

# The Coming Asian Pacific Community and its Implications for Planning; An Open Opportunity

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## I. Introduction

All of the political leaders of the world now recognize that a "New World Order" is coming, regardless of their preferences for past arrangements. They are not helped by the incompleteness of the perspectives offered by independent political pundits, so that there is no clear view of what is likely to be a stable global structure.

The flood tide of political and economic change immediately associated with the collapse of the Soviet system of power, the Gulf War, and the stagewise dissolution of the Communist Parties must pass under the bridge occupied by observers before they can make downstream projections. Even then estimations must be fragmentary, as compared to those prepared in the past. However, a piece of the picture is already becoming clear in a part of the world that is not centrally involved. East and South Asia, with the Pacific region, is in a position to organize and make a major move.

The search for an image of an integrated Asian Community is a quest that is teasing the foremost policy planners for those nations and also the largest multi-national organizations operating there. Assuming no cataclysmic change, this activity is likely of

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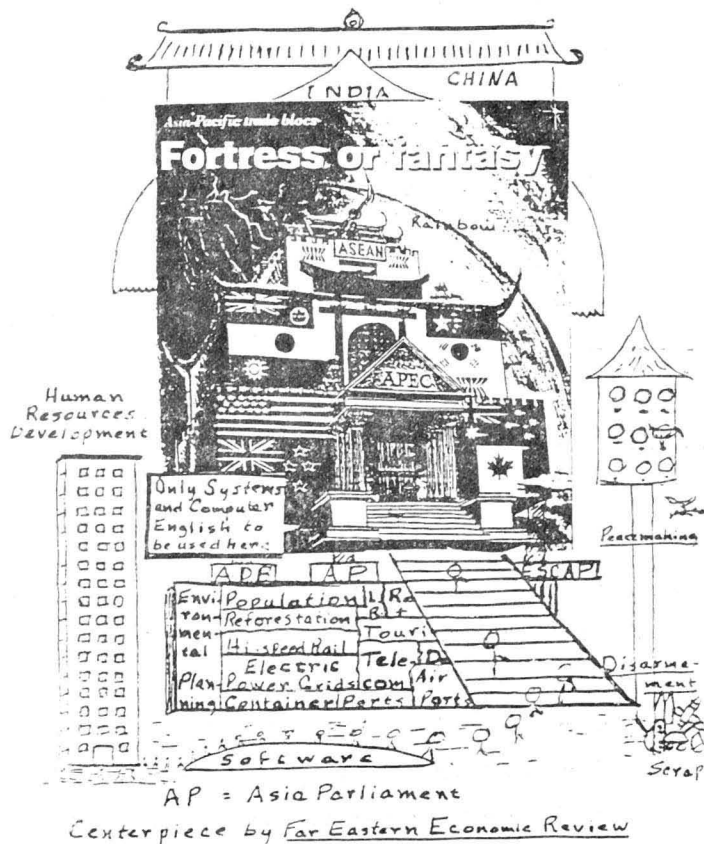
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become one of the obsessions of the 1990s and the years to follow.

For the promotion of international trade three different combinations, all incomplete, have been put forward. They were based upon the political realities of the moment, but stimulated by an acceleration in the efforts leading toward European Community(EC). This new trading bloc poses an increasingly effective substitution of internal trade for exchange with the rest of the world. Thus imports should stop rising, and might even decline.

Most spokesmen are uncomfortable with all of the proposals for integration, because a transparent nationalism controls populist parliaments and central committees. These bodies are stewing with suspicion of all others, neighbors as much as former colonizing powers. Grudgingly, forward-looking elected leaders are forced to consider compromises.

Fig. 1. FOUNDATIONS FOR ASIAN PACIFIC COMMUNITY—2000



(The partially hidden foundation stones Re+ and De- represent Research and Development pursued for common ends.)

An artist for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, who signs himself as KORISANTen, captures the defensive orientation underlying glorious fantasies in these aspirations for Asia. His image has a fort-castle floating in the sky with no visible support and no mooring. Lightning and storms beat upon the structure from the Left, while the Right enjoys a rainbow, and a clear sky in the distance. It shows no means of holding it in position, not even a gas bag filling with hot air. The facade is a montage of the flags of the participating nations; the portico, battlement and gazebo represent ad hoc regional entities. A rat hole at the base has light streaming through it, suggesting that there is no substance behind the front.

