

Activism, Artivism and Beyond

Inspiring initiatives
of civic power



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One of the key activities of The Spindle, the innovation programme of Partos, is to monitor and highlight trends and new developments on key themes such as on inclusion, civic power, new ways of cooperation and data. *Activism, Artivism and Beyond* is the first publication in The Spindle Monitor series about civic power.

Inspiring people

All cultures around the world have their own stories about the epic struggles of individuals and civil society groups seeking freedom and change. These struggles are a reaction to the multiple forms of oppression and repression that have existed since the earliest documented human history. Throughout the ages people have joined forces to protect public good, make the world more fair, free, and equal, and oppose those who want to keep resources and power in the hands of the few. And, although much time has passed, this has not changed. What has changed are both the forms of restriction, in terms of the mechanisms and tactics used, and the ways in which people circumvent these restrictions. This particularly applies to the civic space – the arena in which people choose their own way of life, express their opinions and participate in society. CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation, in its annual *State of Civil Society Report* for 2017, warns that in more than 100 countries around the world the space for civil society is shrinking. It extensively documents the threats to

civil society, including restrictive legislation, financial constraints, smear campaigns, and even assassinations. At the same time, many countervailing actions are being taken. Much can be learnt from these often creative and surprising initiatives. And that is what this report is about.

Partos, the Dutch membership body for development organisations, is dedicated to supporting civil society to better harness civic space and to exert its creative power for the public good. Together with our members and the Partos Civic Space Platform, we seek to warn of threats to civic space and reinforce solidarity and supportive action. Through Partos' innovation programme, The Spindle, we focus on identifying and analysing new trends and approaches in activism by civil society and, where possible, we develop new ideas and tools. This report, *Activists, Artivists and Beyond*, seeks to highlight these developments. By disseminating examples of innovative civic countervailing power, we hope to inspire citizens and their organizations. We feel privi-

leged to have The Broker, an innovative think net on globalization and development, as the main author of this report. In addition, we are enthusiastic to team up with CIVICUS, both for this report and for the worldwide campaign for civic space. We plan to follow up on this report with a crowd-sourced anthology of recent creative civic initiatives and perhaps a series of webinars to exchange experiences and assimilate new ideas.

To conclude this preface, we would like to thank all those who contributed to this project. We dedicate this report to those people with fire in their belly, who decide to stand up for something. It is their passion and persistence that forms the basis of society's resilience and ignites change for a better world. With *Activists, Artivists and Beyond: Inspiring initiatives of civic power*, we hope to help fuel this change.

Bart Romijn
Director, Partos

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The Standing March

The French protest ban

On 13 November 2015, Paris fell victim to a series of gruesome terrorist attacks. Suicide bombers and mass shootings by a number of gunmen left 130 dead and another 368 wounded. That same evening, president Francois Hollande, who was earlier evacuated from the *Stade de France*, closed France's borders and declared a state of national emergency. These security measures, which have been extended until at least July 2017, have given French authorities exceptional powers, including the right to set curfews, limit the movement of people and prohibit mass gatherings.

Only two weeks after the attacks, the 2015 Climate Conference – known as

COP21 – took place in Paris. This event was of major importance, because, for the first time in over 20 years of UN negotiations, world leaders aimed to achieve a universal, legally-binding climate agreement (the Paris Climate Agreement). Given the importance of the meeting, massive protests had been planned by environmental groups. However, due to the ongoing state of emergency, French authorities forbade all mass gatherings, severely constraining the public's freedom of expression.

Representing humanity

Despite this protest ban, many people found creative ways to make their voices heard. On 29 November 2015, at the start of COP21, people passing by the *Assemblée Nationale* building in the heart of Paris were stunned. Staring back at them were the faces of over 500 people from all over the world, projected on the building's massive façade. The video projection – titled 'The Standing March' – was created by renowned French artist JR and Brooklyn-based film director Darren Aronofsky. These 'artists' used their skill and creativity to protest when protesting in traditional ways was forbidden. Their video installation shows people from different backgrounds, who were all filmed separately, rotating on a green background. Later, these separate images were combined to create a representation of humanity – a crowd of people standing united to save their shared planet.

On the Standing March website, JR explains the power of his work: "For security reasons, marches are forbidden in Paris. But our art piece is a silent march. And we are marching, backed by the *Assemblée Nationale*, the heart of the French democracy". So, even though people were not allowed to be physically present, JR and Aronofsky managed to make a clear statement to the 25,000 officials gathered for the COP21. "It symbolizes that people are watching, and everyone on this building, and everyone in the world is watching to see what our diplomats do", explained Aronofsky.

After its initial showing on the *Assemblée Nationale*, the art piece was projected at different locations throughout Paris during the conference, including the Louvre, the Pantheon, the Musée Picasso, and the Bibliothèque Sainte Genevieve. Thus, the piece itself marched through the city and, thanks to social media, attracted attention not only from passers-by in the streets, but also from people all over the world.

Whether because of fear of terrorist attacks, anti-terrorism legislation, repressive regimes or cultural norms, all around the world people find themselves in situations where their right to protest is restricted. What the Standing March shows is that human creativity, and art in particular, goes a long way to circumventing such restrictions. And, although many individuals, grass-roots groups and civil

society organizations (CSOs) may not have the means to produce their own massive video projection, if we take a closer look at what makes the Standing March so effective, other forms of protest art could be created that would have a similar effect.

The Standing March transformed a well-known public space – in this case the building of the French National Assembly – into something completely different: a piece of art. By addressing an issue on the minds of a broad audience (the COP21) and depicting a big crowd of people in a place where mass protests are not allowed, the Standing March not only challenged authorities, but also conveyed a message about societal resilience. This example, like all the examples contained in this report, shows that people cannot be easily silenced and, with collective energy and power, will always find a way to claim their rightful space to be heard.

At the time of the Standing March, elsewhere in Paris, another demonstration took place: the 'Empty Shoe March'. Thousands of people, who could not physically demonstrate due to the protest ban, sent in their shoes to represent their march on the *Place de la République*.

Introducing civic space

Across the globe, people are taking innovative and proactive steps to defend and expand their civic space.

The shrinking civic space

For many decades, opportunities for people to express their opinions, chose their preferred way of life and participate in politics have been expanding. Think of the formal establishment of a range of civil rights and liberties, the advance of democracy, and the ever-growing access to information. However, waves of democratization tend to be answered by counter-waves of restriction, in which democratic values are challenged and the civic space limited.

Around the world, human rights are violated, government accountability jeopardized, people silenced, and organizations shut down on a regular basis. These developments are by no means a new phenomenon, nor are they limited to the Global South. Civic freedoms have also been challenged in the Global North, in democracies that are generally thought of as open and free. Each year CIVICUS's State of *Civil Society Report* provides a

clear insight into these trends. In its latest report in 2017, CIVICUS concluded that the civic space has been substantially restricted in more than 100 countries and in all regions of the world. The threats to civic space have taken a multitude of forms, including legislation restricting the rights and freedoms of CSOs; bans on public demonstrations; smear campaigns and verbal attacks; the detention, disappearance and even assassination of activists; and restrictions on online freedom of expression and access to information.

While the shrinking of civic space is cause for serious concern, in reality people often find innovative ways to circumvent the most daunting obstacles. *The Standing March*, and the many other examples described in the following chapters, bear testimony to this fact. The energy and creativity present in civil society warants hope and optimism. Thanks to the Internet and social media, people

today are more aware of the rights abuses happening around the world. Combined with the endless possibilities for connecting with one another, this awareness is fuelling a global counter current of activism, solidarity and dissidence. People are recognizing the importance of an open society and (online) communities are showing great preparedness to defend the rights and freedoms associated with this.

Types of restrictions

The structures, actors and measures that restrict civic space are highly varied, are not always easy to identify, can have paradoxical outcomes, and are continuously evolving. Yet, as this report illustrates, people are inventive and adaptable, which means that shifts in power relations or new forms of restriction are quickly matched by innovative civic action. Across the globe, people are taking innovative and proactive steps to defend and expand their civic space. This report

seeks to draw attention to these initiatives and celebrate the creative people behind them. Drawing on their contagious energy, it aims to foster mutual learning, generate solidarity and inspire all who seek to reclaim lost spaces, make better use of existing spaces, or explore new spaces for civic action.

This report aims to monitor civil society's actions and tactics and celebrate their creative and spirited initiatives. Eight types of tactics for (or instruments of) civic action are explored: visual arts, crowdsourcing, humour and public shaming, transparency and fact-checking, social media, education, music, dance and theatre, and protection. Each chapter explores one of these tactics, including its purpose and various forms, as well as examples. Thereafter, one example of each tactic is described in detail to illustrate its power in practice.

The shrinking civic space cannot simply be attributed to government policies. A variety of structural forces, actors and mechanisms are at work, which limit civil society's space for action.

For more background on the shrinking civic space see page 62.

Civic space is the arena within which civil society can function. Its boundaries are defined by three fundamental rights: the right to association, the right to peaceful assembly, and the right to freedom of expression.

More on civic space and other definitions can be found on page 68.



Artivism: when art meets action

Visual arts

Artivism: when art meets action

Since the mid-1990s, art has attracted increasing attention as an instrument for social movements and organizations. Scholars have begun to appreciate the importance of art in forming a movement's identity, mobilizing resources and ensuring effectiveness. Of all the art forms, visual arts are probably the most commonly used in civic action and, although the variety of artistic expression is endless, paintings, photographs, sculptures, videos, graffiti and holograms are some of the forms used. Especially in countries where freedom of expression is severely limited, art functions as an alternative channel of communication: when demonstrations are banned, organizations shut down or media subjected to severe censorship, art is often the only possible instrument of protest.

Repressive regimes can spark creativity and make people who would not usually consider themselves artists seek ways to communicate that evade censorship. The production of *Arpillera* tapestries in Pinochet's Chile (described in more detail on page 16) testify to this fact. They show that, for a movement or organization, art can be much more than a 'vehicle' for transmitting key messages. Art can attract new recruits, mobilize (financial) resources, generate media atten-

tion, and even stand as a symbol of a cause, thereby fostering commitment and recognisability.

In addition to being instrumental to movements and organizations, artworks (and artists) can be a form of protest in their own right. Politically-engaged artists – or 'activist' – come in all shapes and sizes. Probably the most famous activist in contemporary times is the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, whose works, which often criticize the Chinese government and led to his imprisonment in 2011, are shown all across the globe.

