The thesis forwards sociological reflections on the dialogue on volunteerism and development discourses – particularly the underlying assumptions of organized volunteerism and the factors affecting the discursive changes associated with it – through the experiences of organized volunteering groups. This is inspired by the recent international and national directives/laws declaring volunteerism as a strategy for development. Using grounded theory methodology and pakikipagkuwentuhan, the research explored the experiences of volunteers and program managers of Jesuit Volunteers Philippines, Associate Missionaries of the Assumption, University of the Philippines – Los Banos Ugnayan ng Pahinungod, and Dynamic Teen Company.
Findings show that the dialogue between volunteerism and the development discourse has placed organized volunteerism in a struggle to balance two dimensions of impact: personal formation (transformation of volunteers), and the strategic or social impact of their work on the communities they serve. However, not all organized volunteering groups exhibit the same intensity of the struggle. The intensity of the prioritization for either dimension depends on the declared organizational goals and the pragmatic considerations in the communities as managers and volunteers try to operationalize formation through the concrete change-making works of the volunteers in concrete situations and communities.
Moreover, the thesis explores the change processes associated with organized volunteering work as strategy for development. The process is highly pragmatic, wherein volunteers share their knowledge and skills, social capital, and inspire some members of the community by expanding lifeworlds of the people the volunteers work with. In understanding and making sense of the volunteer experience, the volunteers and managers generally refer to Filipino cultural concepts, while in more concrete discussion, the volunteers refer back to the declared institutional values espoused by the organized volunteer associations.