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# The So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library for Documentation, Networking, and Training

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### INTRODUCTION

#### Knowledge Domain

Originated from Serge Moscovici's<sup>1</sup> *Opera Prima* (1961), Social Representations theory (S.R.), originally European, is currently a multilingual worldwide field with a substantial body of literature in social psychology and other social science. Studies of "what" people know – and "how" this lay people knowledge relates to the social groups to which they belong and are shaped by the polyphonic traditional and new media system – are concerned with the social construction of everyday knowledge and the related socially situated practices. The "objects" studied have a strong societal impact in the social spheres.

This *supra-disciplinary field* is characterised by a *great consistency in terms of epistemological and theoretical inspiration* and a rich diversity both:

- From the *paradigmatic point of view* ("structural," "social positioning," "monographic", "anthropological," "dialogical," "modelling" approaches);
- In terms of *methodological research designs* (qualitative, monographic, anthropological, experimental, descriptive, structural, visual-figurative, multi-methodological, etc.);
- From the *thematic point of view*
- With respect to the *applied contexts and domains of expert and lay knowledge production and transmission*: education, health, economics, environment, tourism, politics, organisations, media industry, etc.

The goal of this contribution is to present background, mission and future research directions of the So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library: a digital platform integrating scientific documentation, networking and training purposes in the field of Social Representations and Communication (So.Re.Com.).

#### BACKGROUND

Born from a personal bibliographic inventory, initially including almost 500 references in the field of *So*cial *Re*presentations and *Com*munication, the *So*.*Re*.*Com*. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library has been transferred into an ad-hoc designed relational database implemented in 1996 on the *European/International Joint PhD in Social Representations and Communication* website (de Rosa, 2000, 2001, 2004 a, 2004 b, 2006; 2008, 2009 a, 2009 b, 2010 a, 2010 b, 2010 c; 2011; de Rosa, Picone, 2007).

It is built on an on-going multi-year project aimed at an empirical meta-theoretical analysis of the whole literature on Social Representations (de Rosa, A.S. 2013 a, 2013 b). Guided by the main goal of evaluating the impact of the scientific production driven by the Social Representations theory in the social arena faced with social demand, the aim is to take stock of the scientific field developed in more than 50 years by conducting an empirical meta-theoretical analysis of the literature on Social Representations, mapping the development of different paradigms, the related research methods, the thematic areas and their impact on the various applied fields within the multi-generational community of scientists and across different geo-cultural contexts. This research program is led by de Rosa, creator and program director of both the European/International Joint PhD in S.R. & C. (http://www.europhd.eu) and the So.Re.Com. THEmatic NETwork (http://www.europhd.eu/SoReComTHEmaticNETwork), a network of networks that promotes co-operation between academic, professional research and commercial institutions and facilitates the dissemination of scientific results in the field of Social Representations (see Figures 1 and 2).

Located at Sapienza University of Rome Sapienza - the largest university in Europe with a patrimony of 155 libraries and a recent investment in digitalising contents<sup>2</sup> - the state-of-the-art of the *Social Representations and Communication Research Centre and Multimedia Lab* includes the integrated specialized physical and So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-Library. It is the nerve centre of the *European/International Joint PhD programme in Social Representations and Communication*, the training structure of the wider *So.Re.Com. THEmatic NETwork*, dedicated to research and training needs for both doctoral candidates and highly experienced researchers, individually or in cross-national research teams.

Recently (2012) transferred from its historical location opposite Campidoglio to another larger location in the very heart of Rome at the top of Aventino hill, overlooking the capital' archaeological-architectonic centre, it guarantees technical support for training and management activities, including real-time interactive exchanges with partner institutions around the globe.

Full-time staff is available to provide assistance to users.

#### MISSION

A research environment "based on" and "aimed at" integrating scientific documentation, networking and training purposes.

The So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library is a multipurpose digital environment of interrelated relational databases conceived in the logic of the semantic web, including multiple web interfaces aimed to integrate *documentation services*, with *networking* and *research training*.

Once the ongoing migration into an open access platform will be completed, the *So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa"* @-*library* will answer the increasing demand for multi-lingual access to multi-format documentation in Social Representations and Communication, also from users in disadvantaged areas in the world

Figure 1. The So.Re.Com. Joint Innovative Doctoral Program institutional network.





Figure 2. The So.Re.Com. THEmatic NETwork at a glance on global scenario.

where information and training are difficult to obtain. The ultimate goal is to make it accessible to anyone, anytime, anywhere, therefore disseminating resources otherwise dispersed and fragmented in several universities, public and private research centers and governmental institutions.

