

# The Social Science Data Archive in Slovenia

Here we present the activities of the Social Science Data Archive (ADP) in Slovenia. There are still few such archives, which form the basic infrastructure of national research work, to be found in Central and Eastern Europe. In the process of setting up, a data archive may draw on the experience and support of similar institutions abroad, but the receptivity of the home environment is essential, as discussed in the introductory section. The kinds of past and present research that set a special stamp to the ADP's collection are described in the following in order to spur interest in using the material it is available.

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## Introduction

The Social Science Data Archive (ADP) was established on 8th July 1997 by the Senate of the Social Sciences Faculty (FDV) of the University of Ljubljana. As of autumn 1999 the ADP is located in the Faculty's new building, on the second floor, above the above the Joze Goricar Central Social Sciences Library. The work of the ADP is supervised by the ADP Council. An advisor in the Ministry for Science and Technology (MZT), which is responsible for the information infrastructure, is authorised to follow the ADP's activities. As a specialised scientific information centre in the field of the social sciences, the Archive is financed from the budget under a contract with the Ministry. In the case of special development, research or educational projects the Archive seeks support offered in public notices. The Archive also derives part of its income from services rendered and remuneration for the use of its database (see *Arhiv družboslvonih podatkov* 2000). Besides general restrictions related to ethical rules for the use of data, the Archive may impose special restrictions on access to particular units of material for different types of users. Materials are usually available free of charge and without restriction for educational purposes, while each unit of material is expressly labelled to indicate whether or not the author's permission must be obtained for use for public or profit-making purposes. Users are obliged to cite the author and the Archive when publishing any of the material.

The ADP has been a member of the Council of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA -<http://www.nsd.uib.no/cessda/>) since 1999. CESSDA provides

support in the establishment of new archives, particularly in the form of advice and job-training. The ADP has adopted the method of work common in archives with a long tradition such as the German ZA - Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung and the UK DA - United Kingdom Data Archive with modifications to suit conditions in a small country. Co-operation with CESSDA also means that Slovenian data stored in the ADP is at the disposal of researchers and other users around the world. Similarly, the ADP mediates access to material in other countries for its local users.

The main obstacle to greater international utilisation of Slovenian research material is language. However, English-speakers are advised to consult the ADP Study Descriptions, which are also written in English and contains short summaries, descriptors and other information about the research, to choose materials. The next step is to contact the ADP staff who will advise them or arrange for a translation of the required material. When the study is a Slovenian part of some comparative international research in most cases an equivalent to it can be found in the English originals without much difficulty.

The ADP's basic function is to store and protect data from damage so that it will be available for secondary analyses in research or for teaching purposes. For the foreign as well as the local user the first question, of course, is how to get data on the data, namely on the study materials the ADP houses that are pertinent to his or her current research purposes. This can be done by searching a new catalogue on the Internet, NESSTAR - Networked Social Science Tools and Resources (<http://www.nesstar.org/>). In view of its small size, the ADP has opted for the greatest possible standardisation of its procedures to assure a comparable form of documentation and description of the data stored. It was amongst the first to adopt the metadata standard developed in the framework of the Data Documentation Initiative (<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/DDI/codebook.html>). Together with the Document Type Definition (DTD) this has allowed the machine-readable social science codebook to be filled in XML - eXtensible Markup Language (Stebe, Omerzu 1999). Standardisation of procedures enables the efforts of larger archives to

construct tools and user-tailored services like NESSTAR to be pooled.

NESSTAR which was being developed with EU sponsorship and through the co-operation of several partner social sciences data archives, in effect amounts to a virtual data library. The ADP has been able to join this project thanks to its admission to CESSDA and because it has adopted the new DDI DTD data description standard completely. The catalogue allows to search in several archives simultaneously at the level of research description, methodology, and variables of the database, on-line exploratory statistical analyses of the selected database and the ordering data by electronic means for deeper analysis are possible.

### **The Data Holdings**

The importance of an archive is judged by the value of the material it houses. The ADP rests in particular on the rich and long tradition of the Slovenian school of empirical sociology which took shape through the work of the Institute for Sociology and Philosophy (ISF) established in 1959. The ISF launched several classical-type studies, which blazed the way both thematically, and personally for particular lines of research which continue to this day, although under different institutional conditions. The main research topics of the ISF were as follows: local communities and spatial sociology, quality of life and social stratification, customs, lifestyles, and especially the influence and use of the mass media, attitudes and values, family sociology, the study of fertility, youth, industrial sociology and so on. Thus, surveys conducted in the sixties and seventies represent a unique source of data on various social phenomena that may serve as starting-points for comparisons over time (Stebe 1999). Researchers like Stane Saksida, Katja Boh, Zdravko Mlinar and Niko Tos were trained in this period and went on very actively into further empirical research which steadily built up long thematic series.

Amongst the most outstanding research is the Mass communication media survey (MKS; Vreg et al. 1962) which was one of the first strictly-designed empirical surveys on mass media and more broadly, on lifestyle, personal use of time, and quality of life in Slovenia. Thematic links to this research may be traced along the line of social stratification to the survey in the seventies on Social stratification and Mobility in Yugoslav Society-SSM (Saksida et al. 1974) which covered Slovenia and Macedonia. In the eighties there was an extensive comparative project encompassing the federal republics and provinces in the former-Yugoslavia. The class structure of the former Yugoslav society was studied in the eighties with the survey "Class Composition of Contemporary Yugoslav Societies (KB)" (Jambrek, Tos et al. 1987). At the end of the eighties and in the nineties this topic was echoed in various sections of related surveys on the Level of Living Survey (LOL) (Svetlik et al. 1994), the Interna-

tional Social Justice Project, 1991 (ISJP 1991) and surveys on the topic of inequality in the context of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP 1992,1999) in which Slovenia has been participating fully through the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey (SJM) since 1990. Another extensive project, related in type to the foregoing in that data on habits and changes in social structure predominates, is the Migration project dating back to the seventies (Tos 1974, 1976a, 1976b). This data is stored in the ADP.

