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**Crossed Concepts:
Identity, Habitus and Reflexivity in a Revised Framework**

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Abstract

Identity is in almost all discourses, perceptions and paradigms, from the social sciences to politics, the media and daily life, like a floating signifier for multiple meanings. In this sense it is less a concept than an umbrella term for different, even competing perspectives of individuals, collective bodies, ties and processes. Thus it represents, rather, a label or a gate for wider issues presupposing crossed concepts. Or concepts that we must cross in that conflation of reflexive lines, searching for a cohesive framework for our identities, plural and pluridimensional. Based on sociology, this text attempts to cross the notion of identity with two concepts – habitus and reflexivity – associated with the legacies of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, respectively, and similar circles. A way to articulate and update them with other authors and debates on contemporary culture, the individual and the biographical approach, which bring new insights into the personal and social production of difference(s).

Keywords: identity, habitus, reflexivity; sociology of individuals and contemporary culture

1. Rethinking references ¹

Identity is like a floating signifier for multiple meanings in almost all discourses, perceptions and paradigms, from the social sciences to politics, the media and daily life. To quote Lévi-Strauss in an old, still relevant, essay, identity is “a sort of virtual home to which it is essential that we refer to explain a certain number of things.”² For this reason, as a common or umbrella term for different, even competing, perspectives of individuals and collective bodies, it represents less a concept than a “label” or a “gate” for wider issues presupposing crossed concepts. Or concepts that we must cross in a conflation of reflexive lines, searching for a cohesive framework for our identities, plural and pluridimensional.

For its part, the framework does not have to coincide with a theory, though possibly stemming from several, and we may doubt if yet another theory for identity is possible in the current and prolific scenario of theories. A sign, for some, of a hermeneutical diversity that is necessary in order to interpret the complexity of identity in contemporary societies; for others, more of a threat of eclectic drifting. My proposal is a framework, one that is rather analytical and pragmatic; a conceptual mapping tool that is also operational for empirical research. Based on sociology, it attempts then to cross the notion of identity with two concepts – habitus and reflexivity – associated with the legacies of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, respectively, and similar circles.³ A way to articulate them, too, with other authors and debates on contemporary culture, the individual and the biographical approach, which bring pertinent insights into the personal and social production of difference(s).

The two concepts were selected for three reasons. Firstly, for their centrality as key connections between the personal and social dimensions of identity. The habitus is a socially embodied and performative system of dispositions, related, in turn, to

¹ Expanded version of the paper presented at the *14th International “Culture & Power” Conference: Identity and Identification*, organized by IBACS – Iberian Association for Cultural Studies, University of Castilla-La Mancha, Department of Modern Philology, Faculty of Humanities, Ciudad Real, Spain, 22-24 April, 2010. A slightly shorter version is published in the book by Eduardo de Gregorio-Godeo and Ángel Martín-Albo (eds) *Mapping Identities and Identification Processes: Approaches from Cultural Studies*, Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers (forthcoming). The text is also part of a diptych with a larger essay (*Individuals, Biography and Culture Spaces: New Figurations*) to appear soon as a CIES e-Working Paper. I would like to thank Colin Archer for his revision of my English.

² “Une sorte de foyer virtuel auquel il est indispensable de nous référer pour expliquer un certain nombre de choses” (Lévi-Strauss, 1977: 322).

³ See among other publications: Bourdieu (1979, 1989, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2001) and Accardo, Corcuff and Bourdieu (1989); Accardo (1997); AA.VV. (2003c); Coelho and Pinto (2007); Jourdain and Sidonie (2011); Giddens (1990, 1991, 2000); Beck, Giddens and Lash (1994).

reflexivity in two directions: not only the individual's awareness, self-evaluation or rationalization but also the social competence provided by knowledge, expert knowledge and other resources⁴ that are available to embed it in agency. A social or "institutional" reflexivity, to use Giddens's terminology, that is constitutive of late/post modernity and so is part in our diagnoses, choices and foresights.

Secondly, these concepts are crucial in that they thus express duality in all forms of identity: incorporation and construction with objective and inter/subjective determinants. In other words, the passage from ascription to achievement, inherited identities to projected ones (in short, belonging vs becoming), from the intimate sphere to public life. The important point is to recognize that such processes of "transitional identities", carried out with tensions and ambivalence, may excel in the present day on account of the increased experience of diversity, diaspora, contingency, hybridism and individualism (Lavie and Swedenburg, 1996; Nunes, 1996; Canclini, 1997, 1999; Bauman, 2000, 2001, 2004; Blunt, 2007). An experience of identities which are therefore plural, flexible and even more volatile in certain contemporary "ontological nomadisms", though parallel to renewed or persistent crystallizations that map our complex world to various degrees. To give some examples, in radical fundamentalisms, nostalgic cultural revivals or basic traditionalisms intertwined with modernity.

Adopting a specific point of view in this text, the third reason to recall the pair habitus/reflexivity was the need for a conceptual recontextualisation to understand the individuals in such a world. We will have a framework actually revised by some reappraisal of references⁵, divergent or ambivalent perspectives and updates that challenge the resilience to change in some concepts with greater longevity. In my view, for instance, the habitus itself as it was basically proposed by Pierre Bourdieu almost forty years ago and, meanwhile, has apparently been subjected to the dual "pressures" of a transformed reality and alternative approaches. How it has been and can still be reformulated by the dominant trends in our global or translocal condition is a starting question that is obviously followed by the second one: how can it be crossed with the equally aged notion of reflexivity, which was, nevertheless, prominent and pertinent in

⁴ I mean various resources that, besides literacy, provide empowerment and emotional regulation for the individual.

