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25, rue de la Plaine  
75980 PARIS CEDEX 20  
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Tél : + 33-1 40 09 62 62  
Fax : + 33-1 40 09 62 80  
Site : [www.ecpa.fr](http://www.ecpa.fr)

*Editorial Offices / Rédaction et Administration*  
ÉDITIONS DU CENTRE DE PSYCHOLOGIE APPLIQUÉE  
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*Editorial Assistants / Secrétaires de rédaction*  
Philippe FAURE - Anne MANCERON

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## Analogy in focus groups : from the victim to the murderer and from the murderer to the victim

Birgitta Orfali<sup>1</sup>, Ivana Markova<sup>2</sup>

Université René Descartes-Paris V<sup>1</sup>, University of Stirling<sup>2</sup>

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### Résumé

Les focus groups constituent une méthode de recherche qui consiste en des discussions de groupe portant sur des sujets précis. On pourrait les comparer à des conversations de café pour leur caractère informel et de ce fait on peut les décrire comme une société pensante en miniature. Les focus groups permettent d'étudier les représentations sociales, c'est-à-dire l'organisation dynamique du savoir et du langage dans le sens commun. Cet article considère les différentes façons d'utiliser les focus groups pour étudier les représentations sociales relatives aux crimes contre l'humanité. Deux cas sont retenus : le premier suggère l'absence de représentations sociales tandis que le second établit leur présence. Soulignant le rôle de l'analogie didactique et heuristique, cette étude démontre l'importance de la proximité du cas dans le discours public.

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### Summary

Focus groups is a research method based on group discussions of a specific topic. It is similar to informal discussions in cafés and streets and therefore, it could be described as a thinking society in miniature. It enables studying social representations, i.e. organisations of common sense knowledge and language, in their dynamics. The article describes the use of focus group in the study of social representations of a crime against humanity. It presents two cases, the first of which suggests non-existence of social representation, while the second suggests its presence. Focusing on the role of didactic and heuristic analogy, the study shows the importance of proximity of the case in the public discourse.

#### Mots clés :

Focus group  
Dynamique des représentations sociales  
Société pensante en communication  
Analogie

#### Key words :

Focus group  
Dynamics of social representation  
Thinking society in communication  
Analogy

## 1. Studying the dynamics of social representations

### 1.1 Simulating a thinking society

We shall characterise social representations as organisations of common sense knowledge and language concerning specific social phenomena that are in the public discourse (Moscovici, 1961/76), like mental illness, democracy or totalitarianism. The main aim of the theory of social representations is to study structured contents of such phenomena in their dynamics. We shall argue, that focus groups, more than other research methods, contribute to the theory's main aim because they simulate a thinking society in communication.

Focus group is a research method based on group discussions of a specific topic. Unlike naturally occurring

group discussions, the topic to be discussed in focus groups is determined by the researcher. Like naturally occurring group discussions, focus groups are open-ended. They are similar to discussions that people hold in cafés, restaurants, in streets or at political meetings, where participants negotiate meanings, create new meanings and generate diversity and difference as well as consensus of opinions. This is why Farr and Tafoya (1992) described the focus group as "a thinking society in miniature".

One of the most neglected characteristics of the methods examining social representations, is that "we think through our mouths" (Moscovici, 1984). Although people form opinions, knowledge and beliefs during communication, when social psychologists study social representations, they hardly ever take their communicative nature into consideration. They usually omit the dynamic, syntactic and semantic features of language, through which representations and their aspects, like attitudes and emotions, are expressed.

## 1.2 *A more social method than others*

Focus groups provide rich resources in which common sense knowledge and language can be studied in their dynamics. Language is never a neutral channel of information processing but it is always filled with judgements, evaluations and different meanings. Through language use we hide and reveal our religious and ideological beliefs, scientific convictions and social representations (Moscovici, 2000). Through the study of communication we also learn how people interpret and re-construct social phenomena, change their meanings, and create new meanings. Our ideas and images of social realities are more vivid when society undergoes a crisis or a change due to a political, economic or social upheaval. Under such circumstances communication becomes particularly rich because people are perturbed and motivated to talk about such phenomena or "to think through their mouth". Social crises and tensions are followed by revolutions in common sense thinking. These, Moscovici argues, are just as significant for the changes in common sense knowledge as are the crises in scientific revolutions, for the changes in scientific knowledge. Focus groups, because they are a method based on communication, have a potential to study such crises and tensions in common sense knowledge and language.

