SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND PUBLIC LIFE:

A STUDY ON THE SYMBOLIC CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC SPACES IN BRAZIL

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To

Jacob and Regina

(who taught me that other people matter)

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I relate the work of both Arendt and Habermas concerning the public sphere to Moscovici's theory of social representations. I propose a distinction between social representations in and of the public sphere to show that (i) social representations are forms of symbolic mediation firmly grounded in the public sphere, and (ii) public life plays a constituent role in the development of representations and symbols. Drawing on Winnicott's concept of potential space, I show that the constitution of social representations and public life rests neither upon the individual nor upon society, but upon those spaces of mediation that link and separate them at the same time. The concept of public sphere is operationalised along two dimensions: the space of the streets and the arena of politics. The research comprises three empirical studies: (i) content analyses of the Brazilian press, (ii) focus groups with street children, taxi drivers, policemen, professionals, students and manual workers, and (iii) narrative interviews with Brazilian parliamentarians about the impeachment of the former president. The roles of the media, of conversation and of narratives in the shaping of both social representations and public life guide the analyses. The findings suggest that the blurred character of the relationship between self and other in Brazil lies at the very heart of social representations of public life. Threat and fear on the streets and corruption in political life are anchored in older metaphors of corrupt blood and a contaminated, ill, social body. The results suggest that the workings of social representations are inseparable both from the historical features of the society in which they develop and from the processes whereby a community struggles to maintain an identity, a sense of belonging and a location in the world.

INTRODUCTION

This research has its origins in the reality of my own country. The difficult state of affairs that characterises public spaces in Brazil - and its tragic consequences for the life of Brazilian people - prompted me to write this thesis. One does not need to write a thesis to observe the immediate reality of public life in Brazil. In its most crude face, it reveals corruption, violence, nepotism, patronage and inequalities. In its most subtle face, it reveals deep lacunae between constitutional rights and an everyday life that, for the vast majority, is deprived of citizenship. These conditions, to be sure, are part of a history that, for Latin American countries, is the result of systematic colonization and exclusion. It would be difficult, and undesirable, to ignore the violence that marks both the conquest of the Americas and the subsequent development of the continent. These social structures and historical developments are not abstractions; on the contrary, they impinge upon the lives of social actors with a constitutive power. And yet, I do not think such a history is the ultimate explanation, the only means of understanding our social situation. If it is true that it is necessary to consider history and social structures, it is also true that both history and social structures are constructed by social psychological subjects, who know, act, invest with affection, and render with meaning, the realities in which they live.

How then, in conditions of everyday life, do social subjects appropriate public life and transform it into *their* reality? How do they explain it? How do they make this reality meaningful? And what is the meaning of this reality for them? In other words, how do they construct social representations about public life and how do these social representations themselves become a symbolic environment? These questions are at the core of this thesis. They are not divorced from debates occurring in Brazil at the beginning of 1991, when I set out to work towards my doctoral degree. The ways in which corruption seemed to be permeating the most micro-levels of social relations, the concern with ethics in both political life and everyday

practices, and the need to look more closely subjective structures increasingly deprived of a sense of alterity were at the centre of a debate in Brazilian academic and social life (Costa, 1988; Chauí, 1992; da Matta, 1992, 1993; Birman, 1993). It became clear through this debate that simple oppositions of the type 'dominant versus dominated' could not give an adequate account of the complex interactions that are producing in Brazil a culture of violence or, even worse, a way of life in which violence is becoming banal. Of course, this does not mean that one can just overlook the extremely predatory behaviour of the Brazilian élites and their international allies. In this regard, let me make clear that the north-south divide is real enough as to the costs it imposes on peripherical countries. As to the Brazilian élite, I have no respect for them, in the same way they never have had any respect for Brazil and for its people. This élite, who pretend to guide the country towards modernity and yet sustain the highest concentration of land ownership in the world, who takes Europe and North America as their declared models, but insist on perpetuating feudal realities for the sake of sustaining their own privileges; this élite has yet to explain itself, preferably before a tribunal. However, as I indicated before, symbolic constructions of public life in Brazil cannot be understood only as an exercise of dominant groups. Reproduction is not all there is in symbolic fields and the ways in which people struggle, resist and manifest elements of agency must be taken into account. In Brazil, I am convinced that the violence which marks public life has not yet succeeded in erradicating those elements that link concrete everyday experiences to a project of hope.

This research thus has a context. It stems from certain socio-psychological practices that have been taking place in Brazil and, more generally, in Latin America in recent years. These practices, which concern pressing and urgent realities, are part of an attempt to develop a social psychology capable of explaining the social psychological phenomena which our social structure produces. Although I am referring to a social psychology that we have been developing in Brazil and in Latin America, this is only to make explicit the **site** from which I am talking; there is no intention at all in this effort to work for a regional social psychology, a sort of Brazilian or Latin American social psychology. Quite the reverse, I would say that

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this social psychology is an attempt, on the part of Latin-American social psychologists such as the late Ignácio Martin-Baró (1983) in El Salvador, Pedrinho Guareschi (1992), Wanderley Codo(1985) and Silvia Lane (1985) in Brazil, Maritza Montero (1978) in Venezuela, among many others, to redefine, drawing on European sources, the modes of practice and the theoretical development of our discipline. The context of this research therefore is not absolute; contextualization does not necessarily mean particularism. The Brazilian case, which is at the centre of this study, cannot be understood outside of a larger context, to which it also belongs. In this sense, I started reflecting about public life in Brazil and found myself reflecting, just as much, about the meaning of public life in general and its relation to social psychology in particular.

To investigate contemporary conditions of public life means, for the social psychologist, reflecting on various directions. First, it involves a reflection on 'the social' as such. Our discipline has been ambiguous, to say the least, in its relation to the social. Sometimes considered a variable, sometimes considered an external influence, social psychologists have been at odds with the category that, paradoxically, distinguishes them from other psychologists. The far-reaching historical analyses of Rob Farr (1991a; 1991b) have been a reliable guide in understanding why this is the case. Positivism on the one hand, and individualism on the other, seem to be the joint themes that have, in the course of our history as a discipline, shaped most of our theoretical efforts and codes of practice. Second, reflecting on public spaces also leads to a reflection on the relationship between self and other, reproduction and agency, individualism and community life. Whichever form of public life is being considered, its analysis discloses a play upon such fundamental themes. And thirdly, reflecting on public life involves confronting certain pivotal social issues, which call for a critical social psychology, attentive to the changing face of social, cultural, gender and global relations. This, in my opinion, is crucial, and poses the issue of commitment. Scientific knowledge is never neutral, and involves options of many kinds. In opting for a critical social psychology, I share the concerns of the late Ignácio Martin-Baró, Pedrinho Guareschi, Silvia Lane and Eclea Bosi, amongst other Latin American scholars, for whom the epistemological

and theoretical shifts taking place in social theory must be firmly grounded in human narratives of freedom, emancipation and social justice.

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This thesis is organised in three parts. The first part poses the theoretical question that is adressed in the rest of the thesis. It contains three chapters, each corresponding to a different element in the overall theoretical framework of the study. In chapter one I define the research problem and I there I consider three aspects of it: the current realities of Brazilian public life, the historical background of these realities and the relevance of the theory of social representations to adressing the question. I show that the present conditions of public life in Brazil, which are mainly characterised by violence and poverty in the streets and by corruption in political life, must be seen in relation to the history of Latin America. This history, characterised by unity in diversity, explains many of the complexities of Brazilian public life. In chapter two I discuss the relationship between the public and the private spheres. These two domains, I argue, can only be understood in relation to each other. I draw on the work of Arendt and Habermas to sketch the main elements that characterise the public realm. On the basis of these elements, I propose the public sphere as a space of inter-subjective reality, which brings to the fore the dialectics between self and other. After having demonstrated the social psychological dimension of the public sphere - the public sphere as a space of alterity, I go on to discuss, in chapter three, the relationship between the public sphere and social representations. This is done at two levels which, although related, are analysed separately. The first concerns the *logic of production* of social representations. It concerns, therefore, social representations in the public sphere. It is suggested that the public sphere, as the place of the generalised other, is constitutive of social representations, in that it provides the ground for their emergence and development. The second level examines the problem of social representations of the public sphere. Here I discuss the moment at which something like a "public" becomes conceivable to social actors and hence becomes an object upon which social representations can develop. These three chapters therefore follow a three step logic: (i) I start from the

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characterization of the particular case of Brazilian society in chapter one, (ii) I theorise about the meaning of the public sphere as a social psychological phenomenon in chapter two, and finally (iii) I discuss how social representations are at once generated by - and yet contribute in generating - public life.

The second part of the thesis is concerned with a discussion of the methods used in my empirical studies. In chapter four I make explicit the epistemological foundations of my approach and I describe in detail the procedures of my empirical work. Drawing on the work of Marková on the Hegelian paradigm and the assumptions developed by the critical theorists of the Frankfurt school, I discuss the historical character of social psychological knowledge and the dialectical nature of the relationships between both objectivity and subjectivity, and between universals and particulars. In the discussion of the research procedures, I operationalise the concept of the public sphere along two dimensions: the *streets* and the *political arena.* The investigation is designed in terms of three empirical studies: (i) a content analysis of the Brazilian press, (ii) focus groups with street children, taxi drivers, policemen, professionals, students and manual workers, and (iii) narrative interviews, where Brazilian parliamentarians tell the story of the impeachment of the former president, Fernando Collor de Mello. This range of techniques assists both the quantitative and the qualitative analysis of the representations. Each is presented and discussed in its own right as a valid research technique. The issues of objectivity and validity, as well as the relationship between qualitative and quantitative methods of research, are then discussed.

The third part comprises the presentation and discussion of the results. The differing roles of the media, of conversations, and of narratives in the shaping of social representations are discussed drawing upon the findings. In chapters five to seven I identify the representational fields emerging from my analyses of the media, of the discussion groups and ofthe narratives of politicians. These different sources produce a strikingly similar representational field. The blurred character of the relationship between self and other in Brazil, and the quest for a national identity, lie at the very core of the representations found in these different contexts. I discuss how

this relates to the development of Brazilian social thought and to early scientific theories, which linked the mixture of different ethnic 'bloods' to the problems of Brazilian social life. Whilst social scientists, especially social psychologists, may long since have abandoned searching for biological explanations of social phenomena this is not true of their lay informants. I also show how these representations are intertwined with defensive strategies drawn upon by the community to negate its hybrid and, therefore, threatening identity. In the last chapter I consider the ways in which this study may contribute to the theory of social representations as well as to an assessment of the limits and possibilities of public life in Brazil.

As it will be evident, this thesis is an interpretative (ad)venture. A potentially fatal illusion of those who work at interpreting social life is the illusion of providing a final reading. In considering reality as a closed and determined set, the researcher may wish to coincide with it and exhaust it with her analysis. However, to restore the experience of others in its purity and to capture completely the spirit and the sense it hides is an impossible task. Interpretation is the outcome of an encounter between the researcher, who is a subject, and the subject-object domain. Encounter, dialogue, interpretation, representation; the research act does not escape these conditions. Interpretation, therefore, is always re-presentation and as such is open to con-frontation. This is why, I believe, any interpretative effort should always strive towards rigour and systematisation. Their value is not, as some might believe, that they would allow a positive knowledge. The value of rigour and systematisation is to make research accountable, so to speak. In giving account of one's decisions, ones's assumptions and procedures, we help to make research practices acts of dialogue, open to further development and elaboration. In producing the space that these pages open, I have discovered that to read and to investigate is to reflect and to think upon the words of others, the writing of others, the experience of others. As to the difficult task of constructing my own text, I should say that the images and voices of another place have always been with me: the landscape, the people, the many others that are on the other side of the sea, in Brasil. They helped me to remember that, as Merleau-Ponty wrote, *'the earth is the soil of our thought as it is of our life'*.

1.0. THE PROBLEM: SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN BRAZIL

1.1. Current Realities

The main purpose of this study is to look at social representations of the public sphere in Brazil in order to explore the relationship between social representations and public life. This is done in two different ways, which are interdependent and inseparable. On the one hand, it is a project concerned with the quality and the contradictory nature of public spaces in Brazil and how these spaces are represented in the register of symbolic experiences. In this sense, it looks at social representations *of* the public sphere in Brazil. On the other hand, it seeks to unravel the role of social representations as constituent elements of public life, and in this sense it looks at social representations *in* the public sphere. As I hope to demonstrate, these two aspects of the problem are closely inter-related and they can only be distinguished for the purposes of analysis. Thus this research considers both social representations of the public sphere in Brazil and the processes whereby these social representations are brought about. By looking at the particular case of Brazilian society, I hope to show the crucial connection between social representations - as a specific social psychological phenomenon and the public sphere - as a specific social space.

In order to do so, the empirical focus of the study is on the ways Brazilians represent the space "out there", construct a social knowledge about this space and in doing so look back on their own identity. Now, the experience of everyday life involves representing - in different manners - the world that is "out there" when the privacy of the home is left behind. When the door of this private home is closed behind, one enters a space with both physical and concrete features as well as an

immense diversity of meanings and of symbolic signs. This space makes its own demands upon people, requires them to understand its signs, calls for socially established behaviours and so forth. Summing up, people need to draw on all the signs they have encountered throughout their socialization and in doing so they will be exercising both their individuality and their sociality (Mead, 1934). Which representations emerge from this encounter which a community has with its own sense of "we"? How do these representations come about, how do they reproduce or change old meanings and practices? How do they shape the object they represent? And how they can help us to understand realities that can and should, if correctly identified, be transformed?

To investigate social representations of the public sphere in Brazil poses a number of problems for the researcher. To come to grips with a social reality, which defies explanation, and to explain its specific logic and momentum, is a most difficult task both conceptually and empirically. However, if the structural problems of Brazilian society defy the theoretical creativity of social scientists, they also reveal - in their dramatic social effects - the impasse of sustaining a *sense communis* and a public life. The dilemmas of public life in Brazil are not new. On the contrary, they are as old as the history of Brazil and there is a long tradition of research, ranging from anthropology to psychoanalysis, concerned with the configuration of Brazilian public life and its structural problems (Faoro, 1975; Costa, 1988; da Matta, 1991, 1992, 1993; Chauí, 1992, 1993; amongst many others). Yet, to describe the situation of Brazilian society today is no easy task.

Perhaps one could start by saying that, first and foremost, there is the quality of public spaces in Third world societies, particularly in Latin America. Five hundred years after its "discovery" the continent still struggles with many of the problems which have marked its history, namely, famine, poverty, violence and corruption. In Brazil, the signs of social unrest are very crude, and quite explicit. They are in front of people's eyes and there is little one can do to avoid observing them. I am talking precisely about twenty-five million deprived children and, of these, between seven and eight million who live in the streets; about 24.7 million illiterates and one of the

highest rates of child mortality in the world - 87 per 1000 (Dimenstein, 1991). I am talking about famine which is still the main cause of death; about the absence of sanitary conditions for a large proportion of the population, about the instability of the economy which, for the last ten years, has been characterized by an inflation rate varying between 20% and 25% a month - and still, these are only a few of the statistics describing our social conditions. Seventy-five per cent of Brazil's 150 million people now live in urban areas. Over twenty cities have more than a million inhabitants and Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo are among the five largest cities in the world. Brazil has the biggest concentration of land ownership in the world - as great as the concentration of income. The richest ten per cent of the population earn half of the national income (53.2%) and the poorest ten per cent receive less than one per cent (.6%).[1]

In contrast: Brazil is a rich country. It is the fifth largest country in the world and, industrially, it ranks 11th in the world league. Indeed, Brazil's economy, in spite of inflation, is strong. Its industrial sector is large and can be compared to developed capitalist societies. The natural resources are plentiful, from the Amazon jungle to the fields in the south: its land is arable and the mines in the southeast are a permanent source of both precious stones and gold. This, maybe, is the first big contradiction with which the country has to cope: the extreme, but highly concentrated wealth and the extreme, but widely distributed, poverty. Inequality in Brazil is not a political slogan - it can be found throughout the social fabric.

I start my reflections about the nature and meaning of the public sphere in Brazil from a consideration of these realities. Recent research concerning the last decade of our history - the decade of the transition from dictatorship to democracy - has revealed a highly problematic landscape (Moises & Albuquerque, 1989). The reversal of popular expectations about the resolution of economic and social problems and increasing frustration with the institutions of state in general - that are marked by corruption, inefficacy and bureaucracy - have led to something that I would call

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[1]Sources: IBGE - *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (the official Statistics Office), and World Bank.

disenchantment with the public sphere. Some of the symptoms of this disenchantment appear very clearly in everyday life: the rupture of the social fabric can be seen in criminality that, in the Brazilian case, has become a social pathology. This can be seen in the traffic that has become a kind of battlefield for individuals who seem to have no connection with each other at all. It can also be seen in the virtual absence of the mutual trust that is needed to build up any project of life that to some extent takes into consideration the public domain, i.e., the domain of others.

More quietly, less brutally than in the streets, but just as effectively, the arena of politics has been one of the major sources of distrust and disenchantment with public life. Corruption and impunity are old issues and their taken-for-grantedness in every day life is symptomatic of their power as patterns of social behaviour. The gap between public rhetoric and private enterprise is enormous. The distance between words and deeds, a sort of autonomy of language, where anything can be said, where the word becomes a vehicle for autonomous meanings, all unconnected with what actually happens, permeates the chain of social relationships. And when explanations for this gap are discussed in public, they are expressed in terms of private reasons. What sounds like magic realism, becomes, in fact, reality.

Thus, for instance, if the national congress in Brasilia is discussing the minimal national wage, or the new economic policy, what is salient to the public is the crisis in the president's marriage. In 1991, for more than ten days the headlines of the major Brazilian newspapers highlighted what, in effect, became a "soap opera" about the president's relationship with his wife. And the personal problems of the president were presented as an explanation for the absence of any policy capable of coping with the profound, structural, and very public problems the whole country was going through. In the same period, ministers were involved in public discussions concerning the love affairs of their cabinet colleagues. The media gave ample coverage to the private notes being exchanged in those meetings and, for more than two months, the whole country witnessed the development of a love affair between the Finance minister and the Minister of Justice. Here, we find yet another feature, this time not a gap between words and deeds, but a curious inversion: in Brazil what

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should be private becomes public and what is public becomes private. That private affairs could be transformed into matters of public concern constituted another insight on the part of a government which, not only understood that Brazilian society is submerged in the private, but which also used such marketing strategies for the whole period it held office. But that public matters should become a vehicle for private interests is an expression of the social, economic and symbolic misery of a society incapable of reflecting upon itself in its own domain, that is, in the public domain.

The problems discussed above, arising from a specific historical, social and economic formation, affect human experience in all its domains and go far beyond the realm of economic exchanges. It is here that one needs to consider the symbolic effects of such a situation. For the gap between what is said and what is done - something that in Freudian terms would be equated to the absence of the reality principle, the distance between the policies that regulate everyday life and everyday life experience, the disenchantment with the public sphere as a whole, generate a vicious circle, where to think about and to reflect upon a common life space occurs under the sign of an "impossible". Deprived of the possibility of believing in a common and social project, the outcome has been alienation and fatalism for Latin Americans. Ignácio Martin-Baró (1983) described what he called the "fatalist syndrome" in Latin America. Its major consequence is to bring to a halt the notion of historical time in the actions of social agents. In it, every object and every human being just goes on - no big changes are expected, except those to be found in the normal, taken-for-granted, course of life. Things are as they are, as they were yesterday and as they will be tomorrow. Only the present counts. Yet not the plenitude of present experience that the Latin poet was looking for, but the one that is given by the impoverishment of the possibilities of life. Hence, without either historical memory or a project for life, there is nothing but the fatal acceptance of destiny. In other words, this fatalism becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. What kind of social subject emerges from such circumstances ? As Piera Aulagnier (1975; 1979) has pointed out, the task of the psyche's functioning is to represent what exists and to learn how to represent the I, as an entity that is built up and that maintains itself

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in a delicate struggle of dependency and independency with the existing reality. That is why every human I, in order *to be*, needs to exercise the function of anticipating itself, of being capable of reflecting its own temporality, without which it drops its search for an identity and its relation to time. Therefore, the I has to *think* and to anticipate a future space-time which is open to the consideration of alternative possibilities. It is unnecessary to say that this process does not happen from "within" but in "relation to" something that, in the case of the human species, is both the world as a construct of human activity and the others who comprise the fundamental support upon which the uniqueness of each human I unfolds. From the very beginning alterity is present in the psychic scene, shaping the essence and the nature of its constitution as a psychological entity, or expressing it more accurately, as a socio-psychological entity. Therefore, under circumstances such as those described above, both societal links and selfhood acquire a problematic configuration. The issue becomes even more serious because these problems are not only externally generated -although the north/south divide is real enough. However, they are also generated from **within**, in the very interstices of local relationships and practices.

The considerations outlined above may sound too pessimistic if images of an "other" Brazil are to come into the picture. Carnival, music, popular culture in the streets, solidarity in the *favelas*, resistance, *mestizage*, art, humour and literature comprise the other face of Brazilian society. The richness of Brazilian culture, and of Latin America as a whole, is well-documented and whoever knows Brazil can give testimony to the intensity of these cultural forms of life. In fact, there has been a complex interplay between these elements of Brazilian cultural life and the configuration of political life, something that I shall discuss later in more detail. As a mode of introduction, it suffices to say that the institutional void between family and state in Brazil - typical of societies with problems in consolidating democratic forms of government - has one of its origins in the pervasiveness of emotion and family ties across the social fabric (de Aragão, 1991). Brazilian anthropologists and sociologists alike have been at pains to make sense of the dilemmas of a culture founded both in collectivism, solidarity and emotion and in authoritarianism, corruption and violence (da Matta, 1991; Ortiz, 1986; Chauí, 1993). It is exactly

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these disjunctions which present the most challenging paradox in the constitution of Brazilian public life. Not only because they blur the frontiers between public and private life, but also because they produce a specific space of contradictions that defy the very relationship between representations and reality.

In a fundamental essay for Latin American cultural history, *Misplaced Ideas*, the Brazilian critic Roberto Schwarz (1992) explores the roots and consequences of the dislocations between a system of representations of society - which functions as a frame of reference for everyone - and the reality itself. This essay is decisive to the problem I am addressing. In it, Schwarz shows the effects of the contradictions which took place in nineteenth century Brazil, a country whose actual social relationships were based on slavery and yet, who incorporated as its own the liberal ideas coming from Europe. In Brazil there were the slave trade, the latifundia and clientelism, that is, the very antitheses of the bourgeois principles of universalism before the law, of the dignity of labour, of the separation between the public and the private, of civil liberties and so on. Strange as it may be, this clear contradiction did not impede Brazilian social thought (mainly intellectuals and élites) from adopting as its main point of reference the liberal principles of the European bourgeoisie. When faced with these liberal ideas, "Brazil, the outpost of slavery, was ashamed - for these were taken to be the ideas of the time - and resentful, for they served no purpose. But they were also adopted with pride, in an ornamental vein, as a proof of modernity and distinction. To know Brazil was to know these displacements, experienced and practised by everyone as a sort of fate, for which, however, there was no proper name, since the improper use of names was part of its nature" (Schwarz, 1992, p.28). And Schwarz goes on to say, "the test of reality or coherence did not seem to be decisive, notwithstanding its continuous presence as a requirement, recalled or forgotten according to circumstances. Thus, one could methodically call dependency independence, capriciousness utility, exceptions universality, kinship merit, privilege equality, and so on" (p.24). Such displacements are illuminating not only for the issue of the relationship between representations and reality in Brazil, but also for an understanding of the very conditions that blur the private and the public spheres. Somehow, Brazil developed an ideological frame of reference and a system of

representations that had nothing to do with the reality of the country. Now this is exactly at the heart of problems such as the ones discussed above. The power of ideas over facts, the autonomy of discourse, the almost absurd co-existence of a social reality screaming for attention and an interpretation that negates it: these, as I shall discuss in the next section, are elements that can be traced back to the very inception of Latin American societies.

The debate about a public sphere is not, of course, restricted to Brazilian society. The issue of distinguishing between the public and the private spheres goes back to the meanings of these two realms in Ancient Greece. In our contemporary societies the distinction becomes blurred and is the result of the transformations in both public and private life that occurred with the emergence and establishment of the bourgeois era. In this sense, the question of what is public and what is private evokes, essentially, the nature of a relationship. The one can be understood only in relation to the other.

Actually, the debate about a public sphere lies at the very heart of the discussion concerning the limits of democracy and of citizenship in contemporary societies. When, in the 20s, Walter Lippmann (1927) wrote *The Phantom Public* he was already pointing out that there is "nothing particularly new in the disenchantment which the private citizen expresses by not voting at all". The solution he offered then was the delegation of the functions of the public to a group of competent experts, since there is simply not enough time in the day for a citizen to perform all the tasks expected of him. Lippman's recommendations were unequivocally elitist and are far from being on the agenda of a critical theory of public life. But, odd as they may be, his remarks seem amazingly to the point. Today, perhaps more than ever, the *res publica* has been called into question. Taking Habermas'(1989b) work as a starting point, social scientists of different disciplines have queried both the denotation and the connotation of the public sphere. In what sense does it epitomise the principles of freedom, equality and solidarity that, since the 18th century, have been the cornerstones of western rationality? Habermas' work is centred on the emergence, development and transformation of the bourgeois public sphere in Europe and

remains the most complete account to date of this new category of capitalist society. In it, Habermas defines the public sphere as a space where citizens meet and talk to each other in a fashion that guarantees access to all. It is a sphere where the principle of accountability is developed, which leads to a transformation in the **nature** of power as such. Power, indeed, can be exercised, but it must be exercised in an accountable and visible fashion. Habermas is concerned to demonstrate and to discuss how the critical functions of the public sphere are weakened through its structural transformation. Consumerism, the mass media, the expansion of the state in advanced industrial societies, are some of the elements which conspire to debilitate the contemporary public sphere, provoking what Habermas calls a "re-feudalization of the public sphere". Although his critique is sharp, Habermas, in describing how the public realm unfolds and declines in modern societies, is concerned with demonstrating how it evokes a concomitant commitment - as a space that can be recovered; as a project that can still sustain the rationalisation of power through public discussion.

Hannah Arendt (1958) has been another important contributor to the debate surrounding the notion of the public realm. She takes the Greek experience of the polis as her starting point for establishing the meaning of the public realm and its relation to the private domain. Her book *The Human Condition* is, beyond doubt, a tribute to the public realm, which she describes as the space where people can enact in speech and in deed the plurality and uniqueness that characterise the human condition. The public realm is the space that belongs to all, and is common to all. Because it demands the abstraction of purely private interests, the public sphere is conducive to the production of permanence and history, insofar as it allows the life-span of each person to be transcended. It is perhaps in Arendt's oeuvre that one can see most clearly the importance of the public sphere as a *normative* concept. By grounding the public sphere in the human condition of plurality, she calls our attention to the need for recognising the multiplicity of social logics that characterise human existence. At a time when post-modern critiques emphasize the supremacy of differences for their own sake and conceive of public life as sheer fragmentation, her account seems more necessary than ever. For plurality, the quintessential feature of

public life, does not lead to indifferentiation and indifference. To be different for humans is not the same as being apart from each other; on the contrary, it is the very commonality of the public realm which allows difference to appear. For how can one recognise it if not in relation to alterity? And yet, difference is not sovereign as some post-modernists would have it. Criteria must exist to decide what is legitimate or not (nazism was a very good story, and so were Latin American dictatorships). This is achieved through dialogue and joint action, activities which are part and parcel of the public realm. In this process, different perspectives constantly meet, compete, negotiate, re-define themselves, are accepted or discarded. That is why the acknowledgement of different perspectives and attempts to negotiate them in public always comprises an unfinished business and history is an open-ended process. In the current debate about the public sphere, such notions are often considered out of place, for they cannot, their opponents would say, account for the slippery and fragmented features of contemporary societies. Of course contemporary societies produce fragmentation and dispersion; one just needs to look around. But to reduce the interpretation and assessment of contemporary societies to their conditions of actualization deprives social thinking of any critical endeavour. The normative notions which emerged from the process of assessing the past and foreseeing the future are not in vain; they constitute a project. And a project involves the capacity to anticipate an open reality in such a way that it privileges one outcome over many possible others. Rather than being wiped out by the fractures and disjunctions which can be found at the core of our contemporary societies, the notion of a public sphere remains a project to be achieved.

Two major questions arise from this conceptualization. The first one is the question of identifying whether this is a study about public life, or about social representations of public life; the second is whether this is a study about Brazil and therefore limited to a particular society, or whether it produces a type of knowledge that could be generalised to any society. The second brings about another, and yet related, problem: is it possible to use this theoretical framework to explain the specificity of Brazilian society? In regard to the first question, I hope the study itself will demonstrate the vital relationship between social representations and public life.

Social representations are forms of social knowledge always constructed in relation to a social object, which they also shape. In this sense, this study addresses the problem of how social representations and public life relate to each other.

The second question is a more complex one. There is no doubt that different societies produce different phenomena and paying attention to cultural diversity is crucial in the social sciences. However, the acknowledgement of different experiences does not lead to the isolationism of purely local understandings. These differences can meet, be recognised for what they are, allow for comparison and for the emergence of elements that sometimes remain unnoticed within a purely local context. Moreover, theoretical frameworks and projects cannot be regarded as national, especially in the realms of culture and social sciences, where boundaries are established on the basis of intense exchanges. As Said pointed out with great propriety, "a confused and limiting notion of priority allows that only the original proponents of an idea can understand and use it. *But the history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowings.*(my emphasis) Cultures are not impermeable, just as Western science borrowed from Arabs, they had borrowed from India and Greece. Culture is never just a matter of ownership, of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of appropriations, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures. This is a universal norm. Who has yet determined how much the domination of others contributed to the enormous wealth of the English and French states?" (Said, 1993, p.161-162). Very little remains to be said after his words. Actually, it is perhaps not accidental that Said's concerns seem to apply so well to discussions that are also taking place in Latin America and no doubt, in Africa, in the Arab world and in the Indian sub-continent. We know only too well the extent to which cultural borrowings construct local realities. These voices, coming from the developing world, recognise the borrowings and do not deny them. This, may I say, has been rather a European tendency, one that, nevertheless, did not impede Europe from taking advantage of the vast universe of cultural difference and wealth it met in the age of the Empire. This study, therefore, draws on European traditions of thought and research, which can illuminate Brazilian reality, for Brazilian reality has never been, nor is, encapsulated

in itself. To understand how a particular community constructs social representations about its public life can also contribute to an understanding of different experiences.

Finally, let me say that, in Brazil, we are still concerned with the problems of equality and injustice, wealth and poverty, democracy and authoritarianism, and the necessary demarcation between the public and the private. I hope I have made clear above, when discussing the current realities of Brazilian societies, why these questions remain unanswered and are far from being trivial - they have a concrete impact on the conditions of life of a multitude of people. As such they are not alien to social psychology. Thus the need to investigate how they are transformed into everyday knowledge, how they acquire meaning in the representations of social actors and how, from these processes, there emerges a symbolic environment that shapes the very object it refers to and the very experience of those who once constructed it.

1.2. The historical background

The history of Latin America, and of Brazil within the continent, can offer important elements to an understanding of the relationship between the public and the private realms. Although public life is currently highly problematic, the origins of the problem are to be found in a more distant past. To be rigorous this would require a review of some 500 years of history that comprise colonization and exclusion. It would be necessary to go back to the gaze of the colonizer, and the warrants such a gaze has imposed. It would be necessary to go back to the possibilities of resistance that vary from one Latin-American country to another. Although such a task is beyond the scope of this piece of research, some components of this history are necessary to fully appreciate the problem under investigation.

Unity in extreme diversity has been the cultural hallmark of Latin America. The societies of the continent are marked by both cultural continuity and political discontinuity. As Fuentes (1988) points out, Latin America is Indian, Black and Mediterranean. Researchers on Latin America consider acculturation, *mestizaje*, and transculturation, basic concepts in any outline of Latin American history and culture.

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The first, acculturation, refers to the destruction of native cultures by European ones. *Mestizaje* (racial mixture) alludes to a blend of cultures, where none is eliminated, and transculturation indicates a concern with the mutual transformations of cultures, in particular the European by the native. European culture spread to the Americas in the wake of the contradictions that characterized the end of the 14th century. On the one hand, it was characterised by the Spanish crown's determination to rid Iberia of its Arab and Jewish influences and to impose medieval structures on the native Indian civilisation. On the other hand, the Europeans who emigrated, Fuentes says, were men of their time, and therefore, were carrying within themselves the seeds of the Renaissance and the hopes of creating a New World.

Many of today's issues in Latin America have their origins in colonial times. The emphasis on dogma and hierarchy which characterised the culture of Iberian Catholicism are still evident today. The weight of patrimonial confusion between private and public rights, and forms of corruption by heads of important families including nepotism, impulsivity, and irrationality are as old as the rituals of magic and dance performed by the Indians and which came with the African slaves. In an article concerning the structures of Latin thought, Eco (1989) notes that, in its drive to find laws, give direction and express intentions, Latin thought created instead a *universe of discourse* (Eco, 1989, p.48). In fact, discourse (meaning here language, ideas and imagination) has become an autonomous realm within Latin cultures. In this sense, Eco says "Latin culture runs the risk of giving to the universe more significance than the universe in itself contains; the non-Latin cultures, in their turn, run the risk of not seeing significance where there is one, or where it could be recognised, in order to respect at any cost the alleged primordial origin of empirical data" (p.34; my translation).

It was the magic universe of the indigenous peoples, with their respect for the sacred and for the mysterious that the Latins met for the first time. Todorov (1992) has shown that, at the heart of this encounter and its subsequent development, was the question of the relationship between Self and Other. First, because no other encounter is so extreme or so exemplary: "the discovery of America, or the

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Americans, is certainly the most astonishing encounter of our history. We do not have the same sense of radical difference in the "discovery" of other continents and other peoples: Europeans have never been altogether ignorant of the existence of Africa, India or China" (Todorov, 1992, p.4). Second, because the path from discovering, taking possession and destroying, which marked the conquest of the Americas, allows us to see a paradigmatic case of relation to alterity. How can one explain the military superiority of the Aztecs, their knowledge of the terrain, their supremacy in numbers and yet their defeat? According to Todorov, what explains it is the capacity to meet and understand the other in her otherness. The Spaniards could perceive what the Indians could not: their different vision of the world, their different relationship to that world and to other people provoked the Indians to see the Spaniards as part of their mythological universe. The Spaniards, by contrast, saw the Indians as a remote, different, distant Other. Understanding otherness therefore is not a sign of tolerance in Latin America; the genocide of the sixteenth century, the largest in human history, shows that understanding otherness is not the same as co-existing with otherness and appreciating difference: it can be also dangerous.

The populations coming from Africa in the following centuries comprise another important tradition in the culture of Latin America. The African people brought their enslaved labour and produced much of the wealth for both colony and metropolis. In order to survive, however, they introduced their music and their dance. More than just a form of artistic expression, this music and this dance comprised an important source of resistance. As Rowe & Schelling (1991) point out, "first, in African cultures music did not exist as an autonomous practice separate from the religious life of the community, which also expressed itself through dance, myth, ritual and sacred objects. Second, dance and music were interwoven in the sense that musical form developed as a function of dance, and dance itself was a visual correlate of musical form; (...) Thus the body caught in the motion of dance also became one of the means by which resistance to reduction of the body to a productive machine was expressed" (p.123).

These historic encounters can perhaps explain the profound faith in the power

of ideas over facts in Latin America. It can explain why art and cultural expression have been the main site of resistance and change throughout the continent. It can explain the **deep sense of "otherness"** in Latin America that, since those times, is both a characteristic of cultural expression and a sign of danger. If, for the Europeans, the Indians were the "radical other", the same was true of the Europeans for the Indians. Yet, such an encounter may also explain the strength of personalism, the victory of the paternalistic caudillo and the weakness of civil society, because kinship, historically, has been the essential form of sociality in Latin America.

The emotions of the family pervade the public space and find expression in the popular culture, such as melodrama, and in politics, through populism. The *telenovela* has been one of the major export products from Latin America, and in particular from Brazil, and it reveals to a significant extent the importance of the private realm throughout the continent. In the *telenovela* there is a "democratic" world of the emotions, where everyone is capable of feeling with the same intensity. Social conflicts dissolve in the wake of personal conflicts between the "good" and the "bad". The emphasis is on the recognition of kinship as social being and the 'social contract' is of no importance at all. Martín-Barbero (1987) asks: "Is there not a secret connection between melodrama and the history of this subcontinent? Certainly melodrama's non-recognition of the 'social contract' speaks loudly of the weight which that other *primordial sociality* of kinship, neighbourhood solidarity and friendship holds for those who recognise themselves in melodrama. Must there not be some sense in raising the question of how far the success of melodrama in these countries speaks of the failure of political institutions which have given no recognition to the weight of that other sociality?" (p.244).

Concerning his question, I would say that political institutions have failed precisely because they *have* recognised the weight of this 'other sociality'. Patrimonialism and populism are without doubt the upshot of such a sociality in the realm of politics and public life. Patrimonialism refers to an "extensive network of reciprocal patron-client relationships between actors of highly disparate power and status. It has provided a framework for vertical personal dependence by offering

concrete channels, commonly in the form of ceremonial kinship, through which working-class men and women have "private" access to those above them" (Stein, 1987, p.126). The origins of patrimonialism are to be found in the semi-feudal colonial systems of Spain and Portugal. These were permanently reinforced by both official and folk Catholicism. Patrimonialism has been an institutional framework for politics with a strong emphasis on hierarchy and organicism, bringing together the rulers and the ruled; "to the powerful it has taught charity; to the powerless dependence on the charitable" (p.126).

Populism is the institution that in twentieth-century Latin America epitomises a manifold of elements put together for the express purpose of social control (Laclau, 1977; Stein, 1987; Cueva, 1987). Populism constituted a political response to the changes imposed by the transition from rural, agriculturally centred export societies of the 19th century, to the urbanised and mass societies of the 20th century. The pith of its politics was the integration of the new masses into national politics without disrupting the existing system. Populism builds upon emotions and personalism and its main traits involve: (i) the emergence of a leader who appeals to the emotions of the majority of the citizenry; (ii) the refusal to assume any notion of social conflict and (iii) the defence of the right of a corporative state to rule the national family hierarchically. It is therefore, in equating the notions of people, family and nation, that populists deny the existence of conflicts between social classes. Since everyone belongs to the same national family, any problem or competition between groups must find a solution in fraternal and filial terms. According to Stein (1987, p.130) "the relationship between the leader and his mass followers has been the key to understanding populist political dynamics in Latin America. The most striking feature of that relationship has been its personalism." Indeed, the most striking feature of populist movements is that they find their political power in the presence of a strong leader with whom people can identify above all in emotional terms. These caudillos (Vargas in Brazil, Peron in Argentina, Velasco in Ecuador, for instance), transform various individual traits into a personal political style. Large sectors of the population thus identify with the leader as one *individual to another*, without any institutional mediation. The leader was compared to a generous father figure who would give

himself to the people usually knowing beforehand their demands because he was intimately connected with them. As such, he could steer the political affairs of his less sophisticated children.

The imperatives of history therefore are strong elements in understanding the texture of the present. They contribute to the formation of a social imaginary that underlies the symbolic constructions of the present. Taking this into account, I will discuss in the following section the specific approach of social psychology to these issues, and more particularly, that of the theory of social representations.

1.3. The relevance of social representations

I have suggested that the Brazilian public sphere is today the outcome of historical and social conditions that have shaped people's lives throughout the Latin American continent. But to what extent do social actors appropriate such a history, construct a meaning out of it, redefine it, or eventually transform it altogether? This question leads to the last point in the constitution of my research problem. The weight of the contradictions to which I have referred produces, of course, a certain kind of social link and a certain kind of relationship that one has to develop with this reality in order to continue everyday life. That is to say, people have to re-present this reality, give it a shape and a content, either to fit within it or to call it into question. In other words, there is a social psychological dimension to be taken into account in the making of history and in the construction of social reality. This dimension involves the symbolic knowledge that is produced in everyday life, when social agents engage in the communicative practices of the public sphere.

Social psychology has not been oblivious to these issues. Richard Sennet's book "The Fall of the Public Man" (1977) is a good example of the way in which the relation between the private and the public has been discussed within the discipline. Goffman (1971) has also dedicated himself to the study of behaviour occurring in public spaces. But it is Philippe Ariés and George Duby, in their authoritative collection, "History of Private Life" (Duby & Ariés, 1990; 1991), who

have shown in depth how historical events and social demands have transformed the psychological features of the family and of childhood that, nowadays, are the privileged sites of the private domain. The boundaries between private and public have always changed according to the vicissitudes of different historical eras, and can be regarded as a paradigm of how history and society are to be found at the very core of human subjectivity. We can see this clearly when Ariés (1973) describes the family of the fourteenth century. The exchange of affection and of social greetings were realized outside the family, in a much warmer and more extense environment that comprised neighbours, friends and servants, amongst others. The boundaries of the family were blurred in this milieu - which is something that will assume a completely different form in an industrial society, for instance. Mead's (1934; 1977) account of the constitution and development of the self is also an important source for approaching the problem of the relation between the public and the private realms. Although he does not discuss the problem as such, his conceptions of the self provide a fertile ground for understanding how the balance and interaction of the two realms are decisive to social psychological phenomena.

However, the theory of social representations is where I locate the crucial elements for approaching the object of my investigation. On the one hand, and this is fundamental to the present research, because social representations are in themselves symbolic phenomena produced in the public arena. As Moscovici (1984) has stated and I intend to show in this study, social representations are rooted in the meetings, in the cafés, in the streets, in the media, in the clubs, in the queues and so forth. That is the public space in which they incubate, become crystallised and are transmitted to others. It is when people meet "out there" to talk and to make sense of their everyday lives that social representations are forged. As a phenomenon, they can express, in their internal structure, permanence and diversity, both history and current realities. They contain in themselves both resistance to change and the seeds of change. The resistance to change is expressed by the weight of history and of tradition, which impinges upon the processes of anchoring and objectification. The seeds of change are also to be found in the essential medium of social representations, namely conversation. Talk is the outcome of an ongoing process of

dialogue, conflict, and of confrontation between new and old ideas "on the make". In this sense, social representations are mobile, versatile and ever-changing. They assume a chameleon-like character and generate the possibility of change. On the other hand, because social representations are always a representation of an object, that is they stand for something, they re-present something (Jodelet, 1984b). In this sense, they actively construct or, better still, they actively re-construct reality, in a kind of autonomous and creative way. They have an imaginative and signifying character that expresses, ultimately, the labour of the human psyche towards the world. Therefore, they express the space *par excellence* of the human subject, struggling to make sense, to interpret, to construct the world in which he/she finds himself/herself. Beyond the given structures of social life, they offer the possibility of novelty, of autonomy, of what still does not yet exist, but *could* exist. They are, in this sense, a relationship with absence, and a means to evoke the possible.

At this stage I should like to stress that I am not denying the power of social structures - how could I, after having just described the Brazilian case? Nor am I according autonomy to the symbolic order. This would be a false dichotomy in terms of the theory of social representations. The relationship between the material and the symbolic is one of the problems at the very heart of the conceptual framework of the theory. Objective processes are the counterpart of subjective ones. The latter build upon, but always go beyond, the material conditions of human life. The processes of objectification and anchoring show clearly that constructing social representations involves historical and social structures as major elements. If there is an underlying conception about the human condition in the theory, it certainly rests on an understanding of the human being as a *subject*, capable of agency and - at the same time - acting within social and historical constraints. Taking this into account, I believe that social representations theory can embrace the phenomena with which I am concerned, can give them a meaning and a mode of explanation. At the same time, I hope to demonstrate how the present study can feed-back and contribute to the development of the theory, to the substantiation of its presuppositions and an enlargement of its frontiers.

In this chapter I have discussed the main elements that constitute the problem of this research. I have done so in order i) to spell out the conditions under which the research problem comes into being, and ii) to give an account of the historicity of the research problem itself, that is the ways in which it has been transformed and defined by historical conditions. To summarize briefly, the relationship between the public and the private spheres has been shaped by the historical trajectory of the Latin American continent. This path is the outcome of diverse elements comprising the European tradition, the native indigenous populations of the Americas and the peoples of Africa who were shipped to the Americas as slaves. The interaction between these various cultures has shaped, on the one hand, the development of a particularly intense and rich cultural experience. On the other hand, however, the supremacy of emotionality, personalism and privacy over public affairs have weakened the public life of Latin American societies. Populism is the expression of this trend in the sphere of politics. Associated with these historical aspects are the present conditions of public life in Brazil, which is eroded by misery, poverty and violence in the streets and by corruption and crime in political life. To explore the social representations of public life, therefore, is an attempt to bring to light the mechanisms that maintain, in the register of symbolic experiences, social structures which should and could - if adequately challenged - be open to yet further transformations.

2.0. ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE REALMS

2.1. On the Dialectical Nature of the Relationship between the Public and the Private Realms

Today we live in a world in which words such as "public", "publicity", "publicize", "publish", and "public opinion" circulate and play a fundamental and ever-increasing role. They are major categories in the assessment, discussion and reproduction of social affairs, and the proliferation of opinion polls is just one of the many factors which epitomizes their role in our societies. Despite their growing importance, social psychologists have done little to clarify the notion of the public sphere or to produce novel theories that would enable us to re-think practices of opinion polling, just to cite one example[1]. Traditionally, social psychology has been concerned with the private subject or, even more, with the private individual. Such a concern has shaped a whole program of research in which attitudes, feelings, cognitive processes and so forth were considered essentially **personal**. Even those phenomena regarded as produced in social spaces were understood in terms of individual reasoning. Yet, I would contend that the meaning of the public sphere and the form it assumes has concrete implications in the shaping of social-psychological phenomena. Public life is not an external structure influencing private lives, but is a constituent element of those very lives. The failure to recognize this close relationship is due, to some extent, to the difficulties our discipline has had in recognizing itself and its place in the field of the social sciences. Besides, the constraints a positivistic tradition of research has imposed on it are still very powerful. The social and the political domains have, most of the time, been considered as "variables" in the development of social psychology's theoretical and methodological corpus, and the possibility of a true dialogue with neighbouring

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[1] For a critique of the way in which social psychology has "liquidated" the concept of public opinion see Jürgen Habermas, "The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society", trans. T. Burger (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989b, ch.7).

disciplines, e.g. sociology, history and political science, has been lost in the wake of efforts to make social psychology an experimental discipline. The acknowledgement of social psychology's limited history, however, should not prevent us from attempting to construct different possibilities both now and in its future development. Part of the task confronting social psychologists today is to examine this legacy and to seek to determine which elements can and should be retained, and in which ways these elements can be reconstructed to reflect the transforming character of our modern societies.

One of my central aims in this chapter is to give an account of the historical development of the public sphere, and to identify the different meanings it assumed in each of the various social configurations in which it occurred. This method of exposition, I believe, is necessary to the delimitation of my research problem. If, as I have advocated above, other social sciences are to become constitutive of social psychological knowledge, this process requires a genuine and global interface between different perspectives. Moreover, the notion of a public realm can only be understood in relation to its contrast, namely, the private realm. It is, therefore, **within** a relationship that a specific public domain takes form. To understand this relationship it is necessary to break down its mode of constitution and to unfold the very precise historical character of the concept.

Public and private lives are not given in nature from the beginning of time. They constitute a historical reality which different societies have developed in different ways. The subtle boundaries which separate them are the same boundaries that define them and to reflect upon public and private spaces means first and foremost to reflect upon the history of a **relationship.**

This is the case today and this has been the case in the past. Although the two spaces have assumed different meanings at different times, they have always been defined in relation to one another. So if, on the one hand, there has been an enormous variation in terms of issues and ways of life concerning what is public and what it is private, on the other hand, there has been no society in history in which

the meaning of public life was not constituted by the private sphere and where the meaning of privacy was not defined by public life. Duby & Ariés (1990) have shown how the delimitation of a space as private, something which only arises in a fully modern form within Anglo-Saxon bourgeois society, can be isolated in more remote societies, such as medieval Europe or the Greek city-state. This is possible because different historical realities have always distinguished between what is to be hidden from and what is to be open to others, what is to be particular and what is to be common, what is to be open and distributed to all and what is to be kept secret, reserved and therefore *withdrawn* from all. These aspects comprise the fundamental meaning of the public and the private realms. They indicate that there are things that need to be hidden and others things (res publica) that need to be presented publicly if they are to exist at all.

The relationship between the public and the private realms, therefore, is dialectical in nature. Their relationship is *"ordo ad aliquid"*, that is, the intrinsic ordering of something towards some other thing; that which in order to be, needs the other thing, otherwise it is not (Guareschi, 1992). Hence the public sphere as a totality and as a reality presupposes, to be understood, the private sphere. It is in the dialectics between what is common and what is particular, what is open and what is hidden, what is distributed and what is withdrawn that the two spaces are constituted as distinctive social domains.

The boundaries between the public and private realms, as well as their content, have changed enormously throughout history. Their **meaning**, nevertheless, has remained much the same. Let me illustrate this distinction. Questions of gender will serve as an example in this regard. Changes in the domestic sphere were made possible through the struggles that brought the gender issue into the realm of the public sphere. In becoming constitutive of public debate they re-shape what, historically, has been excluded from the public realm. More than that, they re-shape modes of being, generate new patterns of subjectivity, of relationships, of what it is to be a women and what it is to be a man. So the link between women and privacy and between men and publicity is neither natural nor essentially and immutably true.

However, what determines whether an object is to become public or remain private is not the object itself, but the specific way in which it circulates in society and the place where social agents, in a given socio-historical setting, decide to locate it. The meaning of privacy - to hide, to withhold from the public - is the same; but the boundaries and content have changed, for what was before hidden - women, sexuality or relationships - now appear as part of the public domain.

In the following sections I shall discuss the meaning of the public sphere in different historical settings. My account, necessarily, will be selective and will neglect many dimensions worthy of discussion. But my aim is to identify the main contours, the most salient lines of development in a history which, by no means, has come to an end. Therefore, instead of giving an exhaustive account of the notion of the public sphere, I will single out the sources of the debate.

There are basically two historical moments that are considered to be paradigmatic for the notion of a public sphere (Habermas, 1989b). These two moments correspond to the fully developed Greek city-state and to the transformations which occurred in Europe from the 17th century to the first half of the 19th century. I shall begin by discussing the origins of the notion in the fully developed Greek city-state. Then I shall examine the conditions which render possible the emergence of the liberal model of the public sphere and discuss that in its own right. It is not my intention, however, to write a historical text. In using historical sources I attempt to grasp variations in the meanings and consequences of the public sphere and its counterpart, the private domain.

2.2. The Polis and the Public Sphere: The Greek-City State and Democracy

Although the notions of public with which we deal today were shaped in the process of the emergence, transformation and eventual disintegration of the so-called bourgeois public sphere, notions concerning what is public and what is not - that is to say, what is private - can be found in a more distant past which goes back to Ancient Greece.

Indeed it is the experience of the Greek *polis* which is the origin of the sharp - yet intricate - boundary between the public and the private realms and, as Habermas points out (1989b, p.4), "since the Renaissance the model of the Hellenic public sphere, as handed down to us in the form of Greek self-interpretation, has shared with everything else considered classical a peculiar normative power."

It is my opinion that this peculiar normative power to which Habermas refers derives its strength from the peculiarity of the Greek experience itself and I shall consider it a key moment in the complex history of the concept. My account is based on the work of Hannah Arendt (1958). In her book "The Human Condition" she traces back the meanings and structural configurations of the public sphere in Greece, highlighting the extent to which its original understanding has been lost. In a way it is an assessment of all Western philosophers, who preferred to speak of Man as a universal rather than of human plurality (Schürmann, 1989).

It is in the light of her work that I would like to outline some of the elements which characterise the public sphere. According to Arendt, the fact that people share a common space and are bound to each other through social companionship is not what distinguishes them from other animals. This cannot be considered a fundamental human condition. To live with other people is not enough; rather it is a necessity imposed upon us by the biological cycle of life which includes everything we share with other species - to eat, to sleep, to reproduce, etc. To live among people in a human fashion presupposes the capability of escaping from the realm of mere necessity to a quite different domain - the domain of action or politics in which people realise their capacities for speech and action. Of all the activities deemed necessary to the continuation of human life, only action (*praxis*) and speech (*lexis*) were regarded as political and would form what Aristotle called the *bios politikos*, i.e., that sort of life distinctively human which would ban from its frontiers everything simply necessary or serviceable.

The condition for both speech and action is human plurality, "the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world"(Arendt, 1958, p.7). It is

because people are different - and yet the same - that action and speech become necessary: if we were all identical there would be no need to communicate and to act upon an unvarying sameness; if we had nothing in common at all the very process of speech would lose its basis and action would not justify itself. Hence, what makes people's lives unique and distinct is not the bounds of a common life imposed by necessity and given by its natural allocation on the earth; but, on the contrary, it is the free will of action and of speech exercised in the realm of political life that constitutes the genuine human experience.

Here, it is worthwhile to make a detour back to the origin of the words we use. Arendt shows how the unique relationship between action and being together seems to be the reason for translating Aristotle's *zoon politikon* into the Latin *animal socialis* which is the regular translation since Thomas Aquinas (*homo est naturaliter politicus, id est, socialis*, that is, "man is by nature political, that is, social"). Yet, there is no equivalent to the word 'social' in Greek language or thought; its origin is Roman and although the word *societas* had initially a political meaning (it indicated an alliance between people for a specific purpose, which is very limited compared with the Greek understanding of political),"...more than any elaborated theory, this unconscious substitution of the social for the political betrays the extent to which the original understanding of politics has been lost" (Arendt, 1958, p.23).

The political life and the life of the household which have existed as independent - although related - entities since the rise of the Greek city-state coincides with the contrast between a public and private sphere of life. What characterized the sphere of the household, or the private sphere, was that in it people lived together according to their needs and the guiding drive was life itself; it fostered the cycles of birth and death and, in its shadows, everything related merely to the biological needs of life was kept secret from the view of one's fellow people. The sphere of the polis, or the public realm, on the other hand, was the realm of freedom and the relationship between the public and the private spheres of life rested on the fact that the taming of the necessities of life within the household was a pre-condition of the freedom in the polis. The mere liberation from the realm of

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necessity, however, should not be confused with freedom because freedom demands its own proper space - the public space of word and action which comprised the political life. This space was considered fundamental because there are in the world many important issues which require a choice that cannot be based on certainty.

Public life exists to tackle those matters of collective interest which are neither susceptible to being mastered by the rigour of intellectual cognition nor subjected to the despotism of a path that contains only one truth. Hence the importance of the "we" of common action, which happens between people and from which arises power understood as a resource generated by the ability of the members of a political community to agree on a common path of action. This is the basis of the statement "potestas in populo", that is, power comes from below, not from above. Without the public debate of a group, mediated by speech and action, there is no power and that is why, in ancient thought, power is unconnected with violence or despotism. The use of force and the solitude of an isolated leader ruling from above can never engender power. This is so not only in the polis but throughout the whole of occidental antiquity. Absolute, uncontested, rule and a political or public realm were mutually exclusive.

