

Open AIR

Open African Innovation Research and Training: Exploring the Role of Intellectual Property in Open Development



Intellectual Property Law & Policy Research Unit, University of Cape Town (UCT)
Wilfred & Jules Kramer Law School Building, Stanley Road, Middle Campus
Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Tel: +27 (0)21 650 2064, Fax +27 (0)21 650 5770
<http://uctipunit.wordpress.com>

Fellowship Opportunity

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The Open African Innovation Research and Training (Open AIR) initiative on the role of intellectual property (IP) in open development invites applications for a three- or six-month Fellowship to live in Cape Town, South Africa, and work on Open AIR research, outreach and training activities. Primary responsibilities will include conducting research on a case study within one or more of the project's thematic areas, contributing to the development of outreach strategies and training initiatives, and helping to solidify and grow Open AIR's pan-African network. The Fellow will interact closely with project leaders and affiliated researchers at the Intellectual Property Law and Policy Research Unit at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

Open AIR will provide the Fellow with a subsistence and research stipend of up to ZAR100,000 (South African Rands) for each three-month period, plus cover the costs of return travel between the Fellow's place of residence and Cape Town. The Fellow may also have the opportunity to access additional funding for research expenses, outreach and training initiatives, and/or travel to disseminate research results.

Qualified candidates for the Fellowship should come from the African continent and hold a postgraduate degree (master's or doctorate) in law or another discipline closely connected to intellectual property law, the economics of innovation, and policy. Fluency in English and excellent writing, analytic and communication skills are essential. Proven experience in research, outreach, and training activities will be an asset.

If you are interested in applying for this opportunity, please provide, via email to Open AIR Interim Project Manager Chris Armstrong, c.g.armstrong@gmail.com, your curriculum vitae, including the names and contact information of three referees, and a covering letter outlining your qualifications and proposed contributions to the Open AIR project's research, outreach and training activities. Review of applications will begin **6 June 2011** and continue until a suitable candidate is selected. The successful applicant will be contacted by Open AIR and will be required to enter into an agreement that sets out the specific responsibilities and obligations of the Fellow.

About the Open African Innovation Research and Training (Open AIR) Project

Open AIR is a pan-African, multi-disciplinary, three-year project to collect research evidence, build capacity and generate practical lessons concerning the influence of intellectual property (IP) environments on open innovation and collaborative creativity in Africa. It will help African innovators, creators and entrepreneurs turn knowledge into concrete practices that transform economies and drive human development forward.

The 21st Century has ushered in new modes of innovation and creation based on collaboration among interconnected networks of people, knowledge and resources, but research and capacity-building around IP systems have not kept pace with these trends. Open AIR's interconnected, empirical case studies and future-focussed foresight research, along with sophisticated capacity-building for public and private sector leaders, carried out by a pan-African network of interdisciplinary experts, can facilitate collaboration, empower communities and reconfigure power structures.

Polarised views on how IP facilitates or restricts innovation and creativity persist because there is little empirical research on this topic. Consequently, relevant actors create or confront sub-optimal IP laws, policies and practices that impede development. Two interrelated hypotheses might explain why this is especially problematic in Africa: (1) African innovation and creativity are not properly valued by current IP-related metrics, and (2) African innovation and creativity are being constrained by sub-optimal IP-related policies and inefficient IP-related practices.

This project, supported by Canada's IDRC and Germany's BMZ, will determine how Africans can harness existing or potential IP systems to measure and facilitate innovation and creativity for more participatory, effective, and just models of 'open' development. Motivated by a vision of innovation and creativity in Africa as being sustainably vibrant, properly valued, democratically participatory, collaboratively shared, widely accessible and justly distributed through society, this project aims at four concrete outcomes for human development:

- raise problem awareness and facilitate critical policy engagement;
- change discourse and behaviour to engender fewer bottlenecks and more collaboration;
- empower a networked, epistemic IP community in Africa; and
- re-configure IP-related valuation metrics, capital and power structures.

