

# On Localizing Social Science Research<sup>1</sup>

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What we in the *Philippine Social Science Council* (PSSC) would like to see happen over the next five years is to have an active network of social science researchers in key institutions in every region of the country.

These networks presently exist, although in different states of organizational health. Those which are ailing, we would like to apply remedies to. Those which are healthy, we would like to see flourish and grow. And where a region is as yet not part of the network, we would like to see the seed planted.

But we would like to see our network of centers not only as stations — to use an agricultural metaphor, not merely as harvesting information and thus reducing the people who man these centers to data gatherers or "agricultural" pickers in the vineyard of science.

The kind of network we have in mind is a network of active centers which will go on their own steam of ideas and creative innovations, borne of inquiring minds truly interested in exploring the rich treasure trove of information and insight in their own geographical areas.

The mission then of our research trainees in these centers will not be merely to gather data for national surveys which Manila will be conducting from time to time. Rather, their mis-

sion will be to ask questions about their own locales, point out dark spots in the social and intellectual terrain which have not seen the light of investigation, build up a data bank which is easily usable for other researchers, and then to set up the procedures, techniques, perhaps hitherto unused, to ferret out information and insight, and *then* to tell us here in Manila what they would like to do and how we can best help them in terms of manpower resources through consultancies and in terms of financial resources to carry out their investigations.

We in PSSC believe that the period of adolescence in research *is* over, or *should be*, over. We would like to force our trainees into *young adulthood*, if necessary, through a test of their intellectual mettle and perseverance in inquiry.

Instead of asking for relevance, social scientists should *be* relevant without saying so by making every social science class that they teach an opportunity to do spadework in research, so that in effect, their towns, their municipalities, their provinces may become social laboratories to which they can send willing and idealistic students.

In making observations about local areas, we have to go beyond macro-level generalizations, always protected by averages, which can cover a multitude of differences. What we need to do now is to flesh out the rather skeletal sketches of our regions so as to manifest differences and distinctive features.

This fleshing out, which is operationalized in the localization of research, will demand different activities and skills resulting in the compila-

tion of a suitable data bank for the area. This data bank should cover all social dimensions of the area and hence can command the interest and dedication of specialists from all the social disciplines.

At this stage of the development of scholarship in the Philippines, divisional lines among the disciplines will often have to be blurred. Nor can competence in one area be used as an excuse not to delve into other areas, for with cooperation, such joint research will help our social scientists mature and develop in their disciplines.

The types of microstudies PSSC has in mind are legion and are necessary if the area is to have the required empirical basis for policy making aimed towards local development.

Such humble data gathering as the compilation of census data (births, deaths, marriages, fertility patterns, inflow and outflow of population, languages, interethnic marriages), in short, the elements which go to make a demographic profile of the area, is necessary, if nothing else, to supplement and confirm, if necessary correct, the often globalized data available from the National Census and Statistics Office.

The rituals, celebrations, life-cycle activities of a town must be documented, and indicators found of its people's values, attitudes, habitual behavior. Undoubtedly, for many, the findings will merely confirm what earlier and larger scale studies have already pointed out, but confirmation at the micro-level serves not only pedagogical and training purposes but likewise, where distinctions exist, makes critical differences salient.

<sup>1</sup>An earlier draft of this paper was given as an address to the graduates of the 1981 Summer Research Training Program of the Philippine Social Science Council at the Ateneo de Manila University on 29 May 1981. (Also published in the *Philippine Geographical Journal*, vol. 25, no. 3, July - September 1981. Pages 94-97.)

Looking at our past, we need biographies of local people who made a difference in the life of the community, patiently gathered through written documents and often through the oral recollections of people who were contemporaries or of people who are descendants of these contemporaries and who have their memories to call on. We need institutional histories of schools, churches, agencies in the area. For local history, if nothing else, we need to be able to compile sources that may be used by a latter historian and somehow put these sources in usable form.

