More highlights from day 3

Digital Covid Warriors Saving Real Lives

The session "Digital Covid Warriors Saving Real Lives", facilitated by the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), focused on how the organisation worked during the pandemic, ensuring that the most marginalised people living in unconnected areas could access food, finance, health, education and their basic rights.

Through "Soochnapreneurs" (which translates as "information entrepreneurs"), DEF was able to contribute to Covid-19 relief initiatives by sharing information and raising awareness around Covid-19, as well as pushing back against disinformation. They published a Covid-19 Information Resource Kit, which contains verified crowdsourced information in English and Hindi, and also provided mobile digital services, distribution of food grains, oximeters and oxygen concentrators, protective gear and support for vaccination registrations.

Feminist Knowledge Production - Deconstructing Knowledge

Body & Data, based in Nepal, explored feminist knowledge production in this session by presenting two diverse pieces of content they published this year. The first was Exposé, a "visual poem" by spoken word poet Shuvangi Khadka that explored how personal images and videos are sometimes made public for doxxing and harassment. The other was an article called F for Fandom, F for Feminist Space by legal practitioner Diskhya Khadgi.

After showing both pieces to the audience, everyone broke up into two breakout groups to discuss what stood out for them, whether they found any feminist values reflected in the pieces, and how they found these to be different from mainstream content. Several participants discussed their own histories of being "Tumblr queers" and fandom in places like thedarkarts.org, how they found alternative communities and friends in these online spaces that allowed them a queer identity that they found hard to express offline, and the power of pleasure as a key feminist principle. Khadka spoke about their artistic process given that they themselves have not experienced the phenomenon they wanted to explore in the video, while Khadgi said they came across the Feminist Principles of the Internet on the APC website, and that is what made them consider how the internet is used, especially in Nepal, for something seemingly "frivolous" like fandom.

Film screening: Invisible Mundu (Directed by Varun)

Kuri thinks her father ("Appa") is a superhero, who can turn invisible with the help of his "mundu". But when Appa faces Dineshan, the Great Eye in the Sky – a metaphor for state-based surveillance and digital oppression – he ends up losing his life and livelihood. How will Appa overcome the great

villain? The film "Invisible Mundu" is an animation that explores the idea of privacy and consent. It uses a fun fable style to narrate how a father, who was deemed a superhero by his daughter, would react when he faces state-based surveillance and digital oppression.

Film screening: Pattani Calling (Directed by Vijitra Duangdee)

To get a SIM card in insurgency-hit southern Thailand, you have to have your face scanned. Because of this, thousands of Malay Muslims are forgoing mobile communications and becoming biosecurity rebels against the state.

From a mosque after prayers, the protagonist of Pattani Calling explains the cost of being cut off from modern communications in the insurgency-riddled "deep south" of Thailand. He has to make long drives through dangerous roads to meet people in person or to use a landline to check in on his wife and son at home.

His disconnection is self-imposed but necessary: he refuses to register his biodata to get a SIM card as ordered by the Thai state. The government says it is a necessary security measure covering the Malay Muslim-majority southernmost provinces. It says this is where militants fighting a grinding insurgency against Bangkok use burner phones to detonate their roadside bombs. Muslim locals say it is just the latest tool of Thai security services to creep into their lives: harvesting biodata in a new layer of mass surveillance in a region where appearing on state registers often results in miscarriages of justice.

Pattani Calling is a story of a community being forced by state digital policies into exile from modern communication. It is also a tale of defiance and resourcefulness by people staying connected when the state refuses to give them SIM cards.

Digital Inclusion and Achieving the SDGs: A view from the global South

The 2020 e-Conomy Africa Report by IFC and Google finds that Africa’s internet economy has the potential to reach USD 180 billion by 2025, accounting for 5.2% of the continent’s gross domestic product (GDP), and USD 712 billion or 8.5% of the continent’s GDP by 2050. This trend could accelerate further, as digital technologies have come to the forefront in the unprecedented global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the majority of folks affected were in the global South, where those who lacked access to the internet became particularly vulnerable in terms of finances and did not even have access to the first five core SDGs. Those with digital access to the internet in cities and urban towns have in some way tackled the first five of the SDGs and are proffering solutions for the other 11 SDGs.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, being "digitally included" helped communities cope better during the first year of the pandemic by being able to access tools to support livelihoods, from

health to education and feeding. The session Digital Inclusion and Achieving the SDGs: A view from the global South, organised by APC member in The Gambia Jokkolabs Banjul, generated this space to correlate the top five SDGs (No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well Being, Quality Education, and Gender Equality) and digital inclusion, and show how being digitally included can aid attainment of the SDGs.

