CAMPAIGNING TO "SAVE ROŞIA MONTANĂ": THE ROLE OF THE *FORMULA AS* MAGAZINE

Viorica Alina POP[1]

Abstract: *Informed by the social representations theory in social psychology, this study focuses on the media representation of the "Roşia Montană" issue in the Formula As magazine, a media actor which assumed an active role in the opposition to the controversial gold mine construction project in Roşia Montană, thus having a substantial contribution in the construction and transmission of social representations related to the Rosia Montana case in Romanian society. For examining the content and dynamics of the media representation of "Roşia Montană", 241 articles, issued between 2002 and 2010 in Formula As, were submitted to an automatic text analysis performed with the aid of the software T-LAB.*

Key words: *the Roşia Montană conflict, social representations, media communication, Formula As magazine.*

1. Introduction

A hot topic in nowadays Romanian public debate, the "Roşia Montană issue" is related to the project launched at the end of the nineties by the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC), to mine the gold and silver deposits in Roşia Montană, an ancient village situated in the Apuseni Mountains, Romania, in an area known for its richness in precious metals. RMGC (a joint venture between the Canadian based company Gabriel Resources Ltd., owning about 80% of the shares, and the Romanian state, with about 19% of the shares) plans to build in Roşia Montană Europe's biggest surface mine, implying the construction of four open-pits and of a processing plant where gold and silver would be extracted through a cyanide-leaching technology. The opposition to the corporate project generated an unprecedented movement in Romanian society. Officially gathered in July 2002, when several NGO's joined the fight of the locally based association of 'property owners' from Roşia Montană refusing to leave their village, the "Save Roşia Montană" movement gained the support of numerous social actors from Romania and abroad who justified their opposition to the corporate project on environmental, cultural, social, legal, economic, and ethical grounds.

This article focuses on the role of the Romanian weekly Formula As in the fight to stop the corporate project and thus to "Save Roşia Montană". We analyze the media coverage of the Roşia Montană

[1] Department of Political Science, Christian University "Dimitrie Cantemir", Bucharest.

issue in Formula As through the lens of the social representations theory in social psychology. By the articles regularly published in Formula As all through the conflict this media actor took on the role of active involvement and may be regarded as an agent of construction and transmission of social representations related to the Roşia Montană issue of the opponents to the corporate project.

2. Theoretical framework

The theory of social representations in social psychology focuses on the content, production and communication of common sense knowledge, social representations being "a form of knowledge, socially produced and shared, having practical ends, and competing for the construction of a common reality for a social ensemble". [2, p.36]. In the very rich tradition of research on social representations inspired by Moscovici's seminal work [6], one field of research concerns objects, with rather short-term historic significance, which are inscribed in representations about social structure and events. [13]. The characteristic topics of this research field are those that revolve around social conflict, such as social inequality, xenophobia, national conflicts, protest movements, unemployment, social movements, ecology debates, abortion. The social representations studied within this field are the products of an explicit process of societal evaluation of persons, groups and social phenomena. It is within this third field where our analysis of social representations emerged around the Roşia Montană conflict falls.

Social representations are both the product and the process through which common sense knowledge is formed. [3]. In the making of social representations, two main socio-cognitive processes are involved: anchoring and objectification [6]. Objectification implies the selection of information about the new object and its de-contextualization, the schematization of the selected information for constructing a figurative nucleus, and the naturalization, which gives reality to the new image. [3]. This process depends upon the characteristics of the social unit where the representation is being elaborated in terms of social structure, history, culture, generation, education [14]. Through the objectification process a social representation is elaborated for serving the needs, values, and interests of the group. Thus, this process conducts to significant distortions of the object, some of its elements being concealed, other being accentuated. [3].

Anchoring was synthetically described by Moscovici [8] as the process through which the new object is given meaning by integrating it into pre-existing categories of knowledge, thus making familiar what first was unknown or even strange. This results from classifying and naming the new object. By classifying, the new object is compared to a prototype, representing the class to which the object is supposed to belong to. This can be made either by generalization, which implies reducing the differences between the object to be classified and the prototype to which it is compared, or by particularization, implying that the particularities of the new object are emphasized and the differences are exacerbated so that the new object will end up being considered different from the prototype. However, the tendency to generalize or to particularize is not an intellectual choice, nor is it innocent, because it "reflects a given attitude towards the object, a desire to define it as normal or aberrant." [8, p. 45] . Through the process of naming the new object loses its disturbing anonymity and becomes part of a complex of specific words located in the *identity matrix* of our culture [8]. Once

named, the new object will be describable, distinct, and it becomes the object of a convention between those who adopt and share the same convention too. But also in this case, "it is obvious that naming is not a purely intellectual operation aiming at clarity or logical coherence. It is an operation related to a social attitude". [8, p. 47].

