Ateneo de Manila University

Archīum Ateneo

2020

The Problem-Solving Mode: Social Scientists Back Home and the Limits of Critique

Czarina Saloma-Akpedonu

CZARINA SALOMA

The Problem-Solving Mode
Social Scientists Back Home and the Limits of Critique

Abundant debates on the problematic positioning of intellectuals in the Global South are typically confined to migrant scholars and to the insider/outsider binary vis-à-vis their object/subject of study. Yet intellectuals back home—both those returning and those who never left—must also forge through the fraught politics of location and epistemic privilege as the other side of the same coin. Nowhere is the politics of location perhaps more striking than in the social sciences and among social scientists based in the Global South who have mostly been trained in Western universities or in Westernized local universities. As academics who mobilize knowledge in the context of state-led and international donor-assisted development projects, their work demonstrates that in the Global South the primary goal of social scientists should be to not only offer a critique but to solve a problem toward making institutions and systems fulfill their functions. In this problem-solving mode, the distinctions between "outsider" as critical-distant (i.e., opening everything up for discussion and debate following a scholarly tradition but may be oblivious of contexts and particularities) and "insider" (i.e., possessing knowledge of the local manifestations of universalized and globalized processes but may not be critical-distant) are to be erased. The "outsider" joins forces with the "insider" as the social scientist moves from being critical-distant to being socially embedded and then back again. This problem-solving mode urges social scientists back home to be critical of but yet part of the system as one tries to solve a problem.

INTRODUCTION

I am one of the many Filipino academics in the Philippines who worked (or are working) with the World Bank. A few years ago in Bielefeld University where I earned my doctorate in Development Sociology, I gave a lecture on surprise or non-knowledge and its role in the pilot implementation of a World Bank-supported urban community-driven development project in the Philippines. At the end of that lecture, I was asked why I seem uncritical of the World Bank, as any academic is assumed to be.

I found in this question an invitation to examine more thoroughly one central plank in academic work in the Philippines: the work that is commonly referred to as development consultancy. In many developed countries, academics and consultants are often separate individuals, with critical scholars usually differentiating themselves from consultants and many universities making a clear distinction between hiring consulting professors and research professors, as it is deemed unreasonable to expect high profile consulting and excellent research from the same faculty member (see Kieser 2002 in Mohe 2006). In the Global South, however, many social scientists in the academe work as consultants. In many universities such as those in the Philippines, the three pillars of academic life are teaching, research, and university service and outreach where each is understood to enrich the other. Data and insights from consultancies, categorized under university service and outreach during faculty annual evaluations, are to find their way into teaching. A social scientist is to write peer-reviewed journal articles after the technical reports have been submitted to funding agencies and the permission to use the data for academic purposes secured from the commissioning agency. It is not to say that all social scientists follow this path in the Philippines, where many academics teach eight or more classes a week (twenty-four hours or more). Academics with the competencies and the time to undertake consultancy work then find their way to many international development projects as the nuances of development issues in the country are unfamiliar and unconventional to most international development agencies.

In reply to the "Bielefelder question," I had given the following answer: "the work of local academics in international donor-assisted development projects in the Philippines shows that in spaces where many institutions are in varying forms of maturity, our goal should

be to not only offer a critique but to also solve a problem." But why did the question induce such role conflicts within me? And what do I mean by the problem-solving mode?

Two ideas underpin the questioning of my place as a Filipino social scientist back home. One is from the anthropologist Tim Ingold (2016) who points to the beauty of the dialectical interplay and the eventual dissolution of the dichotomy between two systems of relations that drives people's productive activities. In Ingold's case, this is the splitting between the social and the ecological and his moving from science to art that brought him further back to science in his teaching. The other idea is from the poet Adrienne Rich (1983) who, accounting for how she arrived at where she now stands, introduced the "politics of location" using "bread" and "blood" as very powerful metaphors. The former is for material and economic conditions, the latter is for skin color and ethnicity. In both social variables, she held the position of privilege: "what I knew of blood was that mine was white and that white was better off" (Rich 1983, 528). Yet, after a long struggle of being a woman in the white mainstream American culture, it did not prevent her from "writing directly and overtly as a woman, out of a woman's body and experience, to take women's existence seriously" (535).

