

Foreword

Economic growth is a matter of increasing concern to the leaders and to the people of developing countries. Failure of growth may also topple the governments of technologically more advanced areas. While it is true that no two communities are identical, this intensive study of a Philippine fishing town shows the effect of factors other than economic on the level of prosperity of the citizens. The importance of these noneconomic variables becomes clearer if one thinks of economic growth as the effect, or dependent variable, and social, technological, and political influences as the causes, or independent variables. In these terms a community becomes a sort of poorly controlled experiment, poorly controlled because the independent variables are only vaguely identified and because the results are often quite contrary to predictions.

Economic development is sometimes thought of as a matter of a school, a road, and an industry. The value of this report lies in the demonstration that other factors are important, matters that lie in the domain of the social organization of a group of people. Unlike some other Philippine communities with eroded hillsides or typhoon-ravaged fields, Estancia town boasts of natural resources which could provide a higher standard of living. In his history of the economy of the town, the author demonstrates that changes in the technology of fishing have increased the number of fish taken. There has been little of the resistance to innovation which is sometimes attributed to traditional peoples. In spite of these advances, the majority of the people still live on a subsistence day-to-day level with its toll in poor health and wasted human resources.

Szanton is at his best, however, when he analyzes the social organization of the community and describes the expectations which govern the relationships among the owners, captains, and crew of the fishing boats and their transactions with the school of vendors who gather about the catch at the town landing, nibbling the result of the night's fishing until, as it were, the bait is gone and nothing has been caught worth taking home. He not only catalogs the economic indices of underdevelopment but shows some of

the interpersonal processes which operate to maintain it. The enterprises of the town are not just small in scale compared with those of a more prosperous place; they differ also in their deficiency in trust and control. Businesses are limited in growth because owners cannot delegate responsibility to others with a high prospect that assigned duties will be carried out in the owner's interest. A business is thus limited to what a man, or woman, can manage himself.

I read this report with great interest because I had the opportunity to visit David and Cristina Szanton during their stay in Estancia. They chose not only a theoretically interesting town but a beautiful spot located on a sheltered bay with protecting islands just offshore. Both of them spoke Ilongo, the language of the region, and their language skill and personal charm enabled them to establish a relationship of confidence with the people of Estancia who, in turn, shared many aspects of their lives with the Szantons. This special relationship with the people of Estancia has enabled David to reach an understanding of the factors that affect economic development as they are experienced by the people themselves. His insights enable us to see that an improvement of the standard of living does not depend entirely on outside forces but can be influenced by factors over which the people have control.

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