Given its versatility, art as civic activism is by no means limited to repressive states. When freedom of expression is not under direct threat or

limited, people still use art as an additional tool in their repertoire of available action, thereby expanding their scope, audience and space. Art has proven to be especially valuable in helping activists adapt to the needs of mass media. In high-paced Western society, where there is an overload of information and images, getting a message across quickly and innovatively is more important than ever. In order to more effectively reach the public and influence change, eye-catching artwork is increasingly being used to attract attention. Street art is particularly successful in drawing attention, mostly associated with political graffiti, such as the work of the elusive Banksy. Lesser known or unknown artists also engage in this form of 'artivism', often in direct response

to current events. After Trump's election in America, for instance, anti-Trump activism spread across the USA; in Europe, the refugee crisis is featuring in many shocking (street) art works.



Nature activists have also used street art to further their cause. By painting underwater images on buildings around the world, The Sea Walls public art programme seeks to bring the sea to the street to give the oceans a 'voice'.

More inspiration

[Ice Watch Paris](#)
An art installation by Artist Olafur Eliasson, which took 12 immense blocks of ice from the Arctic and arranged them in a clock formation at the Place du Panthéon, Paris, where they melted away during COP21
<http://icewatchparis.com/>

[The Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution](#)
An astounding collection of artistic creativity that sprung from Syria's revolution
<http://www.creativememory.org/>

[Reverse graffiti](#)
Creating street art and spreading an activist message by creative and selective cleaning
<https://www.treehugger.com/culture/activists-send-a-message-by-cleaning-things-up-a-bit.html>

[Red Sand Project](#)
Participatory artwork using red sand and cracks in the sidewalks to raise awareness on refugees, immigrants, exploitation and human trafficking.
<https://redsandproject.org/>

For more links to these and other projects visit
<https://thespindle.org/project/trends-report/>

Visual arts

Case: Arpilleras against Pinochet



Following the military coup in 1973, a brutal military regime was established in Chile under the leadership of Augusto Pinochet. Exercising complete control over civil society and closing down any opportunity for peaceful dissent, Pinochet inadvertently created the conditions for the development of alternative and creative means of protest. Under his military rule, Chilean women were regarded as politically passive and encouraged to embrace traditional gender roles. However, extreme poverty forced women to seek employment and social involvement outside the home. For thousands of women, participation in clandestine grass-roots organizations was a way for them to provide for themselves and their families, as these organizations arranged communal kitchens, 'collective buying' groups, and work. One of the most important of these organizations was the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*, established by the Catholic Church. In the slums surrounding Santiago the *Vicaría* began organizing Arpillera workshops for the women living in shantytowns.

Tapestries as instruments of protest

Arpilleras are small, colourful tapestries made of scraps of cloth and other found materials, sewn and embroidered upon pieces of burlap. They depict the women's daily experiences of limited freedom under the dictatorship and the atrocities committed by the Chilean military in symbolic ways, for instance, by showing doves in cages or hands in chains. As such, these

Arpilleras became a record of Chile's political history, giving expression to the voices silenced by the regime. The women mostly produced their art at night so that they would not be caught and charged with subversion. As the tapestries could not be sold within Chile, most of them were exported illegally to Europe and North America, where they were bought by NGOs, human rights organizations and Chilean exiles, who, in turn, sold them to the public.

Over the years the *Arpilleras* became one of the most important vehicles for Chilean pro-democracy organizations to transmit their message to people outside Chile. The artworks also had other important functions. For one thing, the workshops in which they were produced became 'sites of socialization' into the movement's way of thinking. By being involved in a collective activity that positively affected their lives and also educated them (or, indoctrinated them, as some would say), these women were effectively recruited as activists for the movement. Second, by selling the *Arpilleras* abroad, not only was the pro-democratic message spread beyond Chile's borders, but the *Vicaría* was also able to secure an income for the artists while at the same time generating financial resources for its cause. Third, the fact that the *Arpilleras* were bought by people far away was regarded as a sign of solidarity, which gave the repressed population in Chile hope, strengthening their determination. Moreover, because the

artworks fostered increasing awareness about the situation in Chile, they helped generate political pressure from abroad. Eventually, the *Arpilleras* became a symbol of the struggle against Pinochet.

The creation of the *Arpilleras* started as a way for the shantytown women of Chile to earn a living and express their grievances. Soon, however, these tapestries became much more, and it is from these additional functions that other movements and organizations beyond Chile can learn. Throughout South America, *Arpilleras* have been used as a tool for peaceful resistance. Examples of similar forms of protest can also be found in Europe (in memory of the Spanish Civil war), Africa (in protest against the atrocities committed by the Zimbabwean state) and Tibet (as part of the free Tibet campaign in London). Although in other places the artworks did not acquire the significance that they did in Pinochet's Chile, the colourful and painfully frank tapestries testify to the universal power and transferability of this art form.

Inspiration

Apart from the art itself, the workshops and the distribution of the *Arpilleras* can serve as inspiration for contemporary movements. A creative workshop that offers practical benefits for participants – such as a social network and an income – is more likely to attract disadvantaged people than, for instance, educational lectures. Using a creative workshop as a

site for education, to raise awareness and to nurture collective solidarity can be a highly effective way for organizations and movements to reach a broader audience and strengthen civil society.

Additionally, in contexts where direct opposition or active involvement by foreign NGOs is impossible (as was the case in Chile), the position taken by the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad* is instructive. As a religious and local organization, the *Vicaría* had more (albeit still limited) opportunity to act than other CSOs, especially compared to non-Chilean organizations. By exporting the *Arpilleras* abroad, the *Vicaría* acted as a 'middleman', broadcasting the voices of Chilean shantytown women to the outside world and, thereby, effectively expanding their space. Similar forms of collaboration could be useful in today's conflict areas, as there are still plenty of people whose voices are silenced and who have limited opportunities to make their voices heard in their own countries, let alone on the international stage.



Mobilizing global knowledge

Crowdsourcing

Mobilizing global knowledge

Social media enables activists and civil society organizations to reach large audiences quickly and easily. In addition, it allows them to engage a network of people in some form of peer production. This method, where a network of individuals is harnessed for a specific cause, is commonly known as 'crowdsourcing'. And, although social media has proven to be a particularly useful way of crowdsourcing, other web-based instruments that serve the same purpose have emerged. Initially, crowdsourcing was developed by the private sector as an innovative and cost-effective business model. The model rests on the idea that by attracting an interested, motivated crowd of individuals, solutions can be found that are superior in quality and quantity to traditional forms of business. It is exactly this insight that is motivating organizations and activists around the globe to employ crowdsourcing in pursuit of their own not-for-profit goals.

One of the best known forms of crowdsourcing (even if some might not realize that it is indeed crowdsourcing) is citizen journalism: the participation of amateur reporters or regular citizens in the process of collecting, reporting and disseminating news outside mainstream media institutions. In areas where profes-

sional journalists cannot work freely, either because of violent conflict or political pressure and censorship, crowdsourcing has proven to be particularly valuable. Through mobile applications like StoryMaker, people are able to capture stories and share them with the world, providing news stories that would otherwise not be told. In addition to mobilizing people to gather news, crowdsourcing is also used to create and increase collective knowledge, build communities, foster civic engagement and promote human rights. One example is the He-ForShe solidarity movement, which calls upon people and organizations to start their own initiatives and become 'change agents' for the achievement of gender equality. Another example is Herdict, a platform that calls on people to report web blockages, such as censorship and denial of service attacks, thereby monitoring Internet accessibility around the world and visualizing the data in interactive maps.

Similar maps are used in the multiple applications provided by the Ushahidi platform, an open-source crowdsourcing technology that is increasingly being used in crisis situations and for health. The platform was initially developed to collect eyewitness reports of violence in the aftermath



of the Kenyan elections in 2007 and plot them on an online live-updated map, so as to foster accountability and transparency. Since then, crowdsourcing has been used for a number of purposes, including to match people's needs with relief efforts in earthquake-hit areas in Nepal; to collect and collate citizen reports on human rights violations in Syria; for the monitoring of elections around the world; and for locating victims and survivors after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. The most famous example of the application of Ushahidi is probably Harassmap, which uses the Ushahidi platform to document sexual harassment and provide support to victims. By enabling people to report assault anonymously, Harassmap makes it easy for victims to overcome barriers to reporting harassment, such as social stigma, shame and institutional constraints. Additionally, by visualizing sexual assault in an online platform, Harassmap effectively raises awareness about and challenges the social acceptability of sexual harassment.

In these examples, crowdsourcing has facilitated the creation of an online space in which people share information, contribute to actions and become part of newly-established communities. Crowdsourcing is increasingly being used by large NGOs, because they too recognize the enormous potential of this strategy to further their cause and engage more people, despite their often dwindling membership base. World Wildlife Fund is one such organization that has developed crowdsourcing activities. One of its most recent initiatives, Climate Crowd, will be discussed on the next page.

Not every country, city or neighbourhood is well connected to the Internet. But almost everywhere around the world people have mobile phones. Thus, ensuring that your crowdsourcing campaign allows for contributions via mobile text messages increases your chance of including people living in more excluded and remote areas.

More inspiration

The Zooniverse

The world's largest and most popular platform for people-powered research on which anyone can build a project and invite volunteers to contribute
<https://www.zooniverse.org>

140journos

A Turkish platform for citizen journalism that covers events that remain unreported by mainstream media and aims to circumvent the extensive censorship in Turkey
<https://140journos.com/english/home>

TracFM

Online crowdsourcing software used by radio stations, NGOs and governments to give a voice to people who live in remote areas in Africa
<https://tracfm.org>

RosVyBory

A Russian crowdsourcing platform to prevent election fraud by recruiting thousands of citizens as voluntary monitors
<http://www.worldbulletin.net/haber/86468/thousands-to-monitor-russian-vote>

For more links to these and other projects visit
<https://thespindle.org/project/trends-report/>

Crowdsourcing

Case: Climate Crowd



Climate research has found that rural communities in developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, are greatly affected by changes in weather and climate, particularly due to their high dependence on natural resources. And, while the effects of climate change on these rural communities is becoming increasingly clear, their responses to these changes – that is, their coping and survival strategies – have received little attention in research. Yet, the way in which these rural communities are responding to climate change is creating a serious threat to the biodiversity in their surroundings.

Crowdsourcing nature

In order to protect animal wildlife, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) must inevitably concern itself with climate change and the consequences thereof. When thinking of how to deal with climate change in rural areas, lead climate researcher for WWF, Nikhil Advani, and his team found themselves faced with a challenging situation: more than climate change itself, it appeared that human responses to climate change in these rural areas were threatening biodiversity. What was lacking was sufficient and detailed information about the strategies and needs of these communities. Having dealt with weather-related challenges for generations, these people's knowledge could be of tremendous value in designing appropriate interventions that would benefit them as well as the environment and the biodiversity around them.

