

Analysing the French Abstracts from the International Conferences of Social Representations

BÉATRICE MADIOT

Université de Picardie Jules Verne

Translated from French by Marcelo Félix and Cecília Bucete

University of Évora

INTRODUCTION

The international conferences on social representations began in 1992 in Ravello (Italy). Since then, every two years, these conferences have punctuated the theoretical field while becoming a moment of exchange expected by researchers. In 2012, the 11th International Conference on social representations thus took place in Évora (Portugal).

On the occasion of these conferences, participants provide an abstract of the work they intend to present. This set of abstracts constitutes an important resource for representing the state of a field, its trends, its novelties... This is what we intend to do in the present article.

Firstly, we will consider these conferences, and we will then briefly present the aspects in which the Prospéro software can be a relevant tool to work on the themes, theoretical referents and structure of an abstract. The description of the sample we have worked on will be followed by the presentation of the findings obtained.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES: A NEW ERA FOR SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

In 1992, the 1st international conference on social representations took place in Ravello. This event inaugurates a new era of diffusion of the theory of social representations. There is a before and an after Ravello.

Before Ravello, there is the theory of social representations with one year, 1961, one founder, S. Moscovici, and one book, "Psychoanalysis, its image and its public". From this birth, the theory has expanded rapidly, established itself, and become diffused at the instigation of S. Moscovici by means of the Laboratory of Social Psychology (LPS, EHESS Paris) from 1965. "Two directions of research, founding of the team since the sixties and still relevant, are favoured: the study of social representations and of the phenomena of influence" (Website of the LPS). S. Moscovici reinforces this apparatus of diffusion by creating in 1976 the European Laboratory of Social Psychology (LEPS). Situated in the Foundation of the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (Paris), this network according to the terminology of Kalampalikis (2003, p. 50) aims to break the isolation of European researchers, to support the originality of their research, of which the social representations, and to contribute to a greater autonomy of the European social psychology relative to the North American social psychology.

Feeding the centre that the LPS and LEPS constitute, S. Moscovici and D. Jodelet worked on the implantation of the theory of social representations beyond the European continent and particularly in Latin and Central America.

Between 1961 and 1992, 11 events around the social representations occur (De Rosa, 2008, p. 165). They begin in 1982 through an international round-table taking place at 6 months of interval in Lyon (France) and Montreal (Canada). Invited to this multidisciplinary event on the subject of representations¹, the theory of social representations is thus immediately recognised and as a result legitimised beyond social psychology. This first event is prolonged in the form of conference, symposium, round-table, workshop... in Europe (3 in France, 3 in Italy, 2 in the UK, 1 in Belgium, 1 in Turkey), but also in Brazil (1988). These events demonstrate the need to become more formally organised.

¹ These events were organized by IRPEACS-CNRS Institute for Research in Pedagogy of the Economy and Audiovisual for Communication in Social Sciences - National Centre for Scientific Research (Belisle & Schiele, 1984).

This will be effective in 1992, a pivotal year as two tools of internal diffusion in the field of the theory of social representations emerge:

- One is the 1st international conference on social representations (Ravello, Italy). The conference is intended to all researchers with the aim of sharing and producing a set of knowledge in the process of being made,
- The other is the European Doctorate on social representations and communication (University La Sapienza, Rome, Italy) developed by A.M. De Rosa supported by the LEPS. This doctorate ensures continuity by training students.

These two births have contributed to the organisation and long-term success of the theory. If we focus on the first event, since then 11 international conferences have been held every two years in a different place (Table in the appendix). The initial interchange Europe/South America was quickly transformed with an opening towards Central America (Mexico, 1998, 2004), North America (Canada, 2000), Asia (Indonesia, 2008) and Africa (Tunisia, 2010). The increasing number of communication (30 in 1992, 331 in 2012) demonstrates the success of social representations (De Rosa, 2008, p. 171). The international conferences contribute to this vigour by structuring this field not only in a theoretical, methodological, and institutional way but in a human and geographical way as well (Tapia, 1980). From this perspective, Ravello inaugurates a new phase of development of the theory of social representations.

Tool of scientific sharing, the Conferences thus constitute a sort of mirror of this field; the abstracts hence being a mark of this state. The analysis and putting in perspective of these abstracts can help to grasp the vitality, main elements, but also the emergence of new themes, theoretical approaches and methodological innovations. This is what we intend to do in the next part of this paper first by focusing on the software of textual analysis, Prospéro, that we have used to carry out this task.