⁵ The text belongs to an ongoing reappraisal of the points of reference for the sociology of art and culture (parallel to biographical sociology and the sociology of individuals, and therefore relevant for identity) with which I have reconfigured the course programmes that I teach at ISCTE-IUL. Part of this work was previously presented at the Research Workshop, *Sociologia, Arte e Cultura: (Re) Interpelações* (*Sociology, Art and Culture: (Re)Interpellations*) that I held at CIES on 6 February 2008.

the last turns of society and sociology? These are the two questions with which we first approach individuals, to continue, then, with reflection on the dimensions and manifestations of their identities: the other part of a double framework.

2. Individuals in contemporary culture

To rethink legacies searching for a new approach to the habitus, it is interesting to begin with the uncommon confrontation between two directions in sociology. Or a short reference to two sociologies that are addressed, respectively, to the individual and to the global patterns of contemporary culture. Though they embrace distinct issues, when mentioned together, they once again reveal ambivalent perspectives, now transposed to forked ways to glimpse identity – concomitantly, differences – through almost symmetrical processes of de/singularization.

The sociology of individuals, of singularity or experience, became a dominant trend despite its diversification according to the different academic contexts and issues⁶ It is closely related to the idiosyncrasies and plural regimes of the actors: practices, rationalities, subjectivities or “individual grammars” (Martucelli, 2002, 2006) that have aroused, precisely, renewed debates on Bourdieu and the habitus in the French context.⁷ On the other hand, the notions of self, agency and reflexivity, also important to empowerment and citizenship, belong more to the British vocabulary as in other authors concerned with “institutionalized individualism” under the new social pathways and the Welfare State (Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001).

Here we have a wide scope for individual identity and its interpretations. It is indeed a converging outcome of both singularity and plurality that sociology may combine in several ways. For instance, by either emphasizing singularity (be it typical of certain groups and “charismatic” professions as in art⁸, politics etc., or highlighted in other ways of focusing on personal facets⁹), or by revealing the plurality that shapes

⁶ See several perspectives in Martucelli and Singly (2009); Corcuff, Le Bart and Singly (2010). Also : Molénat (2006); Corcuff (2005, 2007); VV.AA. (2006, 2007);

⁷ Among other re-evaluations of the habitus (Kaufmann, 2001, 2005), the main one belongs to Bernard Lahire for his new “dispositional sociology”, which is critical of Bourdieu, though Lahire considers himself “more as an heir than a successor”. A sociology illustrated with massive empirical work, with portraits of the individual’s pluralities in his or her dispositions and actions. See, among other publications, Lahire (1998, 2002, 2004, 2005).

⁸ See references in Conde (2001, 2009a, 2009b, 2011b, 2011c).

⁹ Which were also re-launched by the “biographical turn” in social sciences, a movement first noticed during the early 80s and, with a new drive, a decade ago (Conde, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1999;

individuals – e.g. the heterogeneous experience they have in their different contexts, relationships and axiologies. Several kinds of solicitation, performance and involvement, from the most emotional or expressive to the most instrumental, that convert identity into an activity. As François Dubet (1994, 2005) states in his sociology of this experience, it is “the work of the actor”. A practical and reflexive task to run processes across the institutional, interpersonal and intimate spheres which require, at least, three forms of action: integration, strategy and subjectification.

The other direction appears quite symmetrical because it locates the identity in collective patterns with more de-singularizing processes. It is mainly concerned with broad dimensions (ideological, political, symbolic, cultural and even spatial by the logic itself of globalization) that blur or reconstitute the meaning of differences – their borders and autochthony in postmodernity. There opens up a whole new outlook of hearing less about the uniqueness or personalization of individuals and, actually, about the fact that they are modelled by global culture, the media and consumption. Even providing a “cultural supermarket” with pre-formatted forms for individual identity – in “food, arts or spiritual beliefs” (Mathews, 2000) as in “common” regimes of sentimentality. In addition to that trilogy at the core of the sociology of culture in a situation of more ‘interdisciplinary sharing’ with other cultural studies¹⁰, we have the new forms of urban, visual, technological, media, informational and aesthetic digital cultures with the major impact of their “network paradigm” on relationships, communication, economics, power, meaning and identity.¹¹

To sum up, major features of our global age – and, on this point, we meet ambivalence again, undoubtedly in split views on globalization. Among other contrasting perspectives, it is seen through a double and opposing process of decontextualisation/recontextualisation of everything that circulates in the world: goods,

Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf, 2000; Roberts, 2002; Roberts and Kyllönen, 2006). More references in Conde (2011b).

¹⁰ From the huge literature for the trilogy here are a few examples: Jameson and Miyoshi (1998); Featherstone (1990, 1991, 1995, 1997); Kellner (1995); Gay (1997); Fortuna (1997); Crane, Kawashima and Kawasaki (2002); Jackson, Crang and Dwyer (2003); Melo (2003); Hopper (2007). Also for some perceptions of the daily life: Pais (2002), AA.VV. (2003b); Inglis (2005). Although the interdisciplinary sharing is more institutionalised in anthropology, the sociology of contemporary culture shows it in the approaches to this trilogy, to multiculturalism and, more generally, to the issue of the production of identities and differences in global and post-colonial contexts, as they are considered in cultural (and postcolonial) perspectives (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Bhabha, 1995; Long, 1997; Hall and Gay, 1996; Hall, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d; Tudor, 1997; During, 1999; Kelly, 2002; Silva, Hall and Woodward, 2005; Grossberg, 2010). See also Santos (2001b).

