

Report on attendance of the IGF 2016 for EuroSSIG/Amazon

Being chosen for the EuroSSIG/Amazon fellowship to the 11th Internet Governance Forum in Guadalajara, made it possible for me to attend my first IGF, which was held 5 – 9 December 2016. According to the fellowship's conditions, I had to announce my thematic focal points while being able to choose freely which sessions to attend. I placed my emphasis on Human Rights, questions of Internet and jurisdiction and approaches to a rights-based multistakeholder environment.

On Day 0, my goal was to familiarize myself with different kinds of sessions and rules of conduct. A good place to get this information and a general overview of the IGF was the Newcomer's Track that convened daily with different subjects and speakers. I attended it partly each day to get the most out of other sessions while benefitting from this infrastructure set up for newcomers like me. As my first session, I attended the GigaNet Symposium where young researchers presented their papers. It was put forward how important inclusive processes and transparent platforms are in Internet Governance but they also pointed out that there are still problems of limited participation and linguistic accessibility.

In the session on the IANA Transition, insiders offered their views on the process and addressed challenges of the near future that are due to the novelty of handing over IANA functions from the US Department's of Commerce NTIA to the community. An approach could be to use political science and international relations theory in questions of power distribution and in order to create a system of stringent accountability.

In the next session on protection the safety of journalists online and offline, David Kaye, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, expressed his concerns that human rights rules and guidelines are systematically being neglected in different political systems, creating an environment of uncertainty and insecurity for journalists. The Internet is an accelerating factor, both for journalistic work and for surveillance of and violence against journalists.

The official Day 1 of the IGF took place on Tuesday, 6 December. The first session I attended was the Open Forum "Internet and Jurisdiction" where participants of the first Internet and Jurisdiction Conference reported on its outcomes. During the conference in November, representatives of different stakeholder groups had discussed issues of jurisdiction about data, content and the Domain Name System. Instead of exact solutions, the organizers' goal was to create a space for experts to exchange ideas and to engage. Next, I could attend the workshop "Implementing Human Rights standards to the ICT sector". During this session, reports and initiatives were presented that evaluated the Human Rights performance of Internet Service Providers. Being subject to national jurisdiction, private Internet companies differ widely in their obligation to respect international standards. In addition, their own terms and conditions are rarely Human Rights based, while still influencing all layers of the

Internet. Over the past years, it has been the work of different initiatives to spread awareness on user's rights and holding ISP accountable and this work will have to continue rigorously.

In the session on teaching Internet Governance, I participated as a recent alumna of the European Summer School on Internet Governance. It was interesting to hear about different approaches of other regional SIG and the influence EuroSSIG and the South School on Internet Governance had on a now spreading phenomenon of teaching Internet Governance in different, sometimes still marginalized, regions and thereby increasing accessibility and knowledge.

The afternoon of Day 1 was dedicated to the opening ceremony during which the host country Mexico shared some cultural aspects, inter alia in form of the performance of a Mariachi band.

Day 2 was a day full of scheduled sessions that fell in my area of interest. First, I participated in the workshop "The role of judiciary systems and Internet Governance". The speakers emphasized that the rule of law is an accepted principle in most modern societies, the interactions of legal and judiciary systems has been falling behind in the digital age and they are not yet well adjusted to the challenges of Internet cases (of which there are many). Current judges are not, in most cases, digital natives and they oftentimes lack an understanding of options. In addition, laws in many countries are not yet precise enough concerning Internet cases, which results in disproportional rulings and results in filtering, blocking etc. Therefore, more training for judges and other legal personnel is needed, as well as comparative research to point out weaknesses.

Then, I attended the Dynamic Coalition on Rights and Principles that gave regional Human Rights defenders a platform to voice the specific problems prevalent in Latin America. One focal issue was the political influence of orchestrated misinformation campaigns online and how these botnet activities altered the political scene, especially in Mexico, and made it more violent. A rise in gender-based violence online was another point of concern.

After that, I attended "Law Enforcement, Cyberspace and Jurisdiction". It was set out that the Internet is inherently cross-border, yet legal systems have not adapted to this fact yet, which makes effective law enforcement hard to realize. With that come problems of legal accountability and the responsibility of ISP that not all recognise. The question of localization and the role of ISP as informal judges in "lawless" cross-border cases needs a strong framework of principles to which all stakeholders can adhere.

After a lunch with the Amazon Public Policy team and a fruitful meeting with two of the organizers of the Austrian Youth IGF, I participated in the session on Human Rights advocacy and strategies for the digital age. In this, a hypothetical situation (introduction of fees for participation in the IGF) was discussed in groups and then in the plenum with possible solutions and action plans to keep the IGF open and accessible.

On day 3 firstly I attended the workshop "Can law enforcement catch bad actors online anymore", which addressed the problematic of IPv4 addresses running out and the large scale of IPv6 addresses in conjunction with mobile devices and the need of legal systems to consider this technical change while generally struggling with law enforcement in Internet cases.

Then, I attended the workshop "Surveillance and International Human Rights Law". In this discussion especially, the questions of proportionality and legitimate aims in limiting privacy were put at the centre. These are clearly stated Human Rights principles, yet online mass surveillance by default breaches them and there are no globally applicable instruments yet to counteract and to create judicial oversight.

Additionally, some political regimes exploit the possibilities of the Internet in terms of surveillance to achieve political goals and to create chilling effects for opposition. For these reasons, modern privacy law has to become more robust to make sure states can and will respect, protect and fulfil the rights of their citizens. Also, accountability and resilience of ISP in situations of disproportional state surveillance has to be made clearer. Users can only act accordingly if there is sufficient transparency on surveillance practices.

Day 4, the last day of this IGF, I attended the workshop on economic, social and cultural rights in which a report on ESCR and the Internet by the Global Information Society Watch was presented. Human Rights defenders and experts from different regions gave an insight on the specific challenges in their systems. It was made clear that in comparison to civil and political rights and their implementation in an online environment, economic, social and cultural rights are still under researched and this lack of academic knowledge needs to be addressed in the years to come.

Next, I attended a session on Internet shutdowns. Although being heavily criticized and - according to Human Rights law - can never be justifiable, the practice of shutting down the Internet for hours to days keeps spreading, especially in developing countries. In the case of India, it occurs that the Internet is shut down purely in order to prevent students from cheating during general exams; this is a clear violation of the country's users' rights to free expression, access to knowledge, access to critical infrastructure etc. The experts emphasized the role of national legal systems, but also called for rigorous actions by civil society.

To bring my first IGF to a closing, I then watched the main session; a dialogue between IG pioneers and young leaders on the past and the future of Internet Governance and the value of on intergenerational learning in a multistakeholder approach. After that, the official closing ceremony took place with participants sharing their impressions and ideas and officials and experts reflecting on the past few days and the next steps to take.

Throughout the IGF, I also attended a number of Lightning Sessions. In this more informal format, 20 minutes are dedicated to specific topics, for example how refugees use and need the Internet and how conflict solving in Internet cases works in Russia.

Apart from the insights of the countless sessions, the Internet Governance Forum is a learning experience like few others that stems from open and constant interactions with people that are experts in their fields and are happy to educate and exchange ideas and resources whenever approached. I have gained great experiences and could widen my academic horizon all while expanding and strengthening my network of people working in Internet Governance. As someone who is a relative newcomer and in the phase of finishing academic studies and looking for professional opportunities, attending an IGF was the best next step to take. I now have a more coherent understanding in my areas of interest, especially in digital Human Rights and jurisdiction. I am grateful for having been granted one of the fellowships and I will surely try to stay active and striving to pursue my way in this field and make use of this opportunity.