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Individuals, biography and cultural spaces: new figurations

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Summary

How can the sociology of individuals with, in particular, the accent on singularity, be reconciled with the sociology of our transculture, i.e. cross-cutting dimensions that dim or reconstitute the mark of the difference(s), borders and autochthonies in contemporary societies? This question and reflexive ambivalence from two directions in sociology, raised in a previous text, is picked up again here in an essay "in dialogue" with the legacy of Norbert Elias. A key reference for non-dichotomous thinking on individuals, power and society, though this text seeks to re-contextualise some of his concepts. Or ways of using them in the contemporary situation, with conceptual proposals for situating individuals in henceforth trans/local cultural spaces with new, or transformed, figurations and mediations. The first part returns to the concept of habitus, introduced by Elias in *The Civilising Process* well before Pierre Bourdieu's framework, and now inserts it in a broader interference matrix for the individual's dispositions. Including those that are actually biographical and are considered here from a more up-to-date perspective of the ways of perceiving life and its narratives. The second part is based on figurations (a conceptual pillar of Elias' sociology, also constitutive of the habitus), though it crosses its chain of interdependencies with the other notion of mediations. Various kinds of mediation, from broad to specific, that today redefine cultural spaces, especially the artistic ones as an example here, by means of translocal processes and a complex chess-game of powers. Interferences and interdependencies are thus two issues that, associated with Elias and exploited in this way, contribute to the drafting of a framework for individuals, their lives and cartographies.

Keywords: Norbert Elias, sociology of the individual, auto/biography, habitus, figurations and mediations, cultural and artistic spaces

1. How we became ourselves [1]

This essay on individuals, their biographies and cultural spaces, which are approached in dialogue with the legacy of Norbert Elias, also aims to re-think some of his concepts – or the ways of considering or using them under contemporary circumstances. It is a re-encounter with a beloved author – since my initiation into sociology – although, for this paper, I should not only think of him. What could I add to the countless expert views, books and articles on Elias? It is, rather, to think with and even beyond him about some aspects of the present times, and with a line of reasoning that I recognize that I have greatly discovered in him, as in other authors quoted through the essay. Some of them will be discussed here, but the important point is to recognize how much I have learnt from them all.

We could commence by quoting *The Society of Individuals* ([1991b] 1993), one of Elias's key works on the topic, but I would not like to miss the opportunity to recall the emotion and fascination with which, at an earlier stage, still as a student, I read another *opus magnum***:** *The Civilizing Process* ([1939] 1989, 1990). Magnificent pages with the history – a historical sociology with Elias' profoundness – of the long development of its figurations, processes and changes, which constructed us as individuals on the Western path of individualisation especially from the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

How we became what we are: this was a fertile revelation in the history of how the individual is structured by a civilisational transformation through the double sociogenetic and psychogenetic process that simultaneously runs through and explains the political formation of states, the regulation of violence, the dialectic of distinction and inequality among groups, classes and cultures, the development of manners, mentalities, behaviours and values, the borders between the public and the private, and the structures of the personality. I was fascinated by the inimitable way in which Norbert Elias gave us this vast civilisational portrait with the complexity and pulsation of time, and the bridges between comprehensiveness and detail, the global and local, episodes and history, and theory and empiria. And, no less, by Elias' so personal and powerful writing, with a clarity and depth that should still be an inspiration for distinctly more rhetorical meta-theory.

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[1] Expanded version of the paper presented at the conference *Beyond dichotomous thinking: the society of individuals. The legacy and continuing relevance of Norbert Elias's sociology*, organized by Polo delle Scienze Sociali, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Florence, 7-8 October 2010. The text was also presented at the Open Session *Indivíduos e Espaços Culturais (Individuals and Cultural Spaces)* that I held at ISCTE/IUL on 25 October 2010. A part was also presented at another Open Session: *O Espaço Biográfico Contemporâneo* (*The Contemporary Biographical Space*), held at ISCTE/IUL on 19 November 2009. A shorter version with the title "Rethinking individuals: new figurations" will appear in the special issue: "Eredità e attualità di Norbert Elias" in *Cambio. Rivista sulle Trasformazioni Sociali*, 2; Dipartimento di scienza della politica e sociologia, Università degli Studi di Firenze. Translation by Colin Archer, whom I would like to thank for the care and clarity with which he has interpreted this and other, already published, papers of mine.
 The essay is also part of a diptych with the previous text of which the first part is partially retrieved here for another context of discussion: "Crossed concepts: identity, habitus and reflexivity in a revised framework", *CIES e-Working Papers*, No. 113 http://www.cies.iscte.pt/destaques/documents/CIES-WP113_Conde.pdf

To sum up, a fascination with this non-dichotomous thinking, against the oppositions between individualism and holism, action and structure, subjectivity and society, synchrony and diachrony, macro and micro analysis. It is also a fascination with the singularity of an author who introduced the connections between drives, emotions and power into sociology. Dimensions of the human condition always lay on Elias' horizon ([1985a]1992), ones that the civilising process moulded, combining two types of regulation: social constraints, normative, institutional and political, and self-control which individuals apply from within themselves, from their bodies, feelings and emotions, and from public life to the intimacy of their being.[2] For this reason, the sociology of Norbert Elias does not restrict itself to individuals: this is rather a sociology of society with and of the individual.[3]

From other perspectives, the historic course from individuality to more modern forms could be described as ontological metamorphoses. To recall Marcel Mauss' famous essay on the construction of the "category of the person", passages that introduced a new psychological, moral, metaphysical and legal basis for the old Latin notion of the person: "from the mask to the role, from the role to the individual, from the individual to the person, from the person to the self" (Mauss, 1985: 357, 347). [4] Even in the context of what is called contemporary individualism, this metamorphic and plural process continues towards the "self" if we keep sight of its ambivalent or ambivalently interpreted declinations. A "self" that can be associated with more anomic and narcissistic forms of the "minimal self" and the "fall of the public man" (as Christopher Lasch and Richard Sennet wrote in the opening-up to individualism in the 1980s[5]), or the almost contrary. The "maximal self" that became common since the 1990s, overflowing, for some even lacerated, with the multi-faceted experience of its subjectivity, reflexivity and identity. [6]

I do not intend to run through all this fluctuation around individuals but, in the main, to consider them in relation with Elias' perspective and some recent sociology that has assumed them as a centre of gravity. Better said, sociologies of individuals, which, though diversified, establish a specific line in which the apparently common notion of the individual is now, in fact,

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[2] However, the intimacy experienced with a sense of individual identity, which has asserted itself since the transition from the late Middle Ages to the Renaissance, has an archaeology that comes from Greek culture and the religious influence of confession, in particular as it was promoted with the Reformation. Among other references, see: Foucault, 1984a, 1984b; Hahn, 1986; Braunstein, 1990; and, more generally, Ariès and Duby, 1990. An essay on values that I have not forgotten since earlier readings on this subject is that of Agnes Heller (1982) *O Homem do Renascimento.*

[3] For some overviews, see: Goudsblom and Mennell, 1998; Mennell, 1989a, 1992; Mouzelis, 1993; Heinich 1997; Fletcher, 1997; Garrigou and Lacroix, 1997; Krieken, 1998; Salumets, 2001; Smith, 2001; Mennell and Dunning, 2003; Loyal and Quilley, 2004; Quintaneiro, 2004; Kilminster, 2007 ; Cahier, 2006 ; VV.AA., 2010a ; Gabriel and Mennell, 2011.

[4] Mauss' essay, "Une catégorie de l'esprit humain: la notion de personne, celle de 'Moi' ", was originally published in 1938. Other references: Dumont, 1983; Lukes, 1973; Carrithers, Collins and Lukes, 1985; Luhumann, 1985; Sosna and Welbery, 1985; Birnbaum and Leca, 1986 ; Taylor, 1994; Burkitt, 1991; Béjar, 1993; Cohen, 1994; Camps, 1996. Further references below in note 86.

[5] Lasch, 1984, 1991; Sennet, 1977, 1988; Lipovetsky, 1989.

[6] Gergen, 1991; Giddens, 1991, 1992; Bauman, 2000, 2001, 2004; Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman, 2005. Further references on the issue of identity appear in Idalina Conde (2011a).

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a double sign (sometimes ambiguous) of both proximity to and difference from Norbert Elias' sociology. Moreover, in both directions, if we compare it with other current trends that challenge the choice of a single line of reflection, the basic question is: how can the sociology of individuals, with the accent particularly on singularity, be reconciled with the sociology of our transculture, i.e. transverse dimensions that dim or reconstitute the mark of the difference(s), borders and autochthonies in contemporary societies? I mean the trilogy of global, media and consumer culture and the inter/multicultural dynamics and new forms of urban, visual, technological and information culture. Like the impact of flows and networks on relationships, communication, the economy, power, meaning and identity.

The first part opens up this reflexive ambivalence in two directions on symmetrical processes of de/singularisation that requires conceptual proposals to and re-situate individuals in these trends and in trans/local cultural spaces with new or transformed configurations and mediations. My intention is to return to a key concept in this relationship of individuals with their contexts: the *habitus* that Norbert Elias explored, from *The Civilising Process* to *The Germans. Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* ([1989] 1996). Another *opus magnum* which was published, fortunately, a year before his death and reconfirms how habitus had already been introduced into sociology long before the uses and reconceptualisations by Pierre Bourdieu.[7]

What I shall try to give, then, is a brief and eclectic recontextualisation of habitus. Transformed, moreover, into the outcome of multiple dimensions among which the "traditional" ones are added to the more contemporary such as those of transculture. A main reference for postmodernity (late or advanced modernity as some prefer) after the great and rapid changes of the last three decades. Besides, this larger content for the habitus (thus, just below, re-named "dispositions", not to be confused with other conceptions) takes account of the specific biographical dimension. That is, aspects of individuals' lives and their narratives that should be given prominence because they shape dispositions and because they are, precisely, re-shaped in a wider contemporary biographical space. How it is composed and by what polyphonic trends and impulses have become primary questions to understand today's individuals: both their singularity and common lives.

Since recontextualisation has other levels if we are to rethink Elias' concepts and, at the core, the concept of figurations, it is necessary to bring in mediations as another key notion. Various mediations that run through and structure society, individuals and their spaces, from transverse types like the media, new technologies, networks and discourses to more specific

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[7] The same, moreover, could be said about the dialectic of the distinction between classes and cultures, which is closely associated with Bourdieu's work (1979). Elias had also introduced it long before in his work *The Civilising Process*. To avoid repeating references, except in some cases, see those for Pierre Bourdieu in Conde (2011a), a complementary text in which I discuss Bourdieu's concept of habitus. In this essay I discuss other aspects of Pierre Bourdieu'sociology, especially for the artistic and cultural areas, and will cite only some of the references to him.

ones in certain (e.g. professional) areas of activity. How can they be crossed with configurations in Elias' sense? We move, then, from interferences in the habitus or dispositions that produce individuals (and that they produce) to the issue of their interdependencies in the figurations. This is the question for the last part of this text, which is concluded after a round of different mediations and mediating processes, in cultural and artistic domains.

Interferences and interdependencies are thus two complementary issues.[8] To sum up, on the road to responses that have now been renewed, though many are certainly still open to the initial question underlying my fascination with Norbert Elias and the civilising process: how did we become what we are?

2. Individuals – interferences and dispositions

Without covering the whole of the conceptual and empirical trajectory of habitus, we may consider the main aspects of this "system" (Bourdieu's term) or "configuration" (Elias' term) of dispositions that are socially incorporated into individuals and generate their practices, values, representations and orientations. Thus, both structured – historically grounded, as it is termed in Elias – and mutable by the individual's action and reflexivity. In addition, a coherent comparison of perspectives on habitus should not only consider how it appears in Elias' "figurational sociology" and Bourdieu's "theory of practice" but also how it can be converted into alternative concepts in other theoretical formulations. They, too, on the road of a different non-dichotomous way of thinking to the mutual overlapping of structure and agency: e.g. Anthony Giddens (2000)' "structuration theory", which has become, moreover, a dominant paradigm.[9]

My priority is given to various references to enlarge the framework for the individuals, and even beyond the current sociology for them. As I have addressed it before, it is indeed differentiated by authors and academic contexts and looks at the singularity of individuals or the plurality that they represent in their dispositions, practices, subjectivities, rationalities, that appear in "individual grammars" or "the actors' regimes".[10] A habitual lexicon in the French context, expanded by other notions like self, agency and reflexivity, which reflect a more Anglo-Saxon origin and the influence of Giddens and similar sociologists. So they strengthen the actionalist (and emancipating) sense of the individual, as well as being related with the empowerment and citizenship within the workings of our "institutionalized individualism" in "risk societies" with the weakening of the Welfare State (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994).[11]

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[8] They were used previously as "crossing" guidelines for a framework of "crossed" concepts, the habitus and the notion of identity (Conde, 2011a).
[9] The same for Anthony Giddens: see references in Conde (2011a).
[10] See Martucelli and Singly (2009). For further references, see Idalina Conde (2011a). This previous text, which is partly retrieved here, develops a broader reflection on the issue of identity and globalization. as I have addressed it before (Conde 2011a),
[11] References in Conde (2011a).

Through the various prisms[12], these perspectives go thus against cohesive and/or determinist perceptions of habitus – which concerns Bourdieu and Elias' totalising concept – and especially the actionalism that attaches importance to voluntarist and reflexive processes in the self-construction instead of the reproductive effect in the habitus. In France, some outlooks have, precisely, aroused renewed debates among commentators on Bourdieu, of whom Bernard Lahire (2002) is the leading example with his new "dispositional sociology". [13] Based on portraits of the individual's plural dispositions (with illustrations produced by massive empirical work) it shows how every individual may combine diverse modes of socialization/incorporation as well the construction and "activation" of dispositions throughout the different contexts of action. Taking another line, we can recall the "sociology of experience" that François Dubet (1994) introduced earlier to analyse the relationship between the heterogeneity of the individual's performances. So, what Dubet calls the "work of the actor", to produce a non-fragmented and non-volatile subject throughout different areas, contacts and involvements, is a practical, reflexive and subjective kind of work that converts the individual and the whole of identity into an activity, a process.[14]

In this way, subjectivity and subjectivation as a construction inherent in the individual may appear as resistance to heteronomy and indifferentiation. They are, nevertheless, emphasised in other viewpoints as "core" processes in contemporary societies. Now, a perspective actually parallel to that sociology of individuals because it belongs more to the sociology of culture, and in this case concerning collective patterns such as the de-singularisation produced by what, above, I called transculture (Conde, 2011a). Certainly, it seems a highly inclusive word for all the types of content and flows circulating around the world that shape our lifestyles, imaginaries and identities (Conde, 2000a, 2000c). Anyway, it serves to bring here individuals' forked perceptions and introduce this specific wing into their dispositions.

Figure 1 may supplement, then, the "narrow" senses of habitus, inserting these *de-singularising cross-cultural dimensions* in a broad matrix of interferences including the cosmopolitan features of the individuals. I prefer to call it transculture, instead "global culture",

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[12] For the French context, Martucelli and Singly (2009: 50-80) mention at least four axes in which different approaches are developed with the following issues. One, on how individuals are constituted by various *incorporations* that configure their habitus or dispositions. The second, on how they deal with norms, values, codes and regulations. So, with the issue of what we may call *reactions*, be it of conformity, resilience or resistence to various forms of "governability" that run through their lives, from the intimate sphere and their own body to their relationship with institutional, bureaucratic and legal frameworks (the state, hierarchies, orders of legitimacy, etc.). A third axis is concerned, rather, with the *relationships* involved in identity configurations, the self with its others, on which the essential dimensions involved in identity configurations (support, affection, recognition) depend. Finally, in the fourth axis, the main question is how individuals are also constructed by their confrontation with trials/tests and *enjeux* throughout the different contexts and challenges in their lives. An axis with the issue of both their competences and experience, particularly as François Dubet considers it in his sociology.
[13] More references in Conde (2011a).
14 As François Dubet states in his sociology of this experience, this "work of the actor", to run processes across the institutional, interpersonal and intimate spheres, requires at least three forms of action: integration, strategy and subjectification.

because of its multidimensionality. Not reduced (as the notion of global culture is often interpreted) to the "Macdonaldisation of the world" notably under the imperialism of the media and the cultural industries (Conde, 2011a). Besides these patterns of consumption, the other meanings of the transculture include the literacy produced by informational and communicational flows; the multiculturality that extends even beyond the multiculturalism related to minorities or ethnic segmentations to become a multiple experience of diversity.[15] And, obviously not least, the commitment (ethical and political) to the contemporary citizenship with forms of transnational activism and "causes", as happens in the areas of human rights, the environment and planetary governance, among other global issues and movements.

Surprisingly, these dimensions, so relevant in our time, have been quite removed from the debates on habitus in the notion of Bourdieu, as well as, now comprehensibly, of Norbert Elias, who died precisely at the beginning of the 1990s. A decade of many turns towards the present situation. That moment also coincided with the publication of *The Germans*, Elias' great work on his total historical and national perspective of habitus. The "second nature" or "embodied social learning" of individuals in the long timespan of their contexts and cultures, which connects the social structure with the structure of the personality and is expressed in ways of life, attitudes, and codes of behaviour and thought.

Therefore, *The Germans* does not belong to the age of globalisation as it expanded since the 1990s (with the new technologies), the translocal condition and its trends, which reorganise the framework of time and space and the reference points of our lives. Though in this book, as in the others by Elias, the backbone of his thinking is the issue of interdependencies and tensions that define a figuration: its range, its perimeter, its set of players, their mutual relationships and power-ratio. A key notion between nations, similar to all kinds of social formation with a variable geometry of both exchanges and power asymmetries: institutions, places, groups etc. Then, it is a book not just about German issues; conceptually, it remains a reference of figurational sociology because of those interdependencies that became, at the end, the huge paradigm of our "age of (electronic) connections."

In Elias' figurational thinking the interdependencies are even the very condition for the comprehension of the singularities of every nation, state and culture. Like his conception of the collective habitus in *The Germans* that is against all essentialist, static and ideological notions of a "national character"; rather, mutable and always in relation to the state-formation process and its socio-political, cultural and generational figurations, which are particularly addressed in this book.[16] Furthermore, *The Germans* also goes back to the long timespan involved in the

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[15] A close or media experience of exposure to the otherness in public re/presentations (discursive, media-related, image-related)
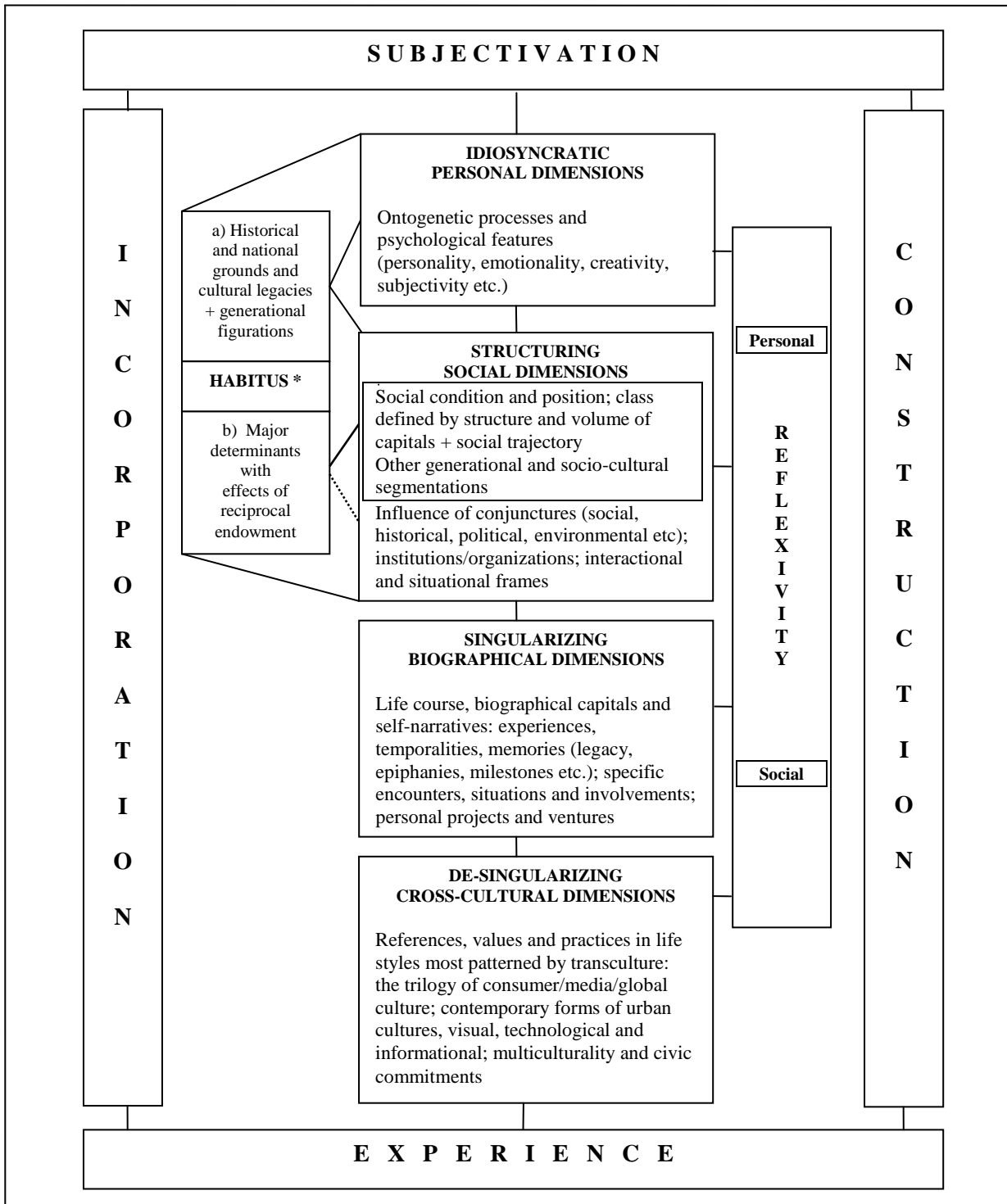
[16] Generations and the relationship between the sexes are central, here, to an analysis of power struggles, cultural changes, freedom movements for dominated groups (young people and women), and a "spurt of informalisation" in social relations, which introduced new civilisational configurations in Europe in the 20th century. The book opens

formation of habitus, with the structuring role of the past in the civilising curve of the world's nations. For the past is never simply the past, as Elias repeats so often, and even less so for Germany. It was to return to haunt the present with its traditions, traumas and "missions" and in *The Germans* we see how they influenced "the breakdown of civilization": Hitler's rise to power and the tragedy of the Holocaust.[17]

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with precisely these aspects (the chapter "Civilization and Informalization", pp. 21-120, with the first point on "Changes in European Standards of Behaviour in the Twentieth Century") before the historical digression on Germany and nationalism. As well as the figuration of relationships between individuals and groups such as generations, particularly addressed in this book because of its important role in German history.
[17] Norbert Elias, "The Breakdown of Civilization", in *The Germans* (1996: 299-402). See also Dunning and Mennell (1998).

