*Proposal for Keynote Lecture at ICSC 2018 in Rome*

**« Cross-cultural research on spatial concept development »**

**Pierre R. Dasen, Université de Genève**

I will first review cross-cultural research in the area of culture and cognition, with particular focus on the development of spatial concepts. I propose that the formulation best covering all empirical data is in terms of « cognitive style », i.e. spatial cognitive processes are universally available to all humans, but there are preferences for some spatial frames of reference over others. These cultural differences are under the influence of a number of eco-cultural variables, which are often confounded, but which careful cross-cultural quasi-experimental designs allow us to tease apart.

The second part will illustrate this general conclusion by research on the development of the « geocentric » frame of spatial reference, initially studied by Levinson (2003). This is a cognitive style in which individuals choose to describe and represent small-scale table-top space in terms of large-scale geographic dimensions. In Indonesia, India, Nepal and Switzerland, we explore the development with age of geocentric language as well as geocentric cognition, and the relationships between the two, as well as the environmental and socio-cultural variables that favour the use of this frame (Dasen & Mishra, 2010).

References

Dasen, P. R., & Mishra, R. C. (2010). *Development of geocentric spatial language and cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Levinson, S. (2003). *Space in language and cognition: Explorations in cognitive diversity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.