The opening that I found for my own exploration of the politics of location, as a social scientist educated in the West and working in my home country, is the problem-solving mode in the social sciences. In it are tensions that are just as important as the as-yet unresolved and more abundant debates on the problematic positioning of intellectuals vis-à-vis the Orientalist binary. This revisiting of the methodological debates in knowledge mobilization has four parts. In the first, I engage the contentious but unavoidable issue of epistemic privilege and authority that informs scholarship on the Philippines by examining the embedding contexts of Filipino social scientists who are based in the Philippines and are back home. Next, highlighting that the more important issue is not about epistemic privilege and authority but rather about contributing to the creation of knowledge toward the improvement of the human and more-than-human futures in the country, I construct the problem-solving mode in the context of the social scientist back home and discuss its main features (being critical and being an insider) and its elements (mobilization of professional, policy, critical, and public knowledge). In the next part, I demonstrate how the problem-solving mode works in the

context of two World Bank projects. The article concludes with some notes for Filipino social scientists back home and who are working in development projects about navigating one's politics of location.

FILIPINO SOCIAL SCIENTISTS BACK HOME

Who is the Filipino social scientist back home? My construction of the problem-solving mode in the social sciences would first need to address the "native" intellectuals' problematic positioning by finding a middle ground between the social scientists who studied abroad and returned home and those who never left home. In "Privileging Roots and Routes: Filipino Intellectuals and the Contest over Epistemic Power and Authority," Hau (2014, 30) draws attention to the "longstanding but as-yet unresolved issues about the intellectual's claim to epistemic authority" including the claim of epistemic privilege and authority exercised by Philippine-based Filipino intellectuals. This claim is based on assumptions that one's social location, especially the situatedness in specific social relations, endows one with insights and perspectives about particular problems or issues that may not be available to people from different social locations. It flows from the critique of the Orientalist binary between the "Orient" and the "West," which tends toward two extremes: one, that only the local intellectuals who never left home can claim epistemic privilege and authority to speak of, if not on behalf of, their nations (for the limits posed by geographical distance on foreign scholars, see Azurin 2002); two, that critical distance—existential, geographical, and intellectual—is a necessary condition of intellectual work (see contribution of the migrant intellectual by Said 1994). However, replacing one set of binaries ("Orient" versus the "West") with another ("outsider" versus "insider") is not, as Hau (2014) pointed out, very helpful in understanding "Philippine-based, often middle-class, intellectuals."

Thus, by "social scientist back home," I mean the Filipino social scientist who is based in the Philippines who consciously reclaims one's local rootedness against the backdrop of one's professional training as a critical distant observer of this society. As members of the Philippine-based, often middle-class intellectuals, the social scientist back home refers either to the social scientist who studied abroad and returned home and to the one who never left home. In both, the social location is characterized by exteriority. An education

from a university abroad is one indicator of being situated "outside." Statistics on the exact number of Filipinos with PhDs earned from abroad are hard to come by, but it is possible to get some idea of the pervasiveness of this phenomenon from micro-statistics. In 2019, for example, there were eighteen Filipinos with a PhD in Archaeology, sixteen or 89 percent of whom obtained their degrees from universities abroad (Baretto-Tesoro 2019). A clue is also provided by the current faculty profile of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the Ateneo de Manila University. In the Academic Year 2020–2021, it counts 67 percent of thirty full-time and part-time faculty members as having a PhD, mostly earned from a European or American university. But a Filipino social scientist does not have to study abroad to be situated outside, as the Philippines stands close to the American educational system and structures. Despite not having left home, the exteriority is accomplished by a Western education in one of the country's universities that promotes critical distance of the subject/object of study. Social Watch Philippines' (2019) observation that the delivery of a more specific historically and culturally appropriate education requires a focused attention more than ever is indeed a common observation. Back home, the insider/outsider dichotomies may be significantly more important as Western social theories become staple even in Philippine universities. Similarly, the paucity of non-Western elements in Philippine social science that counterpoise Western traditions may render the "Orient" versus the "West" dichotomies more necessary than ever. However, back home, what is needed the most is to transcend these various social positions to contribute to the creation of knowledge toward making institutions and systems in the country work.