As a research method, focus groups have very specific characteristics. While questionnaires, individual interviews and surveys are detached from everyday communication, focus groups are potentially more "social" than other research methods. They can provide data based on common thinking, the formation of knowledge and on arguments through which meanings are negotiated. Unfortunately, this potential has been so far little exploited and focus groups discussions are often analysed by methods based on non-dynamic assumptions. These include, for example, coding of the material and counting frequencies of codes; content analysis, which reduces the content of discussion into manageable units. However, content is, above all, the structured content. Its analysis should consider the fact that content is thematised in discussion. It is its thematisation that provides information about the dynamics of thinking.

## 2. Description of the method

Since the ending of the Second World War focus groups have been used largely in market research to explore consumers' preferences for various products. In this way focus groups have gradually replaced door-to-door techniques of personal interviewing that were previously used to encourage consuming. However, during the nineteen nineties focus groups became a popular research method in the social sciences. One of the reasons for interest in focus groups was

due to the pendulum swinging towards more qualitatively based social research that takes into consideration people's interpretations of contents and meanings. Since then, focus groups have been used in social sciences either as an independent method to explore phenomena in question, or in combination with other, quantitative approaches.

### 2.1 *Characteristics of a social group*

Focus groups usually involve 4-12 persons, who explore jointly certain questions that are "in focus" of the researcher's interest. In contrast to market research, where the number of people in a focus group can be larger, in social scientific research smaller groups of six or fewer persons are more appropriate. In discussing issues of social interest and sensitive nature, the participants can become highly involved and emotionally caught in the topic. They may provide personal information and personal opinions of controversial issues. Therefore, for ethical and personal reasons, in smaller focus groups the participants can be more open about such issues.

In the study of social representations, focus groups can be used in a variety of ways. For example, they can be applied in the initial stage of research to generate ideas and hypotheses so that researchers can orientate themselves in a new field of inquiry. In this case, it is likely that group discussions will be relatively unstructured and open-ended in order to pursue as many ideas and hypotheses as possible. These can then be tested by less intensive, but more extensive methods like surveys, interviews or questionnaires.

Alternatively, focus groups can be used at a later stage of research as a way of deepening the understanding of the already obtained data. For example, in order to study social representations of a crime against humanity, the researcher may use, in the first stage, methods like surveys, questionnaires and scales. In these he or she examines attributions of responsibility, mitigating circumstances of the crime, other events that may be considered to increase or decrease responsibility of the criminal, knowledge surrounding such events, and so on. Data from surveys and questionnaires provide the researchers with frequencies of the category of response and statistical data; with yes-no answers and other brief accounts relating to the phenomena in question. However, in order to understand the meanings of these phenomena and to obtain in-depth knowledge about them, the researcher can then carry out focus groups, in which the data obtained by statistical methods are submitted to further qualitative scrutiny. For example, in focus groups, the question of responsibility, the circumstances of a crime and other relevant issues can be openly discussed, negotiated and argued. Focus group can provide insights into the reasons for particular views, uncertainties and tensions in communi-

cation, the formation of opinions and so on (Markova, in press).

## 2.2 *Qualitative sampling*

Such applications indicate that focus groups usually do not provide data from representative samples but instead, they involve specially selected samples. Sampling depends on the purpose of research. Because focus groups are labour intensive in terms of collection and data analysis, researchers usually employ "qualitative sampling" (Kuzel, 1992). This means that they select specific stratified samples, which are based either on demographic variables like age, gender or education.

In contrast to natural discussions in cafés and at political meetings where group discussions are spontaneous, in focus groups it is the moderator (Krueger, 1998, Focus Group Kit 4) who elicits views and directs agenda to be discussed. The moderator could either be the researcher himself or it could be a person specifically trained to fulfil the research aims. The moderator ascertains that the research agenda is well covered. He or she monitors discussions, encourages all participants to express their views, avoids presenting own judgements of the discussed topic or evaluation of the discussion. He or she should not present an expert position and should not ask leading questions. However, the moderator encourages the participants to clarify their points of view and explain ambiguous utterances and claims.

