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Mapping Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences

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In recent years, Research Infrastructures (RIs) have assumed a strategic role in the development of the social sciences, functioning not only as technical platforms for data collection and management but also as epistemic actors that shape scientific practices, methodological standards, and forms of collaboration. Aligned with the FAIR principles and the Open Science framework promoted by the European Union, and in line with the priorities identified by the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), RIs facilitate the production of interoperable, sustainable, and accessible data, thereby reducing fragmentation and enhancing the impact of research on society. Within this context, the FOSSR project (Fostering Open Science in Social Science Research) aims to build an infrastructure for the social sciences, including the Italian Online Probability Panel (IOPP) – the first probabilistic online panel representative of the Italian population; alongside the implementation of established international surveys such as the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), and Growing Up In Digital Europe (GUIDE). This study investigates the role and evolution of RIs through a bibliometric approach. The analysis reconstructs the conceptual, intellectual, and social structures characterizing scientific production linked to RIs, highlighting both the dynamics of quantitative growth and the trajectories of thematic development. The results indicate a shift from the predominantly technical and engineering origins of RIs, associated with topics such as Spatial Data Infrastructures and GIS systems, toward a field characterized by work carried out in socio-humanistic areas. RIs thus emerge as central nodes in the transition toward a more open and collaborative social science.

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Bibliometric Analysis Open Science Research Infrastructures Research Trends Social Sciences

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