman, 1970, Castells, 1997). Such kind of intra-positional polyphasia can be described as a plurality of potential vectors of response to social suggestions—distancing, resistance, compliance and creative synthesis are perspectives that are generated in the dialogue between external catalysers and the subject.

Modification of distance

Distancing is the central operation of semiotic transformation, it is the basis for reflectivity and semiotic potency (Valsiner, 2007, p. 33). Self-distancing in the third dimension, placing oneself above the plane of other positions is conceptualized as taking a *meta-position*. Bakhtin (1994 used the term *vnenahodimost* (temporal, spatial and meaning-related outsidedness) as a viewpoint of the author and a reader that integrates all other viewpoints in a novel. Hermans (2010) uses the concept of meta-position as a reflective act of “taking a distance from other positions and reaching some overarching view from which the specific positions are considered in their interconnections” (p. 151). Such meta-position may have unifying, executive, and liberating functions:

As *unifying* it brings together different and even opposed positions so that their organization and mutual linkages become clear. In its *executive* function, it creates a basis for decision making and directions in life that lead to actions that profit from its support from a broader array of specific positions. As *liberating*, it acts as a stop signal for automatic and habitual behavior arising from ordinary and well-established positions. Considering them from the broader perspective of a meta-position increases the chances for innovation of significant parts of the self (Hermans, 2010, p. 151).

Reflective distancing may be performed both in relation to social suggestions and in relation to habitus (see Hilgers, 2009; Adams, 2006), thus it is a means for ignoring systemic power, for releasing oneself from its imperative power (even for a moment, even imaginatively). But distancing from the power of a particular system is at the same time self-positioning under the influence of some other systems.

An example of distance maximization with keeping the orientation of social suggestions, may be the phenomenon of “performative conformism” during late socialism—people performed speech acts and rituals as a reproduction of social norms, positions, relations and institutions, reproducing themselves as a “normal” Soviet persons without being personally attached to these (Yurchak, 2005).

Maximal distancing may take the form of ignoring the novelty, or social suggestion altogether (inattention), taking the position of an unengaged spectator, or vice versa—playing the role of hyper-engagement (Jaroslav Hasek’s literary hero “the good soldier Schweik” is a good example here).

Total denial may be realized in exit, retreat, withdrawal, or physical repositioning (emigration). In Bourdieusian terms, it means leaving the field, denial of the game, or choosing another field. On the representational field, such distancing may take the form of absolute intolerance or erecting semantic barriers in relation to the novelty (cf. Gillespie, 2008).

Partial denial, remaining in the field but isolating oneself, may take the form of “inner emigration,” self-isolation, preserving the old habitus in the changed field, or the survival of old representations and patterns of behaviour. The external field may change, however, a person preserves his or her inner position in previous or alternative fields, which represent islands of previous mindset in the changed conditions. Hysteresis, inertia of mindset, describes this response mode on the non-reflective level. On the reflective level, a person may consciously try to preserve the old meaning complexes as opposed to changing them.

Modification of orientation

Negation

Choosing a response in the opposite direction of a social suggestion results in various modes of resistance, including: expressing dissatisfaction, breaking norms, or following counter-norms/regulations, creating counter-positions, etc. On the non-reflective level, we can speak about “resistance or protest habitus,” an unconscious tendency to oppose any change or to exhibit power in the form of rigid and strong external pressure. Resistance may arise from the incompatibility of social suggestions with the existing habitus (identity). Personal unreflective resistance may be a response to excessive semiotic abundance (“semiotic over-determination”) in the environment: automatic affective resistance can be expressed as ignoring omnipresent advertisements or rejecting

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monotonously repetitive social suggestions (cf. Valsiner, 2008a). On the reflective level, resistance requires semiotic scaffolding created through argumentation and historical examples (e.g., various forms of civil disobedience).