The various expectations of exteriority vis-à-vis the object/subject of study flow from the conventional and more prevalent practice in the social sciences to follow the protocols of modern science that are anchored, among others, on objectivity. Objectivity as an expression of universalism was viewed by Merton (1973) to preclude particularism, which then requires the scientist to cut all personal relations with the subject/object of study and be oblivious of its condition and context. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the social sciences to be value-neutral or context-free, as both subject and object of study are embedded in personal, social, and institutional relationships. Anthropology and sociology, for example, are disciplines that require their practitioners to generate insights on cultural plurality across times and places toward critical insights into the possibilities of

the future. In these disciplines, scientific inquiry becomes a way of caring for one's own society at the very start. There are also issues around one's role in society that are more acute for both natural and social scientists who were recipients of training abroad in the context of Official Development Assistance (ODA). There is a view that foreign students on scholarships must return to their home country after having finished their studies amidst acute concerns about the limited development impact of scholarship programs on developing countries. For example, a study of the scholarship programs of the Carl-Duisberg Society, a German development assistance institution, concluded that the program had good micro-level results (i.e., for students involved, good results are achieved) but had limited broader development impact (i.e., on an institutional level of the developing country) (OECD 2001).

Consultancies with controversial international development institutions are probably the biggest source of dilemma for the social scientist back home. Indeed, many academics consider international institutions such as the World Bank as "the enemy" that advances a socially destructive model of economic growth involving common property resources and state-led development. For example, using empirical material from India, Randeria (2003) refers to the "cunning state": the state when working with multilateral development institutions selectively imposes neoliberal policies and capitalizes on its perceived weakness in order to render itself unaccountable to its citizens. By providing the funds for state-development projects such as dams, usually packaged under good governance objectives, the World Bank can only be viewed as abetting the cunning state's indifference and distanciation from realities on the ground.

Criticisms of the World Bank range from causing harm to environments and communities; to how its economic policy conditions on loans, projects, technical assistance, or financial surveillance undermine the national development strategies and democratic processes of borrower countries; to not doing enough to prevent loss of loans and grants for development projects to both corruption and waste; and to staff incentives being misaligned with the Bank's mission to end extreme poverty (Bretton Woods Project 2018; Igoe 2018; Kabeer 2015). The dismantling of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization, viewed as prime instruments of neoliberal globalization and the various crises associated with it, has now become the battle cry for deglobalization. Deglobalization, as the process of restructuring the global economy,

aims to build the capacity of local and national economies to respond to the needs of peoples, nations, and communities against their degradation or integration around the needs of neoliberal globalization (Bello 2006).

In the 2000s, the World Bank began to address the human dimension of development in terms of "empowerment" (making state institutions more responsive to poor people through good governance) and "security" (addressing risk and vulnerability). This concern with voice and participation and being more responsive to the needs of the poor opened spaces for local social scientists to contribute expertise in World Bank projects in community-driven development and participatory budgeting. Notwithstanding, poverty reduction through market-oriented growth remains the priority (Kabeer 2015, 117). For example, the portfolio breakdown of World Bank sector lending in 2019 in East Asia and the Pacific showed that "social protection" (as a proxy variable for participatory and community development projects) accounted for only nine percent of the total (World Bank 2019). The non-economic social scientists back home not only find themselves working in World Bank niche projects but also grapple with the World Bank's "micro-level alternatives," or "participatory budgeting," or "community-driven development," which come from the same language used by its critics. The social scientist back home, thus, can easily be accused of not only participating in the co-optation of the language and agenda of deglobalization but affirming the power of development institutions to make certain definitions of poverty visible. These definitions homogenize attributes and experiences of poverty and the situation of those categorized as poor (e.g., marginal, excluded, vulnerable, unwell, illiterate and often indigenous and female, live in predominantly remote rural areas and urban shanties, with few assets and weak social networks) and sees poverty as a problem that must be eliminated to maintain social functionality (Green 2006; Escobar 1991, 1995). Accordingly, these definitions do not focus on the rich and processes of wealth creation.

Thus, among the critiques against the World Bank, one has the most implications on the work of Filipino social scientists back home: the normative power it wields over knowledge production through its own research, publications, and support of academic work. It has been observed that the Bank's ability to position its "policy prescriptions as 'best practice,' supported by theoretical and empirical work, oftentimes results in the internalization of Bank and Fund positions by scholars, development practitioners and finance ministers" (Bretton Woods

Project 2018). These critiques have implications for social scientists who work as development consultants, since consultants in any field are often called to legitimize management decisions (Ernst and Kieser 2002 in Mohe 2006).

