

Board paper 2013.7

Proposal to organize CPRsouth9 as part of a LIRNEasia proposal to build research capacity on systematic review method

For the first time since January 2007 when we held the first board meeting, we are meeting without any formal assurance of funds to hold the next conference.

When the Board met last in Port Louis, Mauritius, we had an intense discussion on future funding of CPRsouth in the absence of continued IDRC support. I continued the conversation by circulating a discussion paper entitled “The future of CPRsouth.” Based on a number of useful comments for Board members as well as from our sister organizations and new data, the paper was revised. It is attached as Annex 1. The revised paper was sent to IDRC to serve as the basis for a discussion on future funding.

However, the conversation was postponed. It was then suggested that we might consider writing a concept note quickly for some funds that had to be pushed out quickly. This could not be for CPRsouth per se; but for a research project that could include funding for it. The concept note that we quickly pulled together cleared the first screen. The result was the proposal briefly described below:

Communication Policy Research (CPR) communities in Asia and Africa seek to facilitate the emergence of policy intellectuals who can take evidence to policy and regulatory processes. LIRNEasia wishes to create the conditions for the members of these communities to learn about systematic review (SR) techniques through formal training, the conduct of SRs on four development-related questions by a subset, additional learning through discussion of the studies and the method at the 2014 CPR south conference and the dissemination of the findings of the completed systematic reviews.

The proposed multi-faceted learning about SRs will provide a sound foundation not only for those selected to engage in the four studies, but to members of the larger CPRsouth community who will be able to participate in one or more of the components, despite not doing the research per se. The infusion of SR knowledge into the CPRsouth community will improve the rigor of the research generated by CPRsouth members, even if not all may be able to mobilize the required resources. The four studies address important but not fully settled development related questions dealing with payments, small, medium and micro enterprises, education and how they are impacted by applications of information and communication technologies (ICTs). In addition, the efficacy of reforms in ICT infrastructure will be systematically reviewed, for insights into broader infrastructure reforms. The research will be conducted by geographically dispersed teams selected at a training course and coordinated by research managers and experts from among LIRNEasia staff and fellows.

Systematic Reviews (SRs) “originated in the field of medicine where a need arose to systematically bring together the available evidence, particularly of clinical trials. Since then, other fields including social

science have begun to adopt the methodology. The primary studies included in a systematic review are selected using strict pre-determined inclusion criteria appropriate for the research question. The primary studies need to clearly demonstrate the impact and causality pertaining to the specific intervention/s identified in the research question. The methods used to conduct the review are transparent so as to allow for future replication, if so needed. This is done by explicitly defining the procedures in the form of a protocol document.”

It is possible that a decision on this proposal will be communicated by the time of the Board meeting. In the event the decision is positive, the following decisions would be required from the Board:

1. Approve the organization of CPRsouth9 in a manner that gives center stage to the Systematic Reviews done under the above project, including panel discussions by experts and invitees on the pros and cons of the method.
2. Approve the conduct of the tutorials in the form of a training course in SR.
3. Conditionally approve holding CPRsouth9 in South Africa as a joint conference in the event RIA receives funding; if not, the conference will be held in Thailand or Sri Lanka.

In the event the decision is negative, we will continue to seek funds. Any help that the Board can give will be greatly appreciated.

The future of CPR*south*

Rohan Samarajiva¹

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¹ The paper has greatly benefitted from detailed comments from Ashok Jhunjunwala, Johannes Bauer (TPRC Chair), Robin Mansell (EuroCPR scientific advisory committee head), Hernan Galperin (DIRSI and ACORN) and Reg Coutts (CPR*south* Board member). The research was produced by the Human Capital Research Program at LIRNE*asia*, headed by Sujata Gamage, and includes contributions by Nilusha Kapugama and Ranmalee Gamage.

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Introduction

It has been seven years since we at LIRNEasia conceptualized CPR*south* as our principal capacity-building vehicle (See Annex 1). From the beginning we wanted it to be owned by more than just us. We believed that such a broad-based “ownership” structure would be more conducive to success and to sustainability. That broad ownership now exists. There are many understandings of what CPR*south* is, what it could become, and what its problems are. The original design set out in Annex 1 has been subject to multiple modifications. This is progress.

We need the broadest participation to solve the immediate problem of lack of success in generating significant funding support from within the Asia-Pacific and gradually declining funding support from our funder, IDRC.² We are now receiving co-payments from participants amounting to around USD 5,000 from paper-givers and young scholars per conference and also contributions in kind from local hosts.³ Yet, we still depend on a funder based in Canada in order to develop policy intellectuals in the Asia Pacific.

We welcome multiple understandings. But does not mean that all understandings are equally valid. We must look for those that mesh with facts on the ground. They will help us get to the next stage.

Production of policy intellectuals

We identified a problem, a paucity of policy intellectuals. We proposed a solution: CPR*south*.⁴ This was not something that came from the demand side: from policy makers, regulatory agencies, or even from suppliers of ICT services. It came from a think tank, supported by a funder.