¹¹ See, for instance: Darley (2000), Miranda and Coelho (2000), Marcos and Miranda (2002); Castells (1996, 2001), Cardoso *et al* (2005), Bracken and Skalski (2009).

capital, technology, people, information, images, cultures.¹² With regard to the latter, which are indexed to the important question of identities, the point of view also waivers, depending on whether globalisation is the emblem of cultural imperialism (Western and, especially, Anglo-Saxon) or, differently, an emancipating universalism and a bearer of diversity. The ambivalence depends on whether it is considered the product of the hegemony of global flows such as the cultural industries (Lash and Lury, 2007)¹³ or rather an exchange in the other flows (migratory, communication-related, symbolic) that produce the cultural complexity, cosmopolitanism and hybridisms of our time.¹⁴ It is the time of “transnational connections” between cultures, people, places, to quote a title penned by Ulf Hannerz (1996, 2001), though for globalization as glocalization, as it was re-baptized by Robert Robertson (1992, 1995): a mixed and alternative umbrella restoring the space to local cultures and identities and, so, effectively giving the sense of a re/contextualization “over” decontextualized references.

Ambivalence could be mentioned in relation to other issues such as multi/interculturalism (Gutmann, 1994; Goldberg, 1997; Kelly, 2002; Wieviorka, 2002; Oliveira, 2010), the notion of culture itself and the public arenas of art and creativity (Cuche, 2003; Conde, 2003b; 2008, 2010), but my purpose was only to evoke certain contemporary trends to close the circle around the habitus. Indeed, a concept that has remained highly immune to such postmodern dimensions, quite removed from Bourdieu’s references, though he and his “theory of practice” are repeatedly (and ritually) quoted throughout contemporary discourses, beyond sociology. The problem is that, despite a wide definition for the “system of dispositions” underlying the overall social influences on individuals (embodied, performed and transformed by them), the basic and empirical uses of the habitus have persisted, attached to structural differentiation, particularly by class. Moreover, there is an understandable historical gap between the time of the conceptual construction of the habitus and the huge transformations of the last 20 years, which have accelerated even further since the 90s.

¹² Again, from an enormous literature, I refer to the synthesis of Malcolm Waters (1999), which covers various authors for the different dimensions of globalisation: economic, political, social and symbolic or cultural; also AA.VV. (2001, 2002b; 2004) On the mechanisms for the decontextualisation of modernity and in globalisation, see Giddens (1991, 1999). For another comparison of viewpoints, see, also, Santos (2001a) on the inequalities in the “world system in transition” (with the ranking of centres, periferias and semi-periferias) and the different processes of globalisation, in particular “hegemonic” and “counter-hegemonic”.

¹³ Some indicators in UNESCO (2005).

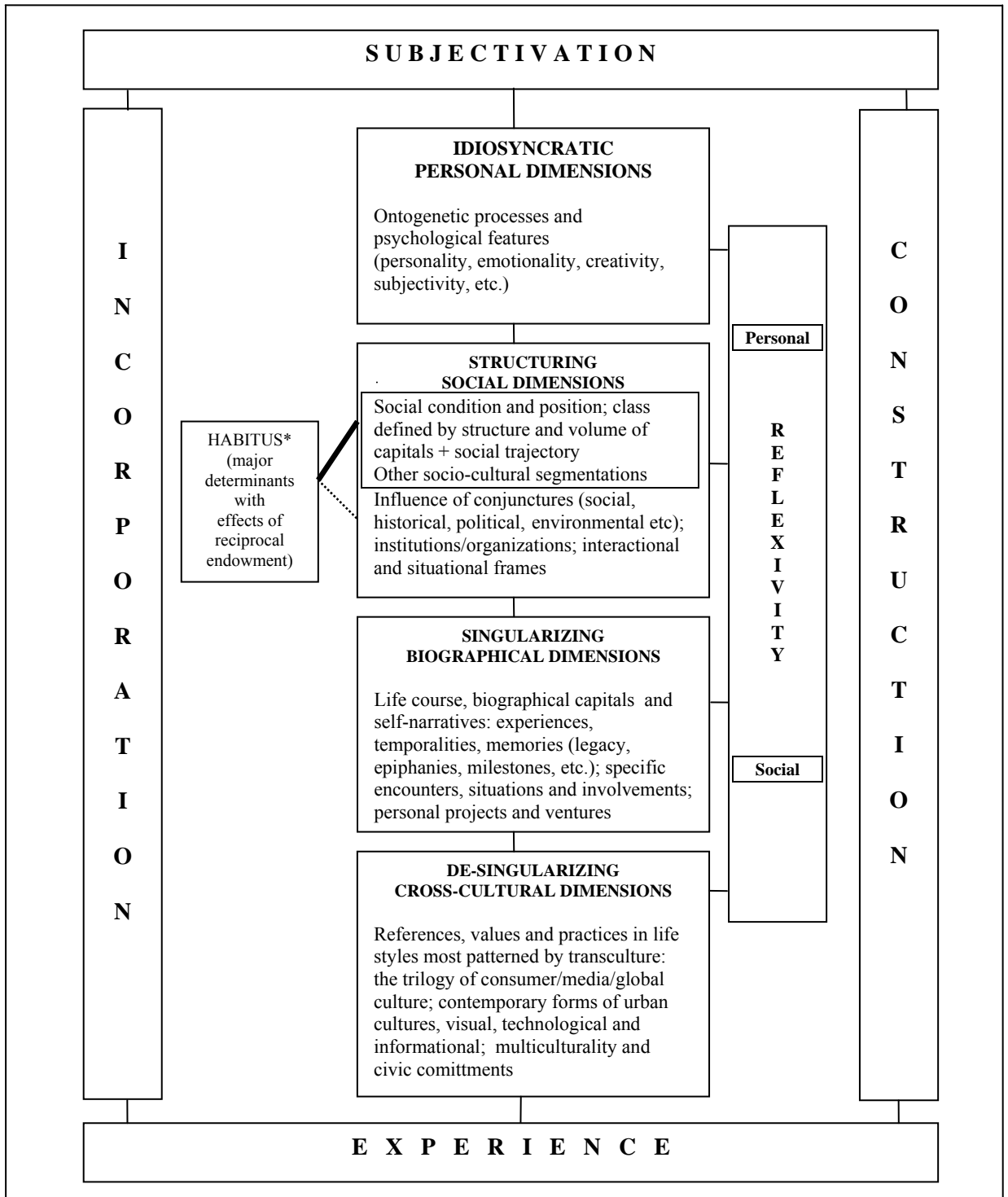
¹⁴ See, for instance: Appadurai (1996), Tomlinson (1999, 2000), Kraidy (2005), Roudometof (2005).