To accomplish these goals, its creator and project leader is coordinating a large team of human resources with different degree of expertise since many years, in order to produce, collect and meta-analyze scientific documentation published in the field all over the world, not exclusively by the So.Re.Com. Thematic Network members.

This @*-library* supports access to multiple repositories and web-tools, designed by A.S. de Rosa and implemented on the EuroPhD website, in order to integrate the three main pillars (Figures 3, 4, and 5).

Figure 3. The So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa" bibliographical repositories and @-Library.





Figure 4. @-learning Kit at disposal of the So.Re.Com. European/International Joint Ph.D. research trainees.

Figure 5. Distance tutoring and co-tutoring tools based on personalised access to research reports and on-line evaluation of trainees' research reports



### Documentation

- A comprehensive bibliographical repository of the literature on Social Representations, currently including almost 10000 references. This growing collection of bibliographic entries includes not only the classic bibliographic details, but also the author's and co-authors Institution affiliation and Country/Continent, the bibliometric indexes (Impact Factor and SJR) and other useful information for geo-mapping the diffusion and impact of the theory over the world, by decades and thematic areas and for visualizing the intra and inter-institutional authors' collaborations by city, countries, continents
- A *meta-theoretical analysed repository* of the literature on SR, currently including more than 3000 meta-analysed articles or book chapters using the on-line grid for the "meta-theoretical analyses" and the guidelines developed by A.S. de Rosa (1994, last version updated January 2014)
- An *intelligent* @-*Library* holding a rich documentation of PDF texts, videos, audio-interviews and multi-media scientific and training materials in the field of S.R.
- Advanced search engines hyper-linked with all the three above-mentioned repositories (also using as ontologies the categories of the very detailed "meta-theoretical analysis" grid) and for the full text search on the PDFs

# Networking

- More than 3000 members of the world-wide SoReCom Thematic Network on-line community, including personal and institutional information and scientific profiles
- News and calendar of scientific events
- Online co-operative research tools
- On-line web-conference management system for participant registration, submission and review of abstracts, power point presentations and papers, interactive feedback system for editing and publishing
- SoReCom THEmatic NETwork @-NEWS
- Newly designed management service for "Virtual meetings with authors or book presentations"

# **Research Training**

- Multi-point web-videoconference interactive system, also sharing applications and files
- Developing research trainees' skills in metatheoretical analysis of S.R. literature and advanced use of bibliographic *repositories*
- Distance tutoring and co-tutoring based on personalised access to research reports and on-line evaluation of trainees' research reports at the initial, intermediate and final stages
- Video-lectures in streaming and web-videointerviews with the protagonists in the scientific field
- Web-tools allowing research trainees and professors to provide "ratings," i.e. feedback on the virtual training activities and those involving physical mobility, etc.
- Dynamic timeline for research training activities management and credit accumulation sheet
- Personalised inventory from the application to the degree and beyond
- Alumni community and career development

# FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

As planned developments *from the content point of view*, we envisage:

- An increased critical mass of content and related metadata of the the So.Re.Com. "A.S. de *Rosa*" @-*library* by the next four years - thanks to the approval by the European Commission of the 2013-2017 contract SoReComJoint-IDP People-Innovative Doctoral Program positioned at the highest ranked (98,80/100 mark) among 1175 proposals. Built on the sound experience of both the EuroPhD S.R.&C., approved by the EC since 1992, and the So.Re.Com. THEmatic NETwork, the SoReComJoint-IDP project is coordinated by Sapienza University of Rome and includes 13 universities, 2 private companies, 1 national research centers with cooperation with private sector in 8 European and 6 extra-European countries (Austria, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, Mexico, United States). This large and diversified network ensures a wide range of complementary paradigmatic, methodological and thematic options offered by international and cross-sectorial research teams within and outside European borders. The associate partners perform vital tasks such as co-tutoring activities, hosting Early Stage Researchers (ESR) for secondments and providing valuable training modules during the project's foreseen scientific events.
- The So.Re.Com.Joint-IDP will contribute to disseminating also the meta-theoretical knowledge produced by a new team of 13 ESR who will work together, by access to the best comprehensive specialised @-library worldwide, on the on-going multi-faceted project led by the *European PhD Lab* director on top of previous multiyear work carried out with the long term

aimed

purpose of writing a Biography of the Social Representations Theory. This unified research project framework will be articulated into 13 precise objectives concerning the specific research lines to be developed by each recruited ESR, matching their own interests and area of prior expertise. The ESR will cooperate in meta-theoretical analyses and contribute to the development of the specialised So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library. The integrated research framework will provide an integrated training opportunity to maximise the cooperative and joint expertise of both the host institution and associated partners, doing so from the theoretical, methodological and applied perspective of the researches conducted in the 50-year development and diffusion of this scientific field, with a view to monitoring and exploiting its added value to respond to social demand in the multiple contexts of the social arena: from economics to the environment, politics, health and community issues, science communication, etc. The need for developing both core and wider employment related skills is driven by the goal of making research training of greater relevance for a wider variety of careers both in and outside academia, internationally and globally more attractive.

