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Social Representations in the social arena faced with social demand: a wide range of societal issues investigated in various thematic areas in multiple applied contexts



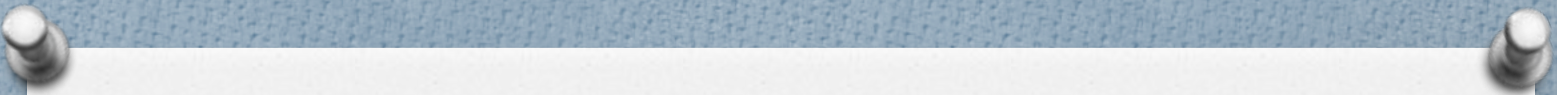
European / International Joint Ph.D. in
Social Representation and Communication



Social thought supporting professional action: social representations and intervention

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Intervention by social representations

- o Formation of a new social representation
 - o A new object (computer in 1990s)
 - o An old object in a new context (economics for students)
- o Transformation of a social representation already in place
- o Manipulation of social representations to obtain a desired behavior of individuals and groups

The expert and lay knowledge

- Unequal relationship between common sense and science : epistemological power ?
- Scientific knowledge is also produced in a specific social and institutional context marked by social interaction and group dynamics.

Practitioners' expertise and social representations

- practitioners who apply expert knowledge in concrete situations transform science into social representations
 - theories and results of scientific research are not substantially used in professional practices
 - Professional representations

Researchers or professionals may therefore be subject to similar representational processes as laymen.

The 'expert patient': an emancipation of secular knowledge?

- affirmation of the reflexive individual (Giddens)
- social norms of autonomy and participation (Erhenberg)
- development of new technologies (allows individuals to have easy access to expert knowledge and exchange individual experiences)
 - *The expert patient*
 - empowerment in social intervention

Common sense between emancipation and domination

- Social representations are recognized as valid knowledge also by institutions
 - Programs of self-management in chronic disease
- Is this an emancipation of the patients from medical power ?
 - individuals are no longer under the influence of a dominant internalized ideology but
 - they become now solely responsible for their actions and their destiny in an "uncertain" social context

Conclusion

- Traditionally, in intervention, social representations should be remodelled or be handled in accordance with certain standards imposed by expert knowledge.
- This unequal relationship between the expert and lay knowledge in the intervention can now be questioned:
 - On the one hand, expert knowledge, whether it's science or professional knowledge, is often subject to processes that are not very far from the dynamics of constitution of social representations.
 - On the other hand, the secular knowledge of clients took a higher status in interventions recently .
- Social representations become knowledge recognized as legitimate not only by professionals, but also by organizations and even by the State.
- This reversal of the power relationship between expert and lay knowledge is not without consequence:
 - On the one hand, people have the opportunity to take control on their situation by using their own experiences and knowledge;
 - on the other hand, the system manipulates this movement of individuation to free up resources and put back the domination on a new contractual basis that highlights individual accountability.