Acceptance

In terms of directionality, this response mode converges with the social suggestion. The modification of distance may take the form of amplification or reduction of the social suggestion. Examples of this strategy are the trusting acceptance of the changed sociocultural reality through reinterpretation of one's own position and the positions of others; anchoring new social representation in the existing system of representations, or the adoption of new hegemonic ideas (and "forgetting" previous ones). Compliance, conformity, conversion, obedience, stoic acceptance, and humble submission may be various forms of this response mode.

In a non-reflective form, it describes the situation where habitus coincides with the external structure. In this scenario, the world seems to be "normal," and has a taken-for-granted quality. When changes are smooth and slow, they do not provoke unreflective resistance; people begin to realize only gradually that something radical has changed in the guiding social principles. On the reflective level, this mode of response may include calculated acceptance or opportunism. But compliance may also be an active choice: "The person can, actively, take the role of "passive recipient" of cultural messages. This entails direct acceptance of "cultural messages" as givens, without modifications. By active construction of the role of "passive recipient" the person temporarily aligns oneself with the 'powerful others'" (Valsiner, 1994, p. 255). Kafka's literary hero K. (from *The Castle*) represents such total obedience (Kundera, 1998).

Modification of distance and orientation.

Creative synthesis

This is one of the mechanisms enabling cognitive polyphasia. Creative synthesis involves some form of transformation—bringing together different influences (different rationalities, old and new social suggestions, treated as dialectical oppositions), through mutual dialogical modification. Such social inventiveness may lead to the construction of hybrid (higher order) affiliations and identities, create new understandings, transform social rules, roles and practices. Jovchelovitch and Riego-Hernandez (2015) present a typology of cognitive polyphasia by differentiating three main strategies in situations of contact between diverse knowledge systems. In case of *selective prevalence* multiple knowledge systems co-exist and are retrieved separately in opportune contexts. *Hybridization* mixes and synthesizes something new out of multiple knowledge systems.

Dialectical solution of the tension between different (and oppositional) social suggestions or perspectives is possible by transcending across the boundaries of the seeming dilemma to a meta-level. Hermans (2010) describes the construction of a third position in which two other positions merge or fuse, thereby conciliating their conflict. This adjustment mode realizes most visibly the generative and creative potential of habitus-producing social inventions and innovations, on the one hand, and semiotic potency, on the other. Choosing this option, an agent is relatively free to modulate both distance and directionality of his or her response to social suggestions and ultimately creates novelty in self-regulatory symbolic tools.

Lotman (1998) has described two possibilities for the integration of divergent systems: 1) creolization (mixing) and 2) creation of a third, metasystem. In the first case, the principles of one language deeply influence another despite the completely different nature of their grammars. In its actual functioning, this is imperceptible to the subject's internal point of view and the hybrid system is perceived as single whole. The creation of hybrid identities, multicultural orientation and dialogue between different perspectives (Kasulis, 2002), as well as increasing the diversity of representational fields (Zittoun et al., 2003) are some examples of strategies based on creolization.

Different strategies may be used in parallel in different spheres of activity and situations. People may resist changes in one field and express complicity in another, there may be different levels of rigidity or flexibility and various dynamics of positions. In the context of DS, there may be dialogues (or lack thereof) between the "conformist self" and the "resistant self" within the same person. The presented scheme of intra-positional manoeuvres gives us an image of realized and unrealized options (actual and possible trajectories) of an individual in his or her dialogue with sociocultural context. In the intrasubjective sphere concrete *I*-positions are built upon this "semiotic skeleton" of distance and orientation modification, using available symbolic resources. Any of the resulting positions realized by social subjects feed back into the sociocultural system, promoting either its stabilization (through compliance and resistance) or change (through innovations). Each position in the societal and symbolic fields contains intra-positional polyphasia.

