12th International LAB Meeting - Summer Session 2008
14th International Summer School

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

Social Representations in Action and Construction
in Media and Society

"Social Representations, Collective Memory and Socially
Shared Emotions: narrative and experimental approaches"

From 26th July to 3rd August 2008
http://www.europhd.eu/html/_onda02/07/14.00.00.00.shtml

Scientific Material

European Ph.D

on Social Representations and Communication

International Lab Meeting Series 2005-2008

MARIE CURIE ACTIONS

Semiotic Rotations

Modes of Meanings in Cultural Worlds

edited by

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CHAPTER 8

FROM SEPTEMBER 11 TO THE IRAQ WAR

Shocking Images and the Polarization of Individual and Socially Negotiated Emotions in the Construction of Mass Flashbulb Memory

Annamaria Silvana de Rosa

INTRODUCTION: PARADIGMATIC INTEGRATION

This essay examines how mass communication systems mediate emotions as well as images and thereby construct social memory. After addressing theoretical concerns, I present some of the results stemming from a multi-faceted research program, *The Impact of Evoked and Selected Images and the Social Sharing of Emotions on the Construction of Social Memory: From September 11 to the Iraq War,* for which data was gathered from October 2001 to March 2003 (cf. de Rosa, 2002a).

For this study, I represent how the role of the social sharing of emotions relates to social memory graphically. Thus, I have represented multiple relationships as polygons, whose nuclei connect different instances (see
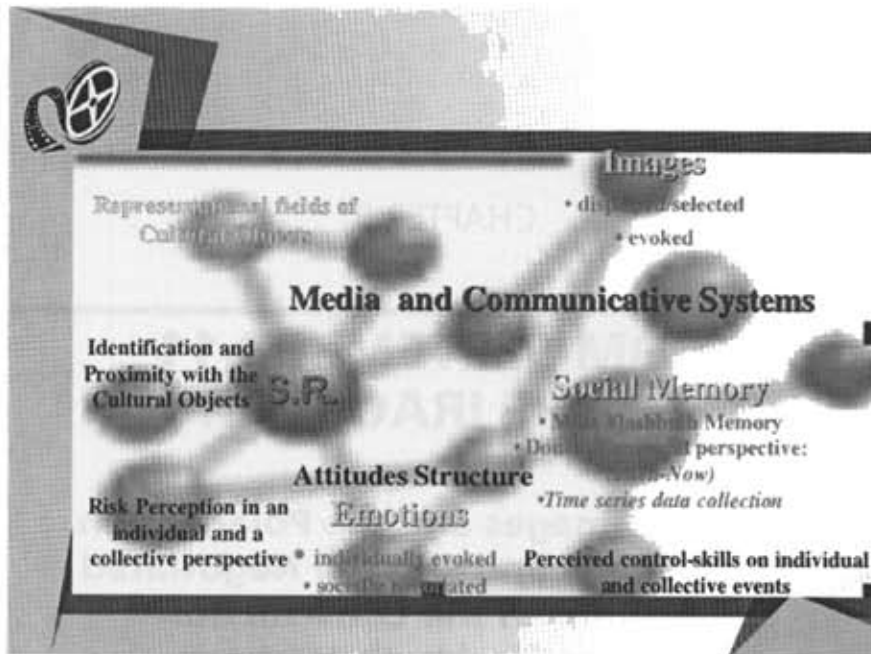
Figure 8.1.   A multi-dimensional conceptual network Images, Emotions, Social Representations in the construction of the Social Memory mediated by the mass communicative system.

Figure 8.1. The central nuclei of each element comprise social representations and social memories. The lines linking the nuclei comprise communication and media systems. In exploring this complex conceptual web, what I examine here are:

- images, which function both as research tools and as objects of investigation, relevant as displayed stimuli, mentally activated eidetic scenarios, and instances of socially selected images;
- emotions evoked by the images, both individually and socially; and
- representational systems of September 11 and interrelated cultural objects, such as the United States, Europe, the West, Islam, and war and peace.

Fundamental to this study is the concept of flashbulb memory.

In the literature, "flashbulb memories" (FBM) are generally called "events that remain impressed on our memory in an unusually vivid and persistent way. These are also events about which one often speaks with other people and about which we are asked to express emotions, evaluations and to take positions. (Bellelli, Curci, & Leone, 2000, p. 291)

We argue that the tragic events of September 11 displayed spectacular, unprecedented effects on a global scale through the mass media and that by examining these effects, we can demonstrate how mass flashbulb memory is created.

IMAGES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON SOCIAL REPRESENTATION AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

An unstated, admittedly impressionistic premise impels this work: social psychology seems to ignore, almost completely, the role images play in the construction and reconstruction of social reality, almost to the point of making them invisible. This disinterest is reflected in the infrequent use of images, both static (photographs) and dynamic (films), as research tools.

This is true not only in research on attitudes and social representations, but also in the study of collective, mass, and social memory. Indeed, many authors use these terms in an indiscriminate manner, almost as if they were synonyms, as illustrated by the adoption of the term *social* by Fentress and Wickam (1992), Sà and Vala (2000) and Sà (2005) or *collective*, as preferred by Jedlowski (2000). On the other hand, some authors, like Jodelet (1992) and Viaud (2002), create too narrow distinctions by linking them with specific disciplinary references (e.g., cognitive psychology, neuropsychology, social psychology, sociology, and anthropology). Even in the field of psychology, images are focused on either as an individual product of mental activity, as pure perceptive stimulus, or as a mental image, as cognition or representation, mostly decontextualized and desocialized.

In other words, research on the links between images and social representations and between iconic and symbolic dimensions still leaves much to be desired (de Rosa, 2001; de Rosa & Farr 2001; cf. Seca, 2001), even though there are relevant studies inspired by social representations theory (Allansdottir, 2002; de Rosa, 1987, 1990, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2002d; de Rosa & Farr, 2001; de Rosa & Schurmans, 1990; Farr, 1994, 1998; Galli, Nigro & Poderico, 1989; Haas & Jodelet, 1999; Lahlou, 2000; Milgram & Jodelet, 1976; Ullan, 1995; Uzzell & Blud, 1993). More broadly, as I have argued elsewhere (de Rosa & Mormino, 2000), critical ties and convergences among social representations, social memory, and social identity account for conceptual dimensions (image, memory, social representations, and mass communication systems) and thus warrant further research.

Already in 1978, Neisser, while working in cognitivist circles and using an ecological research approach, considered the context of daily life in studying memory and analyzed objects from a social viewpoint. Consequently, in the 1980s, scholars returned to nature and the social functions of collective and social memory (already postulated by Bartlett, 1932, and

Halbwachs, 1925) as well as to cultural mediation systems based on "the community's interpretive practices" (Vygotsky, 1934/1992). Importantly, this renewed perspective encouraged researchers to take interest in social facts and actions as target events. Moreover, it transformed the study of memory and forgetting into forms of social action, leaving behind the idea that they function as individual properties of the mind (Middleton & Edwards 1990).

Although it was thus recognized that nature is culturally mediated by memory and linked to the semiotic character of thought processes through the powerful semiotic tool of images, images have nonetheless not attracted a lot of attention among researchers, whether influenced by renewed cognitivist traditions or by socioconstructivist paradigms and "discursivists."

MEMORIES AS PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE MIND: IMAGES IN FLASHBULB MEMORIES

Even when the role of images is taken into account by researchers, they are treated like metaphors of photography. That is, images are treated for their trait of figurative vividness and as if each image had the clarity of well-developed photographs without ambiguity or polysemous qualities. In other words, images are always treated as a body of information, a sum of details, a visual event as measured against photographic clarity; thus, the accuracy and persistence of memory are measured through the mediation of cognitive and evaluative factors (prior knowledge, personal consequence, importance and salience, novelty) as well as through emotional and communicative factors (affect and overt rehearsal). Even when an image is evoked, then, memory is seen as reproductive rather than symbolic.

Nonetheless, studies on flashbulb memory (FBM) have the merit of investigating memory processes in relation to important social-target events that have a strong impact on the collective memory and that are highly significant from the communicative and visual or scenographic point of view. The classic paradigm developed by the FBM literature always refers to individuals and includes traits such as surprise, personal importance, involvement, event evaluation, and rehearsal. They are investigated around events such as these:

- Criminal acts against political figures, such as:
    - the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, as investigated in the seminal study by Brown and Kulik (1977) as well as by Winograd and Killinger (1983);
    - the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan, as investigated in the study by Pillemer (1984); and

- the assassination of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, as investigated in Christianson's (1989) research.
- Significant political events with a strong impact on public opinion, such as:
  - U.K. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's resignation, as investigated in Conway's (1995) study;
    - the death of important figures in national life such as:
      - the death of Francisco Franco, as investigated in Ruiz-Vargas's (1993) research;
      - the death of King Bauduin of Belgium, as investigated in research done by Finkennauer (1997; Finkennauer et al., 1998) and in the study by Bellelli (1999); and
    - the resignation of "Clean Hands" Prosecutor Antonio Di Pietro.
- Natural catastrophes, such as the San Francisco earthquake, as investigated in the study by Neisser, Winograd, and Weldon (1991);
- Technological or scientific disasters such as the Challenger explosion that was examined in studies by Bohannon (1988), McCloskey, Wible, and Cohen (1988), and Neisser and Harsch (1992) or the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster, used, among others, as a target event in Larsen's research (1992).

These seminal studies in flashbulb memory scholarship use a model that departs from cognition information (associated with eidetic elements, such as the contextual scenario of the fact, action, or event to be remembered) to obtain a mnemonic re-cognition. They remained based, however, in an informative and computational model (with individual capacity for special encoding) for which social factors are reduced to elements contained in the target event; to the context of learning about the news (autobiographic insertion, thus forming a collective object of the memory); or to communication vehicles via the rehearsal mechanism that allows for elaboration of the narratives.