It is indeed in the experience of plurality and in the diversity of different perspectives - which, nevertheless, can lead to a consensus among the public - that the meaning of the public sphere is to be found. According to Arendt (1958), the term public indicates two interrelated, but not identical, phenomena: it signifies first, that what is public can be seen and heard by all and has the largest possible publicity; second, it means the world itself, to the extent that it is common to all people and is distinguished from each person's own private place within the world. However, the world should not be understood as the earth or nature in its pure state; quite the reverse, the world is the outcome of the fabrication of human hands - i.e., it relates to the human artifact and to the affairs that go on among those who inhabit its space. What characterizes essentially the living together of people in the world is that there is a **world of things between** those who share it in common. Like any in-between, this world of things both relates and separates people at one and the same

time. Hence the public realm as the common world sets up the sharp lines that both relate and separate people, that bring them together and yet prevent them from falling over each other.

At the same time public life provides the necessary conditions for history and permanence in the sense that its public nature allows the survival of whatever is to be saved from the natural destruction of time. The public space does not exist for one generation alone and is not limited to the living. Although it is the space people enter when they are born and leave behind when they die, it transcends the life cycle of mere mortals. Its immortality comprises its capacity to produce, maintain and eventually to transform a history preserved in artifacts and in the narratives of people's actions. If people were to be isolated within their own private space in the world, neither history nor political life would be possible at all. It is the meeting arena of public life which provides the conditions not only for discovering the common concerns of the present but also for identifying what the present owes to the past and what hopes it has for the future.

Furthermore, the public realm is the space which provides a basis for dialogue, since its reality is plural, that is, it depends on the presence of a multitude of different perspectives. For, notwithstanding the fact that the world is the common ground of all, everyone who is present has a different position within it and these positions can never coincide. The only possibility of a coincidence of perspectives depends upon the outcome of a process of speech and action which contains both the similarities and differences between people - that is, dialogue.

It is against this backcloth that the term private in its original privative sense finds its meaning. It was only in contrast to the significance of public life that the ancients attributed a sense to the word private. To live a completely private life would mean above all else to be deprived: to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others; to be deprived of a relationship that is defined by being related to, yet separated from, the others through the mediation of a common and shared world; to be deprived of a sense of permanence which comes

with the possibility of going beyond life itself. As Arendt (1958, p.58) points out, "the privation of privacy lies in the absence of others". This was the sense in which women and slaves were deprived in the Greek polis.

Although the private realm derived most of its meaning from the public realm and was considered secondary in Greek thought and in the experience of the polis, the true sense of privacy was to be found in the relationship that shaped the boundaries between privacy and publicity. What ultimately warrants the importance and necessity of the existence of a private realm is the fact that to be able to participate in the life of the polis and to develop the conditions for a human existence implies the existence of a place where people can be on their own which is recognised it as their unique space within the world. The preservation of boundaries was one of the most important elements constituting the reality of the city-state and, despite the fact that the rise of the public realm occurred at the expense of the private realm of the family and the household, the old sanctity of the home was never entirely lost. It is worthy of note that it was not respect for private property as we understand it today that prevented the polis from violating the private lives of its citizens and made it hold sacred the boundaries surrounding each property. Rather, it was the fact that to be a human being and to participate in the affairs of the world demands a proper location within it which each person can consider his own.[2] The law in its original sense was connected with these border lines between the public and the private; it was a space considered a sort of no man's land laying between the private and the public, fostering and protecting both realms and, at the same time, maintaining them quite distant from each other. If we consider the contemporary phenomenon of homelessness, Arendt's notion of privacy acquires an enormous force.

At this point in my exposition I think the normative power of the Greek

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[2] Arendt (1958, p.30) observes that even Plato whose political strategy would propose the end of private property and an increasing of the public realm to the point of destroying private life as a whole, still speaks with great respect and reverence of *Zeus Herkeios* who was the god of the border lines and calls the *heroi* - the boundaries between one state and another - divine, without seeing any contradiction.

experience and the legacy of its traditions becomes clear. Indeed, I would contend that this normative power is not only due to the content of that tradition but also to the fact that the major categories it offers us can still be found embedded within the whole corpus of philosophical thought that has developed in its wake. Above all its strength rests on the importance of reflecting, with them, on the contemporary forms of our daily lives and the extent to which we can claim their original meaning to make sense of our current experience. Notions such as plurality, action, speech, diversity, dialogue and consensus upon matters of general interest are more than ever present in the agenda of the social sciences and, from my point of view, are fundamental issues for social psychology. They all originated in the public space and at the same time continue to hold a basic relevance for psychological life; such categories are in themselves the synthesis of the dialectics between the social and the psychological.

2.3. The Emergence of the Liberal Public Sphere: From the Power of the Lord to the Power of a Public

The bourgeois public sphere is itself the outcome of a process that provoked a new relationship between the private and the public domains. Above all, the bourgeois public sphere was constituted as a radical claim to change the nature of the relations between the state and society. In the wake of this process there came about the novelties related to the transformed subjectivity of bourgeois people and the transformed texture of the experiences taking place in the social space. Public, publicity, publish, publicize and so forth are expressions which still, today, bear the constitutive elements of that era; such notions engender a new form and a new meaning to common life. Intimacy, interior, passions and love, as essentially private matters, are the counterpart of the affairs occurring in public; such new realities also acquired a new meaning for the uncertain societies that were being formed at that time.

To understand the public sphere in its fully developed bourgeois form it is necessary to go back to its origins and to study how it came about. Again, my

attempt to do that will be selective and I shall rely basically on Jürgen Habermas'account of the main elements that marked that process. His book *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*(Habermas, 1989b) is still the centre of a debate on the concept of the public sphere. As such, it provides the source of my discussion and remains the most complete description and analysis to date of the emergence and disintegration of the bourgeois public sphere.[3]

The distinction between *publicus* and *privatus* which existed in the tradition of Roman law borrowed from the Greeks had no common usage in European societies during the Middles Ages. Habermas (1989b, p.5) points out that the "precarious attempt to apply it to the legal conditions of the feudal system of domination based on fiefs and manorial authority (*Grundherrschaft*) unintentionally provides evidence that the opposition between the public and private spheres on the ancient (or the modern) model did not exist." What we will find in such societies is a situation in which all relations of domination were to be centred in the lord's household - all that existed, including the organization of the social labour, was organized and had its cornerstone around the house of the lord. Regarding institutional criteria, there is no evidence that even feudal societies of the High Middle Ages possessed a public sphere as a unique realm distinct from the private sphere. Although the period would consider public symbols of sovereignty (such as the prince's seal and any other attributes of lordship), this publicity was not part of the social realm, but something which would present itself through the *person* of the lord. Medieval public representation was immediately linked to the concrete existence of the lord: in presenting **himself** he presented the power. There was no notion of a **public** power; the power to rule was connected to **personal** attributes stemming from the ownership of land and aristocratic lineage. At this time words like excellence, highness or majesty sought to characterize the uniqueness of those beings who, through their personal existence, were capable of public representation. Needless to say, the church was part of the feudal authority and as such it also held the power

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[3] See C. Calhoun (ed) *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1992) for an account of the debates surrounding Habermas's concept of the public sphere.

to represent.

This type of publicity gradually disappeared during the long process of polarization that antedated the bourgeois struggle to assert itself against the feudal order. Religious freedom became the first area of private autonomy with the changes the Reformation brought into effect; the bond with divine authority was from then on a private matter. The state budget was separated from the private expenses of the lord's household and the bureaucracy, the military and, to some extent, the legal institutions gained independence from the privatized sphere of the prince's court.

By the end of the eighteenth century the feudal authorities (church, princes and nobility) had broken apart into private elements on the one hand and public elements on the other. The power of the nobility passed instead to the organs of public authority, parliament and the legal institutions and those social groups that had developed and which were concerned with trades and professions came into being as a sphere of bourgeois society which stood apart from the state as a genuine area of private autonomy. Public, then, would refer to the state. The state had developed as an entity having an objective existence over against the person of the ruler. The public was the "public authority". This new public sphere which surfaced with national and territorial states corresponded to the need to respond to the transformations that were occurring at the very base of society, namely, the permanence of the relationships springing from the exchange of commodities and information. This is the time of the development of the printing press and the emergence and consolidation of capitalism.

Public then, would no longer refer to the representative court of the prince bestowed with authority, but to an institution regulated according to competence, to an apparatus endowed with a monopoly on the legal exercise of authority. In contrast, private designated anything excluded from the sphere of the state apparatus; it is not until after the middle of the sixteenth century that the word *privat* appeared in Germany assuming the same meaning, as in the English *private* and the French *privé*, not holding public office or official position. Out of this private realm, with no

connections at all to the state apparatus, developed the sphere of "civil society". As a legitimate domain of private autonomy, civil society began to shape the opposition between the state and society and led eventually to a quite clear distinction between the two.

From the personification of publicity in the being of the lord to the endowment of the state apparatus with the idea of a public power, the notions of public and private are shown, above all else, to be historical categories that define - and at the same time are defined by - the transformations occurring in the social organization of labour and in claims to political power. My attempt here was to demonstrate that the conditions that allowed the fully developed model of the liberal bourgeois public sphere - namely, the distinction between state and society and the advent of a "civil society" of private people standing against public power - are the product of transformations concerning the substantive mode in which different societies established the distribution of power and set up conditions conducive to the development of collective efforts. In the following section I shall be concerned with the description of the particular features of the bourgeois public sphere in its fully developed form, the debate around the logic of its production and the extent to which it remains a paradigmatic experience to the institution of democratic societies.

2.4. The Bourgeois Public Sphere

The bourgeois public sphere is constituted of privatised individuals who assemble together to form a public, or to discuss matters of public concern. Here, privatised individuals assume the sense given by Habermas (1989a; 1989b), who considers them as such because they are the actors in a privatised sphere of commodity exchange and social labour. The elements that brought into being this new public which is engaged in critical political discussion evolved in the wake of the development of early modern capitalism. The economic independence provided by private owners of commodities (be it members of the labour force or those who control the means of production) meeting each other freely in the market place, the

discussion flowering in coffee houses, salons and public houses[4], the emergence of an independent press, and the critical reflection fostered by letters and novels - these were the main factors that contributed to the constitution of the public sphere.

The new public sphere brings about a novel conception of political participation and of the relationship between state and society. It indicates an arena where citizens seek political participation through the medium of rational talk. As I described before, the bourgeois public sphere acquired its fully developed form in early modern Europe, when the bourgeois, as a new social class, started to assert its power over against absolutist states. The aim of that new "public" was to mediate the relationship between state and society, by making the state accountable to society via publicity. Accountability is thus one of the substantial novelties generated by the liberal model of the public space. It meant, at first, the requirement that information concerning the actions of the state should be subjected to scrutiny by the force of public opinion. It also meant that the general interest of society was to be transmitted to agents of the state via institutional channels such as legally guaranteed free speech, a free press and freedom of assembly.

In this context, the development and transformation of the media became a key element in the consolidation of the public sphere. The rise of literacy and of journalism to give an account of the intense debates occurring within literary circles soon gave way to a fully developed press. The press, according to Habermas (1989b, p.181) is the "public sphere's preeminent institution and its institutional transformations correspond to a shift in the function of the public sphere as a special realm".

The public sphere, therefore, comprised institutional mechanisms aiming at a rationalisation of political life by rendering the state accountable to its citizens. At the same time, it implied a dialogue among citizens which incorporated a number of

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[4] The spread of salons in France, table societies in Germany and coffee houses in England was overwhelming at the turn of the 18th century. By the first decade of the 18th century London already had 3000 coffee houses, each with a stable group of habitués.

ideal features such as: i) debate in the public space must be open and accessible to all; ii) the issues at stake must be of common concern; mere private interests were not admissible; iii) inequalities of status were to be disregarded; and iv) the participants were to decide as peers. The results of such a public debate, then, would be public opinion considered as a consensus reached through free debate about common life. The use of reason as the guide for public debate was thus another substantial novelty in the liberal model of the public sphere; through it, society as a whole would create a knowledge of itself.

These two aspects of accountability and of the use of reason to negotiate issues of common concern constitute the pith of the new principles that the bourgeois public put in opposition to the ancient regime. Their claims against the public authority were not against the concentration of power, but against how power was exercised. The new principle was that the exercise of power should be controlled and scrutinised by the public and the proceedings of the state should be made public. As a new ascending class, strange as it may appear, the bourgeois were not seeking to rule. Their claim was a claim **for power**, "something which was not just the claim of changing one basis of legitimation for another but was intended to change the nature of domination as such" (Habermas, 1989b, p.56).

The liberal model of the public sphere in bourgeois society lies at the centre of the debate concerning issues such as democracy, citizenship, political participation and so forth. Habermas's account remains the main source of this debate. Yet, there are a number of important criticisms of his conceptions, most of which related to his alleged idealisation of the public sphere (Landes, 1988; Fraser, 1990; Ryan, 1990; Thompson, 1990; Eley, 1992). These critiques contend basically that the bourgeois public sphere never came to actualize its presuppositions and its utopian potential was never fully realised. According to these authors, the evidence for such a contention is manifold. First, although the public sphere was constituted by the principles of accessibility and publicity, its actual constitution rested upon a number of important **exclusions**. Landes (1988) argues that the most important exclusion was gender. Eley (1992) goes further and claims that, connected with the gender question,

there were other important exclusions rooted in the processes of class formation. Clubs, salons and coffee houses were anything but accessible to all, they say. These places actually formed the training ground for groups of bourgeois men who were preparing themselves to govern. More than that, this network of public discussion and elaboration of a culture of literacy was merely a means of distinguishing bourgeois man, on the one hand, from the aristocracy whom they intended to displace and, on the other hand, from the popular strata whom they intended to dominate.

Fraser (1990) extends further her critique of Habermas's conceptions. According to her, the problem is not only his idealisation of the public sphere. Habermas, she says, "fails to examine other, non-liberal, non-bourgeois, competing public spheres" (1990, p.60-1), and that is precisely why he idealises the liberal public sphere. Fraser demonstrates that there was a multiplicity of public arenas competing with the bourgeois public sphere and that these various publics have always been in conflict with one another.

There is no doubt that the various critiques described above can cast light on a number of important issues concerning the logic of production of the public sphere in bourgeois society. Habermas has responded to these critiques, recognising that the "growing feminist literature has sensitized our awareness to the patriarchal character of the public sphere itself..."(1992b, p.427). However, neither Habermas nor expressive feminist theorists would be willing to deny the importance of the public sphere as a guiding concept in democracy. Fraser (1990) points out its importance as an arena for both dialogue and political participation which is not purely guided by the logic of market exchange. And Benhabib (1993) goes further, stating that feminists have lacked a critical model of public and private spaces and, therefore, rather than just criticizing Habermas's theory, it would be more appropriate for them to form an alliance with it. I think there are two points which are worthy of further attention in the logic of the critiques outlined above. The first concerns the alleged gap between the ideal principles of the public sphere and their actualisation. This is the same gap that has always existed between ideals, projects for change and their realisation. It is a simple historical fact to acknowledge that, for any fundamental

transformation to occur, there must be an idea, or a principle, or a project for its realisation. The critiques that assert that the public sphere was never in practice what it was intended to be in principle overlook the importance of those principles as historical facts. As Holub (1991, p.3) points out "what attracted Habermas to the notion of a public sphere then and now is its *potential* [the stress is mine] as a foundation for a critique of society based on democratic principles". The fact that the principle of accessibility to all has never actually been implemented and is still a long way from being achieved is not a reason to deny the model of the public sphere. Besides, the public sphere is discussed today both as a concept to guide the project of radical democracy **and** as a historical phenomenon, open to evaluation and critique. It seems that in the critique developed around Habermas's work there is, quite often, a misunderstanding between these two levels; thus, the concept is criticised on the basis of claims that the public sphere never existed and its potentiality for guiding that which *could and should* exist, runs the risk of being lost. As Mouffe (1992) says "instead of proclaiming the ideological and illusory character of so-called 'formal bourgeois democracy', why not take its declared principles literally and force liberal democratic societies to be accountable for their professed ideals?" (p.2).

The second aspect relates to the idea of competing public spheres as opposed to the notion of a public sphere. The main argument in favour of competing public spheres is based on their potential for expressing plurality and diversity. Moreover, they offer a proper space for social groups that are excluded from the dominant public sphere and, therefore, can exercise political action in a public sphere of their own. It seems to me that there are many dangers at stake in such a conception. First of all, it institutionalises what is, in reality, the outcome of historical inequalities. Second, and even more seriously, it retreats from the idea of a common space for dialogue and rational debate, where people, in spite of their private interests, can assemble together and reach a form of consensus. The mere idea of competing public spheres denies the very principle of a public sphere, namely, a space of common concern. And again, if the argument is just that such a place does not exist, I would say that for things to exist they must be constructed by the actions and ideas of

humans, for history is nothing but the construction of that which did not previously exist. Besides, I would contend that to keep groups marginalised in a 'competing' public sphere of their own is a dangerous way of keeping those groups apart from the main arena of decision-making.

The public sphere, thus, is discussed today both as a guiding concept in the political project of establishing a radical democracy and as a historical phenomenon, open to evaluation and critique. It remains as a paradigmatic idea for thinking about democracy and the possibility of a common space for dialogue. It is indeed an idea that contains all the problems derived from inequalities in the distribution of power and the deep fractures in western societies. But it can be, nevertheless, as a historical fact, a yardstick for the collective production of memory and understanding.

2.5. The Public Sphere: The approach of social psychology

The foregoing discussion has stressed the public sphere in relation to its historical development. In this section I shall focus on a related theme, namely, the connection between public life and socio-psychological phenomena. This connection represents, in my view, a key aspect in the constitution of a substantive *social* psychology.

The public sphere as such, in its fully developed bourgeois form, brings about the following novelties: accountability, accessibility, publicity, and the use of reason in the negotiation of consensus, which otherwise would not be possible, given the plurality and diversity of the public realm. As I said before, the fact that these novelties were never completely realised in practice does not suffice to deny them altogether as historical facts. On the contrary, they must remain as ideal paradigms reminding us of what is still to be achieved.

It is in the light of these constitutive aspects of the public realm that I would suggest its correspondence with the notion of otherness - as an inter-subjective space. The public sphere as a space that exists because of human plurality, as a space that

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is sustained because of human diversity, as a space that introduces the notion of accountability and finds its expression in dialogue, brings to the fore the necessary mediations between the one and the other. The notion of a *generalised other*, developed by Mead (1977) is indicative of these mediations. Mead's view of the generalised other is that "any thing - any object or set of objects, whether animate or inanimate, human or animal, or merely physical - toward which he [the human individual] acts, or to which he responds, socially, is an element in what for him is the generalised other; by taking the attitudes of which he becomes conscious of himself as an object or individual, and thus develops a self or personality."(1977, p.218). It is the generalised other which gives to the individual his unity of self, and there is no possibility of a full development of the self without the internalisation of the attitudes of others. The importance of a community follows from that. It evinces a sense of "we" in the constitution of the individual self, which attests once and for all that private lives do not emerge from within but from without, that is, in public.

Freud has opened up a fertile soil for thinking about the individual subject in these terms. In his study on the ego and the group he states: "in the individual's mental life someone else is invariably involved, as a model, as an object, as a helper, as an opponent, and so from the very first individual psychology, in this extended but entirely justifiable sense of the words, is at the same time social psychology as well"(1921/1985, p.95). In the psychoanalytic tradition, it was perhaps Lacan, who took up the notion of the Other as constitutive in the whole development of the subject. He contends that the unconscious, the paradigmatic notion of psychoanalytic theory, is "the discourse of the Other" (Lacan, 1987, p.193). Lacan develops the notion of *'Autre'* or *'grand Autre'* (in English the 'capitalised Other') when exploring the idea of 'otherness' developed from the Freudian concept of 'object'. In his view, the capitalised Other, being "the locus of the deployment of speech", is structured as language and therefore as a social contract (1987, p.264).

The dialectics between the public and the private realms in the social domain thus includes the dialectics between the I and the Other, and highlights the necessity of taking into account a theory of the self in assessing the quality of both public and

private lives. For who am I but the self the others present to me? The mirror as an object of self-confrontation reminds us of the myth of Narcissus and remains a sign of how deceitful the juxtaposition of images that are only controlled by one's own eyes can be. The actual possibility of confrontation, therefore, is given by another mirror in everyday life - the face of an Other, the eyes of an Other, the gesture of an Other. The fact that humans can interrogate themselves and that they are capable of playing with different territories and sites to reflect their own identities just shows that, beyond any type of isolationism and individualism, the true possibility of individuality lies in the presence of others.

In a different - yet related - vein, Billig (1989) has developed an important contribution to the constitutive character that public life bears upon psychological processes. On discussing the Ancient theorists of rhetoric, he proposes that the ability to argue, and to contradict, is fundamental to the processes of human thinking. Billig's work allows us to see how argumentation plays a role in the constitution of the psychological mind. Such a conception discloses the public nature of dialogue and the various mechanisms of conversation which are incorporated in the processes of thinking. Argumentation is in itself a social practice. It presupposes the presence of different perspectives and the will to reach a form of consensus. In this sense, it is based both in differences and in commonalities. People indeed can argue and contradict each other and they do differ, most of the time, upon fundamental issues. But in the very act of arguing and contradicting each other, they are enacting what they have **in common**. That is what makes dialogue necessary and worthy. I think it is not accidental that Billig goes back to the tradition of the Greek polis in order to reconstruct the very elements of argumentation and contradiction. The Greek polis has been, and still is, a major paradigm to the idea of a public sphere. Plurality, the very basis of dialogue and argumentation, is at the heart of the public sphere and it is the *sine qua non* condition to its existence.

But if public life, as a generalised other, is a constituent element in the geneses and development of individual lives, it can also cast light on those specific social-psychological phenomena that are firmly rooted in public life, as are, for

instance, social representations. It is important to note that I am not saying that individuals do not have social representations in their individual psyches. They do, and they are actually the holders and producers of social representations. But in order to **produce**, to **bear** and to **transmit** them, isolated individuals are not enough. They must meet in a public fashion and engage in a communicative interaction with one another. Harré (1981) draws on the public and private spheres to think about cognitive processes that involve essentially socially distributed effects and conditions. Although, he says, "lingering Cartesianism is everywhere, suggesting that if anything is cognitive it must be individual and private"(1981, p.212), there are important cognitive processes that are not inner and private, but happen when displayed in public. As he argues "what sort of statements are being made in concrete social activities, such as strikes, riots, parties, working breakfasts, overtaking on the inner lane and so on? Starting with this as a rough guide: modern strikes can hardly be seriously taken to be economically motivated. They are best understood as claims to recognition and dignity, as displays of worth; riots too may be something like that: look at me, and take me seriously. In that interpretation a riot is not pushed from within by alleged psychological states but drawn from without by the presence of an audience and the opportunity for staging a display of character" (Harré, 1981, p.213). Apart from the statement that modern industrial action can hardly be conceived of as economically motivated (let us bear in mind the reality of underdeveloped societies where strikes are still today primarily orientated towards achieving economic goals), Harré's analysis illuminates the subjective aspects of public action, in which private individuals assemble to perform rituals of cognition and recognition, of claims, demands and social roles. It is hard to imagine how those processes could take place if not in a public arena, where the presence of Others guarantees the basic condition for them to occur. More than that, it is through the actions of social actors, performing acts called upon by the demands of a generalised other, that the public sphere appears as the space where a community as a whole can develop and sustain a knowledge of itself.

The importance of the public sphere, however, not only relates to the quality of public life in itself. It goes further than that. The way in which a community

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represents its public life shapes both the way the generalised other is internalised by each of its members and, therefore, also the particular subjects that emerge in that process. As Mead (1977) has shown, in the full development of the self, its constitution is given not only by the immediate circle of its relationships to others, but by the "organisation of the social attitudes of the generalised other or the social group as a whole to which he belongs" (p.222). The representations about the public sphere, as the representations of a generalised other are, therefore, constitutive of individual lives, insofar as they constitute the self. Individualism, as a phenomenon that epitomises the totally privatised individual, can exemplify just such a process. Individualism is a basic failure to consider and represent the generalised other. In other words, individualistic behaviour does not take into account the common life of all. In this sense, individualism does not deny only the common life, or the public life. It also denies the fully developed self.

Sennet (1977) has drawn attention to the imbalance that exists today between public and private life. In his study he demonstrates how such an imbalance has become a problem and why it matters. According to him, that vital part of one's life lying outside the walls of the family home has been lost and one's fellow person in the public street has become a stranger, a threat. Silence has taken over from talk, and observation has replaced participation as the only way in which to experience public life. As a result, private life becomes out of focus, as increasingly narcissistic forms of intimacy set in. Even more, Sennet argues, the public world is usurped by a private psychic supremacy which leads to a deterioration of both individual and society.

Although Sennet has been criticised for overlooking the importance of self-reflection as one of the marks of the reflection of modernity (Giddens, 1991), I would agree with his fundamental point, namely, the risks of an all-encompassing privatised intimacy invading and impoverishing public life. The relationship between the public and the private realms and the clear demarcation of the boundaries between the two is, from my point of view, a key element in the demarcation of realms of being. We do not experience life at once, and to learn how to demarcate

and preserve spaces of sociability and intimacy is necessary to maintain differences and nuances, which are the basis for finding similarities. The necessity of defending the existence of the two separated realms, the public and the private and at the same time, the recognition of their essential connection is a crucial matter in modern societies. It is not only crucial in sustaining the possibility of democracy and citizenship - where political subjects in speech and action participate in that sphere of life that is common to all, and therefore cannot rely on private interests and intimacy. It is, furthermore, crucial to the constitution of a private life that bears in itself the full consequences of the fact that people live together and there is no human life without the presence of other human beings.

3.0. SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Envisaging public life - of which we know very well there is all too little - requires an almost childlike feeling of omnipotence.

Alexander Kluge

The study of social representations has received a great deal of attention in the field of social psychology over the last four decades. The concept made its entrance in the field through the work of Serge Moscovici on representations of psychoanalysis in France (Moscovici, 1961/1976). In the Anglo-Saxon tradition of social psychology, in spite of the suspiciousness with which social representations was initially received, the concept has been discussed and incorporated as a useful tool in the understanding and analysis of social psychological phenomena. It is not my intention here to review the progress of the concept and of its constituent elements, for there is a considerable amount of work already available in the English language (see Farr & Moscovici, 1984; Farr, 1987; Jodelet, 1991). The various confrontations which have occurred between the concept of social representations and other concepts within social psychology are also beyond the scope of my analyses here. Research in social representations has developed sufficiently to produce a field of discussion in its own right. There are plenty of issues concerning the concept and the theory that need to be clarified and developed. These include issues at the level of both theory and methods and the relationship between the two, and it is within such a perspective that I locate my own effort here.

In this chapter I discuss the relationship between social representations and the public sphere. This relationship is a complex one and must be unpacked carefully. I do this at two levels which, although related, must be analysed in their own right. The first concerns the *logic of production* of social representations. It concerns, therefore, social representations **in** the public sphere. I argue that the public sphere, as the place of the generalised Other, is constitutive of social representations, in that

it provides the ground for their emergence. The second level examines the problem of social representations **of** the public sphere, that is, how the public sphere itself becomes an object for the development of social representations. Modernity has brought about different ways of relating to spaces which are common to all and to spaces which belong only to a few. Any sharp distinction between inner and outer, or between public and private, has become problematic ever since the discovery of the individual. Farr (1991c), for instance, points out how the very notion of the individual becomes a collective representation at a particular point in history. What seems to be an ideology - individualism - is already the outcome of collective ways of representing reality. In other words, *modes of being* are themselves the outcome of representations which quite sharply shape the substance of everyday life in terms of practices, talk, patterns of cultural transmission and so forth. The arguments I present in this chapter to relate social representations - as a specific social psychological phenomenon - and social representations - as a specific social space - are rooted in the processes through which the human subject develops a self, creates symbols and opens up to the diversity of a world of others. Drawing on the concept of potential space (Winnicott, 1967), I propose a cross-level analogy between the development of symbols in the individual subject and the development of social representations in public life.

These two aspects of the problem - social representations in the public sphere and social representations of the public sphere - give it a very specific configuration. If, as I argue, social representations are bound to a public sphere and if, at the same time, in the process of their construction, they are creating an objectified knowledge of the public sphere, then to look at their content and form is of crucial importance to any intellectual perspective concerned with the possibilities of common life, which goes beyond privatised interests without losing sight of the individual. Many social psychologists have manifested such a concern (Moscovici, 1963; Farr, 1981; Markova, 1982; Billig, 1991; Jodelet, 1991). They all reveal, to a greater or lesser extent, an attempt to develop and to give theoretical breadth to the dialectical relationship between the individual and his/her society. It is this same underlying presupposition that guides my effort here.

3.1 Social Representations in the Public Sphere

In chapter two I have attempted to map the concept of the public sphere with the notion of other in psychology. In this chapter I want to establish the links between otherness - as inter-subjectivity - and the public sphere in the constitution of social representations. I intend to do so by discussing (i) the place of the other in the constitution of symbolic activity; (ii) the extent to which social representations build upon the representational activity of the human subject; and, finally, (iii) the extent to which social representations go beyond, and therefore are distinct from, the individual work of symbolic representation. I hope it will soon be clear that these three phases of my discussion are an analytical device. The emergence of the ontological human subject, with a proper sense of self, is bound to the emergence of symbolic activity, which, in its turn, depends upon a social reality. The concept of potential space, as proposed by Winnicott (1974) can shed light on these intricate dialectics and I shall use it to guide my theoretical endeavour in this issue. Piaget (1964/1968) is another important source in the discussion I am proposing here. His account of the genesis of representations and their relationship with symbols runs in parallel with the process of "de-centring " which the human subject must undergo in order to construct him/herself. I believe that such a line of argumentation has important implications:

(a) It debunks the idea of the individual as a private enterprise. The individual, in him/herself, is the outcome of a process of socialisation. Thus, my argument profits heavily from what Mead (1934) has shown, namely, individuation and socialisation are different elements of one and the same process in the ontogenesis of human experience. The private individual is, rather, a **historical** form; it emerges in specific societies and tends to prevail in those societies where public life becomes highly privatised (Rose, 1981). When psychologists

individualise the human subject to the extreme point of individualism[1], they are acting out the pressures of a historical reality. It is faintly ironic that a stance that attempts to deny social reality is in itself shaped by social reality. Just like any other social actor, the psychologist cannot escape it.

(b) It maintains a perspective on the individual subject as someone capable of agency and of creative action upon the world. The claim that the individual subject constitutes a domain of understanding and analysis in his/her own right does not necessarily entail an individualistic approach. On the contrary, much research concerning the genesis of the ontological subject includes the social reality necessary to account for that genesis.

3.1.1. The making of symbolic activity

The making of social representations in the public sphere is discussed here by reference to a line of research that unfolds the origins of symbolic activity in the human being. Symbolic activity is deeply rooted in the process of the development of the self or, rather, it emerges as an outcome of the fully developed self. Winnicott's model of self development and Piaget's research on the structures that underlie the cognitive development of the child can illustrate the complex inter-connections between the infant and the environment, as well as the main elements that make these connections meaningful. In the following pages I shall draw

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[1] See Allport, G.W. (1985) *The historical background of modern social psychology.* In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (eds) A Handbook of social psychology (vol.1, 3rd ed., pp. 1-46) Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley. Allport strongly defends the non-existence of social psychological phenomena which would go beyond the individual as the centre of analysis. See also Brock, A. (1992) Was Wundt a 'Nazi'?:Volkerpsychologye, Racism and Anti-Semitism. *Theory & Psychology.* Vol. 2, (2), pp.205-223, for a very interesting discussion of Allport's essay and his extreme animosity towards all forms of collective psychology including Durkheim's theory of collective representations.

extensively on their work[2], for both Piaget and Winnicott considered that it is not until the human being has integrated his/her thoughts and feelings about himself/herself into a global perspective which expands beyond personal interest to the whole of humankind, that she/he will become an individual.

According to Winnicott, the journey from absolute dependence to a relative independence is what characterises the path of development of the human being. The fact that human beings are born in a state of absolute helplessness makes the care of other people the first psychological reality with which the infant has "to cope". The infant is totally dependent upon the caretaker and, therefore, it is in the vicissitudes of this relationship that his/her life has to start. It is not only the dramatic situation of the neonate that marks this beginning, even though this situation turns out to be a symbol of all vulnerability. It is also the fact that the survival of the neonate depends entirely on external care which, in its turn, is related to the fortuitous fact of the infant being loved. The baby depends upon being held by others to be fed, to be kept comfortable and to be kept clean. The infant has no means of knowing about the details of care and there is no distinction between what is "me" and what is "not-me". S/he does register, however, the experience of satisfaction that derives from the external care of her/his needs. Such a state is described as primary narcissism and it is characterised by a lack of integration where it is not possible to talk about a self at all. Aspects of the infant are felt as aspects of the environment and vice versa. However, it is important to note that the extreme dependency of the infant does not condemn her/him to a state of total alienation from others. It is indeed through a delicate dialectics, in which the infant is helpless and dependent on maternal care, that the source of her/his power is to be found. Because the infant is helpless the caretaker holds and handles the baby in total devotion; and so the baby gains control over his significant others.

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[2] The processes described here are discussed by Winnicott mainly in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (London: Hogarth Press, 1965), and *Playing and Reality* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) and by Piaget in *Six Psychological Studies* (London: London University Press, 1968) and *The Psychology of the Child* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1969).

The path along which the journey from dependence to relative independence progresses is based upon what Winnicott has called holding and handling, activities permeating the relationship between infant and caretaker. The function of the caretaker is to provide a reliable holding for the immature and weak existence of the infant. Progressively, the caretaker starts handling the baby, which involves the introduction of both absence and failure. These are the first limits of an outside reality to the sensory-psychic experience of the infant. The caretaker is not always there; she/he has an independent existence outside of and beyond her/his relationship with the infant. From the experience of holding, there arises a sense of trust in the environment that the caretaker represents, and from the experience of handling the first elements of ego-relatedness, or communication in the full sense of the word. This journey leads to three major achievements, namely, integration, personalisation and the beginnings of object-relating. These achievements are not necessarily consecutive; on the contrary, they are inter-dependent and often overlap.

Winnicott's account of the transition from absolute dependence to a state of relative independence coincides in many ways with Freud's description of the transition from the pleasure principle to the reality principle (Freud, 1920). But Winnicott developed this transition further, for he regarded the reality principle as "an insult". According to him, "the Reality Principle is the fact of the existence of the world whether the baby creates it or not, it is an arch-enemy of spontaneity, creativity and the sense of the real"(Winnicott, 1961, p.236). Since growing however, involves an acceptance of a world that is "not-me" and of a relationship to it, how does the infant cope with the "insult" of the reality principle? The answer Winnicott offers is the substance of illusions or what he has called the *potential space*. For him, the potential space is an intermediate state between the infant's incapacity and his progressive capacity to acknowledge and to come to terms with reality. The illusion experienced by the infant is that of *omnipotence*, which the holding and handling of his needs in a condition of ego-relatedness permits; omnipotence that, as Winnicott observes, is real for him but an illusion from the point of view of the observer. It is in this space that reality and fantasy meet and become one, by means of the brief experience of omnipotence guaranteed by the caring environment: in it the infant has

the illusion of creating that which is already there to be found.

The notion of potential space is, perhaps, Winnicott's most original contribution. The concept was developed from direct observation of the relationship between children, their care-takers and the first object they adopt as their own special possession. This first object - the transitional object - has a particular importance to the child. The transitional object is the first "not-me" possession and it plays a crucial theoretical role in regard to the conception of illusion developed by Winnicott. It is related to what Laplanche (1987, p.94) would call the acquisition of the "first-me" possession. This is the first step on the road to acquiring a sense of self. A further step in the development of the potential space between the individual self and the environment is the play of young children. Playing is a direct development from the transitional phenomena just described. It involves trust in the environment and the capacity to be "alone" in the presence of others. At the same time, playing consists of "playing with reality"; it retains the experience of omnipotence and thus creates a reality for the child. Winnicott considered playing to be the basis of cultural experience and of creativity in adult life. Communication, in a similar vein, occurs in the overlaps between potential spaces which transcend the fundamental boundary between the "me" and the "not-me". Indeed, if for Winnicott the very essence of growth is the construction of a boundary where the self and the inner reality begin to be *one* in relation to a shared reality of *others*, the potential space transcends this boundary. In the potential space people are neither in the world of fantasy, nor in the world of shared reality, but in the paradoxical third place that belongs to both these places at once.

In an illuminating paper about the concept of sign in the works of Vygotsky, Winnicott and Bakhtin, Leiman (1992) demonstrates how Winnicott's notion of transitional phenomena is crucial to an explanation of the quite complex "interplay between the subjective and objective aspects of the intersubjective space". Western philosophy has so insistently imposed its tradition of focusing either on the subjective or on the objective, that the space of interplay between the two is often ignored. However, it is exactly in that space that "we can better understand the roots of

symbolic activity. The main element in Winnicott's understanding of the 'third area of living', which he approaches by the concepts of transitional phenomena and potential space, is the emergence of a symbol in the meeting point of union and separateness" (1992, p.215).

The potential space, therefore, is the space of **symbols**. Symbols, the complex matter of the meaning of meaning, presuppose a capacity to evoke presence in spite of absence, since the fundamental aspect of symbols is that they stand for something else. In that sense, they create the object **represented**, constructing a new reality to a reality that is already there. They fuse the subject and the object, because they are the expression of the **relationship** between the subject and the object. Through symbols, different things can stand for each other and can converge into similarity; they allow for infinite variability and, yet, they are referential. Thus, it is of the essence of the symbolic activity - the activity of the potential space - to acknowledge a shared reality - the reality of others. Yet, it is a *creative* acknowledgement and leads to involvement with others and with the object-world. The reference to the world of others is what guarantees the creative nature of symbolic activity, so one's experience can build upon the experience of others continually creating the experience of a shared reality. That is why Winnicott says that it is out of difference, in every sense of the word, that the human self grows, for "when one speaks of a man, one speaks of him along with the summation of his cultural experiences. The whole forms the unit" (Winnicott, 1967, p.99).

As Davis & Wallbridge (1981) point out, Winnicott's views are very close to those of Piaget regarding the formation of symbols and the symbolic play of the young child. Although the focus of their concern was quite distinct for, whereas the former was looking at emotional development, the latter was looking at intellectual development, they would both agree that the affective and intellectual dimensions are inseparable in the development of the child's sense of reality.

Piaget's work is complex and highly relevant to social psychology. I am aware of the critiques which have surrounded his oeuvre, specially in the Anglo-

Saxon world (Duveen, 1994). Here I draw on Piaget because I believe his notion of decentring is essential in understanding the ontogenesis of cognitive development and symbolic activity. This conception pervades all of his work, and constitutes, in his own account, one of the most important facets of the development of cognitive structures in the child. Piaget compares the process of decentring, which the child undergoes, to a "miniature Copernican Revolution". As he says, "at the starting point of this development the neonate grasps everything to himself - or in more precise terms, to his own body - whereas at the termination of this period, i.e., when language and thought begin, he is for all practical purposes but one element or entity among others in a universe that he has gradually constructed himself, and which hereafter he will experience as external to himself" (Piaget, 1964/1968, p.9). The emergence of a "self" as such, in opposition to an external world, is closely connected to (or even more, is a pre-condition of) the mental transformations that permit the representation of things and, therefore, the development of symbolic thought and language. On the plane of knowledge the activity of the subject requires a permanent decentring. It is this de-centring that "makes the subject enter upon, not so much an already available and therefore external universality, as an uninterrupted process of coordinating and setting in reciprocal relations"(Piaget, 1968/1971, p.139).

3.1.2. Social Representations and Representational Activity: The Symbolic Construction of Reality

The relationship between the concept of social representations and representational activity *per se* is ambiguous. This is because the study of individual representations arouses the ghost of cognitivism and its basically individualistic perspective. The weight of classical cognitive theories - where a representation is a mere reflection of the outside world in the mind, or a mark of the mind which is reproduced in that world - cannot be lightly dismissed. There is, however, another ghost which continues to haunt the study of individual representations: that of Freud and of the whole literature inspired by the psychoanalytic theory of symbols. The theory of social representations undeniably draws on a theory of symbolic activity.

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Social representations are regarded, according to Moscovici, as forms of social knowledge which imply two faces, as interconnected as the two sides of a sheet of paper: the figurative, or image-making, side and the symbolic side (Moscovici, 1981). It is, therefore, the latter ghost which needs to be made "real", if the complexities of the relationship between the unconscious, the representation and symbolic activity are to be acknowledged within the theory of social representations.

The research on social representations has considered to a great extent what a representation is. Jodelet (1984b) fashions the concept of social representations and their development into a theory by taking into account what a representation is. Drawing extensively on Piaget, she argues that the act of representing overcomes the rigid divide between the external and internal universes. A representation involves an active element of construction and re-construction; the subject is the author of these mental constructions which he/she can transform as they develop. From her analysis of the act of representing, she identifies five characteristics which are important in the construction of a social representation. These characteristics are the referential aspect of a representation, that is, the fact that it is always the reference **of** someone **to** something; its imaginative and constructive character, which renders it autonomous and creative, and finally its social nature, the fact that the "categories which structure and express the representation are borrowed from a common culture and these categories are those of language" (Jodelet, 1984b, p.365). It is clear from Jodelet's account just how crucial the act of representing is to the very construction of a social representation. It should also be clear how her account can be combined with Winnicott's notion of symbolic activity and potential space.

Kaës (1984), in an explicit attempt to conceptualise a representation from a psychoanalytic perspective, develops the hypothesis that a representation is a **work**, a work of recall of that which is absent, and a work of liaison. According to him, "la représentation est un **travail**: travail de l'absence (appel à re-présenter) et un travail de liaison (réduction de l'écart par la pensée)" (Kaës, 1984, p.373). The representation, therefore, operates in a field of absence *calling* for a re-presentation of that which is absent. In doing this, it produces a liaison between the absent and

the present. Moreover, Kaës argues, the processes which are at stake in the working of a representation are those which psychoanalysis has discovered regarding dreams, mental life and the nature of the unconscious: condensation and displacement. They both relate to a capacity for playing with meaning. Indeed, the unconscious and its processes, Freud remarks, "is not simply more careless, more irrational, more forgetful and more incomplete than waking thought; it is completely different from it qualitatively and for that reason not immediately comparable with it. It does not think, calculate or judge in any way at all; it restricts itself to giving things a new form" (Freud, 1900, p.507). It is precisely this capacity to give things a new form - through the active playing of the psyche - which constitutes a representation. In Freud's view the primary material of the psyche cannot express itself, except through a representation, which is a delegation of the drives into different objects. The psyche's representational activity, thus, involves a mediation between the subject and the object-world. The latter re-appears, in the form of representations, re-created by the subject, who in his/her turn, is also re-created by his/her very relationship with the object-world. It is possible to ask here, what is the substance of these representations, besides delegating the affective load of the drives into something of a different form? The substance, or content, of which representations are made, are symbols.

Piaget (1969) has examined the problem of the unconscious symbol in his studies on the development of the symbol and the mental image. In his view, it is just pointless to consider an unconscious domain for affects and a conscious domain for thought and intellectual life, since "the unconscious is everywhere, and there is an intellectual as well as an affective unconscious" (p.172). Further, he argues, the trade-offs between the unconscious and the conscious are incessant in every psychic process, so even the most elementary symbols are at the same time conscious and unconscious. It is particularly interesting for the purposes of the present discussion, to single out the relationships Piaget establishes between the symbolic play and the dreams of children. In the ludic activity of the child there are striking similarities, both in terms of symbolic structure as well as in terms of content, with the processes at stake in oneiric activity. It is not at all surprising to find out that the processes

underlying both are condensation and displacement, for both are characterised by the use of symbolic representation. Even the most basic symbols are the outcome of blending images, of contrasts, of identifications that condense, as it were, the variety of objects, affects and significant others at the disposal of the child. It follows that there must be a displacement of meanings among those various objects ("object" here stands for both things and people), giving to one the reference of the other, evoking in one the presence of the other, mixing in one the image and the sound of the other and so forth. It becomes clear that condensation and displacement are inseparable parts of symbolic activity.

To review. Representational activity is a work of the psyche. This work happens through the unconscious processes which Freud has described as condensation and displacement. Considering the foregoing section, where symbolic activity is presented in line with Winnicott's notion of potential space, we can conclude that symbols develop upon the basis of, and are embedded in, representational activity. The human subject constructs, in his/her dealings with the world, a **new** world of meaning. On the one hand, it is through his/her activity and relations to others that representations emerge, allowing for the mediation between the subject and the world that he/she **both** discovers **and** constructs. On the other hand, the representations permit the existence of symbols - these pieces of social reality mobilised by the activity of the subject to make sense and re-shape the environment within which he/she finds himself/herself. Needless to say, both from a developmental perspective and from a conceptual perspective, there is no possibility of symbolic formation outside of a web of already constituted signifieds. It is upon and within this web that the subject's work of re-creating what is already there takes place. The psychic subject, therefore, is neither abstracted from social reality nor condemned to be a mere reflex of the social reality. His/her job is to work out the permanent tension within a world that, although preceding him/her, is open to his/her efforts to be a subject.

These analogous processes, I want to contend, are necessary in understanding the full implications of social representations as phenomena mediating between the

individual and society. They highlight the psychological foundations of social representations theory and explain some of the intricate trade-offs between psychic investments and social reality. The interplay between the unconscious dimensions of representations and the structuring of social representations as such, allows us to understand the variety of phenomena at work in the symbolic construction of reality. The analysis of the conceptual field of a social representation confronts us, at one and the same time, with the subjective nature of social reality and the objective nature of subjective reality. There is no dichotomy between the subject and the object except the acknowledgement of boundaries that need to be mediated, and indeed are, through the activity of humans. Such mediations bridge fundamental dimensions of psychic and social activity: presence and absence, self and otherness, symbols and, of course, language.

In the next section I want to discuss what constitutes the specificity of a social representation in relation to representational activity. I shall do this in order to ground my main argument, namely, that social representations as phenomena are bound to a public sphere. I have attempted to show that social representations, because they are symbolic, build upon representational activity and symbols. However, they cannot be simply equated with representational activity, since they are brought about and shaped by social practices and social relationships.

3.1.3. Social Representations: The Creation of a Shared Symbolic Reality

In the foregoing I have attempted to show that the conditions of possibility of representational activity lie in the space of interplay between subject and other. In discussing the genesis of representations and symbols I have concentrated upon the individual subject in order to show precisely how social reality - represented by others - institutes the individual subject. Now, one could ask: If any representation is social, what constitutes the specificity of social representations? As tempting as it may be, they cannot simply be reduced to representational activity because social representations exceed the individual work of the psyche and emerge as a phenomenon bound to the social fabric.

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In fact, this discussion involves a subtle distinction. When talking about social representations there must be a shift in the level of analysis. The analysis is not centred any more in the ontological subject but in the phenomena produced by the particular **constructions of social reality**. Thus, it is not a matter of moving away from the individual because he/she necessarily entails an individualistic perspective (I hope that, at this point, it has become clear which conception concerning the nature and the genesis of the individual subject this study holds). Rather, the central issue is to acknowledge that in looking at social psychological phenomena - and at social representations in particular - we must be looking at the social as a **whole**. And just as the social is more than an aggregation of individuals, social representations are more than an aggregation of individual representations.

As I said before, this is not a new question in social psychology. From Allport to the Gestalt psychologists, there has been a debate about the relationship between units and the whole. In this regard, I would contend that our discipline can largely profit from Piaget's view on structuralism[3]. As he points out, "in psychology, structuralism has long combatted the atomistic tendency to reduce wholes to their prior elements" (Piaget, 1968/1971, p.4). Against such an atomistic tendency, Piaget argues that the notion of structure involves the key ideas of wholeness, transformation and self-regulation. The first two are essential in recognizing the overwhelming contrast between structure and aggregates, because the laws governing the constitution of a structure cannot be reduced to the addition of its single elements. On the contrary, they grant encompassing properties to the whole which are distinct from the properties of its elements. This position, of course, brings about the problem of the formation of wholeness, or how it is generated. Since we are not talking about mere aggregation, how can the genesis of wholeness be explained? The answer to this question is particularly illuminating of Piaget's views, for he offers the notion of transformation as the one that at once constitutes a structure and accounts

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[3] Here I would like to make it clear that, as Piaget himself points out, there are several "structuralisms", which have acquired various and different meanings: "Nevertheless, upon examining and comparing the various meanings it has acquired in the sciences and, unfortunately, at cocktail parties, a synthesis seems feasible..." (1968/1971, p.3). It is this synthesis on which I am drawing in order to construct my argument.

for the genesis of its character as a whole: "The problem of formation of wholeness can be narrowed down once we take the second characteristic of structures, namely, their being systems of transformations rather than static forms, seriously" (1968/1971, p.9-10).

I look at social representations in the light of Piaget's view. Their structure can only be understood in relation to how they are formed and transformed. The processes which form and transform them are embedded in the communicative and social practices of the public sphere: dialogue, talk, rituals, patterns of work and production, art, in short, social mediation. As such, analyses of social representations must concentrate on those processes of social communication and living that not only generate them, but also confer on them their peculiar structure. These processes are all mediations, for there is no experience of social life that can be considered immediate. To communicate is to mediate between a world of infinitely different perspectives; to work is to mediate between human needs and the raw material of nature; to develop rites, myths and symbols is to mediate between the alterity of an often mysterious world and the world of the human mind: they all reveal, to a greaten or lesser extent, the quest of humans to make sense and to give meaning to their existence in the world.

Thus, it is social mediation in all its many public forms that generates social representations. Bearing in mind the close link between genesis, development and structure, I would argue that social representations are social in their genesis and in their being; they would be of no use in a world of people who lived apart from each other; rather they would not exist. Social representations are forged by social actors to cope with the diversity and mobility of a world that, although belonging to each of us, transcends all of us. They are a "potential space" of common fabrication, where each person goes beyond the realm of his/ her individuality to enter another - yet fundamentally related - realm: the realm of public life. In this sense, social representations not only emerge through social mediation, but themselves constitute that mediation. At the same time, the imaginative and signifying character of social representations express, ultimately, psychic labour towards the world. Therefore, they

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express *par excellence* the space of the subject in his/her relationship to otherness, struggling to make sense of, to interpret and to construct the world in which she/he finds himself.

Objectification and anchoring are the specific forms of social mediation of social representations, which elevate to a "material" level the symbolic production of a community. They account for the thing-like character of social representations. They can be best understood if compared with the processes discussed above, namely condensation and displacement. To objectify is to condense different meanings - often threatening, unnamable meanings - into a familiar reality. In doing so, social subjects anchor the unknown into an institutionalised reality, and therefore displace the established geography of significance which society most of the time struggles to maintain. They are at once processes which maintain **and** challenge, which repeat **and** overcome, which are shaped by, and yet also shape, the social life of a community.

In the light of the foregoing sections I would suggest that social representations are **in** the public sphere. Public life, with its specific institutions, rituals, and meanings is the very *locus* in which social representations develop and acquire a concrete existence. It is in such a space that they incubate, crystallise and are transmitted to others. When that happens social representations themselves become constitutive of public life. Social representations and public life are therefore in a dialectic relationship to one another. If this can be said at a social psychological level, it also holds true at the historical level. Social representations and the public sphere bear a relationship that is also constituted historically. The cafes, salons, and literary clubs are important locations for both phenomena, and dialogue is considered to be the essential medium for their formation and transformation. The mass media, finally, appears to be one of the major contemporary mediators of both social representations and the public sphere. And lastly, but not least, they are related at a conceptual level. They are both concepts which relate to phenomena that emerged in the bourgeois era, they overlap in the importance they confer to "the coming together of people", and they contain in themselves a conception which shifts the relationship

between the subject and his other, from a self-centred or other-centred perspective, to a dialectical one.

3.2. Social Representations of the Public Sphere

3.2.1. The Public Sphere as an Object of Social Representations

In this section I discuss the relationship between the public sphere as a specific historical phenomenon and the making of social representations. How did "the public", as a distinct space of sociability, historically become an object to be socially represented and what form does it assume today?

The emergence of a public sphere as an object to be socially represented is linked to the transformations which occurred in the relationship between the public and private domains in Western societies and the birth of individualism. As I have attempted to argue previously, the notions of public available today cannot be taken for granted, for they are the product of profound changes in Western societies. The moment at which something like "a public" or "the public" becomes conceivable to social actors is a crucial one, and involves a number of important transformations in the very lives of the social actors who are there to realise such conception.

The dimensions which I discuss here are interconnected and all play a part in the process of constituting "the public" as a social object. Besides the rise of individualism, I shall consider changes in the public space itself and in the mass media. Their close relatedness is almost obvious and we can find a number of illustrative studies which demonstrate how these elements are at once dependent upon one another, and together they conjure up a totally different scenario in the social life of modernity (Moscovici, 1985; Duby & Ariès, 1991).

The rise of individualism cannot be understood outside of a network of relations that displace traditional ways of regarding the subject and his/her subjectivity. As Moscovici states, "if asked to name the most important invention of

modern times, I should have no hesitation in saying that it was the individual. From the first appearance of the *homo sapiens* to the Renaissance, man's horizon was always 'we' or 'us'" (Moscovici, 1985, p.13). Nevertheless, we know all too well that the 'we' has become an 'I', the family has become the nest of this new 'I' and the 'we' after that, was ser apart, outside the realm of subjectivity. The privacy of the bourgeois family was so born and, with this new privacy, there arises the "public" as a separated, even opposed, realm. Ariès (1973), in his study of the social history of the family, points out his surprise at the rarity of scenes depicting interiors or family life until the XVI century. The central character in these images was the crowd - but not, as he remarks, the anonymous crowds of contemporary cities. The crowd of those images was rather an assembly of neighbours, children, and *matronas*, not strangers to one another at all. For a long time, until the seventeenth century - the period in which the iconography of the family became extremely rich - the essential images were representations of external space and public life. The strong feeling towards family life extended in such a way that, by the end of the eighteenth century, it had already destroyed that old type of external sociability in all social strata. The history of our ways of life, according to Ariès, can be reduced, in part, to this long effort of humans to be apart from each other.

Thus, it is the progressive growth of a space of intimacy indoors, with its institutional boundaries given by the patriarchal family, that engenders in the first place the public as **another** dimension. The public was outside; it was a different space, with its own rules and meaning. The crossing of boundaries from the domestic house to the public space meant also crossing boundaries of different ways of **being**. Habermas (1992b) emphasises the importance of the family in shaping the new psychological experiences and the concern with the *purely subjective*; "no doubt existed about the patriarchal character of the conjugal family that constituted both the core of bourgeois society's private sphere and the source of the novel psychological experiences of a subjectivity concerned with itself" (p.427).