The challenge, then, is to flesh out this fantasy, put a solid foundation under it, and back it up with participation of the Asian mega-societies when they are ready. The latter has been under the illusion that their size allowed them to be virtually self-sufficient in their development, but are sharply coming to the realization that their policies have led to losing ground as compared to outsiders.

The "flesh" of this fantasy is made of cross-national transactions, not only in trade, but also in technological licensing, scientific research, tourism, sports, political affairs and culture. These occasions for acting together build up channels for further collaboration. As it continues there will be interdependency, network formation between offices, and finally new institutions for expediting more transactions within the Asian Community. Boundaries between the participating nations would become more and more permeable over time (Fig. 1).

## II. Strategy

The last thirty years of experience putting together the European Community suggests what has to be created to bring about integration. Freeing the currencies, so that they became interchangeable, and opening the borders to visitors, so that visas were no longer required, were the first steps. That has been largely accomplished in ASEAN countries, which are the pacemaking nations of Asia. The recalcitrant states are under overwhelming pressure to adapt and follow along. Thus traditionally independent countries, like Sweden and Switzerland, feel that they must soon join the European Community, or fall behind economically and culturally. In Asia that would happen to Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam and Burma as soon as the fruits of integration became evident.

Therefore, a charter of the Asian Community should be open-ended, to allow for more participants. Knocking on the door would be Japan, Australia/New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and perhaps the United States and Canada, who seem likely to be tying up with Mexico in the interim. Migrants and refugees are very serious problems delaying integration for the European Community. Their compromises will set precedents for what the world considers to be a relatively equitable resolution of extraordinary pressures from the outside, which will have to be tested against Asian feelings about ethics and civil rights.

Nevertheless, all this apparent flexibility requires many man-years of negotiation and re-evaluation. It may focus upon problems generated between two adjoining countries, or it may require even more complex multi-lateral bargaining. Asia has many fewer diplomats and technocrats than Europe, and their supply is strongly biased to be sympathetic to the societies that offer higher degrees to foreigners. Also what professional technocrats that are available have been trained in obsolescent ideas and have accumulated very little practical experience. Contact with new cultures will cause many surprising mistakes.

Contact with the economically dominant English-speaking countries leads to several kinds of misunderstandings, frequently due to unrealistic preconceptions held by Westerners, but they have often been resolved through negotiations conducted through telephone and FAX. Conflicts with Japan have been managed almost as well, in part because the Japanese have adopted English when working overseas, but also because they have emphasized continuous communication.

Europe prepared for integration by creating professional graduate schools for managers and opening them to students from other countries. The language of instruction was English, because it was universally used to carry out the design of advanced technology, and has been extended to cover economic analysis. Departments for "urbanization" and "town and country planning" growing up within schools of architecture combined curricula, and soon became schools in their own right. Many hundreds of Third World students seeking qualifications swelled their cohorts.

At the same time "regional science" appealed to the more mathematically inclined young people originating from Geography, Land Economics and Transport Studies. Young staff members organized meetings to hear each others papers, trying to produce more elegant papers than the Americans who preceded them. They seemed to be intellectually committed to planning for a market economy with a few public services retained in the administered sector.

During this period the Europeans sent thousands of picked students and young scholars to the United States to catch up on its interdisciplinary approach, and its rationalization of decision making with spread sheets and other software advances. Quite a few Americans brought their theories and intellectual tools with them to institutes in Europe, but only those in which English was the working language, because any other tongue was a major impediment. Library and documentation resources in other languages were not up-to-date, and lacked scope. They initiated communication through e-mail, and special networks for data transfer were created with a lag of only a few years. The volume of the flows doubled or trebled every year thereafter.

The research and development (R&D) divisions of the multinational firms with predominantly European orientation paralleled the research institutes founded by governments and foundations. Their laboratories maintained one set of networks connecting addresses within the firm which were used to expedite new projects. They simultaneously participated in others within the professional associations and the international standards-setting groups. Meanwhile Americans were held back by military commitments to Europe (and elsewhere in the world), so the major portion of its R&D was expended on military technology. Large scale deficit financing caused a weakening of the dollar, thus enlarging the European economy.