In the discipline of language, there is utility in small area studies on the ethnic composition of a locale and its first languages or mother tongues; the second languages spoken; the growing role of Pilipino; the language needs of various occupations; the uses to which languages are directed according to topic, interlocutor, situation; the subtle structural changes taking place in languages especially in English and in Pilipino as these languages are put to use by their speakers; the perceptions of the community about languages, their economic value, their roles as symbols of status or nationhood; the perceptions of the community about the future of these languages. If nothing else, the languages spoken in the locale should be thoroughly described especially with regard to their distinctive features as dialects or varieties of the same language, including the social dialects and the styles of speech used in that community.

The power dynamics in a barrio should be analyzed, the portraits of local power wielders drawn, and the communications networks within the community, especially among the elites and the power wielders, as well as the communication patterns between social strata, described.

Such an analysis will give us indicators for procedures on creating social change, including the pitfalls to avoid.

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## "There are a multitude of possibilities for local research . . . "

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What are the possibilities of social mobility in such a society and what are the means to achieve such mobility? How much has local government really penetrated into the area? Is the barangay for real?

Within the community, what are the economic resources, sources of cash and noncash income? What are the patterns of trade? Are there signs of entrepreneurship? What are the features and conditions necessary to reinforce entrepreneurship in the community and what capital resources may be mobilized to provide the necessary means for such entrepreneurship? What interfaces are possible between the economic activities of one community with another to mobilize capital to a larger degree?

Finally, for those inclined towards literature, we have to collect manuscripts of songs, corridos, zarzuelas, moro-moros, and the extant work of long-dead authors, to prepare these materials in critical editions which can be used by literary scholars. We need to use the techniques for compiling oral literature and tradition to preserve these works now only in the memories of a few elders of the community.

These are a multitude of possibilities for local research, for making our classes stimulating so that our students will look forward to attending social science classes, even if they know that a lot of work and time will be demanded of them, because they will see for the first time that knowledge is not inert, that

the study of man and his social relations is a worthwhile activity that can claim their attention and time.

Our aims and expectations should be modest in the beginning; the scientific method is acquired only as a result of much reading and experience born of actual research and investigation. Initially, simple descriptions, verbal and non-quantitative, may be assigned to whet the appetite. These descriptive studies should give rise to tantalizing hypotheses which will dramatize to our students the necessity of empirical data gathering to support a guess, a hunch, eventually a hypothesis.

Simple counts may be used at first, with basic nonthreatening statistical techniques. For some time we might have to be content with systematic though limited sampling; measures of central tendency but above all measures of deviation may be possible, with the notion of what a test of significance is all about thoroughly explained. For some time, we might have to be content using only the chi-square test, which can be applied to a multitude of cases, making sure however that our students know *why* we are using this simple formula.

Once a tradition of research of this kind is created, one then has the potential for further research, since one has the necessary infrastructure for it — a dedicated and small corps of men and women, faculty and students in our

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Other photos of the PSSC-UP Law Center Seminar-Workshop

*Seminar-Workshop D: Education*



*Seminar-Workshop E: Health, Nutrition, Population and Welfare*

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regional institutions, who are really interested in research. This is where the PSSC can come in and with its newly funded consortium program help these centers with both money and human resources.

Under the research consortium program, any center can apply with the PSSC secretariat to do an in-depth social science research project in priority research areas, for its community or locale. What we would like the centers to do is to conceptualize the design and then to see PSSC so that consultants at PSSC can react to these designs and make suggestions on improving them. PSSC will do this by means of senior

consultants from specialists working in a related field of investigation from the more developed institutions. Then PSSC will likewise provide the centers with the necessary means to do the data gathering, the analysis, and the write-up. In this way, not only does PSSC serve the larger community with much-needed information and insights into the situations of various parts of the Philippines but it will likewise contribute to the improvement of the research capabilities of each center.

Thus, the graduates of the *Research Training Program*, through this example and activities and through their leadership in providing first-hand field re-

search experience, will also recruit other potential social scientists and recommend them to our training programs; in this way we shall create the corps of people that will give continuity to our research network. We shall then increase the pool of manpower in the social sciences in the country, dedicated men and women who will not only disseminate their new found knowledge and skills through revitalized classes but will likewise provide the necessary studies for policy formulation towards development at the local and regional level.

We at PSSC await the manifestation of this initiative — soon!