Conditions and Mechanisms of Specific Intra-Positional Manoeuvres

Mapping the space of possible intra-positional manoeuvres tells us little about the dynamics and mechanisms behind it. In both forms of polyphasia the main challenges for a researcher are: 1) to describe and explain the effects of interaction of plural forms of knowledge in different contexts and 2) to explain the choice among the potential representational possibilities by a subject in his or her particular relationships with the environment. Moscovici (2014) describes the issue with the metaphor of choosing the right keyboard of the mental organ:

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On this topic, I have previously mentioned cognitive polyphasia [...], the power which we have to play various keys of the mental organ. It is so much an issue of choosing the right keyboard, by leaving aside that which is not, as it is a matter of changing the links between them and to elect the domain in which each is the most efficient (p. 777).

Generally speaking, the choice of a specific manoeuvre stems from the interaction between unreflective and reflective levels of regulation, structural and symbolic opportunities and constraints, and agentic choice. We can suppose that similar external patterns of response (e.g., resistance) are produced by different inner activities and mechanisms—e.g., habitual unconscious dispositions and/or conscious deliberate choice between various alternatives, which depend on the intentions of the subject and available range of interpretative perspectives.

Combinations of structure (high vs low control) and agency (high vs low resources), as depicted in a typology of socialization conditions by Rosengren (1997), may be relevant as a catalyst for specific response modes. For example, exit response is related to the combination of high structural control with high level of agentic resources, whereas accepting response is related to the combination of low resources and high structural control. Tania Zittoun (2007, 2013) has accentuated the role of semiotic resources and sociocultural imagination in enhancing personal potency.

Structural control is related to relation of positional asymmetry (power ratio) and its representation in the symbolic field. Norbert Elias (Paulle et al., 2012) stressed that the scope of agency in any situation is a matter of the prevailing power relations between interdependent people. Differentiation of hegemonic, polemic and emancipatory modes of representations (Moscovici, 1984) refers to different levels of “power of ideas” in relation to agents with specific positions. Hegemonic representations are presented in public space as natural and self-evident, exerting their symbolic power by shaping the perception of social reality according to the interests and habitus of the dominant groups. It requires effort to become aware of their invisible power. Another difference in symbolic power stems from “developmental maturity” of collective ideas: in their trajectory of development social objects may be in “liquid” form, enabling pluralism, multiplicity of positions and dialogue; after passing to reified (institutionalized) form, social representations tend towards monologization and suppression of alternatives (Wagner et al., 2008), evidently increasing their symbolic power. The “weight” or “valence” of particular social representations for a person in a given situation depends on the external force and resonance with personal emotional trajectory (Zittoun, 2013). A very specific environment is formed by hetero-referential representations (Sen, 2012) of antagonistic groups, which catalyse rigid patterns of compliance (with in-group position) and opposition (to the outgroup).

Different combinations of these distance and orientation modification modes may be variously thematized in the collective culture. Taking the form of dialogical oppositions

that give structure to public debate (e.g., obedience-rebellion, participation-distancing) they become a basis for social representations (see Markova, 2003, p. 185) and thus provide an additional symbolic resource for individual meaning making (e.g., resistance narratives and prototypes). Another group of factors, influencing the response mode may be forms of communication (monological vs dialogical, diffusion vs propaganda) and behavioural styles (relations of constraint vs relations of co-operation—see Psaltis, 2012).

An Empirical Illustration: Long Life Trajectories and Personal Adaptation Strategies

Traditionally acculturation has been conceptualized as a relatively short-term process that accompanies contacts between representatives of different cultures (Berry, 2003). Here acculturation has been studied diachronically, as a life-long process of adaptation to different socio-political regimes as qualitatively distinct systems of social suggestions. Divergence in the content of successive hegemonic representations and social suggestions is a fertile ground for cognitive polyphasia. The aim of the study (Raudsepp, 2016) was to describe retrospectively such systems and their succession from the viewpoint of individual agents. How do people perceive the conflict of relevant social suggestions of different regimes? Which strategies were used in circumstances of the clash between divergent social suggestions? How do the research participants use sociological imagination (Mills, 1959) by relating particular life trajectory to societal whole?

