



*Sneither kinformation*

Received 13/05/2024  
Accepted 30/03/2025

Printed ISSN: 2352-989X  
Online ISSN: 2602-6856

*Social representations  
(reading on the subject)*

*Gassaa khawla<sup>1\*</sup> Ouchenane Hakima<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> university of 20 August 1955 Skikda. Research and social studies laboratory. (algeria), [kh.gassaa@univ-skikda.dz](mailto:kh.gassaa@univ-skikda.dz)

<sup>2</sup> university of 20 August 1955 Skikda. Research and social studies laboratory. (algeria), [OUCHENANE21@outlok.fr](mailto:OUCHENANE21@outlok.fr)

**ABSTRACT**

This article came as a study, to address the concept of perception or perceptions by addressing the development that this concept has known from Durkheim to Moscovici, and then addressing this concept from a modern point of view, through which Abric, tried to give another image of this concept by including the social dimension in it, by moving from the concept of perceptions to the concept of social perceptions, and this is through his theory called the central nucleus theory. This topic aims to try to develop a vision about the concept of social perceptions, and the various stages that this concept has known in its development.

This research paper also, aims to provide researchers and those interested in the field of perceptions, with one of the most important theories in this field, which is the central nucleus theory of J.C. Abric.

**Keywords:** representation, social representations, central core, peripheral system, Central system.

---

\* Corresponding author

## **INTRODUCTION**

The individual does not live in a social vacuum, but rather shares this reality with other, through his interaction and communication with them, whether in situations of consensus or conflict on which they depend to understand, define and advance on this reality making the new knowledge a unifying reality in which it is easy to communicate, through the production of common and unified representations, on this reality formulated according to the cultural, and social dimensions of the social group or society to which he belongs.

The concept of social representation is an ancient concept in terms of appearance and emergence, but it is recent in the field of social research. The concept has existed for some time and emerged, initially among philosophers. It was then widely spread in the field of psychology, under the name of social representations. The social sciences have long considered it a basic concept, focusing on it and linking it to several social variables. Social representations are a very important concept in social research, because they give true meaning to the actions of the individual within his society. Society is already present in the individual through several processes, the most important of which is perhaps social education, which inscribes the values and principles of society in the individual, and the researcher can access and determine their meaning through the representations that individuals carry on them. This article, has been developed to understand more about the concept of social representations through its emergence, the most important developments in the concept and its different meanings in different fields and disciplines.

## **2. History of the representation concept**

### **2.1 In the 19th century**

Emile Durkheim is the first to mention in the term of representation, which he called "collective" in studying religions and myths. (E.Durkheim, 1912, P123). For this sociologist, the first systems of representativeness that man created on himself and on the world were of religious origin. Durkheim distinguishes collective representations from individual ones since "Society is a unique reality (*sui generis*), with its own characteristics, which we do not find in the same form in the rest of the universe. In so doing, the representations expressed by it then have a different content than, that which we find in purely individual representations, and we can be sure in advance that the former add something to the latter.

### **2.2. In the 20th century:**

The term "social representation" has been of particular interest in all disciplines of anthropology, history, linguistics, social psychology, psychoanalysis and sociology. In France, the term social representation is formed with the social psychologist Serge Moscovici, in his book "Psychanalysis, its image et its Public". (1961) S. MOSCOVICI . Contrary to what the title may mean, this 656-page book does not deal with psychoanalysis, but rather focuses on the study of the image of psychoanalysis among the general public. (French). In addition, it is associated with highlighting how a new scientific or political theory is disseminated, in a given culture, how it transforms in this process, and how it also changes the vision. The term social representation appeared in France with the social psychologist Serge Moscovici ( FARR, 1997, P29).

I.The dynamic aspect of social representations takes on such value. For example, in order to obtain new knowledge of psychoanalysis, individuals develop a particular representation of it, focusing on most of these basic concepts (consciousness-subconsciousness, repression), but neglecting an important concept (libido) which refers to the concept of gender.

This incorporates new representations with pre-existing lines of thought and then influences people's attitudes and behaviors. Thus, the current language now has been absorbed and terminology, such as " slip of the tongue " and the Oedipus complex.

After Moscovici, many scholars became interested in social representations, including psychologists such as Chambert de Lowe in 1971,(Farr in 1977, 1984),( Joe) Daly and Herz Lech in 1972, anthropologists such as "Laplantine in 1978,1987 and sociologists like:(Bourdieu) 1982, Addis 1962 and 1978. The field of work of these researchers is very wide. We can refer, for example, to representations of health and disease (Herzelich), and (Laplantine and representations of the human body and neurological disease (psychotic), Joe Dolly the representations of culture (Kayes), representations of childhood (Chompart de Lauwe), or representations of the professional career (Herzberg, Monero Snederman).