The triumph of family life was, undoubtedly, not only consolidated by circumstances coming purely from this intimate sphere. It is rather the dynamics of

historical, social and psychological change which account for the new tensions between the public and the private realms. This manifold tension allocates the place of subjectivity <u>inside</u> and the place of politics, trade and literacy <u>outside</u>. Although the public sphere in the Habermasian sense belongs to a private sphere of society (private in the sense that it is privatised individuals - private individuals before the state - who assemble to form a public), it is **within** this private realm that constitutes a public, that a new tension emerges, namely, between a space of intimacy and subjectivity inside and a space of discussion, debate and citizenship outside.

The new importance granted to intimacy within the family circle paves the way for consolidating individualism as it is known in modern societies. However, it is not only the sharp divide between the inner and the outer, or the bourgeois dialectic of inwardness and publicness, that conspire to make of individualism the expression *par excellence* of the new subjectivity. The very transformations which occurred in the public space itself are to a great extent constitutive of individualism and conflate to mould the forms in which the public is to be represented.

The enormous distance between the public life that emerges in the eighteenth century and the reality of contemporary urban cities is the most evident trace of these transformations. Changes in urban structure, in means of communication and transport, have transformed in depth the very constitution of public spaces. It is, perhaps, in the literature and poetry produced in the nineteenth century that we can detect the impact of such transformations. The slow walk and the figure of the *flaneur* contrast with the speed and anonymity that were to became the most visible signs of the contemporary city. The *flaneur*, that individual who used to walk slowly in the streets, making the cafés his dining room and the newsstand his library, has been overtaken by the metropolitan passenger, whose condition is that of permanent movement: he has to go far, and the farther he goes, the quicker it has to be.

It is no accident to find in Baudelaire, the great poet of modernity, and in Edgar Allan Poe, the *maudit* short-story teller of the English language, the same concern with the modern city and the potential for isolation within the crowd.

Baudelaire (1991) wrote in *The Crowds*, "there is an art to enjoying the crowd...Multitude and solitude: equal and interchangeable terms for the poet...He who finds it easy to espouse the crowd knows feverish pleasures which will be eternally denied to the selfish man, who is tightly sealed as a strong box, or the lazy man, who is as self-contained as a mollusc" (p.44). And Poe (1993), in *The Man of the Crowd*, writes in a similar vein, "I had never before been in a similar situation, and the tumultuous sea of human heads filled me, therefore, with a delicious novelty of emotion. I gave up, at length, all care of things within the hotel, and became absorbed in contemplation of the scene without." (p.386). Such fragments catch the spirit of an era, where the multitude of passers-by still could provide ground for singularity to emerge, as happens in a Poe short-story, for instance. They portray a life outdoors that conveys with precision the period in which "the public" becomes one of the references of everyday life. And it is Baudelaire (1964) again who captures the transition between the crowds that he loved so much and the anonymous crowd in his poem "The Passer-By", where he tells us about his eyes meeting the eyes of a woman passing-by in the opposite direction. The encounter of their eyes happens in a very brief moment and he feels ecstasy; what he sees is himself reflected in her eyes. Astonished with that look he stays there immobilised. When he turns back she is already gone, vanished in the midst of the crowd.

What we can see in Baudelaire's poem is nothing less than the description of an epoch that had eclipsed the possibilities of communication and encounter in public to allow for the consolidation of the "age of the crowd" (Moscovici, 1985). Some of the most influential factors in this process are the mass media of communication. In Moscovici's words, "the media penetrate every home and seek out every individual to change him into a member of a mass...It is the kind of mass, however, that is seen nowhere because it is everywhere. The millions of peoples who quietly read their paper and involuntary talk like their radio are members of the new kind of crowd, which is immaterial, dispersed and domestic...They all stay at home, but they are all together, and all seem different, but are similar" (1985, p.193). The development of the mass media made almost irrelevant the coming together of people to engage in conversation and discussion, let alone to exchange information. The mediation of the

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mass media produces a displacement in the public experience as well as shaping the possible knowledge that this experience will develop of itself. In becoming the most pervasive forms of social communication in contemporary societies, the mass media inform and form the public sphere. They do this in such a way that information about, and representations of, the public space substitute for **experience** in the public space.

Here, however, I would like to make a parenthesis. The media debate is highly complex, it has produced a literature of its own, and it is not my intention to address it in this study. But, given the importance of the mass media in the constitution of both the public sphere and social representations, there is one element which I would like to explore: the contradictory and, therefore, potentially open character of the mass media. Whether based in the "pessimism" of the early Frankfurt school, or in the "optimism" of the active-viewer model (Livingstone & Lunt, 1991), it seems to me that neither the latter, nor the former can offer the best model to apprehend the effects of the mass media today. The mass media, as any other social institution, are an arena which permits **contradictory** narratives and **contradictory** interactions with the public they help to form. It is against the pessimism of the work of Horkheimer and Adorno (1973) and, to a great extent, even against himself, that Habermas (1989c) warns us of the dangers of oversimplifications. He proposes an awareness of the "ambivalent potential of mass communication". In Habermas's view the mass media belong to what he calls "generalised forms of communication", which maintain their link to lifeworld contexts. As he says, the mass media "free communication processes from the provinciality of spatiotemporally restricted contexts and permit public spheres to emerge, through establishing the abstract simultaneity of a virtually present network of communication contents far removed in space and time and through keeping messages available for manifold contexts. These media publics hierarchise and at the same time remove restrictions on the horizon of possible communication. The one aspect cannot be separated from the other - and therein lies their ambivalent potential" (Habermas, 1989c, p.303).

In the foregoing I have attempted to follow a line of argumentation whose

logic lies in the intricate dialectics between the emergence of the public as a social object, its relation to the formation of a private sphere of intimacy and the ways in which the very transformations which the public space itself undergoes, institute individualism as the ultimate expression of personal life. The mass media cut right across this process not only in regard to their genesis but also in regard to the different historical forms they have shaped. The public that arises in the eighteenth century still retains traces of the old street sociability, and its dynamic and emancipatory potential has been highlighted elsewhere in this study. However, it is in the novelties of mass society that the actual foundations of what today is called individualism are to be found. And perhaps nothing more than the social representations of individualism have shaped the social representations of the public space. In the case of social psychology - and let us not forget how powerful science is in disseminating social representations - there can be no doubt, as Moscovici (1990) has shown, that "social psychology's contribution to the objectification of a social representation of mass society is made via the concept of the self or the individual" (p.77). This is the case, he thinks, because the "individualism of social psychology is a fiction. Behind the person and the manner in which he or she is described, one can discern the mass society. Lurking there is the undefined mass, the anonymous crowd, a formless aggregation of little identities, each isolated from the others. To be sure, we are dealing with metaphors here, but metaphors that make large numbers the essence of sociability" (1990, p.70). In shrinking the public space, mass society paradoxically places the individual centre stage and leaves him/her there alone.

4.0. THE METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES: HOW TO APPROACH THE OBJECT OF STUDY

4.1 Epistemological Assumptions

Kurt Danziger (1979) has written, in his discussion of the positivistic repudiation of Wundt, about how a particular philosophical commitment becomes taken- for-granted within the history of psychology. Matters which should be open to debate and clarification are transformed into implicit certainties, producing a cleavage between theory, method and their corresponding philosophical foundations. The major consequence of such a cleavage is the absence of any philosophical debate about theoretical and methodological options, to such an extent that nobody within the discipline is concerned to identify the underlying assumptions guiding one or another alternative (Danziger, 1979, p.206).

The importance of acknowledging the presuppositions on which every single domain of human existence is based has been largely discussed by Marková (1982). In the domain of science such an acknowledgement has great significance. As she points out, "our innocence with respect to our existing presuppositions in scientific research is associated with several potential dangers" (1982, p.3). The dangers to which Markova refers - though diverse - are of the same kind. If a scientist is not aware of the foundations of what she does, she is deprived of an occasion to reflect on what she does and therefore tends to maintain her practice without considering alternatives. The absence of any such reflection allows for what Markova calls "unjustified generalizations across different subjects" (p.3). That is, by overlooking the problems, conceptual frameworks or the methods of research in different sciences - which are essentially different - crude generalizations flourish unchallenged. The consequence of this and of the final danger are well known in social psychology: if generalizations on such fundamental issues are possible, why not import successful models? The appropriateness or not of importing models is not even considered given the general lack of awareness regarding presuppositions.

This is not an unknown scenario for social psychologists. The origins of this situation can be found in the very beginnings of psychology as an institutionalised discipline and in the difficulties then encountered in identifying an appropriate object of study. The subsequent development of social psychology as a discipline, its models and codes of practice are closely associated with the very historical moment of psychology's conception as a recognised scientific field. As Farr (1991a) has pointed out, social psychology has a long past but only a short history. Its long past relates to the whole of a philosophical tradition which goes back to Ancient Greece. Its short history, however, is concentrated around its efforts to get rid of that long past. In order to be born as a legitimate scientific field, social psychology betrayed itself and underwent a rearrangement of its own historical presuppositions.

The scars of such efforts are still evident. Quite often in the history of social psychology the concern with methodological rigour disguises an absence of theoretical elaboration (Elejabarrieta, 1989; 1990). The content of theoretical presuppositions remains unclear under the formulation of hypotheses that, through sophisticated statistics, acquire the value of scientific findings. However, methodological questions do not relate simply to technical procedures and are not a matter of either applying a questionnaire or conducting in-depth interviews. Although the debate has often centred around a presumed opposition between qualitative and quantitative methodologies, it seems to me that such an opposition is entirely false and does not touch upon the fundamental questions. Methodology relates and actually depends upon theoretical issues which, in their turn, are bound to philosophical conceptions. It is the close connection between the three that guides the research options.

It is my concern in this chapter to outline some basic presuppositions guiding my methodological procedures. In so doing I seek to avoid the perpetuation of historical dichotomies which, from my point of view, do not contribute to the development of our discipline and its epistemological credentials. Therefore, I shall proceed by considering the following assumptions: (i) the character of social psychological knowledge as social and historical knowledge; (ii) the role of activity

in relation to objectivity and subjectivity and (iii) the relationship between totality and particularity or, in Marková's terms, between universals and particulars.

Marková (1982) has extensively analysed the impact of different paradigms in both psychology and social psychology. She shows how the Cartesian paradigm has largely constrained and determined the development and practice of psychology. She proposes the Hegelian paradigm as an alternative for guiding the construction of psychological knowledge. In similar vein, the thinkers comprising the Frankfurt School have proposed an intensive discussion regarding paradigms in the social sciences. Back in the 30s, Max Horkheimer (1985) called attention to the opposition between traditional theory and critical theory and, later, *"On the logic of the social sciences"* by Jürgen Habermas (1967/1988) appeared.

Such efforts set out to challenge the hegemony of positivism in the methodology of the social sciences and attempt to show, in particular, that access to the symbolically structured object domain of the social inquiry calls for procedures that were not those developed in the natural sciences. This is the case, first and foremost, because of the very nature of human life itself. Humans, in contrast to matter, are not given entities who stand-still in nature waiting to be known. Humans are not born with the specific traits that determine their humanity; it is, rather, their activity that enables them to actualize what only potentially appears when a new human life is born. Humans, therefore, are premature beings at birth. Humanity, thus, is not a stable entity that one attaches to the human species, but the outcome of an ongoing process, where "to become" rather than "to be" is the most fundamental element. Unless we think of people as mythical, natural, animals, to whose essence are counter-presented the determinations of an autonomous culture that has emerged apart from them, we cannot exclude *activity* as the element that constitutes both the human subject and *his/her* culture. As Horkheimer (1985) argues, "the facts which our senses present to us are socially performed in two ways: through the historical character of the object perceived and through the historical character of the perceiving organ. Both are not simply natural; they are shaped by human activity(..)" (p.200).

The above conception of the human subject and her reality together with an emphasis on activity has various consequences for the construction of scientific knowledge in the social sciences.

First, it implies the imperative of history as a permanent condition: human life is what it is because it bears a process of constitution and exists within a context. Against the exclusion of time and space, this paradigm calls for the inclusion of temporality and of spatially-located experiences. There are not immutable experiences in human life and the ongoing process of their modification lies at the very heart of their mode of constitution. Social psychology therefore is a discipline of a historical kind (Gergen, 1973).

Second, it implies a reconciliation of subject and object, which takes place through a dialectical logic. The knowledge of the world and the knowledge of oneself are co-constitutive of each other, rather than separate categories. The empirical datum and the human mind co-determine each other in such a way that both are transformed through the very activity that their encounter engenders. It is this process of transformation then, and nothing else, that can account for what the subject and the object are. As Marková (1982) has shown, in her discussion of the Hegelian paradigm, "it is neither subjective nor 'objective' knowledge. It is knowledge based on *interaction* between the knowing subject and the object of its knowledge." (p.111-2).

Third, and finally, because human phenomena are historical and presuppose a process of constitution, their universal character is always actualized in a particular instance. That means to say that, when we deal with such universal categories as people, society, mind and so on, we need to apprehend their expression through a particular person, a particular society or a particular mind. Universals can only reveal themselves in the uniqueness of an individual thing. They are, however, in a dialectical relation with each other. Marková (1982) stresses this point, saying that "the particular, (...), is the *antithesis* of the universal: there are no universals without a particular and there is no particular without a universal. In forming an inseparable

unity they together form an individual object" (1982,p.121). Such an assumption brings together the notion of totality and of specificity for it sees the subject/object in the world as the synthesis of its universal and unique components. In terms of scientific practice that implies, on the one hand, that the object under investigation is a unique phenomenon. On the other hand, and at the same time, the object expresses a reality that goes beyond its unique form giving rise to elements that are universal. The uses of language exemplify such a presupposition, for language is a universal notion and yet can only be actualized in particular ways. Whether it is one specific language or one specific human being voicing the language of her culture, the logic remains the same. It is always a universal being expressed through a particular. In order to capture both aspects, it is necessary to preserve totality as a point of departure and not to overlook what is specific in a given context or situation.

The three elements discussed above comprise the underlying assumptions guiding the present research. As obvious as it may seem, they comprise a framework that contradicts well established conceptions which, to a large extent, have determined the direction of social psychology as a discipline. However, the fact that such attempts re-present to social psychology elements from its distant and long past weighs heavily in their favour. In this way, they may help to redefine a process of coming to terms with the contradictions of what Farr (1991a) has described as social psychology's short history and long past.

4.2 Methodological Procedures

In his paper on "Theory and method in the study of social representations" (1993b), Farr raises an important issue about the need to be explicit regarding methodological procedures. He points out that "in the English-speaking world researchers are required to be much more explicit about the methods they have used in carrying out a particular investigation" (p.12). He considers such a requirement as part of the positivistic inheritance and the tradition of British empiricism. Detailed information concerning methods of research is necessary, basically to permit the replication of research by other scientists, who believe that a given set of socio-

psychological conditions can be repeated in laboratories throughout the world. Moreover, there is also a long philosophical tradition in the English-speaking world that attaches a special value to empirical research.

Farr's argument illuminates the _implicit_ aspects of the requirement to be explicit. He shows that the call to be explicit can disguise the absence of a theoretical model. I strongly agree with his argument. Nevertheless, I would also contend that the need to be explicit can lead in a different, non-positivistic, direction. For methodologies are practices, that is, concrete ways of doing something. As practices, they embody assumptions, involve routine procedures and, therefore, should be highly explicit. Interviews, questionnaires, experiments and the use of correlational methods are not devices abstracted from the historical reality where they are actualised; they pose in themselves, therefore, problems that call for clarification. The necessity of saying clearly _what_ we do and _how_ we do what we do is both a demand of scientific rigour and an attempt to overcome a positivistic tradition, which under the pretext of making explicit the reality of facts, fails to explicate itself.

In the present research I have sought to define, through theoretical elaboration, the constitution of the object of my study (see theoretical chapters of Part I). It is the definition of the object that directs the methodological options, which seek to apprehend and to analyse symbolic forms - social representations - in relation to a socio-historical context - the public sphere in contemporary Brazil. As such, the object under investigation is related both to the mode of production of symbolic phenomena and, at the same time, to the particular shaping of the public sphere in Brazil. Both aspects, of course, are heavily dependent on historical and social conditions and it is my intention to show how they inter-act with one another.

Social representations, as symbolic phenomena, are always the expression of a subject(s) for a subject(s) and, in this sense, they are intentional and conventional, that is, they involve active subjects actualising linguistic codes and social contracts of various kinds. At the same time, they are referential and have a context, that is, they represent something, they say something about something in a particular

historical context. As such, the collection of data poses a double challenge: to grasp the social by considering psychological subjects, and to understand psychological subjects as actors in the social scene.

This consideration justifies a small *detour*. In practice, this double challenge should not be a challenge but a matter of routine, if one considers that this is a piece of research in social psychology. Social psychological investigation, however, still wrestles with the problems of apprehending phenomena at the intersection of the psychological and the social. It is impossible to ignore the cleavage which, during the history of social psychology, opposed social reality to both individual phenomena and mental processes. A mind without a history and a history without a subject seem to be the joint outcomes of an over-sharp distinction between a psychology of behaviour and a psychology of the cognitive subject. There is in this logic a methodological consequence that cannot easily be forgotten within the discipline. When John Watson launched his behaviourist manifesto in 1913, he exerted an enormous impact on the course of psychological research by claiming that psychological data must be accessible to public inspection. By postulating that behaviour is public and consciousness is private, Watson was not only calling for a psychology without introspection. He was also providing the foundations of a psychology without a subject that, following the example of the natural sciences, sought its status as a domain of science by rejecting subjective categories. Hence the challenge and the necessity of further work to develop research practices capable of bringing together social psychological phenomena.

The study of social representations has entailed an intensive discussion of research methods. Because the very concept of social representations sets out to overcome the dichotomies either between individual and social or between subjective and objective, the methods of research must take these dichotomies into account. Generally, appropriate strategies are of two kinds. On the one hand, researchers have applied well established techniques, both of research and of data analysis, such as correlational methods. Such a solution has been increasingly questioned in the sense that pure statistical methods do not take into account the essence of a phenomenon

such as social representations. On the other hand, there is a conscious effort to adopt a methodological approach consistent with the new paradigm that social representations present to social psychology. Such a methodological approach intends to retain both the complexity and the diversity of social representations in different historical contexts. As has been observed many times, this is neither an easy nor a quick task.

As Farr (1993b) has shown, there is "no single royal road" regarding research methods in the study of social representations. His argument considers exhaustively the nature of social representations as a phenomenon and the necessity of taking it into account when it comes to the choice of methodologies. Because social representations are historical phenomena, produced through the channels of everyday interaction, they involve manifold aspects. Hence, in accepting the <u>theory</u>, researchers should be committed to accepting the full implications of collecting and generating data which can account for a social representation.

Jodelet (1991) states that the field of study and its corresponding methodologies should allow the identification of the conditions under which social representations emerge and function (p.15). Here that means identifying, at different levels of social life, what is the relationship between specific social actors and the public sphere, how their different positions in the social fabric relate to the public domain and how the <u>logic</u> of these relationships leads to representations about the public sphere.

I have discussed the notion of the public sphere extensively elsewhere (see chapter 2). It is time now to transpose the concept to an operational level, which will allow the investigation of the processes through which it is socially represented.

The concept of the public sphere is operationalised here along two dimensions: the **space of the streets** (which corresponds to the 'natural', day-to-day settings of public life) and **the arena of politics** (which correspond to the institutionalised public sphere). Both dimensions reflect significant aspects of the

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concept of the public sphere. On the one hand, the space of the streets represents a space that is common to all, that presupposes access to everyone, in contra-distinction to the private space of the household. On the other hand, the public sphere is approached by investigating the realm of politics, which is *par excellence* the realm of the public sphere, insofar as it involves (at least ideally) the notion of decision-making about common life and accountability for those decisions. I am aware that the media are fundamental to the constitution of the public sphere. I will adopt however, the perspective of Habermas, who contends that the media are the *medium* of the public sphere, and I will treat them as such, analysing their contents in relation to the above dimensions. Hence the public sphere involves here two spaces (streets and politics) and one mediator (the press).

From these dimensions three others emerge. They concern the strategic social actors who, routinely, on a daily basis, re-enact the public sphere. These strategic social actors are politicians, the "citizen in the street" and the media. The media are also considered as social actors in so far as they are institutions which bear an **intentionality** and produce an **effect** on the web of social relations. These social actors do not belong, exclusively, to one space or the other. It is not the case, for example, that politicians only belong to the arena of politics while the "citizen in the street" only belongs to the space of the streets. Although their specific location in the social fabric is such, they interact with one another and produce ongoing effects on each other. The media play a fundamental role in this interaction: they mediate between the two spaces and interact with each of them at the same time. In doing so, they both constitute a dimension of the public sphere and construct social representations about it.

The use of multiple methods in this research corresponds to the complexity of the relationships described above. Different techniques allow us to apprehend the different aspects involved in the constitution of the object under investigation. Although these different aspects are related to each other and to a great extent constitute each other, it is necessary to grasp their specificity in the process of constituting the object. Content analysis of the press, focus groups and narrative

interviews comprise the range of techniques selected to assist both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the representations. Each will be presented and discussed in its own right as a research technique. At the same time, I will indicate their detailed application in this research. Table 4.0 shows how the object of study is broken down into distinct dimensions and how these dimensions correspond to the techniques used to generate data.

The Public sphere and its actors		Methods
space of the streets	"common citizen"	group discussion
mass media	newspaper/magazines	content analysis
political space	politicians	narrative interviews

Table 4.0 - The object and the methods of study

Before I proceed, however, there are some questions which require clarification. They are: (i) the problem of objectivity relating to the collection and interpretation of data, (ii) the problem of validity, and (iii) the relationship between quantitative and qualitative techniques.

(i) The claim for objectivity is an old and debatable issue in the social sciences. Objectivity is more than a technical question. It relates to the very nature of the relationship between the elements of the research process, namely the object, the researcher, the subjects and the results. When it comes to a social inquiry I would argue that the object of investigation is in itself a subjective domain, comprising the subjects of social life. In this sense, the researcher is not completely separated from the object of investigation but, on the contrary, is exposed to the very same conditions which give rise to the problem under study (Thompson, 1990). Furthermore, there is a relation of potential exchange between the outcome of a social inquiry and the reality from which the outcome emerges. Human beings **know** and **undergo** the effects of the knowledge they develop about themselves; a stone, by contrast, will never have any clue about how much human beings know about its properties. Objectivity in the social sciences thus assumes a meaning only in relation

to a subjective domain which confirms and supports the claim of an objective reality. Therefore, objectivity can only be conceived of in terms of the explicit formulation of criteria, rules and procedures.

(ii) The second problem, regarding validity, has become extremely important in the social sciences, especially in qualitative research. The discussion of credibility and of generalizing qualitative data increases along with the increased use of qualitative methodology. Recently, the question of validity has found an answer through the idea of triangulation (Flick, 1992). The origins of triangulation can be found in the attempt to see "if a hypothesis can survive the confrontation with a series of complementary methods of testing" (Campbell & Fiske, 1959, p.82). In this context triangulation strategies were employed as a source of validation of empirical procedures and results. In qualitative research the idea was brought about by Denzin (1970/1978) who conceived of triangulation as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (1978, p.291).

More recently, the notion of triangulation has taken on a very different meaning. It has shifted from an attempt at validation to the quite different conception of an **in-depth understanding**. Fielding & Fielding (1986, p.33) suggest the use of triangulation as an **alternative** to validation, where the combination of methods should be applied "carefully and purposefully with the intention of adding breath or depth to our analysis but not for the purpose of pursuing 'objective' truth".

Triangulation, therefore, is potentially useful in combining different methods that will reveal different aspects of the object under study. The main aspect here is not to use one method to validate the results of another, but to consider each technique in its own right as a fundamental source of data. By triangulating different sorts of data and different methods it should be possible to gain access to the manifold reality under investigation. As Flick (1992, p.194) points out " triangulation as it is conceived and discussed here, takes seriously into account, that there is no longer one reality against which results can be verified or falsified, but that research is dealing with different 'versions of the world'."

(iii) the relationship between qualitative and quantitative methods of research has been at the centre of the debate concerning research methodologies in the social sciences. Most of the time the discussion equates quantitative techniques along with positivistic postulates and qualitative methods as a monopoly of those who criticise such postulates. I think that this is an inadequate way of discussing the issue. The relationship between quantity and quality is not a static one; rather quantity and quality feed-back into one another, providing the researcher with a valuable source of fresh insights. The chasm between quantitative and qualitative techniques seems to be associated with a tradition of conducting research where the imperative of **measurement** displaced a concern with theory. Indeed, in the main stream of social psychological research, there has been a tendency to describe percentages as if they alone were indicators of social psychological phenomena. There is no doubt that such practices must be criticised. But the critique should not be out of focus. Quantitative techniques have been extremely useful to identify specific phenomena, especially when it comes to large scale surveys. The same applies to experimental methods that should not be considered in themselves as devoid of value. Marková (1982, p.197) has shown how laboratory experiments can take a dialectical direction depending on the assumptions they bear out. The central question, thus, is not whether the quantitative techniques can offer to researchers what qualitative techniques cannot and vice-versa. The issue, rather, is the conceptual framework that determines which methodology one uses. In any case it is necessary to qualify the use of different methodologies in relation both to underlying assumptions and a theoretical framework.

As I will argue in the following sections, the content analysis of the media, the narrative interviews and the focus groups with different segments of Brazilian society can generate data which explore the object of study from different perspectives. At the same time, I will be concerned to explicate the various roles of each technique in the research process and the criteria which were adopted. In doing so I hope to be coherent with the previous discussion.

4.2.1 Content Analysis of the Press

Beardsworth (1980) has pointed out that the increasing complexity of society gives to the mass media the "vital role of mediating between the individual, with his short range, personal knowledge of the social world, and those large macro-social processes which constrain him and impinge upon him, but which are by their very nature beyond his experience" (p.371).

In a study about the public sphere and social representations it is an absolutely necessity to look at the media. Such a necessity is justified by the extent to which the media are linked, generate and eventually transform the social system and its processes. At the same time, the mass media as mediators offer to the individual subject a picture that she cannot grasp within the limits of her personal experience. The mass media therefore link and connect personal lives constructing a chain of shared and recognised signs which are constitutive both of social representations and of the public sphere. The content of the media thus becomes a central source of data for this research.

The study of social representations has quite often drawn on an investigation of media content. Moscovici's classical study on the social representations of psychoanalysis in France (1961/1976) is an example of the role of media analysis in the study of social representations. In chapter five I will discuss in more detail the relationship between the mass media, social representations and the public sphere.

The press has been analysed through content analysis. Content analysis is an accepted technique for analysing the media in the social sciences. The approach of this study conforms with the broad definition given by Holsti (1969, p.601), namely, "content analysis is any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages".

Its aim is to analyse what is said in a given unit of communication and, according to Ferguson (1983), such an analysis "implies three general assumptions:

that valid inferences can be made between content and intended effect, that the study of manifest content is meaningful to communication, audience and analyst and that the frequency of occurrence of various content characteristics is in and of itself meaningful" (p.212).

In this sense, content analysis provides quantitative data to be qualitatively analysed. I have discussed above the relation between quantitative and qualitative techniques. I do not think there is necessarily an incompatibility between them. On the contrary, I would say that there is a spiral relationship between quantitative data and qualitative analysis. The central question rests on an ability to qualify quantitative data - the analysis, embodied in a theoretical framework, should provide the conditions for that. As de Sola Pool (1959) suggests, "it should not be assumed that qualitative methods are insightful, and quantitative ones merely mechanical methods for checking hypotheses. The relationship is a circular one; each provides new insights on which the other can feed" (p.192).

Before I proceed to describe the different ways in which content analysis is used in this research, there is one more important distinction to be made. Content analysis can involve either textual or thematic analysis. The textual analysis implies an examination in detail of lexical contents and syntactic structures and usually takes words as the basic elements to be analysed. Theme analysis refers to the recognition of certain themes or ideas in the text and then allocating them to pre-determined categories. In the present research the analysis was based upon themes.

The Sample

The five major Brazilian quality dailies and the two most influential weekly magazines were selected to be content analysed. The five newspapers are located in four Brazilian regional capitals: Rio de Janeiro (Jornal do Brasil), São Paulo (Folha de São Paulo e O Estado de São Paulo), Brasilia (Correio Brasiliense) and Porto Alegre (Zero Hora). I am aware that they do not fully cover the entire country, but the criteria for the selection of newspapers and magazines was based on their

importance in terms of generating opinion and producing political repercussions. The two magazines are "Isto É" and "Veja", both circulating weekly at a national level. The newspapers were scanned during 10 sequential days (from 5-5-92 to 14-5-92 inclusive) and the magazines during the month of May. In total there are 50 editions of newspapers and 8 magazines to be scanned.

The choice of newspaper and magazines relates to practical, as well as to theoretical considerations. Voyene (1962) has argued that in a "mass society the press can act as a powerful normative force, generating images and controversies which flow through audiences whose members might otherwise never grasp their similarities and common concerns" (p.372). At the same time, the press is widely considered by social scientists to be one of the most influential setters of agenda (Beardsworth, 1980), being in itself a reference to other channels of communication. Practical considerations have also influenced my decision, particularly reasons of time (this is a PhD study) and viability of the data (the data were sent from Brazil to be analysed in London).

The Units of Analysis

The units of analysis were articles both in the newspapers and in the magazines. The selection of articles was guided by an operational definition of the public sphere. Thus articles referring to the streets and to politics were selected to be analysed. Whereas all articles related to the streets were part of the sample, the articles related to politics followed a more specific criterion of selection. The criterion was that of a *privatised public sphere*. Privatised public sphere refers to those actions, events and relations, which, although taking place in, and constituting, the public domain, are essentially an expression of private interests. Such criteria build upon the premises stated in the delimitation of the research problem. The blurred character of the private and public spheres in Brazil and the subtle (and sometimes crude) intrusion of private matters into the public space are a central focus of this investigation. The coding frame was piloted before devising the one used on the full sample (see Appendix 1 for the complete coding frame).

Here, it is worth repeating that I am aware that the media are the medium of the public sphere and, therefore, anything that is presented in the media enters the realm of the public sphere. Nevertheless in this research I will be looking at the public sphere in itself as an **object** depicted by the media. That is to say that, through the medium of the public sphere, I will analyse the public sphere itself.

4.2.2 Narrative Interviews

Narrative interviews have proved to be a valuable instrument in the investigation of symbolic phenomena. They are in-depth interviews, which present an open field to the interviewee and are devoid of any previous structure. Their main objective is to grasp the version the subject builds up in relation to the object domain. They are concerned with more than an accurate description of the facts. Narrative interviews are a method whereby the subject tells the researcher the story of the facts and organises his/her discourse into a narrative. There are three stages in a narrative interview: the initiation, where the researcher asks the subject to tell the story of a particular object (not necessarily an event); the narrative phase where the subject is totally free and the researcher's only task is to listen and to intervene only within the content of the issues proposed by the interviewee, and finally the questioning phase, where the researcher introduces probing questions to the interviewee and relates them to the interviewee's own narrative.

According to Flick (1992, p.181) "the narrative interview was discussed as the most consequent way of giving way for the respondent's point of view, because the main demand for the interviewer is not to interrupt or disturb the respondent's narration". In the study of social representations the problems of imposing the researcher's own representations on the subjects is a source of major concern. In this sense, the use of unstructured or semi-structured techniques is regarded as a way of overcoming such problems and the "elicitation of accounts, then, is an attractive way of collecting data" (Farr, 1993b). Many studies in the field have used unstructured interviews. Jodelet's investigations on social representations of madness and of the body are instances of such uses (1984a, 1991).

In this research the choice of narrative interviews is related to the informants and to the nature of the data to be generated. As I explained before, the arena of politics is a constitutive dimension of the public sphere. In this sense, parliamentarians are strategic social actors, whose practices enact to a large extent the content of the representations circulating in the public domain. Their individual accounts are the account of a singular experience and, at the same time, the account of a more general one, that embodies and expresses specific social circumstances. Considering these elements, parliamentarians from eight Brazilian political parties[1] were interviewed. It is their particular *location* in the social fabric that directs the choice of informants.

The interviews were centered on the narrative of the impeachment of the president of the country, Fernando Collor de Mello. The impeachment, which happened in September of 1992, is perhaps the single most important event that epitomises the reappearance of the public sphere in Brazil. The process was triggered by a weekly magazine (Veja) that published an interview with the president's brother in which he proclaimed to the country at large an enormous network of corruption involving the president and his immediate cabinet. The denouncement came in the wake of a dispute over the family business (the president's family owns a media empire in Alagoas, a state in the northeast of Brazil). The national press pushed further the investigations into corruption and the population took massively to the streets to call for the impeachment of the president. From May to September of 1992 the mobilisation for the impeachment brought together the Brazilian civil society, which engaged in an intensive discussion about political life. The outcome was considered a victory, not only for Brazilians, but also for all Latin American societies. For the first time in 500 years an important political figure was punished for acts of corruption.

When the project of this research was first considered I had no idea that such an event would even be possible. History however, takes its course as an open-ended

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[1]The fluidity of political parties in Brazil is part of the political scene. In chapter seven I give an account of the parliamentarians who were interviewed and their respective parties.

process: if structures confine the possibilities of change, the actions of humans, as well as their imagination, revive and transform these structures and may even replace them with others that are not predetermined. Thus, it seems to me that the process of impeachment is an extremely important source of data in this research. It started with an article in one of the magazines included in my own content-analysis. The analysis of the impeachment can reveal the ways in which Brazilian civil society met in the public arena to call for a new quality in their social relationships and it can reveal, above all else, both the limits and the possibilities of new representations about public life.

In total, eleven interviews were conducted. The contact was made through the university (PUC/RS - Brazil and the LSE) and the selection of individual parliamentarians took place according to their availability. The initiation phase was centered on asking the MPs to tell the interviewer the story of the impeachment from their own perspective. After the narrative, the probing questions covered the following themes: how the MPs saw themselves in the public eye; how they saw the relationship between parliament and the public trust (since trust in political acts has been identified as a major problem in Brazilian political life); how they see their own image in the eyes of the public concerning such notions as honesty, opportunism, corruption and accountability. The interviews were tape-recorded and the analysis was based upon verbatim transcriptions.

The analysis considered both the structure and the themes contained in the narrative. Therefore, the narrative will be broken down in terms of: (i) the characters and succession of events, the main aspects of which set up the "plot" of the story told, the facts and relations that are predominant and the meanings associated with them; (ii) where the subjects locate themselves in the chain of events, the explanations which are given, the "hows" and "whys" of the story; (iii) the implicit meanings running through the narrative (see Appendices 5 and 6).

4.2.3 Focus Groups

Focus groups are a form of qualitative research. They are basically group interviews which, however, do not presuppose a formal structure in terms of the researcher's questions and the research participants's responses. The main aspect to be considered in focus groups is the *interaction* within the group based on topics proposed by the researcher.

In this sense, group discussions are consistent with the theory of social representations for they comprise the "thinking society" in miniature (Moscovici, 1984). As Moscovici says, "in the streets, in cafés, offices, hospitals, laboratories, etc., people analyse, comment, concoct spontaneous, unofficial, 'philosophies' which have a decisive impact on their social relations, their choices, the way they bring up their children, plan ahead and so forth" (1984, p.16). That is why to collect data from situations of interaction becomes extremely important when investigating social representations. It is through conversations in the course of everyday interaction that people become familiar with objects that circulate in social life and learn how to incorporate them into their conversations and eventually to master them. Although the group discussion cannot reproduce fully the natural settings of everyday interaction (the simple presence of the researcher changes the "natural" quality of the setting), they can bring to the fore many of the mechanisms that are also present in everyday conversation. There are specific techniques which have been developed to preserve the group dynamics as closely as possible to natural situations and it is my intention to draw on such tools.

As Morgan (1991) has pointed out, "focus groups constitute one specific technique within the broader category of group interviewing to collect qualitative data. The hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (p.12).

Focus groups can provide data that arise in a natural form, only minimally

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structured by the researcher or the research setting. They allow individuals to interact with one another and with the topic in their own words, using their own categories and associations. However, focus groups are not completely unstructured because the moderator does raise questions and aims to maintain the focus of the group's discussion around a specific theme. The balance between the researcher's direction and the group direction in the development of the discussion varies according to the objective of the investigation. In some cases, specific information is called for and the moderator takes a more structured approach. In other situations, the major interest of the research is to grasp the topics of greatest relevance and importance to the group members and a less structured approach is required from the moderator. In any case, however, the key issue is to keep in perspective the nature of the data to be collected. It is the precise definition of the purposes of the research that determines the most appropriate way to structure the conduct of the group.

The technique can be a useful device for ascertaining social psychological phenomena produced through interaction. Although focus groups rarely meet in natural settings, they can elicit through the discussion the elements of everyday communication.

Focus group interviews were carried out with different social groups. Professionals, students, taxi-drivers, policemen, manual workers, and street children comprised the six different groupings. The criteria in establishing the groups was that of social diversity. Such diversity was achieved through the allocation of groups according to their location in the social structure, which was given by the subjects' occupation. The recruitment of the groups was delegated to a company and the moderation was carried out by the researcher with the presence of an observer. The groups lasted on avarage for 100 minutes and were tape recorded. The analysis was based on the verbatim transcriptions.

To provoke the group discussion participants were asked to debate on the reality of the Brazilian streets and politics (see Appendix 2). As I attempted to show, these themes appeared to be a "translation" into everyday life of the concept of

public sphere. The main objective of the method then, was to grasp negotiated meanings in the representations of those spaces and the manner in which the groups referred to them. Competing versions, paths to reach consensus, expressions of disagreement and the attribution of causes to the problems that eventually were able to emerge in the groups's talk were analysed, considering both the structure of the discourse delivered by the members and the particular topics that emerged. Chapter six provides a full discussion of the data and how they were analysed.

5.0. REPORTING THE PUBLIC SPHERE: SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS IN THE PRESS

5.1. The Mass Media, Social Representations and the Public Sphere

The emergence and development of the mass media of communication are one of the most important features of modern societies. The pervasiveness of the media and their profound impact on society have warranted special attention from social scientists, to the extent that, today, "media studies" constitutes a field of study in their own right and are fully institutionalised in academic life. This attention is not, to be sure, gratuitous. Even a brief consideration of the presence of the mass media in modern life will reveal the extent of the changes they have brought about. Television, perhaps, is the most salient face of these transformations - the live image, the simultaneous broadcasting of events as disparate as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the local crime story in a little village of the Amazon jungle, attest to the parodoxical shrinking and enlargement of the world at once.

These changes, of course, are not just about new networks of information circulating in a society whose fundamental relationships remain unchanged. Quite the opposite: the mass media have become constitutive of social life. They have altered modes of interaction, they have changed access to, and the consumption of, symbolic goods, they have re-structured institutional politics, and as one would expect, they have radically shifted the boundaries between the public and the private spheres. In regard to the latter, the mass media have played and still play a crucial role.

The shift from script to print in the middle of the fifteenth century was interwoven in complex ways with the rise of the public sphere. As Habermas has shown, the emergence of a distinctive public sphere in early modern Europe was stimulated by the development of the periodical press (Habermas, 1989b). Farr, drawing on the work of McLuhan (1962), points out the importance of print and

literacy 'for change in European culture at the time of the Reformation (Farr, 1994b, p.5). The printing industry, which grew out of the expansion of a capitalist economy, provided a context of ambivalent relations between the critical assembly of private citizens that formed the public sphere and the political institutions of the emerging nation-states (Thompson, 1994). In this sense, the presses became a major site of symbolic disputes, sustaining the exercise of power and yet opening up new dimensions of accountability and visibility to it.

The ability of the media to convey contradictory and potentially transforming meanings lies at the very heart of debates concerning the possibilities of public life today. Thompson (1994) argues that Habermas's account, while being of great importance to an understanding of the development of the public sphere, is flawed when it comes to assessing its transformation and decay. The mass media cannot, as Habermas would have it, be reduced to large capitalist organizations dedicated essentially to manipulating consumers rather than facilitating rational debate amongst citizens. According to Thompson, Habermas fails to realize that "the development of mass communication has transformed the very nature of publicness in the modern world. Habermas's argument is based on a notion of publicness which is essentially spatial and dialogical in character: it is the traditional publicness of co-presence, in which publicness is linked to the conduct of dialogue in a shared locale.(...) The media have created a new kind of public sphere which is de-spatialized and non-dialogical in character: it is divorced from the idea of dialogical conversation in a shared locale and is potentially global in scope" (Thompson, 1994, p.42).

Political practices are thus susceptible to new forms of control. The new publicness, characterised by an increased visibility in the exercise of power, jeopardises the comfort of political leaders who would prefer to conduct their business away from the scrutiny of the public eye. I tend to agree with Thompson, and perhaps the impeachment of the Brazilian president Fernando Collor de Mello, which I shall discuss in chapter eight, provides strong evidence for his claims. The impeachment started with the president being accused of corruption in one of the information magazines which I am analysing, _Veja_, and investigative journalism

played a decisive role in its development.

Whilst the contradictory effects of the mass media in our societies should be emphasized, their tendency to reproduce hegemonic values and meanings should not be underestimated. The mass media are themselves a key actor in the exercise of power, particularly in those societies where the media, big business and government are sometimes in the hands of the same family. In Latin America for instance, the vast expansion of the mass media over the last thirty years has raised the issue of the extent to which the media destroy the bases of popular memory and detach symbols and meanings from the contexts of their production (Rowe & Schelling, 1991). Apart from that, there is the question of how far the mass media impinge on definitions of political life, overtly supporting certain policies and politicians and excluding others. The absence of legislation and, in some cases, the sheer inability to enforce legislation leads to a politics of favour in the concession of mass media ownership and the maintenance of that ownership in the hands of a few who, not accidentally, are the good friends of the ruling élites.

Many of the key questions concerning the public sphere today can be defined in terms of the issues identified above. The interplay between the information and symbolic goods produced by the mass media and the conditions under which social subjects appropriate and make sense of them defines, to a large extent, the public sphere to-day. However, while the importance and constitutive character of the mass media in modern public life must be adequately understood, other - and still possible - forms of mediation and communication in social life should not be neglected. Here I am referring to those structures of dialogue and communication of everyday life which pertain to the lifeworld as defined by Habermas, following a phenomenological tradition (Habermas, 1990; 1991; 1992a).

Given the ways in which the mass media transform, and to some extent define, the circulation of symbolic forms in contemporary societies, they become a major source of reflection in the study of social representations. Indeed, the link between the formation and transformation of social representations and the mass

media of communication demands our attention and, as Farr has pointed out, there is a need for social representations researchers to study media content (Farr, 1993a). Moscovici's original study of psychoanalysis contains a detailed analysis of the French press (1961/1976). It was through his analysis of the relationship between different sectors of the French press and psychoanalysis that Moscovici developed the notions of diffusion, propagation and propaganda as systems of communication, and their importance in the development of social representations.

In this chapter I look at the results of a content analysis of Brazilian newspapers and information magazines, considering the relationships between the mass media, the public sphere and social representations. These relationships are the basis for the analysis of the data. However, it must be noted that my intention here is not to analyse the Brazilian press in itself, something that would certainly require an extensive piece of research in its own right. Nor am I looking for those particular processes in the language of the media that allow for the forging of social representations. Rather, I analyse the press with the sole purpose of identifying which representations of public life are contained therein. Thus the analysis I shall present draws on the theoretical links discussed above. As will become clear in the following chapters, the content of the news, in both newspapers and magazines, bears a clear connection to representations engendered by the discussion in the focus groups and by the narratives of politicians about the impeachment. In what follows I give an account of the main elements guiding the analysis of the data and their interpretation.

5.2. Mapping the Press Content: Some Comments on the Procedures Adopted

The detailed description of the procedures for the content analysis was presented in chapter four. Here, I shall give an account of the developments that followed the early delimitation of the process. The analysis of the press content has occupied a peculiar position in the present research. It was conducted twice, at different stages of the research process. In the first instance, the analysis of the press confirmed the operational definition of the public sphere in terms of streets and

politics. This operationalization, although not unproblematic[1], has proved to be adequate in the subsequent empirical stages of the investigation, when data were collected through group discussions and narrative interviews. In this sense, the analysis of the press has been both a source of data and a guide to the operationalization of the concept of the public sphere. The second content analysis was carried out at a late stage of the research, after the interpretation of the group discussions and the narrative interviews had been completed. This allowed me to go back to the initial coding frame and re-work it in line with broader parameters of investigation and interpretation that were not available when the first coding frame was devised. In the interval of a year, I had the opportunity to deepen my understanding of the research problem by incorporating the results of the group discussions and interviews into the analytical frame of the press content. Thus the coding frame was designed in terms of i) the identification of the article in relation to the newspapers and ii) content. The former comprised basic information about the article such as its location in the newspaper and type of article, that is, whether the article was an editorial, a news item, etc. In regard to content, the articles were treated as stories, and the coding frame was an attempt to identify what the story was about - the *event*, who was the main *actor* in the story and which *causes and explanations* were attributed to the story. References to widespread corruption, corruption as an illness and the ghost of the military were also coded in each article (see appendix 1 for the complete coding frame). These late variables allow for an assessment of the insidiousness of these notions and metaphors, something that is particularly important for the global interpretation of my data. My concern with these variables is not so much the intensity of their frequency in the article, but whether or not they are referred to at all. The mere fact that notions of 'corruption as an illness' and as a 'widespread condition' and the threatening 'ghost of the military' appear in the media is significant, even if the frequency of their appearance is not high. Yet, what I shall present in this chapter is a quite modest analysis, when compared to the sophistication of recent trends in the analysis of the mass media. As I said before, my main concern is to map the content of the press in order to identify

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[1] As I have discussed in chapter four, the operationalization of the concept of public sphere is also theoretically driven.

- and triangulate with the other sets of results - representations of public life in Brazil. It is beyond the scope of the present research to analyse the press in itself and in its relationship to the public sphere in Brazil, something that, as I said, would constitute a major investigation in itself.

Table 5.2.1 compares the general overview of the content analysis in the two stages. The same sample of newspapers (ten consecutive days from the fifth to the the tenth of May 1992) were analysed twice, the first time in 1992 and the second in 1993. As will be evident, there is a difference of approximately 10% in the results.

Table 5.2.1.: Selection of Newspaper Articles for the Content Analysis of the Press

Year of Coding	Number of articles selected	Number of street articles	Number of politics articles
1992	504	245	259
1993	536	264	290

* Same sample of newspapers (May 1992), analysed twice.

The difference can be attributed, in part, to a change in the criteria of selection of the articles relating to the streets. Whereas the articles regarding politics were selected according to the criterion of a privatised public sphere, as discussed in chapter four, the articles relating to the streets were selected on a freer basis the second time. That means basically that all articles that had any reference to the streets were selected and content analysed. This was done in order to pick up contradictory meanings regarding the streets. As will be evident later, these changes in the criteria used did not alter in a significant manner the results. The issues relating to the streets, as they are portrayed in the news, are as problematic as the ones covered in political life, something very much in line with the general configuration of the representations I shall be discussing in the following chapters. The results I present in this chapter refer to the second selection of articles and their subsequent analysis. This second analysis, of course, builds upon the first one, but it is more extensive and more detailed. My intention in describing both procedures

is to give a full account of the research process.

The analysis of the magazines _Veja_ and _Isto É_ followed the same principles. Magazines, however, have a different format and use a different language from those of newspapers. Magazine articles are longer than articles in newspapers and draw on extensively narrative devices. They cover a weekly agenda and, in the case of the two magazines I am analysing, they strongly influence the newspapers for which they _set the agenda_. The cover and leading article of _Veja_ and _Isto É_ has immediate repercussions in the political debate, being followed up by both the electronic media and the press. Given the peculiarities of the magazines as a medium, I shall discuss in more detail the strategies of narrative construction they use in order to tell stories about the streets and political life.

5.3. Looking at the Newspapers: In Search of Meaning for the Public Sphere

5.3.1. The Streets

Newspapers portray the Brazilian streets mainly as a source of violence, fear and threat. The streets are present in the newspapers through events such as looting, the kidnapping of businessmen, street children and demonstrations by workers taking industrial action. These events denote threat and fear and they comprise almost the total content of the news which reports the streets. It is interesting to note that threat and fear in the streets become news in its own right. There is no significant difference between the five newspapers analysed, something which is in itself significant, since it suggests a very strong and widespread diffusion of these meanings across the country. Table 5.3.1 shows a more detailed description of the results relating to the streets. The street events are analysed in terms of the main actors related to each of these events and the main causes and explanations that appear to be associated with them. The criterion for selection was the two highest percentages for each item.

Table 5.3.1: Street Events, Their Main Actors, Causes and Explanations According to the Newspapers (May 1992)

Street Events	%	Actors	%	Causes and Explanations	%
Looting	41	Police Favelados	32 21	Vested Interests Social Conditions	46 28
Threat/Fear	62	The People Military	18 16	Social Conditions Moral Crises	41 31
Kidnapping	16	Businessmen Criminals	76 10	Incapacity to Enforce Law Vested Interests	82 18
Street Children	11	Street Children Government/Police	76 7	Social Conditions Vested Interests	85 7
Demonstrations	5	Working Class	100	Social Conditions Impunity	91 9
Others	3				

* Articles about the Streets n= 264; for actors and causes and explanations, the two highest percentages were considered.

The results above suggest the following:

i) There is a massive symbolic construction of the streets as a space characterised by danger, violence and crime. Fear is the outcome of this situation and it becomes so pervasive that fear itself becomes news. There are articles about the fears of children in playing outside, about the increase in the number of psychiatric patients in public health services who develop symptoms related to fear, about the fear of both people working in the security services and *of* the security services - people are afraid of the police. Fear is, no doubt, news in Brazil. People are afraid and some of the other major events that comprise the news about the streets fully justify such a feeling: looting and kidnapping.

ii) The main actors in these events reveal some interesting elements about representations of public life. Except in the case of demonstrations, the two main actors in all the other events reveal confrontational positionings. The police and

favelados, the people and the army, businessmen and criminals, street children and government/police: these pairings portray different social groups in dispute, most of the time each afraid of the other. The main actors in each event correspond to the different explanations that are given to the event. Social conditions and vested interests appear in most cases. Vested interest is a category that describes justifications drawing on the idea that "there is someone behind these acts", without saying whom or why. It is very close to conspiracy theories where a mythical, unidentified agent is perceived to be behind the actions in question. Looting, kidnapping and street children are the outcome of such vested interest in the words of the government, politicians and the police. These explanations map onto old representations of the people and of the 'social question' in Latin America. *The people*, for instance, is a crucial symbolic construction in Brazilian history. As da Matta points out, "exploited, plundered, assaulted and unknown - specially unknown - this anonymous mass is called *o povo* (the people). And who does not speak for it in Brazil? It is like a god without priests or theology, a truly Brazilian god of Umbanda in which the mysticism born of political dissatisfaction is enough to engender a morality ensuring a mystical relationship between the great powers up above and the mortals suffering affliction here below" (da Matta, 1991, p.2).

Indeed, the people have been seen as a chaotic, unconscious and brute mass, most of the time uncontrollable and fuelled by external forces, either mystical or fanatical. The military, historically, granted to itself the role of fulfilling a sacrificial mythology, understood in terms of a need to destroy the uncontrollable - the people. The 'social question', in this logic, has been considered a 'question for police'. Social inequalities and poverty - features of the social question - are erased by the representation of the uncontrollable mob, who poses the need to control. This is evident in the news. Looting, for instance, appears either as the outcome of social conditions of living or as the outcome of some external agent guiding the brute mob. Poverty, hunger and low wages are swept under the carpet of a social construction of the (mis)guided mob, ready to provoke disorder and to threaten the stability of society. These kinds of media coverage not only describe the subaltern population as a potential threat to society; it also portrays the population as malleable and incapable

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of being responsible for their own actions. It does not occur to the constructors of these conspiracy theories that the relationship between deprived populations and society assumes a different nature and a different quality from the ones they would expect.

The situation of violence/threat/fear is taken up by the military, who still, today, find space in the media to express their concern with the gravity of the social situation in the country. They describe it as a situation of 'social chaos', due to the 'moral crises' that permeate Brazilian life. In these articles the military does not appear as a ghost from the past, but it is explicitly mentioned in the political arena, reminding the country of their presence and in many senses referring to their sacrificial and sacred role of maintaining moral values in a society in which they see clear symptoms of degeneration.

iii) The streets are represented through violence and criminal actions. Violence in the streets is highly salient in the news and the main victims are the more privileged sectors of the population. Kidnapping, as we can see in the events occurring in public spaces, is one of the means of confrontation between criminals and the élite in the streets of Brazil. It is described as an example of the chaotic situation of the Brazilian streets. The streets are unsafe and violent, the newspapers tell us. Rich people are particularly at risk, as the wave of kidnappings of businessmen seem to demonstrate. Criminals and drug dealers operate as if they were more in control than the police and the incapacity of the latter to enforce the law is one of the main explanations for 'the chaos'. The law in this scenario seems to be no more than a convention stripped of its real symbolic value in society. As a social contract, the law, of course, is open to query and debate. It is, however, highly problematic if a society fails to recognise the legitimacy of its own social contract. Vested interests emerge again as one of the justifications given for the wave of kidnappings. The links between looting and kidnapping are established through the construction of a symbolic representation of both the poor and the criminals as being beyond the control of the authorities. It is, therefore, fertile ground for evoking the military ghost, as the only one capable of controlling what appears to be out of hand. Thus

the streets are represented as being in a state of war.

5.3.2. Politics

The articles about politics centre on the problem of corruption. Let us see in more detail which representations are prevalent in political news. Table 5.3.1 presents the results for politics in the content analysis of the newspapers.

Table 5.3.2: **Political Events, Their Main Actors, Causes and Explanations in the Newspapers (May 1992)**

Events of Political Life	%	Actors	%	Causes and Explanations	%
Corruption and Bribery	80	Government Politicians	31 23	Impunity Private Interests / Individualism	40 32
Family Matters and Politics	9	Relatives of Politicians The President	76 16	Private Interests / Individualism Impunity	45 30
Politics and Crime	5	Relatives of Politicians Politicians Drug Dealers/Criminals	36 21 21	Impunity Moral Crises / Widespread Corruption	33 25
Influence Peddling	4	Politicians Government	50 42	Private Interests / Individualism Moral Crisis / Widespread Corruption	82 18
Fear of Dictatorship	2	Military The people/population Politicians	71 14 14	Social Conditions Moral Crisis / Widespread Corruption	67 33

* Articles about politics n= 290; for actors and causes and explanations the two highest percentages were considered.