The empirical material consists of biographical interviews and autobiographical manuscripts. The focus is on the vital people over 80 years of age whose conscious life started in the pre-war Estonia and who have lived through various political regimes and transitional periods with different levels of contextual pressure (e.g., democratic, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes). The criteria for respondent selection were people's availability and the diversity of their life trajectories in similar conditions (Sato et al., 2007). Another criterion for selection was the incorporation of possibly different life trajectories within a generation (including those that are out of the limelight or non-existent in the memoirs currently published). I aimed to achieve that many different voices and different points of view were represented.

Structural opportunities and constraints through a generational lens.

Mannheim (1952) distinguishes generations as potentialities (defined by objective location in historical time) and generations as actualities—social (or historical) generations, defined through reflexivity (generational self-consciousness) and the capacity of generating new identities and meanings, new modes of thought and action in society (specific generational culture). Generation as actuality emerges during abrupt social changes. Instead of being only an object of socialization, such generations become agents of transformation. Mannheim stresses that beside sharing similar major trends (*Grundintentionen*) and background knowledge, a generation is internally

differentiated—people in direct contact with each other form groups with different experiences, whose life trajectories diverge. As a result, it is possible to describe a generationally shared life world and different *generational units* (experience communities) within it. Mannheim (1952) has described seemingly uniform Zeitgeist (dominant ideas) as always split up into a number of tendencies, consisting of oppositional rationalities, as a dynamic unity of antinomies, personalized by different generational units (e.g., romantic conservatives vs. rational liberals), which are in dialogical tensions with each other.

Generational consciousness functions as interobjectivity—taken-for-granted objective meaning structure (Sammut et al., 2008). Generations and generational units provide basic positions in a particular social context, different systems of meanings and practice, both on unreflective and reflective levels. Coexisting generations form a specific generational field of diversity that creates another potential for cognitive polyphasia.

Participating in different fields, people develop different habitus, which make up a hierarchical system in a person. When the habitus and the social world are compatible with each other, the person “is like a ‘fish in water’: it does not feel the weight of water, and it takes the world about itself for granted” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127). Habitus embodies relative persistence, so that rapid social change leads to a temporary mismatch between the new structure and old inert habitus. Thus, for example, the inconsistency of the habitus shaped during the Soviet period with the new structure of liberal capitalism has been described (e.g., Struck, 2003, Glaeser, 2002, Sztompka, 2004), which also applies to Estonia.

Milan Kundera (1988) has characterized the space of human possibilities in the totalitarian context marked by two polarities: Kafka’s serious hyper-obedience, on the one hand, and the Jaroslav Hasek’s brave soldier Schweik’s non-serious total denial of any sense, on the other.

When the multilayered sociocultural context changes, a person has to change externally and/or internally reconstruct his or her Self, reconsider his or her self-concept, look reflectively at the past and towards the future. The precondition for self-awareness (reflectiveness) is a contact between several different viewpoints (e.g., doer and observer, two different cultures) (Gillespie, 2007). People who have lived a long life have encountered the unknown over and over again, have had to adjust to cultural changes accompanying successive very different socio-political regimes. The latter have given rise to “new rules of play” - qualitatively different systems of social and cultural suggestions, new paradigms of value. Estonia’s chequered recent history has resulted in unique politicized biographies, which describe different life trajectories in constantly changing objective fields. A change in the political regime leads to numerous changes at different levels: changes in the social power field and related cultural field (new

hierarchies of regulative ideas), the transformation of the world of everyday life (new symbols and rituals). An individual as a bearer of personal meanings responds to external changes by choosing a certain adjustment strategy. The multitude of changes experienced over a long lifetime has developed adjustment proficiency in people, e.g., an ability to switch over or to use the experience of previous times as a resource (life asset). Thus the experience acquired in the period of the pre-war Estonia regained its value after the restoration of independence.

Strategies of adapting to sociocultural changes.

The analysis of adjustment strategies in certain contextual constraints reveals a mutual connection between external structural influence and person's agency. The adjustment to changes occurs at behavioural and symbolic levels. People establish certain strategies to adapt to changes: First, by modifying individual meanings. Second, by positioning themselves in a certain way in relation to new values and norms, and the dominant ideas (*Zeitgeist*). And, third, by employing cultural resources to contextualize the new experience.

