

# The Impact of the Impact of Meta-Data Mining From the SoReCom “A.S. de Rosa” @-Library

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## INTRODUCTION

The Social Representations Theory was founded by Serge Moscovici in 1961, and after more than 50 years, 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 (de Rosa, 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2016b; Sammut, Andreouli, Gaskell, & Valsiner, 2015; Lo Monaco, Delouvée, & Rateaux, 2016). 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 field 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.

The diffusion of the theory of social representations have been an object of analysis in the bibliometric domain in the light of the critical debate, which still animates the community of scientists, stimulating meta-reflexive discussion and view exchanges among the members of our

scientific community on the preferable publishing options and collaborative strategies in the current editorial and academic scenario (de Rosa, 2015a).

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the “*impact of the impact*” of the social representations theory in the bibliometric culture era, *even beyond the journal’s impact*. At this purpose we will present both:

- A selection of results on the dissemination of the theory across the continents based on data and meta-data concerning authors’ countries and institutional affiliations, comparing articles published in “*not indexed*” and “*indexed*” journals as derived from the two largest bibliometric databases (Isi-web of Science Thomson and Reuters and Scopus-Elsevier);
- And the *geo-mapping* of the wider scientific production in Social Representations.

## BACKGROUND

Background question concerns what is the value of the scientific networking, training and documentation activities in the new academic scenario dominated by the bibliometric assessment culture and by the impact of the technology to the science production and sharing (data-driven science, big data, open data, open access, etc.).

The spirit that animates our interest in considering the “*impact of the impact*” is coherent with the main assumptions of the “*impact beyond the impact factor*” (Zupanc, 2014), and with the conclusions/recommendations of final assessment report of the Higher Education Founding Council for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (HE-FCE) (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/Year/2015/metrictide/Title,104463,en.html>)

- There is considerable skepticism among researchers, universities, representative bodies and learned societies about the broader use of metrics in research assessment and management.

- Peer review, despite its flaws, continues to command widespread support as the primary basis for evaluating research outputs, proposals and individuals. However, a significant minority is enthusiastic about greater use of metrics, provided appropriate care is taken.
- Carefully selected indicators can complement decision-making, but a ‘variable geometry’ of expert judgement, quantitative indicators and qualitative measures that respect research diversity will be required.
- There is legitimate concern that some indicators can be misused or ‘gamed’: journal impact factors, university rankings and citation counts being three prominent examples.
- The data infrastructure that underpins the use of metrics and information about research remains fragmented, with insufficient interoperability between systems.
- Analysis concluded that no metric can currently provide a like-for-like replacement for REF peer review.
- In assessing research outputs in the REF, it is not currently feasible to assess research outputs or impacts in the REF using quantitative indicators alone.

and of the following 2015 report on “*Future approaches to quality assessment in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*”: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/201511/>.

More closely to our disciplinary field this spirit is coherent with the *opinion piece for the Bulletin of the European Association of Social Psychology*, written together with other internationally recognized social psychologists convened in a small meeting in Lausanne (June 12-14, 2013) to reflect on the new conformism dominating research practices in social psychology and to launch debate within the European Association of Social Psychology (EASP).

Another motivational driving force for involvement in the empirical investigation in the field of bibliometric culture is closely related to improve-



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