THE PROBLEM-SOLVING MODE

By the problem-solving mode, I mean a social science approach focused on solving a problem. It is a special quality of the knowledge mobilization approach in which the social scientist consciously contributes toward making institutions and systems fulfil their functions. Knowledge mobilization refers to how knowledge is produced, transmitted, received, evaluated, and integrated into existing knowledge systems toward the achievement of societal goals (Gross 2010). The social scientist back home, thus, offers not only analysis but practical results; to offer practical results is to solve a problem.

What does solving a problem entail? In 1996, *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* was published. This Report by the multidisciplinary Gulbenkian Commission that was led by sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein proposes to open the social sciences to other disciplines toward a unified scientific knowledge and affirms the central role of the social sciences in the "contextualization of universalisms" (Gulbenkian Commission 1996, x). Burawoy's (2007; 2013) critical response to the Gulbenkian Report clarifies that in the problem-solving mode, the contextualization of universalisms should be interpreted as the "plurality of particularisms," not "universalistic pluralism," and that interdisciplinarity means the strengthening of disciplines, not the dissolution of weaker ones. Burawoy's typology of knowledge likewise outlines what interdisciplinarity means for the problem-solving mode. Professional knowledge serves toward resolving anomalies and contradictions in research programs based on assumptions, questions, methodologies, and theories. Policy knowledge is knowledge addressing problems defined by clients. Both are instrumental knowledge because they aim at making things work. Critical knowledge is opening up assumptions of research programs for discussion and debate within the community of scholars. Public knowledge results from the dialogue between the scholar and the non-academic public around societal goals and means for achieving those goals. Both are reflexive knowledge as they examine the value relevance of scientific projects.

The mobilization of the abovementioned four types of knowledge and their division into either critical or reflexive knowledge underpin being critical and being an insider in the problem-solving mode. Knowledge of theories and methods, knowledge of policy, knowledge of the public as well as subjecting all these to discussions and debates as part of critical knowledge contribute to solving a problem. All four types of knowledge benefit from a deep insider knowledge of the social and cultural particularities in which a problem is embedded. In the problem-solving mode, the distinctions between "outsider" as critical-distant (i.e., opening everything up for discussion and debate following a scholarly tradition but may be oblivious of contexts and particularities) and "insider" (i.e., possessing knowledge of the local manifestations of universalized and globalized process but may not be critical) are, thus, erased. The "outsider" joins forces with the "insider" as the social scientist back home moves from being critical-distant to being embedded in the local manifestations of universalized and globalized processes and back again. To illustrate, many social institutions in the Philippines such as local government units, national government agencies, and social development entities fulfil their work through any or a combination of the following strategies: total removal of existing rules and their replacement with new ones, re-interpretation of existing rules and enacting them in different ways, drifting along with changes, and the introduction of new rules alongside existing ones (Saloma, Lao, and Advincula-Lopez 2013). With a problem-solving attitude, the social scientist back home aims to help institutions identify gaps within their respective institutions that require, for example, reinterpretation of the rules or the introduction of new rules alongside existing ones that eventually result in better delivery of basic services.

THE CRITICAL AND PROBLEM-DRIVEN FILIPINO SOCIAL SCIENTIST

With interdisciplinarity being identified by social development institutions as socially desirable, many social development projects are now embedded in organized social science research. Many social scientists back home found work as short-term consultants in the social protection programs of the World Bank. This arrangement is problematic amidst expectations for the academic to be critical of the World Bank's role in promoting neoliberal and structural adjustment policies that, prioritizing economic growth and market forces in

development, exacted a heavy cost on human well-being. Yet these assignments are opportunities for the social scientist to work with international development partners in a problem-solving mode.

The Livelihoods for Vulnerable Urban Communities (LVUC) is a community-driven development project that the Philippine government undertook with technical assistance from the World Bank, from October 2011 to June 2013. The research team from the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC), a multi-disciplinary research center of the Ateneo de Manila University and one of the pioneering institutions of social science research in the Philippines, conducted a process-oriented evaluation of the project with the goal of co-producing knowledge to inform the scale-up of the project. This study, commencing soon after the start of project preparatory activities, covered all of the project's development, implementation, and monitoring and capacity-building components (Saloma, Mangaser, and Hidalgo 2016).