Acceptance of political changes and *resistance* to them, *participation* and *distanciation* form central symbolic pairs of oppositions (themata) that have become the focus of social attention and a source of tension and conflict (Markova, 2003), thus organizing social representations of life trajectories of this generation. There is also a common repertoire of possible *I*-positions on these opposing trajectories, and holomorphic representations of other trajectories and positions.

There are different concrete forms of basic positionings. It can imply maximum distancing physically (departure) or mentally completely ignoring, disregarding the novel, or deliberately taking the position of a (critical and alienated) spectator. It can also involve the so-called inner emigration –retreating into a private sphere, ignoring the public sphere as much as possible is characteristic of both the early (e.g., Chuikina, p. 2006) and the late Soviet period (e.g., Yurchak, 2002). Partial distancing is also possible: one can internally move away from the immediate situation by means of certain cultural forms, for example, observing life from a certain perspective a positive dramatization of life, a romantic and poetic representation of life. This also includes the strategy of mental trauma release by working it through, employing the “narrative restructuration” (Crossley, 2000). A good example of meta-position strategy is humour, which makes stressful situations and blows of fate tolerable and allows people to maintain inner autonomy everywhere.

Negation may manifest as public (collective) resistance struggle (dissidents, “forest brother” guerrillas) or as passive daily resistance (dissatisfaction, criticizing in absentia, disobedience). Different forms of resistance in the conditions of the Soviet regime have been described by Viola (2002), Hellbeck (2006), Kozlov, Fitzpatrick, and Mironenko (2011).

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Acceptance of changes and going along with them, extreme flexibility in changing dominant perspectives. In retrospect people perceive their inconsistency (“such were the times”), sometimes they seek justification in terms of today’s hegemonic representations. The acceptance may be complete (the reassessment and replacement of the key ideas, consciously changing oneself to comply with the key ideas—see Hellbeck, 2006) or superficial and hypocritical (externally accepting the new ideas while remaining internally sceptical). The superficial acceptance may manifest in the simultaneous preservation of the old and acceptance of the new, while isolating them from each other, which enables the concurrent coexistence of mutually exclusive ideas/versions of reality. In the descriptions of the Soviet mindset the so-called “doublethink” is often observed, which allowed people to use different forms of thinking and language in the public and private spheres (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 25).

Synthesis of the old and the new, creating a new meaning, integrating divergent influences into a meaningful whole. Jennifer Todd (2005) identifies the so-called assimilative strategy, where the identity is redeveloped to combine the old and the new into a continuous whole. This strategy is attainable by people who have already developed an internal readiness for change (e.g., Estonian nationalism and Soviet mentality). The other option is “ritual acceptance”—adopting new forms of behaviour while filling them with the old content. In spite of the change in the external forms, the continuity of meaning is maintained. Unlike in the strategy of superficial acceptance, here the old and the new are not kept separate from each other but there is discordant interaction between them. Aleksei Yurchak (2002) has described creative synthesis in times of mature socialism as “domestication” of official ideology in everyday practices: by reproducing the ideological system formally, many Soviet citizens transformed the communist values into meaningful in their life context.

The choice of the ways of adjustment is partly conditioned by the logic and positioning of the life trajectory in sociocultural fields, but also by the strength of the external pressure and the richness of personal resources (e.g., education, health, social ties, personality characteristics) (Todd, 2005). The main adjustment strategy may change during the life due to a change in the external pressure or personal resources (e.g., resignation in the old age, giving up resistance and coming to terms with the existing).

Various strategies have been applied for maintaining the sense of agency in different sociopolitical circumstances (e.g., separation of worlds of political necessity and individual freedom): in spite of strong structural pressure, people manage to choose to what extent they allow themselves to be “determined.”