These objectives will be met through a two-phased research methodology: (1) landscaping case studies in six thematic areas, including a comparative analytical synthesis; and (2) future foresighting exercises, including strategic and contingency planning.

Thematic case studies using impact assessment interviews and focus groups will be carried out in the diverse but interconnected fields of copyrights ('Empowering Creators in Creative Industries'), patents ('Open Innovation in the Bioenergy Sector') and trademarks ('Collaborative Agricultural Branding Strategies'), as well as in three cross-cutting areas of 'The WIPO Development Agenda,' 'The Traditional Knowledge Commons' and 'Publicly Funded Research.' Foresight research will collaboratively determine relevant drivers of change, identify and dissect possible scenarios for the future, and 'backcast' to generate strategic courses of action.

The project aims to build capacity among current and future research collaborators, policy and issue leaders, and grassroots stakeholders including innovators, creators and entrepreneurs. This capacity-building will happen through seminars and workshops, a researcher fellowship program, and a development-oriented intensive course curriculum.

Outputs and dissemination strategies will involve a combination of events, publications and multimedia productions, and an online portal for research, network-building and capacity-building activities.

Administered from the Intellectual Property Law and Policy Research Unit at the University of Cape Town with hubs in Southern Africa, West Africa, East Africa and North Africa, the project will network with the African IP research community. There will also be project nodes in Geneva, for engagement with international law-making and policymaking institutions, and in Ottawa, to connect developed and developing world resources and researchers. As well, there will be links to projects in Brazil and India, to facilitate South-South collaborative opportunities.

About the implementing and funding partners:

Open AIR is financed by the IDRC of Canada and Germany's BMZ. The project's capacity-building component is being carried out in cooperation with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), through its initiative entitled 'commons@ip - Harnessing the knowledge commons for open innovation.'

University of Cape Town IP Law and Policy Research Unit

The UCT Intellectual Property (IP) Law and Policy Research Unit assists in developing IP law and policy in Africa and aims to contribute to the manner in which this topic is treated in the emerging and developing countries throughout the world. The Unit's work is premised on the belief developing countries must participate in the evolution of intellectual property policy and law in order to ensure that any changes take full account of the needs of emerging economies. The Unit seeks to work through dialogue, research, debate and capacity-building, and to explore the issues faced by society at large, IP holders and consumers/users.

IDRC

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is a Crown corporation set up by the Parliament of Canada in 1970 to support developing countries in using science and technology to find solutions to social, economic, and environmental problems. IDRC's support is directed towards creating local research communities whose work can build healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous societies.

BMZ

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) develops the guidelines and the fundamental concepts on which German development policy is based. It devises long-term strategies for cooperation with the various players concerned and defines the rules for implementing that cooperation. All efforts are informed by the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, which aim to halve poverty in the world by 2015. See <http://www.bmz.de/en>.

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

GIZ supports people and societies in developing, transition and industrialised countries in shaping their own futures and improving living conditions. Established on 1 January 2011, GIZ brings together under one roof the expertise of the Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst (DED) (German development service), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) (German technical cooperation) and InWent – Capacity Building International, Germany. As part of GIZ's Human Capacity Building work on behalf of BMZ, the OpenIT@giz programmes support partners in Africa and Asia by providing advanced knowledge in open innovation and information and communication technologies (ICTs). The 'commons@ip - Harnessing the knowledge commons for open innovation' initiative focuses on the interaction between intellectual property rights and open innovation, the knowledge commons, open licences and collaborative innovation. It is part of the GIZ programme entitled 'Train for Trade,' <http://www.inwent.org/train4trade>, which aims at strengthening the private sector and its constituent bodies in the SADC region through capacity-building and training in export promotion, quality control, promotion of open innovation, as well as through promotion of local/regional economic development and local/regional trade. See <http://www.giz.de> and <http://www.inwent.org/it-inwent/>.