In the problem-solving mode, professional knowledge, or technical and disciplinary knowledge useful in making development programs work sensitized those who studied sociology and Weber's "social action" to the necessity of the modern state recognizing and accepting traditional legitimacy. In this problem-solving mode, critical knowledge must criticize the foundational assumptions of professional knowledge that went into the project. The professional knowledge incorporated in project design is typically tested and accepted knowledge—knowledge that is filtered down to general principles that end up conforming to a common norm (e.g., rationality, efficiency) regardless of local social and cultural differences (Saloma, Mangaser, and Hidalgo 2016). Any development project, however, unavoidably interfaces with "hybrid culture." In the Philippines, hybrid culture refers to the coexistence of two systems (de Charentenay 2016). The first system is comprised of the modern state and politics, which follow the principles of Weberian rationality: efficiency, quantifiability and calculability, predictability, and use of non-human technology. The second system follows the logic of traditional values and authorities and is generally pre-colonial. They are based on a different set of rules, power of families or clan, or ethnic group that prioritize the well-being of that community. In the Philippines, the premodern system did not completely disappear in the modern landscape.

Critical knowledge leads to a project design that recognizes this dual reality. For example, the initial project design includes a disbursement system involving check payments. While check

payments would make sense in a modern accounting and auditing system and with larger amounts, they do not work in the context where most payments are done by cash. Project implementers thus introduced a provision of cash advances for expenses less than PhP 10,000 (USD 240) when suppliers refused to accept check payments for small transactions such as the daily purchase of perishable goods for the food processing training, some of which cost less than PhP 100 (USD 2.40). Another example, a key element of the LVUC is the participation of community volunteers. In inviting volunteers, project implementers invited not only barangay government officials, leaders, and members of community organizations (rational legitimacy) but also community members identified in the community survey as trustworthy (traditional legitimacy). Residents of urban poor communities are generally well-organized and produce their own leaders, whom a development project can tap into.

Participatory approaches have relied mainly on the participation of women, a reliance that often results in additional burdens to women at home and in the community. Preventing a development project from being an unintended burden to women also requires the mobilization not only of professional and critical knowledge but also public knowledge toward the inclusion of men and boys in the project. This can start with information and communication efforts to make men participate in these projects themselves or at least support changes in the household gender division of labor that would free up time for women to work in these projects. However, questioning the assumption that the poor have the luxury of unpaid voluntary labor can only be scaled up via policy knowledge so that government and development institutions will change their definitions of community participation.

With involvement in the LVUC project demonstrating that the problem-driven social scientist back home is someone who mobilizes professional, critical, public, and policy knowledge, a question must be asked about the basis of such knowledge. Burawoy (2013, 17) points out how cross-, trans-, joint-, and multi-disciplinary knowledge as a view of soft interdisciplinarity "requires the prior development of disciplinary knowledge." Ideally, social scientists back home have to work toward freeing their disciplinary knowledge from Western-centric assumptions and categories and applying non-Western theory and concepts in their work. Jose Rizal's critique of the Spanish colonizers' knowledge of the Philippines and analysis of underdevelopment as a product of colonialism have, for example, been presented by Alatas (2017) as a fine example of sociological

theory beyond the canon. However, due to training steeped in Western social theories and research methodologies, the default mode has been to draw upon existing Western and Western-centric theorizing, even as an increasing number of social scientists in the Philippines are using postcolonial and decolonial theories in their work. Notwithstanding, opportunities to apply non-Western ideas can emerge from the awareness that when social scientists back home work with the state or with international development agencies as consultants, they are assumed to be experts who mediate between the production of knowledge and its application, define and interpret situations, and set priorities for action (Stehr and Grundmann 2016). In the problem-solving mode, expert knowledge is disciplinary knowledge that is adapted to the issues of a specific context. The claim to expertise should thus always be tempered by the recognition that while experts possess the relevant special knowledge needed to solve particular problems, experts and non-experts are relative terms (Schutz and Luckmann 1973). The social scientists back home should now finally depart from the 1980s participatory development approach that focused on needs that were elicited, articulated, and analyzed by experts or stimulated by the availability of resources and instead focus on helping community members perceive and prioritize their needs (Castillo 1983). They, often given the title of "consultant," should also now eschew the title and instead adopt the more modest title of "researcher," one who produces knowledge with the fellow other and offers solutions. Therefore, the problem-solving mode challenges the monopoly of the academe and consultants over knowledge and solutions. Instead, it advances co-production, co-benefit, and co-ownership of knowledge underpinned by citizens' active role in producing public goods and services of consequence to them (Ostrom 1996).