To access this knowledge, and to give local communities a voice, Advani and his team came up with a crowdsourcing solution: WWF Climate Crowd. Through this new online crowdsourcing platform, WWF aims to fill the 'rural' information gap, with a view to improving conservation and development efforts. Rather than calling on society at large to contribute data, WWF works with a number of organizations (and their volunteers) to collect information and conduct interviews with local community members. Through Climate Crowd, WWF has already collected more than 400 observations from countries all over the world.

Inspiration

Gathering data on a massive scale, finding solutions to major societal challenges, and acquiring information about areas and locations that are difficult to access are all tasks that used to require substantial resources in terms of money and people. However, as shown by WWF Climate Crowd, this is no longer the case. Organizations and movements can now have goals that would have been far beyond their reach two decades ago. Through crowdsourcing, it is possible to mobilize a large number of people to work on a specific task. And, if this task is successfully communicated and deemed important by enough people, even the smallest organizations can achieve impressive targets.

What makes the Climate Crowd platform particularly inspiring is the part-



nerships underpinning the project. Even though WWF is a large organization with more resources than most other CSOs, gaining access to remote areas and rural communities is still a significant barrier. What Climate Crowd shows is that crowdsourcing does not necessarily imply an open call to just anyone who is interested. In Climate Crowd, WWF is actively reaching out to, and partnering with, organizations and institutes that already have people 'on the ground' in the target regions to contribute to the project. Thus, even if the tasks at hand require the help of a specific kind of crowd, crowdsourcing still remains a viable, cost-effective and potentially fruitful option. Additionally, the Climate Crowd initiative shows that, if crowdsourcing starts from an issue that people care about – in this case the consequences of climate change – it is likely that they will feel motivated to contribute. This 'caring for' does not necessarily imply

that people must always recognize a serious problem or feel a sense of urgency in order to be motivated to contribute. There are multiple examples of where the public send in data because they think of it as a fun thing to do and feel part of an online community of people with the same interests.

WWF has developed a number of other crowdsourcing initiatives, which are not only useful and important, but are also regarded as fun by contributors. One such example is the Freshwater Fish BioBlitz, which calls on people to photograph and describe the freshwater fish they encounter on their outdoor excursions.



زِدْلَانِ وَدِكَامِ Relax, it says McDonalds

Humour &
public shaming

زبدلان و دكلام. Relax, it says McDonalds

Humour can be a powerful tool for fostering solidarity and social protest. The ancient Greeks used comedy to mock the elites and comment on political developments. And, in medieval times, humour in the form of carnivals was a way to reflect on and challenge social hierarchies. The power of humour has not decreased over time and, today, it is present in civic activism. Humourologists have shown that jokes can put things in perspective, help people to reflect on situations, and bolster fellowship among groups. However, although the power of humour is universal, the type of humour that is regarded as funny, is strongly bound to culture and varies among classes, groups and over time.

At present, one of the most popular forms of humour for social activism is satire. In magazines and newspapers, satirical cartoons are particularly successful – and often equally controversial – and television channels across the globe are now producing satirical TV shows. Highlighting the absurdities of politics and political leaders, *Saturday Night Live* is probably the best known example. Tina Fey portraying Sarah Palin, Chevy Chase as a bumbling President Ford and Alec Baldwin's President Donald Trump have become world famous — and some say that they have had a real impact

on the public image of politicians and even on electoral outcomes. In addition to such satire in the media, humour can be found in almost any form of social action. Countless examples of funny protest signs for any imaginable cause can be found online. For instance, a gay-rights protest banner said *'If God hates gays, why are we so cute?'*; and in a march against racial discrimination the sign, which proclaimed 'زبدلان و دكلام: Relax, it says McDonalds', undoubtedly resulted in some smiles.

The practical joke is another genre of humour that has found its way into social activism. In Uganda, for instance, piglets painted in the colours of the leading political party, some wearing hats to mimic that of President Museveni, were set free in the streets of Kampala. The pigs caused mayhem in the streets and inside the Parliament buildings, provoking laughter and cheers from bystanders, while at the same time drawing attention to the issue at stake, namely, the dramatic rise in youth unemployment. Almost a year after the 'pig invasion', Russia also witnessed a highly-successful animal prank: a cat named Barsik gained nationwide fame in a prank that criticized the local election procedure. Barsik's story is discussed in more detail on the following page.

To conclude, some attention must be paid to the notion of 'public shaming'. At times, this can be humorous, but not always – and it is definitely not for everyone. Those who find themselves at the receiving end of the shaming are rarely amused. And, on some occasions, the shaming may be outside the realm of humour entirely, as was the case in Northern Uganda, where a group of elderly women stripped in front of two government ministers and in the presence of soldiers, policemen and hundreds of people from their community. They did so to shame the ministers who had come to evict them from their land. Humiliated by this performance, the officials indeed left the premises, but the



women eventually lost their land anyway. Public shaming, whether seen as humorous or not, can be a highly effective tool for civic actors. It communicates group norms and elevates the status of those conforming to those norms; it punishes norm violators and, as such, can undermine the status of those in power; and it can also draw attention to controversial issues that may otherwise remain unchallenged.

More inspiration

Panty Power Burma

A human rights campaign that called upon Burmese women to protest the regime and its use of sexual violence by mailing panties to the generals
<https://beautifulrising.org/tool/panty-power>

Honk at Parliament

A protest-campaign in Lebanon against the parliament extending its own mandate in which citizens honked at parliamentarians at work and while they were going about their daily lives, to disrupt them and reminded them of their unlawful behaviour
<https://beautifulrising.org/tool/honk-at-parliament>

Brandalism

A revolt against 'corporate control of the visual realm' by reclaiming outdoor advertising space such as bus stops by posting artistic and mostly funny ads
<http://brandalism.ch/gallery/>

Replacing Cops with Mimes

A combined anti-corruption and traffic safety campaign in Bogota, in which corrupt cops were fired, re-trained and hired back — as mimes that mocked and directed traffic
<https://beautifulrising.org/tool/replacing-cops-with-mimes>

For more links to these and other projects visit
<https://thespindle.org/project/trends-report/>

Humour & public shaming

Case: Barsik the Cat



Barnaul is a small city in West Siberia, some 2,200 miles east of Moscow. Since 2010, its 700,000 inhabitants have not been led by an elected mayor, but by a so-called 'city-manager', appointed by the city council, thus keeping the political process out of public reach. From 2010 until August 2015, Barnaul was led by Igor Savintsev, who resigned after being accused of selling off municipal land to family-owned organizations, costing the city an estimated USD 157,000. Savintsev's successor was to be picked by a special commission from the city council, which made the people of Barnaul lose hope for a suitable candidate.

Only mice don't vote for Barsik

In response to the upcoming appointment of a new mayor, protest group *Altai Online* initiated an election poll on Russia's popular social media platform VKontakte. This online poll was published ahead of the elections and served to determine what candidate the population of Barnaul regarded as most suitable for the job. In addition to six human candidates, a seventh was put on the ticket: an 18-month-old Scottish Fold cat named Barsik. Apart from Barsik's appearance in the poll, *Altai Online* launched an electoral campaign, using both social media and banners in the street with the slogan: 'Only mice don't vote for Barsik'. The outcome of the poll was a landslide victory: approximately 91% of over 5,000 participants voted for the cat.

After this tremendous success, Barsik's fame spread beyond the confines of Barnaul. In reply to an announcement in early 2016 that the Russian population would be able to vote on the design of new banknotes, a message was posted on Barsik's social media account. In this message the cat revealed its deep-rooted ambition to appear on either the 200 or the 2,000 denomination note. Later that year Barsik, having become a political symbol in the struggle against corruption, announced that he would run for president in 2018, and that Putin better be ready.

Inspiration

The story of Barsik lends itself well to be transported to other contexts where corruption and election fraud are serious problems. The cat's victory in the poll communicated clearly how people felt about local politics and politicians. Additionally, Barsik's immense popularity showed that in times of frustration and anger humour can work to mobilize people. This type of action enables them to protest, while at the same time making them smile.

Using an animal for this protest, as well as being highly effective, also provided anonymity. *Altai Online's* administrator, who goes by the pseudonym 'Altaiskii Seyatel' (Altai Farmer), pointed out that the anonymity of the *Altai Online* team members was of the utmost importance, as their jobs, reputations, and even safety could otherwise be in danger. Therefore,



external communication was done through Barsik, on his social media account and with YouTube videos, allowing the team's identity to remain hidden. Unfortunately, such anonymity is a necessity in many contexts. For activists faced with similar challenges, using animals to communicate their message might be a solution.

Finally, Barsik's electoral campaign is also a source of inspiration. *Altai Online* used a combination of online and offline activities, thereby reaching a wide audience, while also being visible to those citizens without daily Internet access. Moreover, using the slogan 'Only mice don't vote for Barsik' was a strategic choice. Not only is it a funny tag line – something that people will easily remember – but the term 'mice' also refers to those who are corrupt. Hence, the slogan and the use of a cat as a candidate assumes another layer of meaning, making it even more effective.



Unmask the Corrupt

Transparency &
fact-checking

Unmask the Corrupt

As Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index shows, corruption and fraud are present everywhere. Particularly when combined with high levels of state bureaucracy, corruption forms a serious barrier to the development of a healthy civil society and democracy. In response to this, in recent years, people all over the world – from Romania and Russia to Brazil and Peru – have taken to the streets to fight corruption and demand transparency from their governments and leading corporations. In addition to these traditional forms of protests, numerous alternatives have emerged with the aim to improve transparency and check the claims made by those in power, including politicians and multinationals.

One of the main topics of scrutiny is budget transparency. Leading in this regard is South America, where a

number of countries have developed electronic platforms that make budget information publically available and give insight into national public expenditure and revenue. The budget transpar-

ency promoted by such platforms allows people to be the judge of whether their government officials are good stewards of public funds. Moreover, an open budget limits opportunities for governments to hide wasteful and corrupt spending, which means that, in the end, more resources will remain available for the public good.

Internationally, there are a number of organizations and initiatives whose primary goal is to foster budget transparency. The International Budget Partnership (IBP), for example, is an organization that promotes budget transparency on a global scale. Every two years, the IBP publishes an Open Budget Survey that evaluates to what extent governments give the public access to budget information and opportunities to participate in the national budget process. It is important to note that budget transparency initiatives not only focus on governments. Publish What You Fund, for example, is a global campaign for aid transparency that releases a ranking of the transparency of aid donors every year. At the heart of all these initiatives is the fundamental principle that people have the right to know how public money is spent. "This is the people's money", says Rocio Campos, programme officer at IBP, "and that very basic notion is at the core of all this: people have the right to know".

This 'right to know' extends beyond public spending. People and organizations across the globe are also striving for transparency in terms of democratic processes such as elections and political decision-making, governmental and business agreements, the origins of information provided by the media, and so on. In most cases, this struggle for transparency has one overarching goal: To expose and fight against corruption. In this regard, Transparency International may be the best known organization. One of its many projects – fighting pharma-corruption in Honduras – is explored in more detail on the following page.