Driven by the synergic goal of an integrated development of the documentation tool "of" and "for" other researches (So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library) and the training activities of the International doctoral program - among other multi-year series of activities, the Winter Session International Lab Meeting are specifically aimed at training in the meta-theoretical analysis of the specialized literature on S.R.: why and how to map the development of different paradigms, the related research methods, the thematic areas, their impact on the various applied fields and the new emerging research directions within the multi-generational community of scientists and across different geocultural contexts. The program includes:

- *Key lecture* by the research leader, aimed at presenting the Meta-Theoretical analysis of complete body of the S.R. literature
- Presentations by So.Re.Com. Joint-IDP expert post-docs and advanced doctoral trainees involving a multigenerational community of senior and junior scientists that ranges from visiting post-docs to Euro PhD Alumni (including former Marie Curie Fellows), already well trained in the meta-theoretical analysis of the specialized literature on Social Representations
- Training the ESR for developing advanced bibliographic on-line search skills via access to other digital libraries, aimed at developing the large specialized full bibliographic repository and the So.Re. Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library
- Presenting guidelines for integrating bibliographic resources in the physical and digital SoReCom specialised libraries
- Training the ESR in the meta-theoretical analysis grid and tools of the metatheoretical analysis repository including the following tasks and methodology. Following guidelines and procedures given by the project leader prof. A.S. de Rosa and a specific training, the specific ESR's contribution consist:
  - To detect and retrieve publications not yet inserted in the So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-Library, and meta-analyse the whole body of the literature on Social Representations produced according to the "specific individual research focus" over the world and not only in the geo-cultural context/continent of the host institution for mobility stage;
  - To fill new information and upload the related PDF files into the specialized So.Re.Com. "A.S.de Rosa" @-Library;

- To carry out statistical analyses on the complete meta-analysed body (extracted from the SoReCom "A.S. de Rosa" @-Library after the integration of the new information);
- To produce video-interviews according to an outline designed by the project leader - with the key scientists who contribute to the development of the paradigmatic approaches to Social Representations;
- To fully describe, comment and visualize the results using de Rosa's Guidelines for the geo-cultural mapping in the PhD thesis in English (in the book format and short article).
- Illustration of the *double quality control system*
- *Co-ordination and planning session* for the organization of weekly individual and group ESR small meetings on the transversal common tools of the overall research program and the specific goals of each of the research focuses.
- The complementary training stages at host institutions will also offer the ESR opportunities for networking and for further integrating physical and virtual international mobility.
- The supra-disciplinary, multi-methodological and thematic possibilities offered by the training network are enhanced the wide range of world-class visiting researchers invited to participate in the programme's intensive training "stages," multi-point videoconferences, tutoring and co-tutoring for individuals and small groups, and various on-line training tools.

As planned developments *from the technical point of view*, we also envisage:

- 1. Ongoing transfer into a new web-platform from *web-object* to *Drupal*, expanding access via new web interfaces
- 2. To implement a management service innovation enabling users to *virtually meet authors of the*

@-Library's content by jointly coordinated on demand meetings between early stage researchers and famous authors belonging to the SoReCom scientific community

3. To pursue future integration in the larger Sapienza Digital Library and in the European Digital Library, improving accessibility, use and dissemination, while keeping our autonomy in the content management and quality control system to update data and meta-data.

Therefore the developments of the *So.Re.Com*. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library from the content and technical point of views – supported by the approval of the SoReCom IDP People project - will be *facilitated by* and will *contribute to* improve interaction among the three pillars of the *European/International Joint PhD in Social Representations and Communication Research Centre and Multimedia Lab*: documentation, training activities and networking.

# CONCLUSION

The unique combination of a European/International *Joint doctoral programme and a scientific network* including academic and extra-academic partners - in 2013 once again approved by the European Commission as the top project 2013 People Innovative Doctoral Programs (So.Re.Com.Joint-IDP) - is an integrated physical and virtual campus where initial research trainees and experts from academia and the public and private sectors can come together to learn, share, create and disseminate knowledge. We offer a progressive system for training early stage researchers through active research. Research training takes place in international environments, both academic and nonacademic, with specifically designed intensive didactic "stages" in multilingual and multicultural settings. This includes access to the specialised physical and @-library in Social Representations (the So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library), meta-theoretical analysis of the literature on Social Representations and Communication, tutoring and co-tutoring for research projects, active participation in International Lab meetings and International Summer Schools, advanced training in multi-methodological qualitative and quantitative design, software for statistical data analysis and results

visualization, e-learning activities via interactive videoconferences, training in complementary skills, scientific networking, and active participation in international conferences, etc.