Adjustment strategies in different types of life courses

The *social trajectory of life* describes a journey of a person in the social world, his or her successive positions in the fields of life, the configuration of choices and

events. People in similar structural positions may have different attitudes depending on the different trajectories that have lead them to these positions. “Social actors are the outcome of history, the outcome of the experience gathered during the history of the whole social field and the personal way they have come through” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 136).

A course of life may be viewed at three levels. The first is the external person’s relocation in social and geographical spaces (fields) happens. On the second level, the internal journey takes place through conscious choices and/or dialectical connection with passive espousal under some circumstances; this is the course of experience, feelings and meanings. The third level is the later contextualized presentation of a life course, the life “story,” which may happen through different narrative forms.

People who were born in the 1920s and met the same socio-political challenges in Estonia, could choose three general trajectories: denial (emigration), resistance or loyalty. Important choices that determined the subsequent trajectory have often created a core identity, which includes both the self-concept and how others (stereotypically) view the person (e.g., “a Red Army ‘boy’,” “freedom fighter,” “a guy who fought in the Finnish Civil War,” “an expatriate Estonian,” “a red Estonian”). Societal upheavals have several times reversed the symbolic hierarchy of generational units.

Estonian biographical researchers have distinguished between the so-called national and Soviet biography (Kõresaar, 2005, p. 114), as the dominant interpretative frames. The narratives of my respondents gave a considerably more varied picture. It is possible that a change in the public discursive context has an effect here: the black and white approach to history of the 1990s is giving way to a more diverse picture. Based on the type of choices made in generational focal points (primarily in 1940-1945), it is possible to classify the life courses of the generation in various ways. If I rely on the relative proportion of active and passive ways of adaptation, I can divide the explored life courses into those where passive adjustment prevails and those dominated by active choices.

Passive adjustment

The trajectory of suffering. A separate group is formed of the people who themselves or whose relatives and friends have survived extreme existential situations (in the war, due to repression). For many people it is a central experience that has had a strong effect later in their life.

People have described different ways of adjustment in extreme situations: internal rebellion or submission to fate, religious humility and reconciliation, showing altruism, and preserving the internal identity. Here the role of semiotic potency is especially clear: by creating an imaginary field of representations, it is possible at a symbolic level to distance oneself from an immediate situation.

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Adjustment strategies depended on the preceding life trajectory: for some repressed people the Soviet period remained utterly alien, they chose the path of hidden and public resistance or self-isolation. At the time of the new independence they fitted well into the mainstream discourse of victims and suffering, becoming new heroes in the 1990s. Prominent *I*-positions are “I as a victim” and “I as a hero.” There are two forms of life course: smooth life course and undulating life course.

Smooth life course. Apolitical biographies describe the lives of common people who have smoothly come through difficult times. They have passively gone along with changes and without any great losses successfully adjusted—they have been good workers and family people, have seized the arising opportunities and reached peaceful old age. The dominating adjustment strategy in their case is non-reflective privacy and the prevailing *I*-position is “I as a normal person.”

Undulating life course. Some life trajectories are very motley, with deep ups and downs and unexpected turns. As adjustment strategies, complete or partial acceptance and creative synthesis have been implemented.

Active choices

This group includes life trajectories where, in critical times, conscious decisive choices have been made, the life has a direction and purpose. I will look at some examples where a critical choice was made in the 1940s.

The resistance trajectory—an exemplary (proper Estonian) biography in today’s context, “a national biography” that has become a norm. The dominating life strategy is conscious resistance. An exemplary biography of actively resisting to Soviet regime, being the victim of repression, experiencing rehabilitation. There are cases in which public heroization has produced clear self-image of autonomous reckless fighter, “toughened up in Stalin’s universities.”

The so-called “Red” course of life. A contrasting trajectory of conscious pro-Soviet choice and active participation in the Soviet transformations. In the post-Soviet time the agents of this life course were re-positioned from the centre to the periphery of the symbolic field, from hero to anti-hero position. In some cases this has produced a hybrid identity, aimed at reconciliation and compassion towards former victims.

