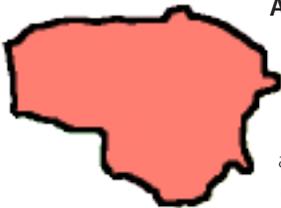


Exploring Qualitative Longitudinal Research and Qualitative Resources

THE LITHUANIAN CASE by Jurate Butviliene and Tomas Butvilas¹



Abstract

Within this paper the situation of qualitative longitudinal (QL) research and archiving systems in Lithuania is presented along with an overview of existing research cultural issues and trends. It is highly important to stress that qualitative longitudinal research in this country is experiencing a new prominence as for many years the quantitative tradition was predominant in the scientific community. Finally a few statements will be made on possible constructive ways to develop further existing resources and infrastructure for qualitative archiving and for QL research and resources.

Keywords: Qualitative longitudinal research, archiving system, social science data archiving, qualitative resources management, Lithuania.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, there have been numerous high-level qualitative research studies made by Lithuanian scientists, especially in the social sciences of Sociology, Education and Political Sociology (e.g., value studies, regional and urban studies, migration issues, attitudes towards careers among school teachers, elite studies, attitudes towards EU integration etc.). However, according to Krupavicius and Gaidys (2009), the situation in Eastern European countries is almost completely different to that of Western Europe, since

social science data archives, as a necessary element of science infrastructure, are almost non-existent or are still in the early phases of development. In many cases in Eastern Europe empirical data for social sciences are still available through various widely dispersed institutions or through individual contacts². This difference is certainly not due to the dearth of empirical social science or empirical data sets, but rather because of a lack of legal and institutional arrangements and funding capacities to promote a regular process of social data archiving as well as access to this data by a broad community of social scientists within different countries and from abroad according to clear and transparent rules. Lithuania is not an exception in this. Moreover, Krupavicius and Gaidys (2009) go on to note that Lithuania is lagging behind such countries as Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia and Romania, which already possess the basic structures of social science data archives. This slower development in the area of social science data archives in Eastern Europe, and for Lithuania in particular, needs to be considered in terms of a few major variables in order to achieve change and formulate adequate solutions or policy decisions.

There are few official documents signed by government representatives that support a social science data archiving and sharing policy. However, various European projects sustain this whole process and help to further develop its infrastructure. There

is the Lithuanian Humanities and Social Science Data Archive (LiDA) that was initiated in July 2006 as a two year national level project with objectives for "Storage and administration of empirical data and information for Lithuanian humanities and social science data." The project has been supported by the EU European Social Fund. The project has been implemented by Kaunas University of Technology Policy and Public Administration Institute in partnership with Vilnius University, Institute for Social Research, the Republic of Lithuania Ministry of Education and Science. The project was completed in September 2008³.

There are some official documents regarding national policies on data archiving and sharing, i.e. Resolution No. 1389 dated November 22, 1996 of the Government of Lithuania "Regarding the order of distribution of legal deposit copies of publications and other documents to libraries" (Žin, 2006, No. 136-5170)⁴. This document assures the following activities take place: i) performs control of free legal deposit copy delivery to the National Archive of published documents; ii) stores and preserves documents published in Lithuania and other documents with national content; and iii) stores and preserves web documents in the Archive of Electronic Resources. Less than a decade ago on-line resources were non-existent in Lithuanian libraries. Lithuanian participation in eFL.net⁵ opened access to affordable on-line resources for Lithuanian researchers, students, and the general public⁶. Expenditure for on-line resources is included in annual statistics and the evaluation of libraries (especially the academic ones) also takes these figures into consideration. As eFL.net grows to meet the evolving challenges of electronic resource acquisition and management, so the Lithuanian Research Library Consortium member libraries' expands its range of activities in partnership.

The aim of this paper is to present the situation regarding qualitative longitudinal research and archiving systems in Lithuania and also to discuss possible means to sustain and develop this quite new phenomenon in the national and local social science culture. Two main methods were chosen: i) scientific literature analysis, evaluation, and interpretation and ii) law acts and normative documents analysis, comparison, and their dissemination in written format.