Pennabeker and Crow point to the need for studying contexts. More specifically, concerning flashbulb memories, they state (in Bellelli et al., 2000, pp. 114–115):

> The reason that when it concerns photographic memories one keeps such a vivid and long-lasting memory is that these allow individuals to place themselves in the historical context and, when they refer to their own and others' personal photographs, to place themselves in the event.

Along similar lines, Guglielmo Bellelli, who has dedicated a considerable part of his research to flashbulb memory, has emphasized the need to study the social context (in Bellelli et al., 2000, p. 291):

Almost all the numerous studies that were done following the trail of the well-known study by Brown and Kulik (1977) have concentrated exclusively on the first aspect, that of memorability. The second aspect, sharing, has only been highlighted in a secondary way. In our opinion, this has oriented most of these studies towards dealing exclusively with individual type processes at this base of such memories, to ignore those that are of the inter individual and social kind and, therefore, to preclude understanding of how individual memories can become part of the collective memory. (Halbwachs, 1950)

Studies on memory, individual or collective, that intend to uncover memory's symbolic, evocative, communicative, and social dimensions are geared not to discovering how much and what exactly is remembered, but, rather, of what and how the memory is constructed, socially reconstructed, and communicated. In such studies, the interlocutors, representational systems, and filters employed by subjects' and social groups' ideological visions should be considered, as well as what role is played by the emotions unleashed or evoked by the event in relation to the network of events significant in the subject's life and similar factors.

Flashbulb memory research has indeed articulated critical steps toward fleshing out how images work, as suggested above, studies that demonstrate the importance of prior knowledge (e.g., Conway et al., 1994); the crucial role of emotions, as mediated via overt rehearsal pushing individuals to talk about an event (e.g., Finkenauer, Gisle, & Luminet, 2000); and the fundamental element of social availability via various mass media venues (e.g., Bellelli et al., 2000). By adapting a multitheoretical approach to the FBM paradigm, we may take advantage of insights offered in the research of social representations, the social sharing of emotions, and communication systems as part of media research.

- Thus, the element of prior knowledge may include interrelated social representation systems of inherent cultural objects as a framework. In dealing with collective memory, this is even more important, when considering experts in the field like Jedlowski (2000, p. 74), who maintain that "collective memory must be understood as the selection, interpretation and transmission of certain representations of the past, specifically produced and preserved in relation to the point in life of a determinate social group."
- Likewise, the role of emotions and the sharing of emotions may be examined as critical factors in the crucial phases of genesis, diffusion, and embedding in the social and collective memory. In that vein, it would be interesting to reintroduce the concepts of themata, as developed by Moscovici and Vignaux (1994/2000) along with Rouquette's nexus (1988, 1994; de Rosa & Mormino, 2000a, 2000b, 2002).

- Concerning the integration of studies on social, collective, and especially, mass memory with that of social representations and emotions, along with what we have learned from media studies, we should consider, like Minnini (in Bellelli et al., 2000, p. 260) that:

> ...mass media memory reflects the value of technologies and cultural artifacts in maintaining the need for a "common information space" in which to locally, temporally and "diatextually" debate and resolve sense making questions.... The question of the memory/forgetting of news does not finish in individual performance, but can be extended to collective practice visible in the way in which news texts already program a particular process of memory/forgetting.

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

THE "ARTISTS OF MEMORY" ON THE RICHLY IMAGINATIVE COMPONENTS OF REPRESENTATION

The importance of images with respect to memory actually has a much longer tradition than represented by psychological research on memory. As has been pointed out by researchers in the art of memory from Frances Yates (1966) to Paolo Rossi (1983/2000, 2001), memory theory dates back to the distinction between the Aristotelian tradition that marked the psychophysiological concept of memory to the gnostic-hermetic concept of Platonic inspiration. Aristotle and the subsequent rationalistic and psychophysiological tradition hold that memory implies the persistence in time of an intact and continuous reality and that the act of remembering allows for the recovery of something that has been possessed and forgotten. Plato and supporters of the gnostic-hermetic tradition (with Giordano Bruno among its most passionate supporters) maintain that cognition was a way to recover lost knowledge along with original divine wisdom. In the platonic sense, understood more as the act of *reminiscence* (anamnesis) than *mnene*, memory could be configured as an art that would cause lost knowledge to reappear and as a means of finding correspondences between the mind and the universe, between micro- and macrocosms.

It is possible to identify new forms of both traditions in various approaches of contemporary cognitive psychology and the localizing paradigms of psychobiological research, on one hand, and in the highly varied field of hermeneutics, from psychoanalytic and Jungian analytic psychology to the holistic paradigms of neuropsychology and psychophysiology, on the other hand. Thus, philosophers like Pietro da Ravenna and Gior-

dano Bruno assigned primacy to images and emotions and allowed that memory enhances the analogical, associative, and evocative abilities of thought, while philosophers like Piero Ramo, Raimondo Lullo, and Giulio Camilllo proposed an art of memory of the logical variety, intent on encyclopedic classification, in which images do not exercise any evocative function; rather, they function something like drawers for the systematic and regulated filing of information. As the most advanced research in the field of neuropsychobiology teaches us, in reality, the classificatory and localizing theories of cognitive memory coexist with holistic theories (Oliverio, 1994, p. 77).

IMAGES, REMEMBERING, FORGETTING, AND NEW SCENARIOS IN MASS COMMUNICATION

In a brief and little-cited popular article on the iconic revolution, Moscovici discusses the image in the process of imagination, making the image subservient to the highly imaginative power of the mind as a simplifying and illusory reproduction of reality. After having thus alluded to the different roles played by the image, Moscovici writes (1983, p. 569):

> If we want to understand the explosive return of images in communication, we must depart from two pieces of primary data. First: Men have always preferred images to other signs...they contain the energy necessary for magic and the desire for immortality. Second: The time needed for "displaying" is more incisive and brief than the time needed to "demonstrate." The image is in complete opposition to the word...after the age of machine productivity and that of science and the arts came the age of sign production. The formula is well known: communicate more things, more rapidly and to the largest number of people...The image does not withdraw into itself, it radiates towards the search for an open eye.... This power to radiate brings the masses together creating the confused but irresistible impression of communication and an order, on a global scale, the effectiveness of the image is really that to allow people to inhabit the Tower of Babel, in spite of the barbarity of languages and culture.

Taking into account the acceleration in forms of mass communication we experience today, along with the tendency to assign factual primacy to visual codes—rather than to written codes or to reading along with its need for time to reflect—research on memory from the perspective of social psychology cannot avoid confronting the problem of how to evaluate, and make use of, the role of images in the construction and social sharing of memory and forgetting of facts and public events.

Indeed, mass communication can provide tools for researching the processes of memory or forgetting of events. Thus, determining what kind of image—static or dynamic, photographic or cinematographic, in black and white or in color, presented in isolation or in interaction with texts, interacting via multimedia communication and/or the Internet, inserted in scientific or popular communication contexts, in television-type information, in entertainment or advertising—all this can aid in understanding how images play a role in social memory.

Events are social not only because they concern the life of the collectivity, but also because they are socially elaborated via the more or less polyphonic orchestration of texts and images transmitted via various media and thereby suggest the potential for (mutual) social sharing. Media sharing alone, however, does not ensure a collective memory. In stressing the need to distinguish collective memory from society's memory, Jedlowski (in Bellelli et al., 2000, pp. 74–75) underscores that with the proliferation of tools and techniques, "cause the formation of extremely wide-ranging common memories," and that "collective memory is able to be analyzed according to models derived from the study of communication." Communication comes into play not only in respect to the nature of the tools involved in the transmission of news—reported news rather than personally experienced events, according to the distinction made by Larsen (1988)—but also in respect to the contexts of reception, use, and elaboration of the news with and in relation to other social interlocutors. These are not necessarily only physically present individuals, but also social referents of the evoked and communicated memory; in other words, to repeat the formula inspired by Halbwachs (1925, 1950): these contribute to the social frameworks of memory. Modern moral panics, as Charles Critcher (2003, p. 131) affirms, could not exist without the media.

Thanks to various research programs sponsored by Denise Jodelet (1992), scholars have renewed their interest in the empirical study of the social dimensions of memory and the exploration of the relations that exist among memory, thought, and social identities. Among the areas of research, we find studies focused on:

- the dynamics of social memory in relation to the role played by its registration and revival in the appropriation of and identification with urban space (Jodelet, 1982);
- the reconstruction of memory, forgetting, and investment in the past in the commemoration of the 5th centennial of 1492;
- the formation of a new kind of memory—mass memory—analyzing its forms and scope using certain political trials, such as the trial of Klaus Barbie, as a point of reference; and

- new forms of memory that are mediated by mass communication, not only as technological artifacts, but also by the media culture that feeds and is fed by these new forms. Thus, Jodelet (1992, p. 246) argues:

> This digression expresses the idea that in the same way that it is not possible to deal with the representation "in general," it is not possible to progress in the analysis of collective and social memory if it is considered in a unitary or "general" way. Differentiation of memories requires specifying: the agents and carriers, the vectors and supports, content and form, contexts of production and memory, the processes at work in the reconstruction and revival of the past, and the effect of traces and on these traces. It is necessary to make an inventory of these traces at the material and ideal level, examining the activation processes in proportion to the psychological and social dynamics. Differentiation of memories also allows us to see how individual memory can be socially influenced; how collective memory, that of groups in the society, and social memory, that of the society are developed and lost. Because these allow for the "storage of the social order," they provide the framework and tools of mnemonic activity or the contents of "public memory" (Douglas, 1989, p. 61). Finally, new kinds of memory come to be considered: obviously the kind produced by communicative practices, but also that which is the product of social and technological evolution in the contemporary world, as characterized by the increase in the role played by the media along with information and communication tools as well as by the globalization and circulation of collective phenomena. This is how new forms of memory emerge: "historic memory," such as the different commemorations that the public is invited to join, and "mass memory," which transcends groups and unites them. In proportion to social uniformity and the influence of new means of communication, Halbwachs perceived the existence of such a type of memory. Today it can be analyzed as a specific phenomenon in the light of knowledge provided by mass psychology. (Canetti, 1966; Moscovici, 1981)

The substantial cross-disciplinary survey that Denise Jodelet provides as introduction to the media event surrounding the trial of Lyon Gestapo Chief Klaus Barbie (Lyon, May-June 1987) particularly stimulates reflection on the links among memory, emotions, and visual and communicative apparatus.