Opportunistic trajectory. Conscious control of one’s life can be exercised through successful manoeuvring in different fields of influence.

In the Soviet period, certain politically marked life trajectories were relatively isolated from one another, the choice of one’s social circle was subjected to written and unwritten norms—on certain occasions it was forbidden to communicate with relatives living abroad, and people avoided communication with repressed acquaintances. However, individual choices were always free, in spite of the dominating attitude,

people continued to communicate with “unsuitable” people. Thus mutually exclusive life trajectories came into contact, which allowed people to develop awareness of alternative choices and their (psychological and social) consequences. Today there are no such normative restrictions any more, but psychological barriers may have survived (a former “forest brother” despising a former militiaman, and vice versa).

Contextuality of choices and meaning making

Important choices are not made in isolation, but in the context of direct social relationships. A biography always potentially involves many voices: its characters are the family and significant “others,” companions of meaningful events—all important relationships at the intersection of which the narrator is located, “the subject of a narrative is in certain respect always ‘more’ [...] than an individual” (Kirss, 2009, p. 32). Choices people make may be motivated by a desire to emulate someone or to be different from someone, whereas authorities and guardians (mentors) have a significant impact (cf promoter positions—Hermans, 2010). Many critical choices, decisions that have affected courses of life have been made by someone else, who acts as a catalyst: a friend who in 1940 invited to join the Young Communist League; a spouse who in 1940 supported the Soviet regime; a brother who fought in the Extermination Battalion. The position or choice of a husband also defines his wife’s fate (e.g., repression), a close relative on one or the other side of the frontline or the state border can create either impediments or favourable conditions for her career advancement. The side characters seemingly playing secondary roles in our life drama may actually have fundamental importance.

People perceive their involvement with companions of suffering experience (war, camp, prison) as special. Being survivors, they feel responsible for their fallen comrades, they feel they have an obligation to make headway and pass on the memory of them. The narrators of biographies often put themselves in a wider context (family, generation, the nation), thus indicating that what they have experienced is both personal and collective. Perceiving oneself as part of a greater whole and dependent on others, leads to different categorization and appreciation of one’s experience of differently organized life stories from those who perceive themselves as independent from others (Wang & Brockmeier, 2002).

Some general observations

People born in the 1920s are the last living cohort who have experienced almost all critical periods in the history of Estonia in the 20th century. Based on their experience, people born in the 1920s often define themselves as a generation of bearers of the values of “pre-war Estonian era.” However, this generation can also be viewed in a wider context. These are the people who witnessed the 20th century technological, political and sociocultural developments, including the failure of great utopias. This

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generation carries the optimistic spirit of the early 20th century: faith in technology and social progress, common hopeful future visions of a just society, anti-clericalism. Their life experience has eventually confirmed their faith in the progressive development of the society, through setbacks and challenges tensions in Estonia have been settled today. Peaceful restoration of the independence of Estonia was a happy ending of a collective path of development for their generation. Trends that originate from the Enlightenment—rationalism and social optimism, which had partly served as a basis already for the pre-war socialization and which were later attempted to realize in the process of building socialism (Bauman, 1976)—are characteristic of this generation. People who were born in the 1920s have lived through several parallel changes: technological development (in their childhood cars and phones were rare, television only came about when they were adults, mobile phones and the internet emerged when they were in advanced age); transformed relationship with nature (most of them have their roots in rural life, being either first or second urbanized generation); alternation of political regimes and hegemonic ideologies; changes in commonplace mentality.

