THE EUROPEAN/INTERNATIONAL JOINT PHD IN SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND COMMUNICATION: A PIONEER CASE OF TRIPLE “I” (INTERNATIONAL, INTERDISCIPLINARY, INTERSECTORAL) NETWORKED JOINT DOCTORATE

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Abstract

The European/International Joint PhD in Social Representations and Communication is a pioneer case of the integration of the triple “i” (international, interdisciplinary, intersectoral) transversal dimensions of the doctoral training and to discuss the implications of adopting the distinct models for the internationalisation of the doctorates and the international joint doctorates. Combining its long-term top institutional history and its capacity for innovation, this well-established European Joint Doctorate, recognised since 1993 within the triple framework of Universities, Ministries and the European Commission and fully operational since 1996, over the years has grown beyond the EU and academic boundaries, thanks to the “unique” combination of a EC-approved Joint doctoral programme (http://www.europhd.eu) and a Scientific Thematic Network of excellence (http://www.europhd.eu/SoReComTHEmaticNETwork).

This supra-disciplinary area of the social sciences interested in how scientific knowledge is transformed by lay people and the media into common sense and how it is related to situated practices, has activated a conversation among social, human and natural scientists in a wide range of international research programmes, concerning public understanding of the sciences and discoveries in various fields. The “objects” studied have a strong societal impact and important applications “within” and “for” society in the political, economic and social spheres.

Currently the European/International Joint PhD in Social Representations and Communication is an international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary networked doctoral programme led by Sapienza University (Italy) in 12 EU (AT, CH, CZ, FR, IT, NL, RO, ES, PT, SE, SK, UK) and 6 extra-EU countries from North America (U.S. and CA) and Latin America (AR, BR, MX) to China, including 25 universities, IFSTTAR (a French national research institute of science and technology for transport, development), 2 SME in Sweden and in Italy in diversified sectors (communication and marketing) and the multinational ELSEVIER in the strategic sector of publishing and science dissemination.

Headquartered at the state of the art SoReCom Research Centre and Multimedia Lab of Sapienza University of Rome, the So.Re.Com. Joint Innovative Doctoral Program (http://www.europhd.eu/SoReComJointIDP) has been selected in 2013 People-ITN-IDP call with the highest evaluation (98,80/100). Its mission is aimed at ensuring: a) internationally well-reputed “research excellence”; b) worldwide appealing institutional environment; c) interdisciplinary research options dealing with societal issues at the interface between lay and scientific knowledge within, with and for society; d) Innovative practices adopted for multiple training activities and tutoring and co-tutoring; e) International and Intersectoral networking; e) training in transferable skills; f) dedicated physical and innovative digital infrastructures, including the So.Re.Com. “A.S. de Rosa” physical and @-Library; g) career prospect development in academic and professional sectors; h) international joint governance structure and quality assurance from the selection process to the joint diploma award. Seven universities in five EU countries (IT, FR, CZ, ES, RO) are committed to awarding the joint degree, on the behalf of the whole network, which co-operates on recruiting, training and evaluating activities as partner organisations.

Keywords: international, interdisciplinary, intersectoral joint doctorate, triple “i” networked doctoral program, Social Representations and Communication.
1 THE TRIPLE “I” APPROACH IN THE CHANGING SCENARIO OF THE DOCTORAL TRAINING

A “quiet revolution” [1] occurred in doctoral education especially in Europe (but with significant echo effects also in other continents mobilising a new dynamic of Higher Education/Research both on European and global level [2]) since Salzburg Principles in 2005 and Salzburg EUA-CDE recommendations in 2010.

Already in 2009 David Boud and Alison Lee [3] state in their book “Changing Practices of Doctoral Education”: “Postgraduate education has undergone unprecedented change in the past ten years, in response to major shifts in the role of the university and the disciplines in knowledge production and the management of intellectual work”.

