

Foreword

This issue of the *Philippine Social Sciences Review* presents the proceedings of a conference on *Alternative rural development strategies* held on July 23, 1992. The conference, together with a workshop on the problems and prospects of multidisciplinary research held the following day, represent the culminating public activity of a joint project on *Agrarian issues in Central Luzon* between the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of the Philippines and the Centre for Asian Studies Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam.

The project was originally conceptualized in 1987 against the backdrop of the post-EDSA scenario. The challenge then was for social scientists to provide perspectives and insights regarding the nature of the country's problems as well as a wide range of viable solutions for consideration by policymakers in government, nongovernment and people's organizations.

Enlightened by theories and empirical observations on the Philippines and other parts of the world, social scientists were deemed to be in a position to help initiate and enhance the success of localized social and economic experiments. These experiments, in turn, are meant to strengthen the economy, the political confidence and organization of people at the grassroots; and to pressure legislators to pay attention to ideas documented by field data, substantiating the meaning of democracy in the process.

Apart from the inputs into decision-making at the national and grassroots levels, social scientists were also seen to be in the ideal position of raising the Filipino's consciousness of problems and their possible solutions through vigorous intellectual debates and discussions. With these exchanges among themselves and other members of society, social scientists can help individuals and groups go beyond their limited interests and expand their sense of community to include the region and the nation.

In 1987, however, the potential contribution of social scientists were constrained by several factors. First, while there were a number of social scientists in the country who individually helped shape policy and public opinion, their impact as a community was not felt in the public realm. This was

partly due to the social scientists' limited contribution to public debates, discussions and program formulation, as well as their weak links with popular organizations, government agencies, and media.

Second, while some analytical tools learned from an essentially Western graduate education were useful in shedding light on some of the country's predicaments, Philippine social science could not rely mainly on these tools for grappling with the complex problems confronting the nation then.

How then could the demand for greater relevance be met? In the late 1980s, new sentiments were considered to be the impetus for social scientists to reconsider the usual theories and methods. These new sentiments can develop out of different forms of practice (i.e. research and extension) which entail links with concrete problems and people. There are at least three different but complementary practices: the vigorous efforts of Filipino social scientists to understand Philippine culture, history, and society using indigeneous categories and the Filipino language as a medium of discourse; the involvement of social scientists in applied field-based research aimed to shed light on concrete problems and their possible solutions; and the processing of the findings from the field as raw materials for disciplinary theory construction.

The project took off from the idea behind the second form of practice. It was premised on the observation that as social scientists address real problems in the field, they will become more conscious not only of the limits of their respective theories and methods but also of the artificial boundaries which mark off one discipline from another. Since a problem-oriented research requires changing conceptualization when the demands of the field call for it and consultations with different groups, exposure to such a research can help develop flexibility and the capacity among social scientists to establish networks with people outside academe.

In this light, the project aimed to provide faculty members, representing different Departments of the College with the opportunity to engage in a problem-oriented field research on a full-time basis. Rural issues in Central Luzon constituted the general substantive area of concern.

The differences in levels of exposure to agrarian issues, research experience, and disciplinary biases determined the phasing of the project. The first phase was devoted to preliminary discussions and the conduct of individual researches which were then conceptualized and critiqued by other team members and resource persons. The individual studies were intended to level off some of the differences in the team by providing the means for each one to get the hang of field research and the confidence to establish ties in the field. The second phase entailed the pursuit of a collective research project in an agrarian municipality in Central Luzon, affected by lahar in the aftermath of the Mt. Pinatubo's disaster.

Although the researches in the first phase were done individually by team members in their respective sites, several discussion sessions wherein each researcher shared his or her findings, sharpened the points of convergence among the studies.

All of the studies explore the factors which facilitate or constrain the implementation of alternative rural development models and strategies in Central Luzon, and for some studies, the effects of these models on particular sectors, e.g. women, farmer beneficiaries. Four studies dealt with model cooperatives (Encarnacion, Jimenez, Añonuevo, Mibolos) and one with the state's Integrated Area Development program (Tadem). Three researches looked at the nature, extent and processes of land conversion and land transfer, abstracting their implications for land reform and rural land use (Bautista, Camagay, Nantes). One study (Medina) focused on village labor arrangements for landless rural laborers and the possible options for this marginalized sector.

The Conference papers documented in this Proceedings summarize some of the issues of the individual research projects. However, discussion on the module on *Women in alternative organizations* and a paper on the IAD study are not included here. Some of the issues raised in the Women module are reflected in the papers of Jimenez and Añonuevo. While circumstances prevented Prof. Eduardo Tadem from presenting his paper on the Sacobia Integrated Area Development Program, a report of his findings is available in the College.

This issue is not possible without the contributions of several individuals and institutions. Prof. Teresa Encarnacion went over the raw and incomplete transcripts to reconstruct the outlines of the Proceedings while Professors Roseanna Valdez and Winifreda Evangelista edited separate sections of the text. Prof. Laura Samson nurtured this issue from its conception through its publication. She and her dedicated staff – Marita, Xerxes, Vicki, Veni, Zeny – deserve to be commended for going beyond the call of duty.

It goes without saying that the researches which constitute the substantive content of this issue would not have been possible without the support of the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy of the University of the Philippines, the Center for Asian Studies Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education, the commitment of the team members, the advice and moral support of the Project Directors, Dr. Otto van den Muyzenberg and Professor Fe R. Arcinas, and the help extended by Dr. John Kleinen and Drs. Mieke Schneider, the Coordinators on the Amsterdam side.

Maria Cynthia Rose Banzon Bautista
 Maria Cynthia Rose Banzon Bautista
 Project Coordinator