Figure 1: INDIVIDUALS
Dimensions of the Interferences in Dispositions

S U B J E C T I V A T I O N

I N C O R P O R A T I O N

C O N S T R U C T I O N

a) Historical and national grounds and cultural legacies + generational figurations

HABITUS *

b) Major determinants with effects of reciprocal endowment

IDIOSYNCRATIC PERSONAL DIMENSIONS

Ontogenetic processes and psychological features (personality, emotionality, creativity, subjectivity etc.)

STRUCTURING SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

Social condition and position; class defined by structure and volume of capitals + social trajectory
Other generational and socio-cultural segmentations

Influence of conjunctures (social, historical, political, environmental etc); institutions/organizations; interactional and situational frames

SINGULARIZING BIOGRAPHICAL DIMENSIONS

Life course, biographical capitals and self-narratives: experiences, temporalities, memories (legacy, epiphanies, milestones etc.); specific encounters, situations and involvements; personal projects and ventures

DE-SINGULARIZING CROSS-CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

References, values and practices in life styles most patterned by transculture: the trilogy of consumer/media/global culture; contemporary forms of urban cultures, visual, technological and informational; multiculturality and civic commitments

Personal

R E F L E X I V I T Y

Social

E X P E R I E N C E

* Complementary views of the habitus:
 a) main references in Elias' work, e.g. in *The Germans* ([1989]1996)
 b) the current uses of Pierre Bourdieu's concept

So, to a greater extent than in Bourdieu, Elias' habitus involves the historical dimension: heritages and national cultures, exactly as happens in *The Germans*. But it is, indeed, at this point that it may be questioned for the present moment, because we realize two directions of change since the first publication of the book around 20 years ago: on the one hand, the global arenas that intermix nation states, governance, economy etc., as the transculture that weakens the national cultures through processes of indifferentiation; on the other, the "presentist regime of historicity" (Hartog, 2003) as our accelerated and highly mediatised experience of time, with a volatility (and amnesias) that may make the sedimentations of the habitus more fragile or contingent.

How Societies Remember (1989) and *How Modernity Forgets* (2009, 2008) are, for example, an eloquent dyad of titles for books by Paul Connerton, published ten years apart, though still raising a third question about our re/constructive relationship with the past. In fact, parallel to the "presentism", nostalgia and the commemorative culture as the "multi-form mobilisation of remembrance against forgetfulness" [18] are are held in our time with high esteem for the past. Whether it is in history, whose legacy, from the events to the myths, is in the meantime being excavated and rewritten by a more post-modern, de-constructivist and de-sanctifying culture, or through the processes of capturing memory,. Be it at a personal and biographical level or that of the "archives" of social, oral and popular memories: the history that is still alive by its stories.

Finally, habitus is total for Elias because it unites the two processes of psychogenesis and sociogenesis. We see it being constructed and operating in his dense descriptions/analyses with equally overall and detailed scrutiny: a spiral that, in the same thread of meaning, "rolls up" fragments and huge *frescoes* of reality, people and their intimacy into large institutional and social formations. Hence, for a way of thinking that rejects the compartmentalisation of levels, layers and categories, the segmentation of Figure 1 into sets of dimensions of the individuals reflect this dialectic and process with difficulty. Futher, the same could be said for the set of *idiosyncratic personal dimensions*, which are inseparable in Elias from others in an overall ontogenetic process: the being of individuals with that of their environments.

Figure 1 accentuates them to indicate what can be least explained, or totally explained, by sociology (especially other sociologies), though it explains the processes of subjectivation across this configuration: the specificity of a person, certainly never separate from the social environment and, yet, an inner world most approachable through psychology, psychoanalysis or

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[18] Lapierre, 1989 ; Ferro, 1989 ; Samuel and Thompson, 1994 ; Fentress and Wickham, 1994 ; Yow, 1994; Ricoeur, 2000 ; Martin, 2000 ; Jelin, 2002 ; Arostegui, 2004 ; Perks and Thompson, 2006; Oliveira 2010; VV.AA.1993 ; VV.AA. 2005; VV.AA.2006 a; AA.VV. 2008b. See also "Le témoignage" (Pollak and Heinich, 1986) an important reference retrieved recently in Heinich (2011).

other perspectives, even biological.[19] In many works the sociological perspective does what is possible: it follows the traces of subtle or radical differences inscribed by that idiosyncrasy in the combined processes of other dimensions: structuring, singularising, de-singularising…

Preserving the umbrella notion of dispositions, the diagram[20] merely attempts to achieve a wider and multidimensional view of individuals. More precisely, a figuration of multiple interferences in a re-named habitus (a large ensemble of dispositions), as I said before, not to be mistaken with other authors. And I adopt the term 'interferences' instead of 'determinations' to avoid a restricted conception of causality, which in turn tends to superpose the structural and institutional effects on the habitus – as is usual in Bourdieu. But, broadly, even my set of *structuring social dimensions* brings them together with others that are less evident in some of his studies: more conjunctural, events-based, situational or interactional because they are parts of the multifaceted experience of the individual. A crucial notion that anchors the framework in Figure 1 because experience is the *ground* that introduces openness into it: diversity, versatility, fluidity, contingence, indeterminacy. So, both individual modelling and agency occur, indeed, in diverse and combining ways. How the dispositions of each one compound all interferences and with what prominent features is, then, more a matter of research than a causal presupposition.

The multiple interferences express this "internal" plurality of individuals, thus possibly breaking the coherent *gestalt* of the habitus, along with their reflexive autonomy and ability to transform it. This is why reflexivity appears as a mediation for the processes of self-construction, in two senses, personal and social; from the "internal conversation" (Archer, 2003)[21] with which individuals cogitate and rationalise their experience to the social competence provided to them by the knowledge, expert knowledge and other resources available to embed it in agency. A socio-cultural and "institutional" reflexivity, to use Giddens' terminology, that is constitutive of late/post modernity and so is part of our diagnoses, choices and foresights.[22]

Reflexivity, a polysemic notion, deserves further clarification, as I have already remarked (Conde, 2011a). To confine myself to a note on the central role that it has won in the social sciences, it suffices to recall that it seems concomitant with the coefficient of information and literacy in our societies and carries a "cognitive" vision of the individual. Incidentally, quite "Giddensian" or inspired by him in contemporary sociology. However, such a twisted representation of individuals, so to speak, may be due to the two effects of theory and reality

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[19] Which he has reinterpreted, historicising naturalised entities/objects in psychoanalysis; see Elias (2010b), an edition with different texts from the years 1950, 1965, 1980.

[20] As I said before (Conde, 2011a), this conceptual "decompartmentalisation" began with an earlier essay aiming to understand the ways to construct the singularity of artists. From charismatic to pragmatic, this singularity is an essential trait of these individual (and status-related) identities: Conde (1992, 1996b, 2000b, 2001c, 2008a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009g, 2011b), among other references.

[21] See further references to this author in Conde (2011a).

[22] For further considerations of reflexivity and its role in the construction of personal projects as the motor of agency, see Conde (2011a).

because part of the answer to the initial question – how did we become ourselves? – involves this sociological filter through which we have become highly cognitive beings. Not to say even more than emotional ones, as Elias saw, accompanying us in the civilising process. But the question still persists when we want to encounter Elias' thinking and debate certain sociological trends: did we truly become definable mostly by this "leap in civilisation" of reflexivity, which represents a supplement, tool or resource for self-regulation (Giddens identifies it with self-monitoring) or is it also due to the turbidity of a cognitivist turn (particularly sociological) that confines the vector, so essential, of the emotions, the pulsional impulses and our "irrationality" to a darker zone of the social and personal?

Be that as it may, reflexivity participates in the dialectic of incorporation/construction and brings voluntarism into individuals' actions and awareness. In other words, the intentionality with which they interpret and may change the conditions and/or directions in their lifes and ties - as we say for identities, the belonging vs becoming (Conde, 2011a). That is the reason why Figure 1 does not neglect the effects actually produced by biography, always an interplay of the probable, the possible and decision. To quote Wright Mills' words in *The Sociological Imagination* of 1959, which could equally be written today, biography is, then, a necessary pathway to encounter these different lines of personal history, with collective history as an open horizon:

"The human variety also includes the variety of individual human beings; these too the sociological imagination must grasp and understand. In this imagination an Indian Brahmin of 1850 stands alongside a pioneer farmer of Illinois; an eighteenth-century English gentleman alongside an Australian aboriginal, together with a Chinese peasant of 100 years ago, a politician in Bolivia today, a feudal knight of France, an English suffragette on hunger strike in 1914, a Hollywood starlet, a Roman patrician. To write of 'man' is to write of all these men and women – also of Goethe, and of the girl next door (…). Within an individual's biography and within a society's history, the social task of reason is to formulate choices, to enlarge the scope of human decisions in the making of history. The future of human affairs is not just some set of variables to be predicted. The future is what is to be decided – within the limits, to be sure, of historical possibility. But this possibility is not fixed; in our time the limits seem very broad indeed." (Mills, 1959: 133, 174)[23]

Indeed, the *singularizing biographical dimensions* in the matrix alert us to elements that are rather clouded by the habitus in a narrow sense and demand an incursion into biography with regard to its web of meanings, levels of analysis and new contexts. Actually, they even challenge traditional ways of doing research in sociology and the restricted conception of the "personal" in people's lives.

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[23] In Pàmpols (2006) we have a brief journey through various uses and models of the "biographical imagination" in sociology and anthropology, from pioneering studies to the present.

3. Passage through biography

Beginning with a plural notion of auto/biography as it is increasingly recognized, we must then take again a multidimensional approach that requires at least five accounts or hermeneutic rotations of an individual life. The first, the most common in sociological paths, is to see biography as a *trajectory* in the double sense, personal and social; a peculiar form of treading the collective paths to which the individual belongs (of profession, class, generation etc). But, considering biography as an individual's *life course* (Giele and Elder, 1998) crossed by other anchorages, movements and calendars, a second account must still reconstitute the multiplicity of relationships and chronotropies (spaces and temporalities) that make the specificity or uniqueness of this life course.

Thirdly, the way in which it is due to personal *projects* is an essential question for biographical inquiry because, as I have already noted (Conde, 2011a), despite different scopes, formulations and degrees of obstinacy, practicability or idealism, the important point is to recognize that the very transitive nature of all projects (purposes vs expected or imagined outcomes) installs intentionality (also reflexivity) and deliberation at the centre of life. They have the metamorphic power through action, decisions, to open a field of possibilities, not only pre-defined (so well closed) by probabilities. This sort of praxis contradicts teleology or determinism, as Wright Mills' words reminded us, and the projects emblematize "prefigurative cultures" and identities in postmodernity. And equally relevant for such a perspective is a fourth account of the *biographical capitals* involved in the life course, to be understood in two senses: as material legacies and also as skills, e.g., the practical and reflexive competence learnt in the experience of life and carried (as well activated) by memory. [24] Personally embodied and bodily expressed[25] they constitute, then, a key reference to the individual's singularity – be it that of a multiple self.

Finally, the fifth account is concerned with own *narratives*, anchoring the fundamental role of memory, too. Personal narratives to be approached in the two axes of self-telling and self-making, which correspond, respectively, to discursive and identity modelling(s) in these stories. However, it should be noted that self-making is not simply in the sense of "ontological strategies" producing manipulations (constructions, representations) of the self. So to speak, like the "mythological rearranging of one's life-history" with an instrumental role, self-referential and self-regulatory for an ego marked out by the "secret mythology of oneself" (Hankiss, 1981:

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[24] On this point, I return to the reference in Conde (2011a) to personal and family possessions as biographical assets that carry the individual's self-history, identity and images, from traditional to new devices that have changed self re/presentations in the private and public realms: e.g. furniture, books, letters, photographs, sites, blogs, YouTube, etc.
[25] In certain cases by very peculiar symbols like tattoos and other body accessories and languages; see references in Conde (2011a).

203-209).[26] Beyond this part, self-making must be approached in the other sense of discourses with agency potential, i.e. a reflexive return with regard to practice, to remodel it. It exists today in various emancipating or empowering uses of life stories, from the pedagogical to the therapeutic.[27]

In fact, this revaluing of the narrative as a re/constitutive dimension of the individual belongs to the turns that have transformed the biographical approaches since the first "biographical turn" in the early 1980s.[28] That time, a coherent movement with the "return of the actor" in the social sciences, to use Alain Touraine's expression (1984, 1996). So, for the biographical incursion, it matters what individuals say (the contents of a life story) and how they say it (the modes of presentation), a second level that diversifies the perception of narratives. Narrative is indeed a plastic notion for many connotations and approaches that were relaunched in the social sciences with the "narrative turn" itself. A second direction concomitant with the biographical turn, concerned with narratives from the broadest perspective in peoples' lives to specific analysis of auto/biographical discourses produced by individuals, their biographers, and researchers (sociologists, anthropologists, historians, etc.).[29]

After the first movement in the 80s, the biographical took the new impulses from the 1990s and the current issues became extensively transversal, as Figure 2 indicates. The traditional use of life stories as other testimonial accounts of cultures, communities and singularities are now the subject of renewed gatherings, alongside other agendas that emerged for the contemporary lives. For instance, those connected with, migration and the diaspora, ethnicity and multiculturality, risk and uncertainty, and various aspects of citizenship as well with the multiple temporalities. An issue that has acquired a great prominence, too.[30]

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[26] Which serves it as a methodology for autobiographical thematisation. In brief, one "myth(od)ology" with a causality that may confer a personal coherence and incorporate a life's past in its present, guaranteeing a symbiotic relationship between the "before" and "after", the "old" and the "new". These aspects were particularly addressed in Conde (1994).

[27] As happens in non-formal and adult education, a field with a large bibliography, of which I merely point out the following titles: Josso, 1991; Delory-Momberger, 2000, 2003; Dominicé, 2003, 2007; Boutinet, Gaston Pineau and Noel Denoyel, 2007; Bachelart and Pineau, 2009; Aníbal, 2011. A useful site is that of ASIHVIF - Association Internationale des Histoires de Vie en Formation et de Recherche Biographique en Éducation: http://www.asihvif.com/ See other biographical uses for self-knowledge and intervention as in the field of "clinical sociology": Gulejac, Hanique and Roche, 2007; Mercier and Rhéaume, 2007; Gaulejac and Legrand, 2008.

[28] A movement first noticed during the early 80s and, with a new drive, a decade ago: Bertaux, 1981; Levi, 1989; Ferrarotti, 1990, 1991, 2006; Conde, 1993a, 1993b, 1993d, 1994c, 1999a; VV. AA, 1994c; Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf, 2000; Roberts, 2002; AA.VV, 2006b.

[29] For references to multiple narrative approaches, see, for example: Ochs and Capps, 2002; Langellier and Peterson, 2004; Berger and Quinney, 2004; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998; Smith and Watson, 2001; Andrews, Scater, Squire and Treacher, 2004; Riessman, 2007; Taylor and Littleton, 2006; Erasga, 2010.
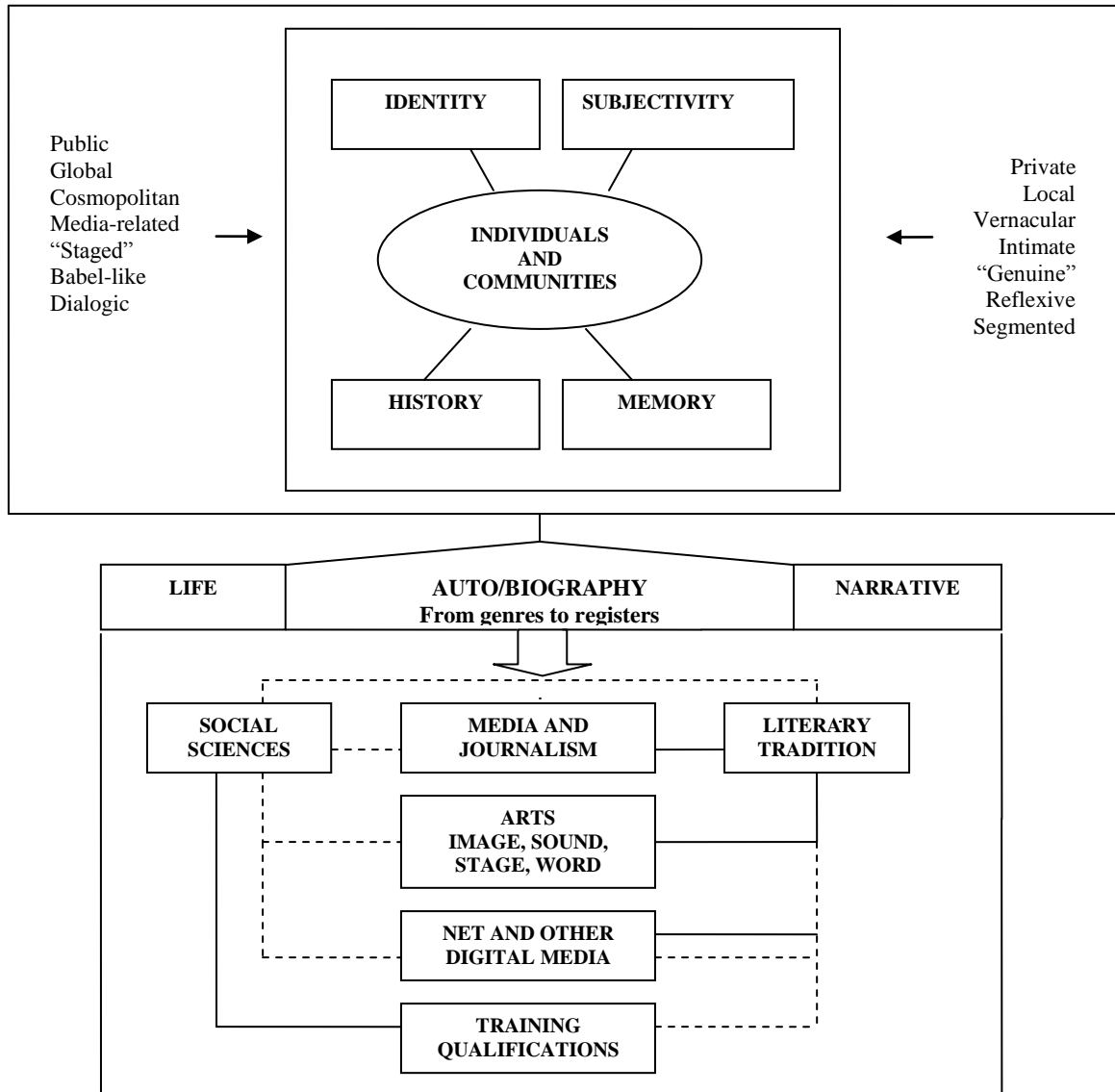
[30] Some references : Roberts, 2002; De Conninck and Guillot, 2007 ; Demazière and Dubar, 2005; Demaziere, 2007 ; Varro, 2008 ; VV.AA. (2004c, 2006b, 2005c, 2007a, 2008h, 2009, 2010b, 2010d, 2011a).