Here is the first contrast with TPRC. Forty years ago, the people entrusted with communication policy making at the Nixon White House wanted to have access to a group of policy intellectuals and started TPRC. They spent the money to get it organized. For decades, up to the middle of the 1990s, participation in TPRC was subsidized by government agencies and foundations through direct grants.⁵ I

² IDRC appears to like what we are doing at CPR*south*. But due to an internal reorganization, our subject matter is given less emphasis within IDRC now. We do not expect the funding to stop in the coming 2-3 years, but acting as though it will is a wise course of action, as we have been told by our colleagues at TPRC who went through such a transition. In any case, it is prudent to assume that funding will taper off when a donor has been supporting an activity for seven years.

³ The contributions from participants have amounted to 6-7 percent of the total costs since CPR*south*⁵ when participant contributions were first introduced. Local hosts have contributed another 6 percent or so since CPR*south*². For the past three conferences, IDRC's contribution has been 85-87 percent of total costs.

⁴ See Annex 1 for the relevant excerpt of the original proposal.

⁵ Johannes Bauer, current Chair of TPRC comments: “It goes back to the 1960s, when Lyndon Johnson established the President’s Task Force on Telecommunications Policy, headed by Undersecretary of State Eugene V. Rostow, already including many of the experts who later would carry TPRC. The Nixon White House worked with some of the Task Force recommendations and under the leadership of Clay T. Whitehead, the Office of Telecommunications Policy (OTP) was created as part of the Executive Office of the President. If I read the history right, it was the frustration of the folks working at OTP that policy-makers were largely deaf to their suggestions combined with the fact that OTP had a research budget that could also be used for conferences that led to the first two “Conferences on Communications Research” took place at the Executive Office Building. Beginning in 1974 the

first attended TPRC as a graduate student in 1984. It was held in the luxurious surroundings of Airlie House in rural Virginia. I did not pay to attend. I did not pay even the airfare from Vancouver.

Positive externalities and subsidies

What does this indicate? TPRC's existence was seen as having significant positive externalities. Therefore, it was supported with tax-payer funds. But then, over time, the public support declined and disappeared. Now, it is supported primarily by registration fees made by members. No longer is there a focus on plenary sessions; now the conventional economics of conferences are in effect. More registrations mean that the fixed costs can be covered and perhaps even some surpluses generated. So now the incentives are to permit as many papers as possible, using multiple break-out sessions.⁶ Occasionally, speakers are said to outnumber the audience, but who can complain?

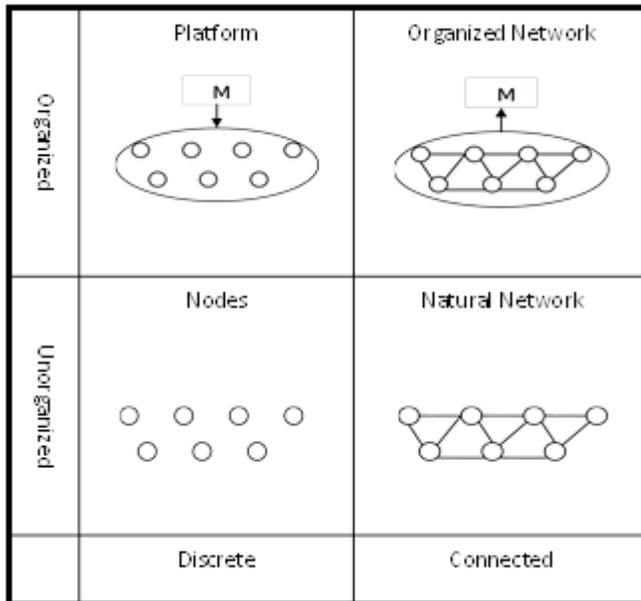
Even now, the payment model involves "subsidies," here defined as payments made by entities other than the direct beneficiaries of the networking opportunities afforded by the conference. This recognizes that the production of policy intellectuals still has positive externalities. But now the "subsidies" come mostly from the organizations (i.e., the universities) that the paper-givers belong to. There are a few sponsors who contribute to the common costs of the conference.⁷

conference was organized independently although OTP provided partial funding. Later, government agencies such as the FCC, NTIA, and NSF provided partial funding. For a while, funds came from the Markle Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Aspen but in the 1990s these sources re-prioritized so that the conference had to become financially self-sustaining in other ways. Eventually, free registration and paid travel for paper presenters were abandoned but the goal to keep registration fees as low as possible remained. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, TPRC experienced a financial crunch and had to again reorganize. Less lush venues, gradually the acceptance of sponsorship, parallel sessions etc. as you describe. At some point, four papers were slotted per session (but we reversed that policy going back to three). The expansion of parallel tracks was more motivated by the interdisciplinary diversity than maximizing participation."

⁶ However, Bauer says that the breakout format was driven by interdisciplinarity, not the need to give a speaking slot to most of the registrants, especially those who needed to give a paper to receive funding from their universities.

⁷ It could be argued that the registration fees are cost-based. Who pays the registration fees and travel costs is immaterial to TPRC as an organization. At the end of the day, they get a certain number of participants; they cover their costs; in some years they run a small surplus; in other years a small deficit. I use the term subsidy to indicate that the participants rarely pay for the costs of registration, accommodation and travel. Their organizations pay all or part of those costs.