In her work, Jodelet does not deal at length with the links among memory, emotion, and social representations; her references to Moscovici's work lean more toward his contribution to mass psychology (Moscovici, 1981) than toward social representations (Moscovici, 1961/1976). However, Jodelet did not fail to underscore functional homologies shared by the two research traditions that developed around the constructs of collective memory and social representations, if only by virtue of an uphill path to the common source of inspiration found in Durkheim's work by Halbw-

achs, as well as by Moscovici (Jodelet, 1992, p. 245). The role of emotions and images in the social construction of memories—which Jodelet tends to distinguish as individual, social, collective, and mass in respect to the disciplinary and conceptual fields of construct elaboration—returns us to the contribution of mass psychology that highlights the link between memory and a nonrational way of thought, in which passions, interests, desires, imagination, and beliefs come into play.

In recalling the active role of knowledge attributed to memory by two of the major theorists of memory, Halbwachs and Bartlett, Jodelet stresses that memory depends on a richly imaginative function and that thought is rich in interlaced abstract ideas and concrete images that refer to the life, tradition, and history of the collective. Departing from Moscovici's reflections, as recorded in *L'age des foules* (1981), on the role that memory plays as a resource ("since the past is a substratum from which to take ideas and images that bind language"), in her work, Jodelet moves from a psychology of the memory scenario—in which emotion, where considered, enters the field at most as a cognitive link to the event and as encouragement for its repetition in conversation—to a psychosociology of contemporary masses roused by the media system (Moscovici, 1981, p. 140). Citing Moscovici (1981, p. 144), she stresses that in contemporary society,

> ...these characteristics are reinforced by the mass communication tools that were created before and above all in order to reach and influence the masses, and therefore to mass-produce them.... In the span of a generation we have gone from a word culture to a much more powerful figurative image culture. In the same way that the press furnished a basis for critical thought, in a relatively brief time radio and television have conferred an unimaginable technical basis and power on automatic thought. Mass communication tools have made it one of the factors of History.

The position is not dissimilar from that articulated by Plato in the *Phaedrus*. There, Socrates characterized writing as a substitute medium for the system of oral communication, a medium that evinces a destructive influence on memory. Thus, the position on the role of the media as "tools both of memory and social oblivion" (Minnini, in Bellelli et al., 2000, p. 259) is as ancient as the organization of communication systems.

In signaling the need to guide the attention of researchers of collective memory toward research on mass communications systems, Jodelet revealed the sentimental and moral side of the role of the media in regard to the memory/forgetting of collective events, sometimes making them emotionally spectacular and, in any case, forcing them onto the agenda of modern ethical imperatives. Perhaps because of the mechanism that fuels social confrontation or a conflict of opinions, the Klaus Barbie trial did not fail to incite controversy about the role orchestrated by "sentimental confu-

sion" and the "logic of the heart" as well as about the key change function of events from the domain of History to the sphere of entertainment (Jodelet, 1992). It resolved the conflict between the duty of memory and the pain of witness, deliberately leaving room for the language of emotion. If in the case of past historical events, such as Nazi crimes, collective memory has been used as a means of giving life, strength, and solidarity to a mass conscience, according to the processes and the procedures that create a mass memory, we have to ask ourselves what happens in the embryonic phase of constituting a social memory when an event of the proportions of a mass catastrophe occurs.

This is where the relationship between time, necessary for constituting a collective memory, and mass communication tools, which currently tend to reset the time/space dimension among actors in and users of the event, comes into play. The distinction between reported news and personally experienced events, and in certain ways even between communication professionals and ordinary people, is changing in new communication scenarios created by new technologies. Certain realities, visible to all, are evidence of this.

- We witness daily the reduction of the boundary between actors and contexts of events on the one hand and reporters, as professional mediators of the news, on the other. This is true even in difficult situations, such as the war in Iraq, for which journalists traveled in armored vehicles and by means of wireless laptop computers were able to report on the war live.
- Likewise, the wide diffusion of video cameras among people of all backgrounds, ages, and professions have made amateur videos into potential journalistic scoops, sometimes seen around the world before professional photojournalists arrive on the scene.
- Just as immediate, the Internet has become a means for rapidly mobilizing coordinated mass movements or actions, as seen in the case of the No Global Movement.
- Cellular phones can also transmit live accounts from catastrophic scenarios, like the dramatic telephone calls made by victims trapped in the burning Twin Towers before their collapse.

Just as such examples proliferate, we are also aware of the complexities involved in communicating so rapidly, as illustrated by the debate that publicly took place in newspapers (e.g., *Le Figaro*, 31-08-03) concerning the critical decision to give public voice to the victims and thereby provide transcripts of their last conversations. Such debate reactivated the conflict between those who argued for the ethical duty of history to record testimonials (remembering) and those who pled for the rights of privacy and silence about such events (forgetting).

All this has a strong impact in modifying communication scenarios in relation to social frameworks of memory. We have to ask ourselves, for example, how much these new communication scenarios modify what we had learned through research conducted on the re-evocation of news and events that 20, 30, or 40 years ago were communicated in profoundly different ways and forms. The influence of technology along with the communication scenario should by all rights be included in studies on social memory in order to calibrate the validity of data acquired in relation to the historic time and technological developments. There is already in existence a plethora of studies that explore the phenomena of memory and forgetting linked to the Internet (de Carli, 1997).

Recalibrating is necessary even in unorthodox studies on social and collective memory, such as those by Pennebaker, who began to study the creation cycles of monuments, films, and books concerning past national events. He discovered that people tend to commemorate the past in 20- to 30-year cycles. This lapse of time seems to be necessary for generations that experienced the events at a critical period in their lives between the ages of 12 and 25, which seem to be the ages that form the richest repositories of collective memories. According to one of Pennebaker's hypotheses (generational resource hypothesis), this generational lag is necessary for individuals to acquire the means, power, and maturity necessary to create commemoration. At the same time, Pennebaker also considered the role played by time in the gradual removal of the pain linked to re-evocation of negative events and the necessary psychological distance. Here too, Pennebaker and Crow (in Bellelli et al., 2000, pp. 133–134) argue, attention should be given to the role of mass communications systems, as cultural systems organized to produce, not only reproduce, news and events in modulating such distance:

> Today our communications have the enormous advantage of technologies that can instantaneously transmit news to practically the entire world. This should facilitate the discussion process necessary to create a general consensus on collective memory. On the contrary, it seems to be able to create obstacles for myth creation, as knowledge of the facts is more widespread and therefore more difficult to embellish. Paradoxically, the ubiquity of daily electronic mass communication can prevent today's collective memories from rising to mythical proportions in the future.

Pennebaker's studies thus hit upon problems that concern the culture industry as a system that creates or destroys myths (cf. Esposito, 2001, p. 21).

According to Luhmann (1995), the mass media controls or orients communication much in the way that ancient rhetoric did, by means of *loci*, commonplaces shared by both rhetor and audience. Like *loci*, today's media creates a "second" reality shared by all and easily recognizable in its

form and narratives (e.g., daily news, characters from films or TV series, commercials). At the moment an event is selected to elaborate upon a social memory, most researchers agree on the need to verify certain essential conditions:

- The event must represent or produce significant long-term changes in individuals' lives.
- The event inspires social sharing via conversation or narration that may have, in addition, an additional purpose of anchoring the event in the system of memory and forgetting of individuals and social groups.
- Events that are particularly emotiogenic as they inspire a forget/ never forget ambivalent communicative dynamic of feelings. This leads to intrapsychological rumination—events that inflate the media that individuals try to repress via unexpressed thoughts and dreams.

A SHOCKING MASS FLASHBULB MEMORY

Among contemporary events, the September 11 terrorist attacks met conditions as an event that is likely to remain in humanity's collective memory as a shocking mass flashbulb memory. What makes this event particularly notable is how the media made a spectacle of the terrorist attack, thereby conferring on that tragic event a key position in the host of momentous events that are marked as crossing a "never before" threshold in the history of humanity. Moreover, in addition to the mass media, other media, such as theater, cinema, and literature, represented the event as a sort of spectacle within a spectacle, as demonstrated by the film *September 11* that appeared on September 11, 2002, as well as by *Requiem for Ground Zero* by Steven Berkoff, *The Guys* by Anne Nelson, along with *Jumpers, Project 9/11*, and *Tina C,* just to mention a few of the programs running at the International and Fringe Festival in Edinburgh in August 2002. The degree to which September 11 has become important is clear in the ways it has been described, as:

- a unique event, changing the world as we know it, in part because an unedited war scenario as a new horizon of living suddenly emerges in the daily life of all people;
- a shock, causing surprise effect and discontinuity (Luhman, 1995) so unusual that it seems to border between fiction and reality;
- an event on a global scale, both socially and psychologically; and
- an event that clearly demonstrated cultural clashes.

Importantly, the event was transmitted and anchored in very contrasting ideological, local, cultural universes. The world was divided into two sides

of the representational system: Pro–Against USA, Pro–Against West, Pro–Against Islam, Pro–Against War–Peace, Pro–Against Terrorism.