Thus, not demanding of the theories what they do not intend to give, we only need to underline that, besides class and other structural modelling factors, we are equally shaped by cross-cultural processes of in/redifferentiation, i.e. due to transculture with multiculturalism and other trends such as information and literacy. Parts, finally, of global culture that are not reduced to the “Macdonaldisation of society” (Ritzer, 1995; 2004). Such standardisation of consumption and lifestyles is only one dimension of what I call transculture to avoid misconceptions. There are others connected with values, knowledge, and the experience of diversity and citizenship but it should be noted that transculture became widespread as the “puzzling form of cultures today” despite persistent attempts to draw the line between the trans- and the multi-cultural (Welsh, 1999; Caws, 1997).¹⁵

In my view, multiculturalism (in transculture) includes and extends beyond multiculturalism related to minorities or ethnic segmentations, in two directions and with an important civic dimension. On the one hand, because it is produced by a close or media experience of “otherness”, i.e. our own wider exposure to the otherness in public re/presentations (discursive, media-related, image-related). On the other, because it is one of the main “causes” of the ethical and political commitments of contemporary citizenship (Stevenson, 2001; Oliveira, 2010). The basis of forms of transnational activism in the areas of human and cultural rights, the environment, politics and economics in the governance of the planet, among other global issues and movements.

¹⁵ In this meaning, transculturalism is both hybrid and interstitial, produced by properties that emerge from cultural encounters or that can also appear as the “third culture”, in addition to the local and the global (Featherstone, 1997). As a result of such *puzzled* transcultures, the authors talk of mixed or frontier identities, interidentity and transidentity (Santos, 2001b) and, overall, transculture thus incorporates differentialism (multi/interculturality) in its own universalism. For example, Mikhail Epstein (1999) spoke of a collective, liberating and emancipating “consciousness” that rejects the separatist concept of cultures, showing the intrinsic incompleteness of each. James Lull (2001), in turn, opted for the expression “superculture for the communication age”, with the same universalist accent, though it was boosted by the new communication technologies and devices. This is a form of transculture (informed, creative, decentralised and liberating) close to Manuel Castells’ approach to the “network society”. Also in relation to the media, we may find, however, other kinds of transcultural perspective, mainly concerned with, “deterritorial forms of media culture” (Hepp, 2009).

Figure 1: INDIVIDUALS
Dimensions of the Interferences in Dispositions



* The current uses of Pierre Bourdieu's concept

So, preserving the umbrella notion of dispositions related to the concept of habitus, Figure 1 below is an attempt to insert its “narrow” sense into a broader, multidimensional matrix of interferences, including these ones for contemporary individuals.¹⁶ For me, interferences seems a better term than determinations, and one that also takes into account some of the criticisms raised regarding Bourdieu’s habitus as a limited concept for covering their “internal” plurality and reflexive autonomy.¹⁷ Calling them interferences avoids the restricted conception of causality for this configuration, combining the cross-cultural dimensions with structural and institutional effects and others, less evident, of the major determinants in Bourdieu’s concept: more conjunctural, events-based, situational or interactional. It is placed by myself in the small box in Figure 1 for the habitus. Furthermore, the configuration complements all this with an account of personal and biographical peculiarities which are inescapable in the sociological perception of individuals.

Of course, I am very aware that the habitus corresponds in Bourdieu and similar perspectives to a totalizing notion (Wacquant, 2004, 2010). So, apparently incompatible with the withdrawal to that small box, yet intentionally designed here to clarify the "black box" of its own which the habitus may become, either in certain sociological routines or in other citations. Like a tautological device (often no less rhetorical or opaque) that is expected to explain much of everything as everything is explained by it (as happens, moreover, with the *fourre-tout* notion of identity) while there is a gap between such broad (theoretical) ambition and the (empirical) evidence restricted to structural outcomes. That is, the habitus basically related to (or embedded in) the positions that individuals occupy in the social space (class, in the first instance) and also

¹⁶ This conceptual “decompartmentalisation” began with an earlier essay aimed at understanding the ways of constructing the singularity of artists. From charismatic to pragmatic, this singularity is an essential trait of these individual (and statutory) identities; in other work I have related singularity to symbolic artistic power and mediations for artistic recognition (Conde, 1992, 1996, 2001, 2000c; 2003c, 2009a, 2009b).

¹⁷ The plurality in an enlarged habitus must include several differentiations of the dispositions according to their type (cognitive or mental, physical, procedural etc.) and their orientation towards relationships and spheres of activity (family, education, work, politics, leisure etc.) (Lahire, 2001). On account of this contextuality of the dispositions, also carried out by specific processes of socialization, another issue raised by Bernard Lahire’s work is that of their transferability to other contexts of action, ones that are different from those of their origin. How can they be activated, with what adaptations or ill adjustment? It questions, then, the unified *gestalt* of the habitus as the general principle of the correspondencies in Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology, which establishes logics of equivalence between the various areas of the social “space”. So for dispositions and positions; practices, values, representations and even identities.

in the fields.¹⁹ In short, the near reduction of the dispositional²⁰ to the positional, as voiced by current criticism of Bourdieusian sociology.