Figure 1: Forms of knowledge networks



Source: Gamage, Samarajiva & Kapugama (2012)

In the case of TPRC, the process began in the lower-left quadrant and moved in a clockwise direction. The US government acted to form the discrete nodes, first into a platform (upper-left quadrant) and then into an organized network (upper-right quadrant), where incentives were created for the participants and their parent organizations to want to contribute to the sustenance of the managerial entity. In the platform stage, there is a manager (M). Resources are pumped in by the Manager from external sources (indicated by the downward arrow) who believe that policy intellectuals are needed. In the organized-network stage, the participants and their organizations see enough value in the annual gathering to pay for the manager and the conference, as indicated by the upward arrow. It is possible that TPRC could move to the lower-right quadrant to become a natural network. Here, there would be no need for the external stimuli of a conference or a manager. The network would exist, naturally. In the context of the Internet, this is not an unrealistic outcome.

So, can TPRC be emulated? Let's look at EuroCPR. Its design was inspired by TPRC and its predecessor, the UK CPR was created with some support from the demand-side. When the UK entity converted itself to EuroCPR there were subsidies from the European Commission,⁸ but they did not last as long as the US subsidies. Eurocrats also recognized the existence of positive externalities in the production and sustenance of policy intellectuals, but they accelerated the process of moving to the upper-right quadrant.⁹ EuroCPR seeks to run on fees paid by participants (actually contributions from the

⁸ E.g., no-cost conference space.

⁹ From Robin Mansell, the Chair of the EuroCPR Scientific Committee: "Actually EuroCPR has no 'parent' organization. For a time it was 'owned' by ENCIP which was a membership organization although for most of its lifetime the small number of founding members were the only ones who contributed substantially to the running costs of its secretariat. Except for funding expenses of invited speakers, EuroCPR operated on the basis of cost recovery via conference fees. As far as I know it also always had an independent (of ENCIP) scientific committee

universities and research organizations that employ the participants) but is having a much tougher transition, partly because of resistance to the conventional economic model and partly because of the lack of economies of scale. An additional problem was that of bringing in new members.

In the case of *CPRsouth*, there was no overt demand for the production of policy intellectuals from any of the governments of the global South. It was completely supply-driven. We wanted to show them the value of producing policy intellectuals. We found that there weren't enough policy intellectuals in the ICT space in the Asia Pacific (Samarajiva & Gamage 2007; Gamage & Samarajiva 2008). So instead of just creating a platform for bringing them together to build an organized network, we had to start at a more basic level: training and motivating junior and mid-level scholars. It is not that there were no senior scholars in the region. But no one submitted abstracts, except to *CPRsouth1*. It could be argued that we excluded the most important senior scholars by appointing them to the Board. But those who were not appointed to the Board (which was, at the start, nine versus the current maximum of 25) did not submit either.

One unexpected outcome was that we will have to wait longer to demonstrate policy impact. It is simply not realistic to expect young people in their thirties to break into the circles of policy influence immediately.

Table 1: Average ages of paper presenters & young scholars

	Paper presenters	Young Scholars
<i>CPRsouth1</i>	37	30
<i>CPRsouth2</i>	36	29
<i>CPRsouth3</i>	33	32
<i>CPRsouth4</i>	36	27
<i>CPRsouth5</i>	35	30
<i>CPRsouth6</i>	34	30
<i>CPRsouth7</i>	37	28
<i>CPRsouth8</i>	33	30
Average	35.1	29.5

and chair (Nick Garnham, now me). EURO CPR has never tried to scale up beyond the open full plenary session model with the exception of a few years when it experimented with parallel sessions and a slightly higher number of participants. It is now back to open plenary style and a small number of participants – in this sense it never tried to emulate TPRC though there was discussion on and off of doing so. EuroCPR struggles with the need to engage Brussels and European national policy makers and needs to do better at this than it currently is doing. In tension with that desire is the need to maintain the ability to attract good papers which offer at least some critical perspectives. Last year the decision was taken to move the conference to Brussels, shorten the format, and proactively try again to engage with Brussels policy makers. We will see how this latest experiment goes. I think it is fair to say that there is demand for individual academics by Brussels policy makers in some cases and some of these participate in EuroCPR (or at least have done so historically) but even after all these years, I would not say there is demand for EuroCPR. It is a long road ... to influence through a collective forum. EuroCPR is now entirely without subsidy from the EC but it has been quite successful year on year in attracting small subsidies from corporate entities thanks to the efforts of various members of the scientific committee and the conference organizing committees (which have changed over time).”

Source: Gamage, Samarajiva & Kapugama (2012)

So, it is going to be difficult to demonstrate value quickly. But even if this were possible, we would face some significant problems.

Mismatch with funding entities

CPR*south* has a fundamental (and unavoidable for an Asia-Pacific regional organization) design flaw. It lacks fit with a national government (like the US Federal Government in the case of TPRC) or a supra-national government entity (like the European Commission in the case of EuroCPR). Who is to recognize the value of the positive externalities produced by it? National governments are unlikely to support the creation of positive externalities for other economies. Except for ASEAN, which seeks to become an Economic Community by 2015, there is no supra-national entity that has reason to subsidize a regional capacity-building initiative like CPR*south*. There may be some possibilities in Africa, such as COMESA and SADC, and in the Pacific and in Latin America. But each of these requires fragmenting the existing network. The direction is opposite to what we have been trying to go in the past three years; Not covering the Global South, but focusing on regions smaller than the Asia-Pacific (roughly 4 billion people) and Africa (~1 billion people).

IDRC, our principal funder, saw the value of positive externalities from the creation of policy intellectuals on a regional basis. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank and DFID may. But that is about it. JICA may be willing to host an event in Japan, as would other national funders. Ford Foundation was a pioneer in field building and a natural candidate to support CPR*south* like activities, but it appears that they are focused on specific countries at this point.