It should be emphasized that new growth in Europe was knit together by a web of personal and institutional exchanges conducted under conditions of trust. The growth was accelerated by a many fold increase in the capacity of telecommunications channels, followed by computing. Interdependence ranged from weather forecasting to transport scheduling to finance with Euro-dollar securities.

Slowly the rituals of transition at the boundaries between the nations eroded away and new media, like FAX, found no obstructions at all. Taxes and duties were made more uniform so as to expedite trade. Currencies were finally stabilized and became freely exchangeable, although the exchange rates were allowed to vary within a pre-determined range. As a result trade flourished, both among themselves and with the rest of the world, even though the adjustments relative to each other were still quite imperfect. For example, when France had over-invested in nuclear energy generating capacity, resulting from a brief orgy of natinalism in an earlier period, it was allowed to export electric power so that its neighbors could economize on urban infrastructure, and waste was reduced all around.

A new unifying politics was created by setting up a Parliament to legislate on the inter-relations. Members of this body were not selected by national politicians, but by individual voters. By setting up a charter such that vital national decisions were not directly affected by a Community body, the number of confrontations was minimized. The Strasbourg representatives hardly ever attracted attention, and they rarely rated headlines, so the work accumulated with few setbacks, providing legitimacy to exchanges with neighbors.

Concerns about the environment became the most common sources of complaint and agitation. German "Greens" came over to help the French antinuclear movement, and the French reinforced the German demands on the acid rain issue. Everyone protested the poisoning of the Rhine River by a multi-national firm that had neglected elementary precautions in case of fire. Thus the most vociferous political opposition in the various national elites became pro-Community in outlook. The military forces were integrated stagewise into an effective anti-Soviet force under NATO, and they isolated the ultra-nationalist elements during the Cold War.

The principal objectors were the farmers, who were accustomed to rising levels of subsidy as their numbers decreased due to mechanization followed by retirement and urbanization. They have been obdurate, because there was no mechanism for dependency across national boundaries. As the greatest single entrenched barrier to Community, the agricultural lobbies rejected mediation and compromise, forcing each negotiating session into overtime.

The European experience suggests the kinds of cross-national interaction that promote the evolution of community, and they highlight the omissions that retard progress. Belatedly the architects of the European Community discovered that the border regions, which were often depressed areas, and therefore seekers for subsidy, should have been enthusiastic, because the removal of longstanding political boundaries stimulated growth in short range exchanges. These possibilities had not been studied at the research institutes, due to unconscious blinders inherent in nationalism. In some instances new growth poles should arise at places that were previously nothing more than somnolent border stations.

### **III. Immediate Steps to Asian Community**

What Asia needs to do first is to expand the educational and research institutes that bring together talented young people and research scholars. Remarkably few internationalized

are available at present, so quite a few more will need to be established. Those that are already at hand will be assessed individually, and then the gaps can be identified.

The ideal mix of economics, technology, social science (especially population controls), language studies and environment is found in the East-West Center in Honolulu, but it is much too small. Some device should be found for funnelling funds from Asia into it to compensate for the American budgetary constraint. Perhaps a larger version of its formula should be started up closer to the center of the prospective Community.

Singapore, with its international services, and its mix of Chinese, Malay, Hindu and Indonesian peoples, is theoretically ideal. However, until now it has maintained a narrow view of intellectual freedom and higher education, including responsibilities of the members of the professions. Therefore until now very few outsiders have been welcomed as permanent residents. Japanese business people there have managed to create a relatively self-sufficient foreign enclave with its own schools, clinics and specialty services, so a kind of precedent has been set. Singapore would be an excellent place for advancing urban technology, especially energy conservation methods, and other forms of environmental management. Singapore should be a host, but some multinational group should act as sponsor and provide the governing board.

The Asian Institute of Technology covers the whole region quite uniformly already, from Korea to Nepal to Iran to Indonesia. It operates only at the postgraduate level, and the only language of instruction is English. It has the best technical library and the most advanced documentation services. Its computing center is perhaps the most elaborate in the region, and a major contributor to education in computing. The A.I.T. draws expertise from the whole world, disseminating it in many short courses as well as degree programs. Both public and private sectors are benefitted. However its social sciences do not compare well with its models of world-serving institutions (M.I.T. and Caltech). The School of Management is still quite small, but it is bolstered with systems-based management science. Most divisions at A.I.T. could engage in frontier research with the faculty they have, if they received an infusion of grants, but so far research efforts are small scale as compared to Japan or the West.