### **3. The concept of representation among scientists:**

#### **3.1. Moscovici's definition of representations:**

Moscovisi defines representations as:

A system of values, concepts and behaviors associated with representations, and themes determined by the social environment, and allows

only the stabilization of the lives of individuals and groups, but is above all a tool to guide attitudes, and formulate answers to questions (Jodelet, 1989.P38).

### **3.1.1. Abric Definition (Abric, 1994, 73-80):**

He is the one who created the theory of the central core, and he considers that the elements of social representations are distributed in an orderly and referenced way in our minds. Each social representation consists of a central core, and peripheral elements, so that they represent the core of the basic elements generated and organized for representations, which are characterized by stability, and permanence, while peripheral elements are the least constant and stable, as they are generally not common to all individuals.

Abric also considers that social representations are a structured set of information, attitudes, beliefs and orientations on a theme, which has produced and shaped socially all the values of the social, and ideological system and the history of the group which adopted it, and which is an essential part of its worldview. (abric, 2003, p59). According to Abric, it is a social cognitive system consisting of two interactive systems: a centralized system, which is the central element of representation, and a peripheral system of peripheral elements and which represent less attractive and less stable subjective elements.

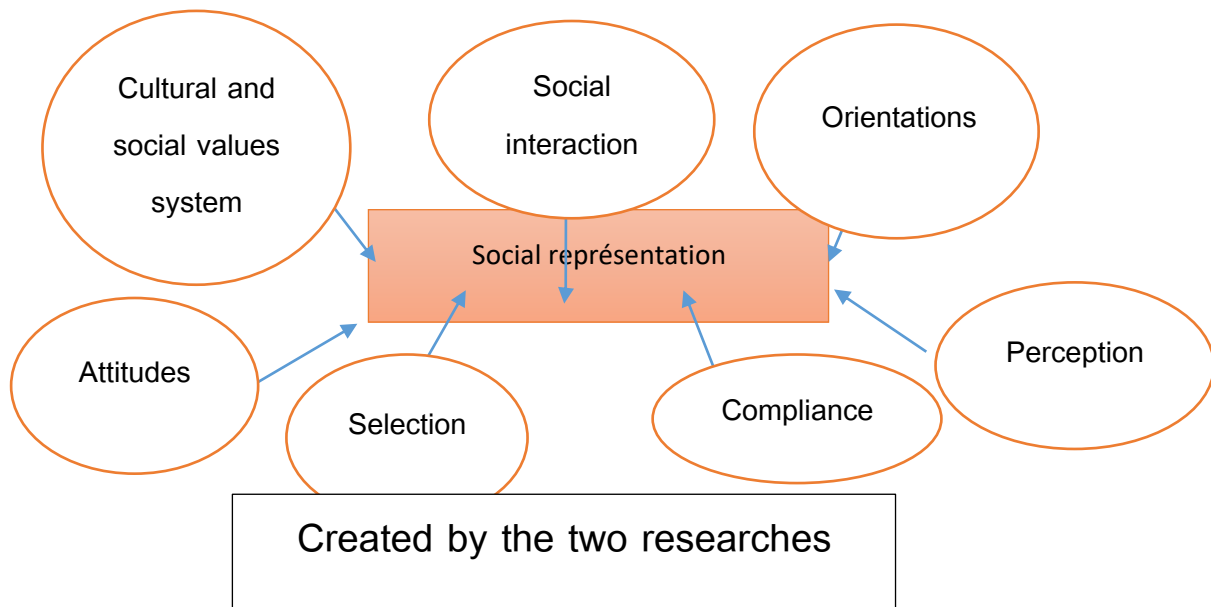
According to Abric, the elements of social representations are distributed in an orderly and preferential way in our mind, and he emphasizes that each social representation consists of a central core and peripheral elements, so that they represent the core of the basic elements generated, and organized for the representations, characterized by stability, constancy and permanence, while the peripheral elements are the least stable and constant, because they are generally not common to all individuals. Based on Abric's definition of representations, we can define them as a form of individual and collective knowledge, that differs from scientific knowledge and contains interactive cognitive, psychological and social milestones.

### **3.1.2. Definition of Durkheim**

Durkheim defines it as a vast class of mental forms (science, religion, myths...). Ideas and knowledge without distinction, the term is common to several social sciences (psychology, sociology and anthropology), and has taken a paramount importance in social psychology, especially with the French scientist Moscovici, who defined representations as the product of the social idea and a necessity by which the individual controls the environment ( Koes rené, 1968, p33).

-We can conclude from Durkheim's definition that representations are a very broad concept, because they are the production of collections of images, attitudes and information where they are formed by community interaction.