To avoid this unidimensionality Figure 1 suggests a multidimensional mapping of influences, crossed socializations and contemporary references for the individual, which reflexivity makes a crucial mediation for self-construction with and beyond incorporation. Another pointer to confrontations between Bourdieu²¹ and Giddens as analogous authors. The first with a quite pre-reflexive habitus in its cohesive social embeddedness, except when it becomes more reflexive in situations of crisis and incongruences between dispositions and positions (for example, due to the effects of rapid social change, personal mobility and hybrid references); the second with an accent on the self as a “reflexive project”, contradictory and voluntaristic, So, an identity project, too.²²

In my view, is not only a cognitive reflexivity, even rationalist, as appears in many accounts (namely in Giddens), but inherently intuitive, creative, emotional and no less metaphysical when we question ourselves about existential meanings in “internal conversations”. To re-use, for my purposes, the expression that Margaret Archer (2003) applies in her approach to “modes of reflexivity”, a fundamental contribution that goes beyond dilemmas and debates about reflexivity (from systemic to personal) and its relationship with the social structure. Moreover, in the continuity of her work as one of the main authors of agency theory, as well as in comparison with Giddens’ “structuration theory.”²³

Though not developing this complex subject²⁴, from a large inventory of connotations for the term in sociology and, generally, the social sciences²⁵, I take, here,

¹⁹ According to Bourdieu, spheres of activity that are always arenas of *enjeux* and struggles for power. I discuss this perspective in Conde (2011b).

²⁰ Individual as well as collective dispositions that the individual and other forms of identity express by the intersubjectivity (Bottero, 2010). Or by an “inter-habitus” as I called it for the isomorphy of tastes and practices in youth cultures (Conde, 1990: 683), quoting the concept that Pinto (1981) had applied to communities of countryside people and neighbour relations.

²¹ Here, I am not considering the other sense of reflexivity in Bourdieu, related to sociology and science in general, as a reflexive (double) objectivation of the social world and of modes of knowledge. See Bourdieu (2001) and also Lynch (2000:30-31).

²² In a similar way, see some of the confrontations in Mouzelis (2007), recalling that reflexivity is also enhanced by “intra-habitus tensions” , not only in episodic disjunctions. Sweetman (2003) crosses the two concepts with a twofold sense: “habitual reflexivity”, as it became omnipresent in daily routines, and the flexible “reflexive habitus”, in contemporary “processes of self-refashioning”.

²³ See Archer (1995, 1988, 2000) and a synthesis in Pires (2007). A recent book edited by Margaret Archer, *Conversations about Reflexivity* (2010), also discusses the relationship with the habitus.

²⁴ I will return to it in a text in preparation (“Individuals: from portraits to narratives”), which compares Archer’s “modes of reflexivity” with “dispositional portraits”, like the model advanced by Bernard

the reference to a triple reflexivity: procedural, for the practical self-monitoring of individuals in their life-course; ontological, for the second self-hermeneutic inquiry; and, thirdly, what we may call substantive or focused on specific matters, for lack of a better expression. In particular, those that the “expert systems” (to quote Giddens), media and public agendas carry as material for individuals to think so much about themselves and the world – precisely, the informational and symbolical resources of a broadened social reflexivity. A more acceptable notion than ‘institutional reflexivity’, which appears in Giddens (with reference to technical, scientific and political matters, among others), because it is more comprehensive and includes the prominent cultural reflexivity that runs through the contemporary condition (Couldry, 2000).

Only in this triple way does reflexivity move from the individual’s basic, practical consciousness (as it appears at first sight with the habitus), to a new potential for agency with the power to transform identities and the conditions of existence. That is, from a realist, even fatalist, sense of one’s place to an open horizon with the perception of more possible places. In turn, these conditions are not limited, in fact, to structural and institutional assets. They are also (re)created in biography. For this reason, it was considered with a singularising autonomy of individuals in Figure 1 because all biography as a life course is a double construction, subjective and objective, of an ensemble of circumstances equally producing dispositions and resources.²⁶ Accordingly, individuals both provided and skilled by their “biographical capitals” (Conde, 1993a), in two senses: as material legacies²⁷ and as the practical and reflexive “immaterial” competence that is acquired from the experience of life and memory.

Lahire. Two sociologies for individuals and unevenly concerned with the *gestalt* itself of personal narratives.

²⁵ Some examples: Lynch (2000), Salzman (2002), Domingues (2002), Sweetman (2003), Adkins (2004), Lash (2003, 2004), Pais (2007), Hosking and Pluut (2010), and the overview of Matthew Adams (2006), with a title (“Hybridizing habitus and reflexivity: Towards an understanding of contemporary identity?”) that is, moreover, apparently close to this text of mine, though not from the same viewpoint. At least not in all the aspects that I adopt here.

²⁶ So, this life course is not restricted to the trajectory in Bourdieu’s sense, that is, as the movement/mobility of individuals in the social space and within fields. A distinction that I have made in other work, proposing a model for the construction of sociological biographies that I already explored in the initial Portuguese “biographical turn”. See references in note 9, especially for that model, Conde (1993c, 1994, 2011b) and also Dubar (1998).

²⁷ “Home possessions” as a kind of “estate agency” (Miller, 2001), cultural and biographical assets (Hoskins, 1998; Caetano, 2007) that carry the individual’s self-history and images in traditional and new ways, e.g. furniture, books, letters, photographs, sites, blogs, YouTube, etc. In Conde (2011b) I provide the notion of “biographical space” (Arfuch, 2001) as the wide context, interdiscursive and highly mediated, in which these expressions of identity are included today.

Personally embodied and bodily expressed, in certain cases by very peculiar symbols²⁸, they constitute, then, a key reference to the individual's singularity – be it that of a multiple self.

Last but obviously not least, Figure 1 includes what, in certain aspects, may be less explained by sociology, though it explains the processes of subjectivation across this configuration: the idiosyncratic dimensions of a person, certainly never separate from the social environment and, yet, an inner world deeply approachable through insights from psychology, psychoanalysis or other points of view, even biological. The sociological one does what seems possible: it follows with several kinds of interpretations the traces of subtle or radical differences inscribed by that idiosyncrasy in the combined processes of other dimensions: structuring, singularising, de-singularising... Nevertheless, it must be recalled that the sociology of Norbert Elias represents an exception with his interest in Freud²⁹ and the more extensive incorporation of idiosyncratic dimensions into the ontogenetic and psychological processes parallel to sociogenesis throughout the civilizing process. Moreover, he also happened to be one of the authors who used a notion of habitus before Bourdieu, in his major work on the historical construction of the individual, as well as in others that are equally fundamental (Conde, 2011b).