The emphasis of co-production of knowledge in the problem-solving mode is highlighted by the outcomes of the IPC's social impact monitoring study of poor rural, urban, and peri-urban communities affected by tropical storm Ondoy and typhoon Pepeng in 2009. The mixed-method study that received funding from the World Bank showed that eighteen months after the twin disasters communities mainly recovered on their own ("*sariling sikap*") and many were still struggling to fully recover due to the lack of assets and working capital to restore their livelihood (Institute of Philippine Culture 2012). A comparison of the impact of off-city (outside Metro Manila) and in-city (within Metro Manila) resettlement approaches on the welfare of resettled households showed that residents in both areas reported

improvements in their living conditions: better housing, improved access to sanitation, electricity, and garbage disposal, even as access to piped water was a serious challenge in both sites, as was access to livelihoods. Notwithstanding constraints such as higher amortization rates, resettled communities preferred in-city resettlement as the best option to enable households to retain access to livelihood and employment opportunities as well as minimize disruptions to essential social support networks. Negative impacts such as higher cost of living particularly due to higher spending for transport in getting to work and school were stronger in the off-city resettlement area. The problem-solving mode in the research project was anchored on listening to the residents' assessment of their living conditions. The data gathering recognized the value of coproduction wherein the production of a service is done with the active participation of those receiving the service and a credible commitment to one another all toward synergy between what a government does and what citizens do (Ostrom 1996).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The anecdote at the beginning of this article laid bare the tensions in what it means to be a Filipino academic back home working for a controversial institution in international development. Just as Adrienne Rich (1983) resisted an apparent splitting of the poet from the woman, of poetry from politics; in my case, I am resisting the apparent splitting of the practical from the critical. Just as Tim Ingold has proposed dispelling of the dichotomies between art and science in anthropological practice deemed as the most humanistic of the sciences and the most scientific of the humanities; in my case, I am proposing the fusion of two positions in what I consider the most important quality of a social scientist "back home": being on a problem-solving mode—being critical of but yet "part of the system" as one tries to solve a problem.

    The article utilizes Burawoy's (2007) four types of knowledge as the elements of this problem-solving mode whose main features are simultaneously being practical and critical. For many social scientists and observers in Western societies whose institutions and systems have already matured, the divisions and debates surrounding the subject/object of study may appear to have been resolved on the side of being critical. Indeed, in contexts where institutions and systems are well-established or in purely theoretical settings, social scientists can be

infinitely critical. Social scientists in Europe and North America can stay in the critical mode since they can expect institutions to make things work, and the more mature political and social institutions in these social spaces do work most of the time. The discussion of two World Bank research projects in this article, however, shows instances where the contextualization of universalisms, understood as uncovering the plurality of particularism in localized manifestations of universalized and globalized processes, is needed before so-called development interventions to institutions and systems could fully work. Thus, in settings where institutions and systems do not work most of the time, the role of the social scientist in society is to help these institutions and systems work. But if one participates as a social scientist "back home," how must that participation be like? In the Philippines, there is a constant need to be reminded that knowledge for understanding and knowledge for action are two sides of the same coin in the face of a penchant among many social scientists to critique and to not offer any solution after the analysis. Corollary to this tendency is critique and criticism without an awareness of how problematic one's position is and that "insider," "outsider," "critical," or "practical" are all problematic positions that we need to locate ourselves in.