## 2.3 *How many focus groups ?*

The researcher usually plans the number of focus groups before starting research. However, this may prove difficult because the number of groups depends on the diversity of opinions expressed in focus groups. Morgan (1998, Focus Group Kit 2) suggests that when the topic provides moderately diverse responses, the researcher typically needs 3-5 groups which exhaust the diversity of the topic and reach theoretical saturation. Afterwards discussions become repetitive. Moreover, the number of focus groups that the researcher needs also depends on what exactly he or she intends to explore. For example, the researcher may intend to explore reasons why some people provide a certain kind of argument while others argue for an opposite solution. It may be necessary, in such a case, to run more focus groups with the participants of a particular type.

In addition, the researcher must consider whether the study requires homogeneous or heterogeneous focus groups (Flick, 1998). A homogeneous focus group consists of the participants who are comparable in terms of their background, e.g. of personal, professional, social or otherwise. For example, a homogeneous group could be defined in

terms of gender, age, geographical area in which participants live, profession etc. Homogeneity can also refer to mutual knowledge of group members, to their acquaintance, friendship, family membership, and so on. One can expect that in a homogeneous focus group the participants will be more willing to talk about sensitive topics without embarrassment. On the other hand, in heterogeneous groups the participants differ in terms of the characteristics that are relevant to the research questions. Heterogeneity is intended to increase the dynamics of discussions, to elicit different perspectives and to confront these perspectives.

## 2.4 *Planning for the analysis of data*

The common task to be discussed by the focus group is presented either verbally or it is written on cards, it can consist of newspaper cuttings, pictures cartoons and so on. The task could have the form of a specific topic to be discussed or it could be a dilemma to which the group tries to find a solution. For example, the group can be given a dilemma involving a crime against humanity, a positive discrimination of a minority group or the responsibility of parents for their children's drug-taking. The focus group discusses the dilemma and it may or may not come up with an agreed solution on the issue of concern.

The researcher must consider beforehand what kinds of data will be required to fulfil the aims of the research. Since the data are group discussions, they could be audio- or video-recorded, or the researcher might only take notes during talk. For some kinds of analysis the researcher will require both verbal and non-verbal data, for others only verbal data. Depending on such considerations, discussions must be transcribed in an appropriate manner. For example, some kinds of analysis are concerned solely with content-themes ignoring the ways in which these contents are linguistically expressed. Other kinds of analysis require transcriptions of phonological features, pauses, hesitations and details of syntax.

Whatever kind of analysis the researcher chooses, he or she should bear in mind the specific nature of focus groups and should utilise this as fully as possible. Focus group is a method that has the potential of studying how people think about problems that are important to them and how they express them in language. There is no point in running focus groups if the subsequent analysis ignores these facts and if those data are analysed in the manner that ignores the dynamic nature of group discussions.

## 2.5 From focus groups to social representations

Common sense knowledge and language are rooted in culture, transmitted from generation to generation and recreated and innovated in daily activities through thinking in communication. The question that arises for us in this paper, is the following: If focus groups are thinking societies in miniature, what do we learn from them about social representations?

The researcher's challenge is to extract social representations or their characteristics from the data. There is no single way how to do that and depending on the questions that they ask, researchers have available many choices. Let us consider some examples. As Moscovici (1992; Moscovici and Vignaux, 1994) argues, social representations are generated from themata, pre-categorizations of antinomic nature, like freedom/oppression, male/female or justice/injustice, that are embedded in history and culture. One question could be to discover the relevant themata of the social representation in question, through focus groups. On the other hand, the researcher may already have hypotheses concerning themata and he or she may verify these hypotheses through focus groups. For example, it can be expected that social representations that are formed through *anchoring* would discuss themata differently than those formed on the basis of *objectification*.

With this in mind, in the last part of this paper we shall concentrate on the role of *analogies* in studying social representation of a crime against humanity using focus groups. This choice was determined by the casual inspection of our data showing that they contained numerous analogies. We shall assume that analogies are closely related to anchoring.

