

SESSION X: Next steps, issues and closing remarks

Panel discussion with

- Andrea Cornwall, Advisor, CITIGEN and Professor, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK
- Anita Gurumurthy, IT for Change and Coordinator, CITIGEN programme, India
- Ramata Molo Thioune, Programme Officer, IDRC, Senegal

Gurumurthy began the session by stating that questions on the intersections between gender, citizenship, new technologies and democracy are linked to a wide range of topics, which means that policy recommendations can span several forums. Furthermore, she stated that the workshop and the CITIGEN network have brought together a community of committed people and the necessary institutional connections essential to take the programme forward. Moreover, the projects had shown that there was plenty of material for relevant policy influence. From the practical perspective, Gurumurthy said that an immediate task would be to synthesise the findings in order to put out an outline of an analytical framework. At the end of the programme, another useful commitment would be to peer review the draft papers of other teams.



Andrea Cornwall

Cornwall shared practical and provocative ideas. She felt that it would be good to incorporate and facilitate more real exchanges among the network partners, e.g. by meeting more often and/or by visiting each other's project. She approved the idea of peer reviewing as it brought forth the advantages of being part of a community, i.e.

sparkling interesting thoughts. She shared her concern on drawing policy outcomes too early in the project and asked to strategically reflect on the work done at the end of the project. She also saw huge value in the methodological synthesis where even reflecting on what did not work could provide learning.

Her theoretical reflections began by a question on how the way in which issues are framed with regard to ideas of the local, trans-local and

global. As the Internet creates a sense of virtual proximity, the local needs to be re-thought. Reflecting on the discourse on participation, she questioned assumptions about people's engagement online and noted how non-participation/exclusion could also be the result of a free choice. Furthermore, she wondered to what extent the time spent online included practises of citizenship. She also addressed questions of empowerment, warning the group about preconceived ideas of women's empowerment which can happen through self actualisation by consuming the Internet, as well as by exercising one's citizenship. She then pointed the need to look at the types of citizenship which are shaped by global efforts to turn women into good liberal subjects, which speaks to questions of contextualisation and of ways of engaging with new media.

McLaughlin did not add to her previous comments, said she looked forward to the results of the research studies and was happy to note that while the researches might be time-bound, the projects themselves would continue beyond.

Molo Thioune began by thanking IT for Change and the participants for a great learning experience. She said she would go back to her colleagues to share especially the idea of social time being incorporated within the project cycle. She was happy to note the passionate engagement people brought forth and said it reflected the appropriation of the project. With regard to the programme, as it is a field building initiative, she felt it would leave behind its legacy in terms of knowledge building and in complementary ways.



Ramata Molo Thioune

From the perspective of IDRC, Molo Thioune shared that research for policy creation was central, and the programme could contribute greatly to this sphere. She said that the beginning lies in identifying and framing an issue or development problem which the programme has already done. To take it forward she recommended that the network ensure that policy makers take into account new knowledge to modify their priorities and agendas, acknowledge new issues brought up and then find ways of addressing and engaging with them. Policy process should not be considered outside the programme but built within it.

She also shared how IDRC went through a period of re-engineering their programmes. There is no longer an ICTD programme but the good news was that ICT was now being main-streamed into all discussion be it health, education, etc. She said that this is to share that there are changes but they also bring with them opportunities. She also said that she would consider exploring a supplementary grant for the programme.

With these comments, Gurumurthy thanked all for participating and and hoped the work of CITIGEN could be taken forward.