The Trajectory of the Development and Evolution of Social Representations

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Abstract

Social representations are a worthy subject and a field of knowledge that has been developed in recent years through the process of research and studies presented in the field of social sciences. The latter has become presented as changes within the events and rapid developments of our world today (Covid-19 , ways of integrating illegal immigrants into Western societies, receiving news through social networks and media , emotional relations, teaching methods, artificial intelligence...Etc.), which are at the same time pressure factors that cause the dispersion of tribal knowledge in a way that makes individuals and society in a rush to search for solutions to any meanings of their emerging topics that rebuild and balance their living social environment.

Introduction:

The idea of the development of social representations comes in view of the factors of instability that surround the direct social environment of modern societies, as well as the complexities of the problems posed with the growth or diversity of situational conditions and contexts, as well as the overlapping patterns that characterize any social phenomenon.

Social representations are no longer interpreted as socially productive accumulations in the sense of what has been practiced in our lives as past and as history that can be restored in future situations as collective representations insofar as they have become a mechanism that puts the social actors through a process of mutual and continuous interaction that includes all forms of their gathering without exception, whether they are individuals, groups, or diverse groups in one society. Thus, the movement of cognitive development is a result related to what is happening in the ocean, a problem at the level of living reality, and in turn leads the actors to change ways of building representations and social practices from the traditional, such as inherited actions, to more rational practices.

1. Concept Evolution Chronology

Like the sociologist of the nineteenth century, " **Durkheim 1878**" was the first to put the issue of social representations under study. He showed this in his books (The **Elementary Forms of Religious Life** 1912) and **(Sociology and Philosophy)**. Although he did not give a clear and comprehensive definition of social representations, his setting of the foundations from which the term is composed made us able to limit them to some ideas close to being definitions.

The beginning was in **Durkheim** 's recognition of the role played by religious perceptions and **rituals** as being the first perceptions formed by individuals in their gathering as social mental patterns that are linked to each other by the

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perspective and foundations of social unity, so that positions are formed and jurisprudence and behaviors are organized through them; thus, public awareness is built "collective awareness", which later turns into collective representations that express collective awareness . "

A. Social representations "collective representations" : For **Durkheim**, " models of thinking and action " mean[1] facts that have crystallized and settled in the form of models that have been transmitted to us from previous generations; they also "serve as frameworks through which individuals think and act, as social lenses through which individuals perceive the external world and the reality around them[2]."

Durkheim considered social representations as independent constructions, that is, they are transcendent over the selves in their formation. They are physical social systems that are built with interactive structures that bear the property of determinism and remain binding to action. **Durkheim** generally defines collective representations. on the basis of social operational components, customs, traditions, memories, religious rules, and higher ideals.etc.   as concrete real phenomena that are external and transcendental due to the priority of the whole over the part; the total society over the individual as a unit.

B. Individual representations: are mental states, "that is, the interaction of a set of mental activities of many brain cells and what stems from this interaction of a compound with its own characteristics and the resulting emotions blend to form images and are in turn blended to form individual perceptions[3]."

Durkheim confines individual representations within the framework of the subjective mental state that is unable to express itself because of its lack of physical or tangible means. In order to do so, it resorts to expressing itself in the form of movements in the human body. These physical movements have meaning only through their homogeneity with the group of individuals that gives a common sense and sense of self within the whole.

In the **late 19th century**, a period of strong scientific dynamism, the work of **J. Piaget** and his collaborators took place in the development of the concept of social representations and their relationship to the subject of the formation and process of the scientific function. His work showed that the development of knowledge in man is not only through direct influence on the subject, but it also arises by using a coding of reality, thus indicating that representation is a mediator between the subject and the human self, which is permanently seeking science.

J. Piaget defines it as: "The sum of the perceptions that the self has about the subject through their continuous interaction, they are interpretations based on a process that fits with the characteristics of the subject and then absorbing the "information" issued by the subject within the framework of mental structures." J.Piaget works   to show the importance of the cognitive dimension of representations[4], which in turn works to give the self the process of absorbing information from interpretations and interpretations; then the individual can mentally determine its framework for concrete or abstract phenomena.