The question of time

Subsidies are essential to successfully traverse the upper-left quadrant. But they are not needed for ever. If the connections that are fostered in the formative stage are beneficial to the participants they could continue as a natural network (lower-right quadrant) without the need for external resources or support a conference and a managerial entity as an organized network (upper-right quadrant). The Upper Right quadrant is the most familiar form for those in universities. The problem is that its success depends on two conditions: (1) the development of a critical mass of participants that are worth being in a network with, and (2) the willingness and ability of organizations such as universities to pay for participation in the organized network.

The first condition can be measured through citations. A start has been made with papers submitted to CPR*south* conferences.¹⁰ It can be extended by studying the citations of all publications by CPR*south* members.

A full 43 percent of those who attended the past four conferences did not have any citation relations with any others at CPR*south*. There were no co-authorships other than among those from the same

¹⁰ This work is being extended to TPRC and EuroCPR conferences, so that the internal connectedness of the three networks can be compared.

organization. The strongest relationships (cited and citing) were found among five authors who belonged to the administrative partner, LIRNEasia, and its sister organization in Africa, RIA.

Table 2: Citation analysis of CPRsouth 4-6 (paper givers only)¹¹

CITING ONLY (Authors citing others)	18	23%
CITED ONLY (Authors cited by others)	23	29%
CITED & CITING (Authors citing and cited)	5	6%
NO CITED OR CITING (Authors with no citations in or out)	34	43%
ALL	80	100%

Source: Gamage, Samarajiva and Kapugama (2012)

Analysis by Pham, Derntl and Klammer (2012) of 20 years of data from a series of interdisciplinary conferences suggests that mutual citation takes longer in interdisciplinary groups. When that study is used as a benchmark, it appears that significant progress has been made by CPRsouth in a relatively shorter time. However, further in-depth analysis is required before reaching definitive conclusions.

The existence of the second condition is difficult to ascertain. It may be assumed that the organizations of participants from higher-income and upper-middle-income countries will be able and willing to pay and that over time, those from other countries will also be able to pay.

Table 3 shows the numbers of abstracts or paper proposals received and accepted. The available evidence does not suggest that there is a huge demand among potential policy intellectuals within the target countries for the services offered by CPRsouth.¹² Unless the numbers of paper proposals from scholars in the target countries can be doubled or tripled within the next two years, it is unlikely that the phase transition to an organized network can be successful.

Table 3: Abstracts/proposals received & accepted, CPRsouth 1-8

	Number of abstracts/research proposals	Number of papers accepted	Acceptance rate
CPRsouth1	51	19	37%
CPRsouth2	65	20	31%

¹¹ Work is underway to (a) include the senior scholars on the Board in the citation analysis; and (b) compare the citation patterns of recent CPRsouth conferences with those of contemporaneous TPRC and EuroCPR conferences.

¹² It has been correctly perceived that the language of the call for papers did not encourage applications by scholars from the developed countries outside the Asia Pacific. While the funding rules were open at the start, they have been increasingly tightened to focus resources on lower-middle-income and low-income economies within the Asia-Pacific region. Observations of responses to other policy related conferences such as ITS (India, 2012 and Thailand, 2012) suggest there is little or no demand for conferences that require senior scholars to write papers that will be subject to competitive selection and to bear their own expenses. Our Latin American counterpart ACORN appears to have cracked the submissions problem: according to Galperin, they receive around 100 submissions each year.

CPRsouth3	85	19	22%
CPRsouth4	75	21	28%
CPRsouth5	81	20	25%
CPRsouth6	101	20	20%
CPRsouth7	63	15	24%
CPRsouth8	41	15	37%

Robin Mansell, the head of the scientific committee responsible for selecting abstracts for presentation at EuroCPR, points to a problem about attracting paper proposals: “For better or worse the actual number of abstract proposals for EURO CPR has varied substantially and in recent years is not high. One good reason for this is that people know that the format is very different – max of only 12-14 accepted for in-depth discussion at each conference – with the chances of selection so low I think people learn that they only submit if they are really very keen to participate. A negative reason is that it is not seen as being sufficiently influential or scholarly – that is something that needs to be addressed. On the plus side the abstracts from younger scholars are increasing in the last couple of years which is a good sign of interest.”

To not have a lot of paper submissions is acceptable if the authors have self-selected and are submitting only their best work. EuroCPR appears to be happy they have achieved this outcome. The quality of papers has gone up at CPRsouth over the years, but it may be too early to claim satisfaction about the quality of the submissions and the presented papers as Mansell does.

Plans for the future

Plan A: Continue

If sufficient funds are raised from within the region(s) there is a possibility that donor funding could continue for the present model. There appears to be a body of practice within IDRC that recognizes the benefits of capacity building in mixed groups, where some participants come from relatively advanced countries and others from less-advanced ones. Interest may be stronger if the Asia and Africa cross-fertilization continues to be a central element of the activity.

Cost control and generation of local contributions are very important. The process of reducing (and better targeting of) subsidies started with CPRsouth5 in 2010. All participants except Board members and resource persons pay registration fees now. Partial reimbursement of travel for those from higher-income countries will, with effect from CPRsouth8, be replaced by no funding for participants from upper-middle income and higher-income economies as defined in

<http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending->

[groups#Upper middle income](#). Those from lower-middle-income and lower countries will continue to have most of their costs met, except for airport transfers, visa fees and the registration fee.