Love as subversion: Reclaiming the feminine perspective

Janastu-Servelots used the opportunity of this session to widen our understanding of how working with community networks needs a feminine gaze, patience and care. They proceeded to tell some revealing anecdotes on the principles of embracing slowness in creating change, valuing indispensability and complexity, and allowing for messiness and uncertainty. One person recounted an incident of how a security guard at the ancient Orchha Fort gave her a memorable history tour, including stories from his ancestors in the area. “Anyone can write anything on Wikipedia,” he told her. “But what I’m telling you is the truth.” One participant responded by recommending the Zimbabwean novel *We Need New Names*.

There were stories of how marginalised people sometimes feel let down or impatient when promised change does not happen fast enough, and how failure, raising false hopes and bad communications are a regular part of progress when building community networks. Complexity of language and cultural barriers often imply slowness, which is something hard to imbibe in your annual plans. Human relationships take time to form, and one participant also recommended the book Getting to Maybe. The final anecdote was of how when one women went to buy glass bangles, her male colleague also ended up buying some for himself and began wearing them. This caused a huge stir wherever he went, and eventually taught him the value of gentleness while going through life, since you don’t want to break your bangles.

Self, collective and organisational ways of extending care



State of digital rights in Africa

In this session, Lillian Nalwoga from APC member CIPESA in Uganda and Sylvie Siyam from PROTEGE QV in Cameroon walked the participants through an eye-opening overview of the state of digital rights in Africa.

CIPESA presented the main highlights of their recently launched Internet Freedom Report, which reveals an increase of violations of digital rights, with a notorious and generalised increase in state surveillance, also addressing how this impacted on the civic space and democratic practices in Africa.

PROTEGE QV presented "Evaluating the level of respect of digital rights: Cameroon's case", which is a tool that draws on the principles outlined in the African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms to build a barometer to evaluate respect of digital rights in Africa. The data obtained with these indicators can be used as a governance tool and also for cross-country comparison.

Sylvie shared some highlights of the report, among them that cultural linguistic diversity and the right to due process are fully respected in Cameroon, and that freedom of expression and freedom of assembly on the internet are really low. Better but still in a weak position, there is equality between men and women in access to and accessibility of the internet.

This tool was shared with human rights commissioners, regulators, telecom operators and CSOs in the country. PROTEGE QV found out that the commission in charge of human rights in Cameroon did not have any tool to assess digital rights, the reason why they were eager to learn more about this tool.

Some questions to the session organisers revolved around how to make all these digital rights trends more relevant to media, so African organisations doing this kind of research can draw on their mass outreach and create public pressure on governments. One of the ways of addressing this challenge that CIPESA has been working on is creating capacity building opportunities for journalists and media organisations, teaching them how to report on digital rights issues and governance in a human rights-based and consistent way.

There was an interesting discussion on how to produce comparable data from the different African countries, also in relation to the global landscape, so this can be used to advocate in regional forums and build greater regional negotiation power.

Collaboration alert! PROTEGE QV is looking for partner organisations to work on the measurements in different countries and regions in Africa, after reaching a consensus on the indicators, the methodology and how to publish the reports.

DIY together a community operated wireless kit - for inclusion of low-literates

Servelots made this session a space for dialogue around how to remotely support people in setting up community networks and to gain insights for their initiative to build an inclusive, decentralised, open kit that communities can easily deploy and maintain.

During the session, Sanketh from Servelots told us how the requests from communities for community networks have been increasing, while COVID-19 imposed barriers to face-to-face training and set-up activities. The pandemic also made connectivity more urgent, both for rural and urban populations that are uncovered by the commercial access model. From those barriers emerged the idea of building a kit to help people remotely, aiming to make the process approachable for communities with different levels of involvement with networks and digital technologies.

Important aspects are being considered to build an effective and simple-to-use kit, such as prioritising local networks as a starting point, providing support in multiple languages, offering instructions in different formats, including audio ones, and using open source technologies. In an engaging conversation, participants brought inputs from their own experiences and also shared references of initiatives with potential synergies, such as Nimble kit from Wakoma and Nupef's project Graúna.

APC’s ITU Sector Membership: Opportunities to strengthen our network advocacy

This session unpacked what the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is and how it works, aiming to briefly cover some key spaces to engage and both ongoing opportunities and those on the agenda for next year. While very few civil society organisations are present, ITU's decisions are rather influential in shaping the internet ecosystem and have impacts on a lot of topics on our agenda, such as community networks, artificial intelligence, environmental concerns, gender

inclusion and cybersecurity.