The Asian Institute of Management also attracts students from all over the Asian Pacific region and beyond. Its teaching methods are borrowed from the Harvard School of Business, but the cases are Asian. A spinoff from the Ateneo, a major private university, the well-designed facilities are "downtown" in the central area of the Makati business district of

Manila. The principal output is profits-oriented MBAs, suited to both private and public enterprise, national and multi-national, although many of its students are sent there to prepare to take over the family business. A remarkable recent addition is a one-year course for the management of a powerful growth phenomenon in Asia—the local NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). The language of instruction is English, as is the language of the office towers surrounding it, although the language of the streets is Pilipino, a dialect reinforced by television programming.

With Hong Kong being such a major force in international trade, and home of many multi-national firms, one would expect an open city like it to have many supporting educational and research institutions. However, its public educational system lagged during the Maoist period in China. The universities restricted enrollment to only a minor fraction of the qualified seekers of admission, so there was little room for outsiders. The cream of the undergraduates and graduates enrolled in English-speaking universities elsewhere in the world, and usually took employment there. The less qualified came back to family firms. So Hong Kong is a disappointment at the moment.

An attempt has been made to fill this gap with the new Hong Kong Institute of Science and Technology. It has a charter which encourages a fruitful mix of research and teaching, and opens its chairs to the best man in the world who is available for the job, regardless of citizenship. This allows it to deal with such shared interests as meteorology and climatology, telecommunications, man-machine systems, energy conservation, quality control, etc.

Next door in Macao there is room for a unique contribution. It already has a more diverse body of undergraduates than anywhere else, but the best role is still unclear.

Beijing should be making the kind of effort that Tokyo University, along with other Japanese national universities, have made in the last decade. International students are admitted, and they are allowed to publish dissertations in English. However, the hurdles are intimidating for people arriving without the Japanese language, and the international output is small, though impressive. China has yet to take the basic decisions as to how deeply to become involved in regional development and global participation.

Seoul and Taipei have evolved in a highly nationalistic way, limiting top posts to their own citizens. At the same time they expect higher degrees earned in the United States, Germany or Japan. Both countries have used their experience with English to engage in a tremendous expansion of international trade. These international connections have a very



shallow base, so they are vulnerable to competition from newcomers. Both societies ought to have an aggressive Institute for Advanced Study that connects them to their neighbors and the outside world, but proposals have not yet been circulated.

Delhi has an Institute of Economic Growth which was once an exciting locus for applying econometric theory to development. However, it followed international fashions that concentrated on neo-classical models which have turned out to be less productive in Asia than competing less-advertised models. Perhaps it can rejuvenate by bringing in scholars from the USSR who can collaborate in studies on the transition from socialism to enterprise capitalism. The expatriate Slavs can offer intellectual energy otherwise only available to the West.

Graduate and professional schools of prestigious Indian universities have been open to outsiders, usually from the smaller countries in the region and the Middle East. Bangalore is evolving a research link to the outside world that takes advantage of communications satellites - a new carrier for international trade. Other places export software, but Bangalore's output is far more sophisticated. Much the way Silicon Valley does in America, it attracts bright minds of many cultural origins which are capable of major leaps in innovation, so it is accumulating an international community of sojourners.

#### **IV. Media and Site Selection**

As in Europe, all these centers work with the written English language. The dialects and accents are initially hard to understand, but over the decades they become standardized and familiar. All the computer software used internationally now employs English, so "computer English" is the norm that is expected to dominate. It is unfortunate that such a hard-to-learn, irregular language has become technically dominant, but it has demonstrated by many tests that, by readily accepting neologisms, it is the most flexible major language to deal with meaning, though possibly not mood or emotions. This sharing of both a technological and cultural literature that evolved from the British Empire, makes it possible to embark upon networking of institutions of higher learning in the immediate future.

The European Community is coming into being without an outstanding software innovation center and at a time when networking is still in its infancy. The unification of Asia must cope with five times as many people, starting with ten fold more spoken languages, and much greater inertia due to illiteracy. Asia will need much more amplification of effort

than was utilized in Europe. That acceleration can only come through new institutions backed up with appropriate software.