For Plan A to succeed it is very important that expectations be realistic. It is not correct to judge a marathon runner in the first few minutes of the race by standards applicable to a sprinter. Even TPRC and EuroCPR, which attract senior scholars (in contrast to the 35 year olds attracted by CPR*south*) and which have clear loci of policymaking in Washington DC and Brussels, respectively (which CPR*south* does not have), would be hard pressed to demonstrate influence. But the key point is that CPR*south* is in the business of capacity-building for policy influence, and not in the policy-influence business per se. We have to judge CPR*south* using the appropriate criteria.

Plan B: Accelerate the phase transition

Plan B is to seek continued support from current funder until CPR*south* 10 in 2015 September, along with additional funding contributions from participants in the form of registration fees and forgone payments for visas, airport travel, some meals, etc. The holding of two separate conferences for Asia-Pacific and Africa or a consolidated conference will be negotiated with IDRC by LIRNE*asia* and RIA. The format will be more or less unchanged.

The assumption here is that 10 years is enough to complete the transition from platform (upper-left quadrant) to organized network (upper-right quadrant). After celebrating the 10th anniversary, the format of the conference will be changed to one that seeks to attract significantly larger numbers of participants who will be accommodated in parallel sessions, still within two or two-and-a-half days. One day of tutorials will be offered for an additional fee.

The subsidies will be phased out. With effect from CPR*south* 8, no travel funds will be provided to participants from upper-middle income and higher-income economies as defined in <http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups#Upper middle income>. For CPR*south* 9 and 10, only 50 percent of travel funds will be provided to participants from lower-middle income economies. After CPR*south* 10, no travel funds will be provided. This will extend to board members as well, though it may be possible to support some travel for those teaching revenue-generating tutorials.

Subsidies will be sought from external funders to support local hosting costs and conference management. It is expected that these funds will taper down over time, requiring the recalibration of registration fees upward from the present nominal amounts.

The success of Plan A can only be seen after CPR*south* 12, in 2017. Revenues and costs will be highly uncertain. A stable revenue stream will require strong participation from high and upper-middle-income economies. However, the evidence shows that participation from these countries decreases rapidly as the subsidies are withdrawn.¹³ The rankings-driven universities of high-income Asian economies are likely to privilege disciplinary conferences over interdisciplinary and policy-focused conferences, as is evident from the comments of several Board members.

¹³ For example only three out of 15 papers at CPR*south*7 were from scholars who had to pay half their travel.

Therefore, it will be necessary to obtain some kind of cushion funding from external sources for the 2015-17 period if LIRNEasia is to manage the experiment.

Plan C: Regionalize CPR

India

India has a population larger than that of Africa (1.2 billion v slightly less than 1 billion). It has a more developed tertiary educational structure, though the social science side is weak. There is precedent in the Joint Telematics Group (including five IITs and the Indian Institute of Science Bangalore) that grew out of a thrust area in the 1985-90 Seventh Five-Year Plan. It can easily support a CPR network if it so wishes. If this course of action is selected, the present format will be continued until CPRsouth 10 in 2015 while exploratory work is done on starting CPRindia in 2016.¹⁴ Evidence of the efficacy of the model will be generated based on data from 8-10 years of CPRsouth will be used to make the case to the Government of India on the need for support.

If CPRindia can be started in 2016 with government subsidies, the decision on format will be left to negotiation between the manager (which does not have to be LIRNEasia) and the Government of India.

A proposal developed by LIRNEasia for Ford Foundation, India in 2011 for a CPR network for India can serve, with updates and modifications, as the basis for approaching the Government of India.¹⁵

ASEAN

ASEAN has the potential to support a regional CPR. LIRNEasia does not have the necessary connections within ASEAN and has not put in a lot of thinking. For this initiative, a different person/entity from within the ASEAN will have to take the lead.

Pacific Islands

A third possibility is to work with donors such as the World Bank, ADB and AUSAID to develop a platform such as CPRsouth, albeit with a much stronger capacity-building component, for the Pacific Island States. This meshes with the ideas behind the establishment of the Pacific ICT Regulatory Resource Center (PiRRT) currently managed by LIRNEasia at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji.

East Asia-Australia-New Zealand

A fourth option is to develop a CPReastasia that would cover the countries of Australia, New Zealand, Korea, Japan and Taiwan. There may be interest in taking this forward among Australian decision makers. There is no match between the proposed geographical scope and a functioning regional economic association. However, the resources available to these countries and the sophistication of their policy and regulatory systems are such that a regional CPR initiative may be supportable.

¹⁴ The existence of a well-known think tank with the acronym CPR has to be worked around in establishing CPRindia.

¹⁵ The unsolicited proposal was unsuccessful because Ford said at that point that capacity-building was outside the scope of its present activities.

Plan C requires considerable resources to implement. In fact, the most LIRNEasia can do, even if adequately resourced, is to work on CPRindia and CPRpacific. The ASEAN effort will have to be led by someone else. There is very little LIRNEasia can contribute to an East Asian initiative.