What follows is an attempt to explain how we developed our empirical research project focused on September 11. Conducted in collaboration with doctoral research trainees Sara Bigazzi and Elena Bocci and a large group of undergraduates, this project studied the role of images and their emotional impact in the construction of social memory via the filters of representational systems vis-à-vis cultural objects, either directly or indirectly implicit in the evaluations of the event and its consequences (de Rosa, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; de Rosa, Bigazzi, & Bocci, 2002a, 2002b).

Individually and in focus groups, 522 subjects[i] were involved in the administration of a series of tools and techniques dealing with different dimensions and constructs, as described in the multimethod research plan (see Table 8.1). In light of the theoretical issues discussed above, the following should be mentioned, although due to the limits of this paper, I can only draw attention to the following:
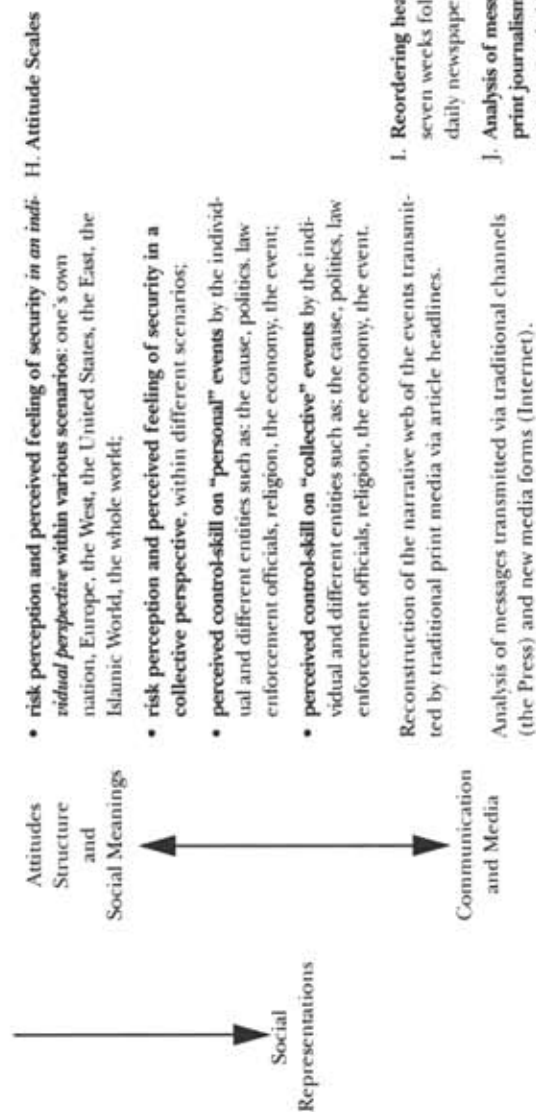
Images

1. Images disseminated by the media were analyzed with respect to the mass media source and semiotic analysis of the narrative structure of the most relevant photo-dossiers, TV programs, and websites dedicated to 9/11 were completed.

2. Mental images to remember or to forget, as evoked by individual subjects, were collected via a flashbulb memory (FBM) questionnaire also investigating the communication routes of the socialization of the news.

3. Images via photo-language in focus groups, using the booklet "Per non dimenticare" published on October 10, 2001, for *Panorama* magazine, were used in order to identify:
    (a) the images that were selected most frequently and that made the strongest impression first on individual subjects and then on the group by means of negotiating choices;
    (b) the images judged more representative of the events by the group as a whole, again by means of negotiating choices (aimed at both selection and rejection);

    We compared a series of six data sets over time that used results obtained via photo-language for group-negotiated emotions in response to images chosen from *Panorama*'s special photo-dossier and that took into account the different number of subjects in each

Table 8.1. The Multi-Method Research Plan

Dimensions	Levels of Analysis	Instruments and Techniques
Iconic Representational Systems	Photographic memory and its "situated communicative knowledge-experience."	A. **Questionnaire** on photographic memory
	Structure, contents and polarity of the representational field about the emotional impact of images seen during the exhibition "11 September."	B. **Associative Network** about emotional impact of the images seen during the exhibition "11 September"
	Emotional impact and meaning of the exhibition "11th September 2001," some of the most vivid remembered images, those never seen or repressed	C. **Evaluative Questionnaire** related to the Exhibition
	"Social" negotiation of consensus/dissent in the selection/exclusion of images according to criteria of representativity and importance.	D. **Photolangage by focus groups**
Emotional Impact	Structure, content and polarity of the representational field associated with "Cultural Objects" related to the event: Terrorism, USA, the Western World, Islam, War, Peace	E. **Associative Network** inferred by **Cultural Objects** related to the Events
	Conceptual links among different cultural objects correlated to a wider representational system net: Human Rights, Asia, the West, Islam, Italy, War, Judaism, Underdevelopment, USA, Terrorism, Peace, Europe, Civilization, Arab World, Christianity.	F. *"Conceptual semantic network"* among different cultural objects correlated to a wider representational system net.
Social Memory	Significant links and intensity between the subject (I) and the above mentioned cultural objects.	G. **Identification scale** on the **Conceptual Network**

Attitudes
Structure
and
Social Meanings

Communication
and Media

Social
Representations

H. Attitude Scales

- risk perception and perceived feeling of security *in an individual perspective* within various scenarios: one's own nation, Europe, the West, the United States, the East, the Islamic World, the whole world;

- risk perception and perceived feeling of security in a collective perspective, within different scenarios;

- perceived control-skill on "personal" events by the individual and different entities such as: the cause, politics, law enforcement officials, religion, the economy, the event;

- perceived control-skill on "collective" events by the individual and different entities such as: the cause, politics, law enforcement officials, religion, the economy, the event.

Reconstruction of the narrative web of the events transmitted by traditional print media via article headlines.

Analysis of messages transmitted via traditional channels (the Press) and new media forms (Internet).

1. **Reordering headlines** published during the seven weeks following the events in the Italian daily newspaper *La Republica*.

J. **Analysis of messages transmitted by traditional print journalism** (frequencies of headlines and content analysis of articles appearing for a full year after the events in wide circulation Italian daily *La Repubblica* **and by new media forms** (forum discussions and web sites dedicated to the September 11 events)

group as well as the range of five options for choosing the image in order of importance. To do so, we calculated the percentages of group-negotiated emotions from among a reduced list of 31 emotions that were selected because of their higher frequency in the full list of 227 emotions evoked, using the formula:

absolute frequencies of emotions/total number of images × 100,

where

$$\text{total number of images} = \text{number of focus groups} \times \text{images chosen by the five groups}$$

Emotions

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

Representational Systems of Cultural Objects

- We explored—via the associative network technique—a set of representations inherent in a series of cultural objects either directly or indirectly related to the event. These included: Europe, Peace, Terrorism, USA, War, Islam, and the West.
- We established a map of their links through correlations among the polarity indices associated with each object in order to look at the role played by the subjects' ideological positions and their wider cultural system of representations in their emotional impact to the images seen at the exhibition.

The results chosen for this paper highlight the role of emotions in the individual elaboration of images to remember or forget and in social negotiation via the photo-language technique in focus groups. The time frame for the study was from October 2001 to March 2003: 5 weeks after the WTC attack to the day after the invasion of Iraq (see Table 8.2).

Similar to the catalog from the exhibition at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, analysis of the narrative structure of the sequence of images published in the photo-dossier "Per non dimenticare" by *Panorama* magazine, which represented a catalog of the images most widely circulated by the media (TV, press, websites, photo exhibitions), allowed us to group the 78 published images into 14 categories. This included a variable number of photos that were uniform in terms of subject and scenic content and allowed us to identify the key photos representative of the series. The photos were labeled in order to be cataloged and accurately identified by page number, with 122 pages in total (see Table 8.3).

We compared the narrative structure identified in the photo-dossier with the narrative structure that emerged from the five memories individually elicited in order of importance using the FBM questionnaire and the photo-language technique in focus groups, completed 5 weeks after the event.

What emerged was the following:

- In both structures, there is a linear sequence related to a temporal web, where all actions follow as an effect of a previous action, suggesting causality (e.g., airplanes crashing, hopelessly trapped people jumping, the collapse of the towers, people escaping), reflecting the event dynamic and the media's display of the event (see Tables 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7).

Table 8.2.   The Time Series for Data Collection via Photo-Language in 57 Focus Groups (433 subjects)

37 Focus Groups (303 Italians subjects from Rome)			
I	II	III	IV
October 19, 2001	September 11, 2002	December 11, 2002	March 20, 2003
5 weeks later	1 year later	15 months later	18 months later The day after the attack to Iraq
19 focus groups 164 ss	2 focus groups 10 ss	11 focus groups 97 ss	5 focus groups 32 ss

20 Focus Groups (130 subjects from Belgrade/Sarajevo)	
April 2002	February 2003
7 months later	17 months later
11 focus groups	9 focus groups
78 ss	52 ss

Table 8.3.   The Narrative Structure of the Sequence of the Photos Published in the Photo-dossier *"Per non dimenticare"* by *Panorama* Magazine

Subject	Number of Photos	Pages
Terrorist attack, airplane "bombs", the towers in flames	12	pp. 1–15
The desperation of people in the towers and Jumping Man	3	pp. 16–17
Collapse of the towers	3	pp. 20–23
People fleeing in Manhattan	15	pp. 24–43
Beyond New York:		
The Pentagon and	3	pp. 44–49
Pennsylvania	1	pp. 50–51
Rescue work without human faces	3	pp. 52–57
Assistance to the wounded	6	pp. 58–67
Rubble	10	pp. 68–85
Political Leaders	3	pp. 86–91
Mourning	7	pp. 92–105
Bitterness	3	pp. 106–111
The Statue of Liberty	3	pp. 112–115
The response?	6	pp. 116–122

Table 8.4.   Comparison between the Remembered Images/Images to Forget/Chosen via Different Techniques: Questionnaire