## 3. The case study

### 3.1 Introduction and description of the problem

The case study that is reported here, was part of an international research project into social representations of responsibilities and entitlements in 5 European countries.<sup>1</sup> These included the UK, France, Russia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Data concerning the relevant issues were collected on the basis of word associations, questionnaires and attitude scales. Participants in each country were 200 people

<sup>1</sup> This study was based on the ESRC research grant to I. Markova entitled Responsibilities/entitlements: Language and social representations in Western and Central Europe, 1997-2001.

aged 16-21 years, 50 % of each gender. Of these, 50% were qualified for University entrance and 50% were not so qualified. All participants came from large cities.

Having collected these quantitative data, we carried out focus groups in order to understand meanings and contents of those data. In each country, 8 homogeneous focus groups were designed, 4 of each gender and of the age groups 16-21. We included only those who completed education for University entrance. Homogeneous groups were more suitable at that stage of research than heterogeneous groups. Our aim was to capture social representations of young people, who, in contrast to their parents, did not experience life in a totalitarian system in their adolescence and adulthood. They were between 6-11 years of age at the time of the political revolution in 1989.

There were 6 topics, each concerning some aspects of social representations of responsibility and entitlements, discussed by each group. One of the topics explored the participants' representations of responsibility for a crime against humanity. Focus groups were carried out in 1998 and this particular dilemma was very actual in post-communist countries, where bringing to justice those who had collaborated with the past regime, was extensively discussed in newspapers, on television and radio. The following dilemma was presented to 8 focus groups of 4-5 students as described above, in each of the 5 countries:

"During the 1950's Jan Horak was sent to one of the toughest sections of the labour camps in Czechoslovakia. He was someone, whom the Communist party thought to be politically unreliable. In order to safeguard his own future he decided to offer his services to the Communist regime as an agent of the secret police. Due to this behaviour some of his friends did not survive. After the fall of communism in 1989 he presented himself as someone who had suffered under communism and who had fought bravely against the totalitarian regime. However, information regarding his true behaviour was exposed and people who had known him gave testimonies regarding his former behaviour. For how long, do you think, is a person responsible for his past actions? Should his activities be restricted today in view of his past or should he be forgiven?"

### 3.2 Stage I: The Czechs and the French

Data were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. The purpose of the study was to explore thematisation of responsibility of Horak's crime. Although the data were collected in all 5 countries, we shall discuss, for the sake of simplicity, only Czech and French focus groups (Stage I). Afterwards, we shall discuss the data from additional French focus groups (Stage II).

At the time of our research in 1998, the issue of responsibility and collaboration with the past repressive regime was extensively discussed in the Czech media. Many people sought revenge for suffering during totalitarianism. Among the Czech participants there were several of those, whose parents and grandparents were not allowed, during totalitarianism, to carry out their proper jobs or who were in various ways punished and marginalized. In other words, for the young Czechs the case was part of oral history, which involved their own families. The participants in all groups reminded that they themselves did not experience communism, but that their parents and grandparents suffered both during Nazism and communism. They thematised the question as to what they, themselves, could have done in that situation. They did not express a unanimous attitude towards Horak's behaviour. Many Czechs, like others who lived in the communist totalitarian system, collaborated, or at least compromised themselves. Now, parents of these young Czechs often felt obliged to explain to their children why they had been members of the Party, why some people had been more brave than others, and so on. Those young people who thought that their parents and grandparents had not succumb to external pressure during totalitarianism, had no sympathy for Horak. Others opposed a lack of sympathy, arguing that they did not know what they would have done if they lived in such situation, as did Horak. They seriously considered what kind of circumstances would turn a victim into a murderer.

In contrast to the Czechs, the French students did not invest either time or thought into this dilemma. We thought that this absence of investment in terms of time and mental effort was likely to be due to the relative irrelevance of this topic to their present situation. After all, for them, this dilemma was situated in history, in a different country, in the nineteen fifties, long time before they were born. The story evoked the Communist Party of the particular epoch and the subsequent fall of the Berlin Wall, which, for them, was already something in the past. Collaboration was a page in history in which they did not participate personally. It was a part of written text in textbooks.