Suggestions have been made that there would be value in an overarching “keeper of the brand” and resource center that can support the regional CPRs. Any such entity would have to be financially supported either by the regional CPRs or by an external funder. The layers of complexity involved appear to make this suggestion not very feasible in reality.

Options summary

Plan A continues the status quo, with improvements as has been the case so far. Its viability depends on the success of the Asia-Africa collaboration in the next few years. Other factors include success in raising local funds, demonstration of increased efficacy in terms of output by participants and improved quality.

Plan B requires that we force the phase transition. In my assessment, it is unlikely to succeed in terms of keeping the lower-middle-income and low-income countries involved. It is most likely to settle at an unstable equilibrium serving a small number of upper-middle-income countries. The focus will very quickly shift from the production and sustenance of policy intellectuals to helping university academics and graduate students to advance their careers and their sponsoring universities to increase their publication numbers.

The components of Plan C, on the other hand, have a greater chance of success and are likely to yield greater development outcomes. The success of each of the components will require considerable effort. At most, LIRNEasia may be able to handle two components, India and the Pacific Islands. Ideally, members of the Board will take ownership for different parts of the transition plan beyond 2015.

There is also an implicit Plan D, which is to run CPRsouth as best as we can up to 2015; conduct a thorough assessment of the 10 year action research project; celebrate its achievements and spread the learning at the 10th Anniversary Conference; and shut down the entire enterprise. Of course, this is just from the perspective of LIRNEasia. No reason why someone else cannot pick up the baton and complete the race.

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ANNEX 1: ORIGINAL DESIGN OF CPRSOUTH (EXCERPT FROM 2006 PROPOSAL TO IDRC)

5.3 A capacity and field building program to develop an Asia-Pacific knowledge network on ICT policy and regulation supported by LIRNEasia as a viable virtual organization; with lessons being drawn for developing effective knowledge networks and virtual organizations

LIRNEasia conducts its research through a virtual organization of researchers (in the first year, 10 researchers from five countries; already additional researchers have been recruited for the second year from six countries) and LIRNEasia is actively engaged in mapping the knowledge networks in ICT policy and regulation¹⁶ as well as fostering their development through university and other partnerships.¹⁷ In its second year, this area will be an active research focus, in conjunction with implementation actions.

The task of capacity building has always been an important component of LIRNEasia's mission (see Section 1.0 for details) and that of its parent network LIRNE.NET¹⁸ and it is one that has been emphasized repeatedly by IDRC in its interactions with LIRNEasia. LIRNEasia has put a considerable amount of collective thought into the design of its capacity building component,¹⁹ in addition to drawing from the Executive Director's experience as the President and Vice-Chair & Chair-Elect of telecom-related divisions of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) and the International Communication Association (ICA), as well as his experience on the Information Technology and International Cooperation (ITIC) Committee of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). He was also a participant-observer in the rise and fall of the Center for Advanced Study in Telecommunications at the Ohio State University, and been associated in various ways with similar centers at Columbia University, University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Southern California. He also investigated the funding of a similar center, now dormant, at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, by CIDA in the 1990s.

He has, in addition, participated in the activities of the Telecom Policy Research Conference (TPRC) in the US from 1984 onward, on two occasions exercising the responsibilities (significantly greater than in other

¹⁶ Gamage, Sujata and Samarajiva, Rohan (2006). From Capacity to Presence: Research on Information and Communication Technology Infrastructure Reform in the Internet Age, Manuscript submitted for publication to *Information Technology for International Development*, MIT Press: Boston; preprint available at <http://www.lirneasia.net/2006/02/internet-presence-of-telecom-researchers/>

¹⁷ In the first year, LIRNEasia made presentations at the Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and TamKang University, Taiwan ROC. At TamKang and at a specially organized event in Bangkok, faculty from multiple universities were invited to participate. Discussions on possible forms of collaboration were held with the Annenberg School for Communications at the University of Southern California and the London School of Economics and Political Science. These actions were not covered by a line item in the grant budgets and were therefore directly funded by LIRNEasia.

¹⁸ <http://lirne.net/live/content/section/5/29/>

¹⁹ E.g., <http://www.lirneasia.net/2005/02/colloquium-feb182005/>

organizations) of session chair. He has participated in the activities of Euro CPR (TPRC's equivalent in Europe) to a lesser degree, but knows the issues around its emergence and consolidation through key actors such as Bill Melody, Nick Garnham, Robin Mansell, Paschal Preston and Pascal Verhoest. He has benefited from the experience of Bill Melody and Robin Mansell (close colleagues since 1980s) in the setting up the PICT network of ICT research centers in the UK and Bill Melody's experience with CIRCIT in Australia.

The most important lesson drawn from this multifaceted observation of the successes and failures of institution building centered on ICT research and associated capacity building is the necessity of separating organization building from network building. An organization must have focus; entry must be selective; values must be held in common; leadership matters. A network on the other hand must give primacy to accommodating multiple interests and parties and must not have rigid entry/exit barriers.

LIRNE*asia* is an organization, albeit virtual (see Annex 5). It has always emphasized a focused and internally coherent and complementary set of research activities, adherence to common values and has declined proposals for funding that did not fit its priorities (e.g., from Asia Pacific Development Information Program (APDIP) in 2004). Effort has been made to identify and discuss common values (see Annex 6). Much weight is given to the quality of recruits and to their productivity. Significant efforts have been and are made to build team spirit and common values.²⁰ The first year's record supports the claim that a focused and disciplined organization can achieve significant results in certain areas such as influencing policy and producing high-quality research in a short time, even in difficult environments.

