Dish of the Day 1 - APC member network, a community of communities

Welcome to day 1 of the APC Member Convening 2021! And welcome to this, the first Dish of the Day, cooked up collectively with all the diverse ingredients that this inspiring network brings into the kitchen.

The plenaries: APC member network, a community of communities

https://videos.apc.org/mgoblin_media/media_entries/369/videoslide2.720p.webm

It was finally time for the APC member network to connect with each other and show up as a community of communities. Co-facilitated by Leandro Navarro, chair of APC's executive board of directors, and APC Executive Director Chat Garcia Ramilo, the first plenary session of the day set the tone for the rest of the convening week: what we want to do as a community, talk to each other about how we have been both personally and as organisations, what we have learned, and what we are looking at in the future. This plenary served as a model for how APC conducts these safe spaces for hard conversations while also imbibing a sense of fun and camaraderie through music, poetry, laughter and more.

We began with a short video compilation of how some APC network members generated change since our last convening a year ago (https://videos.apc.org/u/apc/m/apc-member-convening-2021-apc-network-a-community-of-communities-bc20/) followed by small breakout groups to introduce each other as well as share our favourite song, movie or poem. After returning to the main plenary, participants continued to share their favourite personal touchpoints: films like My Neighbor Totoro, Wings of Fame and Coco; and songs like When the Rain Begins to Fall by Jermaine Jackson and Pia Zadora, and Santé by Stromae. One participant shared how they had just attended a concert by Ana Tijoux last weekend!

APC is in the second year of implementing its strategic plan which ends in 2023, but we also recognise that we are in a radically changed world. These are fundamentally different times, and one of the objectives of the week is to discuss how the year has been for staff and members amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Part of these conversations will be to describe who we are as APC and as network members.

The second group exercise for this plenary was to write down sentences in the format of: APC is X because it does Y. X being one of these five categories:

- A diverse and grounded community
- People-centred technology innovators and practitioners
- Human rights and feminist network
- Policy change actors
- Bridge builder, connector and convener

And Y being an example that links APC and the participant's organisation/group/themselves.

Some examples of what participants wrote were:

· APC is a diverse and grounded community because it works to use technology to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable people.

· C'est un réseau d'organisation mondial qui s'enrichit à travers diverses expérience et bonnes pratiques profitables à tous.

· The APC network is the world's best hope for the survival of the decentralised internet because it provides support to its membership, which is in part comprised of geographically diverse organisations and small companies that are actually creating and maintaining internet infrastructure for direct service to communities, grassroots organisations, at-risk populations and professionals.

· APC members are policy change actors because of the strength of numbers – together we represent civil society in important forums where we support each other to influence key decision-making processes.

· APC is a bridge builder, connector and convener because in the frame of the network we build really valuable relations with other organisations with whom we share visions, aims, and the world we would like to live in, nearing us with new perspectives related with each new technological context.

There were many more such formulations, and the group discussed several of them. One participant commented that "even before we became a member of APC, APC has reached out and included us in regional and international dialogues, which is very useful… throughout the years, we've been engaged in national regional and international advocacy, also together with other think tanks from the broader APC team and network." Another said that "APC has a very great possibility to change the internet."

After this exercise, the group took a short break while listening to a song suggestion by a participant: Namma Stories - The South Anthem by NJ, Arivu, SIRI & Hanumankind.

The final part of the plenary involved explaining the Best Futures Awards, where all participants are urged to recognise people and organisations that "take your heart" this week during the convening. You can add your nominations for the Best Futures Awards

here.

And finally, APC's Jennifer Radloff and Cynthia El Khoury opened the space for everyone to share some of their ways of active collective care. They wrapped up the plenary by reading out two poems: Reasons Not to Step on Snails by Isabel Zapata and Don't Hesitate by Mary Oliver.

As Day 1 of the convening moved forward, members were invited to join the second plenary of the day taking place to accommodate time zones around the globe. Co-facilitated by APC's Valeria Betancourt and Colnodo's Julián Casasbuenas and with the support of live interpreters in French, Spanish and Portuguese, introductory remarks outlined how this week will be important for sharing our experiences, including changes we are facing and strategies we are implementing to continue our work and to make APC a stronger collaborative network. There was a shared feeling of joy that this get-together was taking place in these challenging times and that we are able not only to celebrate but also to imagine the future all together in the perspective of strengthening ourselves as a network. There was a sense of appreciation of everyone's time, presence and participation in this member convening, as "it's very hard to keep connected and keep participating in all these spaces online that have been our way of work."

Together we watched a powerful video presentation highlighting some of the accomplishments of our network from the past year. It was inspiring to see how much our network managed to accomplish in times of adversity, explaining how "even with the COVID-19 crisis, we are moving forward with different projects and trying to adapt and continue our work in making a better life for the communities we serve."

