

HRIA Practices – New York City – April 15-16th, 2014

On the 15th and 16th of April, the team of the Sciences Po Law Clinic HEDG program involved in a project on mining governance and transparency in the Democratic Republic of Congo joined their partners—the Human Rights Law Clinic and the Vale Center for Sustainable International Investment at Columbia Law School and The Carter Center—for a student workshop, a public conference, and two roundtables on the practice of Human Right Impact Assessments (“HRIA”) held at Columbia Law School in New York City.

During the student workshop, both Law Clinics had an extensive discussion on HRIA practices and shared some of their own experiences working on clinical projects with the Carter Center in the DRC. The workshop generated a fruitful cross-learning and brainstorming discussion among students and their tutors on the recent developments of HRIA practices, as well as on some practical and intellectual challenges they faced as clinical students engaging in this complex field.

At lunchtime on the 16th of April, Professor Michael H. Posner from NYU’s Stern School of Business (<http://www.stern.nyu.edu/faculty/bio/michael-posner>) delivered a keynote speech on “Business and Human rights” to a substantial audience of law and international affairs students. He notably developed a 5-prong methodology to promote and diffuse human right due diligences within the practice of multinational corporations and global investors.

This presentation was immediately followed by two closed-door roundtables on HRIA practices, which gathered about 20 professionals, clinicians, academics and students with very different backgrounds. During the first roundtable, representatives from the civil society, international and non-governmental organizations, the private sector and academics discussed their own vision of HRIAs and shared some experiences with a view to map out this emerging practice. The second roundtable was dedicated to the question of capacity building and community engagement in HRIAs. ‘During this second roundtable, Columbia and Sciences Po clinical students jointly presented their work with the Carter Center and their reflective analysis on the limits and opportunities of this work.

This two-day event was organized collaboratively by students from the HEDG clinic at the Sciences Po Law School and from the Human Rights clinic at Columbia Law School, and coordinated by Prof. Jeremy Perelman (Sciences Po Law School), Kaitlin Cordes (The Vale Columbia Center) and Manon Aubry (The Carter Center). It was made possible thanks to the support of an Alliance Program (<http://alliance.columbia.edu>) joint Faculty seed grant, as well as the support of the Sciences Po Law School Clinic and the Vale Columbia Center and the Human Rights Institute at Columbia Law School.