LIRNE*asia*'s mission to build capacity requires field building. If the objective is to create policy intellectuals capable of informed and effective intervention in ICT policy and regulatory processes in specific country contexts, it is not enough to recruit or "repurpose" an elite group of tightly organized researchers. There should be a sustainable system for producing and reproducing such policy intellectuals. This requires the active participation of universities, especially at the post-graduate levels and the emergence of a field as the larger environment within which university-based programs flourish, both in terms of the essential function of peer review and in terms of intellectual exchange and support. Given the shallow depth of the intellectual environments in most countries of emergent Asia, this requires supranational field building.

The emergence of fields is something that happens or is actively done. The urgency of grappling with the emerging challenges of alleviating poverty and improving life chances in a rapidly globalizing economy requires active field building. LIRNE*asia*, with its structured form, can play an important role in field building, as long as the organization is not conflated with the field.

²⁰ Team building trips and various collective activities have been organized in addition to the regular, monthly colloquia.

The fastest method of field building requires the participation of high-quality universities, the buy-in of senior and respected academics, and money, as demonstrated by the Ford Foundation and SSRC in their successful field building initiatives. Money is short in the present instance and so are the other ingredients, though to a slightly lesser degree. Another difference in the US environment is that scholarly networks exist, even prior to the commencement of the field-building initiative. So, for example, the TPRC relied on existing networks among economists, policy scientists, and communication scholars in its “field building or sustaining” activities.

In the case of ICT policy and regulation research in Asia, there was very little to start with. The knowledge mapping exercise that was undertaken in relation to the Jakarta network meeting,²¹ demonstrated that

- There was a dearth of ICT policy and regulation researchers connected to Asia;
- The quality of their output was not high;
- The researchers lacked adequate SSCI [Social Science Citation Index] or web presence;
- They were not adequately connected to each other either through co-authorships or citations; most of these relationships being with those outside the region.

What is proposed is a systematic approach to field building, starting from a more thorough and comprehensive knowledge mapping (using a broader sieve than was used in the first attempt and supplementing the previous methods with questionnaires to elicit information on young scholars and graduate students who were previously excluded) and centered around an annual research conference that will provide a focus for intra-Asian (and intra-South) connections among scholars engaged in ICT policy and regulation research. While LIRNE_{asia} will provide the required support functions for three years (subject to availability of resources), the governance of the conference and the associated field-building activities will be in the hands of a self-perpetuating but changing Board of Directors (modeled on TPRC). The model of conventional academic associations is inappropriate for the task at hand. They are democratic in nature (office bearers elected by members) and are sustained by payments from members and subsidies from universities and other organizations that employ the members. However, this yields highly diffused conferences with low quality control, which are not conducive to field building.

It is to be noted that CPR_{south} serves a function distinctly different from the WDR Expert Forum. The latter is intended to engage the consumers of WDR research, and is generally held in conjunction with a course or a similar event that attracts policymakers, regulators and private sector decision makers. After funding was not made available for a WDR Expert Forum in Asia in 2005, the Forum was included as part of the LIRNE.NET executive training course in Singapore in September 2005 (this will be repeated in 2006). Unless the considerable logistical difficulties of organizing the WDR Expert Forum as a side-event of ITU Telecom World in Hong Kong in December 2006 are surmounted, it will not be possible to attract a quality audience of research consumers in 2006.

²¹ <http://www.lirneasia.net/2006/02/internet-presence-of-telecom-researchers/>. Only some of the findings have been written up in the article submitted for publication. The rest is being written up as a second article.

CPR_{south} has some similarities with the network meeting that was funded by PAN in Jakarta in October 2005. The difference is that there will be prior solicitation of papers from within the mapped knowledge network (in Jakarta, only the invitations were issued on the basis of the mapping) and a greater degree of structured interaction as against the broad discussion of research priorities.

In TPRC and Euro CPR, the tradition is to limit the number of papers strictly and to privilege plenary sessions over parallel sessions. In the case of TPRC, chairs of sessions are given discretion (and in some years, funds) to invite papers as well as accept proposals, leading to highly coherent sessions that include the leading researchers in the sub-field. CPR_{south} will adopt similar practices to ensure optimal contribution to field building. While the focus will be on Asia-Pacific, a limited number of invitations will be issued to the sister networks in Africa and Latin America, in the hope of broadening the scope of the event in the future.

The activities will include:

- Conducting a systematic knowledge mapping exercise to identify current and potential ICT policy and regulation researchers in universities, research organizations and elsewhere. This work will build on the preliminary research conducted in 2005 and the results of which are under consideration by *Information Technology and International Development*.²² The baseline, which will include new components such as the identification of fresh PhDs and graduate students in major Asian and other universities and measures of quality, will be completed in the first half of 2006 and will be updated at periodic intervals subsequently.
- Organization of a conference in Manila in October 2006, “Communication Policy Research: South 2006 (CPR_{south} 2006),” as an integral component of the knowledge mapping work.²³ CPR_{south} 2006 will be modeled to some extent on the Communication Policy Research Conferences in Europe and the US.²⁴ Active researchers in addition to those directly working on LIRNE_{asia} projects will be recruited beforehand to organize and chair sessions (senior) and present papers (junior). The purpose is field-building in the area of ICT policy and regulation research in the Asia-Pacific and other developing countries, including the establishment of mentoring relationships.
- The inclusion of a pre-conference to the Manila conference, intended for young scholars, especially graduate students. A majority of lecturers will be those attending the conference. Depending on

²² <http://www.lirneasia.net/2006/02/internet-presence-of-telecom-researchers/>

²³ The name of the conference and its governing body have been selected to convey the commonality of function with TPRC and Euro CPR. These events are well known amongst researchers. Therefore, there is value in using a name that will connote the similarities and leave open the door to future cooperation. Of course, the final decision on the name will be taken by the Board that will meet for the first time in Manila. The conference is for researchers, scholars and students and the name has to be selected with this group in mind.