Identity/identities: a space for definitions

This part expands the perspective, from interferences in dispositions to identities, keeping in mind a certain dis/continuity between concepts. Because, if the dispositions are not chosen per se (but rather carried in the life course as various kinds of incorporation, albeit “re-worked” by individuals and personal reflexivity), the twofold identity (individual and collective) presupposes feelings of affiliation attached to a constructive process due to identity projections, too – e.g. expectations and choices in the interplay of belonging/becoming. Moreover, every individual has a plurality of

²⁸ Like tattoos and other body accessories and languages, the “marks that demarcate” (Ferreira, 2009). The portraits of youth sub/cultures and “urban tribes” are well illustrated by such symbolic marks and creative narratives from the digital to graffiti, rap, etc. (Pais, 1999; Pais and Blass, 2004; Fradique, 2003; Campos, 2010).

²⁹ That he has reinterpreted, historicising naturalised entities/objects in psychoanalysis; see Elias (2010), an edition with different texts from the years 1950, 1965, 1980.

identities and almost the same may be said of groups and communities, considering their cluster of reference points.

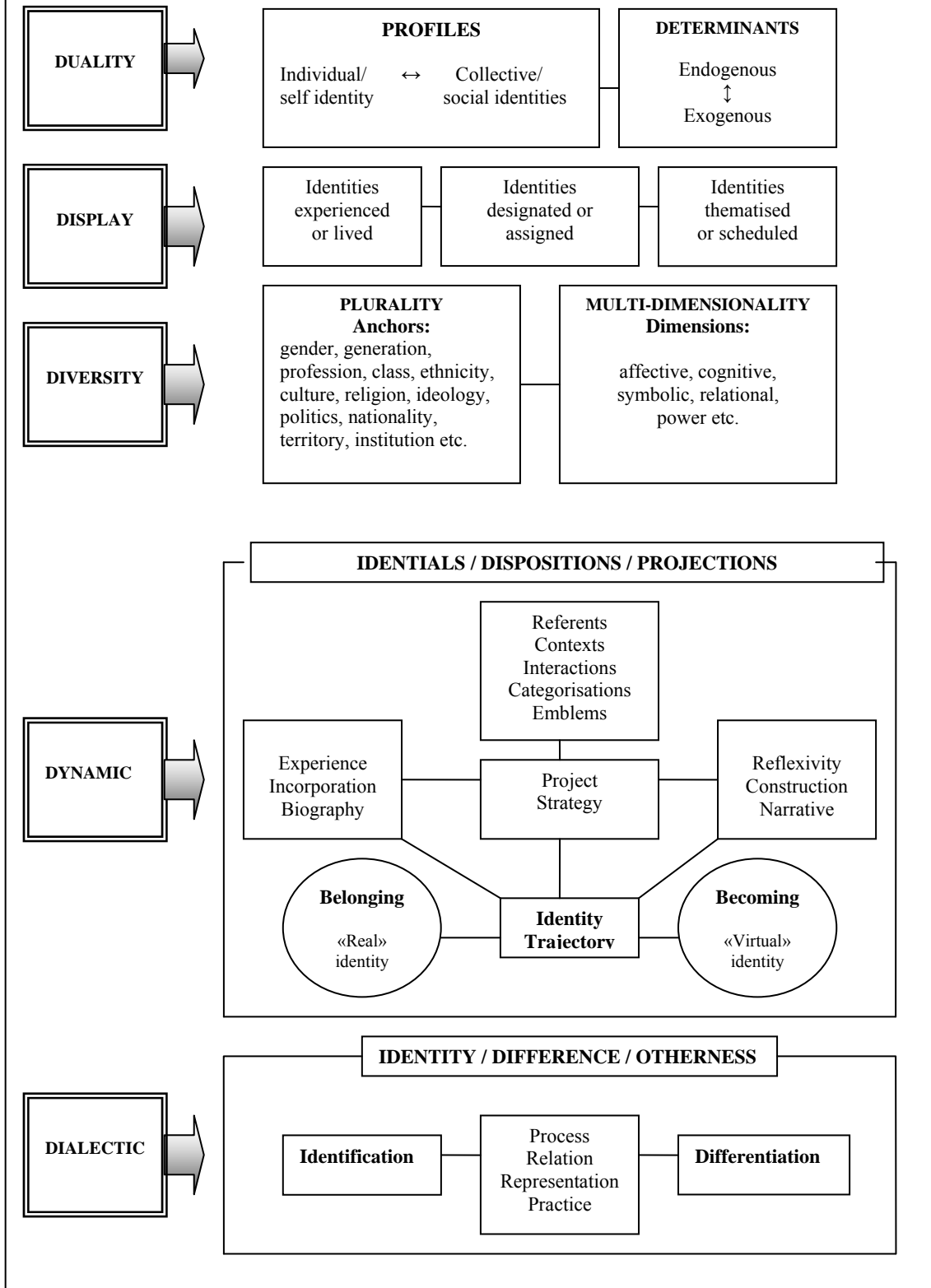
Now, alongside diverse interpretations according to different authors and perspectives³⁰, Figure 2 does not propose a definition but rather a space for definitions on five axes, assembled here as pieces of a puzzle. Since they are frequently and easily recognizable as major topics in sociological and other approaches, I do not need to go into explanations. For instance, the bands at the top and bottom, labelled “duality” and “dialectic”, almost overlap in commonplaces about identity – in the first case, drawing mutual relationships between identity profiles (i.e. social dimensions in the individual identity and the individual’s intervention in collective configurations), parallel to shared sources for the production of identities: more endogenous specificities and the influences of their environments. The lower band concludes the diagram with the two movements inherent to the dialectic of all identities. Identification and differentiation, which show how every identity depends on its otherness, how the relevant others are perceived, desired or contested in its own definition and representation.