Moscovisci developed the concept of social representations in the field of social psychology in his book entitled: " Psychoanalysis His Image and Audience" in 1961, and his contribution came to show the difference between both "social representations" and "collective representations" of **Durkheim**, where he emphasizes the first term because he sees in it the dynamic nature and constantly changing movement and then begins his definition of the term by saying: "If collective representations in the classical sense are an interpretative means that refer to a general category of ideas, beliefs and....Etc., they are for us phenomena associated with a certain category, a way of understanding and communicating; a way that creates both reality and common sense[5]. "

Moscovici believed in the social dimension of representations, whether in their construction or formation and functioning, in addition to his reference to the diversity of social representations due to the structure of different groups or classes that practice their activities in public fields and modern social entities such as " institutions, organizations... etc.

(Denise Jodelet) also has many important definitions about the concept, including its definition, in which it says: "It is a

[1] Abdulghani Emad. Sociology of culture - concepts and problems. From Modernity to Globalization, Center for Arab Unity Studies, 3rd Edition, Lebanon, 2016, p. 70.
[2] Ibid., p. 71.
[3] Ibid., p. 71.
[4] Cf, Piaget. j, la représentation du monde chez l'enfant ,puf,paris, 2023.
[5] Cf, Moscovici.s. La psychanalyse, son image et son public, puf, parise, 1972.

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form of socially developed knowledge shared by members of the group, which has a practical purpose in coordinating a common reality, so we often find a group of individuals with the same social representations on a topic; This makes it a symbolic dimension in interpreting the events of the external world[6]."

Jodelet sees in her approach to social representations a kind of multi-attribute structure, that is, as a model that is built in the human social mind based on the interaction of both the psychological aspect on the one hand and the cognitive process " storing images, information, experiences..." On the other hand, in addition to the symbolism of social reality, it constitutes in the sum of its interaction a complex organization that is resorted to or recalled in the life practices of the actor.

It is also addressed by **Wilem Doise** as: " Principles that generate attitudes associated with specific entries in a set of social relations and the organization of the symbolic processes involved in these relations[7]."

It also imagines **Wilem Doise**'s social representations within the framework of the interaction movement that takes place through the mechanisms of social communication between the actors to produce multiple positions while maintaining the general principle of organization " common reference.

For his part, **Jean-claude Abric** offers us a qualitative leap in the course of the development of the term. He confirms by saying: "It is possible to define social representations as a functional vision of the world that allows the individual or group to give meaning to their behavior and understand reality through their reference system and thus adapt to it.."[8]; J. Abric at the beginning of his definition tries to refer to the operational power enjoyed by giving its members the power to adopt attitudes and practices from the rest of the groups, and this can only be achieved by establishing a reference system shared by all members of the group.

"Representation is not just a reflection of reality, but a meaningful organization. This meaning depends on each of the emergency factors, circumstances, the nature and limitations of the situation, the immediate context, the finality of the situation and on more general factors that go beyond the situation itself: the social and ideological context and the place of the individual in social organization, the history of the individual and the group, social stakes. Representation works as a system for interpreting reality that governs individuals' relations with their physical and social environment as it will determine their behavior or practices. Social representations are a guide to action. They guide actions and social relations."It is a system of pre-decoding reality because it defines a set of expectations[9]. "

Jean-claude Abric insists on the need for a sophisticated view of social representations, as they are universes of norms, contexts, topics and their natural conditions, with the obligatory act of " rationality" that works to determine regularities that guarantee the individual or group a kind of legitimate freedom in addressing their issues.

This is what made Jean-claude Abric put in Chapter Eight entitled "Social Practices, Social Representations" in his famous book "Pratiques Sociales et Representations" to include the definition of (ibanés 1989), which in turn defines social representations as : "The process of cognitive adaptation of social individuals to the concrete conditions of their existence, and in particular the multiple mandatory behaviors required by the established social relations in the context of their daily lives"[10]; This definition comes in the project led by J-c Abric between social practices and their representations, so this definition was presented as an evolution from the first.

Despite the course of social psychology in dealing with the concept of social representations by limiting it to the determinants of inherited emotional systems and self-mechanisms that drive its behaviors supported by knowledge and information and then presenting them as answers within the scope of social action procedures, there is no denying the contributions made by social psychology that made it possible to achieve scientific development that made it important to resort to and invoke some of these definitions (which were mentioned) .

Pierre Bourdieu touched on the term social representations in many of his writings. He defines them in his book " Symbol and Authority" : "The representation that individuals have of their position in the social space is generated by a

[6]Denise jodelet, les représentations sociales, presses universitaires de France, Paris, 2ed, 1991, pp. 31-60.
[7]Pascal Moliner Et Patrick Rateau Et Valérie Cohen-Scali, Les Représentations Sociales Pratique Des Études De Terrain, Presses Universitaires De Rennes, 2002, pp.20-21.
[8]Jean-claude abric, pratiques sociales et représentations, presses universitaire de France, Paris, 4 édition, 2003.P. 13
[9] Ibid., p.2.
[10]Ibid., pp. 219-220.

