Long Session Report: Game Changers

Session Title: Mobilising Metropolis: New approaches for fighting corruption in the context of rapid urbanisation
Date & Time: November 9th, 2012 17:30 – 19:30 hrs.
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Experts:

- Julio César, Regional Official for Human Settlements, UN Habitat
- Sasa Segrt, Executive Director, TI Croatia
- Carlos March, Strategic Communication Direction, AVINA
- Alex Warnock-Smith, Co-founder, Urban Projects Bureau and academic at the Architectural Association
- Elisabeth Ungar, Director, Transparencia por Colombia

Moderated by: Dieter Zinnbauer, Transparency International
Session coordinated by: Zoe Reiter, Transparency International

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

Worldwide, urbanization trends and the concentration of the population in cities, especially in developing countries, pose a serious challenge for governments and citizens in fighting corruption and strengthening governance. Corruption can present in multiple form in cities. There is a need for governments, social organizations and activists to find better and innovative anticorruption mechanisms in cities.

An issue shared by some of the experts focused on the need of a multidisciplinary approach given the wide range of problems that cities are facing, as well as the multiple factors involved in those problems. When thinking and designing solutions for cities, it is important to consider all the factors involved.

The main issues mentioned were:

- Economic drivers are in cities. It is important to take them into account since local governments have the challenge of promoting economic development as well as increasing the quality of life of its citizens. Therefore, it is important to have transparent and open governments.
- Problems between cities range widely: transportation, traffic, waste disposal, public services, urban planning. However, a common problem in cities is violence. Most violent places in the world are cities.
- Increasing transparency and accountability in cities is a key factor for improving enforcement of citizens' rights in cities.

What initiatives have been showcased? Describe the Game Changing Strategies. Please be as detailed as possible, include web urls, name of the initiatives and indicate if local, regional or national.

- UN Habitat expert mentioned the example of the city of Buenos Aires in Argentina, where new approved laws force the local government to search for innovative solutions of the problems of the city.
- TI Croatia recently mobilized more than 15,000 people in the city of Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, against a construction project that did not included any form of consultation with society. The aforementioned project involved demolition of an historical building downtown, as well as the privatization of public space areas. TI Croatia and other CSO's organized pacific protests and demonstrations, gathered signatures for a petition, among others.
- La Alameda Case is a local organization in Buenos Aires that denounces corruption related to human trafficking in the city. They gather information and evidence and send it to the media. They created a map of crime in the city constructed with the help of citizens (people alerts of crime in their neighbourhood).
- Example of the city of Bogota: once a reference for other cities in Latin America and the world, now the city faces systematic efforts from public and private agents to weaken local government institutions. Impunity and low levels of transparency and accountability as well as low social participation has allowed private interests to co-opt local public institutions.
- Examples of the design of urban projects in Medellin and Bangkok (among other cities).

Highlights: What are the main outcomes of this session? What's next?

- Since urbanization translates in the need for governments to specialize, local governments must increase their capacities and improve the institutions that integrate them.
- There are opportunities of new forms of collective action and social mobilization mechanisms to solve cities' problems. Anticorruption mechanisms must incorporate citizens in monitoring government actions and performance.
- Reducing spaces for discretion and improving transparency in cities are key elements when thinking in ways to tackle corruption in cities. It is important as well to strengthen individuals' capacities to exercise their rights through social participation mechanisms.
- The most effective way to tackle corruption is through "acupuncture interventions", i.e. strategic action to solve a specific problem. Specifically, it is fundamental to rethink on how we provide public services in cities.
- Monitoring corruption is also an issue of design. Urban design defines hoe people interact. It is important to strengthen ethical perspective in urban design.
- Civil society has produced information and indicators about cities. However, most of the time this information is not comparable across cities. It is important to have reliable data to make comparisons between cities and evaluate government performance.
- In cities, especially in developing countries, there are different legal frameworks within the same city. For example, municipalities in Latin America that have grown at the point of being physically linked to other municipalities. It is important to have a common legal base for cities so we can reduce spaces for opacity and corruption.

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

It is important to engage relevant actors in an active debate about the challenges that cities face, focusing especially on the implications that corruption has in many different areas. Cities are the closest place where government and citizens interact. Corruption not only reflects on the misuse of the city's resources, but also on the effectiveness of the solutions and on the quality of life of its citizens.

Cities are spaces for innovating and engaging citizens in mechanisms to enforce their rights and participate in the decision-making process of the city. Transparency is a key element to start. It is important to promote laws, regulations and practices that can strengthen openness and transparency in local governments. Therefore, we must think of new mechanisms to monitor how the local government, the private sector and the citizens interact between each other to (re)shape cities.

What kind of questions came from the audience? (Please include interesting quotes)

- Questions from the audience focused on how private interests shape urban planning, specifically when real-estate promoters wants to develop areas of the city that are occupied by low-income population that in most of the cases do not have the rights to live in such land. There were specific mentions to the cases of favelas in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.
- According to some experts and participants, an important fact to consider in the aforementioned problem is that population living in such land do not feel the capacity to exercise their right or to raise their voices because they have arrived to that place illegally. These make them vulnerable for being used in *clientelist* networks, which are most of the time used by politicians to obtain gains during electoral times.
- Housing is prone to corruption because of the interest of real-estate developers. However, in this specific topic there is always the dilemma of promoting new development while at the same time assuring the right to decent housing. How to promote balance based on transparency and accountability?
- How to add accountability to urban design? When thinking of accountability in urban design there are different layers:
1. Ethical accountability: urban planners/designers must be accountable to the real client; the people that will use the space or that will be connected to the place. Kind of the ethics of the decision-making process (inclusive, transparent).
2. Urban designers/planners must think on Interventions to empower people.
3. It is important to recognize that space has a role on the governance of a city. It is fundamental to understand how space is used to be able to change how people behave: improving quality and access to space impact the behaviour of people.

What could be done to promote cross-sector and cross-regional work related to the focus of this game changer session? (If applicable)

NA

What should be done to create opportunities for scaling up the proven solutions discussed in the session? What and by whom?

The challenge in cities is scaling down proven solutions. There has been important efforts in the national level and now is important to make them work for the people in their local context.

Key Insights Recommended to be included in the IACC Declaration

- Promote innovation when thinking of new approaches to tackle corruption in cities.
- Promote multidisciplinary approaches to fight corruption in cities (urbanism, economy, political science, sociology, architecture, among others)
- Increase awareness that not only the government is responsible for corruption in the local sector. We must broaden our perspective and include economical and societal actors in the fight against corruption in cities.

Rapporteur's name and date submitted

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19th november, 2012