Not only over the last decade a remarkable growth in doctorate awarded in the EU, USA and Latin America has occurred (Fig. 1), from one side stimulated by the goal to reach a “critical mass”, from the other side animating discussion and alive debate aimed at rethinking the PhD Factory taking into account the researcher’s employability and the restricted academic career prospects. [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8].

Fig. 1 Source: Jorgensen, T. (2014) Globalisation of doctoral Education and institutional responses [9]

More importantly diversified and innovative models of doctoral programs (international collaborative doctorates, international joint doctorates, industrial doctorate, interdisciplinary doctoral schools) aimed at improving their quality, their degree of internationalisation and of collaboration within and outside the academic context and between disciplines have been promoted by the European Commission, through special programs like Erasmus Mundus, Marie Curie Actions, People, MSCA, Co-fund etc.; by the Ministerial initiatives aimed at stimulating research excellence and Internationalisation of the Higher Education System in several EU States (Germany, France, Italy among others); by Universities or inter-University Associations, professional organisations and networks.

Among the various routes possible for the future of doctorates in Europe and across the world, a structured international programme based on networking, multiple joint supervision, common rules for recruitment, training and evaluation and providing physical and virtual mobility can be seen as one of the responses to doctoral trainees’ demands to overcome their isolation and the limitations of the individual “apprenticeship” model.

An impressive series of meetings, projects and studies have been conducted by multiple stakeholders and institutional actors promoting, implementing and monitoring the process of the reform of doctoral programs by the initiative of the European Commission, the Ministries of Higher Education and Research, the Universities, the Bologna Follow up Group-BFUG, International Associations, like the EUA and in particular its Council for Doctoral Education EUA-CDE, the ACA, the UNICA, the COIMBRA Group Network, LERU, UNESCO, etc.(among many other see: [10], [11], [12], [13], [14]).

One of the most recent events, the InterDOC conference, organised - under the auspices of the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union - in Padua, Italy (20-21 November 2014) by the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, in collaboration with the University of Padua and the University of Camerino, and with the expert advice of the EUA-Council for Doctoral Education
has been specifically focussed on the triple “i” approach to doctoral training (International, Intersectoral, and Interdisciplinary): www.interdoc2014.it

Following previous invited contributions in international conferences and workshops, the InterDOC conference [46] was a new occasion to discuss - during a parallel workshop on “Internationalisation in doctoral training: collaborative projects, co-tutelle, joint doctorates” - the implications of adopting the distinct multiple models for the internationalisation of the doctorates (collaborative doctorates) and the international joint doctorates, that we have contributed to present and compare in previous publications from 1995 to date. Based on our direct experience of creating and since 1993 leading the first European joint doctorate formally recognised in multiple institutional scenarios, these publications address several aspects of the doctoral education (with the specific focus on international networked joint doctoral program), ranging from the administrative and management perspective, to the research training and didactic point of view and to the quality assurance and evaluation system.

2 A PIONEER CASE OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE TRIPLE “I”: THE EUROPEAN/INTERNATIONAL JOINT PHD IN SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND COMMUNICATION.

This article represents an additional dissemination activity to illustrate the European/International Joint PhD in Social Representations and Communication as a pioneer case of the integration of the triple “i” (international, interdisciplinary, intersectoral) transversal dimensions of the innovative doctoral training.

The objective is to share our experience in bringing the European/International Joint PhD in Social Representations and Communications to life and ensuring its long term sustainability also through an effective management, even facing unexpected crisis (lack of funds for research and education in the period of the global economic crisis, changes in leadership and partnership and dynamic interplay between individual and institutional collaborations, transformations in the network life-cycle, etc.).

The long journey of “a visionary idea that became an institution” is well-documented in the program website (http://www.europhd.eu), showing the history of recognition of the European Doctorate on Social Representations and Communication within the triple framework of Universities, Ministries, the European Commission (DG-Research, DG-Education and Culture, R.E.A.) thanks to an impressive list of approved projects within the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Framework Programs, two ministerial calls of the Internationalisation of Higher Education System, the Vinci Program, and its accreditation process in various countries.