Within the theory of social representations, mass communication is conceived as a social practice which constructs public spaces within which people act, imitate, control and reciprocally influence in a permanent way. [11]. The second part of Moscovici's *La Psychanalyse* [6] is an analysis of the circulation of social representations of psychoanalysis in French media in the '50s. Three communication systems or genres were detected and described – diffusion, propagation, and propaganda – each with different underlying mechanisms and intentions related to the audience. While the first two communication genres may be regarded as different stages of communication, seeking either to create an opinion or a specific attitude to the audience, propaganda incites to action. It develops in conflict situations, where two groups with incompatible goals confront each other. The normal result of propaganda is a commitment, whether to vote, to participate in demonstrations, to adhere to the cause, or any public conduct related to a polemic membership. [10]. By creating social representations, propaganda seeks to control opinion and shape behaviours. The cognitive organization of representations originated in propaganda makes them be simplified and distorted versions of reality, built upon dichotomized themes, and, thus, highly stereotypical [6].

The last aspect of social representations theory that we want to emphasize here is that social representations are dynamic phenomena [8]. Consequently, for studying their changing structure and evolution researchers must take into account the temporal perspective [1]; in order to reach this goal longitudinal data obtained from the media archive are most suited.

3. Objectives

Two main objectives guided our research. First, our intention was to identify how the Roşia Montană issue was thematized in the articles published in the magazine Formula As, allowing the study of the contents of the media representations of Roşia Montană in this newspaper. Second, to identify change in discourse about Roşia Montană over time, allowing the study of the dynamics of media representations in Formula As articles.

4. Material and Methods

4.1. Data collection

In the electronic archive of the magazine Formula As (available for articles published since 1998) we detected all the articles whose main focus was Roşia Montană. Data was collected in December 2010. Overall 241 articles, published between February 2002 and December 2010, formed the corpus of analysis. Figure 1 shows the annual distribution of the corpus.
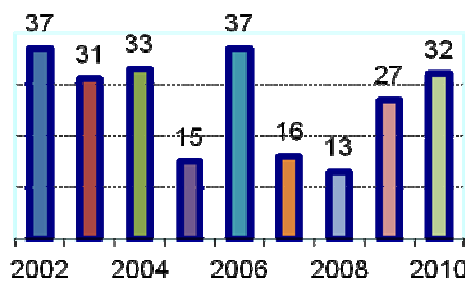

Fig. 1. *Annual distribution of Formula As articles*

4.2. Corpus preparation and pre-analysis

Articles' content was analyzed with the aid of the software T-LAB, a linguistic and statistical tool for text analysis, developed by Franco Lancia [5]. T-LAB works on a *corpus* divided in different sub-sets, according to the variables employed for differencing the texts. The preparation of the corpus implied several steps: text gathering, coding of each article according to the variable 'year of publication', the orthographic review of the material. The corpus was then imported in the program, and processed several times. We used a customized list for detecting multi-words and stop-words (i.e. prepositions, conjunctions). Multi-words (names and expressions consisting of several words) were transformed in single strings (i.e. "Rosia_Montana"). The last step in the corpus preparation phase implied the disambiguation of homographic words and their replacement with synonyms.

In the pre-analysis phase, the corpus was first automatically segmented by the software into 7352 elementary contexts. In T-LAB terms, the *elementary contexts* or context units are composed of several *lexical units* (single words or multi-words) which can be grouped and assigned to a *lemma*. A lemma is generally defined as a set of words with the same lexical root (lexeme) and that belongs to the same grammatical category. Because no automatic lemmatization was possible for Romanian language we used the dictionary building tool in order to reduce the corpus vocabulary. The last step before starting the analysis was the selections of the key-terms. In T-LAB logic, the Key-Terms refer to all the lexical units (words, lemmas, categories) that, each time, are included in the tables to be analyzed. Since we used a customized dictionary we also opted for the customized selection of the keywords. The threshold frequency value was set up at 40. In the end, the analysis was conducted on 482 selected key-terms, which were in the end translated into English so as to facilitate exemplification in discussing the results.