The ADP is endeavouring to gradually include all major past studies into its collection. This undertaking is obstructed in many cases because data and documentation has been lost, even in cases when the ADP has managed to reach the main researcher. This is unfortunately the case with the MKS and SSM survey cited above. Data was best preserved when international comparative research was involved. Thus, thanks to foreign archives already in operation in the sixties, Slovenian data for the following surveys has been preserved: TBS - the Time Budget Survey (Szalai et al. 1966), an exceptionally well-crafted, extensive and well conducted survey on the way time is used; IW2000 – Images of the World in the Year 2000 (Boh 1967) which yielded unique data on the youth of the time through thematically-based questions on future expectations and values regarding peace; Democracy and Local Governance - International Studies of Values in Politics a frequently cited survey which also dealt with methodological problems in comparative research of most different social and political frameworks of local democracy such as in the former Yugoslavia (and Slovenia) and India on one side and the USA on the other. (Mlinar et al. 1966 - 1991); in the same way, Political Participation (Barbie Boh et al. 1971) was a major project at the time when comparative research was flourishing. The participation of Slovenian researchers in them shows that they were able to communicate with researchers abroad and capable of achieving the quality standards required in conducting research and presenting data.

The importance of continuity for the safeguarding of data is demonstrated by two examples of research that were designed longitudinally and therefore ensured the preservation of the raw data for their own purposes. The first is the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey (SJM) (Tos 1968 - 1999), which is the best-known and most extensive empirical research in Slovenia. In type it is comparable to the general social surveys abroad and to a great extent it has served in the omnibus design as an infrastructure for fieldwork on individual thematic chapters of deepened conceptually based research. In addition to this, the survey contains topics related to current affairs at different cross-sections and so it reflects politologically relevant attitudes and opinions at particular times. Some of these are more interesting for comparisons over time while others are related to the institutional context of the previous system that collapsed after 1989. Another major survey that has

been preserved in the ADP is the "Level of Living Survey in Slovenia (LOL)". The most recent replication of it was in 1994 (Svetlik 1994). Conceptually it is modeled on the Scandinavian surveys on subjective assessments of quality or satisfaction with living in various respects such as residential conditions, employment, and leisure time, in comparison with indicators of objective living conditions. Both series are now fully accessible through the ADP. The Archive's own contribution is a cumulative Slovenian Public Opinion 1990-1998 Database (Tos 1999) which has been created by combining series of more than 100 identical variables from the SJM surveys from the period between 1990 and 1998. Thematically it is encompassed in the Politbarometer Section. Other domestic serial surveys which continuously generate new data are the research on the Internet (RIS) (Vehovar 1999 for the latest of the series) and the Youth (Ule 1985-1999).

The criteria of relevance of a study for secondary analysis include: the data refers to the general population, the sample is random and sufficiently large, the topics are unique and refer to important issues both substantively and in terms of applicability, and most notably, comparability across time and space. In line with the policy of giving priority to research that according to these criteria is the most interesting for re-use, the focus is placed on acquiring new data from extensions of serial surveys and from international comparative surveys that include Slovenia. Thus the ADP promptly obtains data from the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer Survey (CEEB) (Cunningham 1997, latest in the series), the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP 1999), the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) (Dijk, Mayhew 1997). It also applies for other well-known surveys within international projects like the Fertility Behaviour of Slovenians (Kozuh-Novak et al. 1998), the Aufbruch - New Departures†'97: International Research on Religion and Attitudes toward the Church (Tos et al. 1997), the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES 1996) - and the European (World) Values Survey (Tos 1999).

To increase the diversity of the subject fields the ADP is negotiating with the Criminology Institute of the Law Faculty, the Pedagogic Institute, the Andragogic Centre, the Centre for Local Communities, and the Defense Studies Centre, which are also major producers of empirical social surveys in Slovenia, to deposit their data in the Archive. The ADP is also linking up with the SICRIS (Slovenian Current Research Information System which makes available information on current research projects in Slovenia; See: <http://sicris.izum.si/>). The authors of research projects financed from public research funds are obliged to make empirical data from the research available to other interested users. The ADP will collect and disseminate it. The very best gauge for the ADP, that data is worth collecting, is of course the expressed interest in it shown by users looking for data from particular surveys.

In acquiring new material it is important to widen the circle of donors outside the academic domain especially to market research institutions and government agencies which have many interesting databases suitable for re-use. An agreement has been reached with the Republican Office of Information on the use of data from surveys on the EU and the monthly Politbarometer series of surveys (PB). Often social scientists have difficulties obtaining access to government statistical data and one of ADP's priorities is to define with the Office of Statistics the accessibility of its data in a form suitable for use in the social sciences. Since 1990 independent commercial market research institutes have been established in Slovenia, which produce different kinds of surveys for particular clients which are also interesting for re-use.

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