Generally speaking, in conducting focus group research one may face the problem that the material is not of a particular interest to the participants or that they may have no opinion on the issue in question. While the researcher may feel disappointment that the discussion is flat and of little interest, such finding may nevertheless be very important. It may indicate that participants hold no social representation or only a weak social representation, on the issue of concern. This was what we suspected in the case of the French.

### 3.3 Analysis of the French focus groups

The French dilemmas tended to begin either with a general statement or with a general evaluation of Jan Horak's action without any attempt to analyse the situation or circumstances in which he lived. These statements and evaluations were very brief, without any reflection on the case and they were followed by similar brief contributions from other participants. Here are all 8 beginnings:

1. A: I am saying that he should not be forgiven. B: Why?  
A: It's already clear.
2. This is exactly the same problem as the resistance during 1939-45. These are people who can... B: Forgiveness should go to victims!
3. A: And in order to... B: survive...
4. A: I am against forgiving him. B: to prison for life
5. A: There are no means to forgive him, he has to pay all his life. B: Either he became a traitor in order to survive, or he did it because he already was a traitor
6. A: Unfortunately, it is human and it stinks. B: I think it happens all the time, people who betray
7. A: What comment can one make about his 'true behaviour'? B: The truth is that he killed...
8. A: I am saying that if someone behaved in this way, one is never sure with him. B: He has to assume his faults.

The main communicative contributions in the discussion of the dilemma, which appeared in all focus groups, were the following: First, different kinds of *analogies* as comments or interpretations of Horak's behaviour. Second, *statements* about Horak as a traitor. These statements were made without any further thematisation. Often they formed exclamations or utterances which sometimes constituted brief sequences. These utterances had the following pattern: The theme, i.e. Horak, or the pronoun "he", which remained the same in these sequences but different comments or attributes were attached to him (Daneš; 1968). These comments or attributes were usually disconnected in the sense that they were not followed up either by the speaker or by other participants. Some of them were no more than reformulations or repetitions of the previous ones. For example:

He should not be forgiven

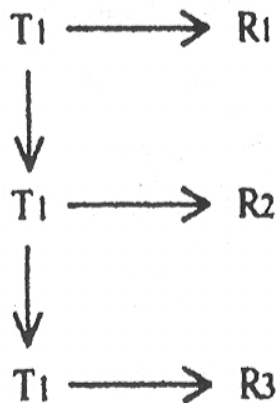
He is a traitor

He was concerned with his own survival

He is a murderer

He should not be forgiven

Using Daneš's (1968) idea of progressive thematic analysis, one can depict such sequences as follows. T1 stands for the theme (Horak or he). R1, R2, R3 stand for different comments or attributes.



Schema 1

Another kind of short sequences, sometimes interspersed between other statements, or forming independent sequences, are evaluations like the following ones: "it is frightening!" "he is horrible!" "he is revolting!" "he is crooked!" "he is vicious!" "Unfortunately, it is human and it stinks!" Such exclamations, which are all negative judgments of Horak's behaviour, are neither thematised nor accompanied by moralising or questioning circumstances, which might lead to Horak's behaviour.

### 3.4 Analogies

Analogies contained commonly shared knowledge, usually relating to historical and political events, e.g. the trial with a Nazi criminal Papon, the fact that after the Second World War many Nazi criminals emigrated to Argentina and the anti-Nazi resistance during 1939-45. Analogies appeared at any place in the discussion, at the beginning, in the middle or at the end. Only 2 groups gave no more than 1 analogy, the other 6 groups used 2-5 analogies. Among analogies, the most common one was Papon's affaire, which at the time of our research was much discussed in the French media. Papon figured here as a strong conceptual image evoking collaborators during the Second World War and therefore, he was seen as someone to be compared to Horak. For example:

O/ Wait, wait! this man could be compared to Papon!

M: Yes, he's a traitor.

B1: A little, yes.

M: He's a traitor, then; now, how can we consider traitors? Normally, they are killed and there, he's lucky, he'll only go a few years in jail.

B2: Yes, but it was to save his life that he did that. Even if he is still responsible.

O: But in fact, the thing is that we consider him responsible

and then? Can we still consider him responsible? Isn't there any prescription?