These institutions will need to include finance. Here one is inspired by the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, which found ways of starting destitute rural people on a savings and investment program that raises them to ordinary levels of poverty. To reach many millions of people quickly, managing their small loans and repayments, required information technology as sophisticated as any in the country. Now their technique must be brought to the urban environment, culminating in the financing of self-help, multi-story housing. At the other end of the spectrum, securities exchanges are required to redistribute trillions of dollars worth of shares and bonds to match people's savings.

Food must be efficiently grown, transported, stored, processed and distributed to support the cities and the poverty in Asia allows very little safety factor. The monsoon is a fickle force that delivers the moisture for the crops, and huge models will be needed to forecast its movements and the allocation of water from the streams it generates.

Human migration is becoming the hugest headache for the European Community. People refuse to stay still and maintain a stable address. Already severe in Asia, voluntary migration is likely to be ten times worse in a couple decades. It requires many adaptive responses, and the software must be available. This short list of problems to be encountered could be easily extended, but it does not change the need for amplified economic and social controls to effect integration.

The struggle to create a European Parliament, with representatives elected independently from national political parties from constituencies within countries is an epic to be studied. The issues related to Community (environment, tourism, intermediate transport, educational standards, business efficiency, market regulation, removal of discrimination according to ethnicity, religion, et.) require continuous planning, followed by negotiation and compromise. Even the choice of the seat of the Parliament (Strasbourg) reflects that necessity. Tireless men with vision, committed to the prevention of World Wars I & II, pushed the idea through to implementation. Only a few "heroes of peace" are known by name to the public. The majority worked mainly for respect of their idealistic colleagues.

Creation of a Secretariat, equivalent to that of Brussels, for the Asian Community is a gargantuan task. There is no dynamo, like Jacques Delors, yet identified who could assemble it. The locale will require the best infrastructure in airports, telecommunications and publishing. These services are only available in a national capital. However, it cannot be

under the wing of a major national member—thus Brussels was the natural choice in Europe. Bangkok seems to be the nearest parallel in Asia, but if the planners are deterred by its traffic congestion, even on the other side of the airport from the central city, it might go to Kuala Lumpur. Both sites would keep it independent of United Nations inter-agency politics.

This review of the challenges illustrates the need for high quality administrators and technocrats. Now it is possible to look for special opportunities for developing the necessary human resources.

