Report from the WSS Fellows session on
"Will Good Governance Bring Sustainable and Equitable Development? Perspectives from the South"
WSS Forum in South Africa, Sept. 2015
by Carolina Adler (on behalf of the session organising team).

Transitions in Urban Environments

As part of the WSS Forum in Durban, South Africa, a number of World Social Science Fellows were invited to participate in preparing and facilitating a session at the Forum, which we later titled "Will Good Governance Bring Sustainable and Equitable Development? Perspectives from the South". The preparation of the session included the participation of the following WSS fellows:

- Carolina Adler (ETH Zürich, Switzerland);
- Simone Athayde (Amazon Dams Network, Tropical Conservation and Development Program, Center for Latin American Studies, University of Florida, United States of America);
- Marie-Ange Baudouin (the African Climate and Development Initiative, University of Cape Town, South Africa);
- Pooja Ravi (Public Affairs Foundation, Bangalore, India);
- Lindsey Kingston (Webster University, United States of America).
- Danica Santic (University of Belgrade, Serbia)
- Victor S. Peña (el Colegio de Sonora, Mexico)
- Jewellord Nem Singh (University of Sheffield, United Kingdom); and
- Nuria Giniger (CONICET/UBA, Argentina).

The session was moderated by Carolina Adler, and the presenters were: Simone Athayde, Marie-Ange Baudoin, Pooja Ravi and Lindsey Kingston, who presented case studies on the topic based on their collaborative work with the ISSC's World Social Science Fellows programme. The session was chaired by Jomo Kwame Sundaram (Malaysia, co-editor, Is Good Governance Good for Development?) and Shuaib Lwasa (Uganda, Integrated Research on Disaster Risk Programme- IRDR).

This session aimed to critically explore the extent to which good governance can deliver the promise of growth with equity. Equity in this context is in view of socially, economically and geographically differentiated risk, the reduction of which is underpinned by good risk governance. The starting point for discussions was the proposed Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels", which was referred to as a means to explore whether good governance can in fact bring the desired sustainable and equitable development aspirations embodied in SDG 16. The session was split into two parts. In Part I, input was given through brief presentations from the sessions chairs (Jomo Kwame Sundaram and Shuaib Lwasa), who shared their perspectives on the session's theme based on their experiences. This input was followed by three rapid-fire case studies by the ISSC Fellows presenting the following:

- Case Study 1 - Negotiating Risk: Indigenous Peoples, Social-environmental Justice and Hydroelectric Dam Development in the Amazon (Simone Athayde, Marie-Ange Baudoin);
- Case Study 2 - Inclusive Water Governance: Case Studies from India (Pooja Ravi); and
- Case Study 3 - Discrimination in Good Governance and Equitable Development: The Rohingya of Burma (Lindsey Kingston).

In the second part of the session the audience was invited into the discussion to complement these presentations. In Part II, a structured method in co-production of knowledge (an adapted version of "Emancipatory Boundary Critique", EBC) was envisaged as an 'experiment' in audience participation to explore the session's theme with the audience. In small groups, the audience (together with the WSS Fellows) were meant to apply EBC through a set of questions that critically challenge the assumptions made under SDG 16, by referring back to the case studies presented and/or by discussing audience's own cases or anecdotes to challenge SDG 16 implementation in practice.

However, due to time constraints and the few audience members present, we turned this second part into an open discussion between the audience and the presenters and chairs. Out of the many discussions and conclusion had, one key message and lesson learnt as a result of deliberations on the cases presented centred on the question of what constituted "good" governance in the first place. Governance, and its formal structures and architectures to enact governance in a given context, is not in itself a pre-condition to successful implementation of SDG 16 , for example, in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. Examples were given that point at legitimate and perfectly legal government-endorsed measures and policies that can and do have detrimental effects for certain groups in society, especially marginalized groups, such as the case of the Rohingya people presented by Lindsay in her case study in Burma. Overall the experience in preparing and facilitating this session allowed all of us Fellows to expand our networks and connect with others who explore these questions as well through their own research and practice, also allowing us the opportunity to connect with prominent scholars and practitioners on the topic.

We are very thankful to the ISSC for the opportunity to bring us together to form a session and explore these questions with a wider audience.