M: No, a murder is a murder, there is no limitation of action by lapse of time!

H: No, perhaps not in that case. No, it is the same... Imagine that you put a gun on my head and you tell me to destroy somebody's car; well, I'm gonna answer you " I'm sorry, I had a gun on my head! "

All 8 French groups, nevertheless, gave little time to this dilemma and did not appear to be interested in it. We could only suggest that either the French students did not have the social representation of a crime against humanity or that they had only a weak representation. Yet no firm conclusion could be made on the basis of our focus groups, which, after all, discussed a problem that was very distant to them geographically, historically and politically. Therefore, the presence or absence of the social representation required to be studied either in other ways or by devising new focus groups, examining this question with the use of a case, more familiar to the French students.

### 3.5 Stage II: The French dilemma

In order to test the hypothesis that French students did not have the social representations of a crime against humanity, we have decided to carry out another set of focus groups with a similar dilemma but more relevant to the French students. We have devised 4 homogeneous focus groups, 2 with each gender, of the age groups 16-21. Considering Morgan's (1998) suggestion (see above), we supposed that 4 groups should provide sufficient data. In order to test our hypothesis, we presented this dilemma only to the French students. In this dilemma, the case was different than that in the Czech case. Here, the murderer turned into the victim :

"In August 1997, Maurice Papon stood a trial. The past general secretary of the prefecture of Gironde under the Vichy regime was sued for the crime against humanity because of his role in the deportation of 1500 Jews during the years 1942-44. In 1981, the signature of Maurice Papon was found at the bottom of a compromising document in the archives of Gironde. This document was an order for arrest of Jews and putting them into a convoy transporting them to Auschwitz. Among questions raised during the process was lapse of time between the crime and the trial. More than 50 years passed since the crime was committed, and the trial took place 16 years after the first complaint was lodged. The complaint was lodged by Michel Slintinsky who, for a long time, sought those responsible for deportation of his father who died in Auschwitz.



Today, media discuss a great deal the case of Maurice Papon. Specifically, it is proposed to change his penalty with a view to liberate him because of his old age. For how long, do you think, is a person responsible for his past actions? Should he stay in prison or should he be forgiven?"

### 3.6 Analogies in common sense knowledge

As indicated above, the French focus groups often used analogies in their discussion of Horak's dilemma. At Stage II, therefore, we intended to study analogies in more detail.

Analogies as forms of thinking, based on perceived and conceived resemblances, have existed probably in all cultures. In European history, they have been well known since ancient Greek philosophy.<sup>2</sup> In ancient Greece, analogies have been used in general cosmological theories, in accounts of particular natural phenomena and in ethical debates. Plato's analysis of analogy as a didactic and as a heuristic method are still relevant, implying their differentiation between illustrative and illative analogies.

Throughout history and culture, analogies have also prevailed in religions, magical thinking and beliefs. Due to its diverse use, the term "analogy" is highly polysemic and it would be difficult to come up with any agreed upon definitions. In common sense thinking analogies are usually introduced by words, for instance, "it is like", "it is similar to" or "one can compare it to". Sometimes, analogies are used without any such introductory phrases. In ordinary discourse, analogies serve various roles, for example, they express relations, attempt to persuade another person or try to adopt or reject certain courses of action (Lloyd, 1966). As Diderot (1830) already argued, analogies are also means of avoiding digressions, contradictions, paradoxes and refutation.

### 3.7 Analogies in the dilemma at Stage II

The discussion of the dilemma by the French students reflected debates by the French public and the French media. Papon was an old man, and the crime took place long time ago. Nevertheless, he was responsible for his act.

All four focus groups pointed out that Papon was very old and ill. Two groups expressed the view that he was a scapegoat and that others should be on trial as well. Nevertheless, despite his old age he was judged responsible for what he did and would remain responsible for the rest of

his life. All groups discussed the question of responsibility for the crime against humanity. The change from the murderer into the victim was made explicit, for example :

"Imagine, that that the system in which you live changes from a democratic to a totalitarian regime. You do certain things. And then they say, yeh but there, what you did under the other regime, the one before, this wasn't good. Then they "scalp" you".

"I don't know if Papon knew exactly what was going on in Auschwitz".