Image Choice Order	Remembered Images	Images to Forget
I	Terrorist attack: Airplane "bombs" The towers in flames	Jumping man
II	Collapse of the towers	Collapse of the towers
III	Jumping man	Terrorist attack, airplane "bombs" The tower in flames Collapse of the towers The desperation of people in the towers Jumping man
IV	The desperation of people in the towers	Terrorist attack: airplane "bombs" The tower in flames
V	People fleeing in Manhattan	The desperation of people in the towers

Table 8.5.   Comparison between the Most Representative and Most Chosen Images via Different Techniques: Photolanguage by Focus Group (Italian subjects)

Image Choice Order	Most Representative Images	Most Chosen Images
I	Terrorist attack: Airplane "bombs" The towers in flames	The desperation of people in the towers
II	The desperation of people in the towers The towers in flames	Terrorist attack: airplane "bombs"
III	Wounded woman in red	Jumping man
IV	Rubble	Wounded woman in red
V	Mourning	Rubble

Table 8.6.   Comparison between the Most Representative and Most Chosen Images via Different Techniques: Photolanguage by Focus Group (subjects from Belgrade)

Image Choice Order	Most Representative Images	Most Chosen Images
I	The desperation of people in the towers	Wounded woman in red
II	Wounded woman in red	The desperation of people in the towers
III	Wounded man in red A dad fleeing with his children	Mourning
IV	Burning skyline Jumping man	A dad fleeing with his children
V	Mourning Wounded man in red	Burning skyline Bitterness

Table 8.7.   Comparison between the Most Representative and Most Chosen Images via Different Techniques: Photolanguage by Focus Group (subjects from Sarajevo)

Image Choice Order	Most Representative Images	Most Chosen Images
I	The desperation of people in the towers Wounded woman in red	The desperation of people in the towers
II	Wounded woman in red Jumping man Rubble	Jumping man People fleeing in Manhattan
III	Wounded man in red Wounded woman in red	Burning towers A dad fleeing with his children
IV	President Bush and a fireman	A dad fleeing with his children
V	The response?	Mourning

- When looking at the justifications provided by subjects for their choices, among other arguments, the uniqueness of the event and the impossibility of anchoring it in previous experiences (besides in the virtual reality of Star Wars games) appears to dominate. The images thus are made real by the media and assume the role of objectifying an extraordinary event that is still perceived as being situated somehow between fiction and reality, and thereby revealing the character of the FBM of this event, as mediated through images from mass communication systems (see Table 8.8).

Table 8.8. Key Justifications Provided During the *Photolanguage* by Focus Groups

Choice of Image	Rejection
• Representativeness ◄──────►	• Poor representativeness
• Emotional charge ◄──────►	• Little/Too much emotional charge
• Empathy ◄──────►	• Absence of identification with ideological and political elements
	American patriotism Not sharing Taliban glee
• Attractive power of contrast	
"Hope/Apocalypse" "Destruction/Will to start again" "Real/Surreal (Science fiction)" on exhibit: "Fear/Solidarity"	
• Communication: ◄──────►	• Communication:
Narrative web "Sequence of the tragic event"	Redundancy/Media

- Furthermore, by comparing the results obtained by the two techniques (FBM questionnaire and photo-language in focus groups), we found a strong concentration on the same few images and on linear temporal sequence in remembering the 5 most impressive mental images (in the absence of any displayed photos) and in the choice of the five images evaluated as the most representative of the event, using the figurative support of the photo-dossier, including the 78 photos most used in the media (see left side of Tables. 8.4 and 8.5).
- However, at the same time as the data collection (October 2001), when the subjects were asked to choose five images to forget (via the FBM questionnaire) and the most impressive (via photo-language in focus groups), the linear narrative sequence—which emerged as first of the five images remembered (via the FBM questionnaire) and was evaluated as the most representative (via photo-language in focus groups)—disappears.

In this case, the first place in the sequence is not assigned to the crash of the airplanes—which elicited primary and subjective emotions like fear, anger, alarm, anguish, disbelief, terror, and horror, but rather to images of victims (people trapped in the tower, jumping, or woman in red), which elicited emotions that arose through identification with them or with the situation. Thus, emotions such as desperation, anguish, courage, madness, terror, sadness, and helplessness were evoked by the photos that depicted people trapped in the tower and jumping, and emotions such as solidarity, horror, pain, hope, compassion, terror, pain, and suffering were evoked by the photo of the woman in red (see the right side of Tables 8.4 and 8.5).

We obtained confirmation that emotions play the role of selective filter for which mental images one remembers or forgets and for the photo-images chosen as most representative of the event versus those that were most impressive. This information was obtained by the emotions the subjects freely associated with their choices and by their arguments and justifications. We learned that:

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

These results are particularly interesting because they confirm the role of emotions in both the selective construction of the memory (as a vivid photographic mental image individually elicited) and in the social negotiation of the choice of the most impressive image (a photo chosen via photo-language in focus groups).

Within the limits of validity with respect to our subjects, who came from Rome, Belgrade, and Sarajevo, these results acquired a sort of transcultural consistency and were even more evident in the data collection with the subjects from Belgrade and Sarajevo. In fact, from the very first work session, their recognition of extreme suffering and identification with victims assigned priority of choice to photos of victims jumping or the woman in red, rather than to the plane crash, which may have reminded them of the horror of war recently devastating their own countries and the so-called intelligent bombs from American military airplanes. Empathy with trapped people has a transcultural value and meaning, because of its nonideological and unequivocal character as an emotion that calls for identification with an extreme condition: victims are considered human beings, rather than Americans, even for the subjects from former Yugoslavia. This supranational empathy partly obscured their ideological positions, linked to their recent

history of interethnic conflicts, for or against Americans, which had clearly appeared during the photo-language sessions in the selection of many other photos that had political connotations: Bush with his father, Bush with firemen, Clinton, the Talibans, and symbols of the United States such as the flag and Statue of Liberty (see Tables. 8.6 and 8.7).

In his history and theory of popular religious images, David Morgan (1998, p. 74) differentiates empathy (projecting oneself into the situation of another) from sympathy (the correspondence or harmony of feelings among people), stating that they are similar processes but ultimately quite different in their ethical and social consequences:

> With empathy, broadly speaking, the image helps to establish the occasion for suffering and operates as the material means of identification with the sacred other who suffers.... In sympathy, by contrast, the image directs the prayer of intercession as well the prayers of thanksgiving after the believer has received a favor. The image is iconic inasmuch as it acts as a medium of communication.

Now, the question remains, what happens when we try to reconstruct the series of photo-language in focus groups over time? As indicated earlier, the data collection time frame lasted 18 months and looked at the relations between images and social dimensions of the emotions developed in memory. They were subsequently re-elicited after the traumatic media event of the attack on the World Trade Center in the United States and the day after the invasion of Iraq by the Anglo-American–Australian coalition in periods of 5 weeks, 7 months, 1 year, 15 months, 17 months, and 18 months after the events.

- Comparing the trends related to the two images chosen most by 57 focus groups from October 2001 to March 2003, what emerges is that the images of victims jumping and the woman in red increase significantly over time and diminish the power of the factual image related to the attack (the plane crash into the tower). This means that the emotion related to victims led to a shift of the factual and descriptive memory of the event and its first act to a secondary plane (see Figures 8.2 and 8.3).
- It is also interesting to note that these results confirm the same selective role of emotions in the impact with the same images that occurred when we began to collect data in October 2001, when victims jumping and the woman in red were the most elicited mental images to forget. This means that the process of forgetting (more than remembering through mental images, freely evoked) denotes a sort of anticipation of the most emotionally charged traumatic images.
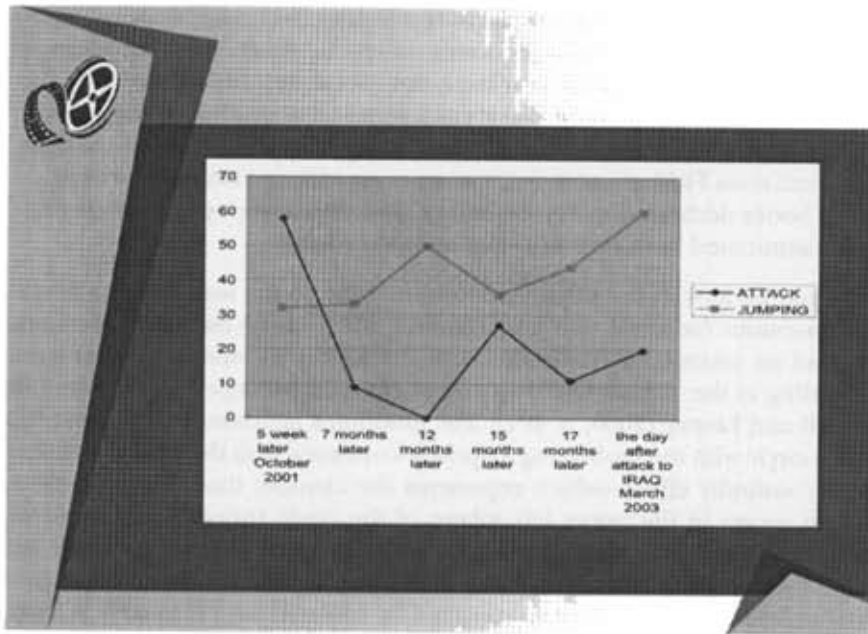
Figure 8.2.   trend related to the two most chosen images by 57 focus groups over the time series October 2001–March 2003: Attach and Jumping
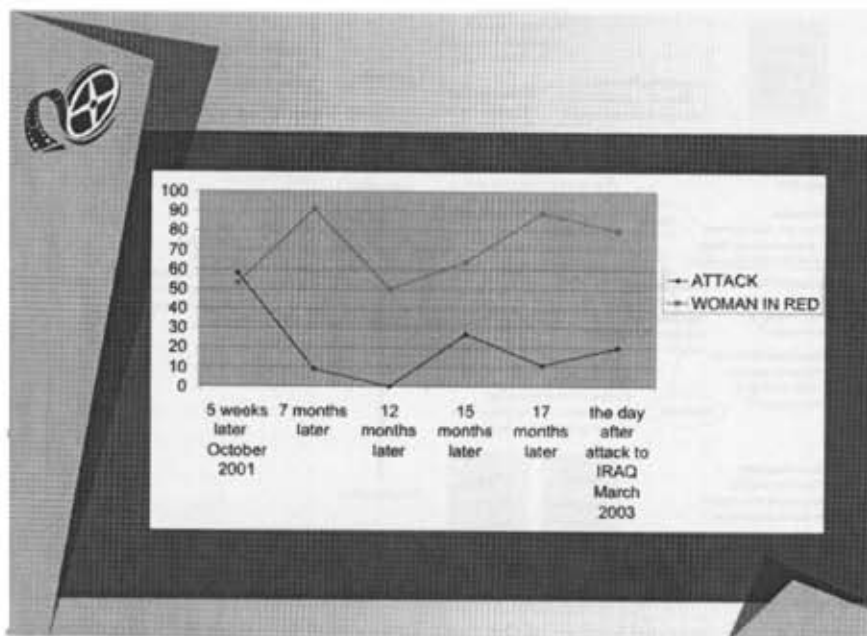