**Figure 01: It present a plan for social representations:**



### **3.1.3. Jodelet definition:**

It is a form of knowledge that differs from scientific knowledge, and is commonly called familiar knowledge or naive knowledge that we find at the heart of social relations. (jodelet,1994,p36)

According to Jodelet, social representations are not scientific knowledge and are based on two processes, one cognitive and the other social. In another definition, they are perceived as a resulting mental, and intellectual process. Human being's concern with this thing may be the notion that social representations are an intellectual process aimed at constructing reality.

### **3.1.4.Definition of Chambart:**

Social representations lie between what is psychological and what is social. At the same time, they also reflect the social thinking of the human being and the productive representation of communication between individuals and, in particular, generations.

- Through these previous definitions, we can say that social representations are the interpretations given to specific subjects according to the information and mental and social influences that surround them. These interpretations are stable and guide the behavior and life of individuals and

reflect their functions and mode of functioning based on logic and psychosocial laws.

### **3.2.Characteristics and particularities of the representations:**

Jodelet identified five characteristics of the representations:

-They always represent a particular theme. Therefore, there is no representation without a theme and it must meet three fundamental conditions:

-It must be alone and abstract. The term concept is written through discussions, verbal communication and communication between actors and the media.

-The subject of representation is a subject within the group's common practice, meaning that representations are not a mere reflection of reality, but rather a social structure rooted in the imagination.

-It has a symbolic and significant advantage of social representation, the first aspect and symbolic and the second one is semantic. The symbolic aspect is correlated with the representation image. However, the semantic aspect concerns the meaning of representation (Jodelet, 1989, p364-365).

-Moscovici also identifies three main features of the representations:

A. Vitality: The term "representations" is defined as a broad enlisting of specialized research streams, through numerous publications, in many States and in various fields through a specialized methodological and theoretical approach. The term "representations" has appeared in almost all the human sciences. It is found in several books in sociology, anthropology, history.

B. Complexity: Representations know the problem of complexity in their definition and analysis because of their position related to a set of concepts of psychological aspect. Moskovici acknowledges that it is linked to a social and psychological dynamic that is also a complex theoretical format (Moscovici, 1961,p20-22).

### **3.3. Functions of social representations:**

- Function of knowledge: Social representations allow individuals to understand and interpret reality by integrating it into an assimilatable model in accordance with the values, ideas and opinions they believe in. In this case, social contact is facilitated by the establishment of a common frame of reference that enables the exchange, transfer and dissemination of knowledge. (Innad Mubarak 2012, p. 133)

- Identity function: Representations contribute to the identification of the group and preserve its privacy. They also contribute to the process of social

comparison and classification. The purpose of this function is to maintain positive images of the individual among the people of the group to which he belongs (Innad Mubarak 2012, p. 133)

- Orientation function: Abric explains that social representations define what is allowed and what is prohibited in a particular social context. Social representations also make sense and create links. From this aspect, they have a social function. They help people communicate to orient themselves in their environment and behave, thus generating behaviors and attitudes, because they also have a descriptive appearance because they define what is legitimate, acceptable and admissible in a particular social context.
- Justification function: Social representations are used to justify the behaviors and attitudes adopted by individuals in order to determine our behavior before realizing it and to justify it afterwards.

According to Abric, representatives have a good role to play, namely the arbitration role and preservation of the social position of the social group. This position seems to be related to previous functions, and focuses particularly on the relationships between groups and the representations formed by each group on another group by prejudging attitudes towards behaviors.

#### **4. Central nucleus theory:**

Abric is the founder of the central nucleus theory and peripheral elements in 1976. Representation or perception calculated is structured around a cognitive system and is satisfactory about central nucleus, defined in turn by a specific number of elements and has a productive function (*génératrice*) and an organizational function. For Laverick 2007, in order to study representation you must first and foremost search for the constituents and centralized content.

Knowing content and components is not enough, but organizing content components is perception. Centrality or paradigm, according to Abric 1994, is a fundamental and necessary element of representation because at the same time it is the concept and organization of paradigm that defines the concept and resists change. Any change at its level results, in a change at the representation level and even a complete change. The central nucleus is the key to representation and has two basic functions:

4.1 Generative function: An element by which it produces and transforms the concept of other elements

4.2 Organizational function: The central core determines the nature of the

relationship between the elements of representation. It is a uniform and modified element proven representation in possession.

4.3. Peripheral elements: According to Abric, they are distributed and regulated around the central cores and have a direct relationship with this core, which determines the presence and weighting and the value and function of these peripheral elements. They form the core content of representation. Their status is dynamic and tangible. It is controversial and subject to change. These are important elements. They are closer to the core. They include residual and qualifying information, as well as beliefs and ambiguity.