During the focus group discussions, two kinds of analogies were used. We call them undeveloped or illustrative analogies on the one hand and developed or illative on the other. For example :

#### Illustrative analogies

He's our French Pinochet!  
It is the same as for Kennedy with the archives being blocked until 2000  
Ernest Renan  
Badinter  
The Bonnet Affair (les paillottes)

#### Illative analogies

the case of pedophilia  
the case of hold-ups  
the prostitution of  
handicapped girls  
serial-killers

#### Schema 2

Illustrative analogies were recalls of the concrete persons who were involved in various crimes against humanity or who themselves became victims of crimes. These analogies were dispersed in discussions without being thematised any further. For example :

A : Ah, it is Badinter...

B : And Badinter took the position to it...

A : yes, yes, this is so and it is serious because he said 'yes' to it

We can suggest that illustrative analogies, which rely on commonly shared knowledge, are used for didactic reasons in order to remind what everyone already knows. Therefore, it is not necessary for them to be thematised any further. Nevertheless, since illustrative analogies are not thematised, they do not create any dynamics in communication. Their aim is mainly orientated towards didactic purposes and to the understanding of the dilemma, rather than towards questions and arguments. All these analogies in our focus groups that were used in the discussion, were drawn from political events.

In addition to didactic analogies, there were also didactic examples used in the dilemma, accompanying the claims of Papon's culpability. Thus, Primo Levi who powerfully wrote in his work about concentration camps, was brought into discussion. The speaker recommended that everybody

<sup>2</sup> G. E. R. Lloyd (1966) goes back to the many references of ancient Greek literature in his book on Polarity and Analogy. He considers for example Plato's analysis about analogy as a didactic method and as a heuristic method, differentiating how one tries to understand something through analogy at first (the didactic approach) and how one tries to discover something through analogy (the heuristic approach).

should read Primo Levi's books to realize the extent of the Nazi crimes against humanity. Similarly, another example, that of Stalin persecution in the Soviet Union, was discussed.

In contrast, illative analogies in our four dilemmas were drawn from non-political events. These analogies of social nature, like serial killers and pedophiles, have also received a great deal attention in the media. Specifically, the differences and similarities were sought between Papon's mass murder involvement and the violence with respect to individuals. For example :

T: The pedophile...

C: I think here, well... then, exactly, the guy who is a pedophile...

T: And there, something's lacking in the law system because if they do not find the corpses, all the corpses, I don't remember..

S : There is no evidence.

T: There is no evidence.

S: Then, we cannot condemn...

T: Yes, or on the contrary, I don't know...

M: But, euh...

T: There has been no complain under 20 years or 10 years, so the guy, he's safe euh... if they don't find the corpses, that'll help him, he won't be... he won't be condemned, well, he won't be condemned but he'll be judged

M: But anyway, regrets do not erase actions, but euh...

N: We are always responsible for our actions!

T: Yes.

S: On the fact that, well...

Illative analogies, because they are thematised, link the dilemma to common knowledge about general issues which are significant in social debates. In our case, they included thematisation of pedophilia, prostitution, serial-killers, neo-nazis, "collabos" and even "the suffering of the Princess Diana". One can suggest that illative or developed analogies are based on topics of the day. They are not used as didactic examples but as heuristic means, through which the participants of the focus group test their own views and confront them with those of others.

This case shows that although analogies are linked to the past knowledge and collective memory, proximity in time is essential. Proximity in time does not relate only to real time in terms of years that have passed but it also refers to proximity that is brought in by the public discourse and the media. The public discourse and the media turn past events into contemporary issues.

We suggest that the existence of both kinds of analogies, illustrative and illative, testifies to the existence of social representation of a crime against humanity. In the case of illustrative analogies, they anchor the event to past events in

which analogy is taken for granted and need not be discussed because the case is clear. In the case of illative analogies, while the participants attempt to anchor the event to something clear and familiar, the case is not clear and during discussion participants put forward proposals for and against presumed similarity. We suggest that the case of Horak was not, for the French in sufficient proximity. However, when it was transformed into their own situation at Stage II, they expressed just as strong social representations of a crime against humanity as did the Czechs.

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