Figure 2. CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACHES

TURNS:	ISSUES:
Post-structuralist: with reference to individuals, subjectivity, contingency	De/centring, plurality, reflexivity and reconstructions of the subject
Biographical: in various traditions and registers; in the social sciences, with two impetuses since the 1980s; in history associated with oral history, historical biography and the relationship with memory in different "regimes of historicity"	Multiculturality, dialogue and identity/otherness Oral tradition, writing and memory in the construction of cultural and identity heritages
Discursivist: with narrative and de/construction occupying the central ground	Glo(c)alisation, diaspora and contextual remapping
Culturalist: ethnographic and post-colonial	Mediatisation, interdiscursiveness and hybridisation of the public/private spheres
Ethical and political: overlapping civic and emancipating dimensions in the notions of agency and community	Citizenship, literacy, empowerment and inclusion

In addition, the definition of biography itself has gained more varied hues (namely in the literary, journalistic and documentary forms) and a new extension in what may be called the contemporary biographical field (Arfuch, 2002). Another emerging multidisciplinary notion, for the diversity of registers, experiences and narratives regarding life that shows how the "biographical" is produced and circulates today in a wide, highly mediatised, interdiscursive, polysemic and hybrid context. So a that permeates our subjectivity, identity, memory and history: the four main axes for the individuals and communities. As Figure 3 shows, it is reflexive and media-oriented even for the most intimate forms, public and private, trans/local and multi/cultural, cosmopolitan and vernacular. Babel-like and dialogic in the polyphony of voices about life, but a biographical field that is simultaneously unequal or segmented in the ways in which each voice speaks and lays claim to its "truth".

Figure 3. THE CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHICAL FIELD:
Coordinates and References

In brief, it is an exclusive area - a figuration - that also transforms the conventions of genres (e.g. the typical auto/biographies), and it even challenges the limits of the usual models in the social sciences (e.g. life stories and the individual portraits that are recently promoted in sociology) to capture life because there is more life, indeed, beyond them. That is, the life that takes place from the erratic to the kind organised in different "templates", through diverse devices and marks of the witness: in daily life and its stories, in the body, in writing, in the words and images of documentaries and fiction, along the accounts of the social sciences. Further, life and the individual self are equally sublimated and de/constructed, nowadays, on the diversified stage of the media, from traditional screens and press interviews to the cyberspace with its multiple possibilities for the digital narratives, storytelling, and self-presentations in sites, blogs, youtube, facebook,etc. (Lejeune, 2000; Cauquelin, 2003 ; Lopes, 2009).

For this reason, such plural expressions of life require new approaches to the sociology and methodology of biography besides the traditional protocol hitherto practised. [31] New gains of the "biographical" which become necessary for an understanding of our lives, as each one participates in and is influenced by this intertextual/contextual chain. So, from the same perspective, the broken lines of Figure 3 indicate certain relationships that the social sciences should stimulate with other registers of the auto/biographical, in addition to the aspects that are already quite institutionalised, such as the use of life histories for training and qualifying purposes.[32]

In my opinion, one of the bridges that we may explore should actually be with resources from the so-called literary tradition and adjacent studies with specific knowledge of the auto/biographical protocols and practices. Although it has usually been despised by sociology for its "biographical illusions". I mean, the Pierre Bourdieu's rejection (1986), which criticised literary forms and other uses of the biographical – though, in return, he received a counter-rejection of his own "other illusion", which was structuralist and quite insensitive to the subjectivity and singularity of the individual (Clot, 1989; Conde, 1999; Heinich, 2010; Truc, 2011).[33]

Without entering into this discussion [34], I would simply like to defend the interest of an interdisciplinary approach, especially when we want to develop a consistent analysis of the auto/biographical narratives. And those areas of literary and semiological studies are the most able to address these narratives and their metamorphoses, from the fictional to the interpretative.[35] That is, the *modus operandi* of auto/biographies, videographies, diaries, memoirs etc., which now include new writings and exploitations/expositions of the "I" by different mediums, arts and inter/media (Dion, Fortier, Havercroft and Lüsebrink, 2007; Costa, 2009; Arnold and Soafer, 2008). Moreover, they share certain issues that are similar to those of

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[31] Some overviews and models in Becker, 1986; Ferrarotti, 1991 ; Pujadas, 1992, 2000 ; Poirier, Clapier-Valladon and Raybaut, 1995 ; Roberts, 2002 ; Bertaux, 1997, 2005 ; Pineau and Le Grand, 2007 ; Lechner, 2009.

[32] As illustrated by references in note 27

[33] In a certain way, however, Bourdieu would later soften his reductionism, not only in *La Misère du Monde* (1993), an extensive collection of personal testimonies, with greater importance given to their singularity, but also because he did not resist writing about himself. Although it was what he preferred to call a "sketch of self-analysis", published in 2004, and not autobiography: *Esquisse pour une Auto-analyse.*

[34] I have already done so in Conde (1999). Moreover, it was quite interesting to see, in more recent approaches, the de-centring from the previous notion of "optical illusions", to adopt a perspective – rather reflexive - of a cognitive and relational dynamic involved in biographical research. It is not only to value the involvement by *empathy*, and the inter/subjectivity that is inherent in this kind of research, but to recognize it as a productive tool for *reflexivity*. Including the self-reflexivity of the researcher, as it is praticed by "auto-ethnography" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Trahar, 2009).

[35] Another field with a huge bibliography, of which only a few examples are given below with many references: Conde, 1999; Oliveira, 2003; Salwak, 1996; Morão and Carmo, 2008; Batchelor, 2003; VV.AA. 2003b; Dosse, 2005; Boyer-Weinmann, 2005; Miraux, 2007 ; Montémont and Viollet, 2009; Lejeune and Catherine Bogaert, 2006. Philippe Lejeune's site, http://www.autopacte.org, provides a long list of additional bibliographical references. He himself has been an important author since *Le Pacte Autobiographique* (1975) revisited in *Signes de Vie. Le Pacte Autobiographique 2* (2005). Another site of interest is that of IABA - The International Auto/Biography Association (http://www.theiaba.org/) with references to several journals (http://www.theiaba.org/?page_id=197). See also, some thematic dossiers in VV. AA. (2006c, 2008c, 2008d, 2008e, 2008f).

the social sciences, e.g. identity and self-reflexivity in contemporary culture and, for this reason, I include them in Figure 3.

The other reference to the media and journalism relates to a field that is not dealt with by the usual applications of the biographical method in sociology and anthropology, though it is important in various senses. In the first place for its large biographical production, in particular documentaries and interviews made by journalists; secondly, for the characteristics of the media discursivity on life and the individual, which shapes forms of subjectivity and contemporary remembrance; and thirdly, for its role in the construction of public and political narratives that we share or contest in our citizenship or civic engagement (Pena, 2007; Jacobs, 2004; Andrews, 2007; VV. AA., 2004c).

After the parenthesis on certain aspects of the intertextual (and intercontextual) chain in the contemporary biographical field, we may take a look at another complementary track that continues to seek biography as a means of access to the individual and the singularity possible through processes of differentiation. Singularity and biographies, then, represent processes in personal horizons that sociological research, in interlocution with the individual, can explore on two levels. One relates to content, what they recount to us or tell us as facts of life; the other, that of their narratives, relates to their way of talking and their type of presentation.

Figure 4 exemplifies an application for the first option. It is an operational and flexible framework that I constructed for the sociological biography of artists. The reference to artists may be justified in a text that has Norbert Elias in mind – the acclaimed author of *Mozart. Portrait of a Genius* (Elias[1991]1993, 2010a). Rather modest, my purpose is only to illustrate a research instrument[36] to map dimensions, thematic axes and points of focus in relation to the life of the individual, which also takes account of its multiple temporalities.[37] Its amplitude is variable. It depends on the route through the "fields" of the diagram that may range from reduced comprehensiveness (a biography involving an occupation or some of its fields, which, in the example, represents the "artistic life") to the maximalist version of the biography, to which other life areas are attached (more "lives of the artist").
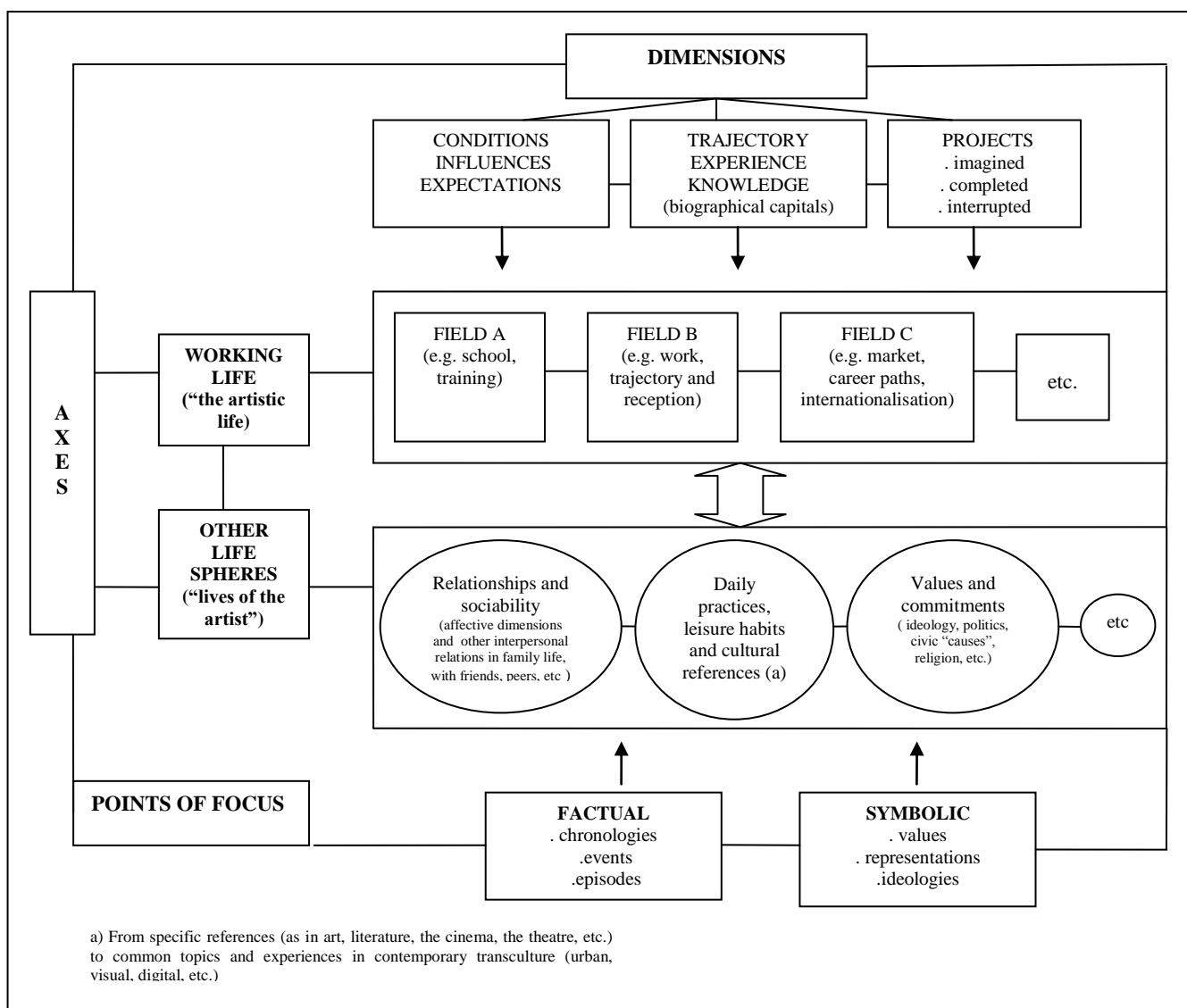
Once again, the diagram hardly appears "Eliasian" (as with Figure 1) in that it divides a global, apparently indivisible process: biography. However, it acts as a compass in the guided and floating navigation that takes place in biographical research. A progressive elucidation, in the two senses of cumulative and reversible by the desired effects of serendipity (precisely, the

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[36] This model appeared in Conde (1993) along with a series of studies on artists, narratives and trajectories: Conde (1991c, 1993c, 1993d, 1994c, 1995b, 1995c, 1996a, 1998a, 1998b, 2001a, 2009a, 2010c, 2011c, 2011d).
[37] It is, then, an account of multiple temporalities that makes the construction of "multi-layered chronological charts" possible (Hiller, 2011) even at the personal level, besides its use for "visualising the intersection of the personal and the social context", as Patrick Hiller (2011) proposes. For other kinds of temporal approach to the artistic domain, see, for example, VV.AA. (2011b).

most hoped-for discoveries in science) that rectify coordinates, issues and starting questions. As a result, the theoretical frames and assumptions that we bear for this journey about (and with) individuals may be redressed. Moreover, it is in this revisability, based on inferential processes in this kind of research which attaches value to induction, that the heuristic comparison between grand and grounded theories lies. Another leap in knowledge, of which the studies become aware when they are skilful in interpreting what the "ground" – i.e. people – brings and says.

Figure 4. THE PERSONAL BIOGRAPHICAL HORIZON
Plan for an Artist's Biography

a) From specific references (as in art, literature, the cinema, the theatre, etc.)
to common topics and experiences in contemporary transculture (urban,
visual, digital, etc.)

What they say and how they say it: a second level that diversifies the perception of narratives. They appear as a plastic notion as I said before, but here I am mainly thinking of those collected by sociological research from among individuals, in which the narrative is not restricted to the more documentary account of contents such as those in Figure 4. As a discourse, narratives must be observed in their compositive *Gestalt*, forms of presentation, identity expressions and mnemonic traces.[38] How does a person recount the story, and with what precisely narrative identity[39] of the authors of a tale, among other reflexive, rhetorical and even fictional resources for it?

Narrative analysis involves several dimensions and levels (Smith and Watson, 2001). One relates to the two axes of self-telling and self-making mentioned above. The other, the ensemble of figures and relationships that weave a life story: the "I's" and "others" of the narrative. It is a plurality that unfolds in the polyhedric individual (in terms of roles, performances, and ways of presenting him/herself) and in the alter-egos distinguished for various reasons (feelings of affection, affinities, competition, influence etc). Mapping and "emplotment" represent another plane that refers to the marking of space and time and the ways of building their plot: what happens, how, why, and with what causal chain. On the other hand, in the several chronologies of a life, events may be assigned status classifications (from "minor", even insignificant to fundamental – positive or negative epiphanies), for their impact in individuals. A different potential for change and agency.

Furthermore, there are planes related to the architecture of the narrative[40], its discursive registers (factual, fictional, confessional, reflective etc), its intentions (mnemonics, repair, revelation, emulation, catharsis) and its appearances or revelations. Ranging from objective to subjective, stories and history, they are always double and, no less, oblique for the fact – let us not forget – that autobiography, like other personal testimonies, is always intertwined with the opaqueness and transparency produced by an "I" that is also recounted as "another". So it is a discourse with the marks of the "distance involved"[41] of individuals with themselves. The

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[38] See, for instance: Denzin, 1989; Demaziere and Dubar, 1997; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998; Taylor and Littleton, 2006; Riessman, 2007.

[39] More reflections on this narrative identity in Conde (1994, 2011e). From victim to hero, the narrator may in fact offer and/or pass through various visages and vary the "talk" throughout the autobiographical narration. The narrator may present him/herself as an individual who affirms his/her difference or singularity or, again, as someone who states his/her independence and self-reflexivity; an actor who dilutes individuality in the identity of statuses and social roles; a person as a type representing the characteristics of a collective category; one who speaks generally as yet another being that belongs to humanity, etc. These variations were mentioned in Conde (1994).

[40] Sequential or chronological; segmented or forked or, again, the circular/recursive narrative, since it returns to an event considered a foundation stone. It may be dramatic, gratifying or revelatory in the sense of unveiling a gift, vacation or destiny. A narrative based, then, on an archaeological causality, dependent on this metonymy-event as a part that contains the whole, which is a fairly frequent narrative variant in artists' personal and biographical memories. I analysed two cases in Conde (1993c, 2011d).

[41] To recall and bring together here the terms of another dialectic that was very dear to Norbert Elias: *Involvement and Detachment* ([1983]1987a, 1997)

individuals, then, with the real and spectral play of mirrors/identities which Rimbaud summarised so well in the poetic trilogy of the I as "he" and another: *Je est un Autre*.[42]

3. Spaces – interdependencies and mediations

This part of my text is different. It follows up the notion of figuration that comes from the habitus and runs through Norbert Elias' sociology, though it now transports it to places which include individuals – some where the notion can be crossed with mediations that also pick up the earlier line of changes with the transculture. But in this move to the second sense of figuration (from the interferences in the habitus to the complementary issue of the interdependencies), we may return to the previous trilogy of the "I". Simply, to have to add the "we", which fails to be said or is obscured in the most self-centred, individualistic narratives.

Using Elias' words, it is better to say the dyad "I and we"[43], which restricts the image of the individual – narcissistic, solitary or freer – in an ontological soliloquy because the individual can never exist alone, and as "another", without a tie to others: the link of interdependencies (and interpenetrations, as Elias stresses) that, in addition, are not just functional, to serve the division of labour, among other kinds of specialisation. The human condition is defined by these ties, with the importance that Elias attaches to emotional bonds. We are not *homo clausus* but "open beings" – to the "emotional valencies which are directed towards other people" (Elias, [1978] 1980: 135). Even sexuality, which is regularly not restricted to a basic, biological dependence but seeks an affective bond, "is only the strongest, most demonstrative manifestation of this need", the universal need for others. For this reason, "when a beloved person dies, it does not mean that something has happened in the social 'outside world' of the survivor, which acts as an external cause on his 'inner self'; it will not even do to say that something happened 'there' of which the effect is felt 'here'. These categories cannot express the emotional relationship between the survivor and the person he loved. The latter's death means that the survivor has lost a part of himself. One of the valencies in the figuration of his attached and unattached valencies had become fixed to the other person. Now that person is dead. An integral part of his self, his 'I-and-we' images has been broken off" (Elias, [1978] 1980: 136).[44]

From Elias' perspective, figuration is based in interdependencies with a "flexible lattice-work of tensions" due to an "elastic balance of power". Power is a crucial dimension in figuration; changes in the "power *ratio*" of every member affect the whole and its flow or

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[42] A directly or implicitly recurring trilogy when these discourses of the "I" and multiple truths are being discussed; their literary or common auto-fictions (Lejeune, 1980; Lejeune and Viollet, 2000; Jeannelle and Viollet, 2007; VV.AA., 2004; Teixeira, 2003; Souza and Abrahão, 2006).

[43] See *What is Sociology?* (Elias, [1978] 1980) and especially the chapter "Changes in the We-I Balance" in *The Society of Individuals* (Elias, [1939, 1987] 1991b, 1993). I cite along the essay the Portuguese editions, respectively for each book in 1980 and 1993.

[44] Translations from the Portuguese edition.

process. Figuration is, then, a multidimensional, relational, asymmetric and metamorphic concept that can have various scales and referents. Every kind of grouping and interaction, from the largest to the micro levels of "players" in a game, which appeared precisely in *What is Sociology?* [1978] 1980) in order to illustrate figuration models. A game is "the changing pattern created by the players as a whole"; a regulated process in which the interdependence determines strategy and un/predictability with each card played, the meaning of the game for each person who is experiencing it under the crossed gaze of the others, the fluctuations in each one's power and the changes of "level", with more complex re-figurations with the entry into the game of new members.

However, as Elias himself explains, the reference to games only serves to build "didactic models". They "are not theoretical in the customary sense of the word" or a metaphor for everything like a game. A case that would, moreover, bring other distinctly more agonistic assumptions about individuals and society. The purpose of the games models is "to facilitate a re-orientation of our powers of imagination and conceptualization in order to understand the nature of the tasks confronting sociology" ([1978] 1980: 92). That is, to understand society with the individuals as being neither an instance over them nor antagonistic by an essential nature. Games act as a resource for the interpretation of human figurations as well the relational, constructed and arbitrable nature of power, which is more strongly regulated by those interdependencies than by each individual. And figurations are obviously more multidimensional than just "games" on account of the human substance that sustains them, the diversity of bonds that they imply.