The generation that was born in the 1920s is characterized by strong educational aspirations and appreciation of knowledge, deliberation and absorption. Their pre-mass-culture socialization has facilitated the development of a vivid personality and critical thinking. People of this generation represent very clearly the features of the “modern self” (as differentiated from the traditional and postmodern self) (Hermans, 2010). Over their long life they have acquired valuable experience in how to adjust to changes in diverse ways, how to maintain inner autonomy in the conditions of external oppression and in retaining their identity against the background of radical changes. They have learned to look at events from different perspectives and overcome contradictions in a creative way. They carry layers of varied experience and therefore their outlook on life is many-sided, connecting contradictory historical perspectives. Both Soviet and nationalist viewpoints belong to their repertoire and they are able to combine them through universal framework. They are also able to look at today’s liberal capitalism from a distance, with sophisticated scepticism: for them this is not the best or the only alternative social order. Thus they are competent in using the resources of cognitive polyphasia.

The generation discussed is not homogeneous, different choices in critical points have led them to different life courses. The characteristic features of the generation born in the 1920s and 1930s is the diversity and political markedness of life trajectories. My study revealed intragenerational multitude of different voices and perspectives: as a consequence of earlier choices, people have developed different positions in life, between some of which there is no dialogue (e.g., WWII veterans from the opposing camps failed attempts to reconcile), some trajectories are currently stigmatized and relatively invisible to the public. The unison and dissonance of different trajectories constitute the “complete polyphonic melody” of the generation.

On the societal level I can construct an overarching intergenerational field where different generations are symbolically positioned. The position of the oldest generation in Estonia is ambivalent: on the one hand, its symbolic capital is acknowledged (although polemically), on the other, it is marginalized in terms of diminished consumption capacity. However, a social generation can be considered self-reflexive in the Mannheimian sense whose actions have become socially, culturally or politically significant. This generation can be considered “strategical” (Turner, 2002) in the Estonian context because their initial socialization was marked by deep and abrupt societal transformations, critical for the Estonian history: WWII and the political regime change in the 1940s. This generation was actively involved in the elaboration of new meanings and practices as a consequence of these transformations. The generation born in the 1920s and 1930s has had a strategic role twice: firstly, during the after-war societal transformations (sovetization) where one of the generational units of this generation (those who took pro-Soviet position, had fought in the Red army, etc.) had opportunity to lead the societal transformations and to build up the new society, and secondly, during the restoration of the Republic of Estonia, when another unit of this generation (those who held anti-Soviet position) could provide its own interpretation of history, which became dominant interpretive paradigm (Kõresaar, 2005). Abrupt and fundamental changes in the societal field may promote the rise of the relative status of new strategic generations and diminish prestige of the previous ones. In Estonia, due to political upheavals in the 1990s, the status of generations that were socialized during the Soviet time has been lowered, whereas pre-war generations (carrying the habitus of pre-war republic), as well as the young, unspoiled by the previous regime, became publicly respected. Thus, politicized history has defined the relative symbolic capital of different generations.

Conclusion: Two Forms of Polyphasia

By using various theoretical instruments I tried to show how habitus and social representations interact dialogically with semiotically potent subject. The combination of two mechanisms for realizing semiotic potency—symbolic distancing and directionality—produces a variety of relatively stable response modes, which are evident in the empirical data. The unreflective level of habitus and the reflective use of social knowledge are intertwined in these processes.

I proposed to differentiate two layers of cognitive polyphasia:

1) Positional polyphasia is based on plurality of representations corresponding to various individual and group positions in the societal or communicative field, stemming from complementary roles in communicative contexts, multiple group affiliations, etc. Intrapsychically these are represented as mutual *I*-positions in DS.

2) Intra-positional polyphasia provides for potentially multiple ways of performing the same positional role—either stylistically (using various speech genres,

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affective modes, etc.) or through semiotic manoeuvres in relation to social suggestions. Using different potentialities to play various keys of the mental organ (Moscovici, 2014) are accessible to an actor in any particular position.

In both forms of polyphasia the main challenges for a researcher are: 1) to describe and explain the effects of interaction of plural forms of knowledge in different contexts (e.g., tough vs benign, level of normative pressure) and 2) to explain the choice among the potential representational possibilities by a subject in his or her particular relationships with the environment (an issue of choosing the right keyboard; see Moscovici, 2014). SRT and DST can be used complementarily for solving these problems.

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