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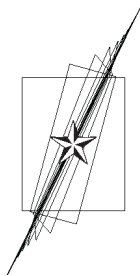
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From the Editor

The Asia-Pacific Innovations Forum—An Emerging Event, Some Birthing, and Future Challenges

For some years now, the De La Salle University (DLSU) (Philippines) and the King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (KMITL) (Thailand), which are among the top-ranked higher educational institutions nationally and regionally, have been collaborating on a number of academic activities. In 2017, their representatives—Dr. Myla M. Arcinas and Dr. Melvin Jabar (DLSU) and Dr. Samart Deebhijarn and Dr. Puris Sornsaruht (KMITL)—including me, had sat down and discussed the annual conduct of a joint conference called **Asia-Pacific Innovations Forum (APIF)**.

While countries in the Asia-Pacific have been carrying out innovations from innumerable fields and disciplines for several decades already, little is publicly known about the extent, intensity, and impact of their innovative efforts. We thus wanted to bring academics, researchers, and innovators together to APIF so that they get to share, discuss, and critique with one another these innovative endeavors, including their pathways and ways forward. We envision APIF to be socially inclusive, that is, to cover innovations from all fields and disciplines, such as the natural sciences, social sciences, business and finance, management, law, education, computer sciences, communication, engineering, and humanities. In fact, the diversities and multiplicities of innovations emanating from a wide spectrum of disciplines that APIF is conceived to have, gave us the reason to use the plural word “innovations” to emphasize the array, as well as the variabilities of life-changing efforts prevailing in our midst. Moreover, we use the word “innovations” here to refer not only to new or improved material products but also to new or improved ideas, methods, or processes, albeit we argue that non-material innovations must need to be transformed first into concrete acts or outputs themselves if they were to impact human lives. Likewise, we conceive APIF to be a catalyst for breaking down the barriers between and among fields and disciplines, a process that can help foster further interest in and action on cross-overs. In this respect, we converge at APIF, as earlier implied, all categories of innovators to enable them to discourse and connect with one another in one single physical space, but on the expectation that they use a language that everyone understands.

Our inaugural edition of APIF was held on January 24–25, 2018 in Pattaya, Thailand. We had 60 participants during this round. Of that number, roughly three dozens were paper presenters who discussed topics revolving around innovations, mainly in business and finance and in the social sciences. We selected the best papers at APIF and serially published them across 2018 in the four editions of the *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review (APSSR)*, the Forum's publication partner. Our second edition of APIF took place on June 13–14, 2019 at the KMITL campus, literally a stone's throw away from Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, Thailand. In this edition of APIF, we had around 160 participants, about half of whom (n=86) presented their paper/s on wide-ranging topics on innovations in health, business and finance, education, tourism, environment, social media, social relationships, and personality development. Papers adjudged as best have been identified and already queued for eventual review and publication in the APSSR.

Between these two editions of APIF, we more than doubled the numbers of participants, paper presenters, and topics. We attributed these increments to our implementation of more focused and more active marketing and

promotion strategies. For example, when we announced the 2019 APIF, we stressed its open-endedness—that APIF covers all types of innovation, including those in the non-material category, and involves all categories of innovator from all fields and disciplines. We are uncertain if the best paper selection and publication in the APSSR was a significant force to drawing greater participation and outputs, the same way that we are unsure as well if the new timing of APIF (June rather than January) could have also played a part in the process (too early to say of their effects but we would like to find out if these are indeed crucial factors). However, for the 2019 edition, we optimized our use of the social media (read: our numerous Facebook groups and pages) to drum up awareness about the conference in both the Philippines and Thailand, and we are convinced that our social media mileage was likely a game-changer for 2019 APIF. The two base countries of APIF are rabid users of Facebook. As reported in the APSSR's September 2019 Data at a Glance edition, 100% of the Internet users in the Philippines and 87.7% of the Internet users in Thailand are using Facebook (<http://apssr.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/DAAG1.pdf>).

Expectedly, in both the 2018 and 2019 editions of APIF, the participants came predominantly from the Philippines and Thailand, particularly from DLSU and KMITL, respectively. To be noted, however, is that, in 2019—at least in the case of the Philippines—we had some intra-country movement in terms of the number of participants from other domestic universities (e.g., Lyceum University of the Philippines) and government agencies (e.g., Department of Education and Philippine Public Safety College). The number of participants from outside DLSU had certainly grown along with that of the size of the DLSU contingent. We maintain that, at this early stage of the birthing process of APIF, we should not worry too much about the diversities, or lack thereof, of the regional, national, and institutional compositions of our participants. Given the numerous conferences available to many academics, researchers, and civil servants nowadays, it would be challenging for emerging events such as APIF to abruptly draw broad-based participation from institutions, groups, and individuals within and across countries in the region. We know that APIF, as a regional event, must diversify at some point.

We do not claim we know how to improve APIF so that its participant base broadens to cover the Asia-Pacific. On the Internet, there are available broad guideposts to making conferences successful in this respect, but there is no guarantee, really, if taking some or all of them would bring positive results. Each conference has a distinct selling point. We could tweak some of our marketing and promotional strategies here and there to draw region-wide participants. However, our experience and wisdom dictate that gimmickry could only go far in the long term. Like other successful conferences, APIF must have an inherently-attractive feature to be able to attract sustained and broad-based participation. It behooves us, therefore, to ascertain APIF's unique character and to enhance and use it to our advantage. Certainly, the Internet and social media shall serve as our vital infrastructure. Equally important is the need for us—the original conceivers and implementers of APIF—to remain as its voices and actors for the long haul. Mainstays are crucial for the long-term viability of a major endeavor.

APIF can very well learn from the decades-long experience of the APSSR on how the latter had succeeded in regionalizing and diversifying the composition of its authors and manuscripts after more than a decade. From being a college-based journal initially, the APSSR had grown into a university-wide journal (i.e., manuscripts received came from DLSU faculty and researchers), and later into an intra-country journal (i.e., manuscripts received now came from DLSU and non-DLSU faculty and researchers in the Philippines), and now into a regional (Asia-Pacific) journal (i.e., manuscripts received are also coming from other countries, such as India, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam). There are indications that the APSSR, with the diversities of manuscripts submitted to its fold daily from various parts of the globe, has already begun to assume the status as a multi-regional journal (i.e., manuscripts received are now coming from the USA, United Kingdom, and Russia). The pathways for these planned transitions had revolved and capitalized around the APSSR's distinctive and unique character, set of dedicated editor-in-chief and support staff, optimal use of the social media and the Internet, and lack of any article publication charge, which is a social equalizer especially for academics and researchers from many emerging economies. The current regional status of APSSR is what APIF should seek to achieve several years from now, following the mentioned pathways. When that time comes, APIF should have already been included in the Scopus database, with a regional stature in the true sense of the word, where its participants or authors and presentations or papers are as diverse as that featured in the APSSR. In the foreseeable future, we shall report about APIF, including the processes and lessons related to its transition

and the roles and dynamics of key influencing factors. APIF's experience would be informative for other groups out there who are likewise seeking to organize their own conferences and make them successful. We contend that APIF has very bright prospects.

Latest Scimago (2018) data have now categorized our APSSR as Q1. We thank all the authors, editors, publishing administrators, and layout artists for their selfless contributions. Please continue submitting your manuscripts and keeping our journal much more active and useful. Visit our online sites, <https://apssr.com> and <https://www.facebook.com/DLSUAPSSR>.

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