

Eliminating Global Barriers:
The International Association for the Study of Common Property's (IASCP)
Regionalization Program

Michelle Curtain
Executive Director of the International Association for the Study of Common
Property
Indiana University
Gary, Indiana USA
mcurtain@indiana.edu

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Eighteen years ago, a panel was formed by the National Research Council (NRC) to study the Common Property Resource Management movement. The panel members discovered that conversations about common property resources (CPRs) were occurring in all parts of the world among an interdisciplinary group of practitioners and scholars. As a result of their findings, the panel organized a conference in 1984 on the study of common property. The 1984 conference brought together an interdisciplinary and international group of CPR "thinkers". The excitement that manifested during this meeting led to the founding of the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP), just five years later, in 1989.

During the last eighteen years, many developments have taken place in the CPR world - numerous CPR-related organizations have emerged, the study of CPRs has expanded, and numerous reports on common property have been produced. However, IASCP has virtually remained the same. In some regards our stagnancy has been good. For example, over the years, IASCP has maintained its goal of diversity. Presently, we have over 1,000 members in 70 different countries around the globe. We continue to fulfill our goal of disseminating information on the study of common property through our quarterly publication *The Common Property Resource Digest*. We support in-house and digital CPR libraries at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis at Indiana University. We hold biannual meetings that bring together scholars and practitioners from around the world to encourage networking and to share knowledge on CPRs. However, in 1999, a decade after our founding, we realized several things. First, there was a realization that we were not capitalizing on the diverse make-up of our organization. For example, upon review of the roster of our past executive council members, one notices that ninety percent of past councilors have been from the United States of America or Canada. Thus, leadership and organizational direction have been largely

centralized between two countries. Secondly, we realized that we were more international in name than in practice. At that time, five out of seven of our international meetings had been held in North America, and our then-upcoming eighth meeting was being planned for Bloomington, Indiana in North America. And, finally, we realized that the globalization movement was forging ahead and leaving the IASCP behind trying to figure out how to be more globally inclusive and how to eliminate existing global barriers. Therefore, in 1999, with a grant from the Ford Foundation, we started our regionalization program. The program was initiated in order to further increase the globalization of the IASCP.

According to Rosenau (1996), globalization is an interactive set of three processes: the spread of knowledge among diverse peoples about each other; the weakening of boundaries, resulting in a more unified world; and the blending of communities, societies, and their institutions. In developing our regional program, we have attempted to embrace Rosenau's conceptualization of globalization through the practice of decentralization. Decentralizing IASCP activities has presented us with numerous opportunities and many challenging experiences. Although the globalization movement of the nineties led to increases in technology with faster, more efficient, and cheaper modes of communication, global barriers still exist. In fact, it is the very nature of our organization, the study of CPRs, which takes many of our members away from these modern conveniences and places them in remote sites without access to modern devices such as electronic mail and fax machines. In addition to communication challenges, we have also encountered language barriers (CPR terminology and languages spoken), which have affected participation in our activities. In order to overcome these challenges, the development of IASCP activities in different regions of the world hinges on our ability to encourage indigenous knowledge, participation, and activities by:

- expanding conversations and broadening our range of networks between practitioners and academics worldwide;
- eliminating language barriers by supporting publications and information-sharing in local languages; and
- creating opportunities that will allow information to be shared faster and easier at local levels.

During the past year, we have attempted to establish a global foundation by encouraging various activities to fulfill our goals of further internationalizing the IASCP. First, we identified regional editors from Brazil, Mozambique, and India to contribute to our quarterly CPR publication. Secondly, we encouraged the development of steering committees in Southern Asia, Southern Africa, and West Africa to work towards developing regional nodes and to organize planning meetings for specific IASCP activities in these regions. And finally, thanks to the efforts of our Regional Representative for the Pacific, John Sheehan, we are all participating in our first IASCP regional meeting.

In this upcoming year, it is our goal to improve and extend our international links and activities in Southern Asia, Southern and Western Africa, Latin America, and in the Pacific. I hope that many of you will join John and our other regional representatives as we work towards empowering the community of resource dependent constituencies by expanding the awareness and relevance of studies of common property around the world.

Reference:

1996 (September). Rosenau, J. The Dynamics of Globalization: Toward an Operational Formulation: Security Dialogue, 27:3, 247-262.