Moreover, the provisions on the subject and its environment are important insofar as they have an important role to play in simplifying and demonstrating the concept of representation. They help to achieve this. Change begins with the central elements as a whole, in terms of balance, interpretation and integration. Peripheral elements have three functions according to Abric 1994:

4.4 The function of concretization: Because it is subordinate to society, it leads to the consolidation of the representation of truth. It is a simple and concrete term that speaks of the present and the sustenance of the individual and the resistance to oblivion.

4.5 Regulatory function: It is less rigid than the central elements, it is sensitive and it plays an important role to induce the adaptation of the representation, because of the changes in the periphery, it acquires a small position and its function of reinterpretation in the direction of the central core and according to the peripheral elements form the motor and evolutionary aspect of the representation.

4-6. Defensive Function: The peripheral system of peripheral elements plays a defensive role in representation. It provides shock protection (flame, 1991, p12) 1994.26).

According to Abric 1994, social representations have four functions:

4-7 cognitive functions: They enable understanding and interpretation of truth and facilitate social communication

Identity function: They define identity and preserve it in the private life and social process of the group. Social representations play an important role in social surveillance.

4.8 Orientation functions: orientation of behaviors and attitudes.

4.9 .Explanatory functions: They allow in advance to clarify positions and behaviors. Allow individuals to explain and clarify their actions in front of others.

If (Moscovici) (1961) considers the representation to be a page with two sides: a formal and another symbolic, Apric 2007 says that it is a page with two sides but the first is the content, the second is the structure of the content components. According to him, the content is not enough to understand that representation is a subject. For him: structure + content = representation

Table No. 01

| The system                  | Central                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | peripheral                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The<br>Tcharacteri<br>stics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Linked to group history and memory</li> <li>-It only allows what has been approved by the group</li> <li>-Stable and consistent</li> <li>-Resists change</li> <li>- Insensitive to developments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Allows the introduction of individual experiments</li> <li>-Accepts discrepancy in group and even contradiction</li> <li>-Flexible and unstable and developing</li> <li>-Calculation</li> <li>- Central system</li> </ul> |

**Title: Table showing the peripheral and central systems of the central nucleus theory**

**The source: created by the two researchers**

## **5.The dynamics of social representations:**

Social representations as a process of psychic real estate reconstruction of reality are linked to the mental and psychological mechanisms of the individual who produces them. They are neither repetitive of reality, nor of idea, nor constructive of the subjective part of the subject, nor the objective part of the self. Therefore, they are subject to certain processes by which all these relationships and associations are born. It can therefore be said that representations are historical, they are created or settle and then transform and die.

Moscovici spoke about two basic mechanisms through his work on social representations: convention and inking, in which he explained how the

social seizes the theme and information or an event and restructures it. It thus becomes a fragmented process, in the interactions between what is psychological, and what is social. In this context, it is a psychological activity that considers a set of social mechanisms, and phenomena identified by the context, through which they are illustrated. Therefore, they qualitatively integrate postures or events in an acceptable way with a general clarification of the essence of their activity.(ficher,gustarenicolas,2005, p131).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

**From what has been presented in this article, Schaw that all the** scientists mentioned above agree that representations are a system of knowledge, concepts, habits and values, and that each of them represents a subject, an image, a meaning, which guides the behavior of individuals and controls and dominates their actions and attitude.

This article came to clarify end demonstrate the importance and emergence of social representations in sociology and its mutation from a simple concept to a complex one. The concept is now one of the most important themes in several fields and specialties of psychology and sociology to such an extent that social representations are identified as forms guiding scientific thinking and attempting to communicate and understand the environment by analyzing it, changing attitudes and solving problems that the individual faces.

From the foregoing, Turns out as follows:

- Representation is a process of constructing reality from a journal of the individual's perceptions.
- Representation is a cultural product recorded in an individual's historical context and is linked to the socio-political project in which the individual finds himself/herself.
- Representations are created through social interaction and evolve through the network of social relations.

## **-7. Bibliography List :**

- 1-Koes rené(ny) image te la culture chez les ouvriers Français éditions.
- 2-Denis jodelet, (1989). Cyas Toulouse, 1968 p833. les représentations sociales P.4.5. paris.
- 3-Abri. J-C,(1994). Pratiques sociales et représentations, Paris, PUF.
- 3-Flament, c (1991). Structure et dynamique des représentations sociales, in 4-D, Jodelet (ed) les représentations sociales (P204- 218) paris : PUF.

- 5-Moscovici, s (1961). La psychanalyse son image et son public, paris : puF.
- 6-Jodelet, D. (1989) Représentations sociales: un domaine en expansion, in D, jodelet, ted), les représentations sociales (p 31) paris op u F.
- 7-Fischer gustave, nicolas, (1987) les consent fondamentaux de la psychologie sociale. PuM. Paris.
- 8-Farr f,(1997). les représentations sociales, en psychologie sociale, PUF.