Figure 8.3.   Trend related to the two most chosen images by 57 focus groups over the time series October 2001–March 2003: Attack and Woman in red

- There is an increasing trend in reselecting the image showing the crash of the plane into the tower on special dates commemorating the event, especially 1 year later, but also as well on the day after the invasion of Iraq, when there was a renewed activation of the same prototypical images in the media. This photo is a sort of a prototypical mass FBM of the event, the most reproduced on the covers of books dedicated to September 11, and the most popular image disseminated both by traditional and new media.

When we look at the sequence from the most to the least frequently elicited emotions (selected with a minimum F >10) via the associative network, we find an interesting confirmation of the activation/deactivation process, according to the "circumflex structure of emotion concepts," as proposed by Russell and Lemay (2000, p. 497). The emotional activation starts at the top of the circle with the mobilizing surprise—consistent with the Luhman theory of discontinuity effect—which represents the element that makes the news new. It moves in the upper left sphere of the circle (unpleasant emotions) from basic emotions, fear and anger, toward a deactivation in the lower left sphere to sadness. This result in the emotional activation/ deactivation process is consistent when the data collected by different tools is looked at transversally (both at the individual and group levels; see Figure 8.4. The most
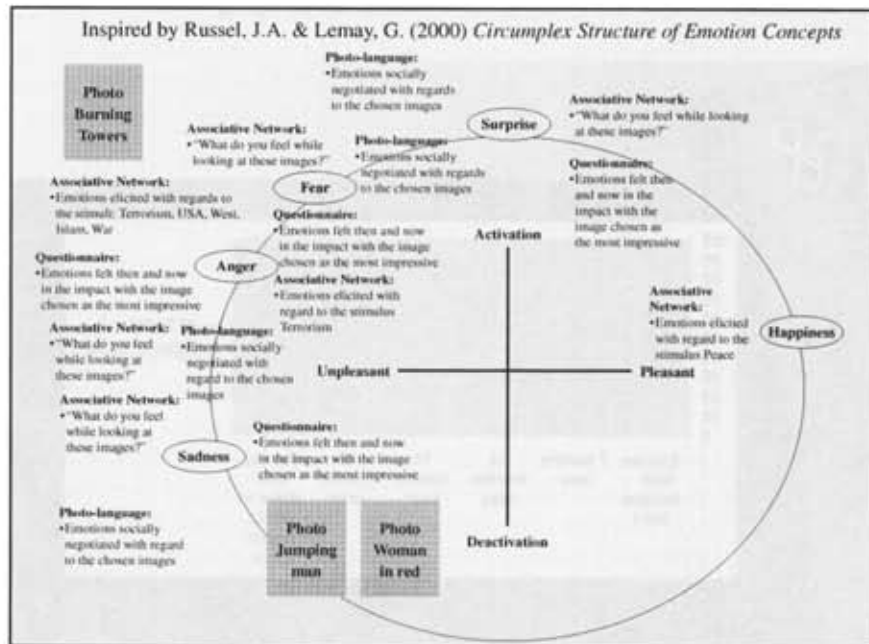

Figure 8.4.   Transversal lecture of the role of emotions throughout all instruments.

Figure 8.5.   Transversal lecture of the role of emotions throughout all instruments.

frequent emotions elicited via the multiple approach of our research program can also be displayed according to the cluster identified by Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O'Connor (2001), where again surprise plays a central role in splitting the right side of the configuration showing all the emotions referring to the main categories of fear, sadness, and anger and the left side showing all the emotions referring to the main category of love and joy (see Figure 8.5).

The pattern of moving from basic self-centered reactive emotions (like fear) toward more elaborated emotions implying a sociocentric perspective (like solidarity) is also confirmed by comparing the freely evoked emotions with the images in order of appearance and with the emotions evaluated according to their order of importance assigned by the subjects. This was done via the same technique, the associative network, but with a task requiring a less projective cognitive focus (evaluation of words according to the order of importance) compared to the association of words freely evoked in order of appearance. In other words, emotions again developed from fear as reaction to solidarity to elaboration of the reaction (see Figure 8.6).

It is also extremely interesting to look at the methodological implications of data collection on the results, as we found an effect of emotions detecting modality:
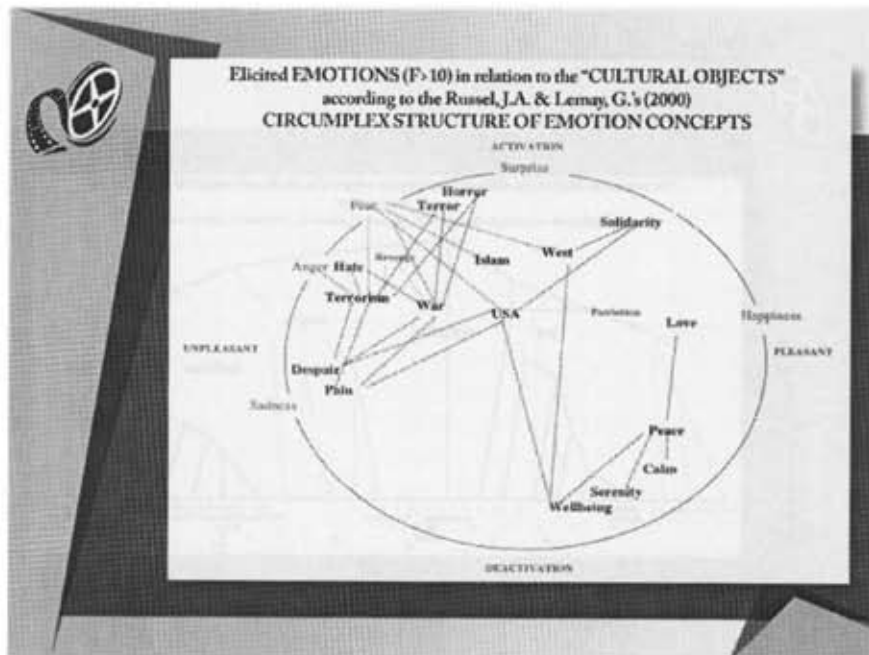
Figure 8.6.   Individually evoked emotions (associative network) in order of appearance versus order of importance.

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

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

- Via the associative network from the individually evoked emotions, the first complex emotion was solidarity, revealing the feeling of a call for action, to be engaged in doing something.
- Via photo-language from the socially negotiated emotions in focus groups, the first complex emotion was helplessness, mainly revealing the frustration of not being able to cope with the horrific event (action inability; see Table 8.9).

Table 8.9.   Emotions Socially Negotiated (photo-language in focus groups) verses Individually Evoked (associative network)

The first 15 "emotions" in order of rank	Socially negotiated emotions by the photolanguage using a photo-dossier "Per non dimenticare" from weekly newsmagazine "Panorama"	Emotions individually evoked by the associative network about the emotional impact of the images of the exhibition "11th September"
1	Impotenza (HELPLESSNESS)	Paura (FEAR)
2	Angoscia (ANGUISH)	Solidarietà (SOLIDARITY)
3	Disperazione (DESPERATION)	Tristezza (SADNESS)
4	Tristezza (SADNESS)	Disperazione (DESPERATION)
5	Solidarietà (SOLIDARITY)	Dolore (PAIN)
6	Speranza (HOPE)	Rabbia (ANGER)
7	Paura (FEAR)	Distruzione (DESTRUCTION)
8	Rabbia (ANGER)	Terrore (TERROR)
9	Panico (PANIC)	Desolazione (DESOLATION)
10	Terrore (TERROR)	Morte (DEATH)
11	Orrore (HORROR)	Speranza (HOPE)
12	Incredulità (DISBELIEF)	Angoscia (ANGUISH)
13	Desolazione (DESOLATION)	Incredulità (DISBELIEF)
14	Sgomento (ALARM)	Panico (PANIC)
15	Coraggio (COURAGE)	Impotenza (HELPLESSNESS)

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

At the same time, other elements of the representations work to differentiate the factorial space, showing a clear contrast between the photographic event's description (with associations placed on the negative horizontal semi-axis, such as photo, fire, massacre, memories, dust, and prayer) and the emotional impact on the positive semi-axis (with associations like sadness, anger, solidarity, anguish, horror, unease, pity, and admiration). This is a descriptive and factual view of the event as opposed to an emotional one. The contrast in the semantic space of the representation between the factual event's ele-

Figure 8.7.   Results obtained by analyzing via SPAD-T the free associations provoked by the impact with the displayed photographs related to September 11.

ments (with associations like silence, explosion, and commemoration) and value-emotions system (with associations like liberty, innocents, family, insecurity, disorder, instability, poverty, love, and power) is further confirmed on the second factorial axis (see Figure 8.7).