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system of perception and appreciation fees"[11] **Habitus**", which in turn is generated by a certain position determined by the position in the distribution of material goods and symbolic capital, and it takes into account the representations that others have of this position, which is determined by the symbolic capital and the position in the distribution, and it has found its symbolic expression in the way of life."

What should be focused on to define **Bourdieu** is the method of mobilizing social representations that the individual integrates from the position or position occupied by the latter or other individuals, where it takes place within the visions and forms of the social groups or groups belonging to it as a member, where it shares with it the same social space and space, and it is also capable of developing into a "**tacit knowledge**" that has the ability to give and produce the best practically mastered practices to face any conditions or disorders.

While the Algerian sociologist (Uday Hawari) subjected **Pierre Bourdieu's** idea of the term social representations to a kind of examination, when he confirmed that the latter dealt with the concept with a constructive vision, where he tried to explain it on the one hand with the heritage and the kinship link of the individual, and on the other hand he has the will to act, translates and re-translates these representations that transform him in his daily life into practices that confirm his independence.

We also find that "**Philippe bernoux**" determines the place of social representations in organizational change according to the framework of his theory of "**organized action**" - within the specialization of the sociology of organizations -: "It is the way in which individuals look at the experiences they know and talk about, the way in which theories are formed and lead them to build reality and to determine their own behavior" , and thus it forms a functional vision that allows the individual or group to give meaning to their behavior and understand reality through their own system; where social representations are created through cooperation and interaction[12], in the sense that it is impossible to think of social representations outside of concrete work situations where individuals and groups meet, interact and control their behavior and set rules and standards. Therefore, these social representations are built from real experiences and practices; they teach knowledge- a **process of socialization** - that generates practices and reflects the way in which actors build their projects and topics.

Through the definitions provided, the richness of the term, the complexity of its connotations and its ability to recall various concepts are clearly shown, which shows us the importance of mechanism and its role, whether in guiding, building or operating the process of our daily practices.

2- Theoretical Models of Social Representations

In this element, he tried to address the most important theoretical models and approaches to social representation (despite their multiplicity), as the researcher touched upon it through the theoretical treatment of previous readings, in which the factor of social representations was included in the light of the multiplicity of theoretical approaches such as representations as an ideology, a social legacy, or as a form of thinking, as each theoretical framework can serve to address a specific topic, so we summarize this in the most important theoretical models   that we see as branching out from the rest of the other classifications.

1.2. The "constructivist" model:

 (J-C-ABRIC) proposes a new model for the formative framework of social representation, surpassing that formulated by (MOLINER), as we can say from the model of the latter, by appointing a set of cognitive elements that constitute the basic theory of representations, including these elements of different procedures and work roles, which he called the "**central nucleus**", which in turn performs two main functions to maintain the internal representation structure.

- On the one hand, it performs the function of generating meaning, "through the central essence, the other elements of the representational field acquire meaning and value for individuals"[13]; on the other hand, it organizes and arranges the surrounding elements of representation (practices and actions) that wrap around the essence, which is the same essence that determines the relations that link the units with the other and the elements with each other.

[11]Pierre Bourdieu, Symbol and Power, translated by: Abdeslam Ben Abdelali, Dar Toubkal Publishing, Morocco,2007, p. 69.
[12]Philippe bernoux, La sociologie des entreprises, édition du seuil, France, 1995, pp. 237-240.
[13]Pascal moliner et christian Guimelli, les représentations sociales, press universitaires de Grenoble, France, 2015, p. 12.

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The development defined by the structural theory of representation is that if social representation has the "**central essence**" as the abstract aspect of representation, the surrounding elements are the aspect of the actual practice of behaviors, according to J-C-ABRIC «Representation works as an entity, but with two components whose status and complement are different."

They are: **First: the Central System**: It is the common basis for collective representation where (collective memory, group history, rituals and symbols, traditions, customs...Etc.)[14] ; to which the group and its elements refer in their actions as subject to its laws. In this case, the central system ensures the stability of representation and protects it from changes and violations. Involving most of the elements of the group to represent works to give a single vision of things to each of the members. This is what constitutes the identity of the group and distinguishes it from the rest of the other groups.