For Burawoy (2007), the social sciences is positioned in between the natural sciences, which emphasize instrumental knowledge and the humanities, which is focused on reflexive knowledge. The Report of the Gulbenkian Commission (1996, 6) also notes that while "science" was more clearly defined, the alternative to science had a seeming inability to offer "practical" results or solve a problem. Accordingly and in comparison with the social sciences, the main goal of knowledge mobilization in the natural sciences and mathematics is unmistakably to solve a problem. When one is trying to solve a problem, one cannot be endlessly critical of working for controversial institutions such as the World Bank. My construction of the problem-solving mode would also apply to academics who, providing evidence-based recommendations to legislators and policymakers to craft laws and plans geared toward solving problems of the country, could be working for a government deemed controversial. In such cases, working with partners from international development or government institutions who have a blend of excellent analytical skills and down-to-earth engagement with social realities eases the burden of the social scientist. Working with partners who are also on a problem-solving mode offers a glimpse into how large institutions

are shaped by actors before they appear immutable. Thus, the social scientist back home should carefully choose research and consultancy projects.

Nonetheless, the problem-solving mode itself is a position that is as problematic as any other position. Who defines the problem and how can it be solved? How does power operate at the very instance of defining a problem? Who is expected to solve such problems? These difficult questions will remain. However, with many problems waiting to be solved in the Philippines, even more important is contributing knowledge that uplifts human and more-than-human conditions. In this sense, there is enough space for every definition and solution to a problem. With many initiatives to solve a social problem or two, an academic can choose not to participate, but such initiatives will push through regardless of whether one participates or not. In questioning my place as a Filipino social scientist "back home," I have therefore come to conclude that the hardest but also the most fulfilling route to resolving the politics of location is the problem-solving mode, which blends together rigorous academic practice and a deep engagement with Philippine society toward making institutions and systems fulfil their function. As Neil deGrasse Tyson is quoted: "In science, when human behavior enters the equation, things go nonlinear. That's why Physics is easy and Sociology is hard."

REFERENCES

Alatas, Syed Farid. 2017. "Jose Rizal (1861-1896)." *Sociological Theory Beyond the Canon*, Syed Farid Alatas and Vineeta Sinha, 143–70. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Azurin, Arnold Molina. 2002. "Orientalism? Privileged Vistas Most Probably." *Philippine Political Science Journal* 23 (46): 139–50. https://doi.org/10.10 80/01154451.2002.9754239.

Barretto-Tesoro, Grace. 2019. "How many Filipinos hold a Ph.D. in Archaeology?" Facebook, April 18, 2019. Accessed August 30, 2020. https://es-la. facebook.com/UPASP/posts/how-many-filipinos-hold-a-phd-in-archaeologygrace-barretto-tesoro-phdofficer-in-/1357464677711817/.

Bello, Walden F. 2006. *Deglobalization: Ideas for a New World Economy*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press.

Bretton Woods Project. 2019. "What are the Main Criticisms of the World Bank and IMF?" Accessed on March 20, 2020. https://www. brettonwoodsproject.org/2019/06/what-are-the-main-criticisms-of-the-world-bank-and-the-imf/.

Burawoy, Michael. 2007. "Open the Social Sciences: To Whom and for What?" *Portuguese Journal of Social Science* 6 (3):137–146.

———. 2013. "Sociology and Interdisciplinarity: The Promise and the Perils." *Philippine Sociological Review* 61: 7–20.

Castillo, Gelia. 1983. *How Participatory is Participatory Development?: A Review of the Philippine Experience.* Metro Manila, Philippines: Philippine Institute for Development Studies.

de Charentenay, Pierre. 2016. *The Philippines: An Asiatic and Catholic Archipelago*. Quezon City: Jesuit Communications Foundation, Inc.

Ernst, Berit, and Alfred Kieser. 2002. "In Search of Explanations for the Consulting Explosion." In *The Expansion of Management Knowledge: Carriers, Flows, and Sources*, edited by Kerstin Sahlin-Andersson and Lars Engwall, 47–73. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Escobar, Arturo. 1991. "Anthropology and the Development Encounter: The Making and Marketing of Development Anthropology." *American Ethnologist* 18 (4): 658–82.

———. 1995. *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Green, Maia. 2006. "Representing Poverty and Attacking Representations: Perspectives on Poverty from Social Anthropology." *Journal of Development Studies* 42(7): 1108–129.

Gross, Mathias. 2010. *Ignorance and Surprise: Science, Society and Ecological Design*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences. 1996. *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Hau, Caroline S. 2014. "Privileging Roots and Routes: Filipino Intellectuals and the Contest over Epistemic Power and Authority." *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 62 (1): 29–65.