We had 38 participants join from places like Colombia, Uruguay, Spain, Morocco, Canada, Argentina, Ecuador, Bangladesh and India, to name a few. As we took turns connecting with each other, we discovered a broad range of regions represented and explored some inspiring quotes shared by each participant, taken from a favourite song, poem or film. Not surprisingly, themes of strength, love and resistance and were often expressed, and one member even sang a beautiful stanza from a special song, emulating the rhythm of the waves. Some of the inspiring quotes shared include the following:

"*You owe your dreams your courage.*" *(Koleka Putuma)*

"*We need to face life with the curiosity of an apprentice and the humbleness of a pilgrim.*" (D.C.Wahl, "Designing regenerative cultures")

"*We found love in a hopeless place.*" *(Rihanna)*

"*We have on this earth that which makes this life worth living.*" *(Mahmoud Darwish)*

"*The beauty of things was born before eyes and sufficient to itself, the heart-breaking beauty. It will remain when there is no heart to break for it.*" *(Robinson Jeffers)*

(In a mix of Spanish, English and lunfardo): "*Cada cual tiene un trip en el bocho,*" which means that everyone is different and has their own issues, and we cannot fully understand each other, and we

have to live with that. ("Promesas sobre el bidet" by Charly García).

From here we took some time to reflect on a number of emerging issues throughout everybody's work and how this links with APC's strategic priorities. Participants were given the beginnings of five statements and asked to add to them, using their own experiences for inspiration. Some of the highlights include:

APC is a diverse and grounded community because:

...it is a network of grassroots organisations across the world that draws from the grassroots to produce policy recommendations at a global level.

The APC network and organisation are people-centred technology innovators and practitioners because:

...we support communities to self-determine their communications. In that sense, we are contributing to strengthening a movement of community networks and other community-based solutions for access around the world.

APC is a human rights and feminist network because:

...it contributes to visibilising online gender-based violence and to design effective responses towards eradicating it.

...it brings the intersection between these perspectives to the internet advocacy spaces, exploring and going deeper in its multiple meanings.

APC members are policy change actors because:

...due to the small grants for campaigning, members are more able to have positive actions in internet policies

APC is a bridge builder, connector and convener because:

...we have been able to learn from and share our work with organisations around our region and the world.

...our best partnerships have been made possible due to our connections within APC.

Once everyone had taken time to note down their ideas, participants were invited to share further comments on their contributions. Reflecting on APC's movement building, it was shared that "we have been working for a long time in the use of the technologies on the internet to improve quality of life of the most vulnerable people and also giving them the opportunity to work together and to find those solutions." In addition, APC's role as a bridge builder was exemplified through a picturesque analogy, likening it to "a tree that's grown many branches" and gives visibility to organisations both locally and globally.

Finally we concluded the plenary with a moving poem, “An Invitation to a Brave Space”, launching this week of meetings on a hopeful note and closing out the plenary with the following words:

We will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be
But
It will be our brave space together,
And
We will work on it side by side.

PS: We’re adding songs here throughout the week; please add your own! (pass: APCconvening / File: world-music-cafe)

More highlights from day 1 here!



On Day 2 of our convening, we will have many diverse and inspiring sessions from **3:30 to 16:00 UTC** organised by members Korean Progressive Network Jinbonet, Pangea.org, Digital Empowerment Foundation, Instituto Nupef with Servelots and Zenzeleni, Media Matters for Democracy, Colnodo and Nodo TAU, Helen Nyinakiiza, May First Movement Technology with Rhizomatica, Mallory Knodel, and LaborNet.

We will have only **one plenary at 6:00 UTC in Ama Waterfall: Members Collaboration(s) and Building of Capacity.** This plenary will focus on the “**Collective Future of the Network**” and member interconnections exploring member-to-member and member-to-staff intentional collaboration and building of capacity, putting transformation and change at the core of members' joint initiatives. This plenary on day 2 will open the three days of reflections on the future of the network: ***What are the stepping stones, the dots, the elements that forge the APC network? What are the practices we could learn from one another?***

What are the elements of today that can be used to build our future? What is the power of collaboration? How can horizontal learning and distributed presence of local/regional initiatives contribute to a collective and global response to fragmentation, isolation and precariousness?

We are extending a special invitation to tomorrow's **Environmental Sustainability Ecosystem: A Virtual World Cafe**, organised by the Environmental Sustainability working group. Join us in any of the two that we will have, with the first one at **8:30 UTC** and second one at **15:00 UTC**. This will be a great opportunity to learn about projects and activities of members, partners and staff involved in the APC Environmental Sustainability Ecosystem, through 2-3 rounds of breakout sessions of 20 minutes each, with opportunities for all interested APC members and staff to present and discuss their work.

Let's also "**Come together**" for a pop-up walk through the **APC guidelines on planning and designing online events** with magic brought by azar and nadege at 9:30 UTC in Vos Cave.

If you'd like to see an **overview of the agenda for tomorrow** in your own time zones, please go to the schedule **here**.