4.3. Data analysis

T-LAB offers multiple instruments of data analysis that can be used in an integrated way. However, like for all automatic text analysis, the output of the software does not stand for the interpretation of the data. The graphs and tables produced by the software are icons that necessitate an iconographic analysis which presupposes the comprehension of statistical logic and an iconological interpretation by the researcher. [12]. In order to attain the first objective, we opted for the *Co-word analysis and concept mapping* tool which allowed us to explore the content of articles on Roşia Montană in Formula As by finding and mapping the relationship between and within little word clusters co-occurring in the elementary contexts and named *thematic nuclei*. (Because the number of the key-terms was superior to 100, the choice was made for the hierarchical clustering of key-words. The association index to compute was the cosine coefficient. The name of each cluster was set according to the word with the higher frequency in the cluster. In the end, the analysis was conducted on 70 thematic nuclei). The rationale behind this method is to detect and interpret isotopies (iso = same; topos = place) in texts, or reference contexts shared among a number of words, which do not necessarily result from their specific meaning. [9]. The results of the automatic analysis can be explored by various charts. We chose the multidimensional scaling (MDS) map to provide a visual representation of the relationships among the data within a space of reduced dimensions. On the MDS

map (Figure 2), the dominant words (labels of clusters with high frequencies of words) are larger. The different colors of words have no meaning in themselves, but contribute to a better visualization of the terms on the map.

In order to attain the second objective we used the *Specificity analysis* tool which enabled to detect which lexical units were typical in a corpus subset defined by the variable 'year of publication'. The typical lexical units, defined for over-using or under-using, are detected in T-Lab by means of chi-square computation.

5. Results

Roşia Montană became a constant focus in the columns of the weekly magazine Formula As from February 2002, several months before the extra-local opposition to the project started to coalesce (see Figure 1). However, no article about Roşia Montană was published in the columns of Formula AS prior to that date, even if local controversy had already manifested two years earlier. Since then, attention to the case has been constant. We do however notice a constant group of articles about Roşia Montană in the first three years of the "Save RM" campaign, that decrease in frequency and make a come-back in 2006, the year when RMGC launched its first publicity campaign in order to get national support for its project. The same thing happened in 2009 when the company launched another series of advertisements in favor of the mining project.

The following sub-sections present how the Roşia Montană case was thematized in the weekly newspaper Formula As, but also the changes that took place over time in this discourse.

5.1. Thematic nuclei in Formula As articles about Roşia Montană

On the MDS map produced in T-Lab (Figure2), several isotopies can be identified. One of them is placed around the nucleus "*The project*". When referring to the mining project, the Formula As journalists wrote especially about the actors involved in the Roşia Montană conflict (*NGO's, Romanian Academy, Gabriel Resources, The company*). The mining project is first of all a polemic object among several actors, forcing state institutions (*Parliament, ministries*) to quickly make a decision based on expert opinions.

In Formula As discourse, Roşia Montană is a place under threat. The gold, the element that brought wealth (*Wealth, Money*) to the place in the past, now represents a threat to the environment. References to the environmental accident in Baia Mare in 2000 are common (*danger, mine, Baia Mare, water*). The place Roşia Montană, with its history and people, is extremely valued in the magazine's pages. Its destruction and the relocation of the population are seen as a real crime (see the cluster of thematic nuclei from the lower part of Figure 2).

Fig. 2. *MDS Map with the thematic nuclei in Formula As*

Another isotopy can be found on the left side of the figure, around the terms that refer to activism and the fight against the mining project in court and in public debates (*Activism, Support, Monuments, Debates, Campaign, Court of law, Citizen, Bucharest*).

At the center of the map, we find terms that can offer us a key to interpreting the intentions in the messages sent by the Formula AS magazine over time: in the

pages of this magazine, the Roşia Montană issue was especially approached with the purpose of mobilizing public opinion and influencing political factors, thus contributing to a decision for the *defense* of Roşia Montană, and in agreement with the the necessity of protecting the environment (*Env. protection*).