Igoe, Michael. 2018. "Trump Administration Takes Aim at World Bank Salaries." *Devex*, April 18. Accessed March 20, 2020. https://www.devex.com/news/trump-administration-takes-aim-at-world-bank-salaries-92566.

Ingold, Tim. 2016. "From Science to Art and Back Again: The Pendulum of an Anthropologist." *Anuac* 5(1): 5–23. https://doi.org/10.7340/anuac2239-625X-2237.

Institute of Philippine Culture. 2012. T*he Social Impacts of Tropical Storm Ondoy and Typhoon Pepeng: The Recovery of Communities in Metro Manila and Luzon*. Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture.

Kabeer, Naila. 2015. "Evolving Meanings of 'the Social' in the International Development Agenda." *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy* 31(2): 114–31.

Kieser, Alfred. 2002. "On Communication Barriers Between Management Science, Consultancies and Business Organizations." In *Critical Consulting: New Perspectives on the Management Advice Industry*, edited by Timothy Clark and Robin Fincham, 206–27. Oxford: Blackwell.

Knauft, Bruce, ed. 2002. *Critically Modern, Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Merton, Robert. 1973. *The Sociology of Science: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mohe, Michael. 2006. "What do Consulting Firms Expect from Graduates and Universities? Empirical Insights from the German Consulting Market." In *Management Consulting Research: Selection and Evaluation of Consultants*, edited by Thomas Deelmann and Michael Mohe, 53–68. Volume 1. Munchen, Mering: Deutsche Nationalbibliothek.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. 2001. "Development Cooperation Review of Germany." *DAC Journal* 2 (4): II-1-111.

Ostrom, Elinor. 1996. "Crossing the Great Divide: Co-production, Synergy and Development." *World Development* 24, no. 6 (June): 1073-1087. https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(96)00023-X.

Randeria, Shalini. 2003. "Cunning States and Unaccountable International Institutions: Legal Plurality, Social Movements and Rights of Local Communities to Common Property Resources." *European Journal of Sociology* 44 (1): 27–60. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975603001188.

Rich, Adrienne. 1983. "Blood, Bread and Poetry: The Location of the Poet." *The Massachusetts Review* 24, no. 3 (Autumn): 521–40.

Said, Edward W. 1994. *Orientalism*. Rev. ed. New York: Vintage Books.

Saloma, Czarina, Maria Elissa Jayme Lao, and Leslie Advincula-Lopez. 2013. "How to Make Local Government Institutions Work: Some Lessons on Social Change." *Philippine Political Science Journal* 34 (1): 83-96

Saloma, Czarina, Lorraine Mangaser, and Candy Hidalgo. 2016. "Expecting the Unexpected: The Role of Surprise in Community-driven Development." *Community Development Journal* 52, no. 4 (October): 702–19. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsv067.

Schutz, Alfred, and Thomas Luckman. 1973. *The Structures of the Life-World*. Evanston, IL.: Northwestern University Press.

Social Watch Philippines. 2019. "Social Watch Philippines Offers a Civil Society Review of the PH Agenda 2030 in UN High Level Political Forum." July 16, 2019. http://www.socialwatch.org/node/18314.

Stehr, Nico, and Reiner Grundmann. 2016. *Experts: The Knowledge and Power of Expertise.* London and New York: Routledge.

World Bank. 2019. *Annual Report 2019: Ending Poverty, Investing in Opportunity*. Washington DC: The World Bank Group. http://documents1. worldbank.org/curated/en/156691570147766895/pdf/The-World-Bank-Annual-Report-2019-Ending-Poverty-Investing-in-Opportunity.pdf.

CZARINA SALOMA, Professor at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the Ateneo de Manila University and former Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Fellow at Bielefeld University, examines the nature and dynamics of knowledge mobilization in relation to the built environment, social development, and sustainable consumption and production, and promotes a problem-solving mode in social science engagement. Her books include *Possible Worlds in Impossible Spaces: Knowledge, Gender, and Information Technology in the Philippines* (Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006) *Casa Boholana: Vintage Houses of Bohol* (Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2011); Many Journeys, Many Voices: *Filipina Overseas Workers, 1960-2010* (Anvil Publishing, 2015); and *Food Consumption in the City: Practices and Patterns in Urban Asia and the Pacific* (Routledge, 2016) <csaloma@ateneo.edu>