

Private and Community Sector
Contributions to Social and
Economic Research in NZ:
funding, skills, value and all that

Key Note Address to Royal Society of New Zealand

Social Sciences Committee Workshop

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Sometimes it seems
like forever!!

That Social Science Research is seen as:

- Incoherently organised
- Difficult to engage
- Difficult to quality control
- Never there when users want it.

Sometimes it feels
like forever!!

Social Science is:

- Underfunded
- Poorly contracted
- Being appropriated

So What is the Problem Here?

- Social science research is missing out?
- Social science is not performing?
- Non-response to the realities of social science in NZ?

The Missing Out Theory:

- No CRI
- No NSOF funding
- But
 - Cross-departmental research fund
 - FRST - contestable & consortium
 - Marsden
 - Health Research Council
 - BRCSS
 - University research funding
 - Other commissioned research
 - CHRANZ
 - Internally funded & provided research

Not Performing Theory:

- There are examples of:
 - Poor quality
 - Poor timeliness
 - Non-delivery
 - Poor take-up
 - Lack of relevance

Not Performing Theory cont:

- But two other phenomenon at work:
 - End-user failure
 - Not research ready
 - Lack of institutional knowledge and records
 - Poor contracting practices
 - Lack of relevance
 - Too much reliance on short-term relevance

Not Responsive to Social Science in NZ Theory:

- Lack of acknowledgement of its complex position
- Social science research
 - Self-supply
 - Product supply
 - Knowledge supply
- Social science funding is both contestable and captured.

Self-Supply Research

- Government agencies
- Local government
- Certain agencies
- Business
- Universities (?)

Product Supply Research

- CRIs
- Universities
- Dedicated research agencies
 - Private companies
 - Community
 - Trusts

Knowledge Supply Research

- Universities
- Some CRIs
- Some dedicated research agencies.

Captured and Contestable Funding

In 2006:

- Social science research funding in tertiary education sector - \$50-\$120 million
- Government Agencies - \$40-\$60 million
- Science system - \$13-19.1 million (direct)
\$18 million (indirect)
- Other - not known

What does this Complexity Mean?

- Colonisation and appropriation
- 'Fit' tension
- Poor assessment of:
 - Capacity
 - Skill
 - Performance
 - productivity.

Colonisation and Appropriation

- Redefinition of social science research to application of techniques
- Quality issues
- Undermines inter-disciplinary programmes

'Fit' Tensions

- Associated with cross-subsidisation
- Poor end-user and provider interface around:
 - Scope
 - Timeliness
 - Science
 - Independence

Poor Assessment

- Tarred with the same brush
- Real scientists and knowledge
 - versus information gatherers
 - versus consultants
 - versus applied research

Private Sector Dedicated Research Providers

- Impacted most
- Resilience is continually compromised
 - Little ability to cross-subsidise
 - No access to transition funding unlike CRIs
 - Not recognised for stable funding platforms
 - Price pressed
- Squeezed between Universities, CRIs and non-research consultants

Yet Dedicated Social Science Research Groups:

- Provide hands on skill development and job opportunities
- Considerable research experience both pure and applied
- Project management skills
- Potentially lower overhead structures
- Cross-disciplinary team-based experience

In 2006 the Social Science Reference Group Recommended both:

- New Initiatives
- Improvements to current practice

New Initiatives Recommendations

- Funding the establishment of an Academy of Social Sciences to act as a *'front door' to the social science and evaluation communities*
- Establishing and fund a new output for social science contributions to *inter-disciplinary research*; and
- Increasing funding for *strategic* research and flexibility to accommodate *investigator-led research*

Improvements to Current Practice

Recommendations included:

- Encourage the adoption of policies within departments to fund research on a full cost basis
- Explore a mechanism to provide for capability investment in the wider social sciences community similar to the science system 'Capability Fund'.

Recommendations cont:

- Enhance the evaluation of social science components of broader research bids.
- Encourage greater involvement of tertiary sector and private research practitioners in CDRP research.