The last step of this institutional history its the top recognition by the European Commission as the best Innovative Doctoral Program - selected in 2013 with the highest evaluation (98,80/100) among 1175 presented proposals - within the Marie Curie - People – ITN-IDP call of the 7th Framework Program, which currently represents the best external evaluation for any doctoral program in Europe (replacing the action of Erasmus Mundus for the joint doctorates): http://www.europhd.eu/SoReComJointIDP

In cited publications and in the institutional website we also describe the scientific, administrative and didactic organization of the European/International Joint PhD in Social Representations and Communication, illustrating its paradigmatic and trans-disciplinary thematic areas, didactic tools and resources, tutoring and co-tutoring systems and instruments, scientific, technical and administrative infrastructure, guidelines for recognition, validation and accreditation. It illustrates also the research-oriented teaching facilities at the European/International Joint PhD in Social Representations and Communication Research Centre and Multimedia Lab and the “distance learning” offers/demand/accrEDITATION/classification in co-operation with a large number of other universities and professional organizations in and outside Europe (in North America: Canada and USA; in Latin-America: Argentina, Brazil, Mexico; in Asia: China). The So.Re.Com. Joint - PhD’s innovative curriculum, which has taken full advantage of modern communication technologies to build a virtual campus spanning the globe. Its well-tested didactic formula and training structure include: tutoring and co-tutoring triadic system (multiple supervision), annual International Summer School and three annual International Lab Meetings (winter, spring and summer sessions), face-to-face individual and small group mentoring activities integrated with an open learning system where tutors have on-line access for didactic activities and for monitoring trainees’ progress; structured individual and collective

See in the list of References a selection of de Rosa’s publications on doctoral education: [47], [48], [49], [50], [51], [52], [53], [54], [55], [56], [57], [58], [59], [60]
international mobility of trainees and teaching staff; and learning by doing in academic and non-academic settings.

2.1 The institutional network composition

Fully operational since 1996, over the years it has renewed itself and grown beyond the European and academic boundaries. Initially composed of an institutional network of 13 European Universities in 9 EU countries, subsequently other universities from Eastern and extra-EU countries were carefully selected on the basis of the excellence of their scientific production in the field of Social Representations and admitted as partners in the institutional network.

Thanks to the “unique” combination of a EC-approved European/International Joint doctoral programme (http://www.europhd.eu ) and a Scientific Thematic Network of excellence (http://www.europhd.eu/SoReComTHEmaticNETwork ) - a "network of networks" that promotes cooperation among academic, professional research and commercial institutions and facilitates the dissemination of scientific results in the field of Social Representations and Communication throughout Europe and around the world - it has been possible to further develop an integrated physical and virtual campus for initial research trainees and experts from academia and the public and private sectors and various disciplinary fields.

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2.2 Focus on a Supra-disciplinary Area of the Social Sciences

This research training programme focuses on a supra-disciplinary area of the social sciences, and in particular of social psychology, inspired by the Social Representations Theory, one of the most important theories of the social construction of knowledge. Founded by Serge Moscovici (honorary programme director of the European/International Joint PhD in S.R. & C.) in 1961, the study of social representations, originally specifically European, is currently a multilingual, worldwide discipline with a substantial body of literature, involving leading scholars from social psychology and other social sciences. The field of Social Representations represents a unifying meta-theoretical perspective on the social construction of knowledge and its relation to socially situated practices. It has important applications for the public and private sectors, acting as a bridge among disciplines including psychology, social psychology, sociology, cultural studies with pragmatic approach to language, semiotics, socio-history, anthropology, and communication studies (also including multidisciplinary approaches from computer sciences and new technologies) with important implications for institutional and organizational contexts, culture and health practices, inter-group relations, ideology and politics, economics, the environment, etc. Interested in how scientific knowledge is transformed by lay people and the media into common sense, it is also a supra-disciplinary field because it has activated a conversation among social, human and natural scientists in a wide range of internationally recognised research programmes. These concern public understanding of the sciences and discoveries in various fields, such as medicine, environmental studies, biology, informatics, economy, political science, etc., and the social representations of complex new multidisciplinary topics like biogenetic foods, medical innovation, globalisation and climate change, forms of interaction through new media, the risk society, immigration, minority groups, racism and multiculturalism, human rights, European integration and enlargement, etc. Consequently, this doctoral program is open to trans-disciplinary and multi-methodological research approaches (experimental and field work). The "objects" studied have a strong societal impact and important practical applications "within" and "for" society in the political, economic and social spheres.

