Enabling civic spaces |
Towards an IUCN agenda

Peter Bille Larsen
University of Geneva
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Recognizing the scale and depth of civic space problems

- We are good to talk about biodiversity crisis, yet less good at talking about own situation and challenges....
Conservation NGOs: a key IUCN pillar @risk?

- Global survey
- Members of IUCN network facing safety issues, surveillance, criminalization and even worse...
- New regulatory restrictions for NGOs and changing funding conditions
Time to Act

- tip of the iceberg
- IUCN yet to recognize the scale and the nature of the problem.
- not isolated cases, structural trends and risks faced by membership
Conservation has become less safe!

Third of NGO respondents said yes.
- Melting CSO spaces

109 countries have **closed**, **repressed** or **obstructed** civic space

Civicus 2018
Civic spaces are shrinking rapidly

- half of the respondents: policies governing NGO/IPO action to have become more restrictive.
No regions spared, yet challenges differ
Trend of increasing threats and violence against environmental NGOs?

- Half of NGO respondents in Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia report have experienced personal threats, physical violence or intimidation.
Trends

- half of responses: that threats and violence against environmental NGOs are on the increase.
- Not limited to usual suspects (mega-projects, extractive industries, timber mafias) – Species, wildlife trade, PAs
- Key IUCN principles become sensitive (e.g. social equity, gender, but also upholding standards as such)
IUCN constituencies targeted

- IUCN members
- Commission members
- Partner organizations
- Indigenous peoples and local community representatives
- Wider research community
Vicious circle of shrinking spaces: members under attack

- Personal threats, violence, prison, intimidation
- Restricted access to critical decision-making locally, nationally or regionally
- Restrictions on financial support from abroad
- Legal and institutional barriers
- Loss of working permits, restricted access to particular regions or fields of activity
- Registration, reporting, requirements
Silent crisis?

- Clear signals of **deteriorating conditions** also among **partners**
- a **Silent Crisis**: institutional blindspot
- **Ever more difficult** to raise sensitive issues
Beyond personal and organizational safety issues, how can we even expect to make a conservation difference if our people and organizations are at risk? Have we as union been taking partnership spirit for granted?
An urgent matter

NGO members – a key pillar – are at risk in many countries
Break isolation and facilitate effective access to protection

If one **member** suffers, we all suffer as a Union

- **This is an urgent matter!**
Reinforce environmental rights, enabling civic spaces and accountability.

From fire-fighting to addressing root causes

IUCN needs a policy agenda to reinforce safe and enabling environments.
IUCN as a union and space of solidarity

- “IUCN could convene and mediate”
- “It would be great if IUCN can provide any training to IUCN partners to be able to dealing with threats and intimidation to personal or organization. Also to mobilization support from IUCN member in country level or IUCN Regional Office to monitor and give support to the partners.”
- IUCN members
How do we get there?

- Motion rejected, yet basis in defender resolution (Marseille)
- Back to back consultation with councillors prior to Council in May. Council action and guidance needed
- National and regional champions needed
Next steps: we need your involvement

- Geneva Environment Network launch, March
- Sponsor topic for IUCN Council
- Co-host of pre-council meeting
- Engage with regional/global network of Committees
- Champion meetings/exchanges in your respective Committees