A TOOL OF ANALYSIS: PROSPERO

Prospéro² was developed by the sociologist F. Chateauraynaud (EHESS) in reference to the pragmatic sociology to study the public controversies and debates. This theoretical positioning

² Computer Program of Pragmatic, Experimental and Reflexive Sociology.

and these objects of research led the author to create an “open technology” (Chateauraynaud, Torny, 1999, p. 433).

More specifically, Prospéro is designed as a toolbox available to the researcher to test hypotheses and carry out experiments on a corpus. If we extend this metaphor, the researcher has ratchets and a number of sockets of different calibre from which she can design tools of analysis amendable at any time depending on the object of study, the theoretical field and working hypotheses.

Delivered with the software, the dictionaries include modifiable categories of analysis, transferable from one corpus to another, from one researcher to another. Insofar as grammatical status, but also plural/singular, masculine/feminine, upper/lower case marks are potentially meaningful, Prospéro has been programmed to differentiate such marks. This is why the software operates from an intact corpus (without lemmatisation). On a first level of analysis, words are automatically differentiated and ordered according to their grammatical status.

This first categorisation is completed by three other types of grouping: the *fictional beings* equivalent of synonyms (e.g., METHOD@ gathers method, methodology, methods, Method, multimethod...), the *collections* that refer to taxonomies (e.g., the list of the different universities and laboratories) and the *categories* that identify the color of a statement (e.g., all terms referring to Learning such as training, education, knowledge, learning, school, ...).

On the basis of these groupings or not, calculations can concern the relationships between a stimulus word and the terms associated with it (e.g., the network of adjectives associated with the term “questionnaire”), be it by creating generic formulas allowing the identification of particular arrangements of terms (e.g., all the common nouns after the words “social representation of”). These operations are based on an automatic breaking-down of the text that takes into account what constitutes a sentence for the enunciating subject or retranscriber (Madiot & Dargentas, 2010, p. 87).

On the basis of these tools, a corpus can be analysed either in its entirety or by comparing sub-corpus partitioned according to the parameters selected by the researcher, or even by studying a text in relation to all others.

By enabling to do experiment on an intact corpus, Prospéro offers a technology where the analysis and interpretation of results are co-constructed. “The permanent comings and goings

between the concepts, the emergent properties of the corpus, and the texts considered individually are the true resources of the interpretation” (Chateauraynaud, 2003, p. 311).

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

Prospero is attuned with the language, hence the need for a linguistic homogeneity of the corpus. Even if it has been adapted in English and Spanish, three independent analyses would have been required to study the totality of the abstracts of the International Conferences. This operation requires an in-depth knowledge of English and Spanish, skills that we are lacking. Therefore we had to restrict the analysis to the abstracts in French. As a result, the abstracts of the 2nd and 9th International Conferences on social representations could not be included as they were all in English. The analysed corpus is also deprived of the French abstracts from Ravello (1992) and Montreal (2000), that could not be gathered despite our various attempts. The analysed sample thus consists of 611 texts (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample

Year	Organising country	Number of abstracts	Number of French abstracts analysed	% of analysed abstracts of the total from the conference	% of analysed abstracts relative to the total analysed
1992	Italy (Ravello)	63			
1994	Brazil (Rio de Janeiro)	114			
1996	France (Aix en Provence)	200	82	41.00%	13.42%
1998	Mexico (Mexico)	233	60	25.75%	9.82%
2000	Canada (Montréal)	256			
2002	Scotland (Stirling)	271	82	30.26%	13.42%
2004	Mexico (Guadalajara)	266	53	19.92%	8.67%
2006	Italy (Rome)	328	96	29.27%	15.71%
2008	Indonesia	164			
2010	Tunisia (Tunis)	323	157	48.61%	25.70%
2012	Portugal (Evora)	331	81	24.47%	13.26%
Total		2549	611	23,97%	100.00%

To work on the abstracts, we drew upon the five main directions from the meta-analysis of De Rosa (2008, 2012, p. 163):

- The theoretical references relative to social representations (genesis, processes, functions, structure, transmission and transformation...)
- The theoretical references referring to other fields than the field of social representations (integration, differentiation, comparison...)
- The thematic analysis that points the objects of social representation analysed or fields of investigation (health, education...)
- The methodology used
- The sample characteristics.

From this grid and with the potentialities of Prospéro, the abstracts analysis in the French language of seven International Conferences on Social Representations will initially focus on the term “representation” and then on the theoretical aspect of social representations. The third part will be dedicated to the methodologies mobilised and the last part to the objects discussed.

SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

To begin the abstracts analysis, all written forms of social representations were grouped under the same label. One of the results of this grouping concerns the acronym SR; its use seems to impose itself over time (Table 2).

Table 2. Use of the acronym SR in the abstracts

Date	Location	Number of occurrences	Relative deviations*
2012	Evora	55	164
2010	Tunis	62	118
2008	Rome	37	116
2004	Guadalajara	10	49
2002	Stirling	44	116
1998	Mexico	4	22
1996	Aix en Provence	12	46

* The relative differences are obtained by comparing the average scores to 100 by taking into account the size of the corpus. The rule of interpretation is as follows: the elements much higher than 100 present a significant increase (especially above 200), those well below 100 a significant drop (especially less than 50).

If the limited space of abstract forces the authors to work to gain space, the use of the acronym SR also refers to the status of obvious fact of the theory. The removal of the term

“social” from the expression “social representation” (1094 occurrences of “representation” in 404 abstracts) is another type of reduction used³.

The volunteer participants agreed to talk about their project to emigrate to Canada or to build their lives in their country during an interview lasting 90 to 120 minutes on three objects of representation: homeland, work and Canada. (Evora, 2012)

However, these sole results do not allow to identify possible transformations of the concept. Thanks to the formulas, three other sorts of representation could be isolated: the “collective representations” (16 occurrences in 11 texts), the “socio-spatial representations” (11 occurrences in 5 texts) and “professional representations” (44 occurrences in 19 abstracts).

The comparison of the 23 texts which do not mention in any way the REPRESENTATION@ (Table 3) with the remaining 588 texts⁴ shows that they are rather focused on another psychosociological concept (stereotype, rumour, social memory, social thought...) (Table 3).

The transmission of knowledge constitutes a specific anthropological function, centred for thousands of years on the image of the adult (the teacher), who transmits to the child (the student). Since the second half of the 20th century, this “collective representation” overflows from the school and family enclaves. (Tunis, 2010)

Table 3. The subcategories of the fictitious being REPRESENTATION@

Subcategories	Number of occurrences	Number of texts
Social representation	1863	525
Representation	1094	404
Professional representation	44	19
Collective representation	16	11
Socio-spatial representation	11	5
Total	3028	588

By focusing on the network of each sub-category of REPRESENTATION@ (detailed calculation in Chateauraynaud 2003, pp. 257-258), we notice that researchers use in the same text terms referring to several of these groupings:

- Either to lighten the text. In this case, “representation” and SR are generally used for “social representation”.

³ A term in inverted commas will refer to the entirety of its written forms.

⁴ The comparisons to which Prospero proceeds take into account the size of each sub-corpus. “The software brings the number of occurrences [of each sub-corpus] to a basis of 100 [or relative score] that indicates independence” (Duret & Trabal, 2001, p. 131).

Thus, the use of a “cross-perspective”, emphasising the relationship between two groups vis-à-vis a same object of representation, proves to be relevant to show the dialogical link between SR and group, and to provide elements about the SR of the object itself. (Evora, 2012)

- Or to make connections between “social representation” and “professional”, “collective” or “socio-spatial representation”. This is thus when the articulation between different types of representation is specified.

Is the French Revolution the subject of a collective representation shared around its positive aspects, or can it be the subject of more contrasted and more polemical social representations? (Rome, 2006)

The network of “socio-spatial representations” presents a particularity. Unlike the subcategories related to “professional representation” and “collective representation”, it is not REPRESENTATION@ (and more particularly the subcategory “social representation”) that is most related to them but “social memory” and Jodelet. This thus underlines the instigator of this psychosociological field and a direction of research.

“Our approach is in line with the theory of social memory (Halbwachs, 1950) and with the theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1961; Jodelet, 1984) the theory of socio-spatial representations (Milgram & Jodelet, 1976; Jodelet, 1982; Haas, 1999; De Alba, 2004)”. (Evora, 2012)

While “social representation” and “representation” are used in a constant way over time (Table 4), the other three appear rather during the last conferences and particularly the Tunis conference.

Table 4. Relative deviations of the presence of different subcategories of representation.

Date	Location	Social representation	Representation	Professional representation	Collective representation	Socio-spatial representation
2012	Evora	100	62	148		421
2010	Tunis	115	116	309	309	258
2008	Rome	100	91	75	84	
2004	Guadalajara	95	84	135	243	
2002	Stirling	67	82		109	
1998	Mexico	106	119	57		121
1996	Aix en Provence	122	166			

The comparison of these results to those obtained in the abstracts in Spanish and English would allow to refine these results. These new perspectives show that authors situate at a theoretical level the words they use; this is what we will now consider.

