

Strengthening Information Society Research Capacity Alliance (SIRCA) III

PHASE II CALL FOR PROPOSALS – OPEN DEVELOPMENT

SIRCA III is a theory and capacity building research programme run by the [SiRC \(Singapore Internet Research Centre\)](#) that began in April 2015 and will run until May 2017. SIRCA III has already funded six projects led by teams of two senior researchers and/or practitioners to develop cross-cutting open development theoretical frameworks. This call seeks research proposals to empirically test these theoretical frameworks in developing countries in Asia or Africa.

The purpose of the SIRCA III programme is to deepen our understanding as to whether, how, for whom, and in what circumstances **the free, networked, public sharing of digital (information and communication) resources contribute towards (or not) a process of positive social transformation.**

The programme is organised into two phases, a theoretical phase (Phase I) and an empirical phase (Phase II). Researchers who submit successful project proposals will join SIRCA III as a **Phase II scholar.**

SIRCA III Research Themes and Theoretical Frameworks

During Phase I, inter-disciplinary teams tackled six cross-cutting themes of open development. We are currently accepting **Phase II proposals** to research these themes specifically and exclusively. Descriptions of the projects, research questions and hypotheses are available in detail on our [website](#). We also encourage you to read a forthcoming publication on open development [here](#).

Interested **Phase II applicants** are asked to propose a research project that responds to one of the following frameworks (Click on links or see Appendix 1 for framework details):

1. [Open and/or Apolitical? A critical re-examination of Open Information Systems](#) by Janaki Srinivasan and Bidisha Chaudhuri, International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore
2. [Resources, Learning and Inclusion in Open Development](#) by Marion Walton, University of Cape Town, Andy Dearden, Sheffield Hallam University, Melissa Densmore, University of Cape Town
3. [Elements of Trust in an Open Model: Exploring the Role and Place of Trust in Open Education and Urban Services in the Global South](#) by Rich Ling, Nanyang Technological University, John Traxler, University of Wolverhampton
4. [A Critical Capability Approach to Open Development](#) by Yingqin Zheng, Royal Holloway University of London, Bernd Carsten Stahl, De Montfort University.
5. [Open development – A focus on organizational norms and power redistribution](#) by Anita Gurumurthy, Parminder Jeet Singh, IT for Change
6. [Public Engagement in Open Development: A Knowledge Stewardship Approach](#) Katherine Reilly, Juan Pablo Alperin, Simon Fraser University

Pre-existing projects that do not relate substantively to one of the SIRCA III open development themes listed above will not be considered. Please examine the [materials for each project and related literature](#), and then formulate your research design to test or validate the stated research questions and hypotheses.

Phase II: Empirical Deliverables

Phase II scholars will collaborate with the Phase I senior research team and will receive periodic support and guidance in addition to funding for the research project. Phase II scholars will conduct research (including data gathering through fieldwork) **to empirically inform the cross-cutting theoretical frameworks** in a developing country. Phase II scholars will receive funding for project-related expenses and travel to SIRCA workshops directly from SiRC. However, Phase II scholars will be responsible for working closely with the Phase I senior research team throughout the research project and will be expected to co-author a final paper as an end result.

Phase II requirements and deliverables are:

1. A written methodology including ethical concerns, access to and selection of participants, data collection tools, analysis and background information related to the context of research;
2. Preparation of periodic reports such as mid-term progress report and end-of-project report;
3. Attendance at a workshop before ICTD 2016 in June at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and another in May 2017 to finalise research outputs for publication; and
4. Submission of empirical paper to a possible edited book or a special issue of a journal.

Additional Overall Requirements

Phase I teams and Phase II scholars will be involved in disseminating SIRCA III research through public fora. All research outputs must be made available with a CC-BY open license. This will include both offline traditional media outlets as well as online and social media. The SIRCA III Secretariat will provide support with dissemination and coordinating the production of policy briefs, but Phase II scholars are responsible to participate and provide content for these plans.

Eligibility

You may apply for research funding as a Phase II scholar for SIRCA III, only if you are:

- affiliated with an academic, government, research, or civil society institution or consortium; funds will be disbursed to your organization of employment and not directly to you;
- from a country listed in Appendix 2; and
- remain in the country of the proposed research throughout the grant period/research project.

Funding Information

Each selected grant recipient will be provided with:

- up to SGD\$8,000 for a maximum period of support of no more than 12 months of discretionary research funding and fieldwork travels.
- least-cost travel and per diems to attend requisite SIRCA workshops and conferences.

Research Proposal Requirements

Applicants are expected to submit a proposal application [form](#), [budget](#), [timeline](#), and CV. Please refer to Appendix 1 for a brief overview of the SIRCA III cross-cutting theoretical frameworks under investigation. SIRCA III aims to support Phase II scholars at every step of the programme, including during the proposal stage. We ask that interested applicants contact sirca@ntu.edu.sg with questions and/or early drafts of proposals for feedback before submission.