Outstanding scholars inspired by the social representations theory working in various research fields and experts from the public and private sectors interested in the applied value of such societal knowledge and the role of communication systems are directly involved in the training process.

The private sector is an integral part of the academic programme, as it contributes it by a) participating in the recruitment board; b) providing specific training modules; c) tutoring and/or co-tutoring of the young researchers enrolled; d) conducting joint research training projects with the academic partners in which the young researchers will participate; and e) hosting early-stage fellows for secondment periods. Industry/university cooperation on the hard sciences has been in operation for some time. However, collaboration within a research training network anchored to a European joint doctoral programme is an innovation for the social sciences, and it represents a path forward and a “win-win” situation for all those involved. Throughout our triple “II” doctoral program, by showing that this innovative collaboration can be fruitful for all concerned, we intend to offer a model of good practice that will encourage private companies to collaborate more actively with academic institutions in this field of study.

Our SoReCom ‘ili’ Joint-Doctoral Program research training will continue to consolidate and further develop the already well-established relationships between academic and non-academic institutions that share common research interests and have complementary methodological approaches. Together they provide advanced research training and enhance career prospects in the area of social sciences.

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1 Serge Moscovici, founder of the S.R. theory, has been the Honorary Programme Director of the Euro/Int. Joint PhD in S.R.& C. since its inception in 1993 until his death in November 16 2014. Emeritus Professor at E.H.E.S.S. and director of the European Laboratory of Social Psychology (F.M.S.H.-LEPS, Paris) that since 1976 has been networking with leading thinkers in social psychology as well as with a worldwide community of scientists in various disciplines including sociology, anthropology, history, economics, epistemology of knowledge and philosophy.

Active in the program are leading scientists in this supra-disciplinary scientific field from the project partners. They have been chosen on the basis of well-tested collaboration with both the Joint PhD and the So.Re.Com THE.NET. Besides the founder of the theory, Serge Moscovici, and Annamaria Silvana de Rosa, creator and Programme Director of both the European/International Joint PhD in S.R. & C. and the So.Re.Com THEmatic NETwork, they include leading scientists from various generations, starting from Moscovici’s first scholars (including Denise Jodelet, Willem Doise, etc.), and well-recognised scientists of the following generation (including, Erich Kirchler, Brigido Camargo, Fabio Lorenzi-Cioldi, Alain Clémence, Agustín Echebarria Echave, Bruno Mazzara, Dario Paez, Juan Pérez, José Valencia, Susanna Seidman, etc. all full professors with top institutional responsibilities as vice-rectors, deans of graduate schools, faculty deans, heads of department), and even younger but already well-reputed scholars, including former Marie Curie Fellows, most of them already associate professors or promising full-time researchers (like Szalo Csaba, Mihai Curelaru, Eva Green, Giovanna Leone, Radim Marada, Lilian Negura, Jane Guan, Martha de Alba, Andrei Holman, Paola Passafaro, Elena Bocci, Mauro Sarrica, Dario Spini, etc.).
representations, involving key areas of social psychology (such as interaction, traditional and new contexts of virtual and mediated interaction, practices and action, the media, processes of social influence, languages, emotions, social memory, etc.) and will be open to other disciplines (semiotics, linguistics, sociology, cultural psychology, mass communication, symbolic and visual anthropology, etc.).