DISCIPLINE OF REFERENCE, SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATION AND PSYCHOSOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

To propose a scientific abstract is to position oneself within a disciplinary and theoretical field. Let us begin with the disciplinary references. Logically, “social psychology” (77 occurrences in 41 abstracts) is more mentioned than “psychology” (50 occurrences in 36 abstracts), “sociology” (20 occurrences in 16 abstracts), “linguistics” (10 occurrences in 10 abstracts), and “anthropology” (8 occurrences in 7 abstracts).

This idea guides the work that we have been carrying out for ten years at the boundaries of sociology, social psychology and linguistics. (Aix en Provence, 1996)

In coherence, formulations such as “psychosocial” “dynamic”⁵ (65 occurrences in 47 abstracts) are the majority (compared to “psychological” “dynamic” - 2 occurrences – “sociological” “dynamic” - 2 occurrences - or “anthropological” “dynamic” - 2 occurrences -).

We will see under which psychosocial procedures these mechanisms operate and the implications that can be identified at the junction of the notions of social / political and of the subject and within the interactions that they reveal. (Rome, 2006)

The reference to social psychology can take a more implicit turn by citing the epistemic perspective defined by S. Moscovici (1984) by the means of the ternary perspective with the ego, the alter and the object (11 occurrences in 6 abstracts).

This aspect can be placed in the triangular relationship (ego-alter-object) that is engaged in an individual interview, as in the focus groups where the non-directive lead of the interviewer may allow each participant, to express their views and arguments in a back-and-forth with the self, the others and the situation. (Tunis, 2006)

The discipline is not very present in the abstracts as the “theory of social representations” (111 texts). The latter filiation can also be expressed by the words of its ancestor or founder, to use Farr’s differentiation (1996). E. Durkheim (7 occurrences in 5 texts) and/or the concept of “collective representation” (16 occurrences in 11 texts) are quietly cited.

Social representations (Durkheim, 1898; Moscovici, 1961) constitute the theoretical basis of this work. (Tunis, 2010)

Unlike the founder S. Moscovici (131 occurrences in 108 texts) and / or the first book *Psychoanalysis: Its image and its public* (4 mentions in 4 abstracts), and/or the date of

⁵ Or implication, approach, perspective, study.

publication of this book, 1961 (46 times in 43 abstracts) and / or the date of the second edition, 1976 (10 times in 10 texts).

According to Robert Farr commenting the founding work of Serge Moscovici *Psychoanalysis: Its image and its public*, the concept of social representation seeks to show “how a new scientific or political theory is diffused in a given culture, how it is transformed during this process and how it changes in turn the view that people have of themselves and of the world in which they live”. (Tunis, 2010)

80% of the totality of the abstracts silences these theoretical and / or disciplinary filiations in all likelihood because they have status of evidence. By following this reasoning, authors should specify to a greater extent the school of social representations which they adhere to.

The literature on this issue distinguishes three trends (Deschamps & Moliner, 2008). The first trend, the socio-genetic one, has been initiated by S. Moscovici; the structural approach, of the central nucleus or School of Aix with J.C. Abric as figure and C. Flament as founder (De Rosa, 2008, p.202; 2012) is the second trend. The third trend, the socio-dynamic one, or organising principles of positioning or School of Geneva was built by W. Doise. In the presentation text of the 10th International Conference, the anthropological orientation represented by D. Jodelet and the dialogical approach in the person of I. Markova are added (D. Ben Alaya).

“The structural school” (63 occurrences), “the dialogical analysis” (11 occurrences), “the dynamic theory” (7 occurrences) are modestly present in the corpus. Let us note the particular place of “the structural analysis” and the absence of the “socio-genetic” and “anthropological approaches”.

On the basis of the results obtained to date, it seems that the bidimensional model of SR is able to offer: a perspective of theoretical integration of the concepts of attitudes and SR, a new analytical perspective of the representational dynamic, as well as a possibility of reconciliation of the theoretical models proposed by the Schools of Aix - Central Nucleus Theory - and Geneva - Theory of the organising principles of positioning. (Aix en Provence, 1996)

The theoretical schools literally mentioned are those which manifested and denominated themselves internally. Conversely, those absent correspond to approaches identified and designated externally. Denomination and recognition go hand in hand. It might be required to qualify this proposition by emphasising that to denominate oneself facilitates more the recognition than being denominated. While “socio-genetic” or “genetic” are never used in the abstracts to refer to Moscovici’s approach, this approach is nevertheless present in a periphrastic way as the “theory of social representations of Moscovici”, or “theoretical model of Moscovici”

(8 occurrences) according to the well-known mechanism of personification (Moscovici & Hewstone, in Moscovici, 1984, pp. 553-554; Viaud, 1996, p. 29).