Interested research teams should download and fill-in the SIRCA III proposal form [here](#). The form will ask you to outline the following:

A. Research project proposal

- Clearly state the Phase I theoretical framework that you will investigate.
- Clearly articulated research question(s).
- Explain how your project will empirically test, validate and/or evaluate the theoretical framework.
- Description of case/context of research in relation to literature.
- A preliminary methodology including ethical concerns and risk assessment.
- Detail beneficiaries, individuals and groups, that would benefit and how you will gain access to them.
- A plan to communicate progress and results with SIRCA and the Phase I senior research team.
- Dissemination plan for results in online and offline media, plus academic, public and policy fora.

B. Detailed project budget

- Applicants are expected to provide a detailed research budget, using the template available [here](#). Please follow instructions in the template to indicate expected costs for the following line items:
 - Personnel¹
 - Equipment
 - Local Travel
 - Research
 - Other Operating Expenses
 - Declaration of existing funding related to your proposal

C. Research timeline

- Projects Applicants are expected to provide a detailed research timeline, using the template available [here](#). Indicating clearly project milestones and completion times (in terms of weeks or months). Please consult the **Key Dates** section to construct your project timeline within the SIRCA III programme time frame.

D. Qualifications of the Phase II scholar(s)

- Applicants should include a CV that lists qualifications including past research project grant(s) and their current status, relevant academic publications and two references with their contact details. Up to two researchers can submit a proposal. Emerging junior scholars are encouraged to apply.

¹ Personnel expenses may include the hiring of research assistants and consultants of no more than 50% of the total project budget.

Review Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

1. Clarity of the proposal and quality of writing;
2. Relevance and fit with one of the six Phase I themes;
3. Adequacy of methodological rigor and capacity to empirically test the Phase I theoretical framework;
4. Access to and significance of the research to the beneficiary group;
5. Quality of research record and referee recommendations;
6. Interest and research potential of the applicant.

Award and Non-Award Decisions

Acknowledgement of receipt of the proposals will only be made to the applicant. Notification of awards will be sent to the respective employing organizations and copied to the empirical scholar normally not exceeding one (1) month from the submission deadline. Written acceptance of the terms and conditions of the award co-signed by the applicant and the respective employing organization, must reach SIRCA secretariat within ten (10) working days from the date of the offer letter.

Applicants for proposals that are not selected for short-listing will receive a notification of decline.

Key Dates (Approximate)

March 20, 2016: Deadline for proposal submission.

April 2016: Phase II grants awarded.

June 1-6 2016: SIRCA III Workshop and Open Session at ICTD 2016 Ann Arbor, Michigan.

June 2016 – April 2017: Selected Phase II scholar(s) conduct fieldwork/data gathering.

April 2017: Submission of final paper detailing empirical results from Phase II.

May 2017: Theoretical and Empirical team members to attend publication workshop.

The programme will be managed by the **Singapore Internet Research Centre**, based at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, and is supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada. SIRCA III is led by a steering committee that is composed of the SiRC Director, Assoc. Prof. Arul Chib and a senior member from the IDRC. The committee, with SiRC leading, provides high-level direction for the overall SIRCA programme, as well as advising on strategic direction and fund disbursement. The committee oversees major decisions, signs off on technical reports and financials, and approves selections of thematic groups and research directions.

Appendix 1 – Phase I Themes and Theoretical Frameworks

1. Open and/or Apolitical? A critical re-examination of Open Information Systems

By Janaki Srinivasan / Bidisha Chaudhuri (International Institute of Information Technology, Bangalore)

This project proposes a theoretical framework to analyse the phenomenon of learning among users of open information systems (OIS) in which learning is taken to be indicative of positive social transformation. In order to understand how learning takes place in the context of OIS use through the interaction of structures and agency, we draw on practice-based situated theories of learning and critical information studies. Such theories prompt us to adopt a broader process view of learning as an everyday practice that shapes individual identity which can be then leveraged to negotiate varied life situations beyond the immediate learning of how to use an OIS. Based on this understanding of learning, we develop a framework that will critically examine different levels of learning occurring within a matrix of communities of practice (CoPs) specifically in the context of OIS use. The broader objective of this framework is to unravel the different opportunities of learning (as development) that OIS provide which were hitherto unavailable to its users.

[View Framework](#)

2. Resources, Learning and Inclusion in Open Development

By Marion Walton (University of Cape Town) / Andy Dearden (Sheffield Hallam University) / Melissa Densmore (University of Cape Town)

Engaging with open development (OD) necessitates learning in which people appropriate and adopt new technologies and socio-technical practices. This typically involves informal learning (i.e. outside of formal education), and will differ between reading relationships (as a user of OD resources) and writing relationships (for full ownership or authorship of OD). If potential participants are unable to connect with existing learning networks, OD initiatives will have limited impact. Communities that aim to be ‘open’ may exclude people by virtue of race, language, literacies, gender, sexuality, phone/computer ownership, access to Internet or other aspects of identity. This project will explore the situated material conditions and informal learning practices that surround processes of inclusion in (and exclusion from) OD initiatives. The project will develop more detailed ethnographic and socio-material accounts of the informal learning processes and outcomes in such encounters. It will foreground the ways that global inequities of infrastructure, default identities and the cultural practices often associated with openness can “format” participation in subtle but significant ways.