This integrated face-to-face and open virtual space, accessible from anywhere in Europe or the world, not only meet the needs of its users by providing easy access to publications and metadata and many other kinds of digital multi-format documentation (printed, pictures, audio-videos), but also enables them to quickly become content providers and co-producers. The multigenerational nature of this interactive knowledge community guarantees cross-fertilisation of ideas between senior scientists and early research trainees, as well as between experts from within and outside of academic circles, including policy makers interested in research on societal issues and their relevance in social contexts. Therefore, open access to the integrated physical and virtual SoReCom THEmatic NETwork infrastructure will allow the members of this knowledge community to continue to grow. The newly designed web-services for enlarging interactive facilities of the So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library not only gives research trainees access to documentation, but in the physical and virtual space of this infrastructure also they can also meet authors and each other to discuss new publications and critical research areas.

In conclusion the So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library provides an integrated digital tool for scientific documentation, networking and training purposes in the supra-disciplinary field of Social Representations and Communication, thus stimulating a rich and ever-growing research and learning environment that is advantageous to research team members, trainees and experts alike.

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#### **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

European/International Joint PhD in Social Representations and Communication and So.Re. *Com. Joint-IDP*: Built on the experience of both the European PhD on Social Representations and Communication, awarding a recognized joint degree since 1996 (http://www.europhd.eu), and the EU approved So.Re.Com. THEmatic NETwork, this international joint doctoral programme, co-ordinated by Sapienza University of Rome (Italy), includes 8 universities, 2 private companies and 1 public research institute in 8 European countries (AT, CH, CZ, ES, FR, IT, RO, SE) and 6 universities in United States, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and China. The goal is to provide doctoral training in Social Representations and Communication, a supra-disciplinary research area of the social sciences that studies the social construction of everyday knowledge in social spheres and media, disseminating European excellence beyond the EU boundaries and attracting the best Early Stage Researchers from abroad. Structured into transnational teams by common research area and complementary multimethodological approaches, this So.Re.Com.Joint-IDP guarantees a well-tested training structure including: a) an innovative integrated physical and virtual campus, where world-class academic scientists, internationally recognised experts, experienced researchers and ESR cooperate face-to face and online "for" and "by"

research; b) multiple supervision via tutoring and cotutoring by at least three tutors in different countries; c) individual mobility for ESR at research centres for secondments; d) collective international mobility of trainees and teaching staff during International Summer Schools and Lab meetings; e) learning by doing (including transferable skills) in academic and nonacademic settings; f) worldwide access to common web platform, as tool for documentation, networking, training and monitoring trainees' progress; g) high tech infrastructure and lab facilities; h) quality evaluation system; i) officialisation of the joint degree; l) active integration in the world-wide SoReCom THEmatic NETwork; m) enhancement of career prospects both in and outside academia.

Social Representations: Social Representations and Communication is a supra-disciplinary area of the social sciences, representing a unifying meta-theoretical perspective, in particular from the optic of Social Psychology, inspired by the Social Representations Theory, one of the most important theories of the social construction of knowledge and its relation to socially situated practices, founded by Serge Moscovici in 1961. This supra-disciplinary field is characterised by a great consistency in terms of epistemological and theoretical inspiration and its rich diversity both from the paradigmatic point of view, in terms of methodological approaches, from the thematic point perspective and with respect to the applied contexts and domains of expert and lay knowledge production and transmission: education, health, economics, environment, tourism, politics, organisations, media industry, etc.

So.Re.Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library: The So.Re. Com. "A.S. de Rosa" @-library is a multiform digital environment of integrated relational repositories conceived in the logic of the semantic web, including a series of web interfaces aimed to integrate documentation services (bibliographic repository, metatheoretical analysis repository, intelligent @-Library) with networking (interactive web-videoconference, on-line So.Re.Com. virtual community) and research training (European/International Joint PhD "Virtual Campus": video-courses in streaming, distant tutoring and co-tutoring, on-line trainee evaluation, timeline management, etc.).

# **ENDNOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> Honorary programme director of the European/ International Joint PhD in Social Representations and Communication: http://www.europhd. eu
- About the on-going development of *Sapienza Digital Library* and the related project Google Books see: Di Iorio, A. Schaerf, M. Guercio, M. Ortolani, S. and Bertazzo. M. 2013; Magarotto. A. 2013; see also: http://w3.uniroma1.it/biblioteche/ risorse\_elettroniche.htm

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