Short Session Report

Session Title: Fighting Corruption in “Post-Truth” America: What Have We Learned, What Are We Doing About It?
Date & Time: Monday October 22, 2018
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Experts:

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Moderated by: Zoe Reiter
Session coordinated by: Zoe Reiter

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

How we fight corruption in a post-truth America, following up on TI’s efforts to build a new presence in the US sphere – to understand both the local US ecosystem on anti-corruption issues, and the question of the
complex role the US plays in the world. Panelists come from movement perspectives throughout the US reform movement, focused on corruption, capture, and money in politics. Main topic: **Problem analysis of corruption in America, how to revise strategies based on the current realities.** Trump is a symptom and not a cause. Key questions: What was keeping folks up at night pre-2016, and what has changed since then? What are the strategies for doubling down, and what new approaches do we need?

**What initiatives have been showcased? Briefly describe the Game Changing strategies/ ideas (if applicable)**


Project on Government Oversight: 30 years of history on these issues, working on agency capture, and the revolving door. That hasn’t changed. What has, though – is the brazenness of the use of public office for personal gain. Shame seems to no longer matter. Corruption questions are also now linked to constitutional and human rights. Examples include Saudi arms sales. **Strengthening good government infrastructure**, through both legal reform and investigation. This corruption bridges both parties. Bipartisan solutions aren’t a silver bullet. Represent.US – nonpartisan national anti-corruption political campaign. Regular voters are disenfranchised, disempowered by the system, through electoral rules, party duopoly, and candidate selection. The job of representation is currently about fundraising. First anti-corruption act
in Tallahassee, and was a collaboration between progressives and tea party activists. Cross-partisan collaboration on state-level legal reforms. Womens’ suffrage and marriage equality both progressed through state-by-state reforms. 2016 suggested public appetite for anti-corruption as a ballot box issue. 88 non-binding and binding legislative victories, 63 since 2016.

People subjected to systemic corruption retreat to extremes. We’re beyond individual instances of influence peddling, to sophisticated, integrated transnational networks. The US is now the crowning example of kleptocratic governance. Sophisticated global network is on the offensive, exporting a positive norm. Anti-corruption professionals are talking to themselves, instead of talking to popular indignation.

Briefly describe the highlights including the thematically interesting questions and ideas that were generated from the discussion or from the floor, and session quotes.

How to distinguish systems-level causes from individual symptoms.

Anti-corruption indignation is captured by corrupt actors themselves. Are our remedies proportional to the pathologies we’re confronted by?

Are people’s daily lives encountering corruption more, or are there two polarized views of what and when corruption matters?

Are we barreling towards social catastrophe like the world wars, Spanish Flu, the Great Depression, that came after the last gilded age.

Importance of broadening political spectrum support, but also issue spectrum support.

Need to tell the truth about where we are, some we know, and some we can’t see clearly.

Abject public misunderstanding of how money in politics works, as though career civil servants accept campaign contributions. Counterpoint – regular citizens often have very sophisticated narratives and understandings of corruption.
Disinformation, dark money, and polarized media mean we’re not telling the truth, unclear about what we are learning, and connecting to the wrong folks.

**What are the key recommendations, follow-up Actions (200 words narrative form)**

Talk to civil society groups from Poland, Hungary, Austria, Italy about what went wrong, since the EU is in some respects ahead.

Intersectional approach incorporating racial justice, human rights, and social equality issues.

Beware creating false equivalency between parties, beware assigning Trump’s victory to anti-corruption frustrations instead of racial resentment. Does approaching advocacy through a non-partisan lens create a false equivalency?

**Key Insights that could be included in the IACC Declaration**

The importance of the link between corruption and human rights, and racial justice, and rising inequality.

That the response to rising, sophisticated kleptocracy networks needs to be as sophisticated and coordinated as they are, and present an urgent humanitarian concern.
Rapporteur’s name and date submitted
John Wonderlich October 22, 2018

This Short Report needs to be submitted within 2 hours after the session.