APC has ITU Sector Membership and has been participating in some processes and spaces, which should be an open window for all members interested. APC is also engaged with the EQUALS initiative, created by the ITU and UN Women to address the gender digital divide, where we are part of the access coalition focused on reducing the gender gap on the internet. Another opportunity shared during the session was the ongoing open consultation run by the ITU Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues (CWG-Internet) on the environmental impacts and benefits of the internet.

For members interested in learning more or engaging in those and other opportunities, this very informative session was facilitated by Carlos Rey Moreno and Verónica Ferrari, from the APC team. The Local Networks initiative, led by APC in partnership with Rhizomatica, is also documenting their learnings and contributions to the ITU at this policy wiki.

Applying design justice principles to user experience research

This session, organised by APC members May First Movement Technology, Código Sur and GreenNet and facilitated by Jaime Villareal, was a participative introduction to what design justice and community-centred design processes are about (in Spanish here.) How do we design, as we the communities are not design experts? How can we do this in a way that it is not merely technical but useful and simple? How can this tool free us? And how can we make certain that the internet reflects our different visions of the world? Design justice is about making sure that the communities that will be most affected by what you are designing will have a stake in the design process.

All of this was brought home through a concrete exercise where participants were asked to join the organisers in planning a process to design a control panel interface for autonomous internet/intranet service providers and community infrastructure projects. The control panel project emerged as part of their work in the Infrared network, after realising that between 20 and 25 different hosting providers had started out with different sorts of infrastructure that were not necessarily compatible with each other and they all did things in very different ways, which was all getting in the way of collaboration. Therefore, they decided to focus on the commonalities, such as the lack of control panels. Were there also commonalities in terms of what users needed?

As part of the exchanges that took place in the session, some participants challenged the feasibility of producing a design that works for everyone, as the users' contexts are so diverse. The group also provided ideas of communities, groups and individuals that could be represented and drive the control panel design project, such as CMS and website maintainers, people whose role is providing technical support in organisations, graphic designers, people organising co-op organisations, independent or public schools that need to provide educational services online, and people with disabilities. Among many others, people working in community networks and who also need to provide these kind of services were pointed out as an important sector to include, and the

organisers said there is room there to involve a lot of people in the APC network.

The facilitator emphasised that anyone who has implementation and development ideas for this initiative, knows about funding options for this kind of project, and/or has examples to share of previous similar processes that can be used as a reference, to please get in touch with Jaime (May First), Nikole (Código Sur) or Ian (GreenNet).

Facial recognition: Risks, challenges and opportunities from local, regional and global approaches

This session, presented by Derechos Digitales, explored the use, benefits and challenges of facial recognition as well as examining various contexts of its application in Latin America. From these case studies, we looked at different options for advocacy to ensure human rights are centred in the use of facial recognition technologies.

Starting with a simple definition of facial recognition as a method of capturing an image and running it through software for analysis before storing it in a database for comparison to other photos and databases, we considered some of the problems and risks involved, particularly in relation to human rights abuses. Notable examples include infringements on freedom of movement, privacy and security as well as possibilities for discrimination, arrests and blocking of access to state services. Because we do not know where and how these technologies are being used, facial recognition is essentially “a solution in search of a problem” and the potential consequences can be serious.

In Latin America, Derechos Digitales partnered with other groups to examine 38 cases of facial recognition use by states in schools, airports, drugstores, metro stations and more, and found that “in more than 60% of cases, there are no legal bases or preceding cases” to determine whether use of these technologies complies with human rights standards. This makes its use very difficult to litigate and poses a challenge to knowing where these technologies are even being used.

What is important therefore is to seriously consider what we can do and how we can act together. Advocacy can take place in international forums (e.g. Human Rights Council) and national campaigns (e.g. regulation, strategic litigation, special events). The use of a moratorium drew discussion from participants around its impact on the purchasing and selling of these technologies. Furthermore, the need for further research and collection of case studies is critical in order to implement policies that will have positive and far-reaching impacts as facial recognition technologies are being developed in order to curtail the potential for human rights infringement through their use and application.

To engage on these issues, contact Michel Souza at michel [dot] souza [at] derechosdigitales [dot] org for more information.

Training and capacity building as a constellation of experiences / Formación y creación de capacidades como constelación de experiencias

In this session, we were invited to learn more about the publication "Technological autonomy as a constellation of experiences: A guide to collective creation and development of training programmes for technical community promoters", which provides resources for the participatory implementation of training initiatives. As its name states, this is not a "one size fit all" manual, but an attempt to connect some stars in the skyline, which means it provides resources for the participatory implementation of training based on diverse local experiences and knowledge from communities. The guide also offers examples, such as the Community Techio, a training programme and pedagogical proposal that has been designed based on needs identified in the field of community communication in Mexico for several years.