An entirely different kind of transparency is the transparency of the origins and factuality of information. In just a few years, fact-checking has become a major tool in civil society's toolbox, particularly with the rise of new forms of media. The Internet has fuelled the spread of disinformation, which is used by repressive regimes to confuse the opposition, break down trust and fracture civil society. Smear campaigns and the spreading of fake news are increasingly being used by those who want to turn perceptions to their own advantage or hurt the people and organizations that oppose them. These mechanisms can be serious obstacles for civil society, as CSOs and human rights de-

fenders often find themselves on the receiving end of such campaigns. In well-functioning democracies 'alternative facts' can also abound, posing a serious threat to deliberative democracy and good governance. In response, the last five years have witnessed a global surge in so-called 'fact-checking'; some even argue that the rapid global spread of independent political fact-checkers has resulted in "what can fairly be called a new democratic institution". In more than 50 countries, spanning every continent, groups that are devoted entirely to fact-checking are active. Examples of fact-checking platforms include Africa Check, Chequeado (Argentina), Dogruluk Payi (Turkey), Pagella Politica (Italy), and PolitiFact (USA).

Fact-checking is also becoming of interest to the mass media. In Spain, for instance, the fact-checking TV show *El Objetivo* is a great hit, and the South African radio show *Corruption Busters* recently won the award for Best Day Time Show at the annual Liberty Radio Awards. By bringing fact-checking to the wider public, these shows are contributing to a more open and honest civic space.

More inspiration

BudgIt Nigeria

A Nigerian civic organization that uses technology to make public spending transparent and accessible for citizens, with the primary aim of raising government accountability <http://yourbudgit.com/>

Yogera

An online platform that aims to fight corruption in Uganda; it allows people to anonymously report corruption, celebrates heroes who have withstood the temptation of bribery, and informs people about their rights <http://www.yogera.org/>

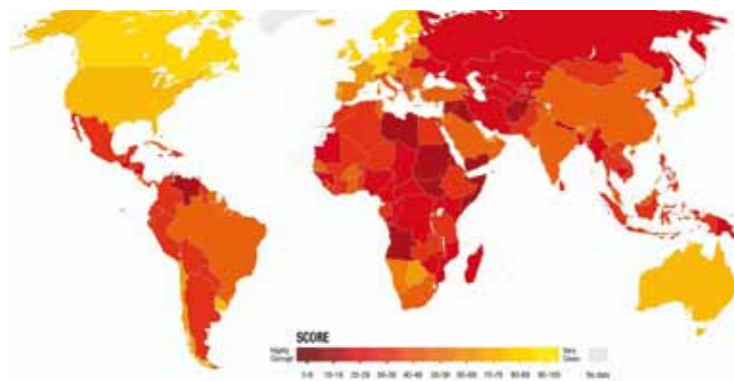
Unmask the Corrupt

A campaign by Transparency International sanctioning the top 9 cases of corruption, which were selected by means of a public vote <https://unmaskthecorrupt.org/>

ProZorro

An online app (used in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan) to prevent corruption in medicine sales by comparing government purchases to the prices listed by suppliers <https://apolitical.co/tens-millions-saved-medicines-ukraines-corruption-app/>

For more links to these and other projects visit <https://thespindle.org/project/trends-report/>



Transparency & fact-checking

Case: Transparency International



According to the most recent data, over 60% of Hondurans live below the national poverty line. And, although this means that the majority of Honduras' population are dependent on the state for access to healthcare, for years the Honduran public health sector has been dramatically underfunded. To make matters worse, Transparency International's Honduras chapter, the *Asociación por una Sociedad más Justa* (ASJ), has uncovered widespread corruption in the procurement of medicines for Honduras' state hospitals and public. It was found that millions of dollars' worth of medicines have gone 'missing' or been replaced by counterfeit drugs, only to be sold on the black market. Following the ASJ's discovery, the state-controlled *Almacén Central de Medicamentos* (Central Medicines Warehouse) was raided, the Health Minister responsible resigned and paid a fine, and the warehouse manager and several others involved in the corruption scheme were convicted. These measures, albeit necessary and valuable to set an example, are, of course, not enough to ensure lasting change.

Public-private partnerships to fight corruption

To ensure that efforts like those by the ASJ in Honduras lead to durable reform, Transparency International emphasizes the importance of involving a variety of stakeholders. In the Honduran case, this principle found reflection in the implementation of Transparency International's

so-called 'Integrity Pact', a tool for preventing corruption in public contracting by establishing partnerships between a civil society actor (usually a chapter of Transparency International), the contracting authority (usually the national government) and the private sector. In March 2014, the Honduran president, Juan Orlando Hernández, agreed to put in place such a mechanism for the purchasing of public medicine. Employees and officials of the Ministry of Health are no longer involved in purchasing public medicine. Instead, this is done through a special, highly-transparent trust that is observed by a committee that consists of representatives from both the public and private sectors, with Transparency International as a key member.

In a country as dangerous as Honduras, the work of ASJ and Transparency International requires a great deal of persistence and courage. Fortunately, the results they have managed to achieve are extensive and go beyond that of the pharma-pact described above. In October 2014, the Honduran president signed an unprecedented agreement with ASJ and Transparency International: The Collaboration and Good Faith Agreement. This agreement is an extensive anti-corruption plan designed by the president and ASJ that focuses on health, education, security and justice, infrastructure projects, and tax administration. To ensure compliance with the commitments made, ASJ and Transparency International's



headquarters have taken up the task of monitoring and reporting on Honduras' progress.

Inspiration

With an impressive international network and numerous success stories of real impact, many of the activities of Transparency International could feature in a 'best practice' guide for CSOs. Focusing on the achievements in Honduras, what stands out is the fact that Transparency International seeks to engage multiple stakeholders in its initiatives. Establishing partnerships with actors from different sectors cannot be done in all contexts or situations. However, making a conscious effort to form a diverse support base and involving even those that might at first seem possible adversaries can yield surprising results. Additionally, the Honduran example is evidence of the fact that long-term efforts, even though they require a lot of persistence and patience, will pay off in the end. Prior to their major achievements in Honduras, Transparency International and its national chapter ASJ had been fighting corruption for a long time. Trying to expose networks of corrupt state officials and companies, lobbying for legislative change and building a network of like-minded partners – these are all activities that take time and manpower.

Finally, inspiration can be drawn from Transparency International's great variety of initiatives. The organization not only works with many different partners, it also works with many different tools. From educating future leaders and providing glossaries, to engaging citizens in 'unmasking the corrupt' and monitoring transparency, Transparency International is fighting its core issues on all possible fronts. Diversification works and, if resources allow, can be an effective method of attracting attention, establishing a wide network and occupying as much space as possible.

At times we lose sight of the fact that CSOs, companies and state bodies are all in fact collections of people. These people all occupy civic space and are all part – some way or another – of civil society. However, the example provided by Transparency International shows that promoting bonds between those people and establishing partnerships between CSOs, companies and state bodies can help organizations achieve their goals. By bridging (perceived) cleavages between sectors, organizations can ensure wider and more powerful support for their causes and have a longer-lasting impact.



Virtual uprising

Social media

It is often argued that social media has the power to change the world, with more people than ever before using online platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. With the new possibilities offered by the Internet, gathering knowledge, sharing thoughts and raising a critical mass of supporters for a cause, has never been easier. Examples abound of the enormous impact that social media has had over the last decade. In Jamaica, health workers raised HIV/AIDS awareness by spreading information through social media. The #OscarsSoWhite campaign, which criticized the lack of racial diversity in the 2016 Oscar nominations, led to changes in voting and selection by the Academy. And, the Ice Bucket challenge, which went viral on every



social media channel, raised a reported 220 million dollars worldwide for ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) organizations. Undeniably, social media has been a vital tool for many civic causes, but, at the same time, it can sometimes be a double-edged sword. Due to the endless possibilities offered online, organizational loyalty has been eroded. Increasingly, people adopt causes, rather than institutions or organizations. So, while social media can be instrumental in reaching a broad follower base, holding on to these followers now requires continuous effort.

Social media is particularly suitable for ad hoc activism and the establishment of large networks in a short amount of time. As the NetChange report, *Networked Change: How progressive campaigns are won in the 21st century*, shows, there are many examples of movements and organizations that have successfully established such networks and campaigns; some of which eventually led to actual corporate or government policy changes. Two examples immediately spring to mind: the Arab Spring uprisings and the Occupy Wall Street campaign. In both cases, an activist community was formed around a pressing issue by means of social media directed-network campaigns. The Occupy Wall

street and Arab Spring campaigns both intended to, and succeeded in, generating massive demonstrations in actual life, outside the virtual space.

Another example is the #GirlsatDhabas campaign (described in detail on the following page), which shows how social media can also build a network that remains largely virtual, but no less effective. This campaign connects women from across Southeast Asia around a common cause, without necessarily bringing them together in reality. Nonetheless, the voices of these women have formed a collective voice that has been picked up by media around the world.

Before looking at this inspiring initiative of women in Pakistan, attention must be drawn to some of the downsides to social media. Since social media, and the World Wide Web in general, are playing an ever increasing role in the distribution of knowledge and connecting people, the gap between those with and those without Internet access is increasing. Although Internet penetration is growing rapidly, over 50% of the global population, most of whom live in developing countries, remain cut off. In addition, there are many countries where, although Internet access is more readily available, civil society is

still not able to fully use the power of social media due to the censorship of online content, the monitoring of social media outlets, and the imposition of severe punishments for using social media to challenge those in power. Hence, although social media has incredible potential as a tool for civic activism, as long as inequalities remain in terms of access and freedom, other channels of knowledge distribution and mass mobilization should not be neglected.

Interestingly, social media is also being used to draw attention to restrictions on 'regular media'. A recent hashtag campaign that is doing just that is the #FreeTurkeyMedia campaign, launched by Amnesty International. This campaign aims to raise international awareness about the extreme limitations placed on free journalism in Turkey, as well as to put pressure on the Turkish government to release the more than 120 journalists who are currently imprisoned.

