This year’s International Conference of Social Representations celebrated the tenth anniversary of bringing together scholars who are interested in the theory of Social Representations that was developed by a French Psychologist, Serge Moscovici.

Participants consisted of scholars from various countries such as France, Spain, Mexico, Japan, China, United States of America, Argentina, and Kenya to name a few. Some of the main themes discussed at the conference were: Some theoretical discussions on the study of social representations; Indigenous Knowledge in Asia...
and Social Representations; Representations of teachers’ work: Professional choice, training and identity; Constructing public worlds: Investigating children’s representations of the public sphere; and Maintaining the order of society: Identity management, prejudice and discrimination. While the conference was intended to use dual language, namely, English and French, the majority of the papers, including keynote addresses, were presented in French. This resulted in the exclusion of numerous participants as there were no translations. Needless to say that after the conference I made a decision to enrol for French classes. I presented my paper as part of a symposium called: Representing Lives: Discursive Approaches, together with my three colleagues with whom I attend the university, Rachel Liebert, Akemi Nishida, and Amber Hui (we were referred to as ‘representatives of the US’, even though none of us are originally from the United States).

The conference ended on 8th July with the father of Social Representation Theory, Serge Moscovici’s lecture on his journey of developing the theory. He presented a glimpse of psychology in the early 60s (his time as a psychology student in Europe); his views on the tensions between European and American Psychology and an historical overview of his take on social psychology. In his talk, Moscovici asserted that the question of language has to be addressed in Psychology. He asked: ‘How can you think of the social without language because humans are communicators’. In his pursuit to understand the world around him, Moscovici reveals that he was seeking a theory that encapsulates common sense. He endeavoured to understand
how scientific knowledge could be transferred to common knowledge, and he concluded that it is all in the methods that we use. Social Representations theory never became ‘popular’ in the United States and this Moscovici believes is due to American Psychology’s lack of belief in ‘folk psychology’.

Serge Moscovici

On the fun side: As this was the first time I visited an Arab country I planned to learn all that I could about Tunisia. The country’s official language is Arabic with French being spoken widely around the country. Tunisia has a population of 10 million, 98% being Muslim and 2% being Christian and Jewish. Tunisia is surrounded by the beautiful blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Seafood is plentiful, and fresh as it is caught daily. The country has a wealth of history, from its people to the ancient buildings (the Kasbah, the Basilica, Jugurtha’s table, the ancient theatre of Sbeitla, and the Amphitheatre) that can be found in different parts of the country. We had an opportunity to learn about the country and its history while we were on our way to the Gala dinner that was held three hours away from the conference venue. This excursion offered us a glimpse of the country, and having a tour guide was helpful and interesting as he provided anecdotes about most of the places that we passed.

The next Social Representations conference will be held in Portugal in 2012. For more information go to the conference website: http://www.10cirs.org/english/index.php
P. SEGALO

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Puleng Segalo is a South-African psychologist and a Fulbright scholar currently working towards her doctorate at the Graduate Center, City University of New York in the field of Social and Personality Psychology. Her research interests relate to the notion of identity construction in various contexts and she also focuses on issues of gender, power, race, sexuality, and how these interplay. She is fascinated by critical feminist theories.