[View Framework](#)

3. Elements of Trust in an Open Model: Exploring the Role and Place of Trust in Open Education and Urban Services in the Global South

By Richard Ling (Nanyang Technological University) / John Traxler (University of Wolverhampton)

The success of open development and open access critically hinges on the trust shared by the various actors. While open development has the potential to facilitate access to a wide variety of services and information in the Global South, it will founder unless users, developers and other stake holders have a basic trust in the material and services. This is particularly the case with open health and open learning. We intend to examine trust in openly developed education and health applications. Both of these sectors have key social functionality that is being digitalized. Further both institutions share a focus on knowledge management and authoritative information. Thus, the issues of trust in openly developed

and openly accessible services have implications for the management of professional knowledge under the purview of expert practitioners.

[View Framework](#)

4. A Critical Capability Approach to Open Development

By Yingqin Zheng (Royal Holloway, University of London) / Bernd Carsten Stahl (De Montfort University)

Drawing upon the critical theory of technology/information systems and Sen's capability approach, the Critical Capability Approach (CCA) serves as a conceptual basis for a research framework that could be applied to assess the design, implementation and evaluation of open development projects. Instead of measuring the achievement of technological or political goals, we propose sets of research questions that seek to explicate the ideological and political foundations of openness, and the extent to which openness enhances users' well-being and agency freedom. The research framework aims to equip researchers with some conceptual guidance and methodological suggestions to carry out independent evaluation of open development initiatives, and in this process start a dialogue with policy makers, donors and designers, to engage with all key stakeholders and to protect the interests of the marginalised and disadvantaged. The CCA Research Framework is not sector specific and can be applied to any open development project. Researchers are encouraged to select, adapt and integrate some of the suggested research questions in accordance to the context and conditions of a particular project.

[View Framework](#)

5. Open Development – A Focus on Organizational Norms and Power Redistribution

By Anita Gurumurthy / Parminder Jeet Singh (IT for Change)

Open development is the employment of ICT-enabled 'openness' towards an improved distribution of power across the intended community of impact. Typically, ICT-based affordances rapidly transform the organisational context of development practice, enhancing organisational outcomes. But affordances cannot be mistaken for norms; the interplay between affordances and norms, and crystallisation of new norms, is critical for moving towards appropriate organisational outcomes. Further, improved distribution of power must occur not merely in the proximity of the '(networked) organisational space' but across the intended community of impact. The continuum between the organisational and community spaces in 'open initiatives' must be examined critically, especially with regard to governance and distribution of power. Empirical research to trace how norms related to development outcomes are built and sustained in open organisations, and how improved distribution of power in the wider community of impact is caused or not, would help understand and enhance the impact of "open" practices and organisations on development.

[View Framework](#)

6. Public Engagement in Open Development: A Knowledge Stewardship Approach

By Katherine Reilly / Juan Pablo Alperin (Simon Fraser University)

Early open development work assumed that the Internet and openness decentralised power and enabled public engagement by disintermediating knowledge production and dissemination. However, over time, new intermediaries have become involved in the delivery of open information and in the stewardship of open knowledge. We have identified five models of intermediation in open development work: decentralised, arterial, ecosystem, bridging and communities of practice. The goal of this project is to produce exploratory research about trends in intermediation across three areas of openness work: open government, open education and open science. How do intermediaries add value,

for whom, and where is this value accruing? Does intermediation serve to maintain openness and facilitate public engagement, or does it create new power structures? To answer such questions, we believe it would be productive to identify common trends or tendencies in how different types of intermediaries take on the stewardship of open information across the different domains of open development work.

[View Framework](#)

Appendix 2 – List of Eligible Countries

Afghanistan	Mali
Armenia	Mauritania
Bangladesh	Mozambique
Benin	Myanmar
Bhutan	Nepal
Burkina Faso	Niger
Burundi	Nigeria
Cabo Verde	Occupied Palestine Territories
Cambodia	Pakistan
Cameroon	Philippines
Central African Republic	Rwanda
Chad	São Tomé and Príncipe
Comoros	Senegal
Congo, Dem. Rep.	Sierra Leone
Côte d'Ivoire	Somalia
Djibouti	South Africa
Eritrea	South Sudan
Ethiopia	Sri Lanka
Gambia, The	Sudan
Georgia	Swaziland
Ghana	Syrian Arab Republic
Guinea	Tajikistan
Haiti	Tanzania
India	Togo
Indonesia	Uganda
Kenya	Ukraine
Korea, Dem Rep.	Uzbekistan
Kyrgyz Republic	Vanuatu
Lao PDR	Vietnam
Lesotho	West Bank and Gaza
Liberia	Yemen, Rep.
Madagascar	Zambia
Malawi	Zimbabwe