The intensive coverage of acts of corruption, criminal and sometimes violent actions related to politics, influence peddling, and political practice mixed with family matters, points to two different, although related, problems. On the one hand, the newspapers do express reality. They are not "just" the symbolic constructions of the media. In this sense, they open up windows of visibility that would otherwise remain closed to the scrutiny of the public eye. On the other hand, and by the same

token, they foster the representation of political life as an exercise in self-interest, quite separated from the interests of the majority of the population. By exposing the realities of institutionalised politics, the press opens up a space for the interpretation of these realities. These interpretations, of course, depend upon specific modalities of representing political life.

Of all the articles concerning political events that were content analysed, 80% are about corruption and bribery. The overwhelming presence of corruption in political life receives extensive coverage by the newspapers and reinforces specific representations of political life. These representations are extremely powerful because their explanatory network comprises a set of meanings that are related to Brazilian folk history and to ritualistic self-interpretation. I shall expand on this in the next chapter, where the discussion of the groups reveals in great detail the trade-offs between the interpretation of a corrupt political life and a corrupt being - the Brazilian. However, it is already possible to see such interpretative networks in the newspapers and magazines. The table above can give us some indications of this.

First of all, political life appears in the press as corruption, politics related to crime, a blurred boundary between familial and political matters and the fear of a return to dictatorship. The principal actors in these events are very much the same, namely government and politicians (who belong to the government), the president (who is government) and relatives of politicians (who belong to the government), the military and the people and last, but not least, criminals (who are related to politicians through dealings of all kinds). The justifications for both the events and for the participation of the actors in these events revolve around issues such as self-interest and individualism, impunity, moral crises and widespread corruption. These sets of explanation for the events that characterise political life reveal the same underlying logic. There seems to be a general loss of the dimension of the Other - and that is the rationale behind ideas of a moral crisis leading to widespread corruption. Self-interest and individualism, the mixing of political and family affairs and impunity are not different in essence. They all reveal the absence of limits to the private self, whose actions in the public realm are not guided by any internalised

sense of a common, public interest. Impunity, in a way, is the greatest reinforcer of all, since it proves, as it were, that "everything goes". Paradoxically, such a state of affairs challenges the dominant ethos of Brazilian society. There are very strong values of collectivism and of solidarity in Brazil, values linked to the religiosity of the Brazilian people and to the importance of kinship at the inception of Brazilian society. The challenge to the dominant ethos becomes clear when actions considered individualistic and self-interested are seen as symptoms of a moral crisis. When Brazil and its people are depicted as corrupt and in a state of moral decline, this is due both to the reality of the situation and to the dominant set of values of Brazilian society. The gap between a moral and ethical set of values, and a self-interpretation that considers the Brazilian as a being capable of corruption and law-breaking, allows for the reinforcement and perpetuation of a deteriorated identity. People are strongly attached to Brazil and to the necessity of its betterment and yet they look down upon it and upon themselves.

Fear of dictatorship is the outcome of such a state of affairs. As I discussed before, the military occupy a specific symbolic site in this scenario. Historically, the army has proposed itself as the saviour of of the country; they were the ones that could protect Brazil from its own people and from its fate. Representations of the essentially brutal and uncontrollable character of the people are part of the social imaginary in Brazil and the military present themselves as the only institution capable of controlling such an indolent population. In this logic, the people become the perpetrators of their own punishment since, by their very nature, they are the source of all wrong-doing in Brazil. Political life and street life come together in a representation of the essentially corrupt Brazilian, the source of all the problems plaguing Brazilian society.

5.3.3. Representations of Public Life in the Newspapers: The Relationship Between Street Life and Political Life

A number of articles in the newspapers link up the streets and political life. This link is established very much along the line of the interpretation I have

suggested above. These articles provide an explicit network of relationships describing and explaining the conditions of public life in Brazil. Notwithstanding their low frequency (18, or 3%, of the total articles analysed), they are qualitatively significant for the interpretation I am proposing here. Table 5.3.3 shows the events, actors and explanations that appear in these articles.

Table 5.3.3: **Events about the Streets and Politics Mentioned Together, Their Main Actors, Causes and Explanations in the Newspapers (May 1992)**

Events	N= 18	Actors	%	Causes and Explanations	%
Threat/Fear	15	Military The People	7 6	Moral Crises Social Conditions	9 6
Corruption/Bribery	15	Military The People	6 6	Moral Crises Social Conditions	10 5
Social Conditions	2	Military Church	1 1	Moral Crises	2
Fear of Dictatorship	2	Military The People	1 1	Moral Crises Social Conditions	1 1
Looting	1	The People	1	Social Conditions	1
Politics and Crime	1	Military	1	Social Conditions	1

* n=18; for actors and causes and explanations the two highest percentages were considered.

The vast majority of these articles relate violence, threat and fear in the streets to corruption and bribery in political life. The military and the people are the main actors, followed by the church and the government. The justifications offered for this state of affairs are twofold: social conditions such as poverty and inequalities, and a moral crisis characterised by widespread corruption in the country. There is explicit reference to widespread corruption in society in nine out of ten of these articles; six out of ten make reference to the military as a threat ready to intervene in public life and half of the articles refer to corruption as an illness plaguing the whole country. The relations between these notions reveal a set of presuppositions which bring into the open the representations at work in the newspaper articles. The articles unite the

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situation in the streets with the situation in political life; in doing so they suggest the similarity between street life and political life in Brazil. At the same time, the articles point to the separation between everyday life and political life; in doing so they suggest the chasm between the ordinary citizen in the street and politicians who conduct the public affairs of society. It is an ambivalent logic whose foundations are to be found in the presupposition that the moral crises of Brazilian society permeate all sectors of the population. The military and the people appear on the same stage as the main social actors in these articles.

Corruption, looting, poverty, war in the streets, moral crises and widespread corruption in society - such notions come together to represent the relationships that prevail in public spaces. On the one hand, they negate the idea of public life since corruption and bribery, which are the outcome of relationships deprived of accountability and therefore deprived of the limits that a generalised other imposes, be it in the form of law, or in the form of internalised social patterns for action. On the other hand, they transform the very idea of public life into a threat, as is the case for violence, threat and fear in the streets. In this sense, these relationships express and, at the same time, reinforce justifications that deny the essential meaning of the public sphere. As such, they suggest the first indicator for a representation of the public sphere - it becomes an empty space. There is nothing in it, no law, no social link, no commitment. It suggests a picture of a no man's land, where everything is possible and where anything goes. In this context, fear of dictatorship is a reminder of the power the military still hold in public life. The situation of chaos that the media present - and help to construct - evokes the military capacity to intervene, control and discipline Brazilian public life. It is necessary to consider the language of the mass media since they tend to stereotype and to exaggerate the situations to which they refer (McQuail, 1976). Yet, the underlying presuppositions of the mass media are part of the cultural stock of the society to which they belong. As Hall has argued, "the ideological concepts embodied in photos and texts in a newspaper do not produce new knowledge about the world, they produce *recognition* of the world as we have already learned to appropriate it" (Hall, 1973, p.184). In other words, the newspapers perpetuate as well as construct social representations.

5.4. The Information Magazines: Analysis of _Veja_ and _Isto É_

The content analysis of the weekly magazines covered the issues of May 1992. Four issues of _Veja_ and four issues of _Isto É_ were analysed and the data do not differ substantially from those in the newspapers.

As Table 5.4. shows, the themes and events which appear in the magazines are very much the same events that appear in the newspapers.

Table 5.4: Events in Veja and Isto É - Issues of May 1992

Events	Veja	Isto É	Total
Corruption/Bribery	11	5	16
Crime and Politics	2	5	7
Familial issues and Politics / Nepotism	2	3	5
Military	2	2	4
Street life: looting, kidnapping and demonstrations	2	2	4
Law-breaking in general	2	-	2
The character of Brazilians	-	1	1
N	21	18	39

* Articles refering to streets and political life in the weekly magazines Veja and Isto É / May 1992

The articles in the magazines are long and draw on a variety of social actors around a common theme. These actors are part of the story in myriad ways: either something is told about them, or they tell us something themselves about their situations, or the article contains verbatim dialogues between them. In any case, it involves the construction of a personage and the construction of intimacy between the reader and the actors in the stories. One of the devices used by the information magazines is to create an intimate space between the reader and the people who are in the news. The text in itself has a narrative form, sometimes similar to that of a

novel; it is a dramatic text and it is the dramatic element that gives coherence and structure to the story. Bearing this in mind, I shall discuss in more detail the treatment each of the themes receives in the sample I have analysed.

(i) <u>Corruption and Bribery:</u> Corruption, as it was in the newspapers, is the most salient single topic in the magazines. The issue is present in the editorials and the leading articles of both *Veja* and *Isto É*. These articles refer to various cases of corruption in high office in Brazil and to the accusations that Pedro Collor de Mello, the president's brother, was firing at his brother, who was then the president of Brazil. In both cases, the articles have an ironic tone, mix personal and public actions and make extensive use of verbatim quotations. When reporting on the investigations surrounding one of the members of the cabinet of Collor, *Isto É* constructs a story based on a "wild west" film, using expressions such as "bad and good guys" just to conclude that in this case there are no good guys. The editorials and leading articles about the accusations Pedro Collor de Mello was directing at his brother are imbued with images and analogies that go back to biblical mythology; Cain and Abel are drawn on as an anchor for the conflicts between the two brothers. As the articles progress, describing the concrete accusations, the reader is served with a full account, and verbatim quotations from the discussions between the two brothers and, gradually, from their mother and extended family. Corruption and bribery are thus constructed through the lenses of personal and familial issues. This leads to the theme of nepotism and family issues related to politics.

(ii) <u>Crime and Politics:</u> The articles relating crime and politics range from murder to electoral irregularities. These articles describe the blurred boundaries between political practice and criminality in Brazil. In some of the articles politics, passions, vested interest, corruption, violence and murder combine to set up the plot of the story. This is the case in a leading article, in *Isto É*, about the mysterious assassination of the governor of Acre, a state in the north of Brazil. The narrative is full of mysteries, subtle insinuations and allusions. Notions that everything is possible and that Brazilians are used to believing in the unbelievable permeate the whole article. In the following excerpt it is possible to identify these elements: *"The*

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shooting leaves a distressing sound in the ears of the country: in the chaos of the
present situation, everything becomes dramatically believable and feasible in the
Brazilian imaginary, when the story involves politics and politicians"(Isto É, May
1992). The form of the narrative overrides the content of the story being told, to the
extent that, at the end of it, one is not sure whether the story has happened or is pure
fiction.

(iii) <u>Family Issues and Politics/Nepotism:</u> This theme is usually related to corruption
and the misuse of public money. In these articles the text brings together, sometimes
in the same sentence, affairs of families and affairs of the country. The links are
made directly, that is, the relationship in the text is consequential. In the editorial of
Isto É we can read "*...the Collor family will not be the same. Brazil, equally, cannot
be the same"*, or *"The dirty linen of the Collor family is being washed in public...It
happens that in this episode Brazil gets a double role: audience and participant in
the show". (Isto É,* 27 May 1992). In these fragments of text we see a country
subjected to the vicissitudes of a family, as if their destiny was to define the destiny
of Brazil. Perhaps that is the reason why the articles narrate in great detail the stories
occurring inside the families that hit the headlines. In the case of the president's
family there are pieces of dialogue between brothers, mother and son. The image of
the mother is evoked through the actions of the president's mother who tries to
pacify her children. Stories coming from past generations are used to justify the rows
of the present an psychological explanations are widely canvassed: even the old
nanny comes into the story to give an account of the early years of the two brothers.
Images of betrayal, of adultery and jealousy are quite explicitly conveyed. Politics
becomes a matter of dramatic passions occurring within the family home.

(iv) <u>The Military:</u> The Brazilian army is in the news commenting on social chaos,
the moral decline of Brazilian society and the prospects of an institutional rupture.
The articles cover the declarations of the last president in the period of dictatorship
about the wave of looting in Rio, about corruption and what he sees as the
degeneration of social life. His comments provoke a strong reaction in the media and
all sectors of civil society. These articles clearly convey the military as a clear and

still present threat to Brazilian democracy. It is no accident that the military comes on the scene when images of the "threatening mob", that is, the poor population of Brazil, are also salient in the mass media. By linking the discourse of social chaos, moral deterioration and disorder at all levels with the voice of the military, the stories lend credence to representations of the Brazilian people as a horde in need of control and the military as the agents of control.

(v) Street Life (looting, kidnapping and demonstrations): As in the newspapers, the streets feature in the magazines through the reporting of events such as looting, kidnapping and working-class demonstrations. In these articles looting is analysed at being at the interface between crime and poverty. The description of the events suggests violence and police action, something which reinforces representations of fear and threat in the streets.

(vi) Law-breaking in general: The articles about law-breaking construct an image of a generalised disrespect for the law. They depict law-breaking as a taken-for-granted activity in everyday life. The law is not enforced, there is no punishment for those who break it and, under this logic, the law is not a reference in common life.

(vii) The character of Brazilians: This single long article, following the cover of *Isto É* on the honesty of Brazilians, is extremely important for my analysis. In it, the Brazilian character is called into question. The narrative is structured around the stories of a few people who, against all odds, resisted the temptation to break the law or to compromise their moral standards. These few cases work in the narrative as the exceptions that confirm the rule, since the whole article focuses on the essentially corrupt nature of Brazilians. Decline in moral standards and ethical concerns are present in everyday life, and the representation of the Brazilian as corrupt is reinforced by a series of descriptive stories of some forms of corrupt behaviour supposed to be common in the streets. As the article progresses, experts are interviewed and invited to give their opinion about the Brazilian character. The explanations vary from social inequalities and economic crises to the Portuguese heritage. However, these notions coalesce into the main reason: the character of

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Brazilians, the being of Brazilians.

5.5. The Construction of Social Representations of Public Life in the Press

The content analysis of the newspapers and the interpretation of the articles in the magazines suggest a coherent system of representations operating in the press. On the one hand, this system builds upon some historical and cultural patterns of Brazilian society - in that it reproduces meanings which are already part of the symbolic stock of the country. On the other hand, the mass media diffuse and transform these representations by the very act of putting them into circulation, into everyday discussion, into the gossip and conversation that goes on when people appropriate media messages - in that these representations are open to questioning and to eventual transformation. Figure 5.5. shows the organisation of the representational field in the press.

Figure 5.5: Organisation of the Representational Field in the Brazilian Press
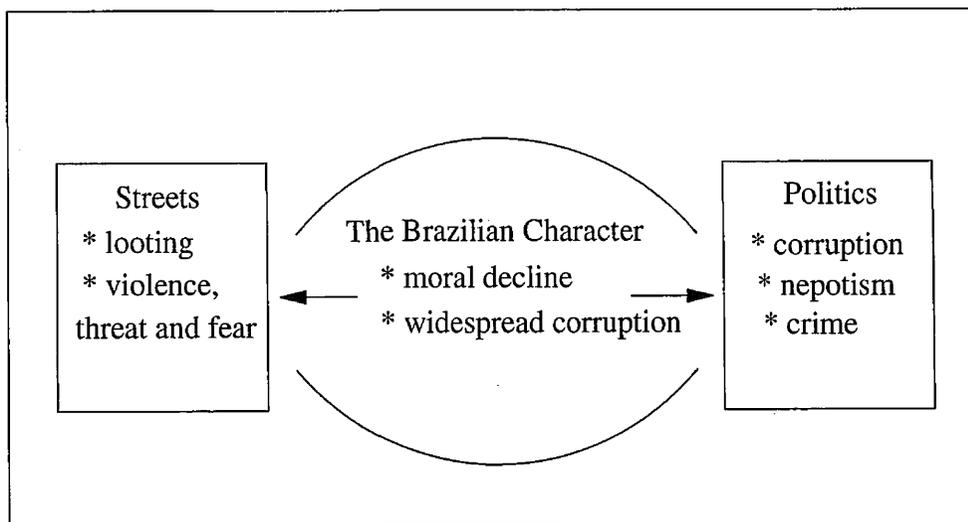
The data discussed in this chapter suggest a quite specific network of themes and explanations comprising the representational field of the public sphere in the press. This field relates the streets and political life and, by the same token, also separates them. It proposes a difficult state of affairs characterised by violence, fear and threat in the streets and corruption, nepotism and crime in political life. Private interests and family issues are so strongly linked to political practice that the former can define and impose their own dynamics on the latter. This is the case with the articles that describe the rows in the president's family. The people are associated with the threat and violence in the streets - they appear in the news as a mob. The government and the politicians are the actors associated with corruption and self-interest. And the military lurks in the background, threatening the people and politicians alike, and reaffirming their role as the guardians of law and order. These notions are organised around a central core that links up the different themes and gives unity to the representational field: the character of Brazilians. This character comprises the notions of moral decline and of widespread corruption in the country.

The analysis above has shown an organised network of meanings about Brazilian public life underlying the content of the media. These meanings are not only diffused by the press. On the contrary, as they circulate, they allow for a collective exercise of social cognition and recognition: they produce a social knowledge through which the community maintains an identity and a sense of belonging. The fact that the meanings found in the representations of public life can be considered quite negative does not alter the quality of the process of constructing this social knowledge. By engaging in the symbolic and shared task of representing a given reality, social subjects enact their own relationship to the social world, investing it with affection and values. The representations in the press are part and parcel of this process. In the workings of the media we also find the conditions through which a society is confronted with its own reality. It may be a difficult one, as is the case in Brazil, but it is nevertheless a *visible* one. This visibility opens up new spaces for representations and action, which can eventually lead to the transformation of the actual. As will become clear in the following chapters, the representations to be found in the media are not far removed from the representations

other social actors construct. The press interprets reality and, in doing so, they draw on devices which are specific to their own language and intentions (let us not forget that the press are organised institutions with goals and intentions); but the press are also mediators, creating channels of communication and information in everyday life. By emphasising the ambivalent character of the press, I hope to make clear that the analysis I have presented in this chapter does not necessarily lead to a purely dull scenario. This is the case because the opportunity to identify and to question these representations is here, it is in the press, and it is, above all, in the voices of social subjects who appropriate and shape these representations, making them part of their own vivid experience of life in Brazil.

6.0. GIVING VOICE TO THE PUBLIC SPHERE: SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS IN DIALOGUE

6.1. The Groups and How to Interpret Them: Research as an Interactive Act

6.1.1 The Choice of Groups: Who? and Why?

I conducted six focus groups. Each comprised a different social category, all of which I considered to be relevant to the present research. My main concern was to allow specific voices to be expressed, for I believe that in voicing their experience and debating it in public people express the diversity of the social world and reveal the complexity of their relationship to it. In other words, different voices provide insights about the particular ways in which different people locate themselves in the world and locate the world in their representational universe. As I described in the methodological chapter, the categories chosen were professionals, students, working class people, policemen, taxi-drivers and street children. The choice of policemen and taxi-drivers was very much related to the fact that these people work in the streets and make their living there. Since I was clear from the beginning about the violence and danger which characterise Brazilian streets, I thought that people who had to earn their living in a space replete with signs of death would have something to say about the representations of public life. Professionals and manual workers were chosen to represent a more classical division within society albeit one that is not unproblematic[1]. And finally the children. Not just any children but street children. Perhaps I should account for their inclusion in this research in a little more detail. White (1965) wrote, in the introduction to his classical study about the social structure of an Italian slum in the United States, that the picture generally presented

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[1] The problem of social stratification in the social sciences is an old one. The undefined legacy of Marx concerning social classes has accentuated the debate and sociologists have debated the issue *ad nauseam*. It is however indisputable that insertion in economic life still provides a powerful tool to differentiate both subjective experience and concrete ways of living.

of Cornerville was quite accurate in terms of the bleak reality it was describing. Nevertheless, he thought and felt that there was a problem with that picture, or better still, that there was something missing. There were no human beings in it and he went in search of their experience. I believe very much that White was right and that this remains one of the most serious problems social psychology faces, if not the social sciences as a whole, when it comes to the study of poor, miserable realities. Quite often, underprivileged people are just not there; they disappear amidst the rates of criminality, the rates of child mortality, the numbers of homeless and so on. It is true that there are many interpretations of their lives and much speculation concerning the reasons which have led to their situation. But their voices, their experiences and their accounts of the situation are usually missing. I wanted to talk with children living in the streets of Brazil, in part because I thought their voices should be heard in a study investigating representations of public life in Brazil. Most of the time the experiences of these children are concealed by numbers - frightening numbers - that describe how many they are, how many join the streets everyday and how many are killed. In the group, these children tell us how it is to be out there, how they manage to survive, how they keep on going and what they think about the country in which they live. They also tell us about their hopes for the future and this, perhaps, was the most poignant moment in the whole field work. Both the colleague working as an observer and myself were emotionally exhausted convening this group. And, indeed, the experiences to which they gave voice demonstrate just how important their accounts are if we are to understand the subtlety and the variety of the processes that give birth to representations of public spaces.

6.1.2. The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Choice

There is no intention here of generalizing these data. But there is also no intention of saying they do not express Brazilian reality, because they do. Claims of generalization based on large numbers overlook the fact that there are elements of the whole even in the most singular of experiences. As I discussed in chapter four (the epistemology of the Hegelian paradigm), the crucial relationship between universals and particulars lies at the heart of the paradigm I have chosen within

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which to locate this research. And yet I am fully aware of the limits of my data. I have carried out group discussions in the south of Brazil, which is in itself limited, given the great diversity of regional culture in the country. I have interviewed only one group in each of the six categories I considered relevant to the problem of my research, something that can be problematic in terms of its idiosyncracy. And yet I think that these people to whom I have talked revealed much more than their idiosyncratic views. This is simply the case because they are social beings, not far from the experience of their fellow countrypeople. By observing and participating in a patch of their everyday life - which was intentionally isolated to be more easily apprehended - I have encountered the elements that allow that patch to belong to a patch-work; it is from this multifaceted set of unique experiences that the totality of social reality arises.

6.1.3. How to Interpret the Groups: The Coding Frame and Its Rationale

I have developed a coding frame to handle the units of content that emerged when the groups debated the topics proposed to them (see Appendix 3). It is important to remember that the themes proposed were defined through the "operationalisation" of the object PUBLIC SPHERE. This was explained in the methodological chapter. Streets and politics were the two foci of interest that I identified, since the public sphere as such would be too abstract a concept for the groups to discuss. The operationalisation of the public sphere in terms of streets and politics was theoretically driven and empirically justified by the content analysis of the media reported in chapter five.

The coding frame attempts to classify content under the modes of discourse in which they appear. That is: descriptions, explanations and causes of the multiple realities the groups describe and the feelings and strategies of coping associated with these descriptions and these explanations. The debates were very much a sequence of argument, counter-argument and contradiction amongst the participants. Meaning was the product of confrontation and oppositional debate. This is true of all but the group of street children. There the children concentrated on telling their own stories

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and expressing their ideas to the coordinator and observer rather than to each other. In the other groups participants discussed among themselves and quite soon forgot the presence of the coordinator and the observer.

My concern with the ways in which meaning is produced relates to how social representations are produced. I think focus groups provide an interesting context in which to observe the strategies that are deployed when people express and make sense of a particular reality. They talk to each other in a way that both draws on, and yet calls into question, the taken-for-granted; they reflect on what they hear themselves and others say and confront the reality that is theirs with the reality they would like to see. So representations emerge that cannot be understood solely in terms of the general themes which the groups propose because these themes are highly heterogenous. Let me illustrate this by reference to the category of individualism.

Individualism appears as a description of the reality of the streets; as an explanation of that same reality and yet again as an explanation of how politics are conducted. Finally it also appears as a strategy for coping with the state of affairs they describe. Therefore, individualism appears in the coding frame under four quite separate headings. But, there is yet more to be considered. Individualism is always mentioned, irrespective of its form, as an appalling reality. It becomes a way of being and a way of justifying a reality that, nevertheless, the subjects don't like. Thus individualism not only expresses a given reality but it also expresses a desired reality that is not there. The coding frame, therefore, is designed in terms of oppositions, because that is how the discussion progresses. The very fact that most participants describe a quite dull reality does not preclude the possibility in their representational universe of another reality that is desired. Such opposition is also important in order to understand the contradictory character of the emerging representations. It is not that subjects would represent the public sphere in terms of individualism - full stop. By representing it as individualism they project that representation and link it to a representation of themselves. But by the very act of doing so, they question it, and reject it, at least at an ideal level, the level of what should be. The other side of the

representation is here, in the imaginative, idealised reality, that, although not fully corresponding to the reality the subjects identify as real, expresses a potential reality that could, simply because it is desired and imagined, become real.

When coding individualism, then, I have been aware of the many different guises of this notion and the processes to which they refer in the dynamics of constructing social representations. Rather than finding agreement in the groups they indicate, instead, a striking process of critical identification where the possible identity of the moment is far from being the desired one (I speak in terms of identity because individualism is a way of being, and my data are quite striking in as much as representations of a public sphere lead back to representations of national identity). What I discuss here in relation to individualism is true also of many other categories, such as fatalism, human nature, the nature of Brazilians and so forth. In all these cases I have attempted to preserve the oppositional and argumentative character given to each of these themes.

The other problem I considered was how to define the units of analysis, since they are not clear in a group. One choice was to take the turn as the unit of analysis, that is, every time a different participant talks. That soon proved to be inadequate since the participants would sometimes speak for five or six minutes and, at other times, they would say just yes or no and thus I would lose diversity in one subject's talk. I decided then that the segment of talk that would lend itself to a unit of meaning would be a unit of analysis. In other words semantics guide the units of analysis. They are defined by the possible meanings that can be attached to them, rather than a priori.

Finally, I am aware that there may be doubt concerning the value of coding group talk as a piece of discourse. Groups have their own dynamics and I am not primarily looking for frequencies or quantities in this specific situation. However, I thought that, even in group talk, the identification of some frequencies could lead to interesting insights in terms of comparisons between groups, as well as in terms of the incidence of particular feelings, descriptions and explanations. I have decided thus

to put the data into Text-base Alpha and to code everything. Text-Base Alpha provides two types of variables after the coding is done. One relates to the number of times a particular code appears (the x variables), and the other relates to the length of the code in relation to the full talk being analysed (y variables). I have considered primarily the y variable type because it can provide a good index of the intensity of the codes in the conversations of the groups. The analysis of the results was both qualitative and quantitative. I have pursued a line of qualitative interpretation based on the metaphors the groups used and I linked the various units of meaning that emerged in their talk. The outcome of this is the interpretative network that I discuss in this chapter. The quantitative analysis was carried out using cross-tabulations and correspondence analysis. The correspondence analysis proved particularly useful in regard to the corroboration of the qualitative interpretation as well as to the definition of the nuances and differences between the groups.

6.2 The Streets and Political Life: Representing the Space Out There

6.2.1. The Streets as Fear and Threat

War. That was the overwhelming metaphor used by the groups to describe the streets of Brazil. The reality of the streets was the first topic discussed and the meanings associated with it appeared clearly and spontaneously. No one had to think too much about it: The words sprung readily to the group field, evoking powerful connotations. Threat, as the groups reveal, can come from many sources, and it expresses itself in everyday practices that vary from the most obvious to the most subtle. Explicit violence and crime could lead to representations of danger. Individualism and traffic battles could lead to representations of each man for himself (and the devil takes the hindmost). There is a general, highly consensual, idea that the streets are fraught with danger and threat. As we shall see, how threat is expressed, and the reactions to it, will differ from one group to the next. The inter-relations between the elements that make the streets a threat are contingent on the concrete experience the groups undergo when exposed to their reality. But there is no doubt that there is a common ground to the experience, where everyone, from a

different perspective, will feel the same:

> Participant 1: *The streets these days are a war...Violent...*
> Participant 2: *Yes, and what is most striking to me is that even the middle-class, and the upper class, that is, all the classes in the country are engaged in that war...the social war..which is coming..is latent, is not in deed, but in potential, we can see that in people....* (**students**)

Or, as we find in other groups:

> Participant 1: *...you must watch out, you must be very careful...you cannot just go out...*
> Participant 2: *Yes... it is the famous "concrete jungle" that people talk about so much...but in spite of being of stone, it is coming alive..It is starting to come alive. War, men...*(**professionals**)

> Participant 1: *You know, the taxi is a window of everyday life, we work with three mirrors, one inside and two outside, and the job is dangerous, these days...everyone is nagging about life, the situation of our country, people are out of breath, and we are a bit like psychologists...very dangerous...*
> Participant 2: *Yes, doctor, it is a war...Our colleague has been robbed five times...Can you imagine? Our nerves are falling apart...*(**taxi-drivers**)

These fragments of conversation are paradigmatic of the immediate associations that come to mind when the subjects think about the streets. They express the meanings through which the streets are re-presented in conversation and, as such, they constitute and convey a set of vivid experiences and affective components, of which fear is the most salient. Fear; here we have another powerful signifier giving meaning to life on the streets. Everyone seems, paradoxically, to be afraid of everyone else. It is by cross-referencing the conversations of the different groups that such a paradox becomes evident. However, the fear which emerges is not only the fear of violence and of criminality. For those groups faced with the most difficult conditions of life, the fear is related to their struggle to make a living "out there", either working or "hanging around", as it is for the children and the workers, and the type of response they meet once they are out there:

Participant 1: *I feel fear, I feel fear. Do you believe, that in the morning, when I get up, and in the evening I pray, of course, this spiritual side, as a catholic.., but early in the morning, I am worried because what I earn..is it sufficient to sustain my family? Besides... that fear I have of getting up, food.., that is my fear, if you don't do X and Y in that day, what is happening tomorrow? This is my fear. To go out and feel that... if I will have breakfast for my family the day after next...it is not only the violence...*
Participant 3:*...as he said, this business of going out, as he goes to the street, is difficult, very difficult, ..you go to the streets in fear of working...*
Participant 2: *You know...you are fine, when I got married I would spend the day without food...*
Participant 1: *I know, I know...* (**manual workers**)

Moderator- And how is it, who wants to tell me how is the life of a boy in the streets...
Child 1- *Ah...our life...the life of street boys is...as, there is these rich boys that stay at home,...you saw that now they made that thing there...I don't know, in Rio, there, that they preferred to kill the boys in the streets...*
Child 2- *Yes...it is the "extermination of street boys"....(exterminio* is a rather sophisticated word, and it is interesting that the children have appropriated it, because that is how the action of the death squads is referred to in the media, and in most places.)
Child 1- *But, better, the little rich ones they leave alive...We are afraid...Yes...there is also this...we working, making a living, trying to do something better, I found work looking after cars, there come the police there...they arrive already beating us, they don't talk, don't explain, they arrive beating us...*
Coord- Everyone here has been beaten by the police?
All- *Yes! I have!*
Child 2- *I have taken even gas on my face...* (**street children**)

The police, in their turn, are also afraid:

Participant 1: *We are also scared, we feel very insecure...*
Participant 2: *They know us...and many times you don't remember the face of all these criminals...But they know all of us...it has happened...you are relaxed, and out of the blue they shoot you..*(**policemen**)

It would be misleading however, to conclude that the community lives in

constant fear and threat without developing its own defences. There must be a way out of such a difficult situation and the various groups, as they talk, unfold different strategies for coping with this reality. The most common one is habituation. Through habituation people forge a way of not facing up to what is happening as well as of inventing new practices based on the very reality they are denying. It is important to notice that habituation does not appear without oppositional trends. There is a dynamic of implicit argumentation in the groups. On the one hand, they strive to see and to overcome the many different guises of the trivial and the effects of banalisation. They do so just by talking: speech gives life to what is unwanted, revealing the harshness of everyday life and the effects which such a reality triggers. There appears, in-between habituation, an effort to notice, to realise, to reflect, which evokes sadness and despair. These are not easy feelings to sustain, but they are active ones, that, as we shall see, lead to reflexivity. On the other hand, the groups resist, and protect themselves. Denial - under the guise of habituation and indifference - imposes itself: if what is there to be seen reflects an image too hard to contemplate, to get used to it or just not to care about it are possible solutions. The community protects itself. And feels the need to hide and to escape. This is a society of internal exiles - which, as we shall see, goes much deeper - where to look outside becomes a threat to the self. The necessity to hide, which appears in a number of practices shaping people's responses to the scene - "we become recluses, we retreat, we enclose ourselves" - leaves the outside to itself, in a void.

Some protections, nevertheless, are not as powerful as one might wish. The car, which is the shelter of the well-off from the dangers of the streets, soon turns out to be itself a weapon in another battleground: the traffic. The car, ideally, can protect physically and psychologically. Physically: because inside it people are inaccessible, and everybody knows it is necessary to lock the doors and to keep the windows closed. Psychologically: because when moving people become oblivious of what is outside; it allows for a flattening of the landscape, which is brought about by movement and speed. However, once in the car, driving becomes a metaphor for competing selves, each one at war with the other.

From these initial representations it is important to single out how they represent a specific form of social exchange. They comprise a set of blended images, metaphors and feelings, as well as strategies for coping, that arise and translate into a set of social practices. These social practices, at the extreme, incorporate the extraordinary within the triviality of an everyday life tamed by habituation. Here, excessive security, armed police everywhere, bars, violence, and even death, lose their tragic dimension. As we shall see, these are not free-floating representations; on the contrary, they are well anchored in images of fate, of separateness and of impotence that are as old as the first encounters between inhabitants and invaders that happened on Brazilian soil.

6.2.1 About the Streets; Of the Streets

There is a distinction between those groups who centre their conversation in a discourse about the streets and those groups whose discourse reflects their experience of the streets. Some groups know; others undergo. This difference between the knowledge developed about, and the knowledge of, the vivid experience leads to the issue of the creation of different representations according to the distinct locus of the participants in the social fabric. It also leads to the problem of identity construction and how this relates to social representations. Professionals and students talk about the streets, centring their talk on the lives of others. To an extent they talk of themselves, as when they describe threat and fear. But the main focus of their discussion concerns the life of those who are the source of their fear: the ones that play the main roles in enacting the battles taking place in the streets. Manual workers, taxi-drivers, policemen and street children, by contrast, when they discuss the streets, discuss what they do in the streets. Their accounts are permeated by their everyday practices. Rather than finding words to describe the situation on the streets, what immediately springs to mind are the daily routines which they develop in the streets. To be a policemen, to be a taxi-driver, to be a street child, to be a worker - as they talk about what that means, they also give meaning to the reality of the world out there. Here, the material the subjects find to re-present the streets are stories about their jobs, stories about their struggles to survive and to eat, struggles to

remain alive. Such narratives link up their representations of this reality to their representations of themselves. Indeed, to be a policemen is also to realize what that means in the eyes of others; it is to define oneself through the concrete tasks one must perform in public. Representations of the street permeate the very identities of these groups. So, street children talk about the streets as a very bad place to be, they don't enjoy being there; it is a place where they are beaten up by the police and recognised by others as little bandits ready to attack. That is, however, what they somehow are: that is how the eye of the beholder sees them and, therefore, this comprises the very representations that cut across their own identity formation.

To construct social representations is a societal process that always sheds light on the subjects who construct them. The way people represent a given reality, the contents - practices or symbols - they find with which to construct the representations, are always an expression of who they are. Constructing a representation is also a process of stating an identity and proposing an interpretation of reality. This is particularly the case in the group conducted with street children. They talk about the streets as their reality, talking about themselves and who they are. When they do so, it becomes evident that these children cease to be children; they are stripped of their childhood. They are seen, rather, as bandits, or as people of whom all the demands of being a "grown-up" are expected. Strategies of survival acquire an enormous importance, because life is a matter of "do it yourself" and "take care of yourself". They all ended up in the streets running away from domestic violence and their public exposure - children surviving on their own with no right to play or to have toys - is just the visible wound of miserable conditions of life that destroy their childhood, their future and their families all together.

Their play, of course, is permeated by the conditions of their everyday life. There seems to be there an avoidance of accepting the "real, small pleasures" that a street child could enjoy. Like playing pinball machines for instance. That seems to be contrary to the ethos that these children hold, where to work is the correct thing to do when they are out in the streets. It is as if they acknowledge that to get rid of the image of "vagabonds", or little bandits, they should be *working* in the streets. The

children act out what the "right" society expects, when the truth is that, as with any children of their age, they should be playing. Sometimes, however, they do play, even though their playing is accompanied by feelings of guilt. They are wrong, they are rejected, and above all they learn how to read these signs from the other. These are the signs that constitute their representations of themselves and of what it means to be a being of the streets: A being without reference, a being without care, a being without anyone. The streets are such a place; a place of 'no-beings' and whoever lives there becomes a nobody. The only possible identity here is one of wrong-doing and of threat:

> Child 3- *There are many things also..., we are of the street, we don't have a family, my mum, my mum, has died, my father I don't know...Since I am little I don't know my father...Only because of that, they want to exterminate us...*
> Child 1- *And there are many things...that...who does is those boys...that live in homes...but who takes the blame is the boys in the streets instead of them....*
> Child 3- *They don't like us, because we are of the streets, "tia"..If they could, I think they would kill us, all boys that don't have anyone....*(silence in the group)

6.2.3. Living Together; Living Apart

The inexorable and undeniable character of living together; the desperate and intense attempts to live apart: such a paradox revealed itself in the course of the discussions. This is not a new dilemma. There has been an abundant literature dealing with the problem of divisions and separations in Latin America, or, to be more precise, in all those countries which had their primary identity defined for them through their confrontation with a European centre (Dusserl, 1993; Said, 1993). However, it would be too simplistic to explain the internal splits which emerge from these historical circumstances by reducing them to the internalization of the binary opposition between dominant versus dominated. Without any intention of obscuring the destructiveness of the historical events that marked the conquest of the Americas, many theorists have shown how they produced different levels and modes of interaction giving rise to the problem of the Other in the experience of these nations

(Todorov, 1992; Quijano, 1993; Dusserl, 1993). The other within - or a culture made of multi-faceted others - where the conditions of possibility of a unified self-interpretation arise necessarily out of diversity and difference: such is the basis for the dialectics between fusion and separation. This problem is indeed crucial as can be seen in the analysis of the group discussions.

It took me some time to understand why there was such an intense discussion in the groups about *human nature* and its character. As the theory of social representations has already and correctly shown, people develop lay theories concerning just about everything around them. However, why would the groups debate so heatedly what constitutes a human being? The debate revolved around two different explanations of the problem. On the one hand, humans are seen as essentially determined: human nature is a given, an ideal substance. On the other hand, humans are seen as the outcome of their interactions and, whether they like it or not, they are part of a social world. It is no accident that these explanations are linked to the problem of individualism in the streets and in politics, as well as to the social inequalities that may explain violence and criminality. There was neither a majority nor a minority in the groups in terms of their positions. The mode of talk was argumentative and often contradictory, where people would switch sides as the discussion progressed. As to what concerns the present research, this is the first clear sign of the notion of separatedness that appears as central in the data. This is the case because it expresses the demarcation of boundaries and discrimination in a reality where contact is thought to be unavoidable:

> Participant 1: *An example, an example I will give you!* (screaming) *It is impossible to be in a shelter in this situation and in the way we live...you are going in two way road, and even if you take great care, there is nothing that will impede that a drink driver, coming from the other side, loses control, hits your car and you had no choice...that is, the whole thing extrapolates the I, doesn't it?*
> Participant 2: *I think that what makes people jump over each other, at any cost, is the basis of their survival...*
> Participant 3: *OK, OK, but why do you say that we have to smash each other? What is cause and what is effect?*
> Participant 2: *People are not bad, strange....I think they become bad...everyone is indifferent...the others don't matter...Brazil...Brazil*

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is looking to its own navel...(**professionals**)

Participant 1: *Yea...violence has gone wild in this country...*
Participant 2: *It is the Brazilian, the Brazilian in himself...he is very "dis-united", it is him for him and the rest...*
Participant 3: *Men, if everyone would give a bit of each...as these politicians...I am always thinking...why earn so much...everyone...but people are too selfish...*
Participant 4: *Whoever wants to do something good in Brazil dies...It is the microbe...*(**taxi-drivers**)

Examples like those above abound in the discussions and they reveal an interesting line of argument. The elements that emerge are human nature, how people relate to others, individualism, Brazilians as "dis-united", selfishness and, finally, the idea that the "good" person cannot live because, in Brazil, she always dies. These elements cannot be understood on their own for their meaning springs from a network of relationships from which they derive their significance. Co-existence with otherness, or the acknowledgement of otherness inside, is veiled under the representations of a dis-united, individualistic and selfish human nature. (In)difference, (dis)unity, (in)dividu(alism): the salience of such notions, used to describe a state of affairs, also express a state of being. Indifference evokes a non-differentiated being, dis-unity tells us about the impossibility of being one (uno) and individualism exposes the extreme form of being one. The persistence of these words in explaining what occurs leads to a need for discussing them further. The path is from the undifferentiated, from the impossibility of being one to the extreme form of being one. This path is a clear expression of a dynamic where the very absence of clear demarcations of difference - impregnation appears through the metaphor of the microbe - leads to the extreme form of differentiation - individualism.

Separation for Brazilians is thus not the contrary of living together; it is a necessary condition that helps to overcome fears of body fusion, fears of a corrupted blood, fears of impurity. Such separations are concrete: they are in the bars, present in everyday life, they are in excessive security in everyday life, they are in the clear demarcation of geographic areas for the rich and for the poor. But they are also symbolic: they are in the disjunctions of perception, where some are seen as radical

others, apart from the "good" society. The best example of this symbolic apartheid was given by the group of professionals, discussing stories about a black boy:

> Participant 2: *I have a friend, well-off, white, middle-class, that is bringing up a black boy. The boy is about 12, he is tall, 1,70m, and her husband gives a lot of imported goods to the black boy...The boy has a bike, a mountain bike...he is very nice and he gets a lot...They live in Tres Figueiras (upper-class neighbourhood).The boy goes to school and he is usually late, then there are two moments when the police brings back the black boy...(laughs)...one is when he is on his bike and he has to prove that it is his bike, because that is too good a bike for him to have it...The second is when the boy is late to school and runs to catch the bus. Police comes and ...(makes the gestures)..takes him back! This is our culture, polluted: a black boy with a mountain bike, well-dressed, in the run..he is done! So...*
> Participant 3: *It is in the head of people, if you are black you are a thief, it is our culture...The policeman has it stuck in his head that all blacks are thieves and the majority of us as well..People don't know how to make distinctions...*(**professionals**)

Here, the group acknowledges, recognises, and then puts into use the power of a representation of otherness - the black. And the fact that "people don't know how to make distinctions" testifies to the sweeping power of that representation: blacks are all thieves. It would be interesting to follow the metaphor through and to ask what blacks have "stolen" (apart from goods which are historically denied to them by coercive social structures that keep them in poverty). They have "stolen", no doubt, the possibility of purity, of an unmixed blood, an unmixed skin - that in Brazil is still a sign of the fascination and desire that blacks exert. Indeed, the black person in Brazil, historically, has been the short-circuit between the categories pure and impure. As de Aragão (1991) shows, the black image has impregnated in Brazil the most central figure of a set of values linked to purity: the mother. The black mother or *mãe preta*, who traditionally breast-fed the white population, has, along with the sexual exchange happening between blacks and whites, paved the way for a whole symbolism of transmission and contamination coming from blacks. The glorification of the "mulata" as the utmost expression of Brazilian beauty and sensuality, the power of black culture, black religion and black mythology in everyday life is undeniable; such elements confront the ideal of purity and, even worse, they reveal clearly that what the blacks have stolen, the whites were more

than happy to give away. There was desire for the fusion, the mixture, the blending and now someone has to pay for it.

Certainly it was proximity through sexual frequentation that led some of the greatest of Brazilian sociologists to say that there was no racism in Brazil (Freyre, 1946, 1986; Skidmore, 1974; Costa, 1985). Such proximity obscured a reality entirely comprised of distance and separation, wrongly seen as a society lacking discrimination. de Aragão (1991), inspired by the notion of "participation" defined by Lévy-Bruhl and the state of fusion later discussed by Bastide (1965), points out that "we grow up together, the same words, the same play, the same affectivity, the proximity of our bodies. We are apart, however, élite and people, indians, blacks and whites, by social practices that produce social and symbolic sites dramatically distant". This is the paradox of togetherness and separation, and it is from the practices and representations which it produces that we can better understand how Brazilians cope with the otherness they carry inside themselves.

6.2.4. Politics as Corruption

The jump into politics was direct. Even though I had a guide to the topics I wanted to discuss in the groups, it was not necessary to raise the issue, because the groups would make the association themselves. Politics for them reflected everything they had discussed concerning the streets. In other words, there is a correspondence between the streets and political life in the representations of the groups. Self-guided interests and individualism, corruption and vested interests are notions common to all groups when discussing politics:

> Child 1: *These politicians only want to steal our money...for them....*
> Child 2: *They have even a soap opera about the marajas... (marajas*
> is the word that has been used to designate the politicians and senior
> civil servants)
> Child 3: *They want our money...*
> Observer: Whose money?
> Child 2: *Ours!*
> Child 4- *The money of Brazil, of course!*(**street children**)

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Participant 1: *There are so many cases..Those rascals use federal resources and...*
Observer: Is it the idea that the politicians are all like that?
Participant 2: *It is not our idea...they make us believe so..*
Participant 3: *It is the general belief I think...if you ask any Brazilian...what appears about politics in Brazil is what the majority does and the majority is corrupted...there is no way...*(**manual workers**)

These representations have a well-founded basis in reality. There is no need to repeat here that the president of Brazil was himself removed from office because of his involvement in a huge network of corruption. The more recent events in 1993 confirmed the suspicions that the parliament itself is riddled with corruption and therefore what the groups voice is their acknowledgement of the events that shaped political life in Brazil in recent months. However, we can go further and ask what are the specific affects, images and myths that come into play in these representations? Corruption is expressed as individualism and selfishness; there is a strong belief that politics is a process which people in the streets cannot control and, to corroborate all of these, the groups identify impunity as a major part of politics. Again we are faced with the problem of separation and relatedness. The groups correctly identify what happens in the streets with political life and, yet, at the same time, reveal the abyss between the two domains. Rather than a contradiction, it is the nature of a <u>relationship</u> that is revealed in this paradox. The very correspondence between the two realms, streets and political life - which are marked by inequalities, individualism, corruption - can indeed be explained by the chasm between the two. A political life deprived of people and people deprived of representatives in political life: that is the chasm the groups talk about and that is the basis of the isolationism between the two spheres. As we shall see, the uses of these current notions find echoes in a deeper layer of meanings where fate and identification are just some of the most evident mechanisms.

6.2.5. Politics as Fate

The causes and explanations the various groups find to justify the situation of political life are extremely rich because they reveal many of the complex interactions and identifications that permeate the representations of public life. Corruption and the maintenance of the powerful in power are explained as an unchanging reality through the relationship between the powerful and the powerless. This is striking in the lay, everyday language the groups deploy; they express in their own words phenomena that have been largely described in the literature about the nature of populism, the loss of a sense of historical time in Latin America and, more recently, about the strategies of marketing that Collor and his team used in the running of government. The groups say that politicians enjoy the sensation of power and through their enjoyment they finish the people: they enjoy showing-off, doing everything that common, average Brazilians are unable to do:

> Participant 1: *Another thing that goes to their head is power..*
> Participant 2: *They start to win too much, and this goes to their heads...*
> Participant 1: *Is the sensation of being at the top, the sensation of being at the top, of commanding...*
> Participant 2: *Exactly.*
> Participant 3: *Sarney (former Brazilian president), he left office, he didn't retire, did he?*
> Participant 1: *OK, but even so, the money he had...he could enjoy his life as much as he wanted. But why did he come back to politics? Power and more money. Only to feel power. Look..there are many places..when I started to work, there were these people of human resources...they look at you from top to bottom...He looked at me and...he looked at you and would put you down there..You need the job, you go for an interview and you are already scared to talk to the man, you are afraid of talking...why? Because of that..It is that weight, it is that power on top of the person...*
> Moderator- What is this sensation of power?
> Participant 1- *It is his sensation and we feel finished because of that. It is the same thing in politics, the politician, the president...Ah...the president is handsome, sexy, he sails, he pilots airplanes, he makes this, he makes that, he has nice women, everything...What did he feel about all that? Ah...all that pose...What he wanted? He wanted to show off! OK, he can enjoy his life, but, to go in airplanes, jet-ski, Ferrari, to drive a truck, to dive, what else...who knows...He did everything, everything we could not do. Everything he presented to us*

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we could not do. Why? It is power, I have that, I can do that. Do you understand? And who pays? We pay, don't we? We! It is the power he has. And that is what brings all these things about...Collor was beautiful, sexy, and he could do everything we could not!
Participant 4- *Ah...stop! You will tell me now you fell in love with the man!*...(laughs)(**manual workers**)

Here, there is crude evidence of how the élite in Brazil plays with the construction of an <u>ideal</u> deeply established in the popular imagination - beauty, enjoyment, sex - and tries to obscure inequalities through a process of identification where the powerful <u>are</u> in place of the powerless. The powerful will be what the powerless cannot be; by looking at them and identifying with them - because the powerless aspire to enjoyment, beauty and sex - they will keep people <u>where they are</u>. Chauí (1993) pointed out some of the devices Collor used in his political career: the elimination of the distinction between the public and the private and the construction of a mythical body. Collor displayed in public his own self as the most powerful signifier of his political activity and transformed his own body into an instrument to be exhibited to the popular imagination. He was handsome and athletic in a nation of disfigured bodies; he was adventurous, playful and strong in a nation of starving people. By identifying with the powerful, the powerless find the only possible role available to them on a secular stage: to represent as one's own what in everyday life is only possible to the powerful other.

Identification, notwithstanding its importance, is not the only process. The other side of it are the feelings of impotence - of being *finished* - that are counter-part to the perceived omnipotence of power. Narratives evoking the impotence of the subjects vis-à-vis the omnipotence of power were extremely salient in the talk of groups. They were linked to a discourse concerning fate, where reality was seen as a given, time lost its historical dimension and dictatorship appeared as a nostalgic reminiscence. These notions in combination can yield interesting insights concerning the dynamics of the representations.

There is an underlying common element to all of the above representations:

to keep agency at bay. The functionality of such an element is twofold. On the one hand, it preserves a clear boundary between the ones who can and the ones who cannot, in that it is functional to justify and to give legitimacy to a state of affairs marked by real powerlessness and real abuse of power. On the other hand, 'it reinforces the maintenance of powerlessness at the level of identity and, here, its operation is more subtle. Powerlessness becomes a component of their identity in so far as the groups identify themselves as such. But the representation of a powerless identity, in allowing agency to be kept at bay, provides and gives legitimacy to an alibi that preserves social subjects as innocent, irresponsible victims of the situation they describe. In this, powerlessness is not only an identity component but it is also a means of identity protection. This well-established representation, where subjects are powerless in the face of a mythical and powerful other, makes for the perpetuation of that condition - as in a self-fulfilling prophecy - and the creation of a secure territory within which the self-identity of the group is preserved. By means of locating agency outside, social subjects can see themselves detached from what is happening. In a way this provides fertile soil for the loss of a sense of historical time and for the representation of reality as a given; through a spiral of signifiers that conspire to keep things as they are, the groups construct both themselves and their social reality.

6.2.6. Politics as Ourselves

Such a secure territory, however, is not as secure as it may appear at first. Notwithstanding representations of powerlessness and total separation from the powerful as a way of identity protection, the groups show yet another strong form of representing the public: "we are all like each other". There is an overwhelming metaphor in the groups: mirror. Mirrors of each other - the people and politicians and the streets and political life:

> Participant 1: *The politicians are a model, politics is a mirror of the people, isn't it? If people are like that, the politicians are as well, on a different level, but the same...*
> Participant 2: *In the same way you get to know that there is bribery inside the police - and there is bribery inside the police - politicians*

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also! (**policemen**)

> Participant 1: *This is a reflection of everything we said about the streets. Because it is the old story: every people has the government it deserves...The ones that are there are a reflection of ourselves!*
> Participant 2: *Yes, even more the case because we have put them there...*(**professionals**)

> Participant 1: *It starts in politics, it is corruption, it is stealing everywhere, and everyone feels the right to do the same, do you understand?*
> Participant 2: *Yea...do you know why we think that everyone - inside the context - thinks that everyone is corrupted? Because it is very easy to be corrupted!* (laughs)
> Participant 3: *Getting more to the point, I think that the guilty one...the one to be blamed for the system being the way it is, is the people...you know? Because, in a way, we take what they do...we think everything doesn't work but we don't do anything...The guilty one, to tell the truth, is the people...* (**manual workers**)

To be alike and to get what one deserves: suddenly the alibis fail and give way to a different situation where everyone is an accomplice in the same process. Even more, behind the idea of being alike, there is also the guilt of an identity that recognises itself to be immobilised and, therefore, gets what it deserves. Politicians are a model, and the groups voice in perfect harmony what the model expects: the actions of the powerful become the identity and the guilt of the powerless.

In the above we have a paradigmatic example of the role of social representations. They emerge from a network of descriptions and explanations that constitutes the knowledge that circulates in the community. Through them, people are bound together; as a community they talk and understand each other: they laugh, they make jokes and they remain silent in a similar way, because they share the common experience about which they talk. They know the jokes, the words, the referents and even in disagreement, as is so often the case, the common background of understanding is still there. Such workings are evident in the various groups. The subjects at once draw on a common stock of knowledge and through argumentation and negotiation they enact it and re-construct it. By putting their representations into use and by struggling to justify them - to each other - the representational field

provides a space of interpretation where the subjects can locate both their reality and themselves.

The use of alibis and their subsequent failure - through a wide-spread representation of complicity - have roots that go far back in history. They also represent the fears, anxieties and the internal exiles that are the hallmarks of the search for identity in Brazil and, more generally, in Latin America.

6.3. "We Get What We Deserve": From the Space Out There to the Space Within

6.3.1. The Streets and Politics: Public Life as National Identity

How do representations of the streets and of politics shape national identity and vice-versa? It was not without some puzzlement that I came to realise that the discussions concerning public life (in terms of the streets and of politics) were organised around a central core of "being Brazilian" or, to express it better, "the being of Brazilians". This notion seems to be attached to everything that describes and explains the realities of Brazilian streets and Brazilian politics in the discourse of the groups. If there is a moment in research where the researcher confronts the unexpected, this was indeed the moment where I confronted what I was not expecting. As I shall discuss later in this chapter, although the conversation varies across the different groups, it varies in terms of the strategy of argumentation, the salience of the themes and the network of causes and explanations the various groups constructed - the themes themselves remain the same. Figure 6.3.1 shows the general configuration of the representation expressed by the groups. The themes that appeared in the discussion were bound to a reflexive mode of reasoning towards human nature, moral values, and conflict between the actual reality and the reality to which the subjects aspired. What they describe is a "state of being" that maps onto a "state of affairs" organising it and leading back to that "state of being".