Built on the foundation of our partners’ expertise and the complementarities of their offerings in terms of both paradigmatic and methodological options, this European/International Joint PhD has the necessary background and the extensive collaborative experience of cross-national and cross-sectoral research teams in thirteen main theoretical, multi-methodological and thematic areas and sub-themes for training the recruited Early Stage Researchers both “for” and “by” research. The cross-cutting research options offered as thematic focus are described in the program website, while the theoretical, meta-theoretical and multi-methodological elements represent a common training background for all our ESRs to undertake empirical research on their specific thematic focus.

2.3 Mission

Headquartered at the state-of-the-art SoReCom Research Centre and Multimedia Lab of Sapienza University of Rome, and structured into transnational teams by common research area and complementary multimethodological approaches, the mission of this SoReCom Joint Innovative Doctoral Program is aimed at ensuring:

a) “research excellence” and well tested training structure including an innovative integrated physical and virtual campus, where world-class academic scientists, internationally recognised experts, experienced researchers and early stage researchers cooperate face-to-face and online “for” and “by” research;

b) interdisciplinary research options dealing with societal issues at the interface between lay and scientific knowledge within, with and for society;

c) multiple supervision via tutoring and co-tutoring by at least three tutors in different countries;

d) individual mobility for Early Stage Researchers at research centres for secondments at worldwide appealing institutional environment;

e) collective international mobility of trainees and teaching staff during International Summer Schools (http://www.europhd.eu/IntSummerSchools) and International Lab meetings (http://www.europhd.eu/IntLabMeetings);

f) learning by doing (including transferable skills) in academic and non academic settings;

h) worldwide access to common web platform, as tool for documentation, networking, training and monitoring trainees’ progress;

i) outstanding location for its headquarter infrastructure in the historical centre of Rome at the top of Aventino Hill and high tech dedicated lab facilities, including the So.Re.Com. “A.S. de Rosa” physical and @-Library [61], [62];

j) international joint governance structure and quality assurance from the selection process to the joint diploma award.

k) officialisation of the joint degree. Seven universities in five EU countries (IT, FR, CZ, ES, RO) are committed to awarding the joint degree, on the behalf of the whole network, which cooperates on recruiting, training and evaluating activities as partner organisations;

m) active integration in the world-wide SoReCom THEMatic NETwork;

n) enhancement of career prospects in academic and professional sectors through International and Intersectoral networking and secondment.

3 CONCLUSION

Some of the priorities recommended by the 2009 Leuven inter-ministerial Communiqué for enhancing international openness are still of particular interest for today and tomorrow doctoral education:

a) Joint degrees and programs as well as mobility windows should become more common practices;

b) The number of people with research competence should increase;
c) Doctoral programs should provide high quality research and increasingly be complemented by inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral programs. In addition, public authorities and institutions of higher education should make the career development of early stage researchers more attractive.

On the basis of an exemplary case study (the European/International Joint PhD in Social Representations and Communication), this article has very briefly illustrated how the Joint International Doctorate represents a key tool for the internationalisation of doctoral education within and outside Europe's borders and that it should finally become a common institutional practice rather than an exception.

Ensuring certain conditions at the scientific, didactic and administrative levels a long list of “musts” and removing potential (legal, institutional, financial and logistical) obstacles to joint doctoral programs and continuing resistance to the International Joint Doctorate, we believe that within the scenario of collaborative networked and open science 2.0 (Nielsen, [63], Tapscott and Williams [64], Burgelman, Osimo and Bogdanowicz, [65], the time is right for expansion of networked joint doctoral programmes.

In conclusion we stress the importance of jointly established International doctorates as strategic option for replacing the unidirectional models of “brain drain ” (cost and consequences of competitiveness) or “brain gain ” (attractiveness) with the cooperative “brain circulation ” model better suited to the network-based knowledge society. Therefore this article contributes to disseminate the idea that one of the main reasons for participating in a joint program for research training is to establish synergies and maximize triple “I” complementarities of expertise, rather than homogenising programmes into a single worldwide formula for doctorates.

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