²⁴ <http://www.encip.org/eurocpr.php>. *A Novel Conference: The Origin of TPRC [PDE]*, by Bruce M. Owen from the book: [TELEPHONY, THE INTERNET, AND THE MEDIA](#) Selected Papers from the 1997 Telecommunications Policy Research Conference. Edited by Jeffrey K. MacKie-Mason, University of Michigan and David Waterman, Indiana University. <http://www.tprc.org/TPRC.HTM>

the response to this event and the availability of funds, another pre-conference event may be organized in conjunction with CPR_{south} 2007.

- Commencement of the process of institutionalizing CPR_{south}, including establishing a constitution, a board of directors,²⁵ a website for self-archiving of publications and conference papers, and a business plan for sustaining the organization and the conference. LIRNE_{asia} will serve as administrative partner for CPR_{south} for three years in the first instance and will also assume fund-raising responsibilities for that period.²⁶
- Organization of follow up conference, CPR_{south} 2007, in September 2007 at a location to be determined to consolidate CPR_{south}.
- Commence efforts to establish a partnership with an Asian university with regional ambitions and willing to commit resources to research and teaching on ICT policy and regulation.²⁷ To the extent possible, the CPR_{south} activities will be enriched by, and support, university relations being developed by LIRNE_{asia}.
 - University relations may include the hosting of post-graduate students with strong Asia-Pacific links and whose proposals are acceptable to LIRNE_{asia} for research projects in Sri Lanka in the first instance, but ideally, with LIRNE_{asia} researchers wherever they are located.
- Offering of an executive training course on regulation and reform (inclusive of a WDR Expert Forum); best efforts will be made to establish this course as a regular annual event offered in partnership with a leading regional regulatory agency and possibly a university (as was the case in 2005). IDRC co-sponsorship in 2005, in the form of scholarships that did not include travel, allowed the broadening of the participant base beyond well-funded regulatory agencies and operators to civil society and universities and ensured a good gender balance.²⁸ The course itself is self-financing and attracts participants from government as well as from the private sector. The objective in 2006 is to shift from the pattern of ad hoc offerings to regularity. If the IDRC so desires, the scholarships can be targeted to a priority area such as the Greater Mekong Region or the “Stans” in Central Asia.
- Commencement of an active research and implementation program on LIRNE_{asia} as a virtual organization that will on one hand support and enable the above capacity building activities and on the other produce usable research on the best use of ICTs and organizational practices to facilitate decentralized conduct of research and its management. The multi-component, six-country study

²⁵ It is intended to constitute a separate board of directors for CPR_{south} that will direct the annual conference and provide oversight to the website. It is proposed that the first Board be made up of nine persons, three appointed to three-year terms, three to two-year terms and three to one-year (renewable) terms in the first instance. As the vacancies arise, the Board shall make new appointments for three-year non-renewable terms. The indicative membership of the founding Board is Ashok Jhunjhunwalla (Chair; India); Ledivina Carino (Alternate chair; Philippines); Rekha Jain (India); YuLi Liu (Taiwan); Myeong-Cheol Park (South Korea); Milagros Rivera (Singapore); Rohan Samarajiva (Sri Lanka); Xu Yan (Hong Kong); Patrick Xavier (Australia).

²⁶ The administrative partner model is based on the manner SAFIR [South Asian Forum on Infrastructure Regulation] was built up in 1999-2006 with TERI as administrative partner. A similar arrangement exists for Euro CPR.

²⁷ LIRNE_{asia} engaged in a months-long relationship building exercise with Nanyang Technological University in Singapore in 2005 that included full-day research presentations to identify areas of common interest, multiple visits, and finally sponsorship by NTU of the LIRNE.NET regulatory training course held in Singapore. The partnership did not materialize because Nanyang's priorities could not be shifted to include ICT infrastructure policy and regulation issues of relevance to emerging Asia and because it had no scholars working on these subjects. Since February 2006, LIRNE_{asia} has initiated a process to explore the possibilities of partnering with the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the National University of Singapore. The first research Dialogue is scheduled for 21 April 2006.

²⁸ The course had 36 participants from 18 countries. Of this number, 12 were women (33%). Thirteen (37%) were from non-profit, non-government institutions, including universities.

described above will be the core case study for this. The study will be conducted with the assistance of a consultant ethnomethodologist with experience in dealing with physical-space and virtual-space interactions.

- Recognizing that virtual interactions must be supplemented by periodic face-to-face interactions for effective working relationships and the important feature of face-to-face meetings in enabling the focusing of attention (weakly present in virtual modes of interaction), the virtual interactions will not fully replace face-to-face meetings.