

4th GIG-ARTS Conference 7-8 May 2020, Vienna

Online Information Governance – More Expression, Less Freedom?

Organised by:

Media Governance and Industries Research Lab & Jean Monnet
Centre of Excellence FreuDE / Universität Wien

LIP6 Computer Science Research Lab / Sorbonne Université &
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique

It is now 30 years since the invention of the World Wide Web, and over fifteen years since the development of the interactive Web or also known as Web2.0. Online information and communication have never seemed easier and more accessible to everyone, thanks to the mediation of social networks, search engines, and other kinds of platforms and technologies.

With such capabilities “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”, freedom of speech and freedom of the press should have grown to such an extent that some of the utopian visions of full participatory democracy would have appeared to be within our reach. At the very least, some of the long-standing informational imbalances concerning information flow globally, diversity of content and authors, and the accessibility of accurate information would have been taken as a given framework against which societies would have been called to solve problems and to look after citizens’ well-being.

Paradoxically, the levels of freedom and freedom of expression, as captured in global measuring instruments by a variety of institutions and organisations, do not show the expected or desired advancement. Rather there is evidence that freedom in societies and freedom of the press deteriorate.

Ambitious goals of freedom to express one’s own identity and opinion at the global public sphere on an equal basis and free from fear of retaliation or misuse evaporate for many,

such as those subjected to hate speech, those persecuted by autocratic authorities and the great majority of citizens whose personal data