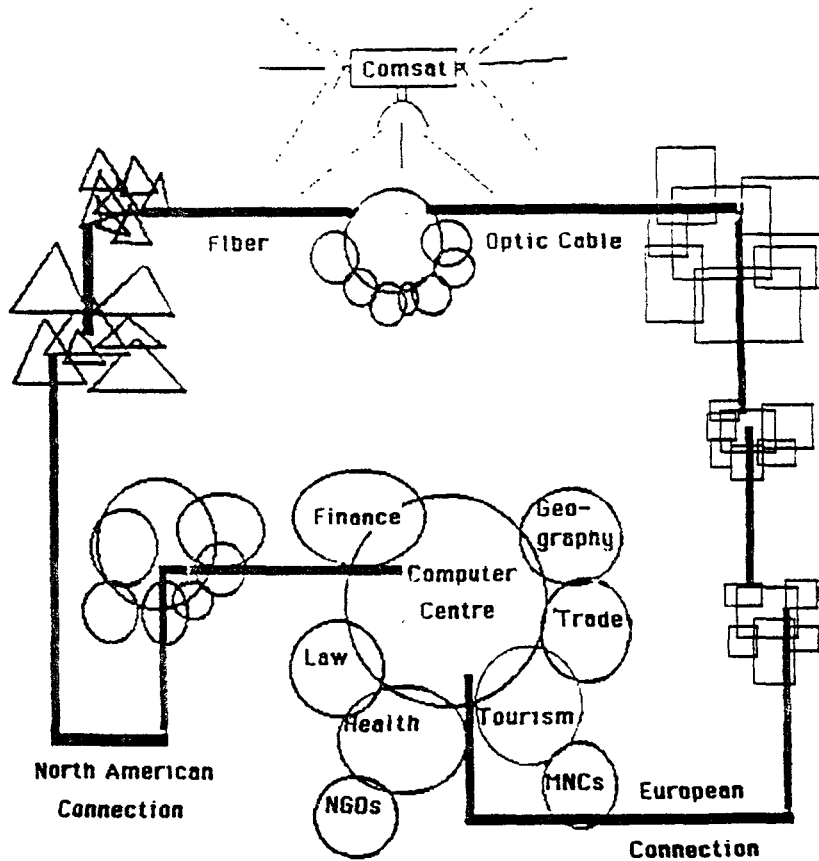
### **V. Human Resources Development**

One should remember status among institutions is even more important in Asia than elsewhere in the world. Therefore it is suggested that Number One university or interdisciplinary research center, and perhaps each major region within the mega-countries, should be designated for Community training and investigations. It should welcome colleagues from all over the world without discrimination to use special collections of books, documents and data banks. Colleagues and professional whose careers are linked with the prospective Asian Community should be appointed on either a visiting or a permanent basis. The most active and eminent of them would be members several such institutes.

Who might be the charter members? They are people whose careers, specializations and commitments have reduced the likelihood of smallmindedness. Geographers (economic, social, political, cultural, environmental, etc.) make up an obvious category. With the recent rise of GIS (Geographical Information Systems) their work is being inextricably linked to that of the computer scientists, international economists, water resources engineers and finance specialists. It should be an expanding circle, with an open membership at each site.

Multinational firms will have a strong interest in institutes dedicated to the creation of Asian Community. They will be concerned about developing executives who understand the process of integration. They might also be willing to provide a part of the funding, wherever profitmaking is apparent. They should never be allowed to become dominant, because so much of what needs to be done in Asia as it develops has been allocated there to agencies of the national government and to NGOs. Health, for instance, will be a major concern and one that is basic for the kind of co-operation that rises above national politics.

Fig. 2. SEEDS FOR ASIAN COMMUNITY



A set of institute complexes in or near leading universities and adjacent to computer centres could engage in training and researches needed for starting up an Asian Pacific Community. Information flow and organizing communications can now be distributed almost instantaneously by fiber optic cable and satellites. Quite different management styles are expected.

The respective countries have radically different ways of organizing their prestige research and training facilities. The institute clusters envisaged in Figure Two will have to be assembled in a manner that is familiar, so that individuals will know how to relate to each other, but is also understandable to outsiders. For example, Filipinos are noticeably more informal than Americans (who are renowned worldwide for being that way), even addressing superiors on a nickname basis, while other societies insist that differentiations in rank be honored. Therefore institutional structures will be strikingly divergent.

Networking usually gets started between investigators in related fields or persons responsible for implementation of a program. Once they have met, and have learned to

trust each other, brief messages can be very meaningful. Progress can be made more quickly in voluntarily organized networks, and larger projects can be undertaken. Thus networking within and between institutes normally amplifies their impact. That is the reason for giving high priority to installing communication satellites and fiber optic cables.

The communications satellites were first introduced by Indonesia to improve the management of thousands of inhabited islands. Uses built up very rapidly, so that they now have three, and all the other middle-sized and larger countries have followed. All of them also depend upon the global Comsat company for their international telecommunications. Very recently fiber optic cables possessing much greater channel capacity have been laid across seas, swamps and even oceans. A boom in FAX has resulted already. In some countries the basic telematic equipment is so ancient the societies will have to leapfrog into modern systems by means of digital exchanges and cellular telephone circuits.

Perhaps too much emphasis has been laid upon technology. Trustful relationships are much more important. Many rounds of meetings must precede the formulation of projects underlying Community formation. They make wars, which have been common in the past, unthinkable, and coercion has ever-shrinking payoffs. These conclusions have been rendered quite obvious to informed persons since the ending of the Gulf War.

Only the first explorations have been undertaken. Nevertheless, they resulted in the construction of the centerpiece of Figure One used for the cover of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 July, 1991.

## VI. A Supply of Planners

The larger members of the future Asian Community created schools of planning in the 1960s and early 1970s to help them handle the huge growth in urbanization that had already begun. Watersheds and mineral resource districts also begged for the attention of planners. The schools were staffed by a wide distribution of disciplines, because only a handful had the opportunity to study in the West. Their students had been graduates of architecture, engineering, economics, geography and other social sciences, and they went on to serve in regional and local planning agencies, but hardly even in national agencies.