Figure 6.3.1: PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION OF PUBLIC LIFE IN THE FOCUS GROUPS
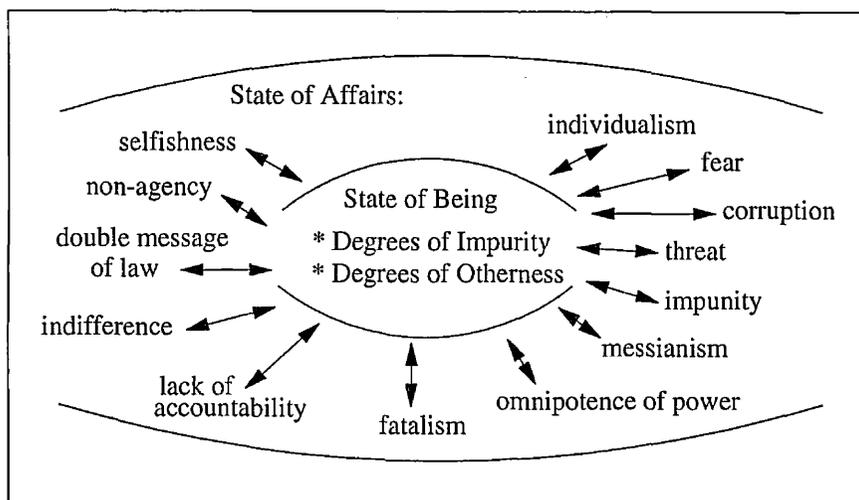
What about this "state of being"? It is "essentially corrupted", "impure", plagued by a "lack of unity" and characterised as "lazy". That is why the streets and political practice in Brazil are as they are. The streets are a place of "indifference", "iron bars", "a war of all against all", "fear", "inequality". Politics are conducted with "indifference", "individualism", "apart from the people". Corruption, the major reality in politics, "mirrors the streets" and paradoxically, in spite of all attempts to keep things separate, the unity is re-established by "we get what we deserve" or "every people has the government it deserves": "we mirror each other".

There is something very similar in the various words and metaphors deployed in the talk of the different groups. They relate, on the one hand, to separateness, to being apart, to fractures that range from metaphors of war and of houses protected by concrete iron bars, to the "mentality of Brazilians" that discriminates against and is indifferent to others. On the other hand, they relate to togetherness, to fusion, to mirroring; people who, whether they like it or not, have come together and who, explicitly because of their coming together, are "essentially corrupted" and "impure". The problem here is not objects usually put in the realm of otherness such as madness (Jodelet, 1991). The problem is how a society represents *itself* and suddenly finds the notion of its own image as threatening, contaminated and dangerous. The

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problem, therefore, is how otherness, most of the time carefully maintained at a distance, turns out to be at the very centre of the representations a society develops of itself.

The typical Brazilian is seen as lazy; whoever is building up the country or "improving" Brazil must be an immigrant, someone who belongs to one of the immigrant communities. Such a self image appears immediately, or as soon as the discussion turns to the problems of Brazil. This self-image is offered to justify the present situation. Again, we could ask, what are the mechanisms at play in such a situation? There is a very specific representation of the space that belongs to all, as a space that is inhabited by this general self, "the Brazilian", someone in whom all the features of contamination, impurity, laziness and corruption coalesce:

> Participant 1: *The Brazilian is lazy...it starts from that...Who is lifting this country are these Germans in the colonies...in Novo Hamburgo...*
> Participant 2: *Yes, that is it, the immigrants in the country, they are lifting Brazil...*
> Participant 3: *Hold on! You think the native Brazilian does not lift the country?*
> Participant 2: *Why Rio Grande do Sul is a good state? Foreigners..*
> Participant 4: *Carioca* ("carioca" is a person who lives in Rio de Janeiro) *is tourism, sleeps until twelve, works in the afternoon and in the evenings goes to the samba school in the shanties..*
> Observer: Who is the native Brazilian?
> Participant 4: *The native Brazilian is me!* (laughs)
> Moderator: And you don't work?
> Participant 2: (laughs) *No...no..of course that if you look way back, everyone is descended from an immigrant, but I am talking about the pure immigrant, the German!*
> Participant 3: *That one* (points to Participant 1) *is German but he caught the Brazilian microbe!* (laughs) (**workers**)

The structure of the social representation shows the exchanges between identity construction and the public sphere. At the same time, the processes of social representations - anchoring and objectification - allow for a relationship between the group and a difficult reality. The condensation and displacement of meanings, the objectification of images of a corrupted blood in terms of corrupt social practices, exclusion and segregation, the anchoring of these meanings in well-established

images of fate and messianism make reality familiar. As the old Brazilian song says: the Other is the I and I am you.

6.3.2. Mixture and Impurity: Corruption Flows in the National Blood

Odd representations? No doubt. But not far from the old symbolic constructions that have permeated Brazilian thought since the nineteen century. Degeneration, though never far from colour, has been more than just colour in Brazil. Moniz (1978) quotes the letter Field Marshal Floriano Peixoto, dictator from 1891 to 1894, wrote to a fellow army man when he dispatched over 5000 men to impose the authority of the Republic on the rebellion of Canudos. He declared: 'as a liberal, which I am, I cannot wish for my country the government of the sword; but, and there is no one who does not know this, because the examples are there for everyone to see (...) this is the government which knows how to purify the blood of the social body, which, like our own, is corrupted'. He apparently knew what he was saying. As Borges (1993) points out, degeneration in Brazil was a "psychiatry of character, a science of identity, and a social psychology." Along European lines, it provided the grounds for thinking that national decline is to be understood through the metaphor of an ill body : the nation is something like a sick man.

"Corruption has no cure": the metaphorical use of corruption as illness, and an illness that has no cure, anchors it in two very old representations. One is the organic analogy between a corrupt public life and impure blood. The other is fatalism, the lost of a sense of historical time, of something that has no cure, no remedy. The first one, I have mentioned before. Let us explore it more deeply, for the links here are truly impressive. Be it as a newspaper interview with one of the best-known Brazilian doctors today, be it in the voice of politicians for whom corruption is a "national malady", be it in the discussion of any of my groups, for whom corruption always appeared linked to human nature and to the being of Brazilians, the metaphors point to a problem of illness and degeneration. But corruption, as a national problem, has been leaping from political discourse to medical discourse for at least two hundred years in Brazil, something quite

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considerable for a country that has less than five hundred years of official history. One could actually go back to the first days of the "discovery" when Pero Vaz de Caminha wrote to the Portuguese king about the new land: "its waters are quite endless. So pleasing is it that if one cares to profit by it, everything will grow in it because of its waters. But the best profit which can be derived from it, seems to me, will be to save this people, and this should be the chief seed which Your Highness should sow there" (Caminha, 1500, p.33). A land where everything grows needs indeed to be salvaged. And it is no accident that Brazilian social thought identified in the nineteenth century the diversity of its culture, the different "levels of civilization", as both symptom and cause of a national malady. Taking on European theories of degeneration, three major themes were developed: (1) the disintegration of the national character into sterile laziness; (2) the diversity of mentalities in a tropical and primitive environment; (3) the analogy between social relations and parasitism. Thus proclaimed in a full bio-medical context in the 1880s and 1890s, these themes continued in a more attenuated form in Brazilian social thought through to the 1930s.

The identification of a "lazy Brazilian" character syndrome was the most important of these themes. Borges (1993) shows how science and literature build on a popular notion that had been widespread since at least the eighteenth century and that could actually be traced back to fourteenth century Portugal. The "ideology of laziness" was a stereotype that scientific thought elaborated and made more precise. In 1994, such notions are still being voiced by Brazilians. They are used to represent public life. These representations are used, as they were in the past, as both an expression (or symptom) and a cause of the current malaise. They provide for the Brazilian community a possibility of naming what is going on and making sense of it. Because of their very nature, they produce contradictory effects that both act as a defence and a perpetuation of the situation. As a defence, because the aspect of separateness allows whoever is speaking to locate the problem as being outside, in some Other entity. As a perpetuation, because the very element of separateness is what marks the representations of togetherness. The nature of this togetherness - made up of so many separated, different elements - produces laziness, disease,

contamination. Cultural diversity is not valued, but constructed in terms of a spoiled identity, that needs to remain separate as a means of negating its irreversible closeness.

6.3.3. "We love; We Hate": Ambivalence in the Representational Field

Dull scenario? Indeed. However, is it possible to conceive of these representations only in terms of old ways of thinking that provide them with a more secure anchor? I think not. The reasons are threefold. The first lies in the nature of the anchors themselves. They are not, as I shall try to show, stripped of contradictions. The same logic that generates metaphors of illness and degenerated blood provides the elements of attraction and fascination that lead towards miscegenation. Desire for a strange, different body also permeates the representations of mixture, giving to the blending of different people a character that is far from being purely negative. The many narratives that appear in the groups, most of the time involving black people, are evidence of this. There is also evidence of this in the development of Brazilian thought and literature across the centuries (de Sant'Anna, 1993). The various encounters that took place in Brazil between Portuguese settlers, indigenous peoples, and black populations are fraught with metaphors of passion, creativity, and fertility. In the same way that Pero Vaz de Caminha pleaded with the Portuguese king that he should salvage these people, he wrote about their charm, the beauty of their naked bodies, their grace of walking in the forest. Examples of the passions provoked by black people in white landowners are plentiful, both in reality and in literature. They all give rise to a social imagination where blacks and indians transform the desire they arouse into a source of their possible, although limited, power. In the case of blacks that was particularly true. There was a game to be played between people that were alien to each other; this game was also a way of transgressing boundaries. Thus, there has been a gap between a tendency to mix, linked to a desire for, and a fascination towards, the different one, and a dominant self-interpretation which makes purity and whitening a value and a goal to be achieved.

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The second reason relates to the various ways in which the groups reveal reflexivity and potentially contest the reality they describe. These representations occur against a background of reflexive thought that introduces the dimension of the *possible* into the subjects' conversation. The high incidence of reflexivity for change in the groups[2], something always present in their discourse, suggests that, at the same time as subjects draw on the taken-for-granted, they find a way of calling it into question. This reveals the imaginative character of these representations, which expands the domain of reality to a different register, where what is not *can* nevertheless be. The reflexivity is organised around possible changes, paths for transformation, and solutions to what is considered to be a situation in need of improvement. This reveals the degree of involvement, the degree of identification and the degree of care that is dedicated to the country.

The third element is humour - more specifically a dramatic humour - which challenges the very content of the situation it refers to. The discussions, notwithstanding the topics and the dramatic load associated to them, have always been permeated by a deep sense of humour. There was a great deal of laughing in the groups and, months later, when working on the data I still found myself laughing at many of the moments in the group debates. This humour was not addressed to external objects only; the subjects included themselves in their various jokes and mockeries and it was perhaps through these jokes and laugher that they were able to reunite/reconcile themselves with the reality they were representing in such bad terms. These jokes were expressed in popular language, sometimes drawing on old sayings, sometimes using what would be considered indecent language, sometimes imitating the style of some well-known political figure, sometimes just by people being irreverent in relation to others. In looking at the issue of laugher it was not until I read Bakhtin's study of the laughing peoples of the Middle Ages (Bakhtin, 1984) that I could understand its meaning. In *Rabelais and His World* he shows superbly the importance of folk humour to an understanding of forms of life and communication that escape the official and formal rituals of society. It is not only,

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[2]Even the street children were reflexive, although in a different way. They reflected about their future and their aspirations of betterment both for themselves and for Brazil.

he states, that laughing allows for forgetting all hierarchies and for a zone where the real and the ideal coincide. It is also that the laugher is ambivalent: "it asserts and denies, it buries and revives."(Bakhtin, 1984, p.12). Such ambivalence of the irreverent laugher is at once a strategy for coping and a creative experience. In this sense, it becomes clear why humour would pervade the conversation. Its ambivalent character is a correlate of the ambivalence expressed in the very representations the subjects constructed.

The ways in which the representations of public life are constructed reveal a high degree of ambivalence. Images of corruption - of the social life, of Brazilian blood - are not impervious to images of a pleasurable universe, where 'miscegenation' and hybrid forms of life play a central role. It is the impure togetherness that gives rise to ambivalence. The blend of repulsion and desire; the ideal of being pure and the actual - extremely concrete - "impurity" or miscegenisation translates into a dialectic of irreverence and ambiguity that has marked the discussion in the groups and, as one would expect, Brazilian society as a whole (de Sant'Anna, 1993; da Matta, 1990, 1991).

In the foregoing I have proposed an interpretation based on a qualitative analysis of the explicit and latent meanings of the groups' discussions. In the following I shall present some of the results concerning each group individually as well as a quantitative analysis of the data.

6.4. Voicing Different Perspectives: Social Positioning and Social Representations

6.4.1. Each Group Has a Story: Structure of Argumentation by Group

The analysis of the individual groups shows some important differences regarding the complexity of the representations. These differences are mainly related to the various ways each group organises the representational field. Here, I consider the organisation of the representational field as involving the strategies of interaction

and the different themes the groups draw on as they discuss public life, the degree of abstraction of their discourse, and the particular configuration each group gives to the semantic network that forms the field. When looking at the different organisations of the representational field, one may ask whether they are more related to the concrete life experience of the subjects or to more complex forms of reasoning, whether they involve multiple relationships between the themes or a more simplified version of the notions which are deployed and, finally, how the groups interact in the process of forging all the above. These variations are depicted in Figure 6.4.1., 6.4.2, 6.4.3, 6.4.4, 6.4.5 and 6.4.6. The diagrams account for the semantic networks the different groups constructed and the level of abstraction they deployed in establishing the relationships between the themes. The different arrows describe different types of relationships between the themes. These are relations of similarity and relations of the type if/then. Relations of similarity apply when the subjects equate one theme with the other without considerations about possible causal factors. They involve a lower degree of abstraction. Relations of the type if/then do establish causes and explanations and provide the subjects with a field of questionings about the reality they are discussing. Instead of saying such and such are the same thing, they reflect about why such and such came about and what are the possible ways to transform it. In this way relationships of the type if/then involve higher levels of abstraction, since the immediate experience is put into question.

Before I go on to discuss the diagrams it is necessary to clarify what the themes are. Streets, politics, Brazilian nature, mirrors and separations, mentality/culture, individualism and fate/change/hope are themes derived from units of meaning that constitute the coding frame (see Appendix 1). The units of meaning were re-organised into a higher level of abstraction so as to generate the themes. Each theme, therefore, comprises a specific number of units of meaning. Table 6.4.1.1. shows the themes and organisation of the units of meaning for each of them.

Table 6.4.1.1.: ORGANISATION OF THE THEMES DERIVED FROM THE CODING FRAME

Streets	Politics	Mirrors/ Separation	Individualism	Brazilian Nature	Mentality/ Culture	Fate/Hope Reflexivity
Threat	Corruption	Omnipotence of Power	Selfishness	Negative	In Abstract	Reflexivity
Inequalities	Despair	Inequalities	Individualism	Positive	Polluted	Human Nature as Interactive
Fear	Self-Interest	Politics as Mirror of People	Indifference		Decadent	Hope
Survival	Power-Interests	Mirroring of Brazilians	Neglect			Salvation
Poverty	Absence of Control	Impunity	Individualism as defence			Human Nature as a Given
Security	No representativeness	Identification				Dictatorship
Habituation	Impeachment	Streets as a Mirror of Politics				Reality as a Given
Traffic War		Bars				Loss of Historical Time
Denial						
Sadness						

Thus the above themes should be always seen as comprising these specific units of meaning. In other words the sub-themes shown in the table allow us to understand the meaning of the themes.

Figure 6.4.1.1 shows the organisation of the representational field in the group of professionals. This group presents a higher level of articulation and complexity in their discourse. They draw on a great number of notions to discuss the topics and in their discourse it becomes obvious that the cognitive and social resources which they possess allow them to construct a representational field with great explanatory power.

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Figure 6.4.1.1: ORGANISATION OF THE REPRESENTATIONAL FIELD IN THE GROUP OF PROFESSIONALS
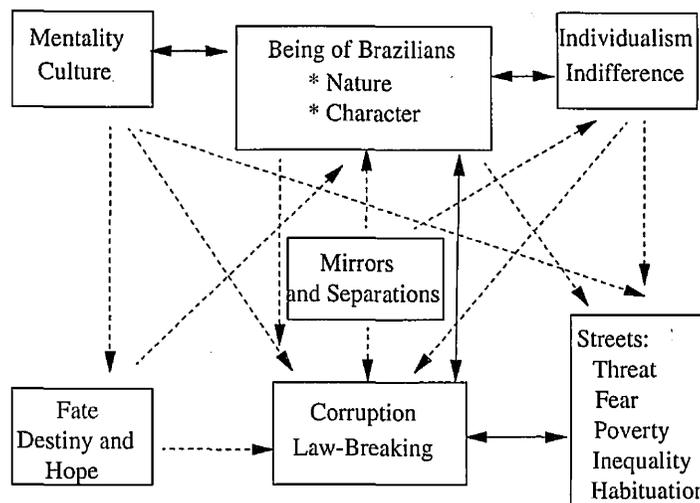
If/then: - - - - - - -

Similarity: ————

As can be seen in the diagram above, the mere number of arrows attests to the complexity of the field. Its explanatory power corresponds to the function of mastering reality of social representations. This function was quite clear throughout the professionals' debate. While many of the above notions are part of the historical constraints discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, the subjects can still appropriate these notions and renew their meaning. This happens through the very process of debate where the power of interaction sets the specific organisation of their way of representing the reality they discuss. As they discuss, the participants re-enact a common stock of representations and, by the same token, confer to the representations a new character. The group of professionals was by far the most rational group. Concerned with competing positions (like the students), their debate occurred under the sign of polarisations. They had difficulties in listening to each other's talk (generally long and complex interventions) and to find a common understanding was definitely not the purpose of their debate. Their discourse was more strategic than interactive: they would identify in others' interventions those points of disagreement that would allow them to prepare a more elaborate

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argumentation of their own point.

The group of students presents a similar, albeit less complex, configuration. As a very articulate, middle-class, group of university students, their representational field is constructed as a network of explanations and causes linking the notions they use. They make comparisons, argue, and find their way in the discussion through heavy argumentation.

Figure 6.4.1.2: ORGANISATION OF THE REPRESENTATIONAL FIELD IN THE GROUP OF STUDENTS
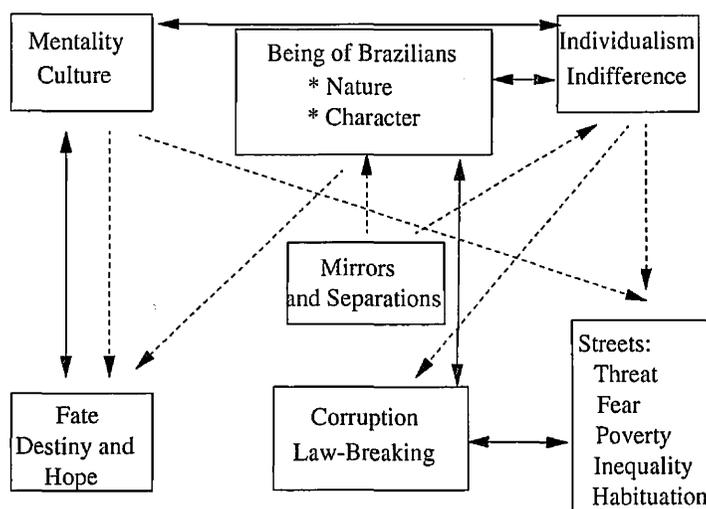
The group operated in a reflexive mode and, like the professionals, they developed a rather intellectualised discourse about the topics being discussed. They created a discussion marked by jokes - mainly towards each other - and often they exaggerated their differences in order to generate polemics and have fun out of it. In the development of this dynamic they reproduced many of the behaviours they were criticising, forging dissociations, internal discriminations and tensions, which were resolved in terms of yet another joke. With very little concern about the presence of the moderator and the observer, their chief interest was to exercise their positions and to know/explore each others' positions.

The group of taxi drivers organised the field of representations mainly around

their own experience. As with the remaining groups, their argumentation was structured around life stories, tales of everyday life. It is in their concrete experience - their activity as taxi-drivers - that they anchor the themes they choose to represent public life. For this group these themes are not pure abstractions; they appear mingled with the ways they experience their everyday life. The semantic network was not simple, even though it was not constructed through a rationalised debate. As figure 6.4.1.3 shows, the group of taxi-drivers developed an argumentation that led to a quite intricate explanation of the reality they were representing.

Figure 6.4.1.3:   ORGANISATION OF THE REPRESENTATIONAL FIELD IN THE GROUP OF TAXI-DRIVERS
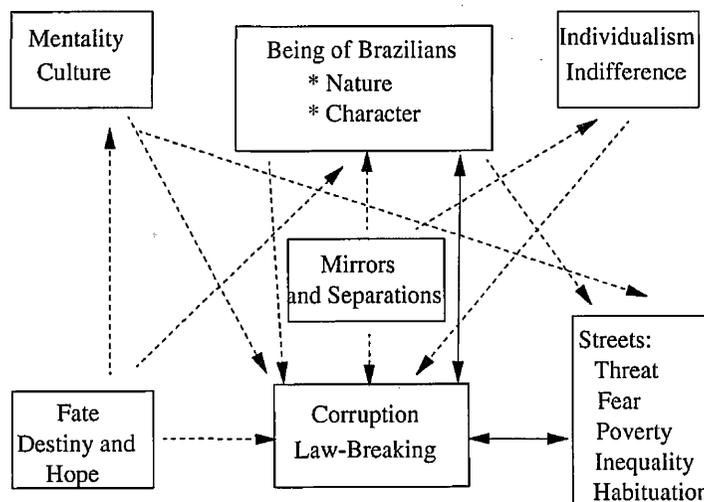
A chat amongst friends, marked by solidarity; this group had a dynamic that contradicted the very reality they were expressing. Throughout the discussion each of them cited examples to one another and called each other into the debate. Their concern was mainly to be understood and the disagreements did not reach the stage of negotiation because the group would dilute them in generalising conclusions. All throughout their debate there seemed to bea deeper level of understanding between the participants coming from a shared activity, a shared experience of everyday life.

The group of policemen presented a more simplified organisation of the

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representational field. The discussion they had was very much centred on the work of the police, their problems and their limitations. It was the a more 'self-centred' group, as it were. In this sense the explanatory power of the representational field they constructed is limited in relation to the other groups. This can be explained to some extent by the very positioning of the police in Brazilian society. The general tendency in Brazil is to treat the police with suspicion, lack of trust and fear. This, it is important to note, is well-founded in reality. In the brief period I stayed in Brazil to conduct field work (July and August 1993) there were three massacres - street children and slum dwellers in Rio and Yanomami indians in the Amazon - for which the police has been held, if not totally, at least partially responsible. Such an image is visible in the policemen's talk. Their argumentation highlights the difficulties of their profession in the context in which they must work, the constant threat to which they are subjected in a violent society, and the lack of recognition both from the authorities and the population. In a way, they *voice* the realities that all groups represented. What can be seen in the group, and paradoxically this will be seen again in the group of street children, is the representational field expressed in terms of vivid experience. For the policemen, to represent public life is intertwined with the representations of their own identity as a social group.

The representations of public life and their identity are mainly structured through narratives of their practices in the streets. It is also the practical experience of confronting impunity and the inefficacy of the law that shapes their representations of politics. The policemen express powerlessness when subjected to the demands of political life. The gap between what they are supposed to do and what they can actually do contributes to the fractures in the representations of whom they are and reinforces the gap which is at the origin of these fractures.

Figure 6.4.1.4 shows the configuration of the representational field in the group.

Figure 6.4.1.4: ORGANISATION OF THE REPRESENTATIONAL FIELD IN THE
GROUP OF POLICEMEN
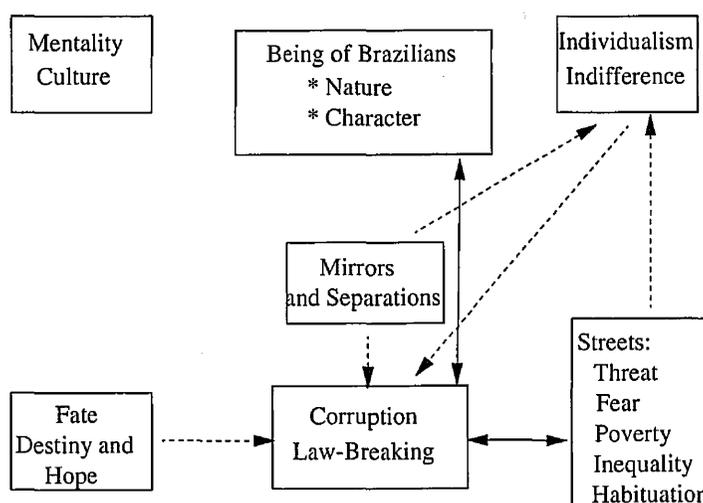
As the diagram shows, the structure of their argumentation is simple if compared with the other groups. The fact that it is their activity - as in the group of taxi-drivers - that structures the discourse does not allow them to extend their reasoning to a domain beyond their immediate experience - and here they differ from the taxi-drivers. However it is important to note that there were moments of reflexivity in the group and, as with all the other groups, they also questioned the situation they were describing.

In the group of manual workers the debate was centred in narratives of limiting situations, in the hardships of life and on strategies of survival. Their argumentation was relatively simple, and they described the streets and political life in terms of a life linked to hard labour, to strict timing, to situations of hunger and uncertainty. Paradoxically, their interaction was replete with solidarity and hope. That was clear in the ways they proposed alternative solutions to their reality, in the ways they talked about their children and their hopes for the future. As with all the groups there were moments in which humour permeated the difficult scenario they were constructing and, at these moments, their laugher and irreverence were a strategy for turning things upside down, for negating the realities of their everyday lives, for

evoking better times. The choice of language in the group - unfortunately untranslatable into English - revealed the presence of popular, folk wisdom, of old forms of irreverence and drama construction, so very typical of popular culture in Latin America. As Rowe & Schelling (1991, p.9)) point out, the form of expression and culture in Latin America "is multivalent...its intense emotionality does not exclude irreverence, parody and the grotesque". Figure 6.4.1.5 shows the representational field the group has constructed.

Figure 6.4.1.5: ORGANISATION OF THE REPRESENTATIONAL FIELD IN THE GROUP OF MANUAL WORKERS
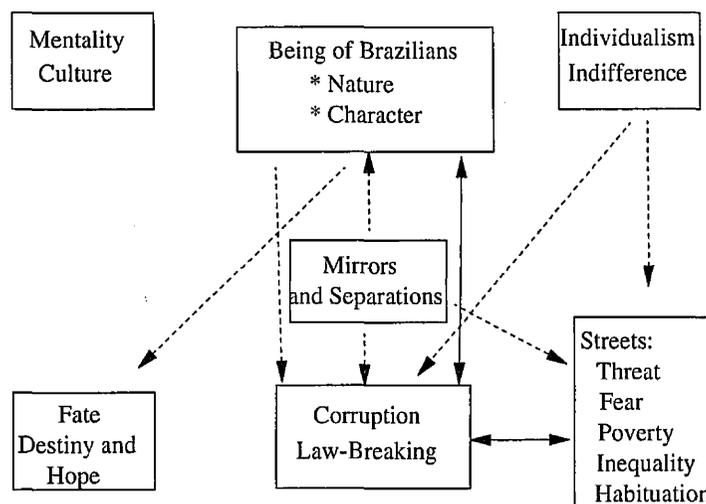
The group also made clear the ways in which some groups' observations (professionals and students) are other groups' experience/narrative. What some groups see as outsiders is the other groups' inside experience: the crossing of the different groups allows for a clear picture of one of the common themes in all groups: separation. The reconciliation is only possible in the general representation of the Brazilian, which, as I discussed before, already carries in itself a heavy load of negative connotations.

The group of street children was, as one would expect, the group that differed the most in terms of both their dynamic and the structure of argumentation. As to the

latter, that can be easily explained by the fact that here we are dealing with children and, therefore, with different cognitive structures. However, in their very particular way, the street children confirmed many of the themes, relationships and affects that appear as shaping the social representations of public life in Brazil. Figure 4.1.6 shows the organisation of the representational field in the group of street children.

Figure 6.4.1.6: ORGANISATION OF THE REPRESENTATIONAL FIELD IN THE GROUP OF STREET CHILDREN

Mentality
Culture

Being of Brazilians
* Nature
* Character

Individualism
Indifference

They don't care
They don't like us
They don't give a damn

Mirrors and Separations

The group is here:

Fate
Destiny and Hope

Corruption
Law-Breaking

Identification

Streets:
Threat
Fear
Poverty
Inequality
Habituation
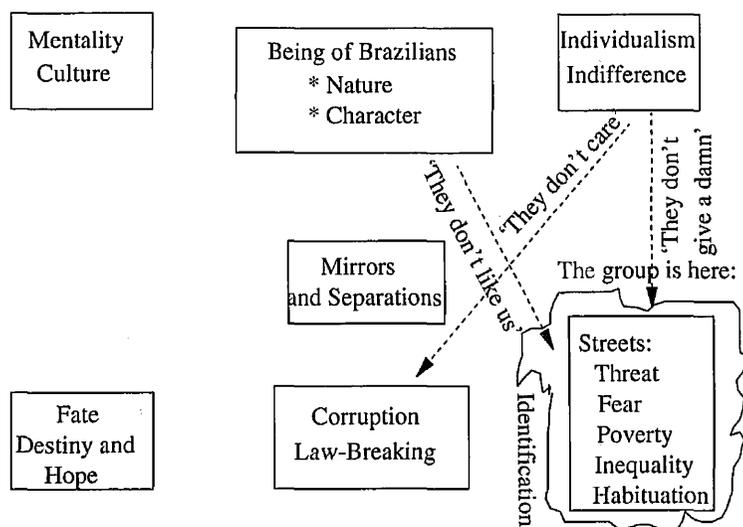
As can be seen in the diagram, the children are mainly identified with the streets, something that does not appear as a surprise considering the very name people attribute to them. These children know only too well they are seen as OF THE STREETS, not only at home, but all around the world, given the work of international agencies in Brazil. That may account for the dynamics of their discourse, which mainly comprised the personal narratives of the children. Their concern was to tell *us* (moderator and observer) and not each other why they were in the streets, how difficult it was to be there, and how much they needed care and attention. They were speaking a few days after the "Candelária Slaughter"[3] and their fear was to be killed

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[3]The "*Massacre da Candelária*" took place in July 1993, when death squads killed seven boys sleeping on the steps of Rio de Janeiro's cathedral. The children were awakened by the bullets and according to one of the survivors most of them were killed from behind as they tried to run away.

while they were asleep. The conjunction of narratives in the groups makes for a very similar story. These children are the offspring of the underprivileged strata of Brazilian society and they, first and foremost, run into the streets running away from domestic violence. They talk about the streets, Brazil, and politicians through a number of statements that reveal the pairing of neglect-care, like-dislike, and to be or not to be a street kid, as the main notions deployed to represent public life as well as their own condition. Again, the children's talk shows that to represent a social condition is a constitutive element in the construction of a social identity.

6.4.2. Each Group Tells a Story: Salience of Themes by Group

In this section I shall present a brief description of salience of themes by group. The tables I present here are an outcome of the analysis performed in Text-Base Alpha and after in SPSS-PC. What appears here are the frequencies for each unit of meaning by group. The units of meaning are organised under general themes that correspond to the more generalising notions that were presented in the diagrams discussed in the above section. They allow us to see the units of meaning that comprise each of the general themes of the diagrams, as well as a clearer picture of the differences between the various groups. A more detailed description of the units of meaning can be found in the coding book in Appendix 3. The tables appear in Appendix 4.

The tables corroborate previous discussions and allow us to see in a clear way the following points:

> i) Taxi drivers, street children and policemen represent the streets as threat. Manual workers describe the streets in terms of survival and inequalities. Fear, habituation and denial are prevalent in the group of professionals. Again, such results confirm the idea of different representations according to different life experiences. Survival is a main signifier to street children. Professionals and students present the most elaborate discourse to represent public life. Their talk covers a

wider range of themes and is more complex and analytical.

ii) The tables show that those groups that develop a discourse about the streets are different from those groups that must live in the streets. Also that the groups that experience the most difficult conditions of life give priority to their concrete experience. Social representations, therefore, are positional and vary according to social conditions of life.

iii) The variance in the level of complexity of the representations. There is a wider-range analysis coming from middle-class groups whereas street children, policemen, manual workers and taxi-drivers respectively use fewer notions to represent public life.

6.4.3. Analysis of Correspondence Between Groups and Themes

The tables in Appendix 2 were derived from the systematic coding of the groups' conversations. In order to assess the significance of differences among the groups the chi-square test was performed. Once the relationship between the themes and groups was established, the phi coefficient was used to measure the extent of the association between themes and groups (Siegal & Castellan, 1988).

The chi-squares confirm the variability between groups and the phi index attests to the strength of the relationships between themes and groups. The units of meaning that comprise the theme mirrors and separations present the largest variability and Brazilian Nature presents the smallest. These results demonstrate that the nature of Brazilians and its connotations are representations that cut across the different groups in a more uniform way, whereas mirrors, streets and politics vary according to different social positionings. Table 6.4.3.1. shows the chi-square and phi results for each of the general themes.

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Table 6.4.3.1: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEMES AND
GROUPS : CHI-SQUARE AND PHI RESULTS

	Chi-square	DF	Phi
Mirrors	3587.90	35	1.03534
Streets	2678.75	45	1.01239
Fate	1649.86	35	1.03894
Politics	1401.07	30	.67981
Individ	867.38	20	.99000
BrazNat	124.66	4	.41467

* All significant at .00001

Correspondence analysis of the tables produced graphical plots which demonstrate a pattern of associations in line with what was discussed until this point. The use of correspondence analysis in the study of social representations has been largely discussed as providing an effective tool for the interpretation of the structuring elements of a representational field in different social groups (Doise, Clemence & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1993). As can be seen in Figures 6.4.3.1 and 6.4.3.2, the correspondence analysis validates the interpretation further insofar as it reproduces the associations between groups and themes found in the qualitative analysis. The patterns of association in the plots also indicate the differences amongst groups in their ways of representing public life.

Such plots demonstrate the proximity between specific groups and specific ways of representing the streets and political life. In Figure 6.4.3.1. it is quite clear that the notions surrounding street children, taxi-drivers and workers are threat, survival and inequality. Professionals and students are at exactly the same point, something which expresses the closeness of their experience given by the sharing of a similar social insertion. It is for these two groups that habituation and denial - as an affective component of their social representations - is salient. Policemen are close to security, fear and poverty, whereas taxi-drivers and traffic battles occupy the same point.

Figure 6.4.3.1: GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE CORRESPONDENCE ANALYSIS OF THE TABLE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE STREETS BY GROUP

```
       .98┤                                        SADNESS ·
                     SURVIVAL
                            child      (1)
  D          work                   THREAT
  i
  m    .12┤    INEQUALITY
  e                           *
  n
  s                          (2)
  i
  o   -.73┤                          (3)
  n
                             (4)
  2                          polic
                             SECURITY
    -1.59┤

           -1.67   -.99   -.32   .36   1.03

                  Dimension 1
```
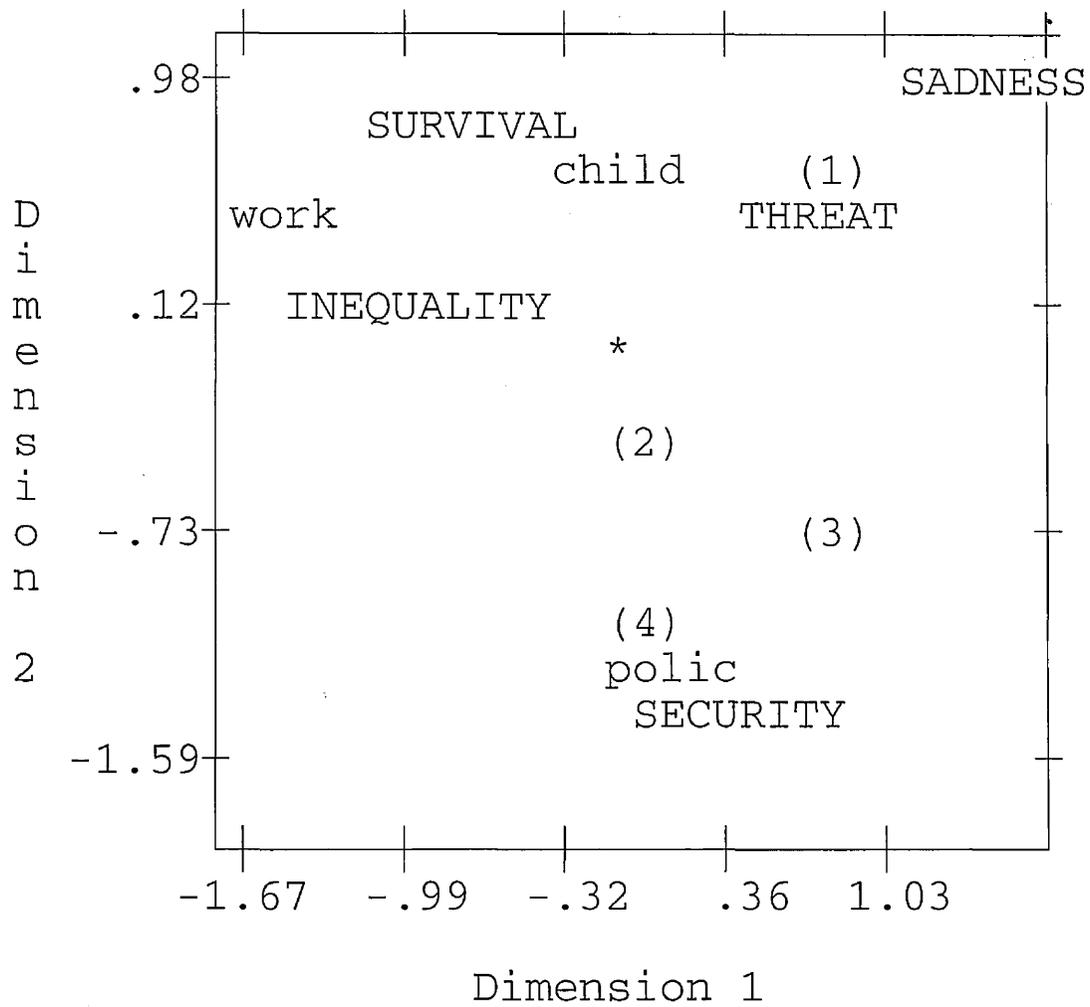
* The highest score variance was denial at .082.

Summary of Multiple Points in the Plot

(1) taxi drivers
(1) traffic
(2) students
(2) professional
(3) denial
(3) habituation
(4) poverty
(4) fear

Figure 6.4.3.2 represents graphically representations of politics by group. Again the variations that occur between the various groups are visible. However, it can be seen that in

regard to politics the representations have a more even distribution in the plot. No control over politicians' practices, the non-representativeness of politicians, and corruption are notions quite central to representations of politics. Despair and references to the impeachment are at the extremes, associated with policemen and professionals, respectively. Street children are situated in a position that reveals the more simple character of their representations.

Figure 6.4.3.2: GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE TABLE REPRESENTATIONS OF POLITICS BY GROUP

```
         1.27                    (1)

                               (2)
D
i
m                                  studt
e     .33
n                              NO  CONTROL
s                                *
i
o    -.61            Work
n               |CORRUPTION              (3)
                |                      NOREPRESENT
                |
2               |Child                 IMPEACHMENT

       -1.55

        -1.63   -.90   -.16   .58   1.32

               Dimension 1
```
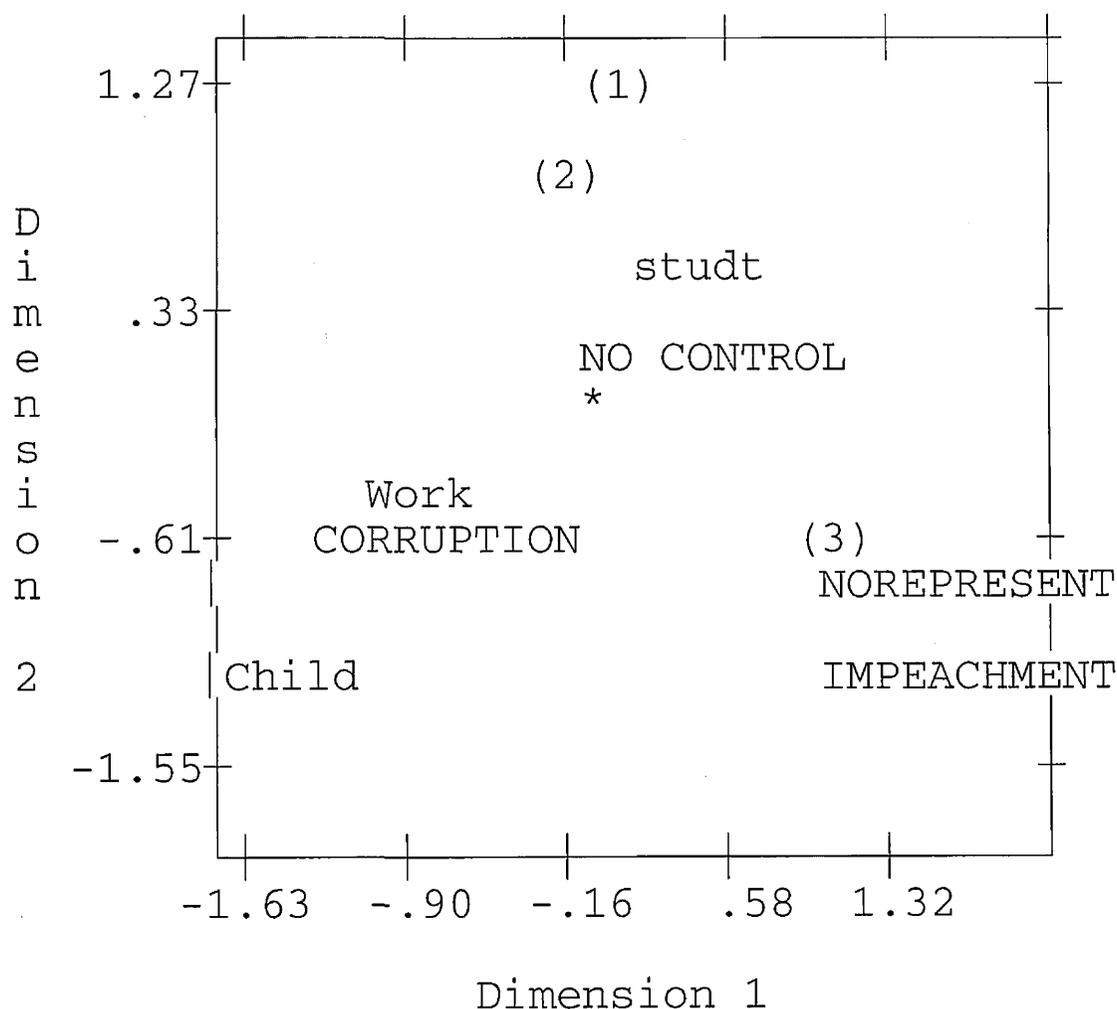
* The highest score variance for the graph is Despair at .075.

Summary of the Multiple Points in the Plot
(1) Despair and Policemen
(2) Taxi-Drivers and Self-Interest
(3) Power Interests and Professionals

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Figure 6.4.3.3 shows the representation of the theme Mirrors and Separations by group. Policemen and impunity occupy the same point at the top of the graph whereas bars appears at the extreme bottom, fairly close to professionals. Children appear at the extreme left pairing with identification. Omnipotence of power as opposed to the impotence of social actors, social inequalities and politics/streets as a mirror of each other (point 3) are close to workers, students and professionals. The description of the streets as politics/streets mirroring each other is close to taxi-drivers.

Figure 6.4.3.3: GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE TABLE MIRRORS AND SEPARATIONS BY GROUP
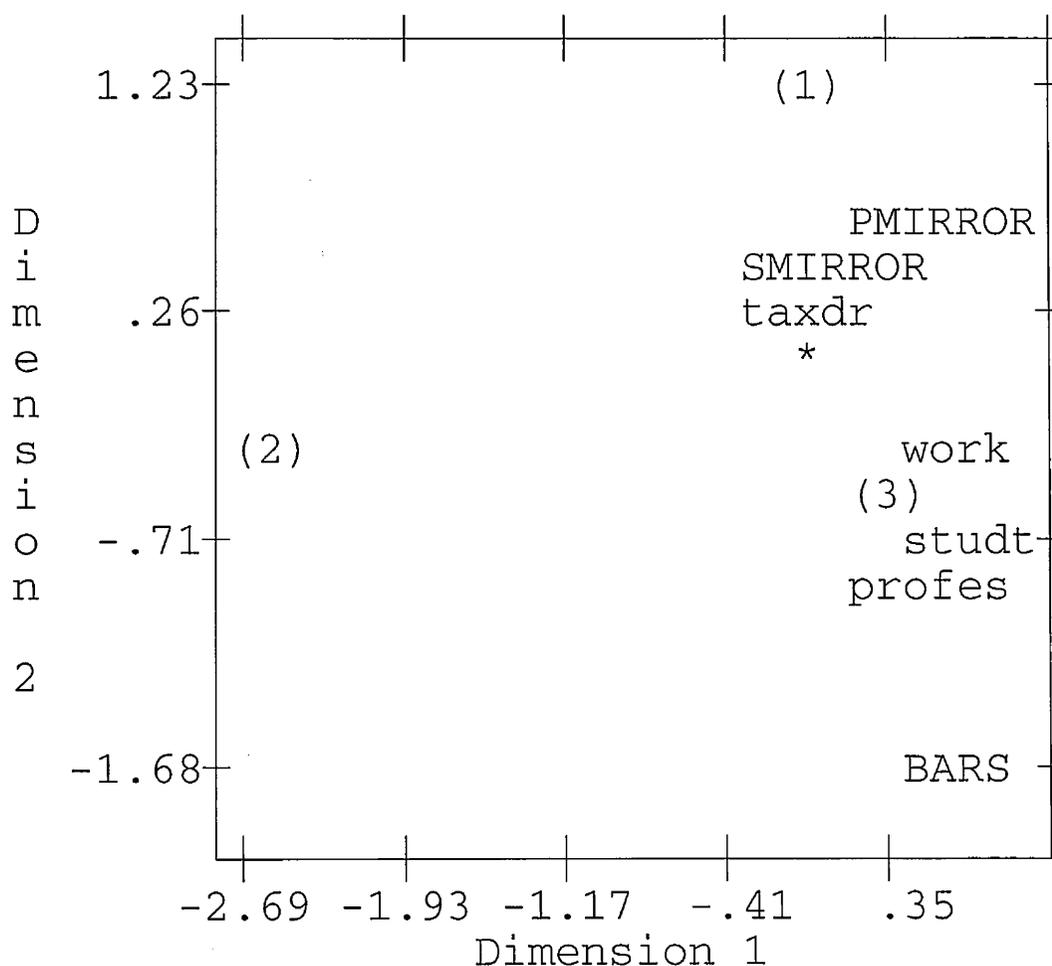
* The highest score variance for the graph is Bars at .118.

Summary of the Multiple Points in the Plot
(1) Policemen
(1) Impunity
(2) Identification

(2) Street Children
(3) Omnipotence of Power
(3) Social Inequalities
(3) Mirror

Figure 6.4.3.4 shows how individualism is related to each of the groups. It is clear that here street is close to neglect and indifference, along with policemen and professionals. Students appear close to individualism as a description and workers and taxi-drivers are at the top of the plot, differing from the other groups.

Figure 6.4.3.4: GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE TABLE INDIVIDUALISM BY GROUP

```
         3.12┤   work

   D
   i
   m     1.90┤       SELFISH
   e
   n
   s
   i
   o      .69┤                           child
   n                 polic INDIFFER
                       profes          NEGLECT
   2                          *
                          INDIV
        -.53┤                 studt

                          FEEL-IND
      └┤──────┤──────┤──────┤──────┤──
      -2.01  -1.06   -.11    .84   1.80
                  Dimension 1
```
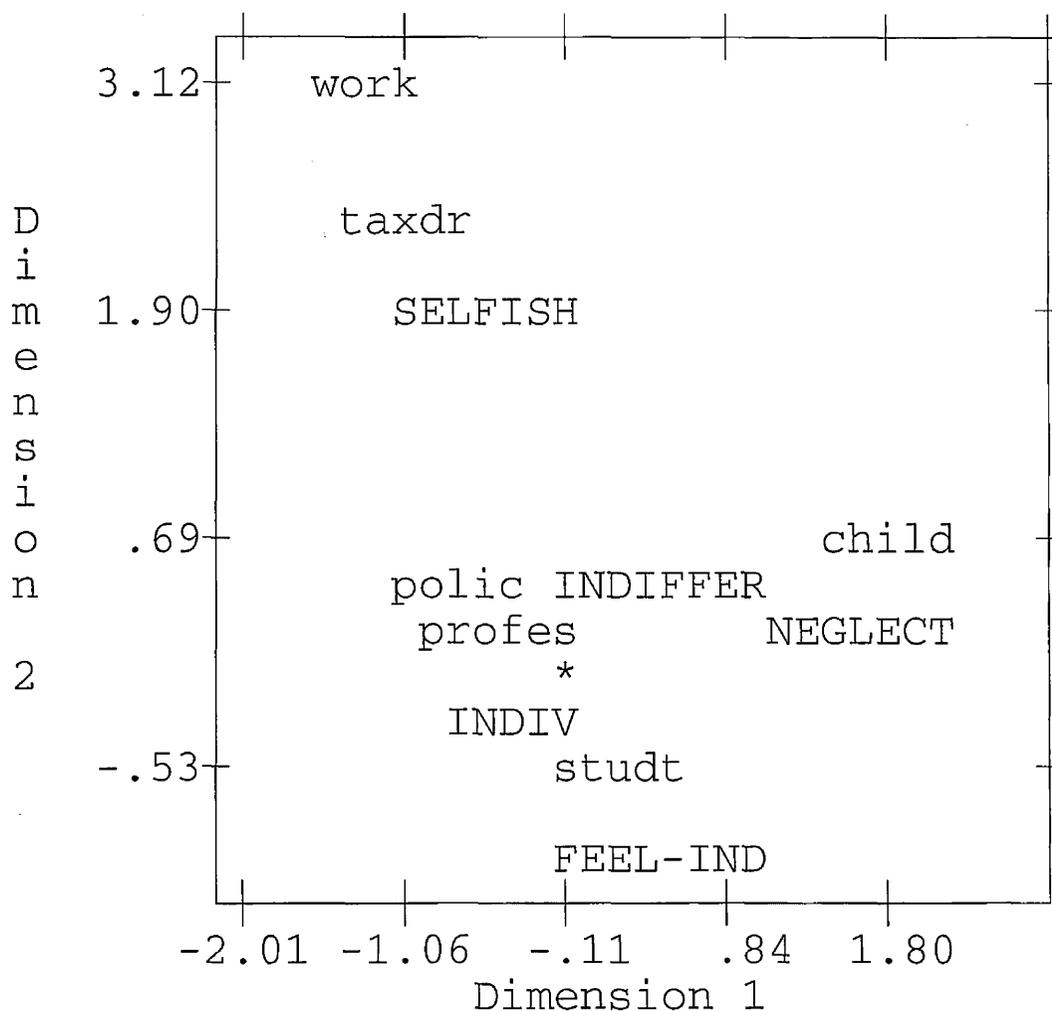
* The highest score variance in the graph is selfishness at .65.

Figure 6.4.3.5 shows the correspondence analysis for fate/reflexivity and hope.

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The plot expresses the contradictory nature of these representations since notions of fate such as reality as a given, loss of a sense of historical time, salvation and messianism, and nostalgia for dictatorship co-exist with reflexivity and human nature as interactive for most of the groups. Policemen have a more fatalistic view of reality whereas street children - despite their difficulties - are close to hope.

Figure 6.4.3.5: GRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF THE TABLE FATE/REFLEXIVITY AND HOPE BY GROUP

```
              ┌──┼──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┼─────────┼─
       1.16┼─                  REALGIV
                               TIMELOSS

  D
  i
  m     .10┼                   studt                          ┼
  e
  n                              (1)
  s                                 (2)
  i                               taxdr
  o     -.96┼                            HUMGIV
  n                 HOPE                         polic         ┼

  2            child                               DICTAT

     -2.02┼                                                    ┼
           └─┼──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┼─────────┼─
          -2.16  -1.32    -.49     .34    1.17

              Dimension 1
```
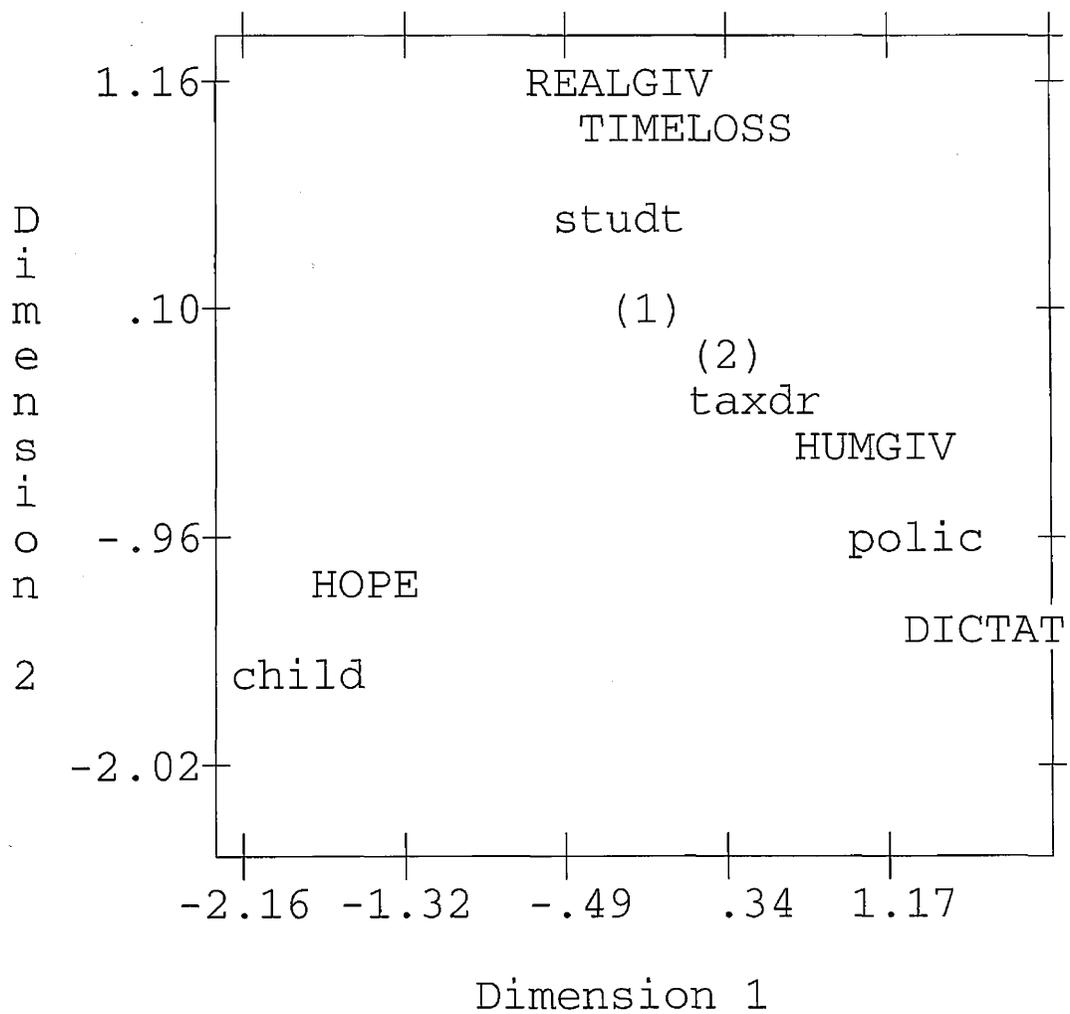
* The highest score variance in the graph is dictatorship at .121.