More inspiration

#defyhatenow

A peacebuilding, training and conflict reconciliation project that supports CSOs in South Sudan; by means of the 'defyhatenow' hashtag, it aims to raise awareness and counter social media based hate speech
<http://defyhatenow.net/>

Every Heartbeat Counts

A Venezuelan social media campaign that aims to rekindle the spirit of the Revolution by encouraging people to spread their artworks and the campaign's logo with hashtags #late (heartbeat) and #cadalatidocuenta (every heartbeat counts)
<https://www.cuba-venezuela.org/index.php/2015/11/20/venezuelas-revolution-is-alive-in-popular-heartbeat-campaign/>

Idle No More

A movement of indigenous peoples in Canada, fighting for their rights and fostering awareness about the Canadian indigenous population; #IdleNoMore is used to spread information and to organize actions such as large-scale flash mobs
<http://www.idlenomore.ca/>

For more links to these and other projects visit
<https://thespindle.org/project/trends-report/>

Social media

Case:

#GirlsAtDhabas



Going for a stroll around the city, having a drink at local bar, or jumping on a bicycle to visit a friend are all activities that most women take for granted. However, in Pakistan, the streets continue to be dominated by men and women are not allowed to 'loiter' out and about, and certainly not without the accompaniment of a male relative. And, although not officially forbidden, cultural norms also keep women from engaging in sport, including the immensely popular game of cricket.

Emancipatory selfies

Sadia Khatri, born and raised in Karachi, returned to her hometown in late 2014 after completing her education in the US. Having experienced firsthand what gender equality feels like, upon returning to Pakistan she was struck by the absence of women in public spaces. Unwilling to accept this new reality, Khatri ventured out in the city and visited dhabas – roadside cafes or bars where food and tea (chai) are served – where she discussed with her male friends the absence of other women. Determined to do something about this situation, Khatri posted a selfie on Twitter with the hashtag #GirlsAtDhabas. The hashtag immediately gained traction on social media and many other girls in Pakistan and India began uploading selfies of themselves in dhabas using the hashtag.

The acceptance of the hashtag on Twitter, and its subsequent spread to other social media platforms and

regions far beyond Pakistan, encouraged Khatri in her quest. Thanks to #GirlsAtDhabas, more and more women started to venture out into the streets to meet at dhabas and other places generally dominated by men. Through this hashtag, women felt connected and strengthened in their emancipatory activities. And, even though most of these women had never met, and will probably never meet, a large virtual community has formed around their shared cause. What is particularly interesting about this community is its incredible diversity: #GirlsAtDhabas' members cannot be typecast. Some wear Western clothes, others wear hijabs; some are moving around in the streets by themselves, and others are reclaiming public spaces while still accompanied by male friends and relatives.

The #GirlsAtDhabas network was not a preconceived idea, but emerged organically on social media. Due to its popularity, the hashtag has now become much more than a simple mechanism to signal that women are eating and drinking in cafés, it has come to symbolize a movement that challenges longstanding cultural gender norms and seeks to reimagine public spaces for women in Pakistan – and Southeast Asia. Apart from the many visits by women to places usually attended only by men, the women behind #GirlsAtDhabas are now organizing events to 'raise some noise' about women's presence in public spaces. For these offline activities, Khatri and her fellow organizers

find inspiration in the 'Why Loiter?' initiative in India. Like #GirlsAtDhabas, the women of 'Why Loiter?' speak out against their lack of freedom and the cultural norms that prevent them from going out on the streets. The group, which is widely known across India, arranges debates, bike rides and night strolls through Indian cities. Through social media the two groups have now connected and are organizing cross-border collaborations, both online and offline.

Inspiration

There are probably few women who do not find inspiration in the #GirlsAtDhabas campaign. Whether they are living in areas where they encounter restrictions similar to those in Pakistan, or are lucky enough to live in a place where they can go out in the streets, play sports and have a drink at a café, most women can relate to the need for emancipation and to defend their space in some way or another. With one simple hashtag that communicates this issue, with which millions of women from all walks of life can relate, Khatri has managed to tie these women together. By putting her selfie on social media, she planted a seed that grew to become a vast network – growth that would not have been possible without the ease of communication allowed by social media. So, what the #GirlsAtDhabas campaign shows, above all, is the power and reach of social media. Through social media it is possible to build a virtual network community

and mobilize millions of people who, even though they will never actually come together, can still speak with a strong and unified voice.

Social media establishes connections between different cultural contexts and allows for the easy spread of information. As such, it forms a virtual space in which established and restrictive cultural norms can be challenged in relative safety before finding translation in 'real life'. As Khatri pointed out about #GirlsAtDhabas, initially there were many women and girls who offered their online support for the emancipatory selfies, but indicated they did not dare to go out in the streets themselves. However, as support for the movement grew, women gained confidence and made online arrangements to go to dhabas together. Thus, when the online community grew stronger and more confident, it became less difficult to challenge cultural norms in daily life. The women behind #GirlsAtDhabas are now reclaiming actual spaces and expanding their virtual network at the same time.

Teaching what matters



Education

Teaching what matters

Ask any activist or human rights defender what he or she is striving for and the answer you will receive will usually boil down to 'making the world (if only a small part of it) a better place'. The tremendous efforts and sacrifices made for this goal are not merely to accomplish improvements for the here and now – invariably the goal is to achieve betterment that will last into the future. For today's activists this has important implications. If their efforts are to succeed and survive, they need a wide support base as well as successors: people who will defend and expand the civic space they are now fighting for in the future.

Unsurprisingly then, education is widely recognized as an important tool for 'raising' the next generation of change makers. For this reason, some organizations are devoted entirely to education; one such organization is Worldsavvy. This NGO aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills and disposition necessary to actively engage in the global community; it also seeks to build a critical mass of global citizens who will be able to address the challenges of the future.

Other organizations, rather than making education their core business, have included education as a

tool in their repertoire of social action. Many offer classroom resources, such as interactive teaching materials and lesson plans, or have volunteers who go to classrooms to teach about the issues their organization is working on. Considering the continuity of their impact, teaching the young is of great importance for many organizations. However, unfortunately, there are still many places in the world where children do not have access to proper schooling. These include areas where families cannot afford to send their children to school, where conflict has forced schools to close down, or where cultural norms dictate that certain groups of people cannot go to school. Where states are failing to provide children with a proper education, civil society is often jumping in to support willing governments or to fill the gap where such willingness is lacking. The Bits Schools, developed by the Dutch organization Butterflyworks, are a great example. These schools run in partnership with local governments to train ambitious youth from underprivileged backgrounds in a wide range of disciplines. So far there are 10 schools spread across Africa, which together have trained over 8,000 young people.

Apart from 'regular' education in schools, there is another type of edu-



cation that takes place outside the classroom. This education includes peer learning, learning from other cultures, and learning through experience. In this type of education, CSOs have proven to be particularly valuable, because outside the classroom it is often up to civil society to create spaces – be they virtual or actual – that allow for safe and constructive learning. Love Matters, an inspirational online initiative (which is explored on the following page), is such a space. Additionally, there are countless programmes that provide training and workshops to raise awareness or promote social change. ActionAid's global youth network, Activista, for instance, has developed a number of training centres, called 'Global Platforms', which exist for the sole purpose of training young activists and civil society organizations to lead social, political and economic change. On a much smaller scale, in the slums of Nairobi, the BoxGirls programme teaches young women to become strong and independent, through boxing. The girls not only learn how

to defend themselves, but at the same time are educated about gender oppression and their rights and opportunities. As such, learning empowers and eventually equips people with the knowledge and skills necessary to defend their rights, freedoms and space.

Every year, more CSOs are using video games as an instrument to educate and raise awareness of their cause. In fact, they are not just using them, but also increasingly producing them to share their mission with gamers around the world. Games for Change (G4C) is a non-profit company that develops social impact games for humanitarian and educational efforts. G4C engages CSOs, the games industry, media, and governments in its efforts to launch game-based projects with a positive impact. One of the many award winning games G4C has created is Peacemaker, which challenges players to establish peace in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

More inspiration

CryptoRally

A competitive learning game which takes players through Mexico City, where they have to complete technical tasks aimed at teaching them effective Internet security tools <https://beautifulrising.org/tool/cryptorally-in-mexico-city>

Learning about Living

A Butterflyworks interactive curriculum and SMS helpline on taboo topics such as puberty, relationships, self-esteem, HIV/AIDS and gender issues that is active in Nigeria, Senegal, Mali and Cambodia <http://www.learningaboutliving.org>

My Life as a Refugee

A smartphone game developed by the UN refugee agency, aimed at raising awareness about the experiences of refugees; players are faced with scenarios based on real-life accounts <http://mylifeasarefugee.org/game.html>

The Internet Protection Lab

An organization that offers technical assistance and training to ensure journalists, bloggers and human rights activists across the world can work safely online <https://internetprotectionlab.net/about-us/>

For more links to these and other projects visit <https://thespindle.org/project/trends-report/>

Education

Case: Love Matters



In many parts of the world, sexuality is not something people can discuss freely. In Egypt, for instance, cultural and religious norms have placed a strong taboo on talking about sex, even more so for women. And, because there is no curriculum for reproductive health in primary or secondary schools, most young people are poorly informed about the choices they have when it comes to love and sex. While there is some sex-related information available online, as journalist and researcher working at RNW Media Abir Sarras, points out, “[this] is mostly of religious background; the discourse is usually directed to the ‘haram’ and ‘forbidden’”. However, during a period of field-research in Egypt, Sarras found that young people are looking for objective and reliable information about love and sex. To fill the gap, RNW Media has developed its ground-breaking platform Love Matters.

Love Matters was first launched in India, where young people encounter barriers similar to those in Egypt. The website offers sexual health information with a positive take on pleasure and relationship satisfaction, giving young people the information they need to have safer and happier sex. After its huge success in India (3 million sessions, 14 million page views, and 682,000 Facebook fans after 5 years of online presence), RNW Media developed similar platforms in Latin America (focusing on Mexico and Venezuela), Africa (focusing on Kenya) and China. Each of the various edi-

tions of Love Matters are attuned to the different customs, questions and sensitivities of the regions they serve, as well as the culture and languages.

The Arabic version of Love Matters – called Culture of Love (with the Arabic word for culture ‘thaqafa’ also referring to knowledge) – is the latest addition to the Love Matters family. Young people in the Middle East now finally have a place where they can find unambiguous, reliable information in their own language. Most importantly, the platform is interactive. People can ask questions on the discussion board or via social media and there is an online forum where they can talk and share experiences among themselves. Young people are, thus, enabled by the platform to discuss sexual issues freely and openly, something they cannot do safely in their daily lives.

Inspiration

Since its launch in 2014, Culture of Love has accumulated more than 11 million page views, 10,000 Twitter followers and 421,000 Facebook fans, and its YouTube channel has had over 12 million views. Just like the other Love Matters platforms, it has been an enormous success, which shows just how much people long for information and the chance to discuss issues that are taboo in their communities. RNW Media has succeeded in creating a safe space where young people can go for such information, and, as such, has set an example for other organizations. The Love Mat-

ters initiative shows that providing reliable information is of profound importance, especially when no authority is doing so. It is also inspiring to see how young people engage in peer learning when they feel safe to do so. Such peer learning creates an informed and empowered community, which has value far beyond the pure knowledge that is exchanged.