Again, representation appears at least as a dual term (Hall, 1997) to apply either to the symbolic system of classifications/categorizations involved in this process or to the “dramaturgical” representations performed by individuals and groups in daily *mises-en-scène*. Currently, and strategically, adjustments to public/private arenas, “frames of interaction” and hetero-images³¹ that finally raise the question of mixed meanings in all forms of identity as re/presentation.

³⁰ See some overviews with different points of view in Shotter and Gergen (1994); Hall and Gay (1996); Wetherell (1996); Fortuna (1999); Brubaker and Junqua (2001); Ramalho and Ribeiro (2002); Gay, Evans and Redman (2005); Silva, Hall and Woodward (2005); VV.AA. (2002a); VV.AA. (2003a); VV.AA. (2007a).

³¹ As Goffman’s pertinent “frame analysis” continuously shows at this level (Goffman, 1973, 1974, 1982).

**Figure 2. IDENTITY
Axes for Definitions**



So the other axis – “display” – in Figure 2 combines its modes of appearance or manifestation³² in a trilogy that aggregates such “represented/staged” types to three others. Respectively, how identities are “genuinely” lived/experienced; how they are designated/assigned by specific orders/prescriptions (normative, institutional, cultural, political etc.); and also how they are thematised/scheduled by various agendas (with other representations), e.g. media-related, political, cultural, tourism-related etc. Again, a part of the social reflexivity quoted above that includes academic agendas themselves, in particular of the social sciences on identity - sociology, anthropology, cultural studies.

In fact, those that pass by the social space and are appropriated by individuals, groups or communities. Thus, such agendas appear in the discursive dimension of identities made with overlapping, dialogues, comparisons and negotiations – in brief, intertextuality. The “texts of identity”³³ produced both by those who govern or simply observe it (“etic” account) and by its natives (“emic” account, i.e. the grounded word by which identity speaks in its own name while also assimilating what others say about it), are, then, plurivocal. A complex and tensional re/textualisation, that is organised into narratives, from convergent to antagonistic, and involves stereotyping, political battles and asymmetric powers, as we know in the history of identities.³⁴

The axis “display” is already a way of pluralizing identities and a challenge to find synchrony vs contradictions in the shapes of the “same” identity. But to clarify the meanings of the pluralities, I kept the word “diversity” for the other axis related to plural identities that are anchored in several bases (age, gender, class, profession etc., or institutions and societal pillars such as religion, language, nationality). And each one also multi-dimensional. In short, a double deployment that individuals (and groups) accumulate and may also multiply at will with project identities, in the ability to

³²An aspect particularly stressed and studied by Costa (1999), one that I am following in this point. He portrayed, in particular, forms of socio-cultural identity in a historic, working-class district of Lisbon (Alfama) with the interplay of auto- and hetero-representations produced by the residents and by the full array of other learned, vernacular and institutional discourses on this “heart” of fado, the musical emblem of the city and Portugal. That is, discourses that are not only tourism- or folklore-related; also historical, anthropological, sociological, ideological, political etc.

³³ To paraphrase only one title (Shotter and Gergen, 1994) among many others.

³⁴ However, and this is a remark against excessive “textualist constructivism” in analysis, “texts” (both “internal” and “external”) consist of a partial notion for identity because, if none exists outside discourses, all of them are precisely the point of “suture” with practices, as Stuart Hall puts well: “I use ‘identity’ to refer the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’” (Hall, 1996c: 5-6).

prioritise becoming over belonging. From the major to the minor, the notion of projects allows indeed almost infinite “zooms” about expectations and its consequences.

They can be related to social movements and identities resisting globalization. As with Manuel Castells (1997), comparing those resistant identities with two others in his typology: the project identity (strongly related to internet users and new social movements) and the legitimizing identity, in particular by national cultures and states. Meanwhile, more fragile in the face of globalization and the (re)emergence of alternative “commonalities”.³⁵ The projects can also be adapted to the “intermediate” spheres of family life, work and education; expanded in the pleasures of leisure and new intimacies (Giddens, 1992). Or, finally, the projects simply invested in that skin of identity no less important for our desires: the personal image and beautification, with fairly trivial projects such as going shopping for fashion clothes and other options – the next tattoo or plastic surgery. Nonetheless, 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/imagined outcomes) installs intentionality and deliberation at the centre of life. They have the power of metamorphosis (Velho, 1981, 1994) through action, decisions in a field of possibilities, not only pre-defined (so well closed) by probabilities.

In this sense the projects emblemize “prefigurative cultures” and identities in postmodernity (Boutinet, 1992, 1996, 2004, 2010). That is why they belong to the core of what, in Figure 2, I called the “dynamic” of identity. Strategy is the alter-medium for praxis: identity strategies currently deployed in several ways, from the more ontological – centred on the “fundamentals” of an identity (e.g. one’s self definition or, as in religion, the re-readings of founding texts) – to the more pragmatic – basically concerned with logistical conditions and the practical way of living a particular identity. Be it very coherent, hybrid, or tactically adapted to its environment, as we can see, for instance, in typologies of strategies, especially by religious minorities and migrants in relation to modernity in their (host) countries (Camilleri *et al*, 1990).³⁶

³⁵ Inês Pereira’s study (2009) is another interesting reference for “network movements” and the “biographies of involvement” of their protagonists.