5. 2. Changes in Formula As' discourse about Roşia Montană

The Formula As articles included in our analysis were published over nine years starting in 2002. We were able to identify significant changes that took place in the newspaper's discourse by analyzing each year's specific terminology. Table 1 in the Appendix section shows the first 20 over-used words in Formula As articles each year

The articles published in the first year (2002) in Formula As inform the reader on the Roşia Montană issue, but from a clear perspective of opposition to the mining project. The envisioned mining project is presented as being a real disaster for the region of the Apuseni Mountains. Headlines such as "After the disaster in Baia Mare, a second Jolly Roger is being prepared on the map of our country: Roşia Montană", "Roşia Montană the feeling of a catastrophe" or "Environmental catastrophes, such as the one underway in Roşia Montană are the result of a Ceausescu way of thinking" are some of the first articles published on this issue. We can identify here an environmental frame of discourse. Far from being singular, this environmental discourse was accompanied by an identity discourse. From the beginning, the Formula As articles present Roşia Montană as an emblem of national identity (*Apuseni Mountains*, "the cradle of Romanian civilization", the place where the national heroes *Avram Iancu, Horea* came from).

An important set of articles published at the beginning are real "disclosures" with regard to the Roşia Montană investor and the mafia behind the project. The key negative character is *Frank Timis*, who, although Romanian, is the objectification of the foreigner who wants to profit from the gold belonging to all Romanians by triggering a disaster at Roşia Montană. All this made possible with the help of corrupt authorities. Emblematic articles with headlines such as: "The murmured history of villainy", "Roşia Montană - The octopus' tentacles are spreading – Cyanide will kill with the official stamp".

At the same time, through the articles published in the beginning, Formula As took on the role of actor engaged in the conflict over Roşia Montană and made an appeal for the salvation of the village. Some exemplary headlines from this period include: "Roşia Montană does not die!" or "Let's save the Apuseni Mountains. These places have always belonged to the Motzi and have to remain theirs!".

In the 2003 Formula As articles, emphasis was specifically put on the description of the project's effects on Roşia Montană and its community, as well as on describing the fight and the actors engaged in battle with the mining company (*Romanian Academy, The Church*). The relocation of the population, the demolition of the churches and the relocation of the cemeteries are presented as the most serious issues involved and that must be fought for. We must say that in its pages, Formula As did not give a "voice" to anyone except the locals who opposed the mining project, often giving the impression that the company lacked any local support.

In 2004, Formula As steered its attention in three directions: firstly, they resumed environmentalist advocacy, drawing attention to the environmental hazards the project entails (specifically, words such as

air, water, environment, ecology, poison and *tailings* appear); secondly, economic aspects implied by the project surfaced in the newspaper's articles (*resources,, jobs, industry, Newmont Mining);* thirdly, the names of two Romanian politicians, both running for presidency in 2004 (*Adrian Nastase*, the then Prime-Minister, and *Traian Basescu*, the then Mayor of Bucharest and leader of the opposition) are indicative of the place occupied by the Roşia Montană issue in a larger political context in Romania in 2004 (the year of the general election).

In 2005, the specific pattern of discourse about Roşia Montană shifts. The emphasis is now put on the legal aspects of the project. These include the *authorization* process that is the government's responsibility, then led by *Călin Popescu Tăriceanu*; *investigating* the legality of certain decisions made by the National Agency for Mineral Resources (*ANRM*), the *county authorities*, or the judicial struggle initiated by the opposition regarding matters involving Roşia Montană's archaeological heritage (*Court of law, Adjournment, Carnic, Archeology, Archeological discharge*).

This type of discourse is also maintained in 2006, mainly regarding obtaining the Ministry of the Environment's authorization (*Sulfina Barbu, Environmental Ministry, Environmental Impact Assessment, Planning Certificate*). In the 2006 articles, critical reference to the mining company's publicity campaign, launched in the same year, is particularly emblematic. To oppose this publicity, Formula As promoted events organized in relation to the "Save Roşia Montană" campaign (*Hay-Festival*).

In 2007, Formula As' message was again focused on environmental arguments, more specifically the danger of using cyanide to extract gold and appeals to national and European officials to have it banned. In 2008, the court battle over Roşia Montană and the political context are frequent subjects of Formula As articles.