From the guide's presentation made by the co-authors Alma Soto and Daniela Bello, the session hosted a lively conversation about the importance of participatory approaches in training, since "we all know something and we all can learn different things," as well said by the facilitator, Carlos Baca Feldman from Rhizomatica. Participants also reflected on challenges and how communities can benefit from autonomy and self-determination concerning communication and telecommunications technologies and processes in different contexts, sharing learnings and reflections from the multiple experiences gathered in the room, such as those from CITAD (Nigeria), Projeto Saúde e Alegria - PSA (Brazil), Nodo TAU (Argentina), REDES A.C. (Mexico) and Colnodo (Colombia).

The "Technological autonomy as a constellation of experiences" guide is available in four languages, Spanish, English, Portuguese and French, in this folder.

CENO: Avoid internet shutdowns with cooperative web browsing and caching

In this session, APC member in Canada eQualitie offered a useful overview of CENO (Censorship.No!), a free/libre open source mobile web browser that uses P2P technology to deliver websites to people's phones and caches copies of popular content among cooperating peers. Besides showing how it works, they also explained how to use it to access blocked websites and how to help others in retrieving that content when those websites are no longer available, whether due to specific site censorship or complete country disconnection from the rest of the world. CENO was built in support of Articles 18, 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and presents a new generation of censorship circumvention possibilities. CENO is based on Firefox for Android (a.k.a. Mozilla Fennec), extended to make use of the innovative Ouinet library, enabling third-party developers to incorporate the CENO network into their apps for peer-to-peer connectivity.

Human Rights and the Internet

“This book is about all of you, about my incredible time at APC." This is how individual member Joy Liddicoat described her recently launched book, Human Rights and the Internet, which was the focus of this session.

Liddicoat said she wanted to capture the struggle to have human rights on the internet recognised as a concept, and was prompted to write the book by the pandemic and ensuing lockdown, which meant she had time to reflect on and process her “crazy, wild, incredible time with APC.” She added, “I felt there was a story that needed to be told, about the Connect Your Rights campaign” (which Liddicoat headed up as the manager of the APC Communications and Information Policy Programme between 2011 and 2014).

In 2011, nothing was going on in UN human rights spaces around the internet, she explained. Raising internet issues at the Human Rights Council seemed to be a clash of concepts at the time: the internet was believed to be an open, free, equal space, with no one in control, while human rights was considered a domain controlled by governments. “Who has the crazy idea of linking these two worlds? APC, of course,” she quipped.

Liddicoat mentioned a number of milestones in APC’s efforts in this area, from supporting members to participate in the Human Rights Council and UPR processes, to working with former UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression Frank La Rue on the first UN resolution establishing that the same human rights that apply offline must also be respected online. APC also played a crucial role in expanding the concept of human rights online beyond civil and political rights, like freedom of expression, to economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to health – with the latter having become particularly pertinent in the current times of COVID-19.

When questioned about the challenges that lie ahead, Liddicoat stressed that one of the surprises resulting from writing the book was “how positive the story was.” The fact that new issues and challenges are constantly emerging makes our work feel overwhelming, and “we forget, as activists, how far we have come in the last 10 years.”

Come together, a walk through APC guidelines on planning and designing online events with magic brought by azar and nadege

In this intimate session, we took a walk through APC’s newly created “Come Together” guide for planning and designing online events. hvale told the story of its creation, explaining that “we didn’t want to give a recipe, but to give a kind of compass, when you start dreaming, and you dream big, and you want to do everything.” Borne of APC’s many years as a remote organisation and catalysed by the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, which shifted the work of the network online, one participant aptly commented that an alternative title to the guide could be "learnings for online convening from one year of pandemic and 30 years of experience".

Throughout the session, we contemplated questions such as “do we need a convening or event, or are there other possible ways to connect? You have a purpose, you have a community – how do you talk to that community? What is our expectation for the use of this guide?” These raised interesting discussions around the challenges of interpretation for online events to improve accessibility, as well as the importance of relevant documentation.

With the official launch of this guide coming soon, we hope that it will prove to be a valuable resource to the network and that through feedback, we can continue to build upon its contents.

Ultimately, when it comes to gathering online, hvale graced participants with the following reminder: “If we build processes and spaces where people can learn, digest and synthesise, then we can build an embodied memory.”

Go back to read the rest of the Dish of the Day!

Revision #15
Created 17 November 2021 21:28:41 by Flavia
Updated 18 November 2021 00:49:31 by Flavia