A counter-stereotypical effect emerges if we look at the positioning of the groups in terms of gender. In fact, females (usually identified as more emotionally oriented) are clearly positioned on the semantic space denoting a photographic and descriptive approach to the event, stressing the factual perceptive elements. At the same time, males are significantly close to the emotionally connotated side. Other illustrative variables show a more refined picture of the population, which express the different meanings and feelings that were aroused by the impact with the displayed images: subjects under 22 years old, those living in rural areas and with a high verbal fluidity index are close to the female results, while subjects living in urban areas, and with a negative polarity index are close to the male results (see Figure 8.8).

Another way to look at the construction of social memory is to compare the emotions individually reported by the subjects as associated with their event's mental images (via the FBM questionnaire), 5 weeks after the event in a dual temporal perspective, Then (September 11, 2001)–Now (October
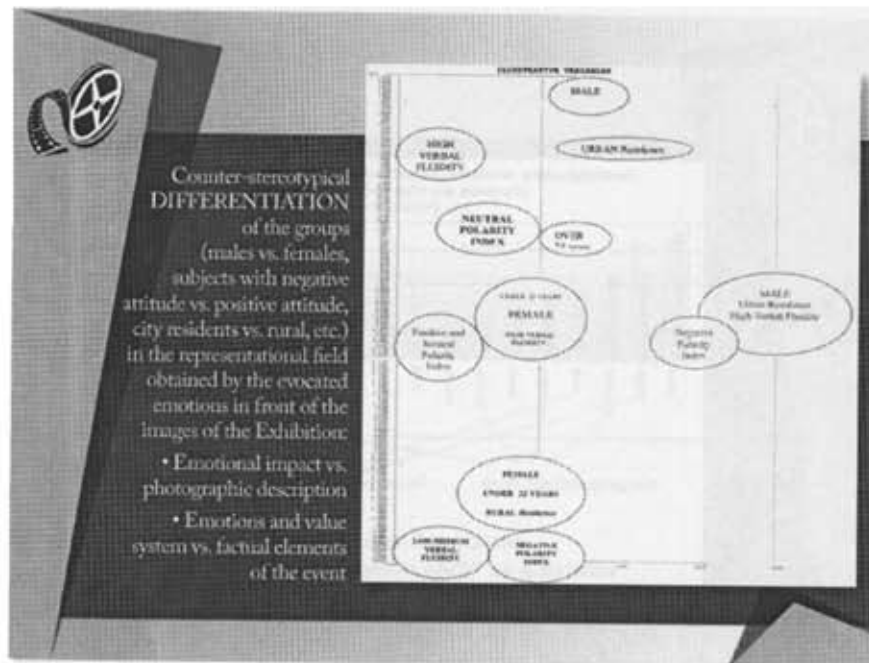
Figure 8.8.   SPAD-T results derived by the Associative Network Role of the illustrative variables Social Positioning of the groups.

18, 2001). Also in this case, when the subjects report emotions referring to the mental images remembered as most involved in their returning to the day of the event and what they felt at the moment, an emotional deactivation occurs comparing "then" with "now." There is a drop in the surprise effect (surprise, incredulity, astonishment), an increase in emotion-concepts with minor activation (like sadness, pain, sorrow), and anger, as compared to fear, which still plays the central role (see Figure 8.9).

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

- most of the emotions follow what we call the modular pattern (Up–Down–Up–Down) or the curvilinear patterns (Down–Up–Down–Down and Up–Down–Up–Up);
- the unique emotion (selected according to the described formula) that shows a stable pattern is the feeling of desperation when viewing the displayed images;
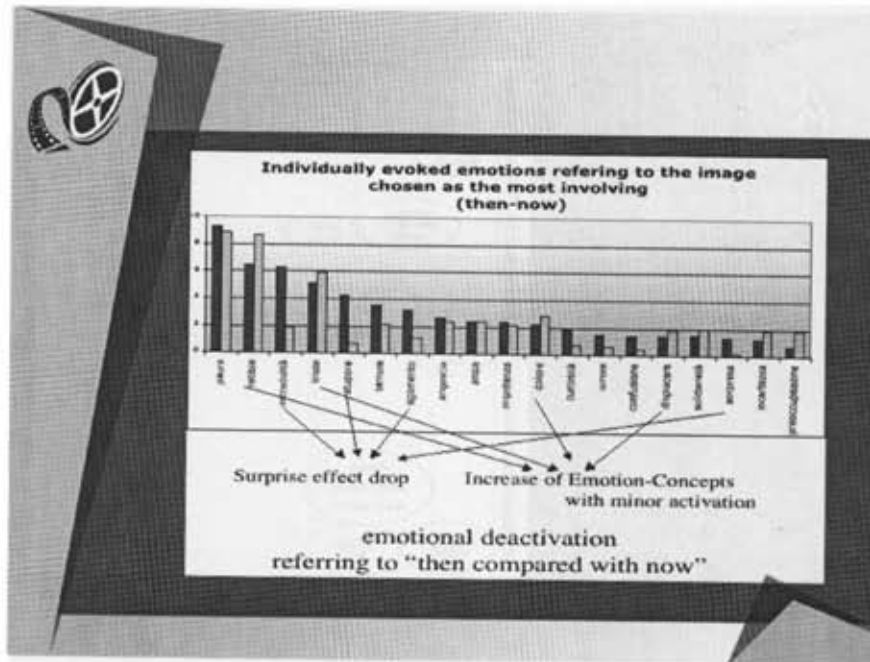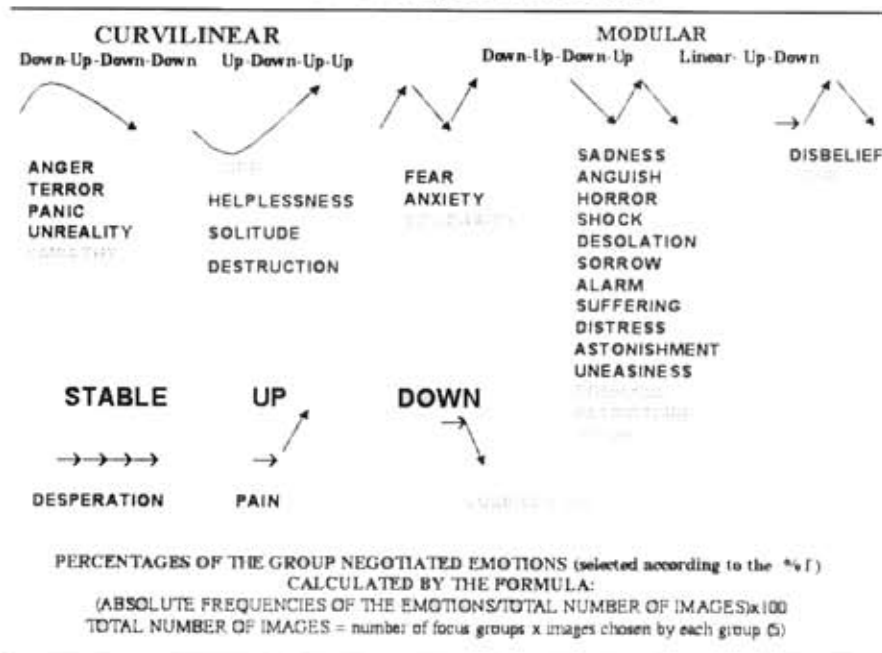
Figure 8.9.   Emotions in a double temporal perspective Then–Now.

- the other two complex emotions of pain and compassion respectively show the pattern called Up and the pattern called Down, results that taken by themselves look like contradictions;
- emotions negatively connoted by the subjects sometimes follow the same pattern of emotions positively connoted, which means that not only in the representational field related to the event during each data collection session, but also in the pattern over the time period, we found a profound ambivalence of contrasting emotions (Desperation–Hope, Fear–Courage, Helplessness–Solidarity; see Table 8.10).

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

This multiplicity in the patterns and also their apparent incoherence suggest that the chain reaction of events that followed the September 11 terrorist attacks (in particular, the war in Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq) contributed to recontexualizing both the social memory and social sharing of emotions regarding September 11. Looking at the results derived from various techniques dealing with the emotional impact evoked by the mental or displayed images, we found a deep ambivalence in:

Table 8.10.   Group Negotiated Emotional Patterns Evaluated Over the Four Time Series: 2001–2003 (37 focus groups; 303 Italian subjects from Rome)

CURVILINEAR		MODULAR	
Down-Up-Down-Down Up-Down-Up-Up		Down-Up-Down-Up Linear- Up-Down	

ANGER
TERROR
PANIC
UNREALITY

HELPLESSNESS

SOLITUDE

DESTRUCTION

FEAR
ANXIETY

SADNESS
ANGUISH
HORROR
SHOCK
DESOLATION
SORROW
ALARM
SUFFERING
DISTRESS
ASTONISHMENT
UNEASINESS

DISBELIEF

STABLE   **UP**   **DOWN**

DESPERATION   PAIN

PERCENTAGES OF THE GROUP NEGOTIATED EMOTIONS (selected according to the % f)
CALCULATED BY THE FORMULA:
(ABSOLUTE FREQUENCIES OF THE EMOTIONS/TOTAL NUMBER OF IMAGES)x100
TOTAL NUMBER OF IMAGES = number of focus groups x images chosen by each group (5)

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

On one hand, we might interpret the deeply rooted ambivalence by extending the concept of cognitive polyphasia to that of emotional polyphasia as peculiar of the nested phenomenon of social representations. On the other hand, we believe that both the deep ambivalence in the emotional representational field activated by the impact with the displayed images in each photolanguage session and the apparent incoherent patterns displayed over time depend on the coexistence of multiple referential levels. These imply both the complexity of the social actors involved in the event's scenes presented in the displayed images as potential emotional targets (e.g., victims, rescuers, U.S. political leaders, the Taliban, civilians of different races and ages) and the nested representational systems related to other cultural objects that orient and emotionally shape different tonalities in the semantic space.