Summary of the Multiple Points in the Plot
(1) Reflexivity
(1) Workers

(2) Professionals
(2) Salvation
(2) Human Nature as Interactive

Figure 6.4.3.6 shows the correspondence analysis for the theme mentality and culture. It can be seen that the theme mentality/culture as an explanation is mainly used by professionals and students. In the professionals' case it is a polluted mentality. The group of students refers to this mentality in abstract whereas taxi-drivers appear at the extreme bottom, clearly differing from the latter groups. Workers, policemen and street children do not use the theme.

Figure 6.4.3.6: GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE TABLE MENTALITY/CULTURE BY GROUP

```
        .49┼   POLLUTED                              ┼
    D          profes                     ABSTRACT
    i                                      studt
    m    -.32┼           (1)                         ┼
    e
    n
    s
    i
    o   -1.13┼        DECADENT                        ┼
    n

    2

        -1.94┼                                        ┼

                      taxdr
          └┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────┼─────
         -.99   -.36   .28   .91  1.55
                   Dimension 1
```
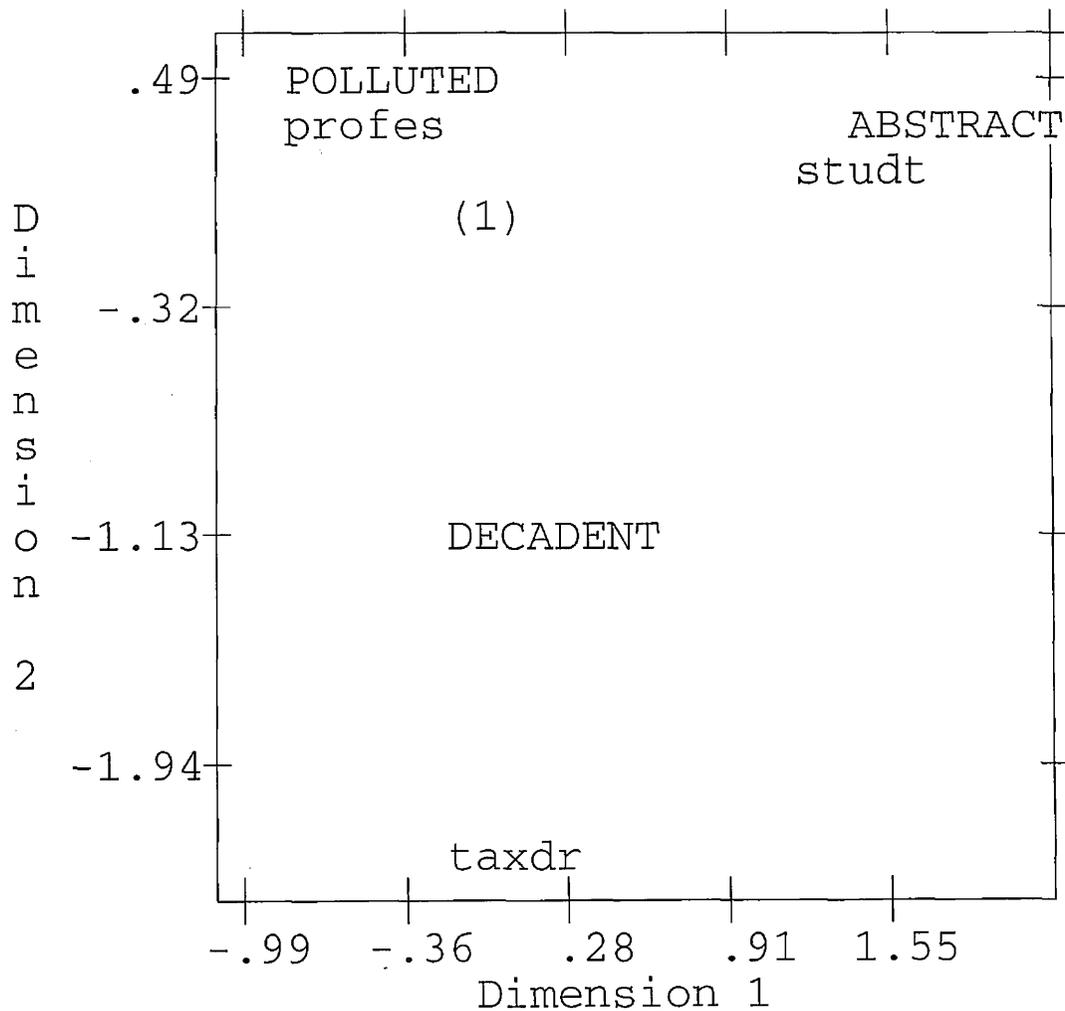
* The highest score variance in the graph is decadent at .045.

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Summary of the Multiple Points in the Plot
(1) workers
(1) policemen
(1) street children

The table Brazilian Nature by Group has only two dimensions and therefore correspondence analysis cannot be performed. The table (see appendix 2) shows that the main representations of Brazilian Nature are negative and the theme appears in all groups explicitly, except in the group of children.

The correspondence analysis, the analysis of the chi-squares, as well as the association measure phi, comprise the range of quantitative techniques of data analysis. The design of the coding frame and the in-depth interpretation of the latent and metaphorical aspects of the groups' conversations, as well as the strategy of interaction they developed in the course of their conversations, comprise the qualitative techniques of data analysis. The use of different modalities of interpretation, both qualitative and quantitative, and their convergence, indicates the validity of the results of the analysis carried out in the focus groups.

7.0. STORIES OF PUBLIC LIFE: SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS IN NARRATIVE

7.1. SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND NARRATIVE

7.1.1. Narratives and the Forging of Social Representations

Narratives are one of the main forms of discourse in which social representations are actualised and come to life. This may sound either a bold or a trivial statement, but I believe it to be neither, and in this chapter I attempt to show the intimate connection between the telling of stories and the forging of social representations. I will do so by (i) discussing some features of the relationship between narratives and social representations and (ii) analysing narrative interviews conducted with eleven Brazilian parliamentarians.

There is no human experience that cannot be expressed in the form of a narrative. As Roland Barthes (1993) pointed out in his classical study on their structure, "narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio's *Saint Ursula*), stained-glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative.(...) Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself" (Barthes, 1993, p.251-2). Indeed, narratives are infinite in their variety and we find them everywhere. More importantly for the purpose of my discussion here, narratives show that there seems to be in all forms of human life a need to tell. By telling, people recall what has happened, put experience into sequence, find possible explanations for it, and play with the chain of events that

shapes individual and social life. In the process of casting themselves and their social life into a story, social subjects present images that come alive, engage in dialogue and redefine the social world, giving texture to its material. By the same token, they create actors who are called back into the social world and seek to transform it. Such is the power of narratives: the power of those who know a story, either by hearing it or by telling it. Moreover, narratives have little to do with a private capacity to tell stories (Bakhtin, 1981; Barthes, 1993). They live beyond personal story telling, ferment and grow as "discourse in the open spaces of public squares, streets, cities and villages, of social groups, generations and epochs" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.259). Maybe it is in these social forms that one can best see the extent to which such narratives are social psychological phenomena.

Indeed, concern with story-telling is not alien to social psychology. Bartlett (1923), in his vigorous *Psychology and Primitive Culture*, provides a detailed analysis of story-telling as a social psychological act. His account is still valid today. Story-telling, he noted, "cannot be treated solely as an individual response. Many of the complex influences that take part in shaping it, come directly from the social group (...) I shall insist and again insist, that in certain perfectly definite respects the myth, the legend and the popular story, are immediately affected by influences arising from the social setting in which they take form and grow" (Bartlett, 1923, p.60). Bartlett goes on to demonstrate how, on the one hand, the form and the content of narratives are directly linked to, or are constituted by, the multiple and subtle relations between the story-teller, the group and the concerns of the community. On the other hand, the narratives themselves become major influences in the moulding of social relationships within a given community. It is clear from this early work that Bartlett is already hinting at the problem of conventionalisation, something he developed later in *Remembering* (1932). Cultural transmission and sedimentation, contact between different peoples, cultural borrowings and the diffusion of culture are the true themes underlying Bartlett's analysis of the folk tale. These elements are indeed decisive in relation to the theory of social representations and recently the degree to which Bartlett's work provides a foundation to the theory has been pointed out (Farr, 1994a; Saito, 1994). Narratives are, as it were, producers

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and carriers of social representations. They express in their very structure the social forms which bring them to life.

Just such a problem lies at the heart of Sperber's proposal for an epidemiology of representations. The issue of how communities "catch" representations, how they are distributed among specified populations, and eventually transmitted to yet other populations is directly linked to the form these representations assume (Sperber, 1985). In other words, the processes by which populations transmit their representations shed light on the very constitution of these representations, just as epidemiology sheds light on the study of pathology. In this sense, one can think of narratives as metaphors of cultural contamination, infecting and transforming the representations of the communities in which they circulate.

Narratives have been a major subject of debate amongst literary critics and philosophers of history (White, 1987; Mitchell, 1980; Carr, 1991). While the former have been concerned with narrative as a form of literary discourse or as a genre, the latter have centred their studies on narrative's representation of historical events. The question of what narratives in fact tell us - either as a representation of reality or as the reality itself - lies at the heart of these debates. This, of course, is not a new problem for the social sciences. To a certain extent this is the old problem of human access to reality, or the relationship between an objective world of events and a subjectivity that sets out to master it, or, at least, to describe it. Narratives are always a form of discourse, whether written or spoken, and their very form presupposes a chronological configuration, that is, a beginning, a middle and an end. Human experience, however, flows beyond beginnings, middles and ends and the cuts which demarcate the sequence are always narrative devices. This crucial distinction makes time a main category in the discussion of narratives (Ricouer, 1980). However, some theorists would argue that narrative builds upon the structures of everyday life, which, in opposition to the previous argument, contain within themselves elements that allow narratives to happen (Carr, 1991). Although this a central discussion for the study of narratives, my own concern here is a different one. Contrary to the historian who is worried about eliminating the gaps between the actual and the

representations of the actual, the social psychologist makes this gap one of the main sources of her investigation. For when people talk about their reality, either past or future, they impregnate the telling with their present ways of living, experiencing and feeling whatever else they may be talking about as present past or present future. If the present, as Mead (1932/1957) has shown, is the locus of our reality, it is because its boundaries "are those of its undertaking - of what we are doing. The pasts and futures indicated by such activity belong to the present" (p.88). In this sense, narratives provide a fertile terrain for understanding the power of symbolic forms and, indeed, how these symbolic forms can themselves act as devices in the perpetuation or challenging of dominant interpretations of social life.

I shall draw on three features of narratives which are fairly consensual across the literature to show how they can constitute major instruments for the organising of social experience and for translating that experience into discourse. In doing so, I hope to show that narratives draw upon and form social representations. The three features I shall discuss are: i) the referential aspect of narratives; ii) the forging of links between the ordinary and the extraordinary; and iii) the temporal dimension of narratives. Before I proceed further, however, let me clarify an issue. Narratives in themselves are a whole field of investigation and debate, and I am aware of the limits of my own endeavour here. The three features of narratives that I shall discuss here are not the only ones, and some may even consider that they are not the most important ones. But they are directly related to the problem of the present research and to social representations as symbolic forms. This is the reason that guides my choice.

The phenomenology of the act of telling a story is fairly simple: someone puts a number of actions and experiences into a sequence. These are the actions of a number of characters and these characters either act through the situations that change or react to the changes in the situations. The changes bring to light elements of the situations and of the characters that previously were implicit. In doing so, they call either for thinking or for action or for both (Ricoeur, 1980). Narratives comprise two dimensions, the chronological and the non-chronological. The former refers to

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the narrative as a sequence of episodes; here a narrative is a story comprising events. The latter relates to the construction of a whole from successive events, or, in other words, it refers to the configuration of a plot (Ricoeur, 1980). Therefore, a narrative is not just the listing of events but is an attempt to link them both in time and in meaning.

To tell: a story is always about something told by someone to someone else. Whether the something which is told is real or imaginary, and whether the audience is real or imaginary, are important questions raised in the analysis of narrative, but these are questions of little concern to those actually involved in the process of narrative. Now, is that the same as saying that narratives have no referentiality? Along with many students of narrative, I believe it is not. Bakhtin (1981, p.292), for instance, leaves no doubts about the relationship between discourse and the world: "discourse lives, as it were, beyond itself, in a living impulse (napravlennost') toward the object; if we detach ourselves completely from this impulse all we have left is the naked corpse of the word, from which we can learn nothing at all about the social situation or the fate of a given word in life. To study the word as such, ignoring the impulse that reaches out beyond it, is just as senseless as to study psychological experience outside the context of that real life toward which it was directed and by which it is determined". Or, as Scholes (1980, p.205)) states, "a narration, then, is a text which refers, or seems to refer, to some set of events outside itself." It does not matter whether the narratives are imaginary or whether its audience is imaginary because, even if they were, the imaginary itself does not emerge from a vacuum. Imagined realities bear a relationship to a world beyond themselves and narratives are a form of mediation between the creative nature of stories and the concreteness of events that, to some extent, exist independently of them. In this sense, narratives emerge as a mediation between social subjects and the social world. They bridge the gap between the social self and the social world, lending to one the reality of the other and helping to engender a sense of community. In this respect, narratives resemble social representations. In narratives, social representations find something like a privileged terrain in which to incubate and to develop. When people weave events into a plot, they imbue them with the meanings, values and affects which are

the substantive material of social representations.

Narratives have a dramatic quality. The function of story telling involves intentional states that alleviate, or at least make understandable, events and feelings that confront cultural canons. They do so by engendering links between the triviality of everyday life and the exceptionality of unexpected situations. Narratives, therefore, establish connections between the ordinary and the extraordinary. This capacity for linking up what is experienced as trivial and what is experienced as extraordinary produces contradictory effects. On the one hand, it naturalises whatever may appear as out of routine, giving it a familiar configuration. On the other hand, it incorporates the dimension of the unthinkable within the register of the possible. Here is the evident connection between narratives and social representations. Social representations, as much as narratives, struggle to make the unfamiliar familiar. Through objectification and anchoring they link up the ordinary and the extraordinary. These processes permit the organising of experience in such a way that it becomes bearable, it becomes understandable and, above all, it becomes devoid of threat. As with the old stories our grandmothers used to tell us, things fall into place, we can see them clearly and, after knowing what the whole story is about, we are no longer scared.

Narratives live in time, use time in myriad ways and only make sense in relation to it. The inherent sequentiality of a narrative is one of its constituent elements. Yet, as Barthes pointed out, "in the narrative (and this is perhaps its mark), there is no pure succession: the temporal is immediately penetrated by the logical, the *consecutive* is at the same time the *consequential*" (Barthes, 1988, p.142). Thus, the ways in which narratives use time cannot be simply thought of in terms of a succession of particular instants. There are temporal implications that arise from the very structure of narratives, as Paul Ricoeur (1980) shows in his extensive discussions on the theme of narrativity and temporality. He draws on the Heideggerian existential analysis of time to show that narratives go beyond the establishment of events *in* time. More than that, he argues, they provide a means to enact the transition from being within time to being in history. This is the case because "the time of a narrative is public time", a time that brings to the fore the

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problem of beings who share their experience not only with other living beings but also with those who came before and those who are still to come. Rather than being just located in time, narratives tend to build history. This temporal dialectic makes explicit that "narrative time is, from the outset, time of being-with-others(...) the art of story-telling retains the public character of time while keeping it from falling into anonymity - it does so as time common to the actors, as time woven in common by their interaction. On the level of narrative, of course, "others" exist" (Ricoeur, 1980, p.171). Ricoeur's analysis is an extremely rich contribution to the understanding of how everyday life situations bear a simultaneous relationship to history, or even more, *make* history. Now social representations also make history out of everyday interactions. Given their capacity to coalesce meanings from the past, images of the present and hopes for the future, they draw on time in a way that surpasses the ordinary sense of time. Anchoring is one of the processes of social representations that can best be found in narratives, since the telling of stories permanently recoveres cultural canons, patterns of action and talk, old sayings and so forth.

These three features of narratives, I believe, are sufficiently broad to reveal their intrinsic links with the shaping, crystallisation and circulation of social representations. They encompass some of the most vital problems that the theory of social representations attempts to address: (i) the mediation between social subjects and the social world, (ii) the processes which underlie people's confrontation with the unknown, the unexpected or the extraordinary and finally, iii) time as history; a time which contains within itself not only the great abstract forces that we usually think of as history, but also the elements of every-day life, where ordinary men and women come together in speech and action to construct the world in which they live.

7.1.2. The Impeachment of the President as a Story of Public Life

Fernando Collor de Mello was elected by the Brazilian people in 1989, in the first direct and democratic elections Brazil had had after almost 30 years of military dictatorship. However, on the 29th of September, 1992, the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies voted - 441 in favour and only 38 against - to suspend the powers of the

president. Three months later, on 29-30 December 1992, it was the Brazilian Senate that decided - 76, out of 81 senators, in favour - to remove Collor from office. Less than three years after having taken office, still with another two to go, Fernando Collor de Mello became the first president of Brazil to be expelled from office on charges of corruption and the misuse of public money[1].

The story of his rise and fall encapsulates many of the features that characterise public life in Brazil. A review of the literature produced in the aftermath of the impeachment shows that the process of the rise and fall of Collor included a wide range of issues related to Brazilian society. These issues vary from the relationship between the state, the economy and society and the nature of the public and the private in Brazil, to the social psychology of the Brazilian people and its relation to politics (Flynn, 1993; Weyland, 1993; Oliveira, 1992; Alencastro, 1992; Nobre, 1992).

Before I proceed to discuss some of the features of the impeachment of Collor that are relevant to the present research, it is necessary to outline briefly the circumstances that led to the impeachment. Of course, this is in itself a narrative, but contrary to the ones that I shall analyse soon, this intends to build upon the accounts found in books and articles written by scholars concerned with Latin America, Brazilians and non-Brazilians alike (Nêumanne, 1992; Oliveira, 1992; Krieger,Novaes & Faria, 1992; Keck, 1992; Flynn, 1993; Weyland, 1993). In these works we can find a fairly similar account of the main events that led to the impeachment of Collor de Mello.

To a great degree the fall of Collor was a direct consequence of the conditions which allowed for his sudden rise in popularity and ascension to power. The 1980s had been a decade of deep economic recession which, after a short period of growth (1985-86), ended in hyper-inflation (up to 70% per month). Democracy,

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[1] Collor actually resigned just a few hours before the Senate voted for the impeachment. His resignation, however, did not stop the process; the voting took place and he was legally impeached by the Brazilian National Congress.

after almost thirty years of military rule, had failed to satisfy popular expectations and conservative élites succeeded in curbing the much needed social and political reforms. The political manoeuvring present in the new civilian regime - ample patronage, clientelism, opportunistic measures - reinforced the view that "nothing has changed", and destroyed the symbolic distinction between dictatorship and democracy. This scenario of deep political and economic problems generated what, in chapter one, I described as a disenchantment with the public sphere; the intense hopelessness and depression which characterised the Brazilian mood at the end of the 1980s provided the fertile soil for the rise of a self-proclaimed saviour (O'Donnell, 1992).

Collor knew well how to exploit this opportunity. First, he portrayed himself as young, dynamic and energetic. He made promises after promises that he would create a "New Brazil", with greater social justice and a clean and modern government. Above all, he found his strongest, and politically decisive, campaign motto in the "hunting of corrupts". Collor, of course, presented himself - and was massively presented by Globo Network[2] - as "Mr. Clean". Secondly, he distanced himself from political parties and he did not seek to organise his supporters into a political party. Paradoxically, he used the weakness of the Brazilian party system to form in 1989 the *Partido de Reconstrução Nacional* (Party of National Reconstruction), which served basically as an electoral vehicle. The *PRN* was a classical case of 'parties of convenience' in Brazil (Flynn,1993): it united a number of politicians without any commitment to a defined political platform, who joined in the Collor campaign as it gained momentum. Thirdly, the support Collor received from Brazilian élites, and specially from Globo Network, was rather driven by the need to defeat Luis Inácio Lula da Silva from the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers Party) than by any genuine backing of Collor. Actually, during his

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[2] TV Globo is the fourth-largest and one of the world's most watched television networks. For a detailed analysis of the role of Globo Network in the 1989 presidential election and in social and political life as a whole see Venicio A. de Lima, "Brazilian Television in the 1989 Presidential Election: Constructing a President"; Joseph Straubhaar, Organ Olsen, and Maria Cavaliari Nunes, "The Brazilian Case: Influencing the Voter" and Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, "The Brazilian Case: Manipulation by the Media?" in *Television, Politics and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Thomas E. Skidmore (The John Hopkins University Press, 1993).

campaign, Collor overtly distanced himself from the élites, whom he attacked in the best tradition of the populist politicians. It was only after the impeachment that the real extent of his dealings with these élites became public knowledge.

Thus, presenting himself as a young, handsome and good saviour of the nation, detached from the bad and the ugly who were then in charge of traditional politics, and without any commitments to specific social groups, Collor grew in esteem and captured the popular imagination, significantly helped by the power of television (Lima, 1993). His relationship with the unorganised, poor population who voted massively in his favour (Singer, 1990) was direct, without any mediation by political parties: the only mediation being television. Thus, Collor 'communicated' with the poor, uneducated, deeply religious and mystic sector of the Brazilian population, displaying *himself* rather than any political idea. It was his personality that became the crucial material of his public appearance: his arrogance, narcissism, unexpectedness, emotional instability, his taste for the exotic, for adventure and easy risks. As Oliveira pointed out, "the messianic element never has reached, except once, the heart of Brazilian politics in such a way that managed to surpass all political forces, either traditional or modern" (Oliveira, 1992,p.27).

The second round of the presidential elections took place on 17 December 1989 and Collor was elected president. On 15 January 1990 he took office and until the beginning of 1992 various members of Collor's cabinet were constantly involved in denouncements of the misuse of public money. In May 1992, in the wake of a family row, Pedro Collor de Mello accused his brother - the president of Brazil - of being involved in a large corruption scheme directed by his former campaign manager, Paulo Cesar Farias. The charges, widely publicised by the major Brazilian newspapers and weekly news magazines, grew in proportion and started to appear from everywhere. The Brazilian Congress, under the pressure of the press and opposition forces, set up a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry - the *CPI* - (from now onwards CPI) to investigate the accusations. The Commission was initially formed to investigate the dealings of Paulo Cesar Faria. However, after following the course uncovered by investigative journalists, the *CPI* found massive evidence that

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Farias' dealings - encompassing bribery, influence-peddling and the payment of Collor's personal expenses, including a 2.5 million dollars gardening job for Collor's mansion - had the president's full connivance. Flynn reports that some interviews he conducted in Brazil, in late 1992, "went so far as to allege that Collor and Farias' were aiming to amass between 4 and 5 billion US dollars, *each*, during Collor's term in office" (Flynn, 1993, p.363). Some revelations caused particular outcry, as with the charges against Collor's wife for diverting large funds of LBA (Brazilian Legion of Social Welfare). LBA's money is directed mainly to poor women and children.

These discoveries, and many others that revealed a chain of corruption exceeding any previously seen in Latin America, evoked angry demonstrations by civil society which took massively to the streets demanding the impeachment of the president. Starting in mid-August 1992, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets all over Brazil to make clear their outrage at the evident presidential corruption. On the 16th of August Collor had called for a show of support from the people who had voted for him, asking the population to take to the streets wearing green and yellow (the national colours) against the ones that wanted to "sabotage democracy". His appeal back-fired and triggered mass demonstrations, with people dressed in black carrying anti-Collor slogans fraught with biting humour. Popular participation - specially the participation of adolescents, who became known as *cara-pintadas* (painted-faces) and filled the demonstrations with their jokes, youth and hope of seeing a different Brazil - was a decisive factor and, along with the testimony of the driver of the president's secretary[3], pushed the impeachment to its irreversible end. By the end of August the CPI submitted its final report, which contained conclusive proof against the president, his wife and Paulo Cesar Farias. The formal petition for impeachment - signed by the presidents of the Brazilian Press

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[3] The testimony of Mr. Eriberto França, the driver of the secretary of the president, caused national commotion. Eriberto availed himself, in spite of very concrete threats against his personal safety, to be a witness to the CPI. His testimony was crucial to the final report: he provided the CPI with detailed information about the route of the dealings in which Collor and his allies were involved. When questioned in the CPI by one of Collor's supporters "why was he doing all that, was it only for patriotism?" as if Mr. França had been bribed to be there, he simply answered: "and is patriotism not enough mylord?" Next morning he was in the headlines of all Brazilian newspapers and information magazines as a symbol of Brazil's effort to recover its dignity.

Association and the Brazilian Bar - was presented to the President of Congress on 1 September 1992. The end of the story is well known. On 30 December 1992, the Senate confirmed the Chamber of Deputies' decision and Collor was removed from office, having lost his political rights for eight years.

What are the signs of Brazilian public life to be found in this story? First and foremost, corruption. Corruption is scarcely new to Brazilian politics. As I discussed in the previous chapter, corruption has been not only a common political practice in Brazilian history but also a powerful signifier of the doubtful "nature" of the nation and its people. Considering the degree of banalisation of corrupt activities, the impeachment of Collor provoked an enormous rupture with the taken-for-grantedness of corruption in political life. The population was not prepared to take the explicit contradictions of "Mr. Clean". Collor was elected on the basis of his promises to cleanse traditional politics and was revealed as one of the most corrupt politicians in Brazil. Popular outrage in relation to well-established political practices, the fact that the president was made accountable for his deeds, and the subsequent punishment he received displaced some of the most deep-seated cultural canons of public life in Brazil: corruption and impunity. This was the first reason that gave to the social movement of 1992 a capacity to re-signify public life.

Secondly, messianism. Brazilian public life has been heavily marked by strong personalities, a politics of favours and a discourse that promises miracles. This, of course, finds its counterpart in a population that is happy to take the favours, does believe in miracles and a culture deeply grounded in kinship. Collor built upon these cultural elements and presented himself as the saviour of the people. Perhaps that was the reason why, once the corruption became evident, his image was so easily shattered. Collor received from the Brazilian people a treatment that other politicians of his stature rarely received. Although his rise profited enormously from a messianic image, when it came to his fall he was treated as an ordinary man. And it was as an ordinary man who owes a response to his *peers* that he was judged. Here, we have a second re-signification of public life: the law can and should be the same for everyone independent of their status. Presidents are not above and beyond the law

and society holds the power to turn that principle into a reality. Needless to say this simple statement confronts old Latin American ways of exercising political power absolutely.

And last, but not least, the massive popular participation that in this case has been *de facto* the main force in defining the impeachment of Collor. Generally considered as an instrument of legitimacy in populist regimes, or as a potential threat in authoritarian ones, the Brazilian people historically has reacted accordingly. The notion of fate has been largely influential in the populist and authoritarian traditions and most of the time works as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The analysis of the focus groups has made clear how powerful these historical traditions can be. "We get what we deserve" or "it has always been like that and always will" are the symbolic effects of a specific kind of political practice, where political actors lose all sense of their own agency and therefore help to perpetuate the very conditions which otherwise they would set out to change. In the case of the movement for impeachment things were different. The population took the leading role, pressurising the National Congress, the mass media, and flooding the streets in the best fashion of the Brazilian cultural tradition. Music, *samba*, not even one incident of violence in mass demonstrations of up to 2.5 million people, humour in large doses and self-irony - the very features of Brazilian culture that allow for a positive self-interpretation - were mixed with political participation and directed to the rights of citizenship.

These elements make the impeachment of Fernando Collor de Mello an exemplary event of public life in Brazil. And even though - as we shall see soon - the capacity to forget is as amazing in Brazil as the capacity to believe, even though the new features of public life produced in the year of the impeachment have lost much of their momentum in the wake of new frustrations and increasing inflation, the events which took place in the year of 1992 will remain a concrete experience for Brazilians of their capacity to construct new forms of public life.

7.1.3. In Search of Story Tellers

In August 1993 I conducted eleven narrative interviews with Brazilian parliamentarians. It was not easy to gain access to the story-tellers. Although I had already written two letters asking for the interviews, the response I received was nil. Thus, I left for Brasilia hoping that personal contact would make a difference. It did and that confirmed some of the problems I discuss in this research: the personification of political practice. In these interviews I simply asked them to tell me the story of the impeachment. Out of the eleven MPs I finally talked to, only one did not produce a narrative; during the whole interview he resisted giving a narration of the events that led to the impeachment of the president.

As one enters Brasilia it is inevitable to think that the city is a symbol of Brazilian contrasts and contradictions. Built throughout the 1950s and officially inaugurated in 1960, Brasilia represented an attempt to take possession of Brazil's large territory: in this sense it is a metaphor of a country in search of itself, in need of looking inside its own territorial heart. When Juscelino Kubitcheck decided to move the capital city to the backlands of the Brazilian west, away from the glamour of Rio de Janeiro, he was moved by the belief that a fully modernised Brazil would only be possible in a context of bringing together those remote areas which, until then, were basically unexplored. The very architecture of the city reveals this attempt. Oscar Niemayer gave to Brasilia the shape of an airplane.

Inside the Brazilian Parliament there is life from Tuesday to Thursday, and that was the time I had in which to carry out my interviews. Brazil is a large country and on Fridays most of the MPs go back to their home states in order to take care of local politics. It seemed a pretty dull scenario, considering that I had only a week to collect my data. I had to set out to do what really works in Brazil: to use personal contacts. It was my pure luck that I have friends working as assessors of the Brazilian parliament. They helped me to get in touch with some MPs, who in their turn helped me to get in touch with others. I had to wait most of the time for one hour and a half to interview them, and my initial intention of a one hour interview

soon had to be abandoned. The maximum time I got was 56 minutes and some interviews were as short as 16 minutes. While walking through the corridors of the Congress, talking to people, running from one cabinet to another, standing by some MPs that had promised to talk to me, the immediate observation I was able to make was that that place has a life of its own. They are inside a space with rules, norms and forms of exchange that I did not understand, but I soon realised that I had to play by the rules of the game if I was to achieve what I wanted to do there. In one of the moments in which I found myself in a frantic dash to catch an MP (and that is the word: to catch) who had promised to talk to me, I just thought: but these people are here to represent me, why is it that there seems to be an abyss between them and me? And, even more, why is it that the only way I can ever touch them is through a network of personal contacts? That seemed to be a major contradiction: in the middle of the most impersonal set of circumstances, the only thing that could save my field work was exactly the power of personal connections. However, what seems to the researcher to be a contradiction soon reveals itself as a source of data. Indeed, from the experience of interviewing politicians, I realised the power of favour as a political practice. The interviews were given as a favour; it mattered little that they were an integral part of a research project funded, in fact, by Brazilian public money. In the end, nine federal deputies and two senators were interviewed. The choice was very much constrained by the availability of the parliamentarians but it was possible to preserve some balance in relation to party affiliation. Amongst the eleven MPs interviewed, five had been members of the CPI and had had a decisive say in the measures that led to the impeachment.

The Brazilian National Congress comprises the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate. There are 503 federal deputies and 81 senators representing the 26 states of the federation and the Federal District - Brasilia. The weakness of the party system in Brazil is persistent and often pointed out as one of the structural causes of corruption (Flynn, 1993). When I planned the field work the intention was to interview two MP's from the five main Brazilian political parties, namely, PMDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party), PPR (Popular Renovation Party), PSDB (Brazilian Social Democracy Party), PSB (Brazilian Socialist Party), PDT(Labour

Democratic Party) and PT (Workers Party). The extremely volatile nature of political parties in Brazil was confirmed, when six months later two of the original parties I was supposed to interview had already disappeared, merging into a new one. Oliveira (1992) has pointed out that the instability of the Brazilian party system has become almost a cliché. However, he argues, the cliché does not yield to a more subtle analysis; the *real* political parties in Brazil do not coincide with party names. He proposes a system of classification that has been widely accepted for its capacity to encompass the mobility of politicians and party names. It reduces the apparently enormous diversity of the party system in Brazil to three real political parties. I shall use his system to locate the politicians I interviewed. Table 7.1.3. shows how the politicians I interviewed can be located within this system of classification.

Table 7.1.3: Narrative Interviews by Party and Duration

Story Teller	Nominal Party*	Real Party	Duration of Interview	Date
Senator 1	PSB	PT	36 minutes	17/8/93
Senator 2	PMDB	Resentment	56 minutes	27/12/92
Deputy 3	PT	PT	28 minutes	18/8/93
Deputy 4	PT	PT	24 minutes	18/8/93
Deputy 5	PDT	Resentment	37 minutes	19/8/93
Deputy 6	PMDB	Resentment	28 minutes	19/8/93
Deputy 7	PSDB	Resentment	16 minutes	19/8/93
Deputy 8	PFL	Dictatorship	18 minutes	18/8/93
Deputy 9	PFL	Dictatorship	25 minutes	19/8/93
Deputy 10	PDS	Dictatorship	47 minutes	23/8/93
Deputy 11	PDC	Dictatorship	40 minutes	18/8/93

* As in August 1993

The first real party in Oliveira's account is inspired by Sennet's discussion on secular charisma (Sennet, 1977). It is the "party of resentment"; "he, a politician of humble origins, found a career in whipping up the public in attacks against the Establishment, the Entrenched Powers, the old Order(...) He is not a commitment to

some new order, but rather a pure resentment, *resentment*, against the order which exists.(...)the class to which he appeals detest those who are privileged, but has no idea of destroying privilege itself(...)There is nothing egalitarian in this *resentment*; shame and envy combine to lead people suffering status injuries to hope that by some lucky break, some accident of mobility, they personally can escape" (Sennet, 1977, p.277). This party of resentment can manifest itself in Brazilian politics under many guises, but the true party of resentment in Brazil is PMDB (Oliveira, 1992). The second real party is mainly characterised by politicians linked to the dictatorship period. They are against measures of correction of social inequality and believe in the market as the supreme fetish. The third real party is PT, the Workers Party. According to Oliveira, "it constitutes the *diferentia specifica* in the real party system" (Oliveira, p. 112). It has strong connections with social movements and is largely supported by intellectuals. These three real party formations are what actually counts in the long run of Brazilian politics.

Party names, therefore, should not be taken literally to designate the nature of the political platform of these parties. It also should be said that these parties do not correspond to parties which existed before the dictatorship period; they are all parties that emerged after that in the early 80s. Again, this does not mean that the real political forces operating in Brazilian politics before 1964 ceased to exist. They continue, but under different names, different alliances, different partnerships. The parties may change; the interests however remain the same.

7.2. THE NARRATIVES

7.2.1. Narrative 1

Senator 1 has his eyes looking downwards as I enter his office, and he asks me to remind him what exactly it is that I want him to say. "The impeachment", he says, "happened a long time ago; I have other things on my mind". Senator 1 had been one of the members of the CPI - and many of the decisive events leading to Collor's impeachment took place in his office. He constructs a narrative (see Table

7.2.1 in Appendix 6) around three main underlying themes, namely, i) Collor's personality, ii) the impeachment as a hazard in an environment where little changes, and iii) the widespread corruption in Brazilian social life. From these three themes, the second is the one that cuts across all the others; in the senator's stories the impeachment becomes a series of lucky coincidences. It is truly amazing how the actuality of the stories are transformed by his account. His voice speaks in many disguised voices of which fate is the most eloquent. The first qualifier to the story of the impeachment - exceptional, out of our political routine - does not impose itself as a signifier capable of re-signifying: The exceptionality of the event is only referred to as a means of confirming the well established rules of political reality. Initially, the implicit meanings of the stories confer on Collor imperial powers, which are essentially derived from the traditional ways of exercising power in Brazil. Politics is a dirty business and politicians enact the dirtiness. Such a state of affairs correlates with the intricacies of Brazilian culture and the nature of Brazilian people: somehow we are morally dirty and a process of moral cleansing is necessary on large scale. There is no doubt that the narrative constructed by the senator is not stripped of reality. What he describes is to a great extent what the focus groups confirm. Yet what stands out is the power of these representations when confronted with an event that has the potential to challenge them. The senator's narrative is mainly structured around a reality that seems to be fixed and determined forever; there is no space in his discourse for the mobile circumstances of the present. In his talk the openness of new events collapse and the autonomy of hazards over social actors appears as the chief determinant of the impeachment. The movement of civil society is absent; the "people" appear in the narrative as beings in utter lack: they don't have enough education to understand the causes of their suffering. It is important to say that senator 1 belongs to one of the most progressive forces in Brazilian politics. Even so, his narrative is firmly grounded in traditional representations, which reveals the strength with which old meanings perpetuate themselves.

7.2.2. Narrative 2

Senator 2 is one of the most influential politicians in Brazil. Since the

impeachment he has been at the centre of the political re-structuring of government and is widely respected by all political forces in Brazil. He was also a member of the CPI. I met the senator at his beach home; he had no time to see me in Brasilia and his secretary suggested I should try to meet him over the weekend. That factor turned out to be highly favourable to my purpose. His narrative was the longest one and the only one not interrupted by phone calls.

Brazilian history is the recurrent theme in the stories the senator tells me. The features of this history are difficult ones: violence, *coups d'etat*, the military presence, impunity. It is just such a history that gives to the impeachment its unprecedented character. As table 7.2.2 (see Appendix 6) shows, the stories the senator tells are all considered unthinkable. They possess features that do not belong to the realm of what people can think about. Now one could ask what it is that lies in the background of these unthinkable events establishing, as it were, a network of contrasts and differentiations that make some events thinkable and others unthinkable? No doubt it is the power of the taken-for-granted and the tendency to naturalise political practices that, actually, rest upon precise historical determinants. What is the unthinkable? The unthinkable is that which cannot be brought to mind, which cannot be made real. The unthinkable thus is also the impossible. In looking at the second narrative we face again the imperatives of history represented as fate and the limited capacity of people to counter-act its effects. In this sense, the narrative produces concealment and even conceals the very conditions of concealment. However, the senator tells the story of a new relationship between society and parliament, and in doing so, he allows for a discourse where the possibility of novelty is not completely excluded. In contrast to the first story, he provides a happier end to his narrative.

7.2.3. Narrative 3

The third narrative was told by deputy 3. He is one of the main representatives of the Workers Party in the Chamber of Deputies. Criticised by members of his own party and adversaries alike, for proposing a full dialogue

between all sectors of Brazilian society, deputy 3 has often been isolated from the main loci of political decision making. Yet he has a strong parliamentary performance to his credit and is often cited as one of the "moderate" voices of the Workers Party. Deputy 3 produces a narrative in which the recurrent themes about Brazilian public life can be easily found. His stories tell us about the chasms in Brazilian society, the exercise of limitless power and the authority of the past in the perpetuation of such realities. Brazilian mentality also appears as a major theme, one that can explain the persistence of the current conditions of social life. The stories he presents are highly analytical and leave little space for secondary interpretations. The impeachment is made up of many stories, as we see in table 7.2.3 (see Appendix 6), but they are not all that different from each other. They are stories about a society divided between "us" and "them", where there is little chance for a meeting point to be found. Collor's election, the chasm between politics and society, social apartheid, the very fragmented nature of our culture: these are the ordeals of Brazilian society. How these chasms are overcome do not bode well for the future. Messianism, authoritarianism and paternalism have been the regular responses to these dilemmas. Yet, deputy 3 does not produce a fatalistic discourse. It is an intellectualised discourse strongly grounded in analytical devices; it makes use of history and current situations to construct a difference between structure and conjuncture. The end of his narrative somehow leaves behind the meaning he had initially attributed to the impeachment. The crises of Brazilian mentality take over in his account the new perspectives that the impeachment had opened up. But even the story of the crises cannot conceal his strong discourses concerning betterment. The past does not legitimise the present but calls it into question. The narrative is filled with metaphors: society is *tired*, politics is a *game*, the relationship between politicians and society is *schizophrenic*, the *chasms* in Brazilian society, the *waiting* for *salvation* and, of course, *messianism*. Society as a character in the narrative is tired and waits; relationships are marked by chasms, even more, they are schizophrenic and the people long for the messiah. Even the most sophisticated attempt at rational narrative does not escape the stratagems of discourse, that reveals through its powerful metaphors the same old meanings, meanings that insist on representing public life.

7.2.4. Narrative 4

Deputy 4 is one of the main representatives of the Workers Party in national politics. His electoral base is the powerful state of São Paulo where the Workers Party was born. He produces a narrative strongly marked by stories of institutionalised politics, where the CPI and politicians are the main characters. As with the others, deputy 4 attributes to the impeachment the qualifier of unthinkable. This is justified by the imperial powers of Collor and his direct relationship with the population, which had disempowered most political institutions. However, he tells how the unthinkable became inevitable, and that is the thread of his narrative. How does something unthinkable comes to the point of being unavoidable? The stories that fill the trajectory from the unthinkable to the inevitable draw on well-known themes: the actual levels of corruption organised around the president (never seen before), the family dispute, convincing the main political parties to support the process, overcoming the chasm between citizens and politicians, the pressure of public opinion and the press. The narrative leads to the moral crises of Brazilian society. Here it should be noted that, even though the stories point to a discourse of betterment, they make present old representations of a society grounded in a questionable morality. The implicit meanings (see table 7.2.4 in Appendix 6) of the narrative illuminate the anchors being used to introduce what appear as novel: the past is present. delimitating and circumscribing the new. The stories reinforce the anchors they draw on and close down new meanings.

7.2.5. Narrative 5

Deputy 5 belongs to PDT which is the party of traditional populism in Brazil, firmly grounded in the heritage of Getulio Vargas. He is very eager to talk to me and to provide an account from "behind the curtains", since he participated very actively in the process of impeachment. Deputy 5 was a member of the CPI and his narrative contains detailed stories about the threats and difficulties that surrounded the work of parliament in the crucial period just before the impeachment. As Table 7.2.5 in Appendix 6 shows, the structure of his narrative is similar to the others. He draws

on the recent years of Brazilian history to set up the plot of the narrative as well as the conditions under which Collor was elected. The stories that follow bring into the plot very much the same characters and the same relationships between them. There we can find the accusations of Collor's brother, the CPI, the role of society, the triviality of corruption in Latin America. The aftermath is not a happy one: There is frustration and disenchantment again in the scene showing that real changes are still desired. The narrative forges various meanings, albeit implicit ones: these meanings are the substance of the same persistent representations. The events do not re-signify the historical background from which they acquire their meaning. Paradoxically, it is the background that imposes its meaning closing down the space of re-signification. The "new logic" of the events, which is part of the reflection the narrative develops, seems not to be capable of proving itself in the logic of the narrative. If we look to the story that closes the narrative - the aftermath - we will find its similarity to the story that opens it. The narrative itself corroborates the unchanging character of political life in Brazil.

7.2.6. Narrative 6

Deputy 6 is a politician from the northeast of Brazil. He belongs to PMDB, the strongest party in the Brazilian parliament. He is respected in parliament for being one of the "honest" politicians from the northeast to whom accusations of corruption were never made. His narrative stresses the positive character of the impeachment, which lies in the participation of society and its decisive role in the process. As Table 7.2.6 shows (sse Appendix 6), the stories are very much centred around the old traditions of Brazilian politics, but there is space for the emergence of stories that open up new fields of meaning. In his narrative implicit notions, such as politicians and the people are a mirror of each other and corruption is widespread, appeared linked to a positive qualifier, as something that could lead to the recycling of old values. His narrative clearly identifies the "nature of Brazilians" with the "nature of political life" bringing back an association that ran throughout the focus groups. In this sense, his account is symbolically closest to the representations discussed in the previous chapter. The CPI does not appear as an actor in the process

and in this respect his narrative differs from that of the others. He describes the political discussion within the Congress as a game of interests where some deputies fought for decency and others resisted until the moment when their own images were at stake. In the implicit meanings of his narrative of the impeachment we can find the same dynamics underlying the representations of public life which were found in the focus groups: parliament is an institution divorced from society and yet like society; politics is a game of interests and very little changes *de facto* in Brazilian society; the problematic nature of Brazilians and the fragmentation of social and political life. Yet, the closing story suggests a positive end given by *experience* of participating in such a unique process. The force of the events in his narrative do not lose their capacity to re-signify.

7.2.7. Narrative 7

Deputy 7 has produced the shortest narrative of all and he told me his story in 16 minutes. Deputy 7 is one of the few politicians in Brazil concerned with ecological problems and his parliamentarian activity is centred on the "green question". The news of the Yanomami massacre entered his door literally at the same moment I did, and that significantly curtailed the interview. His narrative starts by defining the impeachment as a cleavage in political practice and a great emotion for society. Nevertheless, the narrative develops to deny its opening story. The discourse closes around one central theme: the frustration of society and the absence of real change. The striking feature of this narrative - specially because it comes from a politician from the left of the political spectrum - is that society appears deprived of any agency in the events that led to the impeachment. As table 7.2.7 in Appendix 6 shows, he describes the conditions for the impeachment as being more related to the vissicitudes of the political game than with society's actions. The disenchantment, post-impeachment, shows that the pressure of society was not enough to produce changes in political practices and that corruption still continues in various other domains of Brazilian life. The narrative provides another powerful example of an account that does not allow new meanings to emerge. More than all the others, the discourse closes in a self-fulfilling prophecy where change can never occur because,

when it threatens to occur, it means nothing.

7.2.8. Narrative 8

Deputy 8 belongs to PFL and is one of the few women in parliament. She has had a long career in politics and represents the state of Rio de Janeiro. The main characters of her narrative are the Brazilian Presidentialist system, Brazil itself, Collor, politicians and Brazilian people. It is around these actors that the narrative is structured and their relations set up the plot leading to the impeachment. Collor reached power in loneliness, she tells me, due to the problems of the presidentialist system. That is why we need to change to parliamentarism, she says. The almost obvious implicit meaning of her story is that parliament can maintain politicians in power. With a strong parliamentarian base, whoever becomes a member of government does not need to worry about accountability. Brazil appears as an agent of perpetual repetition, as a place that does not evolve, whereas the relationship between politicians and the population is accounted for in terms of resentment and envy. The stories shown in table 7.2.8 (see Appendix 6) portray the population as childish, envious, and ignorant of the right choices. Good politicians are supposed to know better than the people and sacrifice themselves for the good of the people. The metaphors - and no doubt this is the talk of a woman - are based on mother-child relationships, as when comparing political measures with a bitter medicine that must be given to children. The absence of accountability is explained in terms of the absence of control from the population: the population has the chance to do it, but it does not and, therefore, they feel guilty. It is this guilt that provokes the bad image of politicians, because the population wants to attack the ones that provoke guilt in order to feel less guilt. Through a peculiar narrative device the bad image of politicians is not caused by the actions of the politicians themselves, but by the mechanisms of defence of the population (!). Such an interpretation, where accountability disappears under psychologism, provides a good example of how the narrative eclipses the impeachment and reinforces the present with meanings of the past. Ironically, the past is recovered in order to destroy history since it gives legitimacy to the argument of a non-changing and, therefore, non-historical society.

7.2.9. Narrative 9

Deputy 9 belongs to PFL and is a representative of the vast Brazilian north. His party supported Collor's government until a few months before the impeachment when events were proving to be irreversible. However, contrary to his party, deputy 9 supported Collor until the very end, and that makes him a quite distinctive voice in the Brazilian National Congress. Perhaps not someone respected for his position, but definitely someone seen as sticking to his position. His narrative is direct and does not leave space for contradictions. The stories are set around the legal aspects of the impeachment - which he describes as full of irregularities - and the inability of society to interfere in the political process. Politicians should not be challenged because the role of the leader is to lead; parliament is a mirror of society and therefore society is represented; the difficult living conditions of Brazilians disqualify them from understanding what happens - they do not have emotional stability; press freedom has gone too far: such stories reveal in their crude clarity the weight of an authoritarian tradition. Table 7.2.9 in Appendix 6 shows the sequence of stories, where the impeachment is narrated in terms of a power struggle between those who were not profiting from the government of Collor. It is worth noting that the narrative acknowledges the situation of social unrest and poverty in Brazil with the purpose of discarding the agency of its people. Under such difficult conditions there is no emotional tranquillity and therefore the population is "biased". The narrative reveals and engenders representations of public life centred on the autonomy of political practice and the disempowerment of the population.

7.2.10. Narrative 10

Deputy 10 belongs to PDS (Democratic Social Party/Dictatorship) and he had been the leader of Collor's government in the Chamber of Deputies. His narrative is centred on himself: He describes his personal relationship with the process of impeachment and the various stories that constituted this relationship. Events are constructed in terms of his personal stance and how he experienced them. Thus he tells me about his angst and the need to cut his links with Collor when he realised

the gap between the president's words and his deeds. The narrative continues drawing on stories that are common to other narratives such as the image of politicians, the double bind of the law and the frustration after the impeachment (see table 7.2.10 in Appendix 6). Underlying most of the stories we can identify the implicit attempt of the story teller to prove his innocence. His account reconstructs his own participation in the events in such a way that one wonders how such an honest man could ever be involved with Collor de Mello. As for the population, they do not understand what is happening and make the politicians the scape-goats of the nation. Again the narrative represents the Brazilian people as a people deprived of any capacity for understanding the situation and guilty of constructing a bad image for politicians. The end of the narrative is set around Brazilian history and the dangers of the current situation, where fate and the threat of people's agency appear as the main signifiers.

7.2.11. The Story of Not Telling a Story or the Dog that Didn't Bark[4]

Of all the interviews conducted with parliamentarians only one did not produce a sequence of stories. Deputy 11, who belongs to PDC/Dictatorship, is an army man and, at the time of the interview, he was facing legal action for proposing in parliament the return of a military dictatorship. His account of the impeachment was stated in one sentence:

> "The impeachment of Collor was conducted by a minority who did not permit Collor to steal and keep the money for himself and for a minority, that is, the product of the assault was not divided fraternally with other figures in Brazilian politics."

After saying this the deputy paused and refused to develop a narrative of the events that led to the impeachment. He talked for a long time and with great enthusiasm against democracy. But whenever I tried to engage him in a more

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[4]'The dog that didn't bark' comes from a 'clue' Rob Farr suggested to me from a Sherlock Holmes story. In *Silver Blaze*, the fact that a dog *didn't* bark led Holmes to the solution of the crime. In a similar vein, deputy eleven *didn't* tell a story. By doing this, he helped us to understand the processes of closing down new meaning, which were operating throughout the narratives.

detailed account of the process of impeachment he would go back to the same statement cited above. His talk was fragmented and dispersed, and yet concentrated around a few themes: the weakness of politicians, the superiority of the military over the civilians in government, the widespread corruption, the inherently corrupt character of all forms of politics. These themes were talked about through compact statements. Devices usually applicable to various forms of everyday talk - such as exposition - were suspended. There was a moment in the interview, for instance, when deputy 11 cited the case of Peru and hoped someone would have the courage to intervene in Brazil in the same fashion Alberto Fujimori did in Peru. He told me that whoever would do so would be as well received as Fujimori had been in Peru. After that, he paused and became silent. I asked him to expand, to tell me more about the reasons for his views. He said:

"The justification...politicians, they all here put all responsibility for what happens in the last 20 years of dictatorship. I think there was no dictatorship. Some people died, OK. But there are more people dying today of hunger, misery, despair than in 20 years of dictatorship. Power in the hand of civilians is much worse. Now, there is any act of corruption in this country and these pseudo-defenders of democracy say: better so than in a totalitarian regime. What I want, in truth, is not a military dictatorship, a totalitarianism. I want a president that can be a man (raises his voice), *who has the courage to fight for a better Brazil. And not to negotiate everything with this congress. This president we have.., even to change his maid he asks permission from the Congress. Wimp! Inoperant!"*

In such a compact statement (no more than 30 seconds talk), deputy 11 discards democracy, denies dictatorship (OK, some people died), re-affirms it (power in the hands of civilians is much worse) and denies it yet again (that is not what I want). What he wants emerges clearly: a man, who negotiates not, a man who is not a wimp. The refusal to narrate the impeachment conspires to provide a powerful discourse of the main representations still at work in the deputy's talk. In-between his contradictions, there appears the need for an authoritarian leader, the disposal of dialogue or negotiation, the tacit acceptance of corruption, depending, of course, on

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who it is who is practising it. From this perspective we can better understand why it is impossible to narrate the impeachment, for the narrative work would imply an acknowledgement of that which is unspeakable for the deputy. In his act of refusing to tell a story there is a refusal to make contact with the potential new meanings of the process of impeachment. The deputy could not speak of what all the others described as unthinkable. In this, he provided the most explicit clue for the understanding of narratives that consistently denied to the impeachment a new meaning.

7.3. WHAT STORIES THE STORIES TELL US: SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF PUBLIC LIFE

In this section I turn to an examination of how the narratives above construct representations of public life in Brazil. My main concern is to show how these narratives construct a representational field that reinforces some particular meanings and erases others. The stories about the impeachment draw on a particular set of representations and at the same time *resist* the appearance of alternative ones. This is done through the themes brought into the narratives and, more importantly, through the ability of the narratives to establish a relationship between these themes. It is in these relationships between the themes that one can better find the struggles, as it were, of competing meanings. The discursive strategies deployed by the story-tellers are not at ease with themselves and there appears, in-between the lines, the space of contradictions that creates the implicit vertical axis permeating the horizontal sequence of story-telling. It is the implicit vertical axis giving unity to the various stories that permits a clear assessment of the representations underlying the narratives.

Let me explore this in more detail in the narratives of the impeachment. They all revealed a tendency to close *new* meaning down. This was done using the past - or what the stories called history - as a legitimizing argument. The most common qualifiers to the impeachment, and the one used from the very outset of the narratives, were the impeachment as an unthinkable, unimaginable event, an event

that indicates a new era for Brazilian politics. However, the narratives developed in such a way as to erase the novel character of the impeachment and to concentrate on the difficulties and the structural problems of political practice in Brazil. One could think that this is very realistic indeed. But one can also ask: Why is it the case that the qualifiers 'unthinkable' and 'unimaginable' override the qualifier 'new era in Brazilian politics'? Why is it the case that the impeachment cannot be talked about in terms of novelty and of a rupture with the past? That is what I mean by the process of closing new meaning down. In it, old and well-established representations compete with new signifiers - new representations *in potentia* - and win. This process, I believe, is a robust example of how relations of power work in the symbolic arena, defining what is or what is not to become part of social representations. Before I go on to discuss the dynamics underlying this process let us look at the configuration of the representational field emerging from the narratives.