Performing civic power

Music, dance
& theatre

Performing civic power

Apart from visual arts, there are many other forms of art that people use to express their feelings and as tools for activism. Music, for example, has a long history of being used for political and social activism. Dating as far back as the ancient Greeks, music has been recognized as having the ability to foster desirable social and political attitudes and effectively convey ideologies. Apart from the creative protest songs that often form an integral part of marches and demonstrations, more professional performances by popular artists and orchestras have been instrumental in many instances of civic action. Well-known examples are the 1985 Live Aid and 2005 Live 8 concerts, which raised money for, and awareness of, world poverty. These concerts became 'sites of political communication', conveying strong statements related to human rights and social justice. In addition to music, dance is also frequently used as a form of public protest. The surprise performances by *Flo6x8*, which are described in more detail in the next pages, are an interesting example.

Music, dance and theatre are not only used for civic activism in the form of public performances. These art expressions have proven to be particularly suitable for the more hidden or – sometimes literally – underground

types of rebellion. In Iran, for instance, dance is prohibited, but dance classes are given under the guise of 'gymnastics' and secret performances are held in people's homes or even in tunnels and caves. The dancers are, thus, creating new spaces – or using existing spaces for new purposes – to escape the limitations of Iranian censorship.

As for theatre, things are not much different. This genre is also used for civic activism, also in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes, both hidden and public. In Wales, for instance, the National Theatre used its plays as a means to re-engage citizens in (thinking about) the democratic process; a subject that was mostly limited to the 'official' or academic sphere. And, the plays of Václav Havel, although dating back a number of decades, also testify to the power of theatre as an instrument of change. By the end of the 1960s, Havel's works were banned from theatres in Czechoslovakia, because they were seen as anti-communist. Given their popularity and forceful message, people continued to perform his plays in their living rooms and distributed illegal copies throughout the country. Through this process, Havel's reputation as a dissident and activist was built, eventually resulting in his

rise as the leader of the Velvet Revolution. Havel's plays were a form of rebellion that successfully captured the imagination of a nation. Today, the power of his art is still tangible, as the underground Belarus Free Theatre – which, to date, performs illegal plays that protest against the Belarusian dictatorial regime – refers to Havel as a major source of inspiration.



More inspiration

The Singing Revolution

The Estonian revolution that led to the country's independence in 1991; singing played a central role in the non-violent protests in the mid-1980s
<https://singingrevolution.com/>

MCK

An Angolan rapper who attracted acclaim for his musical protests against the repressive regime and ongoing poverty in his country
<http://www.dw.com/en/angolan-rapper-mck-raps-truth-to-power/av-37234950>

Theatre of the Oppressed

A theatre project in East Africa that helps refugees and audiences to share and reflect upon their experiences and consider alternative options with the help of trained actors
<http://www.businessdailyafrica.com/Theatre-of-the-oppressed-Refugees-tell-own-stories/-/539444/3191254/-/ry9i51/-/index.html>

Clown Street Attacks

Actors dressed up as clowns 'attack' passers-by in the streets of Lebanon to raise awareness of and fight social injustice
<https://clownmein.com/performances/clown-street-attacks/>

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Music, dance & theatre

Case: Flo6x8



When thinking of flamenco, most people think of dark-haired men and women, passionately clapping and dancing for their audience. But, as flamenco expert Matthew Machin-Autenrieth points out, flamenco has a lesser known side to it, “a side that is in ‘service’ of social activism and political protest, a side that attempts to resist power structures”. In fact, flamenco has a long history of protest and activism, adding to the contemporary power of this dance form. It has always been the musical outlet of the poor and marginalized, including the Roma and Andalusian regionalists, who used the dance as a symbol of their region’s culture and their struggle for sovereignty. In recent years, the Spanish flash mob group Flo6x8 has once again reignited the spirit of political Flamenco.

The Spanish debt crisis and protest dance

Since 2008, the Spanish population has increasingly suffered the consequences of the global financial crisis and the collapse of the real estate bubble. In the aftermath, banks crumbled under the weight of bad loans, one in four Spaniards were unemployed, and, by 2014, at least 95 families were evicted from their homes every day as they failed to meet mortgage payments. In response to this crisis, public anger against state institutions and banks has greatly intensified. To give expression to this feeling, activists across the country have found creative ways to protest against the injustice and growing poverty.

Arguably the most successful of these creative protests in Spain is the work of *Flo6x8* – Flo being short for Flamenco and 6x8 a much used rhythmic pattern in flamenco music. By means of flamenco dance, music and singing, the group aims to draw attention to the mounting unemployment rates, oppressive economic policies, widespread government corruption, and drastic rise in corporate control. Most of the group’s performances take place in banks, cash points and even government buildings – places that symbolize the subject of their protest. In these places, the impact of the dance is particularly powerful, because bodily movement and people’s ‘use of space’ is strictly organized and regulated there (people queue up, keep distance from the next client and talk in discrete whispers). With their passionate flamenco music and dance *Flo6x8* dancers disrupt this structure and claim the space with body and sound, if only for a few minutes.

“[Flamenco] captures perfectly how we feel about the crisis”, said one of the dancers, who goes by the pseudonym La Nina Ninja; “[Through flamenco we] can express desperation, rage, pain and the desire to change things”. The continued success of *Flo6x8* testifies to the fact that it is not only their own desperation that the dancers are expressing: the *Flo6x8* videos on YouTube are immensely popular among the millions of Spaniards who have been hit hard by the crisis and the majority of the Spanish public

is sympathetic to the initiative. Ultimately, those behind the flamenco group hope that their actions will inspire and encourage other Spaniards to use their voice – or body – to take a stand against the banks, corporations and government, which they see as responsible for the crisis.

Inspiration

What is particularly special about *Flo6x8* is how the group uses dance and music as its mode of communication. It is often said that actions speak louder than the words and, for *Flo6x8*, this is most definitely the case. Flamenco is a dance with sharp, forceful and often aggressive movements, capturing exactly the emotions many Spaniards have about the crisis they are facing. Of course, putting those feelings and protests into words is also valuable, and the dance performances should not be seen as a substitute. Rather, they add another channel of communication, further strengthening the message of protest. The disruptive, yet peaceful quality of the *Flo6x8* performances is also inspiring. For the duration of their song and dance, the dancers bring business to a halt. However, instead of causing panic, anger or provoking a confrontation with the police, the performances make bystanders smile, clap along or even join in the dancing. *Flo6x8* shows that there are alternatives to riots and slander, and that disruptive action can be peaceful and even joyful, without losing meaning or power.

Finally, considering the relationship of flash mob flamenco with civic space, *Flo6x8* is expanding as well as making better use of this space. By taking dance to sites that are not usually locations for such performances, the group is expanding its arena of action. Additionally, if one starts from the assumption that banks, cash points and government buildings are public spaces and, hence, already part of the civic space, one could also say the *Flo6x8* dancers are simply making better use of the space already available to them. Organizations all over the world could translate this idea for use in their own context: they too can find public places available for effective, disruptive and yet peaceful flash mob performances, even if these are currently subject to (unwritten) rules and regulations about their use.



Building safety

Protection

Building safety

Human rights defenders all over the world are trying to promote social justice and human rights for all. In doing so they are posing a threat to those individuals, organizations, companies and authorities that violate human rights. Sadly, this means that human rights defenders are often the subject of reprisals. Ranging from public vilification and the hacking of online accounts, to direct threats, violent attacks, kidnapping and even murder, the risks that human rights defenders face are as varied as they are numerous. In response, many CSOs have developed initiatives that seek to offer human rights defenders spaces – digital or actual – that provide protection from outside threats.

Because the people who expose corruption, fight human rights violations, and strive for justice and democracy are increasingly using the Internet

to achieve their goals, threats and persecution are also taking place online. Consequently, initiatives have emerged that focus specifically on countering these threats. Organizations have developed tools that enable human rights defenders to protect their data and communications, including encryption technology, apps that guarantee online anonymity, and programmes that prevent the interception of communication. Additionally, there are platforms devoted entirely to online protection, such as Security Without Borders (SWB), which was co-founded by hacker and security researcher Claudio Guarnieri. Recognizing that civil society does not have the expertise required to adequately secure itself, SWB's cyber experts and hackers assist journalists, human rights defenders, and NGOs with cyber security issues.

Outside the digital realm, providing protection to human rights defenders is also a major field of work for CSOs. Programmes include provision of emergency funds, protective fellowships, training opportunities and guidelines for protection methods. However, unfortunately, support is not always sufficient. Even though most organizations prioritize prevention and support mechanisms over reactive strategies, sometimes the situation for human rights defenders becomes so dangerous that offering a safe place of shelter is the only option left. Safe houses have emerged everywhere in the world, often in the form of temporary stays in facilities outside of the activists' region, or even country, of residence. The Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders (IM-Defensoras) (which is described on the following page) is one such organization that provides safe houses.

Whistleblowers are a special type of activist. Exposing those who constitute a threat to justice, freedom and human rights often comes with great risks. Therefore, numerous platforms have been created specifically aimed at protecting whistleblowers. PPLAAF (*Plateforme de Protections des Lanceurs d'Alerte en Afrique*) is one such interesting platform. It provides a combination of technical, legal, media and advocacy assistance, all adjusted to the specific needs of the whistleblower.



More inspiration

Protect Nature's Protectors

A Dutch initiative aimed at nature protectors across the globe; activities include awareness raising, training, legal assistance and emergency relief
<http://www.beschermdenatuurbeschermmer.nl/>

Globaleaks

Open-source free software intended to enable secure and anonymous whistleblowing initiatives
<https://www.globaleaks.org/>

Dispatch

An app that aims to minimise security risks for journalists by providing secure communications and the means to publish even if the Internet is blocked or unavailable, using a 'sneaker-net' feature
<https://dispatchapp.wpengine.com/>

Cybersecurity for the People

An online video guide with practical advice for activists on how to protect their privacy, including tips on protecting mobile phones, safe communication, documenting the event, and what to do in case of arrest
<https://theintercept.com/2017/04/21/cybersecurity-for-the-people-how-to-protect-your-privacy-at-a-protest/>

For more links to these and other projects visit
<https://thespindle.org/project/trends-report/>

Protection

Case: IM-Defensoras



In addition to facing the same risks as men, women human rights defenders (WHRDs) face additional risks specific to their gender. When women defend human rights they are often perceived as challenging accepted socio-cultural norms and traditions about femininity and their role in society. This also holds true in Mesoamerica, a region that faces a crisis of violence and systematic human rights violations. Such violations often go unpunished with the countries in the regions all ranking high in the worldwide impunity index (Mexico 2nd and Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador 6th, 7th and 8th, respectively). In a context where both violence and impunity loom large, women are disproportionately affected and WHRDs, in particular, face stigmatization, threats and assaults that remain unpunished. Because state authorities are failing to protect them, WHRDs in Mesoamerica have recognized the need to invest in self-care and wellbeing within their groups and organizations. The Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders (IM-Defensoras) is taking heed of this call and developing holistic protection measures throughout the region.