In 2009, promotion of Roşia Montană as a place resurfaced and was made especially by supporting its historical heritage, seen as a true source of development. Roşia Montană's "archeological treasure" is the key to the area's development through tourism. Formula As was still reporting on Roşia Montană's people who refused to sell and leave their home. Again, the subject of national identity is upheld.

In 2010, the problematisation of economic gain was typical (in reaction, of course, to the mining company's PR campaign launched in 2009 that emphasizes the project's economic benefits for Romania). Again in 2010, Romania's relations with Hungary in the context of trans-border issues with regard to the project were still present in Formula As' articles.

6. Discussion and conclusions

Formula As' articles were entirely devoted to the fight against the mining project. However, no article about Roşia Montană was written in Formula As before February 2002, even if local controversy first manifested two years earlier. The fact that the extra-local opposition started to coalesce in the same year, but several months after the publication of the first article, may suggest that by putting the Roşia Montană issue on the public agenda, Formula As had an active role in shaping

the national opposition. By writing about the Roşia Montană issue, the major emphasis was on Roşia Montană as a place, represented in Formula As' articles as extremely valuable not for the gold in its ground, but for its history, geography and people, making it a sacred place, a source and symbol of national identity. This place is threatened by extinction, and the entire area by an ecological disaster (because of open-pit mining and cyanide use), because of the deliberate actions of a foreigner (the mining company) who wants to take advantage of the natural resources that belong to the nation, all this with the backing of corrupt authorities. Faced with this threat, countrywide mobilization is demanded, in order to support the fight of a community ('David') against the corporate 'Goliath'. The scheme of this narrative includes all four political myths described by Raoul Girardet in his book on *Mythes et mythologies politiques* [2], namely: the conspiracy myth, the myth of the savior, the myth of the golden age and the myth of unity. This discourse also reveals the fact that the debate around the mining project in Roşia Montană is built upon a combination of arguments, fueled by environmentalist, anti-capitalist and nationalist views. When its dynamics are examined, Formula As' discourse about Roşia Montană reveals the discursive strategy of a media player that, throughout the conflict, took on a role of active involvement and was an agent of the construction and transmission of the opposition's representations of Roşia Montană. In the first three years since

Formula As journalists started to report on the case, the emphasis was laid on objectification and anchoring, fundamental processes in the construction of social representations. Once created and transmitted, the social representations of Roşia Montană generated a context of reference [7] for Formula As' discourse about the issue in the following years. This could explain why, in the following years, the articles typically referred to the legal and political fight to stop the project, to extra-local players, and less to the place and the community of Roşia Montană. However, when provoked by the messages of the media campaigns sponsored by the corporation that began in 2009, Formula As' articles returned to their original focus, confirming thus the inter-dependent relationships in which polemic social representations emerge and evolve.

Through its militant approach to the Roşia Montană issue and its exclusive focus on the themes typically defended by the opponents to the gold-mine project, the magazine Formula As could be ascribed the communication genre of propaganda, which is typically present in conflictual communication contexts and whose principal aim is the construction of a representation in view of action [6]. Still, the results obtained through the automatic text analysis let us only advance this hypothesis, more research, which should take into consideration both content and figurative/stylistic aspects in written media communication about Roşia Montană, being needed in order to test it.

Appendix

First 20 over-used words in Formula As articles for each year   Table 1

2002	2003	2004
Gold	Priest	The_Church
Motzi	March	Newmont_Mining
World_Bank	Displacement	Air
Bucium	M_P	Environment
Reporter	Corna	Neighbor
Mountains	Campeni	Ecology
Frank_Timis	Romanian_Academy	Archeology
Disaster	Motzi	Water
Eurogold	Carpinis	Poison
Env_Protection	People	Loss
Horea	THE_Company	Research
People	The_Church	Tailings
Avram_Iancu	Rapport	God
Geology	Village	Traian_Basescu
Baia_Mare	Cemeteries	Adrian_Nastase
Story	Police	The_Elders
Apuseni_Mountains	Churches	Resources
Wealth	Apuseni_Mountains	Directive
Soul	Compensations	Industry
Tailings	Signatures	Jobs
2005	2006	2007
Prize	Gabriel_Resources	Cyanide_
Tariceanu	Hay-Festival	PNL
Investigation	Debates	Interdiction
Adjournment	Sulfina_Barbu	Parliament
Illegality	Concert	Icomos
Court_Of_Law	Publicity	Attila_Korodi
A-N_R_M	Television	Exhibition
Banking_Syst	Env_Impact_Assessment	PER
Carnic	MUSIC_	Environmentalists
Government	Organizer	Law
Film	Env-Ministry	UDMR
Economy	Property	M_P
Archeology	Theft	Hungary
Control	Proposal	Rivers
Professor	Alternatives	Zeno_Cornea
The_Project	Warranty	Accident
Capital	Planning_Certificate	PSD
County_Authorities	PDL	Photograph

