How to select and include contextual case studies related to the FPIs

Reflection exercise!

As you prepare for your conversation, reflect on some of the local issues that you and those around you face in your context related to the internet and digital technologies. For example,

- Does your country experience internet shutdowns?
- To what extent does your government censor internet content?
- Have participants in the room experienced harassment, surveillance, or any form of violence online?
- How has the increased use of marketplace databases and on-demand service apps affected the distribution of economic power in your country?
- How does the increasing power of big tech companies impact the ability to remain anonymous online?
- How do digital technologies enable or restrict local activism?

There will be many ways in which the FPIs and their clusters might apply to different challenges you face in your context. As a result, it can be difficult to decide which issues to raise, which case studies to use as examples, and how to have a conversation about them.

Let's look at how to surface some of the issues experienced in your context, and then at how to select and have a conversation about case studies related to those issues.

Surfacing issues experienced in your context

Remember, a key objective from this part of your conversation should be ensuring that participants come away with a strong understanding of **how the FPIs relate to their work and their lives**. As such, it is always important to start surfacing issues from the positionalities of your participants, as opposed to saying upfront as facilitator what those issues could include generally.

Getting participants to reflect on the connections between the FPIs and their lives comes down to asking the right questions! If folks are hearing about the FPIs for the first time, it can be easy for them to feel like they have no knowledge to share in a discussion about the FPIs or the politics of the internet. Asking broad generalised questions - such as, *'How is the principle of Access challenged in different parts of the world?'* or, *'Why is the principle of Anonymity important?'* - will often render generalised answers, that stifle the direction of the conversation to go deeper. Furthermore, many may not know how to answer, or may feel like the FPIs do not apply to them.

However, when you **ask participants about their experiences**, this

- immediately makes the FPIs relatable
- situates the FPIs within the lives of participants
- brings every participant down to the same level of expertise, since everyone is an expert of their own lives
- creates space for participants to find resonance with the experiences of one another

Asking folks about their experiences ensures deeper and more participative conversations!

So, how do we ask questions about participants' experiences that entice their curiosity and spark in-depth debate? There are three key factors to consider that will inform the kinds of questions you ask:

1. **Who is in the room?** To what movements, unions, communities or occupations do your participants belong? Are your participants journalists? Coders? Are they abortion rights activists or part of workers' union? Do your participants represent a gender-diverse community, or are they residents of the same neighbourhood?
2. **Where is the conversations being held?** Is the conversation a national one or a hyperlocal one? What country, city or neighbourhood are you hosting from? Is the conversation taking place online, with folks representing many geographical places, but from a common movement?
3. **What brought you all together to have a conversation about the FPIs in the first place?** What was the purpose negotiated between yourself and your participants at the beginning of your conversation, for bringing you together? What do you collectively want to achieve?

Your answers to these questions will help guide your decision around the kinds of questions you ask your participants about their experiences of using technology in their fields of work, activism and lives. For example, if your conversation has journalists present that often face threats or intimidation from government, a question you may ask could be, *'As a journalist in your country, what apps do you prefer to use to communicate with your sources and why?'* If your conversation has attracted more of a techie crowd of web developers or coders, a question you could ask is, *'Have you ever created a pseudonym for yourself online out of a need or desire to be elusive or anonymous? What was it? What was the reason?'*

If the conversation becomes generalised, bring participants back to their experiences by asking them to

tell stories of specific scenarios! As stories are recounted, make a note of each one using a flipchart that folks can see, or a shared online notepad to which everyone has access.

For each story, note down the key issue, as well as what happened in the participants' experiences.

How to select and have a conversation about case studies

By the end of the previous discussion, you would have noted a number of stories from the experiences of different participants. These stories may have expanded conversations to other examples of similar events, or have led participants in the room to discover similarities in their experiences confronting the same issue. **Whether from the lives of participants, or examples given from the floor of similar events, these stories are your case studies!**

Take a moment to observe any **commonalities** that are arising in the stories being told, or any similarities in the challenges being surfaced. Depending on the amount of time you have allocated for this part of your conversation, select one or more case studies that seem to have the most resonance among the experiences of participants.

It is now time to take the conversation back to the FPIs and how they relate to the experiences that have just been shared. This can be done collectively, or you can split participants into groups to speak about a case study each.

For each case study, **ask questions that will lead to exploring and interrogating the issues at hand from a feminist perspective.** The questions around each case study can include, for example:

- To which cluster or principles does the case study relate? Does it relate to a single cluster or principle or is it at the intersection of two or more clusters or principles?
- In the selected case study, what technology was involved?
- Who was in control? What was their intention?
- What was the key barrier / challenge to / opportunity for the FPIs being realised in the case?
- Who was most impacted? How?
- Did the scenario create more ways and spaces to be / express / organise / gain autonomy online? If so, in what ways?
- Did the scenario affect you, either positively or negatively? If so, how?

There are numerous methodological processes for drawing out responses to these questions. We have put together **a growing repository of stories from the field**, or methodological processes, that organisers of previous local conversations from around the world have used!

Gather ideas from the next section (Stories from the field)!