Safe houses

Founded in 2010, IM-Defensoras is a network of over 350 local, regional and international women's rights groups in Mexico and Central America. The initiative brings together a broad range of WHRDs – from journalists to LGBT activists, from mothers pursuing justice for family mem-

bers to indigenous women defending their land against illegal mining. What they share, apart from their efforts to defend their rights, are the challenges specific to their region. Tackling these challenges is a tall order for these (often small) groups and organizations. By bringing them together, IM-Defensoras is enabling WHRDs to protect themselves and each other more effectively. The IM-Defensoras network now covers Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. In three of the network countries – Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala – shelters have been built for WHRDs. In these safe houses, women who are threatened because of their activism can seek refuge, meet like-minded women and be temporarily away from their precarious situations.

Markina Gudiel Álvarez experienced first-hand the value of IM-Defensoras. Her father, a UN-commended mayor who had been fighting corruption and impunity in Guatemala, was brutally murdered in December 2004 by supporters of the ousted dictatorial regime. Markina, who had been working as a councillor fighting corruption and seeking justice for her brother who had disappeared at the hands of that same regime, received numerous death threats, even while she was attending the wake for her father. Not long after, in January 2005, Markina suffered an actual at-

tempt on her life. She explains that her work challenges “the interests of the new upper class, such as military and paramilitary [...] who became rich in an illegitimate way thanks to war profiteering”. Fortunately, Markina could rely on the support of the broad IM-Defensoras network of fellow WHRDs to help her move away from the area where she had been attacked. She found shelter in a Guatemalan safe house, where she stayed for two months. This gave her the necessary time and safety to analyse her situation and find a new place to live, while staying part of the women's human rights struggle.

Apart from the very real and practical assistance IM-Defensoras offers WHRDs in their safe houses, one of

its most important strengths lies elsewhere. As activist Gladys Lanza, who recently passed away, pointed out, the organization manages to foster a great sense of unity and solidarity among women. Inside, but also outside, the safe houses, IM-Defensoras makes WHRDs feel empowered, standing together and protecting one another when others have failed to do so.

Inspiration

In late 2014, IM-Defensoras received the prestigious Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award, which celebrates new champions of the human rights

movements. By connecting WHRDs throughout Mesoamerica, IM-Defensoras has managed to do much more than simply form a network. What is truly inspiring about the organization's work is that the network itself has become a form of protection. Those who have joined IM-Defensoras now have an enormous safety net of like-minded women to fall back on. “When something happens to one of us, it happens to all of us”, Gladys Lanza explained. Hence, the building and maintenance of safe houses is a joint effort, as are other activities and campaigns that are part of IM-Defensoras' holistic protection measures. For organizations across the globe, this example shows that if those responsible fail to provide safety, taking shared responsibility can go a long way towards providing protection. Additionally, IM-Defensoras testifies to the fact that protection does not mean only physical protection. Yes, Markina Álvarez needed a safe place to go, but what she also needed was support and people standing by her. More than anything, that is the type of protection IM-Defensoras offers; a kind of protection that many initiatives could realize without a tremendous amount of resources. “I am very grateful”, says Lolita Chávez, another WHRD from Guatemala, “because, thanks to the strength that my sisters from all over [Mesoamerica] have given me, I believe in life”.

Activism, artivism and the need to go beyond

A taste of civic power

Girls taking selfies in teahouses in Pakistan, women dancing the flamenco in the banks and government offices of Spain, a group of Russians turning a cat into a token of democratic values, and artists creating a video projection of a protesting crowd in the heart of Paris. These people, so different and far apart, would never have thought that they would appear in the same narrative or be seen as part of the same community. And, yet, all the inspirational people, groups and organizations discussed in this report are manifestations of our human right to mobilize and organize. All of them are standing up for a goal they believe in, to make the world a better and fairer place.

Activism, Artivism and Beyond gives an insight into the wealth of actions and tactics that, across centuries and cultures, have served to defend, expand, reclaim or redefine our civic space. We have chosen to highlight a variety of different and particularly inspiring initiatives to showcase the scope and breadth of civic action taking place in our world today. In particular, we have showcased eight different tactics used by civil society to pursue its goals, namely: 1) visual arts, 2) crowdsourcing, 3) humour & public shaming, 4) transparency & fact-checking, 5) social

media, 6) education, 7) music, dance & theatre, and 8) protection. These tactics are continuously evolving. Some of them are as old as human kind, such as the use of visual arts, music, dance & theatre. Others are relatively new and typical of today's globalized and digitalized world, such as the use of social media and crowdsourcing. They are, in other words, reflections of the spirit of their time. Some of them are merely reactions to the deliberate actions of agents, mostly governments, but also others, limiting civic space. Others unfold in response to structural forces in society, such as globalization and religious oppression. As times change, the tactics for civic action also change, and consequently, there is a need to expand the stories we have presented here.

All that remains

The key aim of this report is to generate new ideas to inspire readers. Therefore, we have made a conscious decision to steer clear of too much theory and avoided trying to give a complete overview of all of the types of actions that are out there. Consequently, some issues remain that warrant further exploration. For one, some geographical areas have not received the attention they deserve, given current political circumstances, including Central and Eastern Europe,

the Sahel, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East. Second, the involvement of the private sector in civic action, either on its own or in partnerships with CSOs, grass-roots organizations or governments, is an area that has not been sufficiently covered. Third, we have not included the role of trade unions, despite their importance in guaranteeing workers' rights in an era of economic and financial globalization. Finally, we have not included examples of actions that arise from a desperate need for resources. Lack of funding is a major obstacle for practically all CSOs, and even more for grass-roots organizations. In search of resources, creative activities have emerged, including crowdfunding, social entrepreneurship and partnerships with the private sector. Hence, in updating this report, it will be worthwhile to expand its geographical scope, to include a focus on actions pursued or supported by the private sector and labour organizations, as well as to include inspiring examples of how civil society is managing to overcome financial constraints.

Standing together

Network organizations like CIVICUS, Partos (including its innovation programme The Spindle) and The Broker play a crucial role in showcasing examples of civic action and in offering

a platform in which organizations can learn from one another. As such, this report serves as a kick-start for other crowdsourcing and joint-learning efforts, both online and offline, aimed at exchanging experiences and assimilating new ideas to more effectively defend and expand civic space. Actors, measures and structural forces that limit civic space will continue to emerge and evolve. Therefore, civil society's job is to stand its ground and give shape to this space – a job that is never finished. Civil society must be creative and innovative at all times and adaptive to changing circumstances, in order to keep civic action alive.

Activism, Artivism and Beyond is an attempt to foster such innovation. What all of the examples in this report share is passion, resilience, a desire to make the world better and, above all, a contagious energy. Be it online or offline, large or small, global or local, all initiatives covered in this book are the outcome of people's creativity and strength in the face of obstacles that limit their freedoms in some way. The power and energy that emanates from the stories told in this book show that people bounce back, stand together, and have the most brilliant ideas, from which others can learn.





Barriers to civic action

The many actions and initiatives discussed in this report all seek to defend, expand or make better use of civic space. They are a response to governmental repression, as exemplified by the women in Chile who made *Arpilleras* to protest against state corruption; the 'election' of Barsik the cat in the poll for Mayor of Barnaul in West Siberia, and the Standing March in Paris, which effectively circumvented measures designed to restrict protests at the COP21. What the stories in the preceding pages have shown is that civic space is by no means only curtailed by governments. Other actors, including private companies, can also have a negative impact on civic space, as shown by the corruption in Honduras' medicine industry.

As well as the visible actions and measures that trigger civic responses, more complex, structural forces are often at work. These forces impact upon society and, consequently, influence our civic space. The #Girls-AtDhabas campaign, for instance, challenges cultural norms that have developed over the course of centuries. The dancers of Flo6x8 are also addressing structural developments, rather than specific triggers. Hence, the mechanisms affecting civic space are embedded in and motivated by the structural context. This context

enables, limits and motivates actors – whether or not they are conscious of this motivation – to behave in specific ways. As the work of CIVICUS shows, in many cases the behaviour of individuals, organizations, private corporations and government bodies – or agents – can have detrimental effects on human rights and freedoms, thereby negatively affecting the civic space.

This chapter looks at the many barriers to civic action, starting with structural barriers, such as globalization and financialization. It then describes a number of practical measures and mechanisms (by agents), which form immediate and, at times, dramatic barriers for civil society: These include (counter)terrorism, legal and financial barriers and limitations, censorship and fake news, and bureaucracy and corruption. The examples that are included are far from exhaustive, but they do provide an indication of the variety and scope of barriers facing activists.

Globalization and financialization

The system that drives the way our society acts, connects and develops consists of large-scale developments like modernization, democratization, urbanization and globalization. These forces give direction to our daily re-

alities and influence our actions, relations and decisions. The institutional arrangements and ideological frameworks that people have drawn up over time – including capitalism, communism and our religious institutions – should also be seen as part of this context. They too affect behaviour and have proven to be strong motivations for human action. Given the multi-faceted nature of the structure on which societies are built, it is impossible to speak of simple cause and effect when discussing the notion of a 'shrinking civic space'. Naturally, there are clearly identifiable actions that place direct boundaries on the freedoms of civil society, but, on the level of structure, the story is far less straightforward. One development that testifies to the complex and often paradoxical impact of structural factors on civic space is globalization.

Today, globalization is often referred to as one of the main drivers of societal change. Interestingly, the phenomenon is found to have a paradoxical effect. That is, it contributes to the shrinking as well as the expansion of civic space. Globalization is the process of increased interactions and connections between people over the world. Aided by factors like international trade and technological advances – most particularly in terms

of transportation and communication – globalization appears to be an unstoppable force that is resulting in a so-called ‘hyper-connectedness’ and, some even argue, a global civil society. The Internet is making the world ‘smaller’ and connecting actors from all walks of life with one another; initiatives like WWF Climate Crowd and #GirlsatDhabas testify to this fact. From individual people, grass-roots movements and CSOs, to governments, private companies and extremist groups, all actors are claiming their place in the virtual arena, where they can access more information and reach bigger audiences cheaper and faster than ever before.

