Short Session Report

Session Title: WE will not be silenced: civic space restrictions and activism on natural resource governance
Date & Time: 11.30, 3 December 2016
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Experts:
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Alfredo Okenve, Vice-President of Centro de Estudios e Iniciativas para el Desarrollo (CEID) in Equatorial Guinea
Robin Hodess, Group Director Research and Advocacy, Transparency International
Carmen Rosa Shuan Vega, Community leader in Huaraz region in Peru
Andrea Figari, Director for Community Engagement, Tactical Technology Collective (Berlin)

Main issues raised in kick off remarks. What’s the focus of the session?

Space for civil society is closing around the world. In resource-rich countries, activists work in an increasingly restrictive environment and are harassed for speaking out about natural resource governance. PWYP and CIVICUS have partnered to document more systematically the scope and variety of the shrinking civic space around the world and how it actively undermines efforts to achieve greater transparency and accountability in the management of natural resources. The results of this joint research were presented at this workshop, to discuss the main findings in light of real life experiences.
What initiatives have been showcased? Briefly describe the Game Changing strategies/ ideas (if applicable)

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Tactical Tech civil society surveillance toolkit

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<th>Briefly describe the highlights including the thematically interesting questions and ideas that were generated from the discussion or from the floor, and session quotes.</th>
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<td>Harassment is big, happening and really bad. The report shows trends and examples. A lot going on that we don’t even know. Much is not being reported, even murders, as in remote places. Trying to show the common cause and drivers. Emphasis on the use of the law. Civic space is being restricted and half the world’s population lives in situations where the space is obstructed, repressed or closed.</td>
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<td>Example of Equitorial Quinea, anyone who speaks against the state is demonised as a terrorist. If we can overcome sense of being afraid personally, then it turns to the organisation itself.</td>
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<td>In Peru there is no transparency in particular mining projects. The law is designed to obstruct indigenous efforts to secure justice in total violation of human rights. It is through human rights that groups found their defence. Women are most vulnerable. They are focused on impact on indigenous women’s rights, food and water safety, reproduction rights.</td>
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<td>In Transparency International there is an increased focus increasingly on the shrinking civil society space. It is everywhere and increasingly insidious. Physical threats</td>
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always in issue.. We are challenging entrenched power, and now exposing cases in a way that we didn’t in the past, and that increases risks.

Andrea - Could you please explain to us some of the risks created by new technologies

Civil society is behind on surveillance, and we know how much states invest in this. The problem is a systemic civic space issue. We need to collaborate online, but with safe tech tool. We have to learn CPR now, not during an accident. You don’t need to be a technician to protect your rights to privacy.

We need to work on the closing of the space. Working with those without power and dealing with regulation. Human rights and corruption activists need to work more closely together and learn to utilise each others mechanisms.

We have to find a way to help people with financing. We have to get creative. We need to support honest leaders. People don’t have the resources or time.

Local organisations need to have the technical power and resources to act autonomously.

What is the responsibility of companies? It is too late is you are only focusing on reporting when it comes to corporate social responsibility. We need information to take decisions, to be at the operational level with companies.

Often there is no information on spending and budget on projects, so it is hard to determine the extent of the problem (eg what is supposed to go to the community). Companies create front faces in order to avoid being able to get to the root of responsibility.

Companies try to approach students, no procurement, just lobbying.

Acknowledging individuals as human rights defenders can actually increase risks at the national level.
If you are transparent, you make yourself the cannon ball.
There is a person behind every story.

Local level models of networks could be good to share, and they need international connections, solidarity and impact.

Think global to local, outside to inside. Important that with initiatives we can build on what’s there, and also what’s needed new. Need to deal with corporate access right at home.

This work is intrinsically political. About huge imbalances in power. When you start asking tough questions, you are directly threatening huge interests, where the revenue generators are the state. Not an easy fight. We need to work better together. With human rights, mechanisms etc
What are the key recommendations, follow-up Actions (200 words narrative form)

There needs to be a increased focus on the shrinking civil society space. We need to collaborate online, but with safe tech tool. We have to learn now and not during a crisis. Human rights and corruption activists need to work more closely together and learn to utilise each others mechanisms. We have to find a way to help people with financing. Local organisations need to have the technical power and resources to act autonomously. Local level models of networks could be good to share, and they need international connections, solidarity and impact. It is important that with initiatives we can build on what’s there, and also what’s needed new. We need to deal with corporate access right at home.

Key Insights that could be included in the IACC Declaration
Rapporteur’s name and date submitted


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