In the 1980s these schools had to respond to a wave of environmentalism (Meier, 1988). About the same time a few of them created doctoral programs.

As the 1990s came up, the Ph. D.s began to be awarded, with the greatest flow initially

from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur (West Bengal, India). By the end of the decade it seems likely that as many as 150 of these doctorates will be given, and about three times that many in the following decade.

There are, of course, dozens of doctorates in planning earned per year in the United States, the U.K., Western Europe and Canada by young Asians. A few more come from the Japanese universities, with dissertations written in English, as noted earlier. These young scholar-professionals are different from those trained within Asia, because they have been separated from administrations of their home countries for five years or more. As a result those obtaining outside degrees are clearly out of touch. Moreover, their aspirations are most often to fill posts in international agencies, particularly the World Bank and other U.N. organizations. Gaining a faculty post in North America is especially prestigious.

Those trained at home still have their roots. Most were working in some government department while earning their degree. Their ambition is to become a top civil servant, possibly a professor—a position that will be virtually closed after the first cohorts fill the junior posts. Their universal limitation is found in the libraries. It is virtually impossible for them to become acquainted in the course of their studies with the more than a few outdated fragments of the prior literature. So their researches are predominantly field studies or computer models. Rarely are they subjected to the discipline of comparative methods.

If the Asian doctorates, at least a modest fraction of them, were enabled to study together for a year or two while finishing the dissertations begun in their own school, a resource would be created for handling the bargaining and negotiation across international boundaries. The planners with such experience could save years of fumbling. A few of them deserve post-doctoral appointments, if they have already finished.

Thus a cadre of planners capable of working with policy formulation, along with collateral physical planning and design issues, can be speedily brought into existence. Obviously this should be done at a site where connections have already been made that allow tapping the libraries of the world that carry most of the stock of human knowledge. Fitting new questions to recorded experience and recent findings produces far more powerful results, and much more competent professionals.

## VII. A Start-up Proposal

The standard academic prescription for a socio-political program like this is to provide one-year fellowships to people already committed to careers in this and of work. That is true if they have already launched upon dissertations at home, where they have completed all the necessary course work and examinations. They could use the time for library work that gives them an appreciation of comparable studies elsewhere in the world and for writing.

Those candidates considered valuable to the overall program could obtain a one year renewal, so a culture can be transmitted from one year to the next. One or two post-doctoral students in Planning, who are also interested in laying out the steps that lead to Asian Community and a durable peace in the region, should be in attendance. They provide contact with advanced studies and new projects. The group should be housed together and have working places with access to micro-computers. The number that maximizes internal communication and generation of mutual respect ranges from 12~25.

The only place presently suited for such a group is the Asian Institute of Technology. The cost of subsistence, tuition, library charges and computer use on its campus is expected to run \$ 30,000 to 40,000 per fellow. The most appropriate sponsoring institution is the Asian Development Bank, since the increase in technical and political expertise for projects that spill over national boundaries should noticeably reduce risk in lending, and would speed up integration of the Region.

The earliest studies should suggest useful short courses for the staff of recipients of loans. The A.I.T. has extensive experience in offering such short courses. They would also reveal the need for studies in depth of certain continuing problems that might better be undertaken at another site in the Region which could develop a complementary program. It ought to be close to the financial capital of the Region, perhaps the United Nations Centre for Regional Development in Negoya. There special common problems like land price escalation, integration of foreign immigrants and compatible standards could be addressed.

## VIII. Conclusion

In an era when a European Community and a North American free trade bloc are being formed, there is a basis for dreaming of an Asian Pacific Community. Experience obtained thus far shows that trade becomes a minor part of the overall integration required to maintain a peaceable, stable Community while enhancing the cultural and social exchange. The amount of negotiation required is several orders of magnitude greater than the present capability, investments must be made in recruiting talent and training it.

Human resource development and institution building that penetrates all the participating countries will require the most time. A handful of Asian institutions presently, have trans-national coverage but there are gaps in the coverage of the management of modern technology, environment, and planning.

A prototype proposal is offered for getting started in a strategic way. It would create a micro-community of predoctorate and post-doctorate fellows in planning at one or two sites that are least limited by library constraints.

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