Figure 7.3:   **Organisation of the Representational Field in Narratives of the Impeachment**

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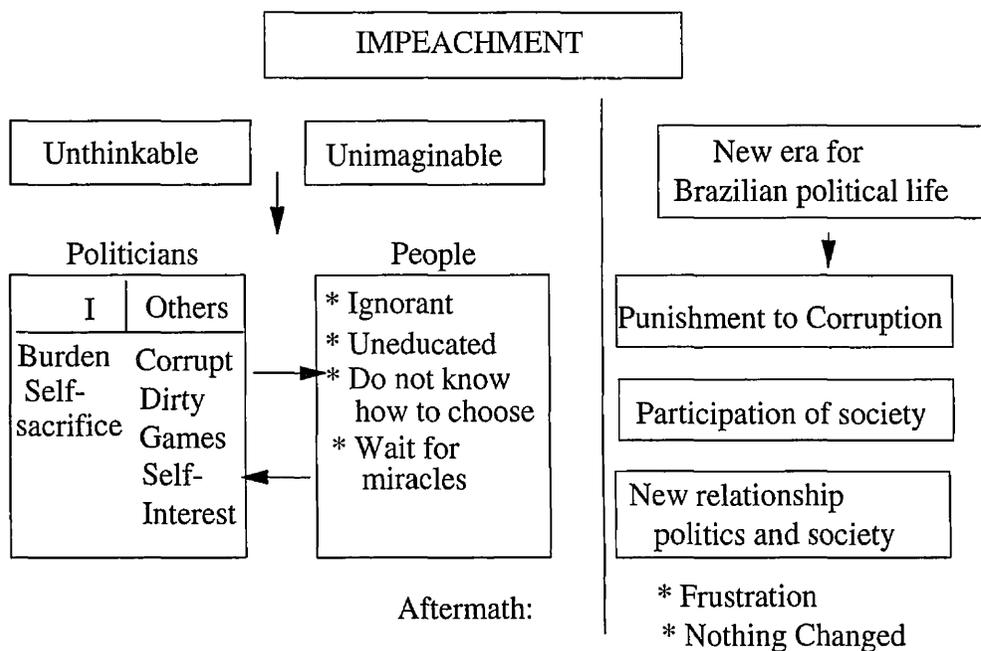
Figure 7.3 shows that the impeachment elicits the register of the unthinkable, of the unimaginable and of a new era in Brazilian society. These three notions appear together at the beginning of most narratives. In looking at the explanations provided in the stories we can see a symmetrical relationship between the dividing line. The impeachment was unthinkable because of the deficits of Brazilian people and the deficits of politicians, excluding the one who was talking. The relationship between politicians and society is characterised by a chasm and yet they are alike. The impeachment was meant to be a new era for Brazilian society exactly for the opposite reason: It brought about a new relationship between parliament and society, it ended with a history of impunity and easy corruption and involved the participation of the Brazilian people. Throughout the narratives the right side of the line loses its force and what gains impetus is the justifications of the unthinkable. In a way these are self-reinforcing utterances where the unthinkable proves to be indeed unthinkable. The aftermath of the impeachment contributes to the forging of these dominant representations, no doubt. The feelings of frustration, the realization that the promised changes didn't occur, the notion that nothing has changed are the most frequent accounts at the end of the story. In fact, not a happy ending.

What representations circulate in the narratives? If we look to the left side of figure 7.3 and to the tables of the narratives we can find at least three powerful representations, ones that we already know from the analysis of the focus groups:

(i) <u>The nature of Brazilian people:</u> The people, the population, the Brazilians were recurrent expressions in the narratives, referring persistently to the same actor: Brazilian people. Brazilians appear in the narratives in a state of lacking. They lack education, they lack culture, they do not know how to make choices. When they possess an identity, it is an identity which affirms itself in disqualification. From this perspective, Brazilians are represented as childish, as a people waiting for salvation, with a backward mentality. The intense participation of Brazilian people in the process leading to the impeachment, and the decisive role of this participation, are cited just to be dropped again. The frustrations emerging after the impeachment seem to confirm this problematic nature of Brazilians.

(ii) <u>Politics as corruption, as a dirty game:</u> Politicians are not impervious to the dominant representation of a corrupt political life. On the contrary, they seem to know it only too well and it is a reappearing theme along the narratives they develop. The very process of impeachment is frequently described as the outcome of personal interests and dispute between politicians who were not getting their share of the money Collor was making. Political life is mainly seen as divorced from public interest and driven by the power games of groups who want to retain their privileges. The important aspect to be singled out here is that these features are always located in a general other, and the I who speaks is kept outside these conditions. Actually the I who speaks appears in a position of sacrifice, having to carry the burden of being a politician in such a difficult situation. The fact that a corrupt political life is located in others, where responsibility for the situation never surfaces as a feature of the I who narrates, takes us back to the alibis of denial and projection revealed by the groups. Not accidentally, some narratives describe politicians in the role of scape-goats for the nation. The representations are formed through a dynamic that protects the story-teller from the situation he/she describes, providing a safe territory where the responsibility is never inside but always outside. The old and popular Brazilian saying "in Brazil the responsible is always the other" seems to find its echoes in these narratives.

(iii) <u>Parliament and society as a mirror of each other:</u> The relationship between parliament and society was a main story in the narratives. This relationship is always described as problematic, sometimes defined as schizophrenic, sometimes defined as non-existent, sometimes defined as a photograph. Underlying these definitions we find the same logic of identification and separation found in the focus groups. Politicians and society are apart from each other and yet are very much like each other. The metaphor of a photograph can well describe the situation: It is the same photograph, but one that neither of the parts likes to recognize as its own. This appears clearly in some narratives where parliament is described as a photograph of society, a photograph that people construct and afterwards do not like to see. Therefore, the attempt at maintaining a distance. The distance, as the other side of the vicious circle, produces a widespread feeling against politicians and any form of

institutional politics, nostalgia for dictatorship and messianism. Because of the distance, the politician becomes either someone to be accused or someone to be idealized as a saviour.

Intertwined with these representations were others that also emerged from the discussions in the focus groups. The notion of a Brazilian mentality - characterised by fragmented interests, the absence of trust, individualism, moral crises and the banalisation of misery and violence - was combined with notions of corruption, of a problematic Brazilian identity and a pulverised society, marked by a complex field of identifications, projections and split ups. This representational field was dominant in the narratives and overpowered the new meanings the story tellers themselves ascribed to the impeachment at the beginning of their narratives.

Now how did these old, well-established representations overpower the new meanings that the subjects were proposing and that, indeed, are recognised as new by social analysts and historians? I want to suggest that this was achieved through the power of yet another representation - fate - and specific narrative devices such as the uses of time and the linking of the extraordinary to the ordinary. These elements appear embedded in each other and together they combine to close down new meaning. The use of time is the most powerful device, capable of transforming history into destiny and fate, and an extraordinary event into an ordinary reproduction of the past. The narratives drew on the past with the particular function of defining the limits of the present. It is the past that confers on the present its very novel character but in such a way that the present is not allowed to speak with its own voice. The past discovers the novel and at the same time covers it up: the novel is there but cannot appear with its full significance. Used in these ways, the supremacy of the past, paradoxically, destroys the very notion of history, since it becomes the argument that gives legitimacy to the idea of a non-changeable society. Things are today as they were yesterday, and that is how they will be tomorrow; history as fate, as a conspiracy of destiny, engulfs the extraordinary qualities of the events: they are anchored and objectified in ordinary stories that have been helping to keep Brazil where it is for the past 500 years.

As a way of concluding this analysis, it should be remembered that the narratives were not homogenous or monolithic accounts. As I hope to have demonstrated, there were contradictory meanings permeating the narratives and many of them kept some space to single out the possible new directions the impeachment opened up for Brazilian public life. Moreover, with the exception of one interview, there was always a narrative about the process, something that is meaningful in itself. As I discussed earlier, the ability to tell a story is also the ability to reflect upon it, to build up an account, to retain the vivid experience of social life in a collective memory. These, however, must not overshadow the fact that stories produce dominant accounts, that some are more powerful than others and, in being so, they construct and perpetuate representations that ought to be called into question. In the narratives I have analysed here, time past, time present and time future collapse into an undifferentiated reality producing what Ignacio Martin-Baró (1983) called the "fatalist syndrome" in Latin America. We know the consequences of this syndrome: It brings to a halt the notion of historical time in the actions of social agents. In it, every object and every human being just goes on - no big changes are expected, except those to be found in the normal, taken-for-granted, course of life. Thus the need to understand in depth the impact of these dominant representations. In bringing them to the surface we may turn them into an object of our questioning, transform the taken-for-granted and help to construct different stories.

8.0. CONCLUSIONS

8.1. The Workings of Social Representations in Public Life

In this thesis I have shown that social representations are forms of symbolic mediation which are firmly grounded in the public sphere. The public sphere – as a space of intersubjective reality – is the terrain in which they are generated, crystallised and eventually transformed. This is the case, not only because public life provides the context within which social representations develop, but also because this same public life is a constitutive element in their formation. The terrain in which social representations grow also shapes the making of social representations or, in other words, social representations *in* the public sphere are constitutive of social representations *of* the public sphere and vice-versa. This underlying condition leads to a number of important conclusions related to the understanding of social representations. These are related to the structure and social functioning of social representations.

First, there is a structural relationship between the genesis and the development of social representations. In order to understand the development of social representations we must first understand the processes that bring them about. I have shown how a genetic perspective can improve our understanding of both the internal features and the processes whereby social representations are constituted. Piaget's view on the relationship between genesis and structure can be extremely informative in this regard. Against the dichotomy between processes and structures that so often has characterised the debate on cognition, affection and action, a proper understanding of social representations involves the acknowledgement of the indissociable relationship between process and structure. In this way we can clearly see why, in social psychology, interaction, relationships, and communicative practices are processes that mark, as it were, from the very beginnings, the structure of the entities we analyse. Processes and structures can only be properly understood in

relation to each other.

Second, social representations are organised into fields, which contain semantic networks. These fields remain constant according to the historical features of the societies in which they emerge. In this sense, they are inseparable from the particular stock of meanings and practices that, in each given society, will circumscribe the action and speech of social actors. But these fields also vary according to the *positionings* that different social actors hold in relation to the social fabric. The semantic networks that organise the field acquire diverse configurations, which differ in their complexity and in how immediate experience is drawn upon to represent a given object. In this sense, social representations are inseparable from the dynamics of everyday life, where the mobile interactions of the present can potentially challenge the taken-for-granted, imposing pockets of novelty in traditions coming from the past. The weight of reflexivity in the construction of the representational fields confirms the innovative character of social representations. These two aspects, constancy and change, are integral to the formation of social representations. They allow for the existence of contradictory representational fields, which interact and compete in the public sphere. Past history and present history are in a dialectical relationship, and together conspire to evoke a possible history. The capacity to evoke alternative realities, through reflexivity and dialogue, is an important element in the workings of social representations.

Third, and related to the mobility and the symbolic struggles of different representational fields (which, as I said above, are constructed by different social positionings), we find social representations intertwined with the processes of identity construction. To construct social representations involves, at the same time, proposing an identity and an interpretation of reality. That is to say that, when social subjects construct and organise their representational fields, they do so in order to make sense of reality, to appropriate and interpret it. In doing so, they state *who* they are, how they understand both themselves and others, where they locate themselves and others, and which are the cognitive and affective resources that are available to them in a given historical time. Social representations, therefore, tell us about *who*

is doing the representational work. This can be fully appreciated if we consider the trade-offs between representational work and identificatory work. The complex interactions between self and other are the basis of both phenomena. There is no possibility of identity without the work of representation, just as there is no work of representation without an identificatory boundary between the me and the not-me. It is in the overlapping space of the me and the not-me that both representations and identities emerge.

Fourth, social representations are structures that comprise, simultaneously and inextricably, cognition, affection and action. Cognition, because representations involve social 'knowledges', forms of knowing that circulate in society, which are part of erudite, scientific and popular culture, which mingle, feed back into each other and emerge as social resources for a community to make sense of its reality and to know what is going on. Affection, because to know involves the desire to know or the desire not to know, involves investment and passion towards the object of knowledge and the act of knowledge. To represent something is not the arid construction of a 'cognitive map'; it is an act that comes from people who think and feel, who have motives and intentions, who hold an identity and live in a social world. Action, because cognition and affection are activities which involve subjects engaging in, speaking of, relating to, and so forth. These activities are social practices - they involve doings of all kinds. Therefore, social representations are acts of affection and knowledge. When street children represent the streets they also say, 'look at us, listen to us, it is painful to be a child of the streets'. When policemen represent the streets they say, from a different perspective, something very similar. 'Look at us, it is not easy to be out there, we are out there'. The personal pronoun, used again and again, tells us both of a personal and a larger story about the streets. It is in this space of mediation that social representations bridge the subject and the social world.

This leads to the fifth aspect of social representations to be singled out here. They are processes of mediation. Social representations are neither centred on individuals nor centred in society as an abstract space. This, I believe, is one of the

most important aspects of social representations highlighted by the present study. Western philosophy has so insistently imposed its tradition of focusing either on the subjective or on the objective that the space of interplay between the two is often ignored. However, it is exactly in that space that we can better understand the roots of symbolic activity and of social representations. The concept of potential space, as proposed by Winnicott, is crucial in this regard. The potential space, the space of symbols, both links and separates the subject and the object-world. Thus, it is of the essence of the potential space to acknowledge a shared reality - the reality of others. Yet it is a creative acknowledgement, which retains the imaginative and signifying character of human agency. Social representations also express this space. It is in the space of mediation between social subjects and alterity, where they struggle to make sense of and to give meaning to, the world that we find the workings of social representations. Thus social representations emerge and circulate in a space of inter-subjective reality.

And last, but not least, this study has shown that there is a structural relationship between the communicative practices of the public sphere, social representations and the uses of power. I have used the media, focus groups (conversation) and narratives as techniques for data collection because, as phenomena, they play an important role in the constitution of public life and social representations. I have shown how each of them is related to the production of public spaces and, therefore, to social representations. On the one hand, social representations develop through the media, through conversations and through narratives. On the other hand, these are forms of communicative practice that characterise, and constitute, public spaces. In looking at the production of social representations in the media, in conversations and in narratives, I have found that they are permeated permanently by relations of power. The construction of accounts is never a neutral business. Some accounts provide one version of reality, other accounts provide a different one; what they express is already the outcome of symbolic struggles that are related to the larger struggles of any given society. In the narratives about the impeachment this process was very clear. The representational field emerging from the narratives was organised in such a way that old, well

established notions were drawn on to the detriment of new ones. In the stories about the impeachment for example, it is possible to see how old and new representations of reality compete, and how politicians construct their accounts so as to close down new meaning. In this sense, relativism is avoided. Some groups have a greater chance than others to assert their version of reality. The asymmetrical situation of different social groups must be considered seriously, for different people bring different resources to bear when it comes to imposing their representations. Actually, these social imperatives can be found in the very structure of the representations formed.

The foregoing features of social representations confirm important elements of the theory and pose some new questions. The dialectical relationships between subjective and objective phenomena, between the material and the symbolic, between the individual and society are nothing new. On the contrary, these are the very presuppositions that guide the theory's epistemic gaze, its theoretical and empirical efforts. Here I should say that I am aware that the theory of social representations is not a homogenous field. There are examples of research being carried out under its umbrella that still draw on practices that compromise some of its basic assumptions (Allansdottir et al., 1993; Wagner, 1994; de Rosa, 1994). Moreover, quite often, researchers conduct investigations without looking back at the implications their research has for the development of the theory itself (de Rosa, 1994). This dichotomy between research and conceptualization is not conducive to enhancing the epistemological credentials of the theory.

Thus the time is now ripe to use empirical evidence to delimit the concept and to tighten up the theoretical corpus of the theory (Farr, 1993c). This, of course, is not a call to highjack the concept and close it down to possible and necessary developments. On the contrary. Theoretical and methodological rigour are not the same as closing concepts down and the task today, three decades after Moscovici's seminal contribution to social psychology, is to make explicit where the boundaries of the theory lie.

In this thesis I hope to have contributed to this collective effort. The six

points outlined above are joint outcomes of both theoretical and empirical investigation. They link the theory and the data used in this research to propose the following:

(i) Public life is one of the conditions of possibility for the emergence of social representations. Social representations, however, do not emerge as external to public life; they are also constitutive of it. The crucial connections between the genesis, the development and the structure of social representations must be taken seriously. Social representations emerge in spaces of inter-subjective reality; they are not the products of purely individual minds, even though they find expression in individual minds. Inadequacies in the conceptualisation of the relationship between the individual and society should not blind us; the individual and society are neither one and the same thing, nor is the one reducible to the other. Social representations have a social genesis, develop in a social space and function as part of social life. They certainly enshrine individual experience but they are not performed as individual actions. The theory of social representations must be clear in this regard; it looks at the social as a whole, and it is to the understanding of this totality - in what it produces of symbolic and meaningful experience - that the theory of social representations is dedicated.

(ii) The acknowledgement of the social as a whole, which accounts for the genesis of social representations, should not prevent a clear characterisation of the social. The social is subjective *and* objective at one and the same time; it engenders in its dynamics historical, political and economic determinants which constrain and narrow the possibilities of human action. In this sense, the social is a space of institutional boundaries and limits. Yet these limits are not absolute. For the social is also a space where new possibilities are proposed, a space of communication, a space where self and other meet, explore each others' identities, construct symbols and express affects. In this sense, the social is also a space for transcending institutional boundaries and instituting new ones. The theory of social representations must make explicit its conception of the social - it is not an independent variable; it is not an external structure; it is not an influence. It is the very arena that constitutes

the subjective and objective sides of the phenomena of social representations. The interplay between subjective and objective, and between agency and reproduction, which constitutes the social[1] is at the very heart of how social representations are formed. The theory must conceptualise this interplay and draw on consistent methodological devices to investigate it.

(iii) Finally, let me consider the importance of the notion of representation and its far-reaching implications in the current debate proposed by social psychologists who adopt a post-modern stance. First and obviously, the theory of social representations builds upon the notion of representation. What does that mean? It means, on the one hand that the theory distinguishes between subject and object. But it also means, on the other hand, that the theory does not transform this distinction into a dichotomy. Let us see why. A representation, and I will repeat for the sake of the argument, is the activity *of* someone, who constructs a mental substitution of something which is *alter*, other, to oneself. The subject and the object, therefore, do not coincide. There is a gap between them, and in order to fill this gap, a representation emerges. This process does not involve a mirroring between the subject and the object; rather, it involves at one and the same time a work of bonding and of differentiation between self and alterity. A representation links self and other and yet, by the same token, it separates self and other, for a representation is something that stands *in place of* something else. Representation thus is both a *mediation* that links presence and absence and a *boundary* that, in separating what is present from what is absent, allows for differentiation to emerge. I am not going to discuss how much this conceptualisation of representation differs from traditional cognitive approaches, for Jodelet (1991) has already done that with great propriety. It is the post-modern rejection of the notion of representation altogether that interests me here. Ironically enough, the post-modern critique of representation considers the traditional cognitivist conceptualization of representation as the only possible

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[1] Let me repeat here, for the sake of clarification, that this interplay also constitutes the self and individuality. In chapter three, I have discussed at length how the workings of representational activity (i) link and separate the subjective and the objective, (ii) are intrinsically associated to the development of the self and (iii) cannot be equated to the concept of social representations, whose explanatory power exceeds the span of the individual psyche.

conceptualization of representational work.

In social psychology, Gergen (1985) has been one of the principal exponents of such a rejection. In his account of the social constructionist movement in modern psychology, he states: "This movement begins in earnest when one challenges the concept of knowledge as a mental representation. Given the myriad of insolubles to which such a concept gives rise, one is moved to consider what passes as knowledge in human affairs. At least one major candidate is that of linguist rendering"(Gergen, 1985:270). From the initial rejection of the idea of representation, because of 'the myriad of insolubles' which it implies (which is a curious justification to the abandonment of a concept, to say the least), Gergen goes as far as proposing, along with a post-modern stance, the "death of the subject" (Shotter & Gergen, 1989). Thus the death of the subject proposed by post-modern thought implies basically a shift in the locus of inquiry. Away from the centric and unified subject conceived by traditional reason, post-modern psychology turns its gaze to social practices, to the social construction of reality (which, of course, is not a post-modern invention). However, in its haste to kill the centric, unified and private subject proposed by the classical rationalism of positivistic psychology, such a position ends up by killing everybody. From this perspective, psychological processes and the mind cannot be conceptualised, because the only possible conceptualisation is the one derived from a positive and rationalistic legacy. And strange as it may seem, our post-modern colleagues *elect a new centre*: discourse. Subjects are nothing but positions in discourses, inhabitants of or embedded within discourses (Shotter & Gergen, 1989). Stripped of any ontological status, the psychological subject is left in a limbo facing her performative actions (linguistic actions) as the only possible locus of inquiry. Now, how does this differ from the classical split between internal and external, between subjective and objective, between mind and behaviour? How is this not a new facade for the old and quite modern Anglo-Saxon empiricism? Or maybe we can see at work here an implicit assumption of an all-encompassing societal reality devouring and defining the ontology of the subject?

Now for the theory of social representations these are false problems. First,

because Moscovici thought both with and against Durkheim. With Durkheim he understood the power of social reality, its relative autonomy and transcendence over human agency. Against the dominant stream that marked the history of psychological knowledge Moscovici (1989) sought in Freud, Piaget, and then Vigotsky ways of conceiving how psychological phenomena construct - and yet are constructed by - social reality. In so doing, he negated Durkheim. For the theory of social representations the subject and the psyche are not pre-given substances nor are historical societies constraining forces apart from the people who comprise them. Indeed, in the theory of social representations the subject is not in a comfortable position. She is defined neither from within nor from without. Ex-centric in her very constitution and unable fully to coincide with that which she is not, the subject is condemned to search eternally for mediations. Action, Word, and Other constitute - in an intricate relation - these mediations: with them social subjects try to fill the gap. To represent occurs in this space. In it a representation finds its conditions of possibility and its mode of functioning and it is only under the sign of violence or immediate coincidence that it would fail to occur. It is in the meeting point of union and separation between the subject and the object (object here means others and things) that representations are formed and that is precisely why they retain at one and the same time their potentially imaginative character and their referentiality to the world. To suggest that they accentuate the dichotomy between the individual and society is the same as suggesting that the individual and society are either reducible to each other or unrelated to each other. To suggest representations are dead is to suggest the final nirvana: a world of perfect coincidence for everyone and of everything. In this world there is indeed no subject. Everything slides into everything else; similarities, nuances and differences no longer have any meaning and, excuse me, but in such a world everything goes. Limits and boundaries are just lost illusions of modernity, any collective normativity loses its *raison d'être*, and because every story is just as good a story as any other whatever appears as an attempt to construct a joint account becomes coercive.

Discourse, just as much as representations, operates as mediation. Discourse and representations are constructed by each other, each extending into the domain of

the other and yet, paradoxically, the one cannot be reduced to the other. That is why positions that claim simultaneously the "death of the subject" and the sovereignty of discourse based on post-modern arguments cannot ultimately be sustained. I think that here we differ, because for the theory of social representations neither the subject, nor representations, nor, for that matter, discourse itself are conceived of in terms of bipolar oppositions or as entities to be understood from within themselves, but in terms of contradictory relationships that give them substance and mark the process of their constitution.

The issues discussed above are, I believe, on the agenda of social representations researchers. They are necessary not only because they define an internal space of conceptualisation and interpretation for social psychological phenomena that, in the past, has often been undermined (or perhaps denied), but also because they involve social psychology in a necessary dialogue with other social sciences. The theory of social representations can make a strong contribution to such an undertaking; it offers the means of understanding, if only through the awareness of a social-psychological dimension, those affects, 'knowledges' and practices that construct the bonds of what I still dare to call a community.

8.2. The Workings of Social Representations of Public Life in Brazil

The other side of the problem this thesis investigated was concerned with social representations of public life in Brazil. To understand the workings of public life in the genesis of social representations was one side of question; the other - and closely connected - side of the problem was to understand how social representations are a means whereby the members of a community construct their social reality. It follows that symbolic constructions about public life are constitutive of what public life is and to look at their form and content is crucial to assess the limits and possibilities of public life in Brazil.

The analysis of the three empirical studies discussed in chapters five, six and seven, has produced a coherent and strikingly similar representational field, where

the 'Brazilian condition' organises and gives form to the representations of the streets and of political life. It is in the qualification and interpretation of this condition that the different voices (media, groups and politicians) heard in this research construct a matrix of the representations of public life. Let us remember that the object 'public life' was investigated in terms of streets and political life. The chain of associations that linked the streets to political life and political life to the streets - an association that was remarkable in the data - had its generative nucleus in the idea of a general self, the Brazilian. Whether it was the mentality of Brazilians, the nature of Brazilians, the moral crises of Brazilians, the 'being' of Brazilians, these were the notions used to explain and to link the representations of the streets and of politics.

Now how are these representations shaped? What is the dynamics they reveal? How is it that violence and threat in the streets and corruption in political life mingle and coalesce in representations of this problematic being, the Brazilian? The answer to these questions must be found in the network of notions, affects and practices that come into play in the manufacturing of the representations. These representations are not purely defined by the content that they reveal, although their content is also expressive of the underlying dynamics that gave birth to them. The full significance of these representations, however, must be understood over against the elements that make them part and parcel of the social and historical life of the community in which they emerge. In this sense, we must break down the constituent elements of these representations in order to bring into focus the full dynamics they express. These elements reveal the *possible* knowledge the community develops about public life and the affects and practices that are integral to the constitution of this knowledge. In the representations which this research uncovered, the knowledge, affects and practices found at the heart of the representations, combine to link the public and the personal.

8.2.1. The Possible Knowledge of Public Life: The Links Between the Public and the Personal

The limitations of Brazilian public life are everywhere to be seen. In fact, more than limitations, one could say that Brazilian society has yet to develop its public life. The possibility of recognition in the public space, which is guaranteed by

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the state of right, declared in a constitution and in the functioning of institutions, is far from being a Brazilian reality. Ours is, as Chauí (1992) has pointed out, an authoritarian society, where the rights of some are the privations of others, where the law does not perform its alleged role of protecting the rights of citizens and where citizenship itself remains an abstract notion in the discourse of politicians who pay little attention to the 'test of reality'. In this society, public life is an aspiration, a project, something to fight for. This, to be sure, does not mean that public life in Brazil is just vacuous. But, given the disjunction between an explicit, written, constitutional code, and an implicit, unwritten, and widely accepted code of *practice* towards public life, the symbolic representation of this disjunction becomes crucial. In Brazil the public becomes personal as the outcome of a network of personal relationships that constitutes the public order, but also, I want to argue, as a way of protecting the community from confronting its own liminality.

The representations which emerge about public life build upon the previoulsy mentioned historical imperatives and upon the cultural patterns of Brazilian society. Let us concentrate in the descriptions of the streets and of political life. The scenario which appeared in the data is rather difficult. Violence, fear, threat coming from every angle, the struggle for survival, inequalities, misery and separateness were the main signifiers giving meaning to the streets. Corruption, self-serving interests, mistrust, the split between the omnipotence of power and the impotence of those subjected to it and the law as a source of ambiguous messages were notions giving meaning to political life. These descriptions did not appear as loose concepts. They were intertwined with a particular set of explanations and causes used to alleviate the otherwise unbearable situation of a common life represented in such stark terms. Thus this difficult state of affairs was linked to a theory of human nature and more particularly, to a theory of the nature of the Brazilian character. It was through a discussion of the nature and being of Brazilians that the nature of public life could best be understood and justified. This set of notions links the public and the personal in complex ways. Let us see how.

Anthropological research has suggested that the categories of house and street

are crucial to an understanding of Brazilian culture (Freyre,1986; Graham,1988; da Matta,1991). The use of the terms house and street is metaphorical, as when the analysis centres on types of social relations, but it is also concrete, as when they are grounded in physical space. Here, I want to follow the work of da Matta, for his conceptualization of street and house offers an excellent model for the understanding of the representations I am analysing. He argues that the house is the sphere of personhood, of progeny and of family. It is governed by the rules of kinship and blood relations; it refers to a universe under control, where everything has its proper place. The street, in contrast, is the realm of public life, controlled by government and by destiny, impersonal forces over which we have little or no control. It is a world of unpredictable events, of deceit, and of roguery. The street implies lack of control, distance and separation. The distinction between individual and person, which da Matta takes up from the work of Mauss and of Dumont, maps onto the distinction between street and house. As he points out, "the idea of the individual as a self-contained, isolated unit has been systematically elaborated in the West, whereas the notion of the individual as a multifaceted, complementary, and relational entity - that is, of the individual as a person - prevails and dominates in holistic, hierarchical, and so-called 'traditional' societies (da Matta, 1991, p.174). The individual is the subject of universal, and therefore, impersonal, laws. The person, by contrast, requires a space of singular patterns, where the law can and should, if necessary, be bent to fulfil her personal demands. These domains (street and house, individual and person) are not strictly separated; they can mingle and overlap depending on the specific rituals and displacements taking place in any given society. The relations between these two systems are complex and there are spaces of passage between them. In most of the rituals of Brazilian society (carnival, football, processions, patronage and parades) these two domains meet and displace each other. This is also the case in the representations of public life found in the present research.

It is the Brazilian *persona* that organises the representational field linking the streets and politics. The complexity of the relationships - specially in the focus groups, but also in the narratives and in the media - that link fate (messianism,

authoritarianism, reality and human nature as a given, as destiny), individualism and the separation between *us* and *them*, suggest that against the individualization, the lack of control and the fatalism of public life, the only possible defence is to evoke personhood, and more specifically, the Brazilian persona. The sphere of the house, and its categories of blood and of body, colonise the public sphere and its categories of individualism, impersonal laws, and fate. Therefore, we find threat and fear in the streets and corruption in political life anchored in older metaphors of a corrupt blood and a contaminated, ill, social body. But the process does not stop here. Because the Brazilian persona which is drawn on to colonise the public space is already contaminated by the public, and the public is itself submerged in the personal. The construction of the representation reveals the passages and displacements between the two domains.

For who is the Brazilian character depicted in the data? The Brazilian character comprises a contaminated mélange of many different others. The Brazilian character is hybrid; and the hybrid designates a material whose being reveals the ambivalent affirmation of a substance and its lack of identity. The hybrid profiles itself in a zone of shadows and its material is evanescent; its very identity rests in a lack of identity. The problem of the hybrid, of being in the margins, of being in-between is even more threatening than the position of being other. The hybrid knows little about the boundaries that differentiate between self and other, he knows little about the location where he stands, he is extremely aware of the potential dangers of contact. And he is, at the same time, fascinated by contact because it was contact, in the first place, that produced the hybrid. This characterization does not, as we have seen, fit in the pure realm of the house and of personhood. This is a characterization that is already anchored in the features of public life in Brazil, with its set of ambivalent demands, of mixture and contact. What about the notions surrounding the centre of this representation? They are not purely public either. They also reveal exchanges with the sphere of the house/personal, for they suggest nepotism, personal interests and egoism, which through the ethos of collectivism, are criticised and called into question. These elements are part of the house/personal domain. We can see therefore, that the representational field revealed in this research is a complex

symbolic form that expresses the trade-offs between the public and the personal in Brazil. It shows how deeply personalism is impregnated in our social imaginary (Ferreira, 1993), and how it colonises the realm of the public.

This, I want to argue, must be carefully considered. The links between the personal and the public in Brazil have been the subject of much debate. There is no doubt that they are dangerous and they severely limit the quality of public life. For the vast majority without access to a network of 'personal connections' they just mean a harsh confrontation with the impersonality of laws. Laws which, not accidentally, are made by 'persons' to whom they never apply. As the Brazilian dictum says "for friends everything; for enemies, the law". The wisdom of the popular dictum and the present analysis acquire their full force in the voice of some of the groups heard in this research. They know only too well that the world out there, for them, is a of struggle for survival and they are acutely conscious of the ambivalence of the law. However, the costs of such a reality, dialectically, help to construct some of the community's best resources. For ours is still a society where familial structures and neighbourhood conviviality are strong. In this sense, it is a society that knows how to defend itself from the anonymity to be found in the streets. Recent research has shown that even under the most difficult circumstances, there are still expressive bonds of solidarity, lively relationships of conviviality, and strong forms of popular expression that maintain community life (Bosi, 1972; Magnani, 1984; Chauí, 1993; Ribeiro, 1994). This was clearly evident in the data through an ethos of collectivism and the rejection of individualism as a value.

The construction of public life in Brazil must take these aspects into consideration. The blurred character of the relationship between self and other in Brazil lies at the very heart of the symbolic construction of public life. They express the quest for identity, the attraction for cultural mixture and the concomitant fear of fusion and contamination that are deeply enshrined in Brazilian culture and that have shaped Brazilian social though and self-interpretation. It is no coincidence to find the problems of identity, miscegenation, and contamination (corrupt blood) intertwined with the interpretation of public life. Establishing links between the illnesses of our

society and the illnesses of a hybrid people is part of the historical attempts to seek purification, separation and exclusion as a possible solution to the problems of Brazil and Latin America. These attempts are veru much alive in contemporary representations of public life. And yet we will not be able to deny what we are - the multiplicity and plurality of our culture and the personal and emotional ties that link us together. But, and I hope I have myself contributed to this effort, we cannot just deny the tragic effects of what we are - the separations, the inequalities and the institutionalised ambiguities that deprives so large a proportion of our people of their rights of citizenship.

8.2.2 The Affects and the Practices in the Representational Field

The organisation of the representational field is embedded in a network of affects and practices. This is clearly evident in the construction of the notions that organise the field. The links between the personal and the public are constructed through a complex game of identifications and differentiations, which are to be found at the very core of the hybrid character of the Brazilian persona. What can be seen here is a dynamics that not only organises the core of the representation, but also defines the relations between the core and the peripheral elements of the field.

The hybrid character which emerged as an expression of the Brazilian self is also the expression of an underlying relation between self and other. The data have shown that identification and differentiation are central to the set of explanations organising the representations. The notion of people who mirror each other, and therefore are like each other, co-exists with notions of intense separateness, of people who live and remain apart from each other, separated by both concrete and symbolic divisions. This co-existence of identity and non-identity lies at the heart of the hybrid condition. It also explains the concomitant acts of linking and separating that, in the same representational act, allow the community to put together and to pull apart the streets and political life, the people and politicians, one social group and other social group, the I and the Other.

It is this constant interplay of bonding and separating, evoked throughout the

data, that takes us back to the historical roots of these symbolic constructions. For what we can detect in these representations are the faint social psychological echoes of acculturation, *mestizage* and syncretism, which are central features of Latin American culture. To link and, at the same time, to separate; to recognise as one's own and, at the same time, to propose as alien to one's own sense of self: in this dual, ambivalent logic we find the enactment of feelings of impregnation and contamination, which permeate the representations.

The Brazilian character therefore lends itself to the anchoring of a particular way of representing the relationships which occur in public life. Just as old scientific theories, which saw in the mixed and 'corrupt' nature of our people reasons for the 'illness' of our society, lay representations today still construct public life through the lenses of purity and impurity, contact and segregation, proximity and distance. Paradoxically, the hybrid character of this public self - it is a constant reminder of the danger of transitional states (Douglas, 1994) - allows the community to draw on its defenses. For the I who speaks (individual or collective) can, even if only at the level of the imaginary, achieve a secure space of differentiation from the Other. And it is the Other who offers an alibi for projecting outside the responsibility for the situation. But the Other is also terribly close. The alibis that keep the self protected from the other fail, because the real character at stake here is the character of the hybrid - "we are like each other". Here, what appears is liminality, the liminality of a discourse that recognises itself as already contaminated and polluted. Thus the defensive strategies are not used to avoid contamination and pollution, because there is a tacit knowledge that pollution *has already* occurred. Fear of fusion is not a fear linked only to the necessity of avoidance; it is the fear of a fusion that has already happened and the pain to be avoided is a pain that has already occurred. There are no secure territories for the protection of an identity that must recognise its hybrid character.

What is the possible defence then? Against the hybrid persona who inhabits public life, the only possible defense is to invite the secure, stable and recognised realm of the personal to take over public life. Because the personal is, and

historically has been, the way to assert the life of the community, because the personal resists the anonymity of universal laws, and because the personal is guaranteed by links of kinship and blood, it becomes the basic form of social relationship that shapes public life. Thus the solution is to be a *person*, who is recognised and bears an identity and, in being so, escapes both the anonymity of public laws and the hybrid nature of the public Brazilian self. This leads to the construction of a different logic, which substitutes the necessary impersonality of public life by the personification of networks of conviviality and patronage.

These affects play a major role in the construction of social representations of public life in Brazil. They are bound to a particular historical development and to a set of practices that shape everyday life. In this sense they are not detached from the practices occurring in public life. Identification and separation, fear, ambivalence and displacement are the counter-parts of everyday doings, when people translate into action their representations of things. Violence, threat, corruption, nepotism, personification are the exposed face of concrete acts occurring in the social fabric. The communicative practices of everyday life transform these 'knowledges', affects and acts into social representations, which will, in turn, feed-back the cultural life of the community which produced them in the first place.

An assessment of the possibilities of changing the patterns of our public life must consider these symbolic constructions. The current debate about public life in Brazil must face the contradictions of our culture and the representations which shape the possible knowledge our society has of itself. These representations are neither 'distortions' of reality nor autonomous in relation to reality; rather, they are a *relationship* with this reality. The workings of social representations of public life in Brazil emerge out of social relations, and in giving these relations a meaning, an affective load and a way of expression, they enable people to order, to state reasons, to express motives and to aspire to an alternative reality. For in order to understand these representations, we must turn to the social reality which they attempt to master. In the case of Brazil, the social practices taking place in the public sphere are full of contradictions and reveal much of the symbolic stock of Latin American history.

On the one hand, they comprise violence, corruption and the assassination of children. On the other hand, they comprise carnival, rituals of magical solidarity and happiness as well as music and popular art. How to make sense of this paradox is, I believe, a great challenge. The blurred character of these practices - that involve simultaneouly elements of privacy and of publicness - may reveal the degree to which Brazilian social life is struggling to overcome - or to perpetuate - its own dramatic problems. I would suggest they are fostered by what has become an almost common sense saying - a social representation? - when talking about Brazil and Latin America, namely, that cultural and emotional expression are incompatible with the political realities of the continent. And still, the political reality however depressing, is there, shaping the lives - and deaths - of millions of people. "Magical realism or frightening reality?" people ask themselves, as if by doing so, they could resist the imperatives of a memory of blood, fire and pain that Galeano (1985) has described at the basis of all Latin American experience. Thus, it becomes necessary to look for those social representations that set apart those different domains of life - what historically belongs to a private order and what historically belongs to a public order. They can be a device to bring back to the Brazilian public life, the potential of a culture that only in private was allowed to express the best of itself.

8.3. Prospects for Future Research

Knowledge, as Bachelard (1968) once pointed out, is a light that always casts its shadows in some other space. The knowledge produced in this study - as with every piece of research - is limited and leaves behind many shadows. As strongly as I would have liked to encompass and explain everything, I am now obliged to face the limitations of my own efforts.

First, I have worked with only six focus groups, one of each social category, and all based in Porto Alegre, in the south of Brazil. Given the cultural diversity of the country, the impact of regional differences is absent from this set of data and therefore compromises its robustness. This was, in part, compensated for by the content analysis of the press and the narrative interviews. The content analysis

involved newspapers from five different regions of the country and the narrative interviews were conducted with politicians from different states of the federation and from different political parties. However, also here I find limitations. The content analysis was carried out on a rather small sample of papars (ten consecutive days in May 1992). Even though I ended up with more than five hundred newspaper articles to analyse they may be biased in relation to their concentration in regard to time. In the narratives I find a similar problem, for only eleven parliamentarians were interviewed. In the choice of parliamentarians I had to rely on accessibility, which is always a problem when interviewing 'top' people. These limitations leave space for idiosincracy and particularism in the data. Much of the argument therefore remain explorative and suggestive rather than definitive. It must be among the ambitions of further studies to collect even larger quantities of data and diversify the samples, something which would allow comparison with the representations found in the present study.

Second, and related to the above, the basis of generalisation which the study offers is questionable. In its favour counts the large literature pointing out in a similar direction. I have found that the representations of public life in Brazil are firmly associated with the findings of research on the symbolic aspects of Latin American and Brazilian history. However, I am cautious in generalising the results. I offer an interpretation of the data, which I grounded in theory. But I am aware that interpretations are always possible interpretations, and I welcome the chance of discussing and confronting my findings with colleagues and researchers in the field. I believe this study provides a baseline for comparison and that is where its contribution lies.

Finally, I have attempted to develop theory in this thesis. This is always a risky endeavour but one, I would contend, that is most necessary. Social psychology has, for too long, limited the scope of its contribution to the understanding of social phenomena and turned its back on the substantive issues of human existence. This has not always been so, as Rob Farr shows in his illuminating studies in the history of the discipline. I strongly agree with his arguments and I believe we must look

back to social psychology's long past. By linking the theory of social representations with theories of public life as developed by Habermas and Arendt, I hope to have contributed with a step in the right direction. By highlighting the social psychological dimension of symbols and representations in the work of Winnicott and Piaget I hope to have shown the links between subjective and objective experience.

Much remains to be done. The links between social representations and identity have yet to be explored, in the depth they deserve. Social identity theory, as developed by Tajfel and his followers, has been much criticised by social representations theorists, on the basis that it is an individualistic perspective. I have not approached this link in the present study, but it is clear to me that the workings of social representations are intertwined with processes of identity construction. Whether it be contributing to the social identity theory paradigm or finding different resources to theorise about how social identities emerge, the theory of social representations will have to address this discussion soon.

The relationship between social representations and power is another prospect for future research. Whoever is carrying out research in our contemporary societies faces the imperatives of power relations in the shaping of social phenomena. The subjects we encounter are not exposed to the same contexts and do not have equal access to the resources of social life. This is not only the case in political and economic life. Power is also to be found in symbolic fields, where some groups lack any capacity to force recognition of their symbolic constructions, and other groups hold all legitimacy to impose their own (Bourdieu, 1985). The social world is an arena were unequally equipped agents struggle to propose their version of events and what they forecast for the future. I can still hear the voices of the street children, reminding me that it is the context of their positioning in the social fabric that defines their representations of both the streets and themselves. This identity is one which they take, but one which they do not desire. This identity is, above all, given to them by an unfair society and it resides in the eye of the beholder. As with the street children of Brazil, we will find similar processes in many other sites of the world. The unmasking of these conditions is part of any intellectual perspective

concerned with and committed to the transformation of social inequalities.

Finally, let me point to the need for furthering our understanding of the relationship between social representations and public life, which is at the very heart of this thesis. I hope to continue the work I initiated in this study by developing further research on the topic. One line of investigation concerns the extent to which different forms of public life define - and yet can also be defined by - social representations. Comparative studies between Brazil, Britain and Eastern European countries offer a fertile line of inquiry in this regard. In the Brazilian case we have seen representations of a public sphere that is emerging, and still struggling to assert itself. Perhaps Britain can offer an example of a public life that is declining, given the recent concerns with corruption and the misuse of public money. The impact, in its recent history, of a culture of individuals without a society, as it was proposed by Margaret Thatcher, has yet to be assessed. And in many of Eastern European countries we have an example of the reappearance of a public sphere, after years of totalitarian regimes. I believe that the possibility of assessing these different experiences is decisive to understand the shaping of social psychological phenomena in contemporary societies. This is the case not only because the study of representations of public life allow us a space of interpretation about the possibilities of common life, but also because these phenomena are intimately connected with the experience of selfhood and private life.

As this study reaches its end, I am convinced of the importance of these issues. Symbolic representations of public life are constitutive of what public life is and looking at their form and content is crucial to assess contemporary experiences of selfhood and the possibilities of preserving a *sensus communis*. Different historical realities produce different symbolic strategies and we all know just too well that today there is solitude, threat and fear out there. The social knowledge we produce in order to make sense of this reality bears a constitutive impact in both public and private experience. From the space out there to the space within the problem remains the same. Against the post-modern deconstruction of subjectivity and public life as pure fragmentation and difference, there is a need now, perhaps more than ever

before, to rescue the best possibilities of our life with others. Late capitalist societies produce pulverization and fragmentation, no doubt, and power has, since long ago, been deprived of evoking the meaning of *potentia* and possibility, which in ancient Greek and in the Latin languages are still irrevocably associated. But to equate social experience with the historical conditions of its actualization, and power with tyranny, is to reduce their understanding to the level of pure reproduction. The acknowledgement, and indeed the unmasking, of inequalities, the abuse of power, exclusion, and discrimination in public life does not lead, necessarily, to the disposal of public life.

In the end, we are all part of a single world, with its varied inequalities, oppressions and misunderstandings. Perhaps it is in the ecological struggles of our time that we can see this with greater clarity, as if nature would be reminding us of our unavoidable interdependency. Sometimes the emphasis on our differences obfuscates the understanding that what we have in common - and 'we' means anybody, wherever we come from - is precisely the multiple contexts that make each human experience unique in its own right. Different experiences do not mean unconnected experiences and there is no single context that cannot profit from the experience of a different one. This, I will repeat with Said (1993), is a universal law.

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CODE BOOK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE PRESS

1   Number (1-N)

2   Name of Publication

        1. Folha de São Paulo
        2. Jornal do Brasil
        3. Estado de São Paulo
        4. Zero Hora
        5. Correio Brasiliense
        6. Isto E
        7. Veja

3   Day of Publication (1-31)

4   Weekday

        1. Sunday
        2. Monday
        3. Tuesday
        4. Wednesday
        5. Thursday
        6. Friday
        7. Saturday

5   Location of the article

        1. Front page
        2. Middle
        3. Back page
        4. 1st pg supplement
        5. Back pg supplement
        6. Middle supplement

6   Type of Article

          1. Editorial
          2. News
          3. Feature
          4. Letters
          5. Interviews
          6. Others

7   Streets

          1. Looting
          2. Violence/threat/fear
          3. Street Children
          4. Traffic chaos
          5. Police Action
          6. Demonstrations/Marches
          7. Kidnapping
          8. Social Inequalities/Poverty

8   Politics

          1. Corruption/Bribery
          2. Influence-Peddling
          3. Politics connected to crime/violence
          4. Personal/Familial life connected to politics

9   Actors

          1. Politicians
          2. Government
          3. Police
          4. *Favelados* (shanty-town dwellers)
          5. Street Children
          6. Military
          7. Working class
          8. Business men/women
          9. Students
          10. Senior civil servants
          11. Drug dealers/criminals
          12. Relatives of politicians
          13. The president
          14. The people/the population
          15. Church/priests
          16. Other

10   Causes/Explanations

      1. Social conditions: poverty, unemployment, inequalities
      2. Moral crises/Moral decline/Widespread decadence of values
      3. Vested interests ("someone" mythical, unidentified is responsible)
      4. Incapacity to enforce the law/Impotency of state to control situation

References to:

11   Widespread corruption in society/analogy between political and everyday corruption (widespread)

      1. Yes
      2. No

12   Corruption as an Illness/Syndrome

      1. Yes
      2. No

13   The Military as a Threat/The Ghost of the Military

      1. Yes
      2. No

FOCUS GROUPS GUIDE

TOPIC I - THE BRAZILIAN STREETS

1. How do you see the general situation of the public spaces this days?

2. What are the main causes for that?

3. Is there a possibility for a change? If yes, which? If no, why not?

TOPIC II - POLITICS

1. How do you see the exercise of politics in Brazil?

2. What are the main causes for that?

3. What is the relationship between the politicians and the situation in the streets?

TOPIC III - CORRUPTION AND LAW-BREAKING

1. What are the main reasons for corruption and law-breaking?

2. Who are the main performers of corrupted acts?

3. How the common citizen in the streets sees this situation?

APPENDIX 3

CODING FRAME FOR THE FOCUS GROUPS

A DESCRIPTIONS -> STREETS AND POLITICS

1. STREETS

{THREAT}   (1) Threat: violence, crime, danger, war of all against all, every notion that implies a threat.

{ POOR }   (2) Poverty: people begging, shanties, decadence of places, every notion that implies poor realities.

{ SEC }   (3) Excessive security: any reference to the widespread use of armed security guards, bars protecting places, police everywhere.

{ INEQ }   (4) Inequalities: any reference to the gaps between the rich and the poor.

{ TRAF }   (5) Traffic battle: any reference to the traffic as a metaphor of "war".

{ IND }   (6) Individualism/indifference

{ SMIR }   (7) Streets/People and Politics/Politicians as a Mirror of Each Other: widespread corruption

{SURVS }   (8) Struggle for survival: when the group describes the streets through the practices developed by people to find a living, or to survive

{ SPOS }   (9) Reference to positive events in the streets : any description that receives a positive valuation

2. POLITICS

{ CORR }   (10) Corruption: any reference to the abuse of public money, robbery of money, of illicit use of money.

{SELFINT}   (11) Self-guided interests/individualism: any reference of actions only concerned with one's own interests.

{ PINT }   (12) Power interests: any reference to the interests of the powerful, or to vested interests of the powerful.

{ PMIR }   (13) Streets/People and Politics/Politicians as a Mirror of Each Other

Chasm between people and politicians:

{POLCONT}   (14) Absence of control: references to the absence of control by people of politicians' practices

{POLREP}   (15) No representativeness: when the group rejects the

politicians as their representatives

{IMPEA}   (16) <u>References to the impeachment</u>: any reference to the impeachment.

B EXPLANATIONS AND CAUSES

1. <u>Split Us and Them</u>:

{ BARS }   (17) bars/reference to concrete separations/security/
{POWER }   (18) omnipotence of power X impotence of subjects
{ IMP }   (19) double-bind of law/ impunity
{ POV }   (20) social conditions: inequalities of all sorts

2. <u>Who are them?</u>

{ UNSP }   (21) unspecified (mythical "them")
{ GLOB }   (22) Rede Globo
{ ECON }   (23) Economic Powers
{ CHUR }   (24) Church

3. <u>Individualism and Collectivism or Social Responsibility</u>

{INDIF }   (25) Indifference
{NEGL}   (26) Neglect
{EGOT}   (27) Selfishness
{INIT}   (28) Individualism as a positive value: initiative, etc

4. <u>Fatalism and Reflexivity for Change</u>:

{REALG}   (29) reality as a given (external: politics, social situation)
{HUMG}   (30) human nature as fixed, given, unchangeable
{ HN }   (31) human nature as interactive
{LOSS}   (32) loss of historical time ("it has always been like that")
{DICT}   (33) nostalgia for dictatorship (as a necessary condition)
{SALV}   (34) messianism: references to the passivity of people waiting for salvation
{REFL}   (35) reflexivity for change: when the reality is questioned against a "should be" reference, whenever the groups engender a discourse related to a desired reality and the ways to get it

5. Mentality/ Culture: anything that refers to the culture and mentality (the groups use these words) as a sort of 'concrete' factor that explains why things happen the way they happen.

{MENTAB}   (36) abstract notion, referred to in general

{POLL }   (37) polluted, contaminated

{ VAL }   (38) value discourse (decadence of values)

{SURV}   (39) Struggle for survival: reference to the hardship of everyday life, and why what happens is determined by people's efforts just to survive (specially in relation to the danger in the streets).

6. Nature of Brazilians: anything that refers to the way of being of Brazilians: lazy, impure, etc...

{BNATP}   (40) positive: joy, cultural blend, easiness, etc

{BNATN}   (41) negative: lazy, impure, etc.

{MIRROR}   (42) Streets/People and Politics/Politicians as a Mirror of Each Other:

C FEELINGS/ STRATEGIES OF COPING

{FEAR}   (43) Fear

{ DENI}   (44) Denial

{ HAB }   (45) Habituation

{ SAD }   (46) Sadness

{DESP }   (47) Despair

{IDENT}   (48) Identification: when the speaking subjects identify themselves with the situation they describe.

{FINDIV}   (49)Individualism

{HOPE}   (50) Hope

{OTHER}   (51) OTHERS

This is a general bucket for all meaningful units not fitting in the above categories.