Lithuanian qualitative archiving infrastructure and main empirical research institutions

As Glosiene (n.d)⁷ states, the landscape of continuing professional development (CPD) for Luxembourg Income Study (LIS)⁸ is rather heterogeneous in Lithuania. There are several important institutions in the network. The main state-supported institution for CPD of public librarians as well as for museum cultural center workers is the Cultural Ministry that offers training courses only for one segment of the LIS community – public libraries; academic, school and special libraries are not offered CPD courses. The second institution is the Martynas Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania⁹ (NLL). It is a responsibility of the NLL to provide both support and training to different libraries in different fields, public ones first of all but also to the school libraries to a certain extent. The Center for Librarianship which is a part of NLL offers lectures and seminars on the actual topics of libraries' activities and their modernization but they are organized as a part of methodological support activities and do not fit into the concept of CPD precisely. The Lithuanian Central State Archive¹⁰ has been a member of the International Federation of Television Archives (FIAT/IFTA) since 2004¹¹. The institution's audiovisual holdings consist of film, sound and video recordings as well as photo documents. The division of Image and Sound is the main repository of cinema heritage in Lithuania and holds a total of 7.612 titles: Lithuanian chronicles from 1920-1940,

chronicles of the Second World years, diverse Lithuanian newsreels and sketches from the post-war period, Lithuanian feature films, documentaries of independent film studios and individual creators, starting from 1991.

The Lithuanian music libraries network consists of over 150 different libraries possessing music stocks¹². Libraries belonging to research library system - the National Library, Vilnius University Library, Library of Lithuanian Academy of Science and Library of Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre - have the most important holdings of music documents. The National Library is the leading library in the country and the Music Department of the National Library provides professional assistance to the network of music libraries in order to introduce music specification into the field of library science and activity. The music document stocks are formed by integrating specialized and universal library functions and holdings contain all forms of music documents such as printed music, manuscripts, audio video materials, books, serials etc. The main sources of funding of those institutions are as follows: i) the Lithuanian Government (i.e. Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science and the State Fund of Science and Studies); ii) EU project funds; iii) private funds (rarely). A detailed map of main empirical research institutions in Lithuania is given in Appendix 1 of this paper.

Qualitative longitudinal (QL) data

As Chenail (1992) emphasizes, much of qualitative research is dominated by research traditions from education, sociology, and anthropology. The researchers from these fields favor such methods as ethnography, participant observation, and naturalistic inquiry. In addition to these popular methods, qualitative research can also include methods from fields such as communication (i.e. discourse analysis or conversation analysis), literature (i.e. narrative analysis or figurative language analysis). Valantiejus (2005) adds to this that contrary to the popular definition of qualitative research as the new mode of cognition, we can see qualitative method as having at its essence the concepts of hermeneutics, pragmatism, and radical micro-sociology. Thus it becomes more important to analyze QL data collecting and archiving issues and consequently to consider strengthening this position in Lithuanian social science data research.

Development planning or steps to consider

Although in recent years Lithuania has made obvious progress in the development of the information society, much still has to be improved in order to achieve an inclusive information society in which everyone can participate on equal terms¹³. Among the principal targets there are widespread installation of broadband access, the development of e-content and e-skills, as well as motivating inhabitants to take up new e-services and measures aimed at enabling them to do so. Another important area for attention to accelerate the participation of target groups at risk of exclusion. Thus existing organisations such as IASSIST and CESSDA could certainly strengthen Lithuanian present institutions and research centres that mainly concentrate on furthering their substantive and methodological programmes. Also support from international agencies and funders would be much of help for the Lithuanian Department of Statistics that collects and disseminates important national information via different channels.

