

**11th Annual GigaNet Symposium**  
**05 December 2016, 09h-18h**  
**Palcco Center Zapopan/Guadalajara, Mexico**

**Session Report**

On 05 December 2016 the Global Internet Governance Academic Network (GigaNet) held its 11th Annual Symposium as a pre-event on day zero of the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in the city of Zapopan/Guadalajara, Mexico. Throughout the whole day there was a constant participation of about 40-50 people and a range of speakers from different parts of the world including a strong presence and representation of women. The symposium took place during the whole day starting at 9h in the morning with a short welcome session followed by the first panel on participation, transparency and responsibility.

Since its early days as Arpanet and also after the development of HTML and the ongoing dissemination of the commercial Internet, participation was and still is a key factor driving the success of networks. The airiness of the first generation of users in the 1990s however is over. The virtual space for free expression by some once even hoped to be independent from state control is struggling today with surveillance from different directions. Several stakeholders, among them governments and private companies, have a keen interest today in observing and evaluating user behavior on the net. As a consequence critical users try to find more secure technical means to communicate or look for institutional ways to protect user privacy and improve online participation of different stakeholder groups. To discuss these challenges and possible solutions the first panel of this symposium focussed on participation, transparency and responsibility.

The second panel was a round table on legal challenges. User participation, data storage and data (in)security in cyberspace, approached in the first panel, are also subjects of intense intense debate for legal scholars, who are often confronted with the conflict between territoriality and cyberspace. Legal regulations concerning privacy, the growing awareness of hate speech, the right to be forgotten and the challenges of legal compliance in cyberspace are among the topics that were discussed with a number of experts from the field.

The third session picked up the topic of participation in a different way. It focused on questions related to end users and young people involved in, or affected by policies and practices of big IG actors like ICANN and the IGF. ICANN's New gTLD Program is another form of increasing participation in the Internet. So far, the evaluation of this program is in its early stages and the complexity of the whole process has led to the organization postponing its second round of the program. Also the IGF is a key actor that promotes participation and especially tries to open doors to the next (or rather, the current) generation of Internet users. In this session the speakers took a closer look at individual actors, their historic background and current activities.

The fourth and final round of presentations aimed at the situation of emerging economies and their specific situation in the global context of Internet Governance. The ups and downs of participation in the Internet and in Internet Governance could be observed very well over the past few years in countries with increasing economic growth and also in relation to the Internet. Depending on the context they are labeled as emerging economies, newly industrialized economies, tiger states, BRICS, or developing countries. While some countries benefited from historically and often violently gained economic advantages building basic infrastructure and later telecommunication networks that are today offering stable and strong Internet connections others are still struggling with their colonial past followed by more or less stable ups and downs and unsteady developments. This last session explored some of these questions and cases and discussed the relation between power and access.

At the end of the day the GigaNet Steering Committee presented recent updates from the network including its new logo, financial reports, academic activities throughout the year (also in cooperation with institutions in different parts of the world) and the upcoming elections.

More details on the symposium, presentations and papers are available on the GigaNet website <http://www.giga-net.org>.

**GigaNet Steering Committee, December 2016**