Other indicators of belongingness to one of these schools or another are used to situate the words (objectification, anchorage, naturalization, central system, peripheral, sociological anchorage ...) (Table 5).

Table 5. The approaches of the theory of social representations

Theoretical approaches	Number of occurrences	Number of texts
“Structural approach”	268	110
“Central system, peripheral”	146	
“Central nucleus”	110	
“Silent zone”	41	
“Socio-genetic approach”	149	75
ANCHORAGE@	96	55
OBJECTIFICATION@	32	20
“Dynamic approach”	56	24
“Organizing principles of position taken”	32	
“Sociological, psychological anchorage”	14	
“Social regulations”	4	
“Themata”	25	13
“Strangeness”	18	
“System of representations”	7	6
“Cognitive polyphasia”	4	2

If the “structural approach” confirms its implantation with the distinction of central and peripheral systems, the often joint use of the processes of “objectification” and “anchorage” proposed by S. Moscovici in 1961 (Table 5) and materialised by their respective network leaves room to the “socio-genetic approach”.

The analysis of social representations that was carried out concerns the process of objectification and the process of anchorage in communication systems, as defined by Moscovici (1961). (Aix en Provence, 1996)

Although Doise is the author most associated with the ANCHORAGE@ and the “dynamic approach”, the reference to the Geneva School remains as modest certainly because it uses the terminology of Moscovici of anchorage to the extent that the two approaches are difficult to differentiate.

The objective of this symposium is to show that the taking into account of the different modalities of social anchorage defined by Willem Doise (1992) provides a heuristic illumination to capture and articulate the

plurality of social regulation that are exerted in representational fields and identifying the organizing principles and socio-cognitive processes underlying them.

One of the most productive ideas of S. Moscovici, the objectification, is little used in the abstracts as are Moscovici's expressions of "figurative schema" or "imaging nucleus" (absent from abstracts), or those of "hard nucleus" (Mugny & Carugati, 1985) "structuring nucleus" (Jodelet, 1989) (respectively 2 and 1 times), contrary to the Aix term of "central nucleus" around which the vocabulary seems to have become stabilised (110 occurrences).

The link between the founding trend of S. Moscovici and the structural approach on one hand, and the Geneva School on the other, emerge. The first one would rather prolong the process of objectification, the expression central nucleus replacing the original term. On the contrary, the second one would rather follow the one of anchorage by retaining this term but by qualifying it to define it better (sociological, psychological, ontological...).

From the theory of the central nucleus, two types of research are currently being developed: they concern the nature and internal functioning of the nucleus, those who try to analyse the central nucleus / periphery relationships. (Mexico, 1998)

The initial theory was enriched by new avenues of research initiated by S. Moscovici among others, particularly with the notion of themata. Introduced in 1994, this notion has generated a body of work contrary to the notion of cognitive polyphasia (Table 5).

The notion of "cognitive polyphasia" was introduced by Moscovici (1962) from the beginning of the theory. (Tunis, 2010)

The specific objective, following a first exploratory study, is to find the central nucleus and its links with thématâ. (Rome, 2006)

As we have seen, the anthropological approach is not explicitly mentioned despite the fact that D. Jodelet is one of the most cited psychologists (70 occurrences in 62 texts) and that the approach is directly related to the "genetic approach" and the "social memory". This result underlines that some authors propose a communication at the articulation of the theory of social representations and other fields of research in social psychology. These fields (Table 6) refer to the classical theoretical approaches of social psychology ("social identity", "social perception", "communication"), but also innovative perspectives ("social thought", "social memory").

"It is acknowledged that the notions of social representation and identity correspond to the central domains of social psychology but also to relatively complex domains". (Stirling, 2002)

Essentially supported by the genetic approach but also by the structural analysis (Table 6), these links confirm the major theoretical contribution of social representations in the field of social psychology.