³⁶ Strategies that depend on the profile and course of these groups, with different social and cultural contrasts in relation to the contexts of admission. They are, in turn, differentiated by degrees of openness to immigrants and minorities that depend on the countries’ own history and their relationship with migratory flows and multicultural diversity. On this topic, see Machado (2002) and Xavier (2007) for two very interesting studies on people from Guinea-Bissau and Brazil in Portugal, an example of more established and more recent immigrations.

Finally, projects, strategies and obviously praxis lead to or manage the trajectory of identity. A term not to be mistaken with the social trajectory of individuals and groups, e.g. class mobility. In fact, other mobilities are possible for individuals, as citizens, professionals or “cultists” of any club, from parochial spheres to the widest context. To quote only three examples around the world, secret societies, virtual communities or “fan cultures” (Hills, 2002) in sport and music are among the many trans/local circles. The trajectory of which I am speaking thus emerges from the dynamic of the identity, defining it as processes.

In Figure 2 it corresponds to several triangulations where the identities of each, e.g. specific contexts, axiologies, categorizations and emblems (such as rituals, symbols, dialects, manifestos), are related to dispositions and projections. So they change in this interplay of bridges and confrontations between what is brought from experience, biography and incorporation, and what is shaped by reflexivity, construction and narrative – a moment, also, to retrieve the Goffmanian distinction between “real” and “virtual” identity (Goffman, 1982). Better said, (re)composed narratives in auto/biographical or collective storytelling, inseparable from identity, its imaginary, and, also, one’s own narrative identity in Paul Ricoeur’s (1990) sense: the constructions of oneself as another/others.³⁷

Final remarks

Connecting the end to the beginning now, we may close the brief itineration in a broad issue by picking up the idea of transitional identities that, in our time, seem to challenge clear frontiers between belonging/becoming and their interpretation in the social sciences. We know how they have been polarized by reflexive antinomies regarding hyper vs hypo identities, according to the ways of seeing their relationship with multiple references (Conde, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a; Mendes, 2001).

That is to say, *hyper* in the case of “saturated selves”, overwhelming and fracturing the individual identity (Gergen, 1991), and *hypo* in the so-called crisis of identities, in private and public life, values and beliefs. But that is indeed calling for complex understandings of a historical and unfinished mutation of “identity configurations” – from communitarian to societal, as Claude Dubar (2000) preferred to

³⁷An aspect dealt with by Conde (1994); it will be developed in the text already quoted: “Individual’s lives: from portraits to narratives”.

state in his book on the present time, hybrid or in-between, of several identities. Familial, gendered, professional identities, as well religious and related to politics, nonetheless pervaded, respectively, by marks of secularization and scepticism or disbelief.

Importantly, the notion of configuration, particularly as taken from the sociology of Norbert Elias (Conde, 2011a, 2011b), demands a relational and nominalist conception of identity, as Dubar argues: not as a permanent substance but as the outcome of specific and contingent identifications (inter/subjective relations) with references or categories both assigned by others to the self and claimed by it for itself. The move from a communitarian to a societal configuration involves, then, the mobilization³⁸ of different forms of identification. In Dubar's words, rather "cultural"³⁹ and statutory" in the first type while more "reflexive and narrative" in the second. These, as identifications particularly required for personal identities in their contemporary re-drafting.

So the crisis is not a void of losses but full of cumulative and transitional processes during the installation and stabilization of a new configuration. A long "interval" that holds the individual's reconstitution and that of his or her own social ties, and, eleven years after Dubar's book, the best that can be said is that the interval distinctly continues ... Indeed, what has changed? Immersed now, in fact, in a serious global financial crisis, though also a vortex for many acquisitions – from material to identity-related and emancipatory – of postmodernity, certainly what has changed, and is changing, is the exponentiation of the contingency in our lives and identities. Finally, an experience of "living with (more) indeterminacy" and so with increased ambivalences in this latest state of *advanced* postmodernity. To update the statement of Zygmunt Bauman (1991), I am quoting from his older book about the still modern, and still postmodern, "self construction of ambivalence".

Anyway, in such permanent transition, an "evolution without progress" in the teleological sense, to recall now from memory what Norbert Elias said a long time before about the civilizing process, some cases change more through a trajectory that is slowly metamorphic, even encompassed with the revival of tradition. At first, like belonging superimposed on becoming, as I already remarked, in new fundamentalisms

³⁸ *Agencement* in French

³⁹ Let me add, identifications, rather, grounded in more traditional and local cultures, because "cultural" is a permanent adjective for identities, clearly nowadays as well.

or “nostalgic cultures” raising the value of our past, roots, folklore and heritage, while other situations seem the opposite: becoming superimposed on belonging in identities that are more subversive or radical, e.g. “grounded” in cuts with traditional community ties and doxas, i.e. values, beliefs, rituals. Nonetheless, none of the configurational processes allow dichotomies. Therefore, we only have traditions that are re-produced, invested in or imagined in the same context of change that simultaneously produces other complex or ambiguous confrontations between emerging and inherited identities. Instead of clear oppositions, we see polarizations along interdependences, as Figure 2 attempted to illustrate with its five axes, organizing a map of relevant dimensions to account for all forms of identity. How they are all distributed and shaped across sociocultural diversity is, indeed, a matter of research – on the basis of those axes.

The same is true about the multidimensional perspective of individuals which was drawn here with various types of interference in their dispositions, some of them updated by cultural trends in postmodernity. How all interferences, including the most idiosyncratic, combined with other de/singularising processes, produce the individual as the basis, along the various prisms of his or her identity as a person, self, actor and agent of structural or institutional constituencies – this is, again, a horizon open to investigation in each situation. This means recognizing the complexity and the indeterminacies in the ways of being or becoming an individual.

To resume, interdependences and interferences were in fact the “crossing” guidelines for this framework of “crossed” concepts. As I said at the beginning, more like a pragmatic tool to organize thought and inspire research, though it stems from theories and, as we have seen throughout the essay, returns to them with some new, or other, questions.

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