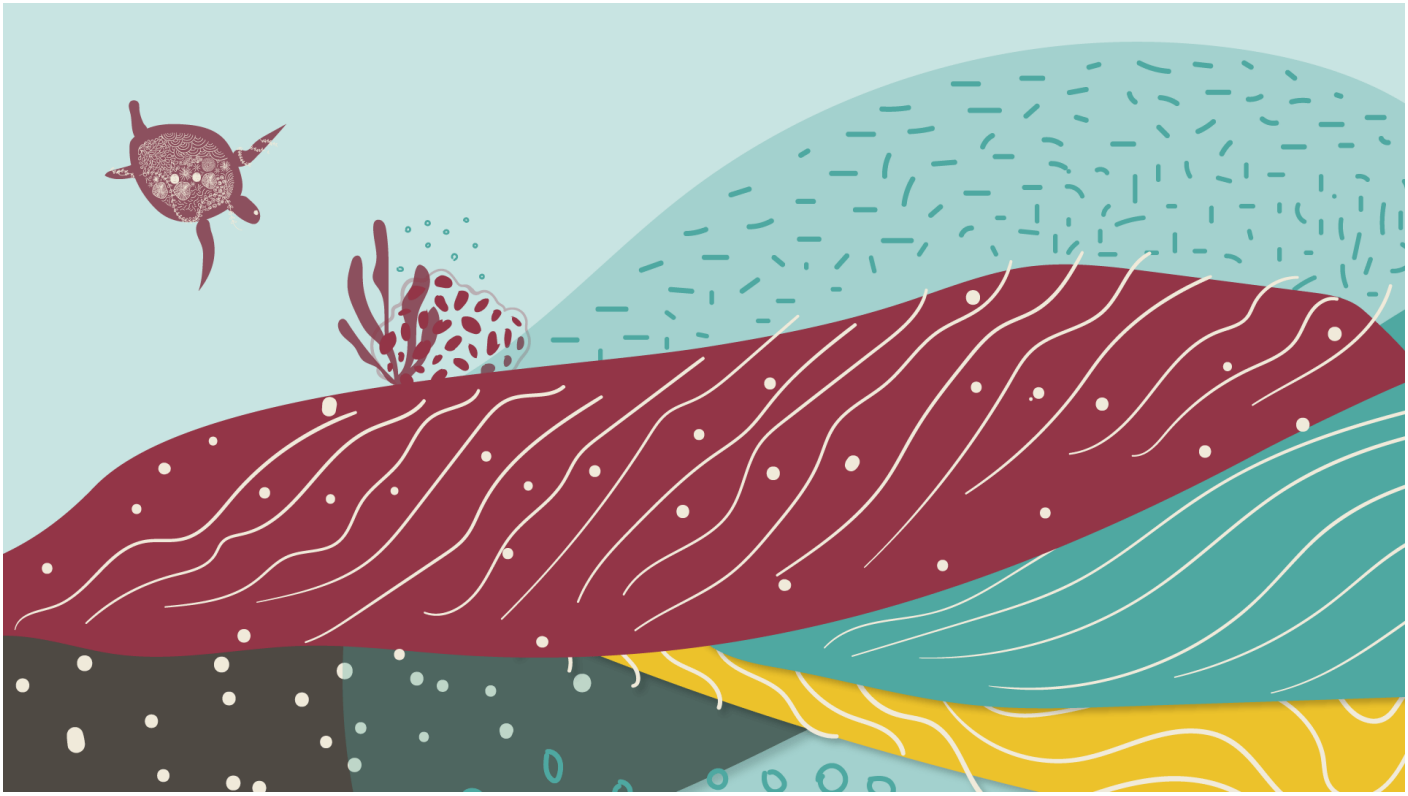
If you feel inspired and have some spare time, please send us **what you have learned about caring for yourself and share care strategies within the network at orgcare@apc.org**.

Remember that if you were unable to attend the plenaries, we have set up a **Mattermost channel that participants can join to participate asynchronously**. Please feel welcome to add your thoughts and suggestions!

Almost there! There is a **link to a shared folder here for you to upload content** (e.g. previous work, posters, documentaries, etc.) (password: APCconvening).

Last but not least: the Best Futures Awards nominations are on! The Best Futures Awards are a recognition we share with one another. During these five days you will attend many sessions, speak and listen to many, many people. You will discover new ways of thinking, doing, resisting, resting and creating changes. We have thought of four main awards: Solidarity, Collaboration, Innovation and Creativity. Help us to choose the person, the collective or the organisation that you believe deserves one or more of them. When attending a plenary, an interconnections session or a pop-up, think about who you would like to acknowledge and share your thoughts with the Best Futures Awards committee. Also, if you would like to be part of the team of "talent scouts" to help us gather nominations, join us and let’s look around together. And yes, the Best Futures Awards have prizes! You can add your nominations for the Best Futures Award **here**.

And that's it for now! Come back here tomorrow for your Dish of the Day to catch up on anything you may have missed from day 2!



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