“A dimension of centrality that determines the organisation and meaning of SR, and an evaluative dimension that constitutes the structure upon which rests the subjects attitude towards the object of SR”. (Aix en Provence, 1996)

Table 6. Links between psychosocial theoretical approaches and the schools of social representations

Psychosocial theories	Occurrences	Number of texts	Social representations approaches*	Network of SOCIAL-REPRESENTATION@**
“Social Identity”	248	107	“Genetic approach” (10) “Structural approach” (8)	315
“Attitude”	147	83	“Structural approach” (25)	160
“Discrimination-Alterity”	132	51	“Genetic approach” (10) “Structural approach” (10)	119
“Social Perception”	125	65	“Genetic approach” (11)	121
“Intergroup Relations”	122	52	“Structural approach” (15) “Dynamic approach” (11)	88
“Social Thought”	98	60	“Genetic approach” (14)	90
“Stereotype-Prejudice”	72	30	“Themata” (6) “Structural approach” (4)	50
“Social Communication”	70	35	“Genetic approach” (13)	30
“Social Memory”	53	26	“Genetic approach” (6)	63
“Emotion”	50	21	“Structural approach” (4) “Genetic approach” (2) “Dynamic approach” (2)	42
“Social Influence”	45	23	“Dialogical approach” (2)	56
“Social Practices”	41	32	“Structural approach” (8)	53
“Causal Attribution”	28	11		42
“Language”	25	15		26
“Ego Ecology”	19	8	“Genetic approach” (2)	12
“Socio Cognitive bias”	12	3	“Structural approach” (3)	11

* The approach of social representations mentioned corresponds to the one that arrives ahead of the network of the psychosociological theory at the start of the line, between parenthesis the calculation of the link.

** Read: the link between the fictitious network SOCIAL-REPRESENTATIONS@ and the theoretical approach “social identity” is of 315.

A new bridge also seems to be initiated with the “emotions” that are supported by the three major theoretical perspectives of social representations.

“Several multiple regressions illustrate the social representations - emotions link, particularly regarding the central system”. (Rome, 2006)

While related to SOCIAL-REPRESENTATIONS@, other psychosociological theoretical fields are present without having been preferentially seized by any school (“Causal attribution”, “Language”).

At the end of this section, the abstracts analysis shows that abstracts authors use marks of their belonging to a school of social representations and / or refer to other psychosociological theories. These marks of filiation are based on a conceptual development of the first theory but also on the adjustment of methods of data collection and analysis.

DATA COLLECTION AND TREATMENT OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

Logically, the abstracts are labelled by a strong scientific rhetoric captured by different categories of Prospéro (Table 7).

Table 7. The scientific rhetoric

Categories	Number of occurrences	Number of texts
To analyse/observe	315	221
To show	280	213
To highlight	213	159
To seek	100	78
To argue	93	71
Analysis, theory, hypothesis, sample	1506	498
Process	252	168
Research experience	804	363
Effects results	802	404
Demonstration (so...)	409	232

The privileged methodological approach rather tends to the “qualitative” (86 occurrences in 62 texts) than the “quantitative” (40 occurrences in 32 texts) or, according to another dichotomy, less to the EXPERIMENTATION@ (31 occurrences in 27 abstracts) than the INVESTIGATION@ (118 occurrences in 89 abstracts). While the latter is used in a stable manner, the EXPERIMENTATION@ is especially present in Aix en Provence (Table 8).

Table 8. Relative deviations for the reference to the investigation or experimentation

Location of the conferences	INVESTIGATION@	EXPERIMENTATION@
Aix en Provence	127	195
Mexico	53	83
Stirling	39	139
Guadalajara	87	72
Rome	85	113
Tunis	152	33
Evora	135	121

The questionnaire, composed of open-ended (22 occurrences) rather than closed-ended questions (2 occurrences), the interview and the word associations (Table 9) constitute the preferred means of data collection. Their use has been stable since the beginning of the conferences.

Table 9. Number of occurrences for methodologies of data collection

	Number of occurrences	Number of texts
Total	831	349
Questionnaire	249	163
Interview	199	137
Word association	112	77
Scale	49	37
Focus group	31	17
Basic cognitive schemes	25	16
Mental maps	22	13
Imis	13	5
Test	8	8
Observation	7	7

The “basic cognitive schemes” and the “mental maps” emerge at the Aix en Provence and Mexico Conferences while “focus groups” are especially mentioned at the Rome conference. This phase of the research process is mainly present in the abstracts affiliated with the structural approach, as is the data analysis phase.