Second: The Peripheral System[15] : It is constantly in contact with the changes taking place in the direct social environment with the contingencies it produces , and since it is the operational aspect of the practice of acting, it tries to adapt the latter to social contexts and the symptoms or transformations it carries, so it enjoys a number of basic procedures, including:

A. It works to determine what is permissible for members from speech, practices, taking certain positions or...etc. within the framework of the legitimacy of the general system of representation and its desired goal.

B. It takes into account the subjectivity of practices in view of exceptions or situational contexts and ensures that behaviors do not fall outside the scope of the central system of representation, even if they are contradictory or different, but fall within the diversity preserved by the surrounding elements and do not exceed them.

C. The space allowed by the peripheral system for individuals lies in the freedom to exercise their vision and experiences towards a specific subject for one goal, which is to protect the central nucleus, where the integration of new behaviors and justifications as well as binding actions are all at the level of the surrounding elements - so we see that most cases of change or modification pass through the surrounding elements first.

Structural theory constitutes a cognitive shift towards social representations, as it has provided a broad framework of concepts and studies for representation, which is no longer just "**universes of opinions**", but has turned into "**organized universes**". On the other hand, structural theory provides a framework that allows understanding the interaction between individual performance and the social contexts in which individuals[16] develop. The hypotheses presented by the theory and related to the topics of social and cognitive adaptation of social actors in the face of environmental changes have played many scientific experiments that revealed scientific facts that indicate the progress of the topic.

2.2. Socio-Dynamic Theory:

One of its most prominent pioneers **(S. MOSCOVICI** and **W. DOISE),** this theoretical model of social representations is seen as being in a state of continuous social dynamism.

Through communication processes, actors are placed in a state of social interaction, which enables us to witness a social movement in which social representations are concerned and unimaginable outside this dynamic. The vision of the theory starts that in the event that the group or its elements receive advanced questions in the lived reality, they are confronted with specific attitudes related to the social identity in which the members are integrated, that is, the attitudes expressed as answers to questions are in fact derived from the multiple affiliations of individuals and groups. On this basis, Doise insists that the source of inclusive attitudes - the **common principles of organization** - can carry duality and multiplicity of attitudes.

W. DOISE, who worked to develop the dynamic theory of social representations, emphasizes the importance of individuals and groups as they are units or parts to be considered in the process of social interaction.

In other words, the (**common principles**) model allocates "a dual function, first and foremost as principles that generate attitudes, but they regulate the principles of individual differences. On the one hand, they provide individuals with common reference points. In the same movement, these reference points become issues around which individual

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[14]Ibid, p,15.
[15] Ibid, p, 17.
[16]Ibid. p.18

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differences are linked[17]. Representations play the role of forming and defining common rules that have been organized to ensure the preservation of the symbolic and doctrinal character, whether among members of the same group or between different groups and the positions emanating from them. If representations work to identify an overarching theme, they give a degree of organization to divergent or different positions.

The theory of different principles is based on the importance of social affiliations and identities and the different principles they produce that are practiced in situations. This idea is called the term - **social affirmation or rooting of representations-** within the social facts presented. For Moscovisci.s, "the issue of common consensus - representations - is through the sharing of certain beliefs within a specific group and this participation is the result of social communication processes. As for W.DOISE, common consensus is more at the level of the points of connection of representation and finds convergences or differences between the focal points in the structuring of existing social relations."[18] The theory reveals the multiple variables that exist in the kinetics of interaction and at the same time highlights the importance of cognitive elements related to individuals and groups.

In addition to the two perspectives discussed, there are many theoretical models that have not been allocated a similar space in this section.

Conclusion

We are talking about universes and mechanisms that are formed by a continuous interaction of everything psychological - social - cultural... It takes into account its environmental conditions within the lived reality in the sense that it has acquired the character of legitimate rationality and translates it into practices in a strategic form. It is an unlimited formative process built within the framework of interactive relations corresponding to external influences.

The ability of social representations in their two parts - the central nucleus and the operational practices – enables them to be able to modify, evolve or change, which comes as a response or adaptation to multiple environmental contexts and symptoms. In this way, we have gone beyond approaches that believe that social representations are imperative constructs binding from the wider society and to which all individual and collective practices are subject to a paradigm that possesses the fact that representations and their social practices are considered within the position of interacting structures with all parallel structures and they also develop themselves through more practical strategies and mechanisms with the lived reality.

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[17] Ibid., p.2.
[18] Ibid., p.20.

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