For this reason, it was interesting not only to look at the change in the emotional activation–deactivation model, as proposed by Russel and Lemay (2000), but also to project on it the net determined by the most salient emotions evoked via the associative network in response to what we have called "cultural objects," like the United States, West, Islam, Peace, War, and Terrorism. The relational and dialogical nature of complex cultural objects, sometimes oversimplified by binary oppositions (e.g., West/East; vertical/horizontal orientation; nature/culture) is very clearly addressed in Winfried Nöth's essay in this volume.

In our empirical findings, peace is the unique cultural object that appears almost isolated on the side of happiness, activating positively con-notated associations like love, calm, serenity, and well-being. The last is the unique semantic link with West and the United States (among the words selected on the threshold of $F < 10$). However, while the representation of the West is associated with solidarity, the United States is associated with pain and despair and, through these emotions, with war and terrorism. In the area of emotional activation toward the unpleasant sphere, we find the cultural objects Islam, War, and Terrorism. The emotion that dominates the links with Islam, West, the United States, War, and Terrorism is fear. Anger and hate along with revenge represent an emotional link between war and terrorism, leaving space to despair and pain, when the process of the unpleasant feelings moves toward emotional deactivation (see Figure 8.10).
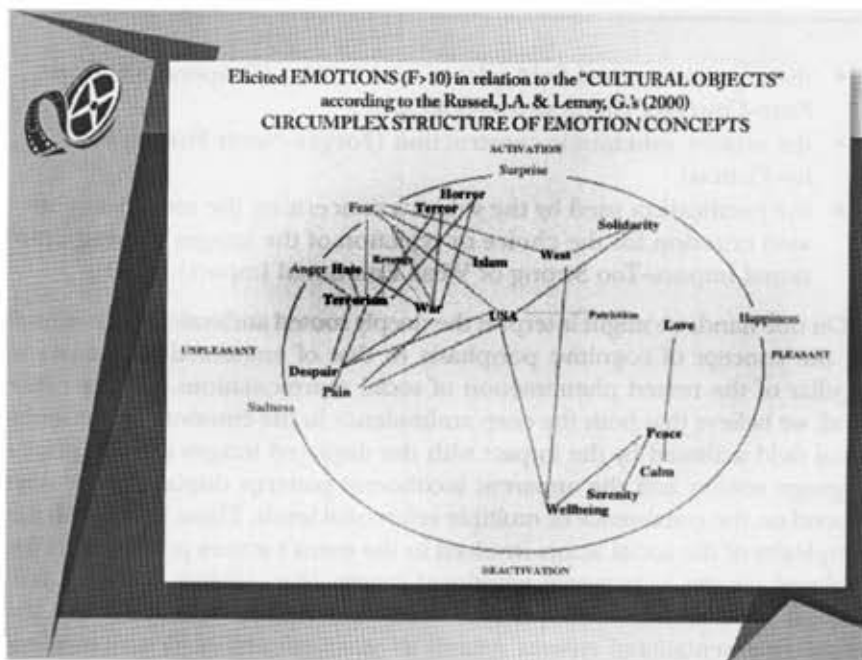

gure 8.10.   The role of emotions in relation to the "cultural objects."

To test our hypothesis on the structuring and restructuring role of the representational system related to the chosen cultural objects in the face of the emotional impact with the displayed images, for each of the cultural objects we analyzed the correlation matrix that identifies positive and negative correlations using as dependent variables the index of polarity derived from the analysis of associations collected via the associative network technique. The results show that the emotional impact with the displayed images at the exhibition 5 weeks after September 11 is strongly and positively correlated with the representations the subjects have of the United States, Islam, Terrorism, and War and therefore represented in the core of the graph. The last are negatively correlated with Peace, which is also negatively linked to Islam. Very interesting is the position of the West, which at least 5 weeks after 9/11 appears almost isolated in the correlational space, except for the link to the United States and therefore not directly perceived as linked to War, Islam, and Terrorism (see Figure 8.11).

Still more interesting is the position of the West, if we compare the results obtained over the data series collection via associative networks including stimulus words, such as the cultural objects. By comparing the indices of polarity obtained 5 weeks after the event (October 19, 2001), 15 months later (December 2002), and the day after the beginning of the Iraq
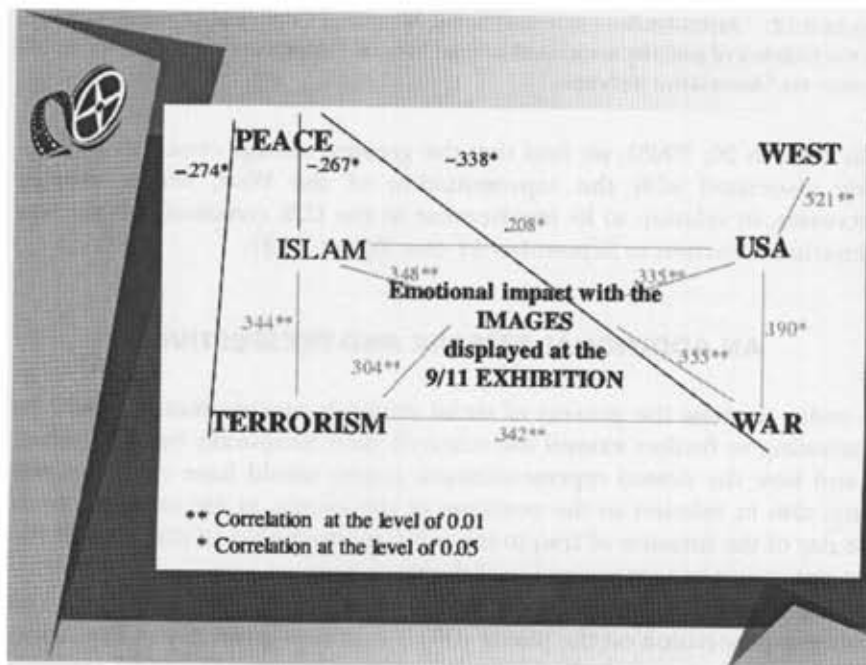

Figure 8.11.   Correlations among the Polarity Indexes derived from the Associative Networks related to the "Cultural Objects" and the "Emotional Impact with the Images displayed at the 9/11 exhibition."
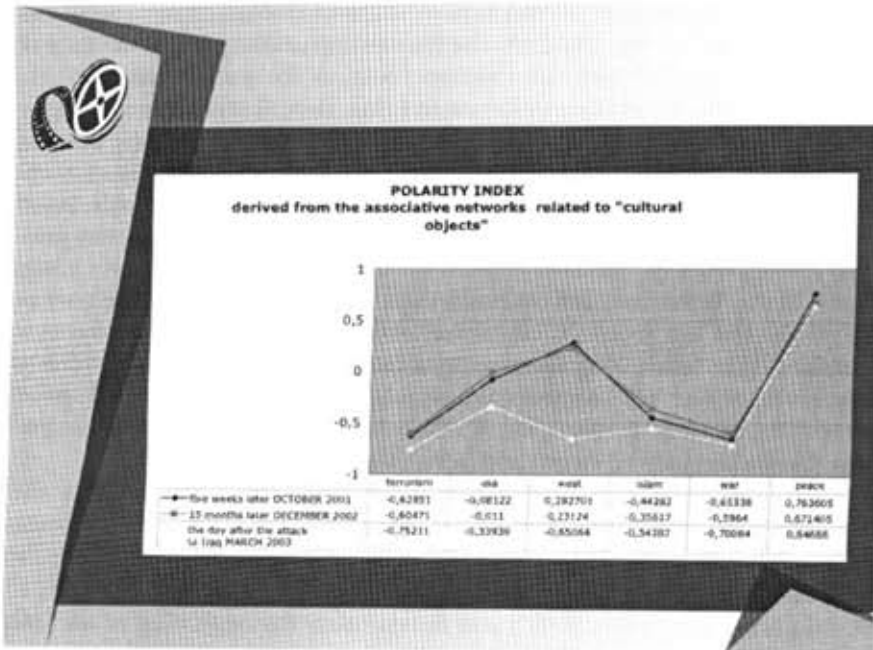
Figure 8.12.   Attitudes Structure and Social Meanings Comparative results derived by the indexes of polarity associated to the Cultural Objects over the data series collection via "Associative network."

War (March 20, 2003), we find that the greatest change concerns the attitude associated with the representation of the West, which strongly decreases, in relation to its involvement in the U.S. coalition and the war scenario as reaction to September 11 (see Figure 8.12).

AN ADDITIONAL REMARK AND PERSPECTIVES

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

History never stops and the social accumulation of traces available for collective appropriation on the part of different groups grows day by day. Nonetheless, no single researcher can run after all events. Empirical research based on multimethod designs and serial data collection is already very unwieldy and always limited by considerable procedural constraints.

I hope that from the integrative view of some of the dimensions considered in this paper, I was able to show:

- First, how much richer it can be to look at the iconic component of the representational systems (both in the presence or in the absence of displayed images) together with the role of its emotional impact and the related set of ideological representations concerning other cultural objects in the construction of the social memory of a traumatic event, in particular when the event (as in the case of September 11) has been transmitted by the media as a sort of shocking mass flashbulb event.

- Second, the importance of taking into account the methodological implications connected with data collection, showing the similarity and differences in the emotional patterns that emerged via the individually administered FBM questionnaire and via the setting of photo-language in focus groups to elicit socially group negotiated emotions.

- Third, the transversal role of the temporal dimension in reshaping the emotional impact with mental and displayed images constructing the social memory of the event.

- Fourth, the potential interest in looking for explanations derived from a set of apparently incoherent patterns when we do not try to minimize the complexity of the social phenomenon under investigation in the 2×2 table.

NOTE

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

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