Table 10. Number of occurrences for methodologies of data analysis

	Number of occurrences	Number of texts
Total	315	161
Textual analysis with software	104	63
Statistical analysis	65	41
Similarity analysis	52	29
Factor analysis	26	18
Press analysis	8	8
Content analysis	60	56

Besides the “content analysis” that is the more stable data analysis technique used, the content analysis with software has set in over time, and particularly since the international conference of Tunis (Table 11). The softwares of textual analysis, and especially Alceste (59 occurrences in 40 texts, Prospéro 5 occurrences, Iramutec 4 and Tropes 1) arrive well ahead of softwares such as EVOC, SIMI, AVRIL (9 occurrences in 7 texts) or the CAQDAS⁶ with Nudist, NVivo and Atlas Ti (5 occurrences in 5 abstracts). The “statistical analysis”, the “press analysis” and “similarity analysis” are mostly found in Evora.

The interviews were analysed using two textual analysis softwares: Alceste and Prospéro, that we have made discuss (Tunis, 2010)

Table 11. Mention of the textual analysis software programs

	Number of occurrences	Number of texts	Relative deviations ⁸
Evora	14	7	114
Tunis	32	19	225
Rome	13	10	121
Guadalajara	6	6	90
Stirling	7	5	48
Mexico	3	3	59
Aix en Provence	1	1	10
Total	76	51	

The analysis shows that authors jointly use several techniques particularly for data collection but also analysis that some call pluri- or multi-methodology (14 occurrences in 13 texts).

⁶ Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis. For the difference between the CAQDAS and textual analysis software, see Madiot & Dargentas (2010).

An interdisciplinary (communication, psychology, education) and multi-methodological approach (questionnaires for parents and teachers, focus groups, individual interviews, word association, drawings, show previews screenings, with the children) is used. (Guadalajara, 2004)

While others refer to the “triangulation”⁷ (60 occurrences in 39 abstracts).

But also, secondly, it provides the researcher with the necessary elements for a comprehensive interpretation of the observed differences. (Rome, 2006)

This term appears in Rome (2006) where a round table is dedicated to it and set in subsequently. Previously, a terminology in terms of “qualitative” approach is rather used. Note that in 2003, two chapters on the qualitative research approach and the triangulation are published in French (D. Jodelet, T. Apostolidis); would this time interval be a period of conceptual incubation necessary to the implantation of new methodology in a constituted theoretical field?

The issue of triangulation in the framework of the qualitative methodologies can be considered in several ways that we will attempt to identify at the occasion of this roundtable. (Rome, 2006)

The triangulation is a means of scientific validation. However, only 20 abstracts (24 occurrences) use one of the derivatives of the root “valid” (including the abstracts of Aix en Provence in 1996).

To test the validity of this model within the theoretical framework of the central nucleus, we drew on research carried out with 553 students on the social representation of politics (questionnaire of 48 items). (Aix en Provence, 1996)

However, the researchers situate their words using a vocabulary referring to as many validation operations recognised in the scientific world. Thus, the comparison⁸ has a prominent place (186 occurrences present in 120 abstracts). This usually corresponds to “compare” the results of groups of subjects that are as many modalities of VARIABLE@ (especially independent) contributing to the definition of SAMPLE@ (137 occurrences in 96 texts) present in the “hypotheses” (143 occurrences in 106 abstracts).

This hypothesis was tested by comparing the obtained results on the entirety of the sample and on various subgroups of subjects according to certain socio-demographic indicators (gender, level of study, activity, practice, etc.). (Tunis, 2010)

Another way to emphasise the scientific nature of the discussion being held is to refer to the “experimental” nature of the research (57 occurrences in 45 abstracts).

⁷ Grouping of the terms grounded theory, qualitative research approach, inductive approach, comprehensive approach, triangulation.

⁸ Results obtained with the formula / RAC = "compar" which gives comparison, compared, comparable...

120 first-year students (60 males / 60 females) were the subjects of a 2x2 experimental design. (Stirling, 2002)

All these indicators refer to a process of administration of the evidence with the aim to produce knowledge. To do this, the authors rely on the “objects of social representation” (25 occurrences).

OF THE OBJECTS OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

As a form of practical knowledge, the social representation always connects something to someone. This literal formulation is very little present in the abstracts (4 occurrences).

“The first set focuses on the social representations of the French nationality shared by various groups from Maghreb”. (Stirling, 2002)

While 359 different combinations correspond to the generic term REPRESENTATION@ of (on) “something” (590 occurrences in 308 abstracts).

Their manual thematic grouping allows to identify favoured objects of study. Immediately, the three traditional areas of research in psychology emerged: “work” (36 occurrences), “education” (29 occurrences) and “health” (27 occurrences) with groups of related topics: children, parents, students, teachers, educators, patients, caregivers, physicians, dentists, nurses.