APPENDIX 4

Table 1: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE STREETS BY GROUP (X VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Childr	Total
Threat	6	9	16	2	4	8	45
Inequal	3	2	1	3	3	1	13
Fear	7	3	2	3	8	-	23
Survival	1	2	2	10	-	6	21
Poverty	4	3	-	2	5	2	16
Security	3	-	1	-	2	1	7
Habituat	3	1	-	-	1	-	5
Traffic	3	1	2	-	-	-	6
Denial	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
Sadness	1	2	-	-	-	-	3
Total	34	23	24	20	23	18	142

Table 2: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE STREETS BY GROUP (Y VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Childr	Total
Threat	64	59	398	21	114	219	875
Inequal	15	24	12	218	89	42	400
Fear	32	57	19	14	116	-	238
Survival	10	7	25	116	-	113	506
Poverty	33	14	-	-	88	34	245
Security	30	-	19	-	168	12	229
Habituat	39	3	-	-	2	-	44
Traffic	62	9	161	-	-	-	232
Denial	13	-	-	-	-	-	13
Sadness	3	-	25	-	-	-	28
Total	301	173	659	680	577	420	2810

Table 3: REPRESENTATIONS OF POLITICS BY GROUP (X VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Corrupt	1	1	3	6	1	1	13
Despair	1	5	2	2	5	-	15
Self-Int	3	9	5	2	3	-	22
Pow Int	8	4	1	2	1	-	16
No Cont	2	3	4	4	-	-	13
No Repr	3	2	-	-	-	-	5
Impeach	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Total	20	24	15	16	10	1	86

Table 4: REPRESENTATIONS OF POLITICS BY GROUP (Y VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Corrupt	3	12	12	253	9	52	341
Despair	7	25	10	10	38	-	90
Self-Int	28	61	142	68	33	-	332
Pow Int	212	32	21	11	13	-	289
No Cont	52	43	71	81	-	-	247
No Repr	41	9	-	-	-	-	50
Impeach	18	-	-	-	-	-	18
Total	361	182	256	423	93	52	1367

Table 5: MIRRORS AND SEPARATIONS BY GROUP (X VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Power	8	15	7	12	3	-	45
Inequal	12	3	3	4	2	-	24
Pmirror	3	4	5	4	4	-	20
Mirror	3	1	1	4	-	-	9
Impunity	3	-	10	3	9	2	27
Ident	4	1	5	-	-	10	20
Smirror	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
Bars	8	-	-	-	-	-	8
Total	41	25	32	27	18	12	155

Table 6: MIRRORS AND SEPARATIONS BY GROUP (Y VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Power	149	399	249	213	103	-	1113
Inequal	167	38	89	50	51	-	395
Pmirror	10	54	82	55	109	-	310
Mirror	22	4	31	100	-	-	157
Impunity	45	-	281	49	396	24	795
Ident	33	21	166	-	-	231	451
Smirror	-	2	20	-	-	-	22
Bars	81	-	-	-	-	-	81
Total	507	518	918	467	659	255	3324

Table 7: INDIVIDUALISM BY GROUP (X VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Selfish	2	2	4	2	1	1	12
Indiv	7	10	1	-	3	-	21
Indiffer	1	1	-	-	-	1	3
Feel/Ind	1	5	-	-	-	-	6
Neglect	-	5	-	-	-	5	10
Total	11	23	5	2	4	7	52

Table 8: INDIVIDUALISM BY GROUP (Y VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Selfish	21	7	20	9	24	9	90
Indiv	81	189	5	-	78	-	353
Indiffer	9	4	-	-	-	5	18
Feel/Ind	4	163	-	-	-	-	167
Neglect	-	100	-	-	-	157	257
Total	115	463	25	9	102	171	885

Table 9: BRAZILIAN NATURE BY GROUP (X VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Negative	17	1	10	8	1	-	37
Positive	4	1	3	-	-	-	8
Total	21	2	13	-	1	-	45

Table 10: BRAZILIAN NATURE BY GROUP (Y VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Negative	177	9	155	268	11	-	620
Positive	49	19	37	-	-	-	105
Total	226	28	192	268	11	-	725

Table 11: FATE, REFLEXIVITY AND HOPE BY GROUP (X VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Reflexiv	15	26	12	17	5	2	77
HumNat	10	5	6	2	3	-	26
Hope	6	15	5	3	-	4	33
Salvat	3	2	1	1	-	-	7
Humgiv	10	-	7	2	1	-	20
Dictat	1	-	4	2	3	-	10
Realg	2	10	1	1	-	-	14
Loss	-	4	6	2	-	-	12
Total	47	62	42	30	12	6	199

Table 12: FATE, REFLEXIVITY AND HOPE BY GROUP (Y VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Reflexiv	355	777	256	441	131	75	2035
HumNat	178	98	42	28	54	-	400
Hope	39	122	45	12	-	103	321
Salvat	17	21	54	26	-	-	118
Humgiv	107	-	57	61	13	-	238
Dictat	9	-	47	26	62	-	144
Realg	30	163	21	6	-	-	220
Loss	-	57	23	16	-	-	96
Total	735	1238	545	616	260	178	3572

Table 13: MENTALITY/CULTURE BY GROUP (X VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Abstract	1	6	-	-	-	-	7
Polluted	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
Decaden	2	1	1	-	-	-	4
Total	5	8	1	-	-	-	14

Table 14: MENTALITY/CULTURE BY GROUP (Y VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Abstract	3	55	-	-	-	-	58
Polluted	103	8	-	-	-	-	110
Decaden	29	14	21	-	-	-	64
Total	134	77	21	-	-	-	232

Table 15: MAIN THEMES BY GROUP (X VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Mentalit	5	8	1	-	-	-	14
Brazinat	21	2	13	8	1	-	45
Indiv	11	23	5	2	4	7	52
Fate	47	62	42	30	12	6	199
Politics	20	24	15	16	10	1	86
Streets	34	23	24	20	23	18	142
Total	136	142	100	76	50	32	538

Table 16: MAIN THEMES BY GROUP (Y VARIABLES)

	Profes	Studt	TaxDr	Work	Polic	Child	Total
Mentalit	134	77	21	-	-	-	232
Brazinat	226	28	192	268	11	-	725
Indiv	115	463	25	9	102	171	885
Fate	735	1238	545	616	260	178	3572
Politics	361	182	256	423	93	52	1367
Streets	301	173	659	680	577	420	2810
Total	1872	2161	1698	1996	1043	821	9591

APPENDIX 5

NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS GUIDE

1. Could you, please, tell me your account of the facts that led to the impeachment of the president?

2. Probing questions:

* how do you think the ordinary citizen sees the performance of politicians?

* what is in your opinion the relationship between parliament and public trust?

* how do you perceive your own image concerning the following notion:

- honesty
- opportunism
- corruption
- accountability

TABLE 7.2.1: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: SENATOR 1

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings and Metaphors
1	The impeachment as a continuum of events	Exceptional; out of political routine; non-habitual		
2	Collor's election and his way of governing	Already irregular; full of suspicious acts	i) Support from the Brazilian élite: media and businessmen; ii) Imperial way of governing	Election as a non-democratic process Empire: the president had the powers of a king
3	CPI (not serious in Brazil) becomes trust-worthy	This was just coincidental good luck	i) The narrator got a post in the CPI; ii) The CPI took the banks by surprise; iii) They were fast: they did not give time to the banks to organise the hiding of evidence and iv) They did not depend on the Brazilian Central bank, which is controlled by the financial corporations, which are corrupt	Brazilian Parliament does not work seriously CPIs are a dead end
4	The inquiry was conducted by an honest policeman	Another coincidental good luck		Every policeman is dishonest
5	Collor's arrogance and presumption	Childish behaviour of the president	i) Collor never thought he was in serious danger	Power is a blinding drug Power is exercised without any constraint
6	The media start to get into it and politicians change their views	Politicians are guided by self-servicing interests	i) Politicians want to be in the media - they like showing off	Politicians are not genuine
7	The CPI is successful: slowly the facts start to emerge	Rare, exceptional, it will not happen again	i) All the reasons above; ii) Legislative power in Brazil is also corrupt	Fate- despite having happened it will not happen again
8	The mistakes in the legal process	Very difficult to call the mistakes into question	i) The authoritarian nature of Brazilians; ii) The omnipotence of those in positions of power	People in power are above and beyond accountability and do not make mistakes Princes and gods
9	Collor out of office	Positive: we had some hope	i) Combination of lucky coincidences	Fate: the autonomy of destiny over social actors
10	Expectations of triggering off a process of moral cleansing	Corruption is widespread	i) It is in our culture	We are morally dirty Cleansing
11	Frustration of these expectations		i) The Brazilian Parliament is corrupt; ii) Brazilian politics is intrinsically corrupt;iii) Just a single person cannot fight widespread corruption; iv) Brazilian people do not have the culture or capacity to understand all that; v) Brazil deludes itself and believes in the delusion	We are all corrupt and impotent and therefore nothing can be done Politics of begging; politics of imploring; Brazil has reached the point of farce
12	The obscurity of political practice in Brazil	There is no visibility in the exercise of power	i) The CPI and the impeachment were just the tip of an iceberg	The impeachment is less serious than it appears to be Tip of an iceberg

TABLE 7.2.2: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: SENATOR 2

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	Brazilian History	Full of coups, violence	i) Impeachment has never occurred	Our history is what condemns us
2	Parliamentary system	Easier to control	i) Examples from other countries; ii) In presidential system, it is easier to have a coup d'etat than to go through the process of impeachment	The presidential system lends itself to violence and *coups d'etat*
3	The unprecedented character of the impeachment	First time in history; it happened in a perfect democratic atmosphere; there were a number of "unthinkable" events that made it possible	i) Contrary to previous accusations of corruption against presidents, the accusations against Collor were all proven; ii) These accusations did not come from Collor's opponents in Parliament but from the press and from men closely linked to the president (his brother, amongst others); iii) The CPI was not created to investigate Collor, but to investigate his chief accountant against whom the accusations were made. Then links with the president were found	In our political history, crime goes unpunished
4	The investigations of the CPI and its outcome	Without precedent; unthinkable	i) The driver of the president's secretary, a very humble person, had the courage to act as a witness, giving evidence of many of the illicit operations he had seen around the close circle of the president; ii) The CPI made use of its legal powers and took the banks by surprise. More evidence appeared; iii) Another humble person, this time a secretary, gave the CPI more evidence of illicit operations; iv) Collor tried to bribe MPs and senators using public money but there was so much evidence against him that he gradually and steadily lost support from virtually everyone	Relations based purely on the notion of citizenship between humble people and powerful people are unthinkable CPIs never really work; it would be surprising if they did
5	Movement of civil society	Plurality; democracy	i) There were opportunities for the president to defend himself and he didn't; ii) The movement brought together all strands of civil society: the church, professional associations, students, intellectuals, the press	Historical difficulties of unified movements in Brazil
6	Collor's reaction to the process	Schizophrenic; complicated figure	i) He never articulated his defence; ii) He kept screaming and trying to use bribery; iii) He asked the population to go out wearing yellow and green (the national colours) to express support for their president and everybody went out wearing black	Collor's unbalanced personality; He didn't have a clue about what was really happening
7	The day everyone wore black	Fantastic; spontaneous; from then on the manifestation in the streets did not stop	i) It is difficult to think of a mass movement so natural, so spontaneous, so unprecedented; ii) Public opinion was disgusted with Collor - the population wore black to show that they were mourning	Surprise with people's reaction without instigation by political parties
8	The role of the military	Null: first time in Brazilian history	i) They did not interfere at all; ii) It looked as if Brazil had been used to democracy for the last 200 years; iii) We will need a lot of research to fully understand the novelty of the situation	The ghost of the military in the determination of political life
9	The vice-president takes office	In a humble manner; with the aim of unifying forces	i) Comparing the new president with Collor's arrogance it seems as if the latter was taking office and the former leaving it; ii) The new government is the expression of the desire of society to get rid of Collor, nothing else; iii) Therefore the new government needs to make the transition until the next election	Collor's arrogance is imperial and we need a negotiated transition
10	The participation of youth	It was moving	i) TV Globo was showing a TV drama about young people under dictatorship, torture, repression, etc; ii) The play captured the national imagination and it helped to trigger off the "cara-pintadas" movement; iii) The kids were looking at the Collor scandal, but without participation, and then suddenly they were all in the streets	The power of the media (TV Globo)
11	Relationship between society and MPs	Society led Parliament; new relationship between Parliament and society	i) It was not the Congress that moved society; it was society that moved the Congress; ii) Brazil is a country without memory; in this case it was different because corruption was proved and documented; ii) The impeachment triggered off a movement towards respect for *res publica*.	There has been a chasm between society and Parliament; Brazil has no memory
12	Hope for a new system of government	Corruption is intrinsically related to the presidential system in Latin America	i) Corruption at top level spreads to the whole fabric of society; ii) We have had frustrated hopes of salvation with all presidents	We must have a system of government that protects us from our tendency to await salvation Salvation

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TABLE 7.2.3: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 3

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The conditions which led to the impeachment	Multiple	i) Features of Collor: messianism, power without limits, feeling of impunity, no concern to disguise or to gloss over acts of corruption, gap between discourse and practice, abuse of economic power; ii) The role of the media; iii) Crises of Brazilian society: on the one hand, social apartheid, immense suffering, frustration after frustration, and on the other hand, a yearning for change, for renewal, for democracy	Power is exercised without limits in a sharply divided society. Messianism
2	The Achievement	Combination of factors	i) Competence of Parliamentary action; ii) Society's pressure; iii) The control of the press	
3	The Meaning	Contrast between the past and desire for change; society is tired of a cultural mentality where "everything goes"; it opened up a new perspective for Brazilian society	i) Society gives a signal that it wants change in the way politics is conducted; ii) Desire for a new relationship between electors and elected; iii) Desire for a new relationship between what is said and what is done; iv) Desire for accountability	The authority of the past in terms of political practice. 'Everything goes'
4	What remains to be done	The impeachment was only the beginning	i) To change the law in order to continue the reforms; ii) To change the relationship between society and politics; iii) To overcome the chasm between the Brazil of the dispossessed and the Brazil of the rich; iv) Overcome a crisis of values, a crisis where projects for society are absent	The divisions of Brazilian society. Chasm
5	The political mentality in Brazil	Based on a tradition of authoritarianism and paternalism	i) Brazilian society has very little experience of democracy; ii) The relationship between the citizen and public affairs has been marked by terror, dictatorship and paternalism; iii) From 1984 onwards, the new democracy did not change that; on the contrary, it reproduced the old state of affairs	Democracy and dictatorship are felt to be the same thing. Paternalism
6	The relationship between citizen and politics	Schizophrenic; there is a great distance	i) Given the distance, the politician is either a saviour or a scapegoat; ii) The distance produces a feeling against politicians and any institutional power; iii) That generates a nostalgia for dictatorship and accentuates expectations of messianism	Saviour, messianism, scapegoat, schizophrenia
7	The cultural mentality in Brazil	In crisis	i) Pulverization of values, no generalising, global projects; ii) Sectarianism of political differences; iii) Absence of trust; iv) Politics is seen as a game, as a betting field; v) Politics is the concern of a few people: millions have no relationship with political life and, at times of election, when the relationship could be re-established, it is re-established through manipulation, clientelism and patronage	Pulverization; Game, betting field

TABLE 7.2.4: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 4

Story	Theme	Qualifiers	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The CPI	Has oscillated from being a joke to being a decisive element in Brazilian political life	i) The constitution written in 1988 gave power to the CPI; ii) The use of the CPI as a legal tool started a new era in political life and in the realm of citizenship in Brazil	People did not take CPIs seriously and the use of legal instruments is a novelty in Brazil Joke
2	The struggle for impeachment	Advancement for society	i) The impeachment became a great social movement; ii) In spite of the features of Brazilian society - it is contradictory and antagonistic in terms of political participation - everyone came together	The fragmented nature of Brazilian society
3	The character of the impeachment	Unthinkable, unimaginable	i) Collor was elected by 35 million votes; ii) He took office displaying imperial powers: he built a 'psychology' around his position; iii) He established a direct relationship with the population and at the same time disempowered the organisations of civil society; iv) He was in control of virtually everyone: the judges, who were silent, and the media; there were frauds and there was abuse of economic power and no ethics in the exercise of government	The power of the purely personal over forms of societal organization Imperial
4	What makes the unthinkable inevitable		i) The concrete levels of corruption were never seen before and they were all organised around the president; ii) The president's family was deeply involved in corruption and the first accusation came from his brother; iii) The press, public opinion and civil society pushed the process ahead; iv) The main political parties, which were trying to protect Collor, joined in the movement; v) Society made the issue its own; vi) There was a widespread political alliance between civil society, parliament, public attorneys, sectors of the police; vii) Politicians' capacity to understand the role of society; viii) The common citizens who faced dangers of all sorts: the driver, the secretary; ix) The role of the media: even Rede Globo had to relent and give ample coverage of the process	Politicians appear as the main actors who are able to "understand" the role of society and that is decisive to the process
5	The relationship between politicians and population	Marked by distrust and suspiciousness	i) The common citizen sees politicians as corrupt and still believes there is impunity in the country	It is a problem of "image" rather than of "real" foundations for distrust and suspicion
6	The changes	They are happening, albeit at a slow pace; They reveal an attempt to establish control, to impede corruption and to punish if necessary	i) The Judiciary has realised that in order to keep its legitimacy, it ought to free itself from pressure groups; ii) There are new organs to control corruption everywhere; iii) These changes are intended to constrain the relationship between economic power, corruption and influence-peddling	There is a strong need for control, given the immense network of corruption
7	The National Crisis	Moral crisis but with positive aspects	i) Society must rethink itself; ii) The individualistic perspective has led us nowhere, therefore there is a new appreciation for collective and community action; iii) The tendency is now for a dominance of the public over the private	Brazilian society is grounded in a questionable morality

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TABLE 7.2.5: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 5

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The antecedent conditions	The real basis for the impeachment	i) Accumulation of a set of feelings that have been capturing the country for some time: the conviction that there is misuse of public money; ii) After dictatorship very little changed: any denouncement of the past was soon seen as revenge	Collor was not the first corrupt politician in Brazilian public life
2	Collor's election	Fake: pure marketing	i) Collor appeared to be a hunter of corrupt politicians. In fact, he himself, was corrupt; ii) Collor's policies were aimed at destroying the state mechanisms of internal control; iii) He paved the way for a Mafia-like organization which was completely hidden inside the state machinery	The power of image making in Brazil
3	Collor's brother's accusations	Very important, crucial for the process	i) The origin of the accusations was crucial: the president's own brother	Predominance of family ties over public ones
4	The CPI	They never work properly	i) It was a cosmetic creation; no one believed it was going to work; ii) It survived all the stratagems used by Collor against the investigations; iii) It possessed the crucial testimony of the driver of the secretary of the president: he gave more evidence; iv) The Commission worked hard and faced all sorts of threats	CPIs never work
5	The day people wore black	Collor's tactical mistake; the movement was spontaneous	i) The wearing of black instead of yellow and green, as requested by Collor, was decisive with regard to bringing the population into the process	Surprise with people's capacity for manifestation
6	The consolidation of Brazilian democracy	Without precedent	i) The military didn't interfere at all; ii) The police were totally subordinated to the Ministry of Justice; iii) Law was finally respected in Brazil	The ghost of the military and the absence of law
7	Corruption in Latin America	Trivial practice	i) It is in the Latin American tradition to trivialise acts of corruption; ii) These practices are part of our culture and are absorbed naturally; iii) We did not bring about a total change but at least we started; it was a first step; iv) Corruption still exists but it is not so openly practised	Corruption is part of us all
8	The driver Eriberto	Without precedent; Expression of traces of feudal relations	i) A humble man faces up to the arrogance of the powerful and presents a new logic; ii) An MP tells Eriberto he was 'spitting in the plate that gave him food' because he was betraying his boss, at which point he answered that the only boss of a public servant is the tax payer; iii) He was confronted by a judge, who asked him which were his "real" reasons for testifying, and how much he was being paid. Eriberto answered: 'I am doing it for my country'. The judge said: 'Do you want me to believe that is all'? At which point the driver said: 'And is that not reason enough my lord?'	The surprising emergence of a new logic for public life that comes from the "people", from a humble man
9	The aftermath	Frustration, disenchantment	i) After the impeachment old relationships were soon back on the scene; ii) People do make distinctions between individual politicians but the parliament as an institution is not highly regarded; iii) It is true that we are a sinful institution, even though there are many honest politicians; iv) The political elites of the Northeast push the region backwards damaging its great cultural richness	The changes were not for good

TABLE 7.2.6: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 6

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings
1	The beginnings	Unthinkable	i) The big parties in the house hesitated to go ahead because they thought there would be no consequences, which is usually the case in the Brazilian tradition; ii) Accusations like the ones being made against the president can lead either to suicide or resignation, but never to a serious investigation	The Brazilian political tradition cannot be taken seriously
2	The relationship between Parliament and society	It was a participatory process; it was a very rich experience	i) The outcry for impeachment started to come from the streets; ii) The facts pointing to corruption were crystallised; iii) The big parties joined in the movement; iv) The media engaged in the investigations	Parliament has been an institution divorced from society
3	Concrete factors that contributed to the impeachment	Accusations of corruption were not new, but they never received attention. Now, there were concrete "facts" to which it was impossible not to respond	i) The level of sophistication of computing in Brazilian banks, which allowed information to be traced fast; ii) The testimony of driver Eriberto; iii) These factors reinforced political support and a desire for society to go ahead with the impeachment	Corruption is not a novelty in Brazilian political life
4	The resistance within Parliament	In spite of the evidence some MPs were still resisting	i) Some MPs had interests related to the president; ii) Other MPs thought that the process was going nowhere; iii) A third group believed all those practices were part of the political game and did not point to the misuse of public money	Politics is a game of interests that can stretch its ethics according to its ends
5	The impeachment happened	In the end it happened by consent	i) Some of the president's attitudes helped; ii) The social movement in the streets was enormous; iii) The MPs who were resisting started to worry about their public image	Many of those that supported the impeachment did so out of personal interest
6	Repercussions for Brazilian political life	Very rich historical event; an event to recycle values	i) It could have changed the behaviour of society; ii) The change could have affected politicians and the population alike, since we are going through a generalised moral crisis; iii) Whatever happens in parliament in terms of roguery, bribery and so forth, happens in the streets as well	Widespread corruption; politicians and people as a mirror of each other.
7	Frustration after the impeachment	It will reinforce the feeling that nothing ever changes	i) Parliament gave a bad example, choosing as its president a politician well-known for his corrupt activities; ii) Low-level of ethical standards	Very little changes in Brazil
8	The image of politicians	Very bad	i) It is a universal problem; politicians carry a stigma all over the world; ii) Politicians are under the spot-light; they are exposed, so whatever they do is visible to all; iii) There is a dispute between politicians and the media for the hegemony of public space; media ownership and political activity are blurred; iv) The party system and the electoral system are very inadequate, and this conspires to devalue the Brazilian political process; v) This malady has many roots and it is not only related to a specific moment - it is a permanent feature of Brazilian society	The absence of control both in the media and political life; Such processes are permanent; they belong to Brazilian society; Malady
9	Corporatism in Brazilian society	In excess	i) Very few people are not concerned with personal interests; ii) When personal and public interests don't match, everyone gives priority to personal interests; iii) This is not only in parliament; the judiciary is even worse	Brazilian society functions on the basis of fragmented interests
10	The homogenisation of all politicians and the image of Parliament	Very bad for political life	i) The electoral system homogenises everyone - it does not allow for distinctions to be made; ii) The parliament does not deliver the goods and the population is waiting for miracles and salvation. These don't come from MPs; iii) It is a problem concerning the level of political development and education of the Brazilian people	All these problems are rooted in the nature of the Brazilian people
11	The positive aspects of the impeachment	There is a positive balance	i) At the very moment of the impeachment, when everyone was swept along by the process, there was a lot of emotion and, therefore, people participated; ii) Few had the political education that was necessary to sustain the continuing engagement in the process; iii) However, the final result was good because people realised that it was worth participating	People lack the political education to sustain participatory processes on a more permanent basis

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TABLE 7.2.7: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 7

Story	Theme	Qualifiers	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The meaning of the impeachment	Unimaginable; unthinkable	i) The whole process was a turning point in political practice; ii) A big emotional event for society	In Brazil impeachments do not belong to the realm of the possible
2	The conditions for the impeachment	They lie, first and foremost, in the very political origin of Collor	i) Collor's origin: no support from political parties; no expression in traditional politics; ii) Public opinion pressures: outrage, public indignation; iii) Above all, Collor did not establish the conditions within parliament for his political survival	Collor's fall is due to the vicissitudes of the political game rather than to society's action
3	Disenchantment post-impeachment	Frustration	i) The agenda of changes established by the impeachment did not occur; ii) If society's pressure had been enough, the changes in political practices would have continued in a number of other similar situations	Nothing has in fact changed
4	The image of politicians	It is a tragic situation	i) Politics is mainly associated with corruption and individualism; ii) That produces a cultural mentality that negates democracy and the consolidation of democracy; iii) There is a generalised feeling in Brazilian society that democracy and dictatorship are the same: democracy did not bring about changes	Politics cannot be seen in a nuanced way; distinctions disappear under widespread corruption
5	The motivations behind the impeachment	Multiple	i) The desire of society for a new ethics in politics; ii) The impeachment was guided by political interests, namely the interests of those who had been challenged by Collor or of those whose interests were ignored by Collor	The impeachment was guided by non-genuine interests and the role of society is devalued by them

TABLE 7.2.8: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 8

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The impeachment as a crisis of the Brazilian presidential system	Cyclic, repetitive crisis		Impeachment has no new meaning; it is a repetition
2	The Brazilian presidential system	i) Installed by a military coup; ii) Concentrated in presidential powers that not even the king had; iii) It did not create mechanisms that could guarantee a parliamentary basis for the president; iv) It creates dramatic situations	i) The president wins the election because of his charisma as a person, but reaches power in loneliness; ii) This situation leads to problems such as revolutions, crises, dictatorships	Brazilian parliamentarism has been authoritarian from its inception and imperial in its concentration on power. Drama; loneliness The power of personal charisma
3	Collor's election	The same as other elections in Brazil	i) Collor found a Congress that was not his own	If the President does not 'own' the Congress he cannot govern; to 'own' the National Congress
4	Corruption/Decadence of Values	i) Old problem in Brazil; ii) It is a universal problem	i) Contrary to other countries we don't have the mechanisms to control corruption; ii) Those who achieve power through corruption do not lose it; iii) Corrupt people are powerful enough to confront the legal system; iv) Whoever is outside corruption is lonely	Corruption is not susceptible to control; The people above; the people below
5	The bad image of politicians	i) Universal: everywhere; ii) People's projection of their own envy and resentment because they didn't get there	i) Every politician is a window; ii) Of all careers, it is the one that people can more easily control; iii) Because they don't exercise control over politicians, people have a feeling of guilt; iv) In order to deny the guilt people go around saying bad things about politicians and forget that, they themselves, have put the politicians where they are	The relationship between politicians and population is a personal one, based on resentment or envy Accountability disappears under psychologism; Windows; verdict
6	How people distinguish a good politician from a bad one	Very curious process	i) There are a few politicians that maintain an image of honesty; ii) This keeps the ideal going; iii) Narrator has been forced into politics - her true vocation was teaching - to carry on the ideal of honest politics	Good politicians are rare and to be one involves self-sacrifice; Sacrifice
7	Expectations post-impeachment	Good	i) The people's capacity for judgement has improved; ii) This will improve the outcome of the 94 elections, because the affinities between the electors and the elected are bigger than one imagines	Politicians and people mirror each other The National Congress is made by Brazilians onto a photograph of themselves
8	The witch-hunt after the impeachment	Demagogic and scaring	i) It creates a bad atmosphere in the country	Investigations should not go too far; McCarthyism; witch-hunt
9	An example of a decision in Parliament	Demagogy	i) MPs are afraid of losing votes; ii) Populist parties	Politicians know better than the less sophisticated population Sometimes we must give to our children bitter remedies
10	Narrator lost the election in Rio		i) People preferred the promises of a populist; ii) Very little changes in Brazil	People don't know how to make choices

TABLE 7.2.9: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 9

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The CPI	Narrator followed the workings of the CPI with a "legal eye"	i) To date, the only accusations ever proved against the president are the refurbishing of a house and the buying of a car; ii) This is not enough to remove a president from office	There are "acceptable" levels of corruption
2	The legal aspects of the impeachment	Full of irregularities	i) There was no right to defence; ii) A very powerful group in our country decided to remove the president from office	Politics is a game of interests
3	Relations between parliament and the people	Pressure from society	i) The narrator was not under pressure because his position was well-known: a leader is not to be questioned, a leader must lead; ii) Political mandates can only be questioned during election time; the people have no right to question the leader's behaviour until the next election	To represent the people is the same as to lead without challenges; Politicians are leaders above all accountability
4	Corruption	Universal; solid institution	i) What happens in the Brazilian Congress is totally transparent to Brazilian society; ii) The National Congress is a representative sample of the economic, social and cultural patterns of Brazilian society	Politicians and society are a mirror of each other
5	The relations between citizen and parliament	The common citizen does not perceive what is happening	i) Brazil is on the brink of social upheavals; ii) There is a state of complete unrest in the country; iii) Therefore the common citizen does not have the emotional tranquillity to judge the National Congress; he is biased	People are biased by their living conditions; they don't understand what is happening; People cannot assess the National Congress because they are emotionally unstable
6	The mass media (especially the press)	They have some credibility	i) Everyone's image has deteriorated; ii) The media can say whatever they want; iii) It is possible for them to claim every-day that the National Congress is a house of corrupt people	Press freedom has gone too far
7	Collor's impeachment	Outcome of a power struggle	i) Collor has opposed powerful interests; ii) He was not a traditional politician: he was elected because of his personal features rather than because he belonged to a political party; iii) His brother supplied the motives for certain political forces to conspire against Collor	There was nothing genuine about the impeachment; The importance of personal charisma
8	The movement for ethics in politics	It is discriminatory	i) The movement is only concerned with politics; ii) Ethics should be a matter for the whole of society; iii) The people in this movement, as well as the people behind the impeachment, are known to be corrupt themselves	Widespread corruption

TABLE 7.2.10:STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 10

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The narrator's participation in the process	Angst	i) He supported Collor's election; ii) He realised the gaps between the president's words and deeds	The impeachment is reduced to the narrator's personal experience
2	The narrator's row with Collor	Angst is intensified	i) He warned Collor about his inconsistency; ii) He suffered retaliation from the government; iii) He made a speech in Parliament denouncing Collor for having set up in Brazil the kingdom of contradiction	Narrator has cut his links with the Collor kingdom
3	The CPI was installed	More angst	i) Accusations against the President were confirmed; ii) The president threw away an historic opportunity to improve the country; iii) What is left for the future?	Narrator is innocent and suffers as a result of the situation
4	Collor's behaviour at the Rio summit	Collor has a paradoxical personality	i) He behaved at the Rio Summit as if nothing was happening	Collor's personal behaviour is pathological
5	After the Impeachment	Many doubts	i) The vice-president has taken office, but to what extent is he not involved with the former government?; ii) The initial improvement of the image of politicians is lost because the frustration with Collor has been transferred onto them; iii) The social crisis continues	The narrator does not like the current policies of the vice-president, which he considers "lefty" and state-driven
6	The enemies of the Brazilian people	Inflation, corruption and recession	i) Generalised impunity and irresponsibility; ii) For the first time a chief of state has been punished, but there were no consequences; iii) Collor was not the only corrupt politician	Impeachment loses its significance
7	The plebiscite about the system of government and the need for parliamentarism	Events could have been different	i) The notion of parliamentarism was never well explained to the people; ii) The president would not have been able to forge such deep corruption; iii) The new government would have been constituted upon a majority	Collor alone was responsible for corruption; parliament is innocent and the people don't understand abstract notions
8	The image of politicians	Very bad; it could not be otherwise	i) The responsibility has to be attributed to someone; ii) Politicians make promises and don't deliver; iii) Legislative power does not allocate money for marketing and advertising; iv) Politicians become the scapegoats of the nation	Politicians do not work on their image and become vulnerable to the attributions and projections of the population
9	The aftermath of the impeachment	Great frustration	i) Impunity continues; neither Collor nor his chief accountant are in jail; ii) Economic policies have deteriorated; iii) The new president is the same, even worse than Collor; iv) The population is in perplexity, they don't understand what is going on	The narrator identifies his interpretation with the interpretation of the population; he is voicing *their* perplexities when he voices *his* interpretations
10	The people's distinguishing good politicians from bad ones	It has a circular effect	i) His electors tell him he is an exception, but condemn other politicians; ii) The electors of other politicians probably regard him as a bad one; iii) Everyone has to care for themselves	The narrator sees the dangers of the situation
11	The double message of law	The law is slow and contradictory	i) The *Jogo do Bixo* has been forbidden for the last 100 years and has been openly practised for the last 100 years; ii) The law is not the same for everyone; iii) In Brazil, crime pays	Widespread corruption and impunity
12	Brazilian history as a frustration		i) From the dictatorship up to now everything has become worse; ii) The deterioration of living conditions in the country is without precedent; iii) There is an increase in crime and social massacres	Brazil is being swept along by its fate
13	The expectations towards the Brazilian élite	The élite comprises more social sectors than just politicians	i) It is difficult to conceive that the élite does not perceive the dangers; ii) It is easy for many people to profit from the situation as it stands, and that blinds them	Let's do something before the people do it

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TABLE 7.2.1: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: SENATOR 1

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings and Metaphors
1	The impeachment as a continuum of events	Exceptional; out of political routine; non-habitual		
2	Collor's election and his way of governing	Already irregular; full of suspicious acts	i) Support from the Brazilian élite: media and businessmen; ii) Imperial way of governing	Election as a non-democratic process; Empire: the president had the powers of a king
3	CPI (not serious in Brazil) becomes trust-worthy	This was just coincidental good luck	i) The narrator got a post in the CPI; ii) The CPI took the banks by surprise; iii) They were fast: they did not give time to the banks to organise the hiding of evidence and iv) They did not depend on the Brazilian Central bank, which is controlled by the financial corporations, which are corrupt	Brazilian Parliament does not work seriously; CPIs are a dead end
4	The inquiry was conducted by an honest policeman	Another coincidental good luck		Every policeman is dishonest
5	Collor's arrogance and presumption	Childish behaviour of the president	i) Collor never thought he was in serious danger	Power is a blinding drug; Power is exercised without any constraint
6	The media start to get into it and politicians change their views	Politicians are guided by self-servicing interests	i) Politicians want to be in the media - they like showing off	Politicians are not genuine
7	The CPI is successful: slowly the facts start to emerge	Rare, exceptional, it will not happen again	i) All the reasons above; ii) Legislative power in Brazil is also corrupt	Fate- despite having happened it will not happen again
8	The mistakes in the legal process	Very difficult to call the mistakes into question	i) The authoritarian nature of Brazilians; ii) The omnipotence of those in positions of power	People in power are above and beyond accountability and do not make mistakes; Princes and gods
9	Collor out of office	Positive: we had some hope	i) Combination of lucky coincidences	Fate: the autonomy of destiny over social actors
10	Expectations of triggering off a process of moral cleansing	Corruption is widespread	i) It is in our culture	We are morally dirty; Cleansing
11	Frustration of these expectations		i) The Brazilian Parliament is corrupt; ii) Brazilian politics is intrinsically corrupt;iii) Just a single person cannot fight widespread corruption; iv) Brazilian people do not have the culture or capacity to understand all that; v) Brazil deludes itself and believes in the delusion	We are all corrupt and impotent and therefore nothing can be done; Politics of begging; politics of imploring; Brazil has reached the point of farce
12	The obscurity of political practice in Brazil	There is no visibility in the exercise of power	i) The CPI and the impeachment were just the tip of an iceberg	The impeachment is less serious than it appears to be; Tip of an iceberg

TABLE 7.2.2: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: SENATOR 2

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	Brazilian History	Full of coups, violence	i) Impeachment has never occurred	Our history is what condemns us
2	Parliamentary system	Easier to control	i) Examples from other countries; ii) In presidential system, it is easier to have a coup d'etat than to go through the process of impeachment	The presidential system lends itself to violence and *coups d'etat*
3	The unprecedented character of the impeachment	First time in history; it happened in a perfect democratic atmosphere; there were a number of "unthinkable" events that made it possible	i) Contrary to previous accusations of corruption against presidents, the accusations against Collor were all proven; ii) These accusations did not come from Collor's opponents in Parliament but from the press and from men closely linked to the president (his brother, amongst others); iii) The CPI was not created to investigate Collor, but to investigate his chief accountant against whom the accusations were made. Then links with the president were found	In our political history, crime goes unpunished
4	The investigations of the CPI and its outcome	Without precedent; unthinkable	i) The driver of the president's secretary, a very humble person, had the courage to act as a witness, giving evidence of many of the illicit operations he had seen around the close circle of the president; ii) The CPI made use of its legal powers and took the banks by surprise. More evidence appeared; iii) Another humble person, this time a secretary, gave the CPI more evidence of illicit operations; iv) Collor tried to bribe MPs and senators using public money but there was so much evidence against him that he gradually and steadily lost support from virtually everyone	Relations based purely on the notion of citizenship between humble people and powerful people are unthinkable / CPIs never really work; it would be surprising if they did
5	Movement of civil society	Plurality; democracy	i) There were opportunities for the president to defend himself and he didn't; ii) The movement brought together all strands of civil society: the church, professional associations, students, intellectuals, the press	Historical difficulties of unified movements in Brazil
6	Collor's reaction to the process	Schizophrenic; complicated figure	i) He never articulated his defence; ii) He kept screaming and trying to use bribery; iii) He asked the population to go out wearing yellow and green (the national colours) to express support for their president and everybody went out wearing black	Collor's unbalanced personality; He didn't have a clue about what was really happening
7	The day everyone wore black	Fantastic; spontaneous; from then on the manifestation in the streets did not stop	i) It is difficult to think of a mass movement so natural, so spontaneous, so unprecedented; ii) Public opinion was disgusted with Collor - the population wore black to show that they were mourning	Surprise with people's reaction without instigation by political parties
8	The role of the military	Null: first time in Brazilian history	i) They did not interfere at all; ii) It looked as if Brazil had been used to democracy for the last 200 years; iii) We will need a lot of research to fully understand the novelty of the situation	The ghost of the military in the determination of political life
9	The vice-president takes office	In a humble manner; with the aim of unifying forces	i) Comparing the new president with Collor's arrogance it seems as if the latter was taking office and the former leaving it; ii) The new government is the expression of the desire of society to get rid of Collor, nothing else; iii) Therefore the new government needs to make the transition until the next election	Collor's arrogance is imperial and we need a negotiated transition
10	The participation of youth	It was moving	i) TV Globo was showing a TV drama about young people under dictatorship, torture, repression, etc; ii) The play captured the national imagination and it helped to trigger off the "cara-pintadas" movement; iii) The kids were looking at the Collor scandal, but without participation, and then suddenly they were all in the streets	The power of the media (TV Globo)
11	Relationship between society and MPs	Society led Parliament; new relationship between Parliament and society	i) It was not the Congress that moved society; it was society that moved the Congress; ii) Brazil is a country without memory; in this case it was different because corruption was proved and documented; iii) The impeachment triggered off a movement towards respect for *res publica*.	There has been a chasm between society and Parliament; Brazil has no memory
12	Hope for a new system of government	Corruption is intrinsically related to the presidential system in Latin America	i) Corruption at top level spreads to the whole fabric of society; ii) We have had frustrated hopes of salvation with all presidents	We must have a system of government that protects us from our tendency to await salvation / Salvation

TABLE 7.2.3: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 3

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The conditions which led to the impeachment	Multiple	i) Features of Collor: messianism, power without limits, feeling of impunity, no concern to disguise or to gloss over acts of corruption, gap between discourse and practice, abuse of economic power; ii) The role of the media; iii) Crises of Brazilian society: on the one hand, social apartheid, immense suffering, frustration after frustration, and on the other hand, a yearning for change, for renewal, for democracy	Power is exercised without limits in a sharply divided society Messianism
2	The Achievement	Combination of factors	i) Competence of Parliamentary action; ii) Society's pressure; iii) The control of the press	
3	The Meaning	Contrast between the past and desire for change; society is tired of a cultural mentality where "everything goes"; it opened up a new perspective for Brazilian society	i) Society gives a signal that it wants change in the way politics is conducted; ii) Desire for a new relationship between electors and elected; iii) Desire for a new relationship between what is said and what is done; iv) Desire for accountability	The authority of the past in terms of political practice 'Everything goes'
4	What remains to be done	The impeachment was only the beginning	i) To change the law in order to continue the reforms; ii) To change the relationship between society and politics; iii) To overcome the chasm between the Brazil of the dispossessed and the Brazil of the rich; iv) Overcome a crisis of values, a crisis where projects for society are absent	The divisions of Brazilian society Chasm
5	The political mentality in Brazil	Based on a tradition of authoritarianism and paternalism	i) Brazilian society has very little experience of democracy; ii) The relationship between the citizen and public affairs has been marked by terror, dictatorship and paternalism; iii) From 1984 onwards, the new democracy did not change that; on the contrary, it reproduced the old state of affairs	Democracy and dictatorship are felt to be the same thing Paternalism
6	The relationship between citizen and politics	Schizophrenic; there is a great distance	i) Given the distance, the politician is either a saviour or a scapegoat; ii) The distance produces a feeling against politicians and any institutional power; iii) That generates a nostalgia for dictatorship and accentuates expectations of messianism	Saviour, messianism, scapegoat, schizophrenia
7	The cultural mentality in Brazil	In crisis	i) Pulverization of values, no generalising, global projects; ii) Sectarianism of political differences; iii) Absence of trust; iv) Politics is seen as a game, as a betting field; v) Politics is the concern of a few people: millions have no relationship with political life and, at times of election, when the relationship could be re-established, it is re-established through manipulation, clientelism and patronage	Pulverization; Game, betting field

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TABLE 7.2.4: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 4

Story	Theme	Qualifiers	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The CPI	Has oscillated from being a joke to being a decisive element in Brazilian political life	i) The constitution written in 1988 gave power to the CPI; ii) The use of the CPI as a legal tool started a new era in political life and in the realm of citizenship in Brazil	People did not take CPIs seriously and the use of legal instruments is a novelty in Brazil Joke
2	The struggle for impeachment	Advancement for society	i) The impeachment became a great social movement; ii) In spite of the features of Brazilian society - it is contradictory and antagonistic in terms of political participation - everyone came together	The fragmented nature of Brazilian society
3	The character of the impeachment	Unthinkable, unimaginable	i) Collor was elected by 35 million votes; ii) He took office displaying imperial powers: he built a 'psychology' around his position; iii) He established a direct relationship with the population and at the same time disempowered the organisations of civil society; iv) He was in control of virtually everyone: the judges, who were silent, and the media; there were frauds and there was abuse of economic power and no ethics in the exercise of government	The power of the purely personal over forms of societal organization Imperial
4	What makes the unthinkable inevitable		i) The concrete levels of corruption were never seen before and they were all organised around the president; ii) The president's family was deeply involved in corruption and the first accusation came from his brother; iii) The press, public opinion and civil society pushed the process ahead; iv) The main political parties, which were trying to protect Collor, joined in the movement; v) Society made the issue its own; vi) There was a widespread political alliance between civil society, parliament, public attorneys, sectors of the police; vii) Politicians' capacity to understand the role of society; viii) The common citizens who faced dangers of all sorts: the driver, the secretary; ix) The role of the media: even Rede Globo had to relent and give ample coverage of the process	Politicians appear as the main actors who are able to "understand" the role of society and that is decisive to the process
5	The relationship between politicians and population	Marked by distrust and suspiciousness	i) The common citizen sees politicians as corrupt and still believes there is impunity in the country	It is a problem of "image" rather than of "real" foundations for distrust and suspicion
6	The changes	They are happening, albeit at a slow pace; They reveal an attempt to establish control, to impede corruption and to punish if necessary	i) The Judiciary has realised that in order to keep its legitimacy, it ought to free itself from pressure groups; ii) There are new organs to control corruption everywhere; iii) These changes are intended to constrain the relationship between economic power, corruption and influence-peddling	There is a strong need for control, given the immense network of corruption
7	The National Crisis	Moral crisis but with positive aspects	i) Society must rethink itself; ii) The individualistic perspective has led us nowhere, therefore there is a new appreciation for collective and community action; iii) The tendency is now for a dominance of the public over the private	Brazilian society is grounded in a questionable morality

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TABLE 7.2.5: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 5

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The antecedent conditions	The real basis for the impeachment	i) Accumulation of a set of feelings that have been capturing the country for some time: the conviction that there is misuse of public money; ii) After dictatorship very little changed: any denouncement of the past was soon seen as revenge	Collor was not the first corrupt politician in Brazilian public life
2	Collor's election	Fake: pure marketing	i) Collor appeared to be a hunter of corrupt politicians. In fact, he himself, was corrupt; ii) Collor's policies were aimed at destroying the state mechanisms of internal control; iii) He paved the way for a Mafia-like organization which was completely hidden inside the state machinery	The power of image making in Brazil
3	Collor's brother's accusations	Very important, crucial for the process	i) The origin of the accusations was crucial: the president's own brother	Predominance of family ties over public ones
4	The CPI	They never work properly	i) It was a cosmetic creation; no one believed it was going to work; ii) It survived all the stratagems used by Collor against the investigations; iii) It possessed the crucial testimony of the driver of the secretary of the president: he gave more evidence; iv) The Commission worked hard and faced all sorts of threats	CPIs never work
5	The day people wore black	Collor's tactical mistake; the movement was spontaneous	i) The wearing of black instead of yellow and green, as requested by Collor, was decisive with regard to bringing the population into the process	Surprise with people's capacity for manifestation
6	The consolidation of Brazilian democracy	Without precedent	i) The military didn't interfere at all; ii) The police were totally subordinated to the Ministry of Justice; iii) Law was finally respected in Brazil	The ghost of the military and the absence of law
7	Corruption in Latin America	Trivial practice	i) It is in the Latin American tradition to trivialise acts of corruption; ii) These practices are part of our culture and are absorbed naturally; iii) We did not bring about a total change but at least we started; it was a first step; iv) Corruption still exists but it is not so openly practised	Corruption is part of us all
8	The driver Eriberto	Without precedent; Expression of traces of feudal relations	i) A humble man faces up to the arrogance of the powerful and presents a new logic; ii) An MP tells Eriberto he was 'spiting in the plate that gave him food' because he was betraying his boss, at which point he answered that the only boss of a public servant is the tax payer; iii) He was confronted by a judge, who asked him which were his "real" reasons for testifying, and how much he was being paid. Eriberto answered: 'I am doing it for my country'. The judge said: 'Do you want me to believe that is all'? At which point the driver said: 'And is that not reason enough my lord?'	The surprising emergence of a new logic for public life that comes from the "people", from a humble man
9	The aftermath	Frustration, disenchantment	i) After the impeachment old relationships were soon back on the scene; ii) People do make distinctions between individual politicians but the parliament as an institution is not highly regarded; iii) It is true that we are a sinful institution, even though there are many honest politicians; iv) The political elites of the Northeast push the region backwards damaging its great cultural richness	The changes were not for good

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TABLE 7.2.6: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 6

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings
1	The beginnings	Unthinkable	i) The big parties in the house hesitated to go ahead because they thought there would be no consequences, which is usually the case in the Brazilian tradition; ii) Accusations like the ones being made against the president can lead either to suicide or resignation, but never to a serious investigation	The Brazilian political tradition cannot be taken seriously
2	The relationship between Parliament and society	It was a participatory process; it was a very rich experience	i) The outcry for impeachment started to come from the streets; ii) The facts pointing to corruption were crystalised; iii) The big parties joined in the movement; iv) The media engaged in the investigations	Parliament has been an institution divorced from society
3	Concrete factors that contributed to the impeachment	Accusations of corruption were not new, but they never received attention. Now, there were concrete "facts" to which it was impossible not to respond	i) The level of sophistication of computing in Brazilian banks, which allowed information to be traced fast; ii) The testimony of driver Eriberto; iii) These factors reinforced political support and a desire for society to go ahead with the impeachment	Corruption is not a novelty in Brazilian political life
4	The resistance within Parliament	In spite of the evidence some MPs were still resisting	i) Some MPs had interests related to the president; ii) Other MPs thought that the process was going nowhere; iii) A third group believed all those practices were part of the political game and did not point to the misuse of public money	Politics is a game of interests that can stretch its ethics according to its ends
5	The impeachment happened	In the end it happened by consent	i) Some of the president's attitudes helped; ii) The social movement in the streets was enormous; iii) The MPs who were resisting started to worry about their public image	Many of those that supported the impeachment did so out of personal interest
6	Repercussions for Brazilian political life	Very rich historical event; an event to recycle values	i) It could have changed the behaviour of society; ii) The change could have affected politicians and the population alike, since we are going through a generalised moral crisis; iii) Whatever happens in parliament in terms of roguery, bribery and so forth, happens in the streets as well	Widespread corruption; politicians and people as a mirror of each other.
7	Frustration after the impeachment	It will reinforce the feeling that nothing ever changes	i) Parliament gave a bad example, choosing as its president a politician well-known for his corrupt activities; ii) Low-level of ethical standards	Very little changes in Brazil
8	The image of politicians	Very bad	i) It is a universal problem; politicians carry a stigma all over the world; ii) Politicians are under the spotlight; they are exposed, so whatever they do is visible to all; iii) There is a dispute between politicians and the media for the hegemony of public space; media ownership and political activity are blurred; iv) The party system and the electoral system are very inadequate, and this conspires to devalue the Brazilian political process; v) This malady has many roots and it is not only related to a specific moment - it is a permanent feature of Brazilian society	The absence of control both in the media and political life; Such processes are permanent; they belong to Brazilian society; Malady
9	Corporatism in Brazilian society	In excess	i) Very few people are not concerned with personal interests; ii) When personal and public interests don't match, everyone gives priority to personal interests; iii) This is not only in parliament; the judiciary is even worse	Brazilian society functions on the basis of fragmented interests
10	The homogenisation of all politicians and the image of Parliament	Very bad for political life	i) The electoral system homogenises everyone - it does not allow for distinctions to be made; ii) The parliament does not deliver the goods and the population is waiting for miracles and salvation. These don't come from MPs; iii) It is a problem concerning the level of political development and education of the Brazilian people	All these problems are rooted in the nature of the Brazilian people
11	The positive aspects of the impeachment	There is a positive balance	i) At the very moment of the impeachment, when everyone was swept along by the process, there was a lot of emotion and, therefore, people participated; ii) Few had the political education that was necessary to sustain the continuing engagement in the process; iii) However, the final result was good because people realised that it was worth participating	People lack the political education to sustain participatory processes on a more permanent basis

TABLE 7.2.7: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 7

Story	Theme	Qualifiers	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The meaning of the impeachment	Unimaginable; unthinkable	i) The whole process was a turning point in political practice; ii) A big emotional event for society	In Brazil impeachments do not belong to the realm of the possible
2	The conditions for the impeachment	They lie, first and foremost, in the very political origin of Collor	i) Collor's origin: no support from political parties; no expression in traditional politics; ii) Public opinion pressures: outrage, public indignation; iii) Above all, Collor did not establish the conditions within parliament for his political survival	Collor's fall is due to the vicissitudes of the political game rather than to society's action
3	Disenchantment post-impeachment	Frustration	i) The agenda of changes established by the impeachment did not occur; ii) If society's pressure had been enough, the changes in political practices would have continued in a number of other similar situations	Nothing has in fact changed
4	The image of politicians	It is a tragic situation	i) Politics is mainly associated with corruption and individualism; ii) That produces a cultural mentality that negates democracy and the consolidation of democracy; iii) There is a generalised feeling in Brazilian society that democracy and dictatorship are the same: democracy did not bring about changes	Politics cannot be seen in a nuanced way; distinctions disappear under widespread corruption
5	The motivations behind the impeachment	Multiple	i) The desire of society for a new ethics in politics; ii) The impeachment was guided by political interests, namely the interests of those who had been challenged by Collor or of those whose interests were ignored by Collor	The impeachment was guided by non-genuine interests and the role of society is devalued by them

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TABLE 7.2.8: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 8

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The impeachment as a crisis of the Brazilian presidential system	Cyclic, repetitive crisis		Impeachment has no new meaning; it is a repetition
2	The Brazilian presidential system	i) Installed by a military coup; ii) Concentrated in presidential powers that not even the king had; iii) It did not create mechanisms that could guarantee a parliamentary basis for the president; iv) It creates dramatic situations	i) The president wins the election because of his charisma as a person, but reaches power in loneliness; ii) This situation leads to problems such as revolutions, crises, dictatorships	Brazilian parliamentarism has been authoritarian from its inception and imperial in its concentration on power. Drama; loneliness The power of personal charisma
3	Collor's election	The same as other elections in Brazil	i) Collor found a Congress that was not his own	If the President does not 'own' the Congress he cannot govern; to 'own' the National Congress
4	Corruption/Decadence of Values	i) Old problem in Brazil; ii) It is a universal problem	i) Contrary to other countries we don't have the mechanisms to control corruption; ii) Those who achieve power through corruption do not lose it; iii) Corrupt people are powerful enough to confront the legal system; iv) Whoever is outside corruption is lonely	Corruption is not susceptible to control; The people above; the people below
5	The bad image of politicians	i) Universal: everywhere; ii) People's projection of their own envy and resentment because they didn't get there	i) Every politician is a window; ii) Of all careers, it is the one that people can more easily control; iii) Because they don't exercise control over politicians, people have a feeling of guilt; iv) In order to deny the guilt people go around saying bad things about politicians and forget that, they themselves, have put the politicians where they are	The relationship between politicians and population is a personal one, based on resentment or envy Accountability disappears under psychologism; Windows; verdict
6	How people distinguish a good politician from a bad one	Very curious process	i) There are a few politicians that maintain an image of honesty; ii) This keeps the ideal going; iii) Narrator has been forced into politics - her true vocation was teaching - to carry on the ideal of honest politics	Good politicians are rare and to be one involves self-sacrifice; Sacrifice
7	Expectations post-impeachment	Good	i) The people's capacity for judgement has improved; ii) This will improve the outcome of the 94 elections, because the affinities between the electors and the elected are bigger than one imagines	Politicians and people mirror each other The National Congress is made by Brazilians onto a photograph of themselves
8	The witch-hunt after the impeachment	Demagogic and scaring	i) It creates a bad atmosphere in the country	Investigations should not go too far; McCarthyism; witch-hunt
9	An example of a decision in Parliament	Demagogy	i) MPs are afraid of losing votes; ii) Populist parties	Politicians know better than the less sophisticated population Sometimes we must give to our children bitter remedies
10	Narrator lost the election in Rio		i) People preferred the promises of a populist; ii) Very little changes in Brazil	People don't know how to make choices

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TABLE 7.2.9: STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE: MP 9

Story	Theme	Qualifier	Reasons/Consequences	Implicit Meanings/Metaphors
1	The CPI	Narrator followed the workings of the CPI with a "legal eye"	i) To date, the only accusations ever proved against the president are the refurbishing of a house and the buying of a car; ii) This is not enough to remove a president from office	There are "acceptable" levels of corruption
2	The legal aspects of the impeachment	Full of irregularities	i) There was no right to defence; ii) A very powerful group in our country decided to remove the president from office	Politics is a game of interests
3	Relations between parliament and the people	Pressure from society	i) The narrator was not under pressure because his position was well-known: a leader is not to be questioned, a leader must lead; ii) Political mandates can only be questioned during election time; the people have no right to question the leader's behaviour until the next election	To represent the people is the same as to lead without challenges; Politicians are leaders above all accountability
4	Corruption	Universal; solid institution	i) What happens in the Brazilian Congress is totally transparent to Brazilian society; ii) The National Congress is a representative sample of the economic, social and cultural patterns of Brazilian society	Politicians and society are a mirror of each other
5	The relations between citizen and parliament	The common citizen does not perceive what is happening	i) Brazil is on the brink of social upheavals; ii) There is a state of complete unrest in the country; iii) Therefore the common citizen does not have the emotional tranquillity to judge the National Congress; he is biased	People are biased by their living conditions; they don't understand what is happening; People cannot assess the National Congress because they are emotionally unstable
6	The mass media (especially the press)	They have some credibility	i) Everyone's image has deteriorated; ii) The media can say whatever they want; iii) It is possible for them to claim every-day that the National Congress is a house of corrupt people	Press freedom has gone too far
7	Collor's impeachment	Outcome of a power struggle	i) Collor has opposed powerful interests; ii) He was not a traditional politician: he was elected because of his personal features rather than because he belonged to a political party; iii) His brother supplied the motives for certain political forces to conspire against Collor	There was nothing genuine about the impeachment; The importance of personal charisma
8	The movement for ethics in politics	It is discriminatory	i) The movement is only concerned with politics; ii) Ethics should be a matter for the whole of society; iii) The people in this movement, as well as the people behind the impeachment, are known to be corrupt themselves	Widespread corruption