According to Krupavicius and Gaidys' (2009), the international dimension of the development of the Lithuanian Social Science and Humanities Data Archive (LiDA), mentioned earlier, is especially important for: i) enabling free access to existing Lithuanian and international empirical data and ii) sharing expertise obtained through cooperative agreements with similar academic service organizations abroad. Such

international agreements help to attract more material and intellectual investments from all domestic institutions. Moreover, the capacity of LiDA to facilitate access by Lithuanian scholars to international empirical data holdings and research development know-how is seen as a way of building confidence and consensus among domestic Lithuanian institutions for the process of forming and expanding a national data archive. Thus participation of LiDA in collaborative international projects could help to create a resource base for linking qualitative and quantitative research data, even though there are still differing opinions as to the importance of these two research strategies in the social sciences (Bryman, 2008; Denzin, 2008 et al.). Finally, international cooperation is almost a precondition in order to obtain sufficient funding from national and international sources for the further development of LiDA as well as for qualitative data archiving.

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7. See at: <http://tlc.shu.edu/doclib/data/doc/glosiene.1176321015.pdf>
8. The Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) is a cross-national Data Archive and a Research Institute located in Luxembourg [taken from: <http://www.lisproject.org/>].
9. More at: <http://www.lnb.lt/lnb/selectLanguage.do?language=en>
10. More at: <http://www.filmarchives-online.eu/partners/lithuanian-central-state-archive>
11. Further information at: http://www.filmarchives-online.eu/partners/lithuanian-central-state-archive/view?set_language=en
12. See at: <http://www.iaml.info/activities/lithuania/2006/report>
13. See at: <https://countryprofiles.wikispaces.com/Lithuania>

Notes

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2. Similar positions were publicly shared during the Bremen workshop (2009) from other countries representatives, e.g., Poland, Finland, Switzerland, and Czech Republic etc.
3. More at: http://www.lidata.eu/en/page.php?page=apie_projekta
4. For further information see: http://www.lnb.lv/lv/bibliotekariem/konferencu-materiali/20070420/regina_varniene.pdf
5. eIFL.net is a not for profit organisation that supports and advocates for the wide availability of electronic resources by library users in transitional and developing countries. Its core activities are negotiating affordable subscriptions on a multi-country consortial basis, supporting national library consortia and maintaining a global knowledge sharing and capacity building network in related areas, such as open access publishing, intellectual property rights, open source software for libraries and the creation of institutional repositories of local content [taken from: <http://www.eifl.net/cps/sections/about>].
6. See at: <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla74/papers/148-Banionyte-en.pdf>

Appendix 1

Main Empirical Research Institutions in Lithuania

	Institution	Data collections since/ remarks
Lithuanian Academy of Sciences	Institute of Philosophy, Sociology, Lithuanian Academy of Sciences	Late 1960s; sociological and demographic research data
	Institute of Economics, Lithuanian Academy of Sciences	Since the 1970s
	Institute of Social Studies	A successor institution to the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology, Lithuanian Academy of Sciences; since April 1, 2002
	Kaunas University of Technology	Since the 1970s; sociological and political research
Universities	University of Klaipėda	Since the 1990s; sociological empirical research
	University of Law (present Mykolas Romeris University)	Since the mid-1990s; sociological and political empirical research
	University of Šiauliai	Since the late 1990s; sociological empirical research and educational sciences
	University of Vilnius	Since the 1970s; sociological and political research
	Vytautas Magnus University	Since the 1990s; sociological empirical research
Statistical offices	Department of Statistics	
Other government and non-government institutions	Lithuanian Bank	
	Ministry of Finance	
	Ministry of Health Care	
	Central Electoral Committee	Since 1992
	Lithuanian Free Market Institute	Since 1990
International organizations	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), International Monetary Fund, Transparency International, Population Activities Unit of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, International Organization of Migration etc.	Various years
	Baltic Surveys	Since 1992
	Vilmorus	Since 1993
Private institutions of public opinion and market research	Social Information Center	Since 1993

Source: Krupavicius, A., Gaidys, V. (2009). *Empirical Social Research in Lithuania*. Interactive: <http://www.cee-socialscience.net/archive/empirical/lithuania/report1.html>