The data indicates the displacement since 1980 of a representation of manual, tiring, constraining and material work towards a representation of intellectual, light, and pleasant work that generates social ties. (Rome, 2008)

Among the remaining themes, some have structured the field of social representations as “body” (21 occurrences), “justice” (19 occurrences), “group” (17 occurrences), “human rights” (15 occurrences), “mental illness” (12 occurrences), “AIDS” (8 occurrences).

The purpose of this study is to know what are the social representations of justice that circulate among young Neapolitan students, and whether these representations are different from each other, depending on the social environment of their production. (Evora, 2012)

Structuring the social communities, these objects go through time and cultures. They allow a work of incremental and “transcultural” knowledge (39 occurrences in 26 texts mostly found in Rome) that points directly to an approach of social psychology as an anthropology of the

contemporary world (Moscovici, 2012, p. 20) and refer to the anthropological approach of the social representations.

Besides these classical themes, new objects of social representation appear such as “gender” (31 occurrences), “economic crisis” (29 occurrences), “environment” (14 occurrences), “economy” (13 occurrences), “homosexuality” (12 occurrences), “globalization” (9 occurrences).

The social representations of gender play a fundamental role in the adult development: being adult means to be in development in a universe of development of collective thinking. (Evora, 2012)

The latter objects refer to current social issues thus showing the reactivity of this field in direct contact with social concerns.

These objects are divided into different theoretical approaches. Thus, “education”, “mental illness”, “environment” are rather invested by the “genetic approach”. The “dynamic approach” favours “justice”, “human rights”, “gender”, “economic crisis”. The “Aix en Provence School” is rather oriented towards “group”, “health / illness”, “AIDS”, “economy”, “work”. “Globalisation” and “homosexuality” are invested by several approaches while “body” is not attached to any of them.

In this vast panorama, the founding object of the theory, the psychoanalysis, is not reinvested (4 occurrences). The initial project of S. Moscovici that was to show how the common sense takes over a scientific theory to construct a practical knowledge was not relayed. Research has rather focused on testing and enriching the initial theory with objects other than scientific.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the abstracts in French produced during international conferences on social representations has allowed us to identify the plurality of ways of saying how we theoretically situate ourselves in the field of social representations, which methodology tied up to which data collection and analysis techniques is used. We were also able to identify the themes that researchers work on.

The theory of social representations is a dynamic field structured in several schools in synergy one with each other. The lower presence of the dynamic approach compared to the School of Aix en Provence at all levels of analysis is due according to us to an intersection of several factors. First of all, the process of objectification has retained more attention than the

anchorage process (Jodelet, 2004, 148). Then, this approach integrates in its model the divergences of perspectives linked to social belonging (Jodelet, 2004, 147). Yet, the plurality is always more difficult to grasp than the consensus even if Prospéro has been designed in this perspective. Finally, the dynamic approach uses the same vocabulary as the genetic approach that makes them less distinguishable.

It would be worth putting into perspective the set of results obtained here to those written in English and Spanish so that the panorama presented be more complete. The set of categorisations developed for this analysis could serve as a basis and be amended by adding to this corpus the abstracts of the next International Conferences in order to grasp the evolution of this theoretical field.

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BÉATRICE MADIOT is lecturer in social psychology at the University of Picardy (France). She is member of the “Psychology Research Centre”, and is also in charge of the Master 2 “Psychology of insertion and social intervention”. Having completed her PhD on the professionalisation of jazz musicians in France under the supervision of Denise Jodelet, she is currently working on the perception of film and musical work within the framework of social representations. In parallel, she has oriented her investigations towards qualitative methodology by practicing with Magda Dargentas researchers and methods triangulation (using the text analysis software Prospéro).

ANNEX

Conference	Organizing country	Title of the conferences
1992	Italy (Ravello)	
1994	Brazil (Rio de Janeiro)	Advances in theory and research
1996	France (Aix en Provence)	
1998	Mexico (Mexico)	La Era de la Psicología Social
2000	Canada (Montréal)	Représentations sociales: constructions nouvelles
2002	Scotland (Stirling)	Thinking societies: common sense and communication
2004	Mexico (Guadalajara)	Représentations sociales et formes d'interaction : groupes, communautés, mouvements sociaux
2006	Italy (Rome)	Média et société
2008	Indonesia	Alternative production of knowledge and social representations
2010	Tunisia (Tunis)	Représentations, transmission des savoirs et transformations sociales
2012	Portugal (Evora)	Représentations sociales et sociétés en mutation