

[Saadi Lahlou](#)

The role of artifacts in the co-construction of social representations

Conference Item [eg. keynote lecture, etc.]

Original citation:

Lahlou, Saadi (1996) *The role of artifacts in the co-construction of social representations*. In: Social representations, the state of the art, 6 - 9 June 1996, London School of Economics, London, UK.

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/32985/>

Available in LSE Research Online: May 2011

© 1996 Saadi Lahlou

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk>) of the LSE Research Online website.

(1996) - LAHLOU, Saadi. *The role of artifacts in the co-construction of social representations*. Oral communication, International workshop : Social Representations, the state of the art. London School of Economics. June 6-9 1996.

The role of artefacts in the co-construction of social representations

Saadi LAHLOU. EDF-Direction des Etudes et Recherches. Clamart, France.

In a systemic approach at society level, social representations can be seen as folds of a large users' manual, "common-sense", descriptive and prescriptive for the use of the World in everyday life. In this respect, social representations allow, and guide, the co-operation of actors ("users" of the common reality) in their respective local goals. Although many studies focus on the existence of such representations, and describe them, there is few empirical work describing how, in real life situations, this "users' manual" is made available to users.

Three recent studies suggest that artefacts (language, documents, but also material objects) act as media in the transmission of social representation (which is not new) but also as a concrete support for representation processing in everyday and professional life. The two first studies [Lahlou, 1995a, 1996, and Lahlou, 1994] show how social representation can be extracted from dictionaries, hereby proving that representations are stocked by culture in material artefacts, in such a way that it can reproduce easily in individual minds. The third [Lahlou & Fischler, 1996] describes in detail the avatars of representations in their successive transfers from mind to objects and vice-versa. Coherently with the "situated cognition" approach [e.g. Hutchins, 1994], it shows how a representation of a state-of-things is transformed into documental description, dispatched to actors in the process of labour division, materialised locally, to finally produce in the reality the state-of-things represented. Artefacts play a key role in this co-construction because their relative stability and public availability allow a delocalised and asynchronic co-ordination of actors concerned, by overtly *actualising*, into concrete referents, facets of the current state of the social representation.

In this perspective, social representation should now be seen as scattered information widespread not only in the minds of humans but also in the very material world itself. Artefacts should then be considered as made of the very same material as representations.

HUTCHINS, E. (1994) Comment le "cockpit" se souvient de ses vitesses. *Sociologie du Travail*, n°4/94. 451-473.

LAHLOU, S. (1994). The use of information within the company : some theoretical reflections and a lexical analysis. *Collection des notes internes de la Direction des Etudes et Recherches*. EDF, 95NO00022. ISSN 1161-063. 55 p.

LAHLOU, S. (1995). *Penser Manger. Les représentations sociales de l'alimentation*. Thèse de doctorat. Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. Paris, mars 1995. 739 p.

LAHLOU, S. (1996). Experts, industriels, médias, consommateurs, institutions : comment le marché se co-construit à travers les représentations. In I. Giachetti (éd.) : *Identités des mangeurs, images des aliments*. 1996. Paris : Polytechnica. 125-154.

LAHLOU, S., FISCHLER, C. (1996) Le traitement de l'information par le bureau. In : *Mémoires, inscriptions, actions, individuelles et collectives*. Séminaire Interdisciplinaire de Sciences Cognitives et Epistémologie. UTC, Compiègne, 1996. 93-103.