However, although globalization is incredibly valuable for civil society – because it is opening up new and often virtual spaces – it can at the same time have the opposite effect. Globalization can diminish meaningful connections and foster localization and individualization. Membership of the ‘global society’ is not based on a strong sense of common culture, tradition, history or language. The fluid and undefined community that constitutes this global society does not offer ground for a strong collective identity. As such, globalization is giving impetus to the desire of people to clearly define their own individual

identities. It is, in other words, resulting in more individualization, a weakening of meaningful connections and a turning away from civil society.

Apart from the far-reaching social effects of globalization, it is also important to briefly discuss its economic implications. Over the last few decades, financial services (such as banking, insurance, and investment services) have gained greater importance and caused a real transformation of the economic system. Studies show that this process, also referred to as financialization, has had a number of negative outcomes. Financialization has been associated with increased inequality, slower GDP growth, higher unemployment rates, increased volumes of debt, and the emergence of the so-called ‘credit bubbles’. How this works exactly would involve a long and technical economic explanation, which is well beyond the scope of this report. However, it is important to understand that the combined processes of globalization and financialization have had consequences that have greatly impacted upon people’s lives and civil society including: increasing dominance of the financial sector; mounting debt across the globe; greater integration of different national and international markets; tighter international financial rela-

tions and (inter)dependencies; and rising (global) financial inequality and exclusion. As some of the examples in this report show (the Flo6x8 dancers immediately spring to mind), these trends have triggered civic activism in multiple contexts.

(Counter)terrorism

When thinking of practical mechanisms that contribute to the shrinking civic space, an obvious development is the explosive growth of security- and counterterrorism measures. Apart from these measures, international terrorism itself, and the fear of terrorism, are already placing great limitations on civil society’s space for action. Because terrorism aims at the very destruction of human rights – in particular the rights to life, liberty and physical integrity – states across the globe have been adopting laws to protect their populations from harm and more effectively hunt down and punish (potential) terrorists. Naturally, it is one of the key responsibilities of the state to protect its citizens, but these protections can be dangerously broad, vague and intrusive.

Counterterrorism has grown to become an instrument of power that states employ, not only to attack terrorists, but also to restrict civic space and silence the critical voices that dis-

agree with those in power. In many cases, counterterrorism programmes fail to clearly define words like ‘extremism’, ‘radicalization’ and ‘terrorism’. As such, these programmes pave the way for governments to draft open-ended laws and expand their powers for, among other things, emergency surveillance, arrest and detention.

In addition to such vague terminology, the actual content of ‘protective measures’ can severely limit civic space and threaten a number of human rights, including protection from torture and discrimination, freedom of expression, and the right to privacy. Much of the rights violations and limits on civic action derive from provisions that expand police or intelligence powers in response to terrorism-related cases. Such powers often impact on people’s right to privacy, as they allow for the surveillance of individuals without a court order and can be used to force Internet providers to hand over data on their users. In many cases, the expansion of police or intelligence powers is done during a ‘state of emergency’. In recent years, a number of countries, including Egypt, Mali, France, Tunisia and Turkey, have taken this measure in response to the threat of terrorist attacks. While this type of reaction is

understandable in light of the horrors the world has witnessed, the consequences of these states of emergency are far-reaching and greatly affect basic human rights, as was highlighted in the ‘Standing March’ example.

Legal and financial barriers

In addition to counterterrorist legislation, other measures are also posing threats to civil society. Laws that restrict the opportunities for CSOs to organize and operate, or that even shut down organizations entirely, have been implemented in a number of countries. Those organizations involved in advocacy and political reform have been particularly targeted. Additionally, in response to the increase in large-scale protests across the globe, the intensity and number of measures to contain them has risen dramatically. In Egypt, for example, a harsh set of measures was adopted in 2013 giving Egyptian authorities wide latitude to use force against demonstrators. As a result, since then, hundreds of Egyptians have been arrested, wounded and even killed for participating in peaceful demonstrations.

Because CSOs are often dependent on external funding for their continued survival, measures that restrict access to resources are particularly

effective tools for actors seeking to put a stop to their activities. For governments, the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an inter-governmental body that aims to combat money laundering and terrorism, are often used as justification for such measures. Anti-money laundering measures based on FATF guidelines, for instance, make it harder to transfer resources to NGOs in conflict areas. And, because FATF advises countries to apply ‘proportionate measures’ to protect organizations potentially vulnerable to terrorist financing abuse, control over the funds that civil society can receive has tightened dramatically.

Censorship and fake news

The history of censorship dates back to ancient times, as does the struggle for freedom of expression. And, while in ancient times censorship was seen as an honourable task that served to shape the character of the people, nowadays it is generally regarded as a violation of freedom of expression. Despite this shift, censorship continues to be pursued in practically all nations and by a variety of methods and actors, corresponding to the endless variety of ways in which people express their opinions: newspapers are shut down for exposing corrupt politicians, certain forms of art are made

illegal because they do not comply with religious rules, demonstrations that challenge state authorities are prohibited, and artists are forced to cancel shows that are considered offensive to the state religion.

Not only governments, but also the private sector is at times guilty of illegitimate censorship. In 2004, for example, the Walt Disney Company refused to produce and distribute the documentary by Michael Moore called *Fahrenheit 9/11*. The documentary linked the then-president George W. Bush to the family of Osama Bin Laden and was very critical of the president's actions prior to and immediately after the terrorist attacks on America on September 11. Former Disney CEO Michael Eisner argued that Disney did not want to be associated with this controversial and political film, because consumers would not want Disney to take sides, but to remain non-partisan. However, others pointed out that Disney's censorship had a very different motivation: According to the New York Times, Disney regarded Moore's documentary as 'bad for business', because the company feared losing the tax breaks it received for its Florida theme parks, where Jeb Bush – the president's brother – was governor. Whether Disney's motivation was

political, economic, or a mixture of both, the fact remains that the company never published Moore's documentary; a decision some regard as an attack on freedom of expression. Given the promise of huge revenue, the film was eventually published by Lionsgate Films. Yet, this example does raise the question of how many movies, less likely to yield such profits, were never produced due to corporate censorship.

Because the Internet offers people almost limitless opportunities to communicate, spread and receive information, the digital arena has become a prime target for censorship. Such censorship can take many forms, from shutting down particular websites to preventing Internet access altogether. The 2015 *Freedom on the Net Report* by Freedom House found that "topics that attract most restriction are criticism of authorities, exposure of corruption, mobilisation of the public and social commentary".

In addition to restrictions, censorship has increasingly taken a different form, particularly online, for example, the spread of so-called 'fake news'. Although it is not an example of censorship in its 'purest form', fake news has become a powerful way to silence dissident voices and ensure

that truths that are 'inconvenient' to those in power – be they the government, private companies or others – are replaced by more convenient information. Cause for additional worry is the fact that efforts against the spread of fake news are now leading to increased censorship. Many governments, for example, are exploring legislation to make the spread of fake news a criminal act. If put in practice, this would mean that governments will be in charge of what is 'accurate' and what constitutes 'truth'. Such a situation would greatly undermine freedom of expression and Internet freedom.

Bureaucracy and corruption

Perhaps less deadly than police crackdowns on demonstrations, and not as visibly infringing upon human rights, are bureaucratic arrangements. However, these can still be an enormous obstacle for civil society. In the *Civil Society Europe Survey*, respondents pointed out that increased bureaucracy and additional requirements for registering associations, for example, make it harder for people – especially those with a lower level of formal education and poor access to information – to establish an organization. Organizations that are already active are often overwhelmed by the need to process a variety of documents,

which makes them less effective and limits their time to undertake core activities. In Venezuela, some have even argued that bureaucracy is the greatest barrier to social change, as it makes productivity and efficiency for organizations, movements and individual citizens practically impossible.

Often related to these bureaucratic obstacles – whether deliberate or not – is corruption, a practice that numerous organizations, including Transparency International, are seeking to curb. Political leaders, companies and civil society itself have all been guilty of corruption in a variety of contexts. Positions of power are abused to aid illicit financial outflows, extract resources, and steal and hide vast amounts of wealth. In Guatemala, for instance, it was estimated that "some 30 per cent of the state budget is lost to corruption". Additionally, in many countries, ongoing corruption is causing natural devastation, posing a threat to peace and security, and hampering the ability of governments to serve their citizens. However, corruption is by no means limited to state institutions. Private companies are often intimately involved in corruption practices by state officials, as well as having their own corruption schemes. While these systems greatly affect civil society, CSOs themselves

do not always have a clear conscience either. In India, it was found that poor and excluded communities viewed civil society with suspicion, because of its obvious acts of corruption and arbitrariness.

Definitions

Civil society

As civil society across the globe is highly varied in its nature and composition, a multitude of definitions exist. For the purpose of this report the broad definition of civil society, as employed by CIVICUS is used:

Civil society, in its broadest and simplest terms refers to “The arena – outside of the family, the state, and the market – which is created by individual and collective actions, organizations and institutions to advance shared interests”. This formulation includes non-governmental organizations, private voluntary organisations, peoples’ movements, community-based organizations, trade unions, charities, social and sports clubs, cooperatives, environmental groups, professional associations, consumer organizations, faith-based organizations and the not for profit media, in the definition of civil society.

As this definition is still too broad for the scope of this report, an additional guiding principle is applied in the selection of civil society initiatives and organizations. Only those actions and organizations that have purposes or values compatible with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are committed to the promotion and protection of these rights are included. Examples include: human rights organizations, development aid organizations (NGOs, associations), peace movements, pro-democracy movements.

While we have tried to steer clear of technical jargon in this report, some civil society-related terminology has been used. Therefore, we offer a few words here by way of definitions.

Civic activism

When we think of civic activism, political activism is usually the first thing that springs to mind. As Duncan Green, Oxfam GB’s Senior Strategic Adviser, points out in his latest book, *How Change Happens*, civic activism indeed includes, but is not limited to, political activism. He argues that a good definition would be any individual action with social consequences, many of which involve collective activity. In line with Green’s definition, at the heart of this report are (collective) actions with social impact, often with a political purpose. Examples of civic activism described in this report have shown innovative ways to ensure that society and its institutions respect people’s rights and meet their needs. At the same time, again borrowing from Green’s work, the examples of civic activism are not only a means, but also an end in themselves: a crucial kind of freedom that is continuously under threat.

Civic space

Civic space is not a space that can be seen or drawn on a map. It is, as Samuel Worthington so aptly described, “the ability for health clinics in Pakistan to operate freely”, “the [opportunity] for humanitarians to rapidly deliver shelter in the Philippines”, and “the freedom for people-based organizations to fight for human rights”. Civic space, in other words, is the arena within which civil society can function. Its boundaries are defined by three fundamental rights: the right to association, the right to peaceful assembly, and the right to freedom of expression. If these rights are in some way threatened or taken away, the boundaries of civic space tighten and, consequently, the healthy functioning of civil society will be limited.

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