Efforts	Rmgc	Environment
Arch_Discharge	Apm	President
2008	**2009**	**2010**
WORD	WORD	WORD
Restoration	Tourism	Videanu_Adriean
Furdui_Eugen	Hostel	Crisis
Court_Of_Law	Patrimony	Budget
Psd	Wax_Tablets	Hungarians
Procedure	Contract	Technology
Patrimony	Publicity	Taxes
PDL	Rosia_Montana	Unesco
Planning_Certificate	Rmgc	Benefits
Elections	Miner	Hungary
Law	Dacia	Consciousness
A-N_R_M	Property	M_E_P
Park_	Purchase	The_State
Cancellation	Uniqueness	UDMR
Mining_Licence	Cancellation	Citizen
Monuments	Family	Romania
Mining_Ind	Declassification	Shame
Agriculture	Lies	Production
Adjournment	Galleries	Blockage
Sanctions	Cetate_Pit	Romanians
Rmgc	Houses	Expenditures

References

1. Bauer, M., Gaskell, G.: *Towards a Paradigm for Research on Social Representations*. In: Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour (1999), Vol. 29(2), p. 163– 186.
2. Girardet, R.: *Mythes et Mythologies Politiques (Myths and Political Mythologies)*. Paris. Edition du Seuil, 1986.
3. Jodelet, D.: *Représentation sociale : phénomènes, concept et théorie (Social representatios: phenomena, concept and theory)*. In: *Psychologie Sociale (Social Psychology),* S. Moscovici (Ed.). Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1984, p. 357-378.
4. Jodelet, D. : *Représentations sociales: un domaine en expansion (Social representations : a growing field)*. In : *Les représentations sociales (Social representations),* D. Jodelet (Ed.). Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1989, p. 31-61.
5. Lancia, F.: *Strumenti per l'analisi dei testi. Introduzione al uso di T-LAB (Tools for analysing texts. Introduction to the use of T-Lab)*. Milano. FrancoAngeli, 2004.
6. Moscovici, S.: *La Psychanalyse, son Image et son Public (Psychoanalysis: Its image and its public)*. Paris. Presses Universitaires de France, 1961/1976.
7. Moscovici, S.: *Social representations and pragmatic communication*. In: Social Science Information (1994), Vol. 33(2), p. 163–177.
8. Moscovici, S.: *The phenomenon of social representations*. In: *Social Representations. Explorations in Social Psychology,* S. Moscovici and

G. Duveen (Ed.). Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 18-77.

9. Rastier, F.: *Sémantique interprétative (Interpretive Semantics)*. Paris. Presses Universitaires de France, 1987

10. Rouquette, M.-L. : *Sur la connaissance des masses. Essai de psychologie politique (On the knowledge of the masses: Essay of Political Psychology)*. Grenoble. Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1994.

11. Rouquette, M.-L. : *Social representations and mass communication research*. In: Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour (1994), Vol 26 (2), p. 221-231.

12. Villano, P., Prati, G., Palestini, L.: *L'analisi automatica dei testi. Aplicazione ai racconti di un disastro ferroviario (The automatic text analysis. Application to the stories of a train wreck.)*. In: *I discorsi dei media e la psicología sociale. Ambiti e strumenti di indagine (The discourses of the media and social psychology. Areas and instruments of investigation)*, B. M. Mazzara (Ed.). Carocci editore, Roma, 2008, p. 153-176.

13. Wagner, W.: *Fields of research and socio-genesis of social represen-tations: a discussion of criteria and diagnostics*. In: Social Science Information (1994) Vol. 33, p. 199-228.

14. Wagner, W., Duveen, G., et al.: *Theory and method of social representations*. In: Asian Journal of Social Psychology (1999) Vol. 2, p. 95–125.