In this way, Elias' sociology does not relate easily with other uses of the game idea, more unidimensional. To recall two cases, one may have game theory as a paradigm that favours the instrumental dimension of action, strategic and rational, that is only considered in a competitive context. So, without the other "valencies" as Elias sees the human figurations. The second case may adopt the game metaphor mainly for the idea of the social representation, for "staged" forms of identity - and no less strategic. Like a superficial game of appearances, basically symbolical, with the strategies of dissimulation/ostentation, such as appears in the studies of the dialectic of distinction.

Obviously, these games exist in Elias' investigations, in exemplary fashion in his book *The Court Society* ([1969], 1983, 1987) where he wrote about the court of Louis XIV, the model for others in Europe. But, once again, his social portraits are differently built, i.e. multidimensional, in order to understand an human figuration as it is the palace power-cultures in which power and its demonstrations are explained by the complex interdependencies of these microcosms so regulated by etiquette and representation, watchful and calculated behaviour, tacit cultures, the art of persuasion, discreet influence, and the situation of living in expectation

of recognition by and proximity to the Prince. Many characteristics, moreover, that have been well preserved until today in the corridors of influence.
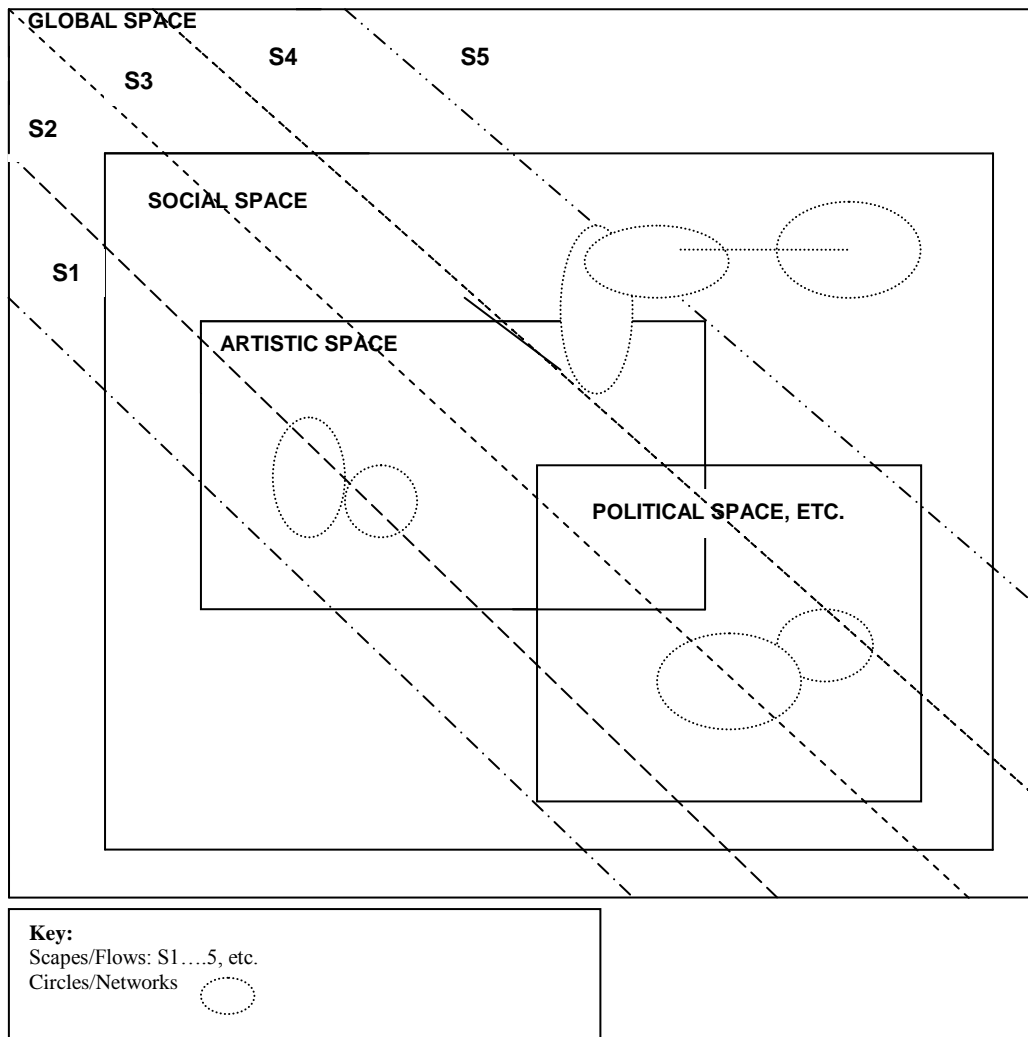
The palace power circles appear then as an example of a figuration that persisted historically, while others were greatly altered in the transitions to the present day. My proposal now is to select one case of the second type and to cross it with a contemporary perspective that in my view can be figurational by the focus on powers, interdependencies, and also mediations. So the example is given by the cultural and artistic spaces observed in our both globalised and networked world as in internal figurations. I am not referring here to the whole issue of *spaces of culture* which, in the contemporary situation, implies comprehensive considerations of global processes of various types, with changes in scales, referents and relationships for nation-states (intra/inter-state), cities, localities, and public and private spheres (Featherstone and Lash, 1999; Jackson, Crang and Dwyer, 2004). Nor the complex discursive, identity and political formations involved with the contemporary notion or categories of spaces.[45] More narrowly, I particularly take *cultural spaces* into account as specific professional domains, though they are also trans/national in many dimensions in the present-day configurations (Boschetti, 2010).

Figure 5 suggests such a cartography and fluxography of our world, to draw us closer to cultural spaces that are not confined to the perimeter of "regions" inside a given society. They have the much greater span that is brought by global flows: financial, technological, migratory, media and ideological, among others in globalisation. To use Arjun Appadurai's terms, based on the word *landscape*, they are the *scapes* that henceforth cross any *land.* [46] Any place that is no longer defined by the most physical dimension of the territory but is rather converted to the "here and now" experience of a multifaceted, volumetric or stratified space, by this interception of flows. As they are not only intercrossed but contradictory in the way in which they often combine with local or vernacular matrices (high-tech and tradition, secularisation and fundamentalism, ethnic Balkanisations and more cosmopolitan cultural indifferentiation), this amalgam produces "disjointed modernities". Another Appadurai term for places that live with this paradoxical synchrony of differences, to be added to that of "multiple modernities" in contemporary times (Appadurai, 1990, 2000; Eisenstadt, 2001).

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[45] Particularly as they are transformed and approached in the postcolonial condition, some spaces being viewed as specific "heteropias" with an assemblage of references and connections (Grossberg, 1996; Allor, 1997). See bibliography in Conde (2011a), especially on cultural globalization.

[46] Appadurai (1996) mentions five types of crossed and possibly "disjointed" flows depending on the places: finanscape, technoscape, mediascape, ideoscape and ethnoscape for migrations with the respective socio-cultural references. However, we may extend this group to others, as Waters did (1995). For example, he added the *econoscape* with the cultural industries, along with the processes of double hypemerchandising or dematerialisation of symbolic goods (with digitalisation and the services market); the *leisurescape* for tourism, which is a considerable dimension in cultural globalisation, and the *sacriscape* for fundamentalism, secularisation, and world religions. More references on the issue of globalization in Conde (2011a).

Figure 5 SPACES/FLOWS OF TODAY'S WORLD

GLOBAL SPACE

S2   S3   S4   S5

S1

SOCIAL SPACE

ARTISTIC SPACE

POLITICAL SPACE, ETC.

Key:
Scapes/Flows: S1….5, etc.
Circles/Networks

For this reason, the macroscopy of universes that can even be small from the demographic or institutional viewpoint, such as cultural and artistic ones, the notion of trans/local spaces crossed by flows (and, as mentioned below, cross-cutting mediations), seems preferable to other options. Be it the notion of the "cultural sector", more operational/administrative, or even concepts of certain sociological paradigms of art and culture. For instance, the "artistic field" and "art world", respectively associated with Pierre Bourdieu's more structuralist and Howard Becker's more interactionist formulations.[47] Despite their relevant analysis, they remain quite removed from global or translocal connections.

The other notion of "art systems" has a similar problem, especially when centred on endogenous dynamics and components, since other distinctly more comprehensive applications

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[47] More appropriately, the genetic structuralism of this "theory of practice". For Bourdieu, see several references in Conde (2011a) and, for here in particular, Bourdieu (1992) and Wacquant (2005) on Bourdieu's notion of "field". For Becker and interactionist approaches, see Becker (1982), Becker and McCall (1990), VV.AA. (2007). Among Beckerian applications to art worlds, I still recall from my earlier readings a study by Ericsson (1988).

of the notion of the "system" exist. For example, some that extend perspectives to a "global system" for the arts or others that, while not exactly adopting the label of a system, bring an identical overview[48]. For its part, the notion of "cultural systems" actually seems too general, besides its various meanings for different authors and paradigms (Griswold, 1994; Crespi, 1997).[49]

The issue is that those frameworks often indexed to *grand* theories (some created several decades ago) may be insufficient or too partial today to integrate other *ground* trends, such as certain dynamics in contemporary art, the new media and cultural globalisation. This type of heuristic confrontation has occurred in my work in various ways. Precisely in a study of the contemporary uses of the new media in various areas (classical and electronic music and the visual and performing arts) and, also, with regard to mediations and processes of translocalisation in artistic places (Conde, 2003b). Therefore, as I have argued in various writings (Conde, 2000, 2003c, 2008c, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b), I prefer, as an alternative, the grounded concept of translocal spaces crossed by various flows – or "scapes" – as a wider contender for possible complementary uses of other notions, other authors and their respective frameworks.

Even without developing them here, we can justify a parenthesis on how some authors place a distinct stamp on "their" figuration, and not necessarily in Elias' sense. In effect, the figuration may move from being collaborative to competitive as we go from Beckerian worlds to the fields of Bourdieu. The former is basically established (i.e. conceptualised) by cooperative networks and conventions (as well as routines) with a structuring, normalising and intercommunicative role, essential for the material and symbolic construction of a world. That is, the intersubjective definition itself of that world and its art.[50] In contrast, Bourdieu's fields turn into arenas for struggles generated by the asymmetric structure of positions (therefore, of capitals, strategies and power) between the dominant and dominated, the established and aspiring, conservatives and heretics. In this manner, by the logic of the basic correspondences (the homologies) in Bourdieu's theory, the principles of inequality and opposition in each field are organized like the cleavages in the broader social space (as between classes and fractions of classes).

So whereas the worlds of Becker diminish the dimension of power, at least as it is dealt with by Elias, the sociology of power applied to the fields by Bourdieu seems too heavily based

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[48] For instance Melo (2001, 2002) and Crane, Kawashima, Kawasaki (2002). See more publications by Crane (1987, 1992, 1993) showing other approaches to cultural and artistic domains.

[49] In Conde (2001b), a brief comparison of paradigms, I also recall older references in the genealogy of the notion of a system applied to the arts and cultural spaces, as in Raymond Williams (1981). Finally, Hans van Maanen's book (2009) offers a good analysis of different paradigms, including the systemic perspective of Niklas Luhmann (2000), with the focus on communicational dimensions and processes.

[50] Networks imply the complementary situation of their many participants in an extensive "team" that includes "external" participants (such as political guardians, patrons or other financing agents) and "internal" participants (in the areas of production, dissemination and consumption, where they are the publics).

on domination, in particular symbolic domination. Thus, the concept of field is as close to Elias' figurations as it is different from them. Furthermore, on account of its dualist model, it is hardly in line with the more multilateral and multipolar vision of power in Elias, besides the fact that Elias' vision of individuals considers them, too, with other "open valencies" (e.g. the affective) for "bonding" in interdependencies, beyond "political", instrumental or strategic interests.[51]

Contrary to dualism, the multipolarity of various elective and competitive circles/circuits is a characteristic of contemporary cultural and artistic spaces, in parallel with the polycentrism of reference points, inherited from the eclectic post-avant-garde(s) since the 1980s. It pluralises "doxas" in the artistic field, associated forms of symbolic power and hierarchies of legitimacy. All terms from Pierre Bourdieu and his field theory which we must therefore now use in a more complex scenario. Moreover, even before post-modern trends, the avant-garde was not defined and did not impose itself with a dualist logic as if there were only two battlefronts: itself against the "conservatives". In reality, there was not a single avant-garde but rather various, competing simultaneously for the leadership of an alternative and radical project, despite a certain "convergence of paradigms" in the modernist ideal (Verger, 1991; Conde, 1996b). In short, a modernism with aesthetic (and political) partitions, one that would fit into an artistic space with greater complexity and segmentation than presupposed for a simple field model. It is rather a space with various fields, poles and circles, both at an international level and in more national and local spheres.

On other hand, many other authors have diversified the portraits of these spaces, exploring distinct frameworks and aspects. The extensive bibliography, which it is not possible to resume here, reveals many kinds of research on aesthetic dimensions and artistic identities; geographical conditions; cultural policies, institutions and organizational sets; professional and market issues; mediations and gatekeeping processes; audiences and cultural reception, etc.[52] Thus, an ensemble of contributions where there is no lack, either, of overviews by the alternative, or almost, "game" concept. Once again, a lexicon similar to that of Elias, though it lends itself to variations in interpretation.[53]

It may be a game, understood in the broadly inclusive and axiological sense, for the parties involved in a comparison of values with tensions, as Nathalie Heinich (1998a) analysed in the relationship between artists, publics, critics and institutions in the face of the "transgressions" of contemporary art. For this author, known for her sociology of singularity in

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[51] Though, in general, it may be said that in this way the asymmetries and resulting strategies do not simply derive from principles of class or social stratification, which are striking in Bourdieu, besides the other forms of inequality of gender, between generations, etc. The plasticity of Elias' concept of configuration allows it to be applied on a very plural and multi-dimensional basis to all interactions, from the all-inclusive to the interpersonal, with various types of inequality/ies and demarcations of power(s).

[52] Various references in Conde (2001b, 2009b, 2009c) and different overviews of the discipline in: Zolberg, 1990; Tota, 2000; Heinich, 2001; Alexander, 2003; Inglis and Hughson, 2005; Péquinot, 2009; Fleury, 2006, 2008; Girel and Proust, 2007; and Girel, 2006.

[53] Let me say that the almost agonistic notion of game is always present as a metaphor and reality in Bourdieu and similar approaches.

the "vocational regime" of artistic practices since modernity, such a "game" is connected with the spiral of a "negative aesthetic" created by permanent lacerations or ruptures in artistic grammars. In contemporary art, the game of "transgression, reaction, integration", that is, aesthetic, institutional, legal or moral transgressions produced by the works, reactions in the reception, and integration by "walls and words", e.g. museums and criticism that seek to achieve "the filling of the void", the "acceptability" of new artistic material.

To give another example, we can also find the notion of game especially in a professional performance (also a game of identity and reputation) in which individuals may enter intermittently and with different degrees of expertise, among other games with their multiple activities and "action grammars". A perspective possible in Bernard Lahire (2006) when he talks of the "literary game", which is, in reality, a "second life" for most writers, who have other *métiers* and occupations. Because of this plural activity which interferes with the fixing of individuals in the positions of a field, Lahire even proposes substituting the notion of "field" with that of "game". Another of his critical revisions of Bourdieu's work to add to the new "dispositional sociology" which he also advanced for the habitus.

Thirdly[54], it may be a power game, or rather power games, on the level of the political, institutional and economic regulation of art and culture that counts on the Welfare State, contemporary forms of patronage (by companies and foundations), other agents and a globalised market (Conde, 2009). In short, game partners who have transformed traditional forms of tutelage from a central regulator to a complex chessboard of actors where the market has a primary role – as in the case of contemporary art .

As the market is globalised it again problematises the perimeter of notions like those of field and world, especially when they are based on local or national frontiers. However, the global impact of the market does not exclude its segmentation and hierarchisation by geographies of power that restrict international artistic leadership (and that of the "big ones" of the cultural industries) to a small set of countries (Quemin, 2002 ; AA.VV, 2002 ; Robertson, 2005). [55] The United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, or France and Italy, among certain others, are part of that Western and central nucleus that shows how globalisation does not always signify a yeast for new and symmetrical relations between centres and peripheries. At least, for this piloting of the markets, it does not, in great contrast to other perceptions of the cultural exchanges and hybridisation in our "global/heteroglossia" (Mosquera and Fischer, 2005: 122ff). They may be – and are – represented in contemporary art that is exhibited in the centres, including by the *Zeitgeist* that imports numerous references and imaginaries from the

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[54] Among other possibilites to use the game idea or metaphor.
[55] About this market, see the work of Moulin, whom I should remember as a key author for her studies, from the pioneering to the most recent, on the construction of artistic values by museums and markets (the typology of various markets), the role of public institutions and the state, and the professional sociography of artists, in works such as the classic *Le Marché de la Peinture en France*, published in 1967. Other works: Moulin, 1992, 1995, 2000.

peripheries. Although the centres concentrate the power of recognising and distributing much of what is exhibitable there, from underground to mainstream tendencies.

For a discussion of the power that is of interest now, this scenario obliges us to abandon bipolar approaches to the protectors and protected. A representation inherited from a system of clients, courtesans and patrons that hypostasises the asymmetry between art and power – the latter associated with the domination of institutional and political systems. It may be hegemonic, though more exceptionally in authoritarian regimes. Nevertheless, such representation persists but even if we take the socio-economic dependence of artists into account (and this situation may get even worse with the financial crisis in the Welfare State, which aids a large part of the cultural sector[56]), today the relationship between art and power fits into an all-embracing – multilateral and multipolar – scenario.

The latter two adjectives come from Elias' conception of power, with all the pertinence to this governance on various scales, from the local to the global, which combine cultural policy and the state with various partners in the "game". Including, many figures from civil society who are part of the "third sector" of culture. It is hybrid because it is public and private with various institutional rearrangements (associations, NGOs, foundations etc) where mixed economies[57] circulate, and constitutes a zone for the proliferation of new intermediate powers and spheres/logics of political, economic, and cultural legitimacy.

The issue of power, or rather powers, is thus presented as a strategic interdependence, including the part in play of the artists' most symbolic power[58] with its relational and pragmatic nature; contingent, constructed, arbitrable. In contrast to a (self-)representation simply as beneficiaries, dependent or dominated, somewhat separate from the central *enjeu* of their protectors. Artists know the "palace culture", so well portrayed by Norbert Elias, with their long cohabitation with this tradition of sociability, leisure, business and power that they have experienced, on the fringe or at the centre, with the various historical (and ideological) figures of the artist as an artisan, professional, courtesan, bohemian, outsider, insider, prophet or celebrity (Heinich, 2005; Conde, 2011b).

So artists know or sense how, in the day-to-day life of the "palace", important decisions for their works and lives are taken. They often even transport to their world the conspiratorial and "guilty" image of the power that is breathed at the court – of today and yesterday. Or in the more parochial and clientelist niches seen as "mafias", influence *clusters* on which the blame, or the suspicion, may always be pinned. But the power, inflectable in many forms, is not beyond any of the partners in play. It is a relationship to be managed to facilitate the skilful and well-negotiated exchange on which the survival of many artistic ideas depends.

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[56] References to the European situation in Conde (2009b, 2009c).
[57] State subsidies, other private funds and resources or capital gains from cultural markets.
[58] A symbolic power that is not simply associated with a status (in the case of artists, acquired over a long history, from their origin as artisans) but the basic power of thought, ideas and their work (Conde, 2009b).

The perspective of power as an asymmetrical and negotiated exchange goes against its subordination to a unilinear principle of domination and formalist or substantivist definitions. As Erhard Friedberg writes in an essay on power, the actor and the system, of which various parts are close to Elias' thinking, no actors 'store' power as a substance or as if it were crystallised in structures. "They exercise it, extracting ever-asymmetrical resources that a context of action put at their disposal; in exercising it they give it its reality and effectiveness and only in this way do they express this asymmetry of resources in social action. As with love and trust, power is inseparable from the relationship through which it is exercised and which links actual people to each other, around specific objects. For this reason, it seems that power can only be intransitive."[59] In other words, it does not circulate and is not transacted like a good or an attribute, beyond the individuals implicated in this relationship in which it is guided (hence, instrumental) by aims, projects and objectives, and is cooperative. That is, with the possibility but not the inevitability of conflict in the inter/dependence that shows "the at least bilateral and most often multilateral nature of power" (Friedberg, 1995:116, 118).

In recognition of the involvement and "political rationality" in the manoeuvres of all actors in a system, these words once again reflect those of Elias, with the same intention as Friedberg's of de-demonising the perception of power as "an abnormal, pathological or unwholesome phenomenon" (Friedberg, 1995: 118), when it is a dimension that is intrinsic to human relations. Justifying his didactic game-models for interactions, Elias also wrote that "the task here is not to resolve the problem of power but simply to bring it in out of the cold" for sociological understanding. "The necessity for doing this is connected with the obvious difficulty of examining questions of power without becoming emotionally involved. Another person's power is to be feared: he can compel us to do a particular thing whether we want to or not. Power is suspect: people use power to exploit others for their own ends. Power seems unethical: everyone ought to be in a position to make all his own decisions. And the mist of fear and suspicion which clings to this concept is understandably transferred to its use in a scientific theory" (Elias, [1978]1980: 92, 93).[60]

Furthermore, a relational conceptualisation "requires precisely personalising the relationship and retracing the set of mediations that the exercise of power has suffered in the mesh of a chain of relations (hierarchical, for example)". Hence, this specific perspective rejects reifications of power as apparently placed in certain figures or institutions "that most often are no more than a reformulation of the illusions of a formal and/or substantive analysis" (Friedberg, 1995: 117).

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[59] "Power can and should be defined as the ability of an actor to structure more or less durable exchange processes in his or her favour, exploiting the constraints and opportunities in the situation to impose the terms of exchange that promote his or her interests. It is a negotiated exchange of behaviours, structured in such a way that all participants derive something from it, simultaneously allowing one (or some) of them to derive more than the others" (Friedberg, 1995: 120).

[60] Translation from the Portuguese edition.

To this extent, it is a conceptualisation that is necessary for the figurations of art and power(s), if we consider them in their combination with crucial mediations in the processes of gatekeeping and strategic games, as well as other relationship types, both within artistic spaces and in the interfaces with the political sphere, publics, the market in general and other global *scapes* that cross other *lands*. I shall do this after reflecting on the plurality and centrality of the notion of mediation and different ways of approaching it.

3.1 Mapping mediations

It should be noted, first of all, that this notion can be applied to all the devices, networks or relationships that act as enablements and/or constraints in relation to an activity, agency, reflexivity, power, meaning or identity. For this reason, it may lend itself to broader or more focused perspectives on institutions, organisations, people, objects, spaces, bodies, discourses, images, signs or symbols (Wall, 2008). A panoply of referents in which the new technologies/media are particularly important for their role in contemporary society with the specific "issue of connections" that they provoke (Miranda and Cruz, 2002; Lievrouw, 2009).

Despite the terms shared with Elias and the fact that there may even be certain points of contact (e.g. the notion of interdependencies, crucial for the information and communication flows that crosses or shapes social interactions and figurations by these means), it is, however, an issue that is now transposed to other levels of reality: digital and virtual. The intermedia, multimediality and re-mediation to which these new media proceed with their use/"collage" of mediums, codes, content, contexts/sets and experiences, have become the reference models for a new technological and cultural era (VV.AA., 2008a; Elleström, 2010; Bolter and Grusin (2000).[61] They involve major features such as the hybrid/mixed media, hypertext and interactivity, which have changed the traditional moulds of the relationship production/ reception, as well new "regimes of experience" in the more immersive and synaesthetic contemporary visual culture. [62] And, also, the new locations with partners/relationships, so to speak, to work in music as the visual arts, among other examples, are often almost transformed into technological laboratories or network studios with multitasking individuals reassembling all the processes of creation, production, editing etc. (Fourmentraux, 2002; VV.AA., 2003a; Théberge, 2004; Marontate, 2005; Muller and Edmonds, 2006).

They correspond to the "the fall of the studio" in the traditional sense, or again, in contemporary art, to the passage "from studio to situation", which is characteristic of many

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[61] Further references regarding artistic specificities: Shanken, 2002; Stallabrass, 2003; Greene, 2004; Lovejoy, 2004; Rush, 2005; Fourmentraux, 2005; Tribe, Jana and Grosenick, 2007; Paul, 2008.

[62] As happens with video games and digital types (Kerckhove, 1997; Darley, 2000). In parallel with the changes in creation/production, the most traditional paradigm for cultural reception is altered by the modes of interaction and interactivity with the new media (and hypertext) that may include reading, surfing, interference with the device, communication etc. For a typology of different action figures about and with digital works, see Fourmentraux (2008: 22).

artists who circulate outside and beyond the studio, producing site-specific works in direct interaction with contexts and people (Rodriguez, 2002; Davidts and Paice, 2009; Doherty, 2004). Even if there is a studio (and a studio may be a site, as in various forms of net art, in addition to the fact that sites "extending" the space of the studio operate in general as logistical places for archives, communication, production, the setting-up of a project, etc), this studio can no longer be seen as an insular "front" space for external mediations. For it has not only transformed itself into a mediation space for the creation of diverse situations but also a reticular space, constructed and crossed by the "cacophony" of different practices and mediations. [63]

Besides these changes, which are of importance to a reflection on the metamorphoses in some of the mediations in the art field (Golvano, 1998) the notion of cultural mediation, on a more general level, takes on various meanings.[64] Among them, the mediation as an intercommunicative or dialogic tool that it is dealt with by various professionals connected with programming, the training of publics, socio-cultural activities etc. In this aspect, as with other interface profiles and spaces as well, the sociology of intermediaries is a fairly well-developed area[65], though parallel to other sociologies (or social approaches) of mediation that are focused on processes with embedded mediations (operations, translations etc) rather than the mediators in a specific, "separated" sphere.

The reference for this second line is a constructivist and "pragmatic sociology" intertwined with the "actor-network theory", with several applications to the scientific, cultural and artistic domains, namely in France. [66] Let us remember that they emerged from the late 80s and 90s as alternative paradigm(s) seeking the plural repertoires (or "grammars") of action, values and attachments among "beings": individuals, objects/artefacts, and moral and legal entities.[67] It is then a reconceptualization of the issue of connections that radically transcends the dichotomies of individualism/holism and would be interesting to relate to Elias' figurations.

In my awareness of this diversity and complexity regarding mediations, my attempt to map them here is, in a way, rather different. Certainly broader than the first focus on intermediaries, almost internal to cultural spaces, and yet not concerned with the second type of analysis. At least in this text. What I would like to carry out, as has already been done for the

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[63] "The cacophony of a construction site", as Hansen (2007) says in his text on the mutations of the studio.
[64] Broad and multidimensional reflections for instance in: Lamizet, 1999; Caune, 1999; Davallon, 2000, 2004; Oliveira and Galego, 2005; Silverstone, 2005; Livingstone, 2009; and VV.AA. (1998, 2004b, 2008g).
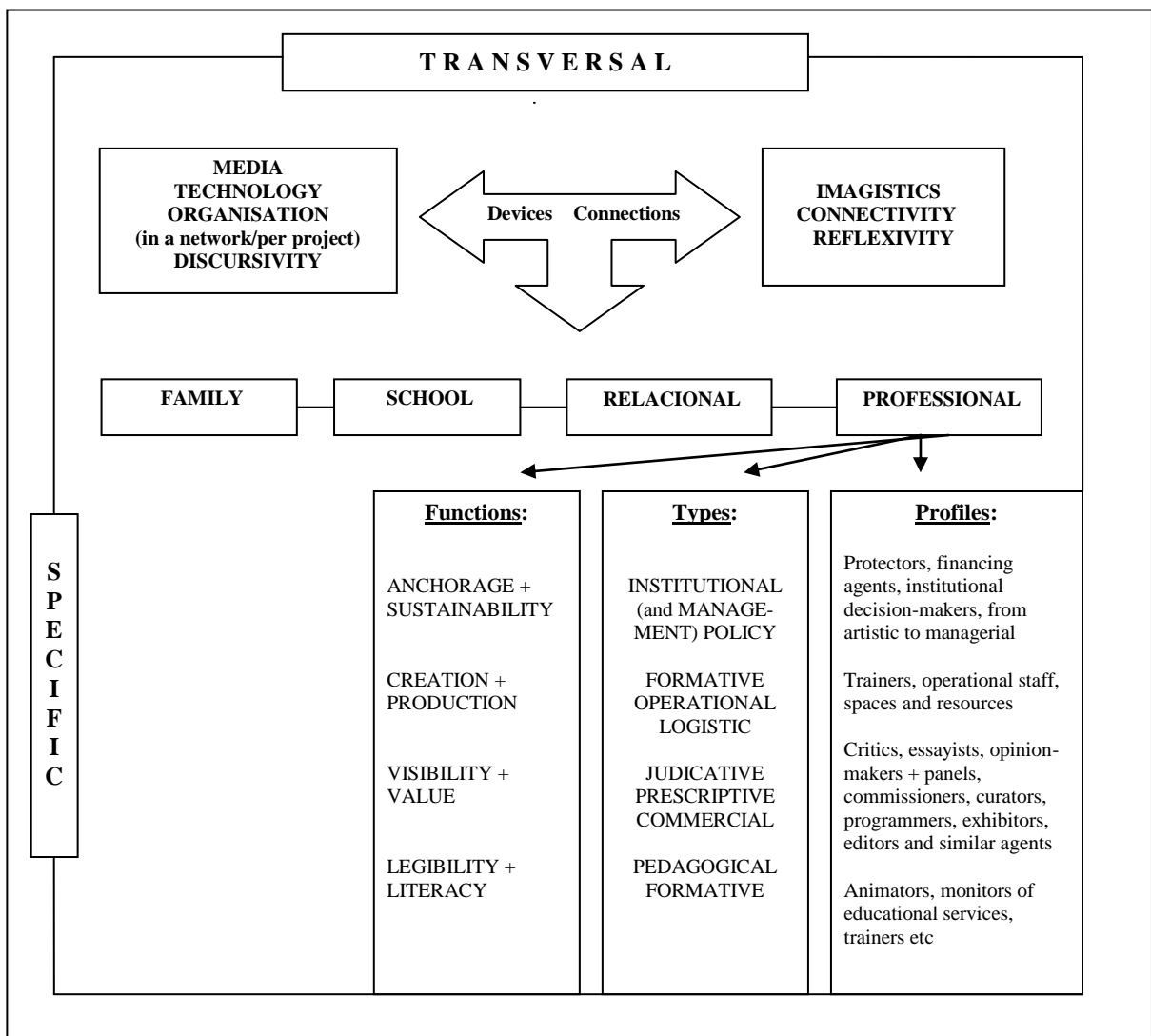[65] Shrum, 1991; Bovone, 1997; Golvano, 1998; Nooy, 2002; and Albertsen (2004) for a broader theoretical discussion. In Portugal, there are various empirical studies along this line: Melo, 1999; Neves, 1999; Madeira, 2001; Martins, 2005; Martinho, 2007; Especial, 2011; and Fortuna *et al* (2003), with a typology of various zones of intermediation. On a more documentary level: VV.AA. 2010c.
[66] For the sociology of mediation, besides other visions of cultural intermediaries and intermediation, see Antoine Hennion (1993), noteworthy for his work on music, which de-materialises "object-artwork" and embeds several kinds of mediation (mediums, operations, senses); and Nathalie Heinich (2009), a recognised author for her pragmatic sociology applied to art. Another example of its application to an artistic situation is given in Yaneva (2003).
[67] "Pragmatic sociology" was primarily seen as an alternative to the "critical sociology" of Bourdieu (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991). For the "actor-network theory", see its seminal author in France: Bruno Latour (1999, 2005), among various publications.

habitus, is multi-scale mapping that, once again, does not lose sight of the more global frameworks for these spaces and their proponents.[68] Thus, a return to Figure 5, which Figure 6 continues with the double inclusion of transversal and specific (particularly professional) mediations. Among others (relational, school and family mediations) that interfere with the individual's dispositions and trajectories.

Figure 6 MEDIATIONS IN CULTURAL SPACES

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[68] This perspective has its origin in various studies on powers, mediations and processes of gatekeeping in cultural spaces and, in particular, the artistic field in Portugal in different decades (Conde, 1990a, 1990b, 2003a), including the experience of the first Art Biennials in the 1980s (1987, 1988a). Among more comprehensive reflections on art and power (Conde, 2009b), some studies addressed cultural policy aspects, corporate cultural sponsoring (1989, 1991), key institutions in Portugal such as the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Conde, 2005, 2009h) and artistic training (Conde, 1988b, 1989b). Other studies present analyses of the informed or learned criticism and reception that operate as judicative mediations in artistic spaces (Conde, 1994a, 1994b, 1998c, 2008a) and also refer to certain alternative exhibition circuits in the visual arts, emerging in the 1990s (Conde, 1999c, 2003e). Finally, various pieces of research on the markets for cultural work are brought together; they consider professional mediations and gatekeeping processes, in particular those that affect the condition of women. On this level, the visual arts and the areas of the new media and serious music were considered in particular (Conde, 1994b,1999b, 1999d, 2000c, 2001d, 2001e, 2003b, 2003d, 2009c, 2009f, 2011c). Some of my first studies were also about the scientific vulgarisation: a mediation itself, with a specific work of "translation" to the general public (Conde and Machado, 1988d, 1989c, 1989d, 1990c).

As we see, the specific mediations relate to functions, types and profiles of inter/mediation. Speaking of functions in a non-functionalist way (descriptive, rather, while also relational and inclined to tensions in this figuration of mediations and powers), I adopt Elias' words regarding the term "function" in the model of interdependencies: "(it) is not used as an expression for a task performed by a section within a harmonious 'whole'. The model indicates that, like the concept of power, the concept of function must be understood as a concept of relationship" (Elias, [1978]1980: 77f)[69]. Hence, with "the reciprocity, the bi-polarity or multi-polarity" of all the parts involved. "To understand the concept of 'function' in this way demonstrates its connection with power within human relationships. People or groups which have functions for each other exercise constraint over each other. Their potential for withholding from each other what they require is usually uneven, which means that the constraining power of one side is greater than that of the other" (Elias, [1978]1980: 78).[70]

The same can be said for the power, different powers, of these mediations, particularly those related to the production of visibility and value, which is so very important for artists and cultural markets. In other typologies this appears with circles of recognition, like that of Alan Bownes (1989): succinct but often quoted for the visual arts, it traces the circles with perimeters of increasing resonance, e.g. peers, critics and gallery owners, principal collectors, the general public.[71] A whole programme, therefore, to revisit the relationship of artists with their various alter-egos, especially crucial in the inner circle of peers, critics, commissioners/curators, gallery owners and other institutional decision-makers/arbiters – which the history of art records, from the most ancient to the contemporary, with many episodes of loyalty, instrumentalisation and ambivalence. [72] In short, double relationships of "calculation and affection" (Friedberg, 1995: 33ff), the relationships inherent in the production of symbolic value and its conversion into the commercial value of artworks and artists' reputations.

Figure 6, however, presents a wider range of profiles, including forms of action that go further than these judicative and commercial mediations. Adopting a broad notion of mediation, preferable here for a mapping that extends beyond the role of intermediaries, it aggregates formative, operational and logistic components for the creation/production itself. In fact, they are attached to the new studios, sites or places mentioned above. But the mapping includes two more cases. On the one hand, political, institutional and management mediations, inherent in

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[69] Translation from the Portuguese edition.

[70] Translation from the Portuguese edition

[71] See further formulations in the work of Moulin, Heinich, Crane and Melo, among other references to the sociology of art and culture already cited.

[72] References and examples in Conde (2009b). A history of stories for which micro-history is, then, heuristic, according to Ginzburg (1991). That is, to rehabilitate the documentary function of the biography, the episode, the intrigue and even the forgotten and rejected *petite histoire*, which often reveal how notable decisions in the market and history of art depend on the interpersonalism and "passions" of this small world.

sustainability, regulation, organisations and the respective powers. [73] On the other hand, pedagogical mediations in areas with a growing number of activity leaders, trainers, educational service monitors etc, specialising in training, education and cultural literacy, and working with publics.
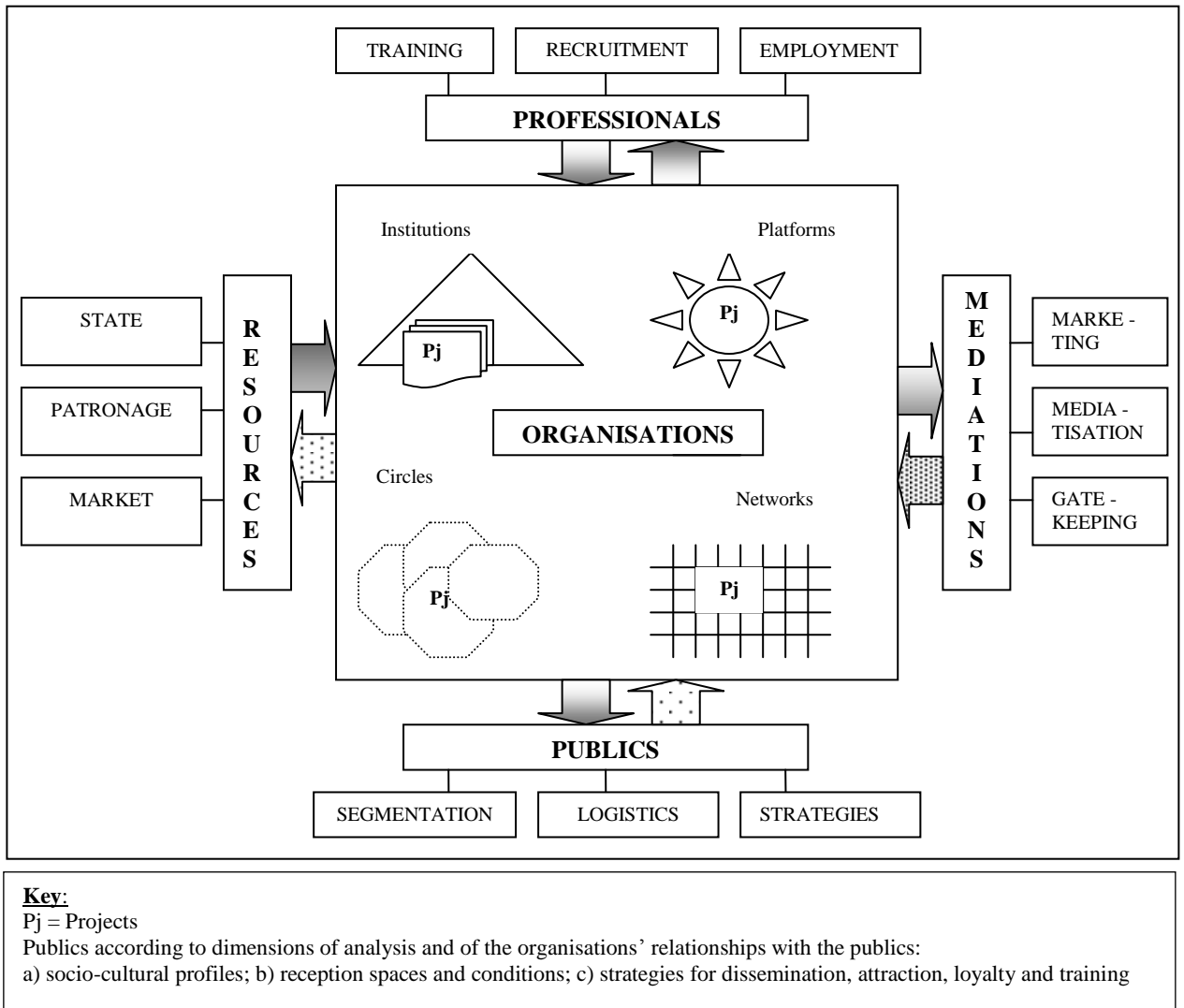
The ultimate advance to a more complex, multilateral and, thus, comprehensive mapping of mediations is the opening up to others who actually articulate cultural and artistic spaces with social and global environments. They are mediations that cut across contemporary society and lead us back to certain lines in transculture. In Figure 6 they appear as devices/connections for highly translocal figurations. In the first place, media mediation as a social ecology transformed moreover into almost "non-mediation" because of its ubiquity in the real, its imagistics and the fact that it became unavoidable for the strategies of cultural promotion. In the second place, the crucial role performed by another three that greatly altered the ways of communicating, producing and circulating images and information, and their reception. They are: the new technologies, powerful and polyvalent tools related to the establishment of new cultural arenas; the network/project-based organizations, a type greatly boosted by electronic devices, which have remodelled many areas of production and social life; and, finally, discourses. Another kind of global linkage in the intertextual nature of almost all kinds of reflexivity experienced and expressed in personal and social horizons – so equally in art and culture.

Before we return to them, I will reflect a little on organisations. First of all, to say that the reference to the above-mentioned type is because it represents precisely the paradigm of the "network society" that has restructured cultural and creative practices from the digital, operational, logistic and communicational aspects (Castells, 1996, 1997; Hartley, 2005). [74] Secondly, to add the notion of an organisation as a meta-mediation within cultural spaces, where it may be portrayed in various (and combined) formats. Besides networks, the institutions, platforms and circles where projects circulate, a key motor here. An organization in this plural sense is then an interface anchorage that, as outlined in Figure 7, crosses four axes: professionals, publics, resources and mediations. Another form of grouping of some of them. Though it is one among other possible charts, it helps us draw the operational figuration of these spaces, as well as considering several triangulations along each axis.

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[73] Not to forget the chess game of powers inside organizations with tensions between two worlds: one of art and another of economic/managerial and bureaucratic logics. So-called "intrinsic" matters for art vs "extrinsic" priorities, as Eve Chiapello (1998, 1997, 1999) pointed out. Some of other general perspectives in AA.VV. 2001a ; Chong, 2002 ; Evrard, 2004 ; Rochet, 1995.

[74] Also, on the polysemy of the network, Portugal (2007).

Figure 7 ORGANISATIONS AND DYNAMICS IN CULTURAL SPACES

| TRAINING | RECRUITMENT | EMPLOYMENT |

PROFESSIONALS

Institutions   Platforms

Pj   Pj

| STATE |

R
E
S
O
U
R
C
E
S

| PATRONAGE |

| MARKET |

ORGANISATIONS

Circles   Networks

Pj   Pj

M
E
D
I
A
T
I
O
N
S

| MARKE - TING |
| MEDIA - TISATION |
| GATE - KEEPING |

PUBLICS

| SEGMENTATION | LOGISTICS | STRATEGIES |

Key:
Pj = Projects
Publics according to dimensions of analysis and of the organisations' relationships with the publics:
a) socio-cultural profiles; b) reception spaces and conditions; c) strategies for dissemination, attraction, loyalty and training

Complementary overviews would provide the theoretical perspectives used for organizations and institutions – incidentally, matter for prolific designs, according to the various authors. 'Neo-institutionalism' certainly belongs to them, though with various outlooks and trends in sociology, economy and other disciplines. However, it is not my intention to resume them or adopt a holistic notion of an institution – which has, indeed, various dimensions, from the organizational to the normative and more symbolic.[75] I even think that the general use of the term under some 'neo-institutionalist' umbrella obscures inverse and simultaneous processes of de-institutionalisation that have variously transformed the present-day scene: the erosion of

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[75] Among various references, see the usually quoted in Powell and DiMaggio (1991). Hans van Maanen (2009) presents a good synthesis of "institutionalism", in particular by authors such as Paul DiMaggio, in a book that contains elaborate charts for various aspects of cultural spaces. For a general assessment of "neo-institutionalism", institutions and organizations, see Scott (2000). Other overviews report operating, institutional and organisational dynamics in cultural spaces (Gay, 1997; Caves, 2000), to describe the current dynamics.

traditional institutions, their recomposition in other forms and the emergence of alternative organisations, without their integrating all those institutional dimensions.

Figure 7 provides a rather pragmatic and fairly succinct record here, interpreting 'institution' as one form of organisation among others. Though an institution may be distinguished in that it frequently plays a leading role, with a specific symbolic, even "charismatic" authority and a historicity covering a longer time-span. But none of these characteristics has been immune to change, as noted by newer perspectives on the hybrid and translocal mutations of artistic and cultural institutions (Gielen, 2008, 2009). Furthermore, the important point is to recognize that, in contrast to institutions (in Figure 7 they also include central and local administrations) with bureaucratic designs and a pyramid format, platforms have emerged as flexible organisations with fixed microstructures and elastic project portfolios. [76]

Indeed, since a turning point in the 90s, there has been a crossing process with informal circles of relationships and work and with different types of networks – electronic, institutional, relational etc. Since the 90s, it is precisely this organisational plasticity that has increased. Stimulated by the motricity of projects with a translocal irradiation (on the basis of new technologies), it has significantly altered the map of artistic peripheries, centralities and circuits. Moreover, such creativity, actually highly interdisciplinary, thus hybrid and diffuse, tends to be developed in niches (many of them adjacent to public policies) that promote new urban cultural skills, as well as spacialisations of "immaterial work" (Nicolas-Le Strat, 1998). In short, features and changes related to what has been called the post-Fordist paradigm in society, as in art (Menger, 2001; Gielen and Bruyne, 2009; Gielen, 2009).

After the organizations we may now return to the other discourse-related transversal mediation and its reflexive properties. Firstly, by discourses I mean the aesthetic, cultural, social and political kinds, which serve as substantive resources for cultural and artistic reflexivity (modes of thinking and working in contemporary art), as well as operational mediation used by curators and programmers to envisage the agenda-setting (and conceptual frameworks) for the exhibition of art and the production of cultural events. Agenda-setting that actually, and extensively, governs production, commissioning, dissemination, programming and reception. But at a second glance, discourses in a broader sense than those functional features contain reflexivity as an important concept of articulation that is to be understood as borderless in various aspects.

Thus, as another key transversal mediation it cannot be reduced, either, to doxas within each cultural field, to remind us of the terms Bourdieu most associated with *enjeux* and internal

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[76] Actually, many institutions in cultural spaces are quite mixed figures, with bureaucratic administrations and adhocratic areas (or departments) such as those concerned with the production (and co-production) of projects. In counterpoint to larger, vertical and rigid bureaucracies, these adhocracies tend to be flexible, smaller-scale structures, with a horizontal distribution of power and informal form of operation (Mintzberg, 1995; Clegg, 1988).

struggles there, both aesthetic and ideological. Rather, less explicitly ideological positions because we must recognize that ideology may only appear highly "mediated" in non-pamphleteering works of art and literature (Sapiro, 2007). Primarily, those that do not give up their formal or textual autonomy in contrast with the basic – e.g. normative – semantics and goals of ideology.

It is true that as a codification of conceptions, so to speak, visions of the world, rules and forms of artistic activity, Bourdieu's doxa expresses a double reflexive component: that of the "agents" who transport it in the habitus and embed it in their practices, and that of the field in which it is shared and disputed. But, quite simply, this structural and instrumental interpretation of doxa, connected with processes of (re)producing the field and with positioning strategies, runs the risk of an interpretive schematism of intellectual and artistic life that subverts the very amplitude of reflexivity as it is practised there. Even with regard to matters that, at first sight, are more utilitarian or strategic (e.g. gatekeeping, the filtering process connected with mediators who interfere with recognition and legitimation, the assignment of value to works, careers, reputations), it appears actually thought out and executed in a non-linear manner.
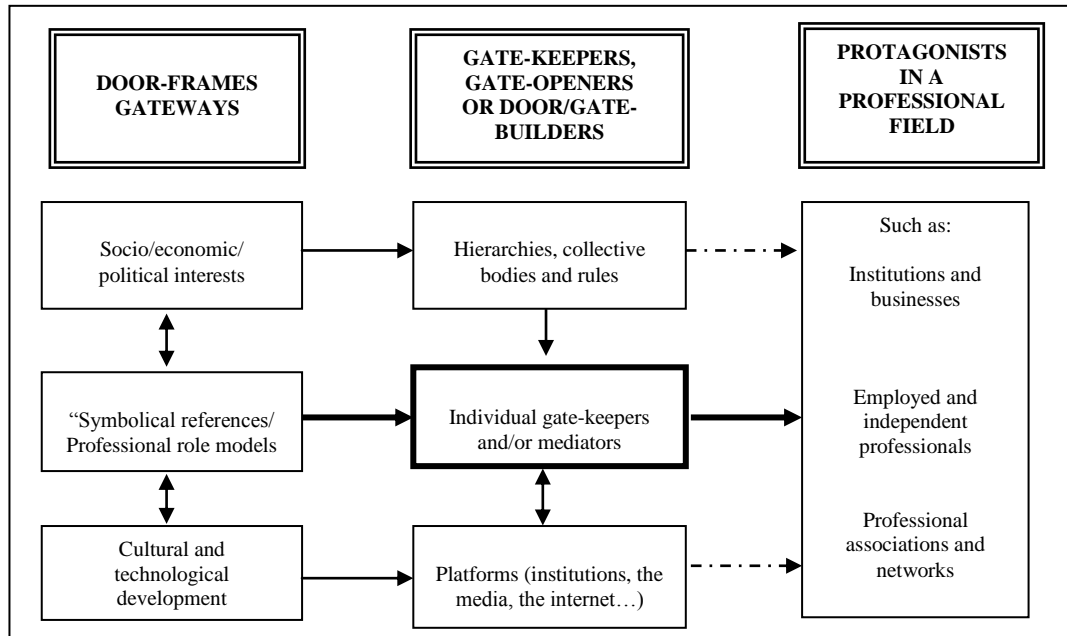
Let me give an example: in a study where I related the notion of singularity to symbolic artistic power and the mediations for its recognition (Conde, 2008a), interviews with the main curators and critics of contemporary art in Portugal did not display positions that were clearly distinguishable on the basis of doxas, nor did they give a simplistic description of gatekeeping. On the contrary, these interviews (that I prefer to call conversations, as they were developed according to the actual dialogue of each encounter) showed a discursive space that is polyphonic but no less shared or consensual in many aspects. Moreover, art and its mediations were considered not only as intra muros, thus merely linked to strategic *enjeux* in each field, but as a matter of reflexivity with a wider span to talk about the place of art in the contemporary world, how it became a visual and sensitive arena to the main topics and tensions of our times, how this must be adopted or discussed as criteria for recognition, etc.

In such reflexivity on recognition, gatekeeping is precisely seen to be a partial and obscure term to cover all the aspects of artistic legitimation, as well as an umbrella for various tendencies. It may be gatekeeping of various types (adjudicative, operational, institutional, political, etc), signify various forms of constraint and/or facilitation (influence, arbiters, decision), and have various points of reference (anchorages, players, procedures, effects) within the complex system of monitorisation vs monetisation[77] in cultural spaces. Incidentally, Figures 8 and 9 exemplify certain conceptualisations from a European study (VV.AA., 2003a) on the

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[77] To use an economic term for the dimension relating to the material, commercial and/or asset-related expression of the symbolic value.

universes of serious music and the new media in the arts[78], to indicate how gatekeeping may be approached from different angles, from general models to detailed accounts of interferences in an artistic career.

Figure 8. A MULTI-STEP MODEL OF GATE-KEEPING PROCESSES

Source: Cliche and Wiesand (2003: 25)

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[78] Especially in three countries, Germany, Austria and Portugal. Regarding the situation of women in these areas, the study treated gender gatekeeping in particular, within a broad framework. Other charts and typologies in VV.AA. (2005b) for the film and publishing sectors in Europe.

Figure 9. GATEKEEPERS AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF AN ARTISTIC CAREER

(EXAMPLES)	INDICATOR FOR "RECOGNITION" OR "SUCCESS"	FIRST LAYER: FACILITATORS SHAPING OR PROMOTING THE START OF A CAREER	SECOND LAYER: MEDIATORS IN THE MARKETPLACE	THIRD LAYER: INSTITUTIONS AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES (MOSTLY PUBLIC)
PHASE I: DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING	Self-expression, personal satisfaction, support from internal and external sources	Family and friends Educators and trainers Role models and their legacies	Professional mentors/ peers Generational networks	Public authorities responsible for setting education and training curricula Panels of judges giving scholarships
PHASE II: DISCOVERY AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT	Public acclaim from professionals	Professional mentors Groups or networks of peers Critics/media The public/audiences	Organizers of distribution platforms or events (e.g. curators of festivals or exhibitions) on a national level Public and private funding sources Producers/publishers Critics/media Agencies	Professional associations (those setting the criteria for membership) Regulators (e.g. setting preferential tax or employment status) Committees of peers giving prizes, awards, project grants Cultural institutions (setting criteria to hire artists)
PHASE III: SUCCESS WITH EUROPEAN OR INTERNATIONAL ACCLAIM	Money Devoted audiences/"fans" Recognized as trend setters	Panel of judges giving awards (travel grants) Cultural institutions Key platforms Critics/media The public/audiences	Transnational organizers of events/curators of festivals or exhibitions Critics/media in leading European or international newspapers, magazines etc. Public relations specialists in the global culture industries.	Forums and networks of international scope and intergovernmental bodies (e.g. the EU and other European organizations as, for example, the Nordic Council, etc)

Source: Cliche and Wiesand (2003: 28)

The important point to underline is that gatekeeping exists alongside other mediation processes whose reflexive content (not only operational or adjudicative) transcends the most strategic or instrumental dimensions, even despite their possible influence on the legitimation

granted by institutions and the market. One of the main reflexive processes involved here is precisely the interpretation that certain mediators exercise, such as those that I interviewed. And interpretation, as the reflection or reappropriation of artistic practices in discourses, produces intelligibility, i.e. sense, and not just visibility or value.

It may adopt various registers, from the more literal or descriptive to the more hermeneutic, exploratory or assertive from theoretical viewpoints, as is seen in the diversity of insights that circulate in the writings on art and culture: commentary, essay and criticism. Finally, it is noteworthy that it represents a reflexive argumentation not limited to the formulation of value judgments, which, moreover, when they exist, it expresses with a fair degree of relativity. This does not indicate arbitrariness but, often, the assumption of plural axiologies (values and criteria, and assessment) which, for the future, are more necessary for an understanding of the contemporary situation. Thus, the discourses of recognition, as well as those of the creators themselves in their works and postures, do not present the doctrinaire closing of the doxas (to return to Bourdieu's terms) or confine themselves to strategic usefulness, as a quasi-capital marked by the splits in the field and played as a stake in its struggles. A plus for some, questioned or devalued by others.

In fact, in introducing the discursive dimension and considering it above all as reflexivity, in various senses, we move on to another perception of cultural spaces that are not just "a space of the (re)distribution and the (re)production of cultural capital" – as Jaroslava Gajdosova (2008, 2009) also says in her "alternative reading" of Bourdieu's concepts and the respective "static structural model". Speaking of literature[79], she counter-proposes a "discursive model of literary field" in which the doxa gains a different reflexive nature and the habitus a more "enabling attitude"[80], because writers are "driven by the field's discourses rather than by its rigid structure", institutional *enjeux* or a doxa merely defined as a set of (literary) rules. In this space of reflexivity, agency and experience, they are mainly driven by broader "questions" with which writers think of themselves, organise themselves, and participate with the literary text in the circumstances of their time: "they may embrace a dilemma about an identity of a

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[79] Using *Die Gruppe 47* (*Group 47*) as an example, "one of the most influential literary groupings in the German Federal Republic" with writers like Martin Walser, Günter Grass, Wolfgang Koeppen, Hans Werner Richter and Siegfrid Lenz. It emerged in 1947 and officially disbanded in 1968. "The Gruppe 47 was also one of the most contentious literary groupings—in the fifties were its writers disregarded for having encouraged the revival of the memories about National Socialism whereas in the seventies they were acclaimed for it. Many of them became the icons of the German literary and intellectual fields where they still hold their canonical positions"; "A younger generation of the *Gruppe's* writers (Günter Grass, Martin Walser) entered the literary and the public lives in the sixties, and until nowadays they have monopolized the moral discourse on the war and the Holocaust." (Gajdosova, 2008: 84).

[80] Precisely on account of the notion of personal and historical experience that writers undergo with their contingencies and agency, which go against the excessive "reproductive function" of the habitus/doxa in Bourdieu, "that obfuscates its other dimension – that of an enabling attitude" (Gajdosova, 2008: 85). It presents, then, a conceptual transposition from the habitus to experience, parallel to the move from Bourdieu's objective field structure to his discursive structure. See also Myles (2004) and other view on the Bourdieu's concepts in Danto (1999).

social group or the whole society vis-à-vis its historical experience or its momentary situation" (Gajdosova, 2008: 85).

The author therefore proposes a different "reflexive mode of doxa" (in her own words, "completely overlooked in Bourdieu's model") to include these "questions", which query the literary space and mobilise it at various points of intersection with society. The collective memory, identities and their transformations are some of the questions of today, though with many others always elaborated by literature – including utopias and reflexive anticipations of a time to come:

"A discursive nature of literary field is mainly given by questions which are at stake for the writers as well as for a community whose dilemma(s) they address. In most literary fields, it is usually one initial question that has been re-formulated by several literary generations (…) I wish to argue that the 19th century literary fields in Europe established not only their institutions, as Bourdieu shows, but they also introduced a range of intellectual and anthropological themes which persisted until the following century. Among them, perhaps most revealing literary themes of the times revolved around the crisis of traditional authority and the institution of patriarchal family, which poignantly illustrate novels of Thomas Mann, Franz Werfel, and Franz Kafka. The taboo of sexual identity was another powerful literary theme of the times which was vociferously brought up in the works of Stefan Zweig, or Robert Musil. In the works of the Late Modernists, the dilemma about individual autonomy escalated into the anxiety about the effacement of subject, which they ascribed to the anomies of a highly rationalized modern world. In the works of Kafka, the locus of this anxiety lied in an unrestrained growth of the bureaucratic control of social life; in the novels of Musil it dwelled in the paralyzing power of state machinery, whereas in Marcel Proust's opus about subjective time (which might have anticipated Foucauldian anxiety about the effacement of subject), it resided in the frailty of one's own memory vis-à-vis the memories of the others." (Gajdosova, 2008: 91)

Analogically, "reflexive doxa" has even become the main feature in contemporary art, and the same in other cultural productions addressed to the main issues of our times. Therefore, reflexivity is a transversal mediation that crosses the intertextual fabric of social reflexivity (in political, media, economic and socio-cultural spheres) with the artistic reflexivity relating to the world.[81] Especially in art, which is now "closer to everydayness than it ever was in the past" (Jiménez, 2005: 276)[82] and is even redefining the artist's role as an "ethnographer", "public intellectual" or citizen with ethical and civic concerns (especially since the 1990s), under the influence of its deconstructionist, postcolonial, digital and ethnographical turns (Foster, 1996; Becker, 2000; Conde, 2003, 2008, 2010b). The last one being the basis of semantic and

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[81] In this part I pick up what I wrote in Conde (2009b), an essay on art and power.
[82] In his book, Jiménez refers to the main nuclei of contemporary art and not the whole of present-day art, a heterogeneous field. These nuclei are the reference points for the summits of contemporary art. I visited two in Germany in 2007, the last *Documenta* in Kassel and the Münster *Skulptur Projekte* (Conde, 2010c).

iconographic ties between society and art, which mainly even functions as a "social scanner" as we see in so many of its images and languages.

In this way, it is a kind of reflexivity shared with the social sciences themselves (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994). Indeed, because this art updates the iconological, hermeneutic and activist tradition, not only with lines of aesthetics and contemporary philosophy. It also uses, perhaps dominantly in certain areas, references from the social sciences and anthropology in particular, cultural studies, and perspectives of post-colonialism, globalisation and macro-trends.[83]

So, for art, these discourses on identity, the body, the feminine, emotions, violence, urbanity, post-colonialism, kitsch, the sublime etc, questioning the possibility itself of narratives and representations, are a work tool. A basic resource for thought, action and power. That is to say, the artistic power that creates, speaks, supplements and acts. With this power to register art in the world, rewriting or "reprogramming the world", as Nicholas Bourriaud (2000, 2004) prefers, it makes countless apprehensions, configurations and interventions in the real. A double "factory of senses" and "technology of remembrance" (Tota, 2000: 16, 95ff) that re-expresses/re-invents stories and history, contemporary landscapes, society and individuals. Including the "tribulations of the self" and "ontological uncertainties" (Giddens, 1992) that make personal (and other) forms of identity vulnerable. In short, witnesses of the world and "explorations of existence"[84] that the portraits of this art bring with realism and fiction, humour, irony, anguish, hope, bitterness, disillusionment, violence, affection and tenderness.

Knowing how they reach the recipients, publics and public space and how they are received is another matter. And, in addition, how they are understood, that is, the transition from the mere perception, *visuality*, of artworks to their greater *visibility* on the criterion of an intelligible interpretation. A necessary condition to avoid optical illusions and simplistic or only realistic interpretations of contemporary art, since it is a complex territory of both conceptual and formal meanings and processes of de/construction that demand enough artistic information and training to guarantee a *de facto* understanding of its codes and hermetisms (Conde, 1992b, 2004).

Nevertheless, reception, from the narrow public to the general audience, is no less involved in the contextual matrices of art and its mediations and configurations of power. As Figure 8 shows, it has a certain power of recognition (an imposing aspect for creators and cultural spaces), though that power is limited to the public resonance, so to speak, of works, artists or institutions. Though they arrive there already recognised by the filters of other

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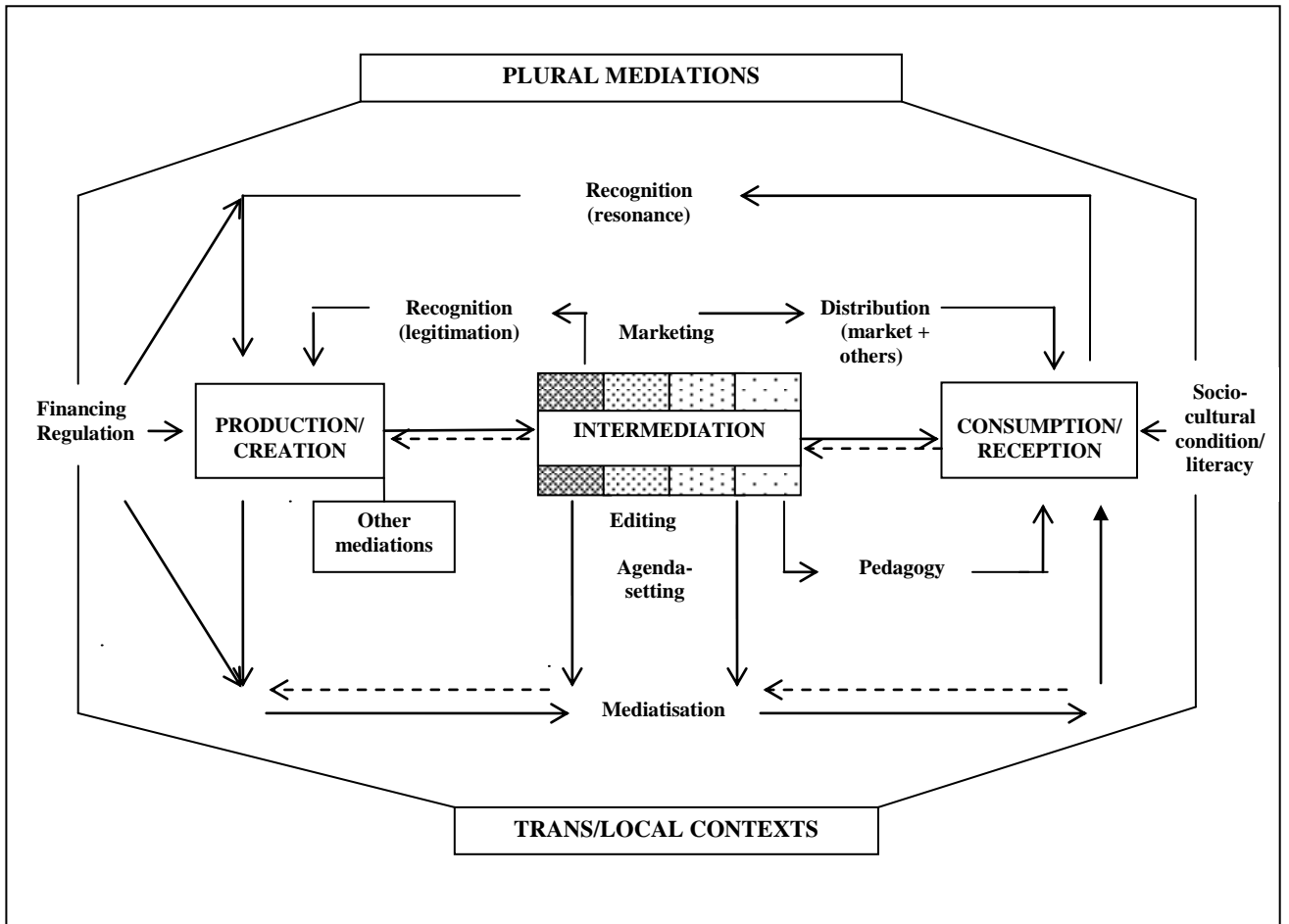[83] Schneider and Wright (2006); other references in Conde (2009b, 2011a).
[84] Paraphrasing Milan Kundera's expression on the novel: a literary non-verist kind of reality but about "existence" as a "field of human possibilities, everything that people can become, everything of which they are capable". Similarly, the apparently more documentary forms of contemporary art take heart from an identical emancipating message of possibility.

recognition. This one, with the distinctly more decisional and discretionary power of legitimation exists in a restricted zone of complicities, some gate-keeping processes and also interpretations. That is, a zone that belongs to "inner circles" and intermediations near the creators, the main anchorages for production and areas of subsidisation/regulation.

Basically, we have now a diagram for the figuration of mediation processes. They are numerous and reversible, connecting what usually appears, by sequential "stages", in a more simplistic PDC model for the trilogy Production vs Diffusion vs Consumption, or similar trilogies. Although the diagram may actually be drawn in a more complex form, this summary version already helps to remove us from that first PDC model with its perspective of "instances". But they have, in fact, internal mediations, in addition to the plural mediations that combine all the trans/local contexts of cultural and artistic activity.

Alternatively, Figure 10 introduces the various processes and the multilateralness that run through all the stages (in their turn, they affect each other, though in different ways), and especially de-compact the "D". It ceases to be a bloc of intermediaries, to be transformed into an intermediation that is segmented by different profiles and movements. Further, the mediation processes that run through the whole of the cultural space are neither concentrated in nor simply irradiate from an "intermediate zone". The span of gatekeeping, for instance, is as broad as this, although specific forms can be localised in certain areas, as I mentioned above for certain circles close to creators, production and subsidisation. They therefore correspond to the left half of the figure.

Figure 10. FIGURATION OF MEDIATION PROCESSES

The de-compacting of the "D", finally, reveals its various meanings and processes that extend from distribution on the market, among other kinds, to the pedagogy that was mentioned above, with a different type of relationship with the publics. It also embraces the promotional strategies which are in part of mediatisation while other parts receive different informational inputs with impacts that also differ according to the figuration zones. Actually, mediatisation is a heterogeneous process that runs through cultural spaces and influences them with different agendas, formats, mediums, professional roles and interests: advertising agencies, general and specialised journalism, criticism and essays in the media, etc.

Throughout these zones we may distinguish at least three media-related outcomes. Firstly, mediatisation operating, itself, as an agent of cultural markets. Secondly, as a provider of cultural information for audiences, so as a possible stimulus for the search for programmes and other cultural events among a large majority of the population that is actually a non-public in this area. In truth, it is highly conditioned (and limited) by the socio-cultural and generational profiles, besides the literacy in artistic and cultural matters, which is itself a condition for competence in reception. Finally, and thirdly, mediatisation also as a form of institutional and

political promotion in its most direct relationship with the powers that govern and regulate this area. Another aspect that helps to construct a "public cultural space" in which most citizens who are not culture publics thus become confronted almost daily with this kind of visibility for topics and controversies such as those related to public and cultural policies (questions on the role of the state, the private sector etc), which the media launch and amplify in the public sphere. [85]

To conclude, Figure 10 summarizes some mediating dynamics to be considered in the current figuration of cultural spaces, and the diagram may appear as perhaps the most Elias-like figure of all those presented here, for its multilateralness and processuality. Two properties of any figuration that we also now need to set in trans/local contexts. Quite simply, as said at the beginning, to reach this outlook we needed to cross the notion of figurations with that of mediations as they characterize the global world today and the specific ones for art and culture. The last stage in an essay which began with individuals and finally ends with an incursion into some of their spaces.

4. The final point: thinking about, with and beyond Elias

How did we generate our debts towards the authors who have or have not been the tutelary influence of our course but who, in all cases, cannot be disavowed and, especially, how do we honour them? Thinking about them is a common form of homage but, in referring to Norbert Elias, this text has followed a different track: of thinking with him and even, for the most part, beyond him. So the reflection on individuals and contemporary cultural spaces has covered many aspects that are not associated with Elias' topics or his times, though they may be raised with the application of some of his concepts to current circumstances. Or explored for a different examination of his thinking.

Without returning to the content of the essay, I would prefer to reserve the final words for certain ideas on this choice and on how it arose from an ongoing, though also reconsidered, interest in Elias. He was a milestone in my apprenticeship in sociology, even if it is not always obvious or he was not always the main point of reference in my work. Nevertheless, for me, as I recalled at the very beginning of this work, Elias not only represents an intellectual reference. He is also an affective one, alive in the memories of my student days: I return to them, never forgetting my fascination for this profound and singular author when I had to read *The Civilising Process* for the sociology of culture course. As singular, moreover, as his own

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[85] Moreover, it is one, among others, of the matters of contemporary citizenship that require us increasingly "to decide". Often without sufficient knowledge or even the expert knowledge necessary for certain fields but, anyway, under the ethical, political and democratic call to have or manifest an opinion. To resume, a trend towards "deliberation" in a differentialist and desirably reflexive public sphere, that both implies an informed relationship with culture and a "culture of citizenship" (Dubet, 1994; Turner, 1994; Stevenson, 2001; Stanley, 2005; Conde, 2004, 2006, 2008b, 2008c, 2010b).

presence as a central "outsider" (Elias [1990]1994, 1991; Merino, 1994; VV.AA., 1994a) in 20th century sociology, until the public and academic acclamation that he fortunately received in the last stage of his life.

On the topic of memories, I should also recall that over twenty years ago, when sociology was dominated by meta-theories (as it still is) and, in Portugal, was fairly francophone, under the aegis of Pierre Bourdieu and his style of writing, we could read Elias as the discovery of another language and grammar with which to consider individuals and their history. Individuals, not as actors, agents or subjects, according to the prisms of the various paradigms[86] but rather individuals as human beings that were presented with the connecting link of psycho/sociogenesis that went beyond all the classical and persistent dichotomies which we debated at the time.[87]

Still, I should like to acknowledge that, beyond all the epistemological and methodological merits of Elias' figurational thinking, what has impressed me most until today was precisely his way of speaking about this human condition with a truth and force that I failed to find in the "humanist" (more analytical or more "sensitive") discourses that adorned sociology. Especially at a moment of post-structuralist and post-positivist turns, with the "rediscovery of the human" from various angles (e.g. the biographical) that re-appeared in the 1980s with a full array of discourses in which there was also no lack of examples of a rhetoric that "poetised" about life, day-to-day existence, identities, the "I", the body and the emotions.

But, in Elias (1987b) emotions do not appear in the same way, nor do they appear softened by "sensitivity."[88] Whether brutal or gentle, intimate or public, they are connected with feelings and power so that they reveal the broad range of the registers and potentialities of the human. That is, the individuals that we all are, instinctive, rational and "modelled", with suffering and joy, fears and passions, vulnerability and violence, which can only be understood within the figurational embrace of history and society. Death, with the metaphysical anxieties that it raises, feelings, the sense of abandoning, settlement, is a case of emotions that Elias left

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[86] Among other possibilities of classification, I refer to these variations that define the individuals by their roles, as beings who are over-socialised and determined by structures or, again, considered in a phenomenology that is "freer" of feeling and experience, etc.

[87] And we still do – the following reading list could well be expanded with many more texts that have kept up the dichotomies debate until the present: Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel, 1981; Gellner, 1984; Alexander, 1985; Alexander, Giesen, Münch and Smelser, 1987; Bourriaud, 1977; Boudon, 1979, 1986, 1984 ; O'Neill, 1992 ; Collins, 1992; Kim *et all*, 1994; Valade, 2001. The return to the holism/individualism debate can be seen equally in Margaret Archer, where other ways to advance beyond it than Gidden's "structuration theory" are suggested. See, for instance, Archer (1995), among other books. For an overall perspective of the social sciences and new epistemological challenges: Berthelot (2000, 2001a, 2001b).

[88] Including that of the sociological kind, though the sociology (and anthropology) of emotions or social accounts of the emotional dimension are obviously developed with plural approaches (Thoits, 1989; Kemper, 1990; Jackson, 1993; VV.AA., 1994b; Craib, 1995; Burkitt, 1997; Scheff, 1997; Bendelow and Williams, 1998; Lupton, 1998; Barbalet, 2001, 2002; Williams, 2001; Livet, 2002; Le Breton, 1998, 2004; Turner and Stets, 2005; Kay and Maruska , 2005; Milton and Suasek, 2005; Stets and Turner, 2007; Turner, 2007; Fernandez, Lézé and Marche, 2008; Rezende and Coelho, 2010).

behind in one of his most moving works, *The Loneliness of the Dying* ([1982]1985b, 2001).[89] The excitement, the histrionic, agonistic and cathartic pleasure that we seek, for example, in sport and leisure (Elias and Dunning ([1986]1992) are other emotions that I learnt to understand, in a different way, in a second, no less striking, volume.

I confess that history, or the figurational modellings of time, as Elias called them[90], was and still is one of the most inspiring aspects for me. This interest also arose from a training in sociology that included history[91] so that, precisely, we would not have a "dialogue of the deaf" among disciplines – the accusation of Peter Burke, a key reference in the literature of the time, who called for a more integrating "third way".[92] Quite simply, Elias always seemed an excellent example to me in bringing, to the heart of sociology, the meticulous and comprehensive analysis of a great civilisational metamorphosis. In it, moreover, he included a vision of power (and violence) that greatly differed from other political sociologies, be they institutionalist, guided by the primacy of social and symbolic domination, as it appeared in Bourdieu, or epigonal of Michel Foucault's perspective. Another author then in vogue, followed in analyses with the panopticon model, disciplinary regimes and the "micro-physics" of power (Foucault, 1975,1979).

However, my interest in history (historical sociology), individuals and power also had another reason, which brings us to the need to think, in addition, beyond Elias. I am referring to the specificity that this trio could have for the artist's condition, to the issue of individual singularity that it raises and to forms of symbolic power. First of all, the symbolic power of artists themselves and their ideas, as authors who build personal and culturally influential "worlds" (of images, feelings, references), as well as the power (or powers) connected with contexts and mediations for their recognition. An area that I addressed, precisely, in this essay, thinking with and beyond Elias, by crossing the concept of figuration/interdependencies with these and other contemporary mediations. And on this level of the artist's condition, I should

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[89] But let us examine a critical appreciation of Elias' thesis in Déchaux (2001). Rather than the "repression" of death and the "solitude of the dying" produced by the process of individualisation, this author proposes new ways of subjectivising death, accompanied by a move away from funerary ritual to more intimate ceremonies. Though not exactly unrelated to the processes of empathy and compassion. A more recent development of attitudes and behaviours in which "the key word is not solitude", which denies social ties, but rather "subjectivity" for other forms of these ties, one that is re-established in the new logics of intersubjective affinity (Déchaux, 2001: 171). And with a psychologisation of death that may not actually dehumanise it, as in the "new model" of attempting "to find an easy death" – without suffering, subjectively rationalized and explained as the transition to the other, terminal, stage of the individual's life.

[90] In another book he would offer a reflection on time (Elias, [1984]1991a).

[91] In spite of the fact that at the beginning of the 1980s in ISCTE, as still today, it only included contemporary history subjects. The sociology of culture covered various aspects of historical sociology.

[92] Peter Burke (n.d./1980), pp. 10 and 26 for the following quotations on sociologists and historians, who, according to his words at that time, "both see the mote in their neighbour's eye" and on the "mutual provincialisms" of academic subcultures split by the quite artificial stereotype of specialisations: for some, "to detect rules", general patterns; for others, "to pay attention to detail", events and situations. Burke has argued, then, that the third way, which reconciles structure with agency and change, would only be achieved by "a social history or historical sociology – the distinction is irrelevant – that should be related not only to understanding from within but also explanation from outside: both to the general and the particular".

once again recall the need for history and, especially, the history of art itself[93], in order to reconstitute an equivalent "civilising process", though not without idiosyncrasies. That is, the arc of a construction process for artists in which they ultimately represent a particular category of individualities in the context of what Elias called the "society of individuals".

Historically, the crossing of the two "civilizing processes" – of individualism in the West and artistic individualisation – revealed, indeed, founding moments in which it was possible for artists to appear as prototypes, magnifying upcoming and more comprehensive cultural values in their idiosyncrasy, e.g. those of individualism (Conde, 1995a). From the Renaissance to Mannerism, Michelangelo was certainly one of these cases: a great ancestor of artists, as a pre-Romantic self-invested in his difference, vocation or gift, and thus glorified by the commemorating instruments of the time. [94] These included, precisely, the nascent genre of artists' auto/biographies and the *Vite* of Giorgio Vasari[95], an ideological and historiographical paradigm celebrating art and its distinguished personages. But even if the course of this individualisation has been slow, tortuous[96] and especially evident in the greatest artists, it represents the foundation of a specific form of identity that was later expanded by Romanticism. From then on, it had other figurations throughout Modernism, and even post-modern de/reconstructions, though it persists as a mark of both the difference of individuals in art and of artistic spaces since their more recent independence.

Without dilating on retreats in history, though it would be interesting to relate them to Elias (and his Mozart, who also had the misfortune of being in advance of artistic individuality, which was still incapable of existing independently in the context of the times, the court and his own family), I would just like to note that it is here that my other reflexive trajectories beyond Elias originated. In fact, if, as Elias wrote, "what we call the individuality of a person is, in the first place, a particularity of his/her psychic functions" in turn dependent of its co-relational orientation for the others[97], in the case of the artistic condition, this *general* "self-regulation"

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[93] I mean the social history of art and of its forms (iconographical, aesthetic, stylistic) that complement the sociology of art, though it has not always been obvious in its tradition. And, on this occasion, I must mention that I am self-taught in the history of art since the sociology course offered no training in this field.

[94] Before, Leonardo da Vinci was still a transitional figure (Conde, 1995b).

[95] A monumental work with the lives of more than two hundred artists: Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de Più Eccellenti Architettori, Pittori et Scultori Italiani*, with two editions in Florence, in 1550 and (enlarged) 1568. It was indeed the foundation stone of art history – and of the right of artists to near-hagiographical celebration of their masterpieces and lives and thus to their elevation to transcendence: *la divinità*, as one of the first terms for artistic charisma (Conde, 2011b).

[96] Even with certain moments of retreat. For instance, in the post-baroque period, a sudden dampening was suffered by the movement for the emancipation of artists, which existed in Portugal in the final quarter of the 16th century, against the background of the international spread of Mannerism and topics relating to the independence of the artistic "idea" and the "liberality" that was claimed for the visual arts (Serrão:1983).

[97] Because "the individual can only be understood in terms of his communal life with others. The structure and configuration of an individual's behaviour-control depend on the structure of the relations between individuals" (Elias, [1939, 1987] 1991b, 1993: 78, 81). As he also states in *The Society of Individuals*: "only through a long and difficult shaping of his or her malleable psychical functions in intercourse with other people does a person's behaviour-control attain the unique configuration characteristic of a specific human individuality. It is only through a social moulding process within the framework of particular social characteristics that a person evolves the characteristics and modes of behaviour that distinguish him or her from all the other members of his or her society.

of individuals takes a *specific* and enhanced form because the artist is self- and hetero-regulated by the primacy of individuality as singularity. Double singularity, personal for the creators and social for their spaces that are distinguished from other professional domains by this interplay with the mutual endowment of difference and recognition.

So, the subjective particularities, and self-reflexivity, of an individual as artist have another "goal", "public status" and "institutional rights" (O'Neill, 1978: 210ff). Just like the intelligentsia, among other fractions of the cultural elites , artists belong to that narrow place of reference that includes creators legitimised by the production of artworks, thought, ideologies, utopias and action (even political) that interfere with our imaginaries, with the reflexivity that circulates in society, and with some of their (re)constructions.

They are therefore "active minorities", as Serge Moscovici (1979) termed them, and not only marked by an institutionalized "anomie" (Bourdieu, 1987, 1989 ; Sahuquillo, 1998), as it is usually related with their individualism and the need for personal deflection as a rule for the spiral of artistic innovation since the Modern movements. In truth, they are also endowed with "nomic" ability, i.e. more widely shared *Weltanschauungen*, symbols and meanings. A passage that supplements the difference of these individuals and also converts them into individualities, on the basis of "historical memory", one matrix of reference and even reverence of some leading events and figures for the more anonymous "collective memory" (Halbwachs, 1968: 38-79).

Despite this fact, singularity persisted on the edges of the sociology of art, more as a problem than a core issue. With exceptions,[98] I recall that 25 years ago, when I published the first article in this area, a large part of the bibliographical references aligned themselves with the "outrageous project"[99] against individualistic and charismatic illusions so extensively illustrated by artists, and the accompanying metaphysical and naturalist illusions for giftedness, talent, genius or simply vocation. The scene has changed in the meantime, even for the current central importance of the sociology of the individual, about which I spoke in the first part of this article.

Society not only produces the similar and typical, but also the individual. The varying degree of individuation among the members of different groups and strata shows this clearly enough. The more differentiated the functional structure of a society or a class within it, the more sharply the psychical configurations of the individual people who grow up within it diverge. But however different the degree of this individuation may be, there is certainly no such thing as a zero-point of individuation among people who grow up and live within society. To a greater or lesser degree, the people of all the societies known to us are individual and different from each other down to the last detail of their configuration and behaviour, and society-specific, i.e. shaped and bound in the nature of their psychical self-regulation by a particular network of functions, a particular form of communal life which also shapes and binds all its other members. What are often conceptually separated as two different substances or two different strata within the human being, his 'individuality' and his 'social conditioning', are in fact nothing other than two different functions of people in their relations to each other, one of which cannot exist without the other. They are terms for the specific activity of the individual in relation to his fellows, and for his capacity to be influenced and shaped by their activity; for the dependence of others on him and his dependence on others; expressions for his function as both *die* and *coin.*" (Elias, [1939, 1987] 1991b, 1993: 80-81).

[98] The publications of Nathalie Heinich, quoted above, were singular, themselves, in their innovative perspective of artistic singularity and the values that guide it. In relation to the challenges that art brings to sociology, see also Heinich (1998b).

[99] To adopt in my sense an expression (in French, "projet attentatoire") that Jean-Claude Chamboredon used in an article at the time (1986: 506).

Even so, it is worth returning to the interpretative ambivalence that the artistic condition raises for sociology, as if, in front, there is a double screen parading illusions and truths (Conde, 1992a; 2001c).[100] A screen that obliterates and reveals since, on the one hand, it shows epistemological obstacles (images, representations, inventions in the field of the "belief" surrounding artists) and, on the other, raises the alert, no less, to the symmetrical obstacle of a desire not to see what they finally show: their justification and effectiveness in the territories of art. The symbolic that returns to the real to re-produce the differential modelling of these individuals, their individuality as singularity because being an artist, as we learnt from the first trilogy of texts by Pierre Bourdieu[101], implies being *one* in the legitimate, aesthetic and socially authorised definition of the name. As I said, the social singularity of this domain in relation to other fields of activity rests – tautologically – on the principle of the personal singularity of its members, and thus the images, stereotypes and even myths do not depend on an objective condition. Rather, they reiterate and reify it in what can be transfigured into "pulsion towards transcendence". This is indeed the – ideological – essence of the artist.

Tautological circularity, however, transforms singularity into an over-explanatory black box, with no proper light shed on its interior (Conde, 2009g). This opaqueness may also occur in sociological uses that select it as an issue. Hence, as I did with the habitus, we have to "open" it to identify at least three dimensions that constitute it and lead to different, though complementary, analyses: the dimensions of context, biography and, especially, authorship, as singularity in art only exists with artworks. They are certainly born of a 'situated creativity': artists in the coordinates of their context, trajectory and reference points, especially aesthetic, technical and stylistic. But, as a process and product of aesthetic, conceptual and operational work as it exists in the various systems of artistic activity, the works have a formal and expressive independence that cannot be reconciled with simplistic or linear perspectives. The worst that could be done in sociology would be to continue with the old "reflection theory", "semanticizing" the works according to the content of life. Or better, of artists' "other lives", parallel to those of their creation and profession.

In fact, artistic work sets "distances" between art works and the real, or generates a highly mediated relationship with it, even in works that are apparently more autobiographical or documentary. With this remark, which also questions the sociology that disdains art works and, even worse, when it disregards their independence in the name of the social conditions that "determine" artists, I would like to distinguish this artistic singularity based on the "author

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[100] I recall that a similar notion of "interpretative ambivalence" was transferred to the sociology of popular cultures. The "embarrassment" of sociologists divided between a "culturalist" analysis, restoring the expressive "independence" of those cultures, and an "ideological" analysis, with an eye on their "heteronomy" under the symbolic domination of categories of cultural legitimacy that have been approved by higher classes and cultures (Grignon and Passeron, 1989).
[101] An author who is always more in a state of tension than quiet interpretative ambivalence, and ready to "objectivate" obstacles: Bourdieu (1975a, 1975b, 1977), texts re-published in Bourdieu (1992).

function" (Foucault, 1992; Babo, 1993; Buescu, 1998) from biographical singularity. The second, however, is not an assumption but a matter to investigate since it seems fairly clear depending on the individuals, while the possible, though not inevitable, relations with the other singularity (artistic; of artworks) are also always variable and complex (Conde, 2009a; VV.AA., 2008f).

What biographical research can do, then, is supplement and, obviously, not close the knowledge of creativity, in reconstituting the different features of artists' more personal trajectories, as I suggested, in line with a model for a sociological biography for them. The background that is always attached concerns their contexts. The perception of the characteristics of the artistic space (various of which have been addressed in this essay), the position that each individual occupies in it, and his or her many attributes: besides wider locations in a time, country, place of residence or passage, age, generation, family, class, etc., among other frameworks, circles and networks of relationships. But, once again, without forgetting that, as artworks transcend biographies, individuals may not be reduced simply to representatives of context. Especially those who distinguish themselves most by the personal way in which they place or challenge themselves in that respect: another facet of singularity and it recalls the Mozart of Elias, his tensions with his context. A context, still, of the "craftsman-artist" in the service of court tastes: they show the defiance of one of them wanting to be an "independent artist" (Elias [1991]1993, 2010a).

Reference to the artworks, another plane not always adopted or defended by the sociology of art[102], involves the need for a new gateway: to move from individuals to their artistic creations, which, precisely, so often display that independence and will to oppose constraints and heritage. It is also a step towards breaking with the tautological and opaque circularity that the notion of singularity may have when it does not seem to be examined in this way through the works but requires other resources for interpretation, to be sought in the history of art, iconology and semiology. Besides a whole series of reference points that, in the meantime, have shone forth from the aesthetic field to quite eclectic approaches applied to visual culture (Conde, 2009d) that include the perspectives of cultural studies, anthropology, post-colonialism etc., as I have mentioned in connection with the relationship between

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[102] Except in occasional cases and more recent trends; see the overview of Jean-Pierre Esquenazi (2007). In another piece of writing, this time precisely on the work of art "*The Embarkation for Cythera*" ("L'Embarquement pour Cythère", 1717) by Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), Norbert Elias not only placed it in its context but observed it beyond that. In the painter's trajectory, this painting fits into the re-aristocratisation of the French court in the reign of Louis XV and the progression from baroque art to the more frivolous and ornamental rococo style. But as artworks have an autonomy beyond their contextual connections, an autonomy with which they survive their creator, they may gain new meanings in different social figurations. This happened with the changes in the reception of this painting, since it was first classified as a "fête galante", a representation more in line with court life, until other symbologies in the 19th century. See Elias (2004) and (2010a), a book on Mozart that includes two major essays previously unpublished in English: on the courtly painter Watteau's "Embarkation for Cythera" and on "The fate of German Baroque poetry: between the traditions of court and middle class".

reflexivity and iconographies of contemporary art. More generally, moreover, these perspectives relate to the prolific (particularly digital) production of new visualities, devices and embodiments of our transculture.

Transculture and, by extension, great changes – reconfigurations – in contemporary society led to the subsequent and more recent re-encounter with Elias, of which this essay bears witness. Other platforms for continuing to think with him and beyond him, now concerning the processes of the de-singularisation and pluralisation of individuals. The recontextualisation and reconceptualisation of the habitus under current conditions has thus brought a more polyhedral vision of our dispositions and identities. As with regard to the erosion of the historical and national pedigrees of the habitus that exist in long-lasting modes of transmission, as Elias also considers them, though they are henceforth confronted with the double temporalisation and spatialisation of the contemporary condition: presentist, transnational, and crossed by flows of various types that we may also see as tranverse mediations. In parallel with other, specific, mediations that complicate and remodel the notion of figuration, as has been observed here in cultural and artistic spaces in particular.

From this point of view, the world that follows on from the *Age of Extremes* – Eric Hobsbawm's title (1994) for the 20th century, too short a century for so many revolutions (political, social, scientific, cultural and artistic), terminating, in fact, before the date in the calendar, with the crises and metamorphoses since the 1970s – is a world that challenges the conceptual frameworks of sociology's founders. Even that of Elias, in spite of his long life, until just the start of the 1990s, in which the way was opened to another postmodern[103] and planetary configuration. Nevertheless, as I wanted to underline in this essay, Elias truly continues to be one of the most productive points of reference. So thinking with him and beyond him means the simultaneous *updating* and *modernity* of certain aspects of his figurational sociology for an understanding of the complexity of our times.

To conclude with two of the examples considered in the course of the essay, the rise of a (multifaceted) sociology of the individual stems, itself, from changes in the "society of individuals". A configuration of society with forms of contemporary individualism that affect the "We-I balance", to cite Elias' fundamental dyad[104], though it retains its acuity, since this hypertrophy of the "I", accompanied by crises and "ontological insecurities" (Giddens, 1991) gives rise, to no lesser extent, to concomitant movements seeking the "We". It is not only from

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[103] Or advanced, radicalised or late modernity, as various authors such as Giddens and similar writers prefer.
[104] See the chapter "Changes in the We-I Balance" in *The Society of Individuals* (Elias, [1939, 1987] 1991b, 1993). Claude Dubar (2000) used this dyad, quoting Elias (and other founders of sociology such as Weber and Marx) in his interesting book on the issue of identities in contemporary societies. He refers to the "move from the primacy of 'community forms' to 'society forms': a change from the We-I configuration, in which the all-powerful We dominate, to others where the I's claim an important place. That is, the development from local and centralized forms of production and trade to others that are globalised and networked. This process does not take place linearly or peacefully but by means of unforeseeable and multi-dimensional crises" (Dubar, 2000: 194). I also make reference to Dubar in Conde (2001a).

the point of view of identities, which cannot merely be subjective, reflexive and contingent, that they need contextual and historical anchorages and a narrative that upholds a sense of unicity and personal continuity.[105] It is also for the construction of common grounds, though in transformed meanings of community and citizenship. The latter, a key notion in our times – on the one hand, formal, legal and political; on the other, as citizenship, intersubjective, cultural and dependent on the cognitive and ideological as well as imaginary and emotional investments of the individual.[106]

Furthermore, it is true that Elias did not experience the most recent globalization and its network of flows that have changed our cartography. Nor did he see the development of new technologies in which the internet, basically "a network of networks of computers interlinked by a common computer language", has become "the central nervous system" of the network society (Castells, 1996, 1997). The same is to say of the "informationalism" which, according to Castells, substituted post-industrialism to be transformed into the matrix of 21st century societies. Short of this referential system, a technological paradigm based on the key role of information and knowledge, it was in "informalism", however, for example, that Elias also saw a process that was a motor of changes, from subtle to radical throughout the 20th century, not only in the relationships and de/ranking between groups but also in mentalities and customs.[107]

Nevertheless, if we understand these differences through the authors' contexts in time, Elias' conceptual up-to-dateness is no less evident if we think of how his notion of figuration – the connecting link of interdependencies – is, after all, today, and perhaps more than ever, at the core of our "age of connections". Everything connected by this (fine or robust) thread, which, when it breaks, may cause a global collapse – of intimate universes on a planetary scale.[108] And, at this moment, I am obviously thinking of the apotheosis of the financial crisis that, in particular, is ravaging Europe, though with a possible chain reaction throughout the world. I

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[105] Remaining with Dubar (2000: 194), we see that a narrative is one of the dimensions of the individual's self-re/construction, particularly in the "the society form": "that means, potentially, that all the fields of the social become spheres of subjective experiences that the personal subject must try to articulate to maintain a certain synchronic unity, reflexive of itself, and a certain diachronic continuity, narrative of itself – without either completely or lastingly succeeding. Unity and continuity are never acquired, but they are, in a way, virtual spaces-times and more or less detectable symbolic forms."

[106] As says Stephen Frost, "if the concept of citizenship is to be more than a simple totting up of rights and duties, it needs to embrace this space of feeling and fantasy, this realm of the subjective, of what might be termed of *investments* which human subjects accrue towards their social world. 'Cultural' citizenship has as much to do with these investments, emotional and irrational as they may be, as it has to do with the formal question of who is allowed to do, or has access to, what. To be a citizen, one not only has to formally belong somewhere; one has also to feel that this belonging is real." (Frost: 2001: 62). Thus, contemporary citizenship implies an "emotional activity" that presupposes the notion of "psychological autonomy" in addition to attachments to others, to communities. But, as Nick Crossley (2001: 36) now says, also a "self-dialogical process" because this autonomy is unstable in the postmodern condition with its contingencies and reflexive pluralism, which cross the path of individuals. Like "reflexive/reactive" agents, they have to look by themselves for an emotional response in a context in which there is no authoritative centre to guide or regulate conduct.

[107] Kilminster (2008).

[108] See Salumets (2001) with applications of Elias' perspective to contemporary scenarios including cyberspace surfing and its interdependencies.

have in mind the torrent of turmoil[109] which we are continuously witnessing like the surges of a wave breaking onto various shores. With the destructive force of a tsunami or a wind of change, no longer gradual but rather stirred up by the turbulence, the unpredictability and also the violence of the contingency.

In the circumstances and anxieties of the present, the contingency thus seems to be a *fatum* (Conde, 2010c), the historical outcome of "post-traditional" and "risk" societies, which are the same of our "age of connections" (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992; Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994). The point which we have reached after the long civilizational process with the opening question for this essay, so deeply addressed by Norbert Elias (how we became ourselves) – and which, however, does not authorise such a temptation to conclude the story or predict the future. All the answers to this second question – what will we turn into/what will we become? – depend on that process, which is still open, variable and endless, a non-evolutionary development without teleology of progress, or apocalypse. We only know that history follows its way. It is neither determinist nor random – a horizon of possibilities[110] that may even be re-civilising among other possibilities of de-civilisation, as has also been written (Dunning and Mennell, 1998; Mennell, 1989b, 1990, 2001; Breuer, 1991; Swann, 2001; VV.AA., 2001b; Krieken, 2009;Haro, 2010; Rohloff, 2011).

The important thing to follow with Elias is the balance, with a vision of broad and close reach. Two complementary modes of knowledge that he left with the image of the "aeroplane" and the "swimmer": the vast aerial perspective over the historical flow and the perspective of the individual in the circumstances of his or her moment. Wise advice, then, of sociology regarding the long term in relation to the conjunctural and presentist precipitation in this image that Elias also used to characterise the relationship of involvement and detachment[111] with situations, and that we may use for another note on the present. Not flying above, the swimmer, who is only struggling against the force of the water, cannot see further ahead than a mast or a boat if they come close to avoid the shipwreck. And if the shipwreck has been a recurring metaphor in pessimistic or nihilistic visions of the contemporary situation (whereas others use that of sailing in the bivalent sense of drifting or constructing a new map), to close this essay,

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[109] The Arab Spring is another example, with the Tunisian and Egyptian revolts, among others, the fall of Gaddafi in Libya and the continuing violence in Syria. Like the "Indignados" movement, a transnational demonstration against the usury of financial capitalism and the threats to the welfare state.

[110] As Elias says, "history is similar, then, to one of those mighty rivers that flow in the right direction, always towards the sea, and yet have no fixed bed before them but rather a large terrain where, first of all, they must seek a more defined bed, where, in other words, a wide variety of possibilities is presented for the creation of a bed in the proper direction. The vision of humanity, for them to achieve an understanding of the automatic nature of historical transformation, will only be truly enlightened and free when not only the immediate present is before its eyes but also the long history of the past from which its own time emerged" in *The Society of Individuals*, translation from the Portuguese edition (1993: 68).

[111] Idem, ibidem, p. 67; and see Norbert Elias' essay "The Fishermen in the Maelström" in *Involvement and Detachment* ([1983]1987a, 1997).

still with the contingency, I prefer another route that also leads us to "flight". I mean the way in which individuals live an experience that radicalises their vulnerability and freedom.

Thus, with respect to contingency and its impacts on us, we may speak of a figuration of fears, bold acts and changes, which, whether desired or not, have become practically obligatory in the present situations of turbulence or crisis. This may be at the basic levels, such as that of survival, and especially in cases more susceptible to precarious work, unemployment and a lack of skills; or it may be in the individuals' emotional and identity re/adjustments for their U-turns, recycling, rifts and challenges. In brief, an experience in various dimensions that, depending on the generations and social groups, may mean destitution and insecurity just as well as fulfilment and liberation. Or, again, swinging between the two limits in an effort to "swim" and "fly" at the same time.

Furthermore, I refer here to fear in an exact sense and not in the sense it has in the civilisational process with its connecting link of self- and hetero-coercion: "chains of fear" - as the sociology of Elias has also been interpreted (Béjar, 1991), perhaps excessively -, on which the manners and mentalities, bodies, "walls of feelings" and subjectivity of individuals have been modelled. If we ignore considerations of how these two types of coercion exist in the contemporary situation, our contingency leads us, however, to think, especially, about other fears. This may be the ever-basic fear connected with personal and collective survival, and the latter, immediate or postponed, with various examples of global threat (financial collapse, nuclear risk, ecological catastrophe etc.). Or it may be especially the fear provoked by the loss of rights and forms of social regulation (institutional, political and economic, as is happening at the moment with financial capitalism), among other weak points of the "social contract" and community bonds.

Under these conditions, the return to individuals of the responsibility for managing (their own) risks with duties and the taking of decisions no longer assured by the welfare state (which is meanwhile withdrawing from various public policy areas) corresponds to a contradictory imposition of new forms of constraint and empowerment for the individual. In different terms, to the freedom of self-monitoring, though it is vulnerable and beset with the difficulties of both a precarious present and an uncertain future.

But it is a freedom, however, that is no less "dangerous", as was said about the working classes of the Industrial Revolution, that may well, in fact, steadily smash "chains of fear", with a critical and subversive pulsion possibly generated by the crisis and contingency themselves, which erode the trust in institutions and the legitimacy of the political system. Two fronts under fire today from activists and "indignados" in the "street" or from more discreet forms of resistance and resilience in various spheres of daily life. To what point can they be consolidated into consistent social movements, perhaps re-igniting examples from the "Age of Extremes", though now with new forms, the use of the "viral" device of cyberspace and a more pragmatic

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than ideological character: it is an open question. Just as the reverse: namely, we will not witness, on the contrary, the suffocation of these *aggionarmentos*, of democracy itself and of the utopias (which, in any case, are now "cold", more tempered with realism) under the economic and financial garrotte, the primacy and conformism of survival – the need to "swim" more than "fly"?

Be that as it may, the horizon of human experience is always more open, multi-coloured and amenable to solutions that do not merely exist with and because of fears as in these two directions to build "defensive walls" of survival, dignity and identity. So, in the same contingency that produces our vulnerability and freedom, we sail, yes, but sailing can also represent a "victory of the will over determinism". And, "recognising ourselves as authors, despite the conspiracy of determinism and chance that seems to govern our lives, is one of the main ethical tasks" of our time: a challenge for us, beings of "imperfections and commitments", for the construction of our (new) map, as José António Marina states radiantly in his *Ética para Náufragos/ Ethics for Shipwrecked* (1996). The book that I prefer above all others on inevitable shipwrecks because it is one about swimmers who also fly. They plough the waters in order not to go under, in a lucid and steadfast relationship with life.

They fly in many ways, with the large and small gestures that make this life, and they fly, especially, in thought, in ideas and in the imaginary with the "fantasy (that) is the twin sister of reason". And "fantasies may be key signs", as Norbert Elias wrote in *The Symbol Theory* ([1991]1994a: 76-77), to defend them as the primatial place of the symbol in human communication and creativity. The reverse side of positivist rationality, therefore, "the maggot of modernity"[112] that post-modernity has justly called into question with the revaluation of our symbolic dimensions.

So we fly because flying is part of the *Humana Conditio* in its endless journey in the name of many causes and needs, of which, however, the most important of all, as José António Marina again reminds us, is indeed the happiness sought in so many ways. Rather, "the idea of happiness (that) is a rare and limitless search plan, a mirage that retreats as we advance, a wonderful ploy of the intelligence to keep us aloft in flight" (Marina, 1996: 32).

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[112] To use – in my terms – an expression, "the maggot of modernity", that Elias employs in his reflections on the philosophy of knowledge, with criticism both of Kant's transcendental thought and the individual rationalism of "Cartesian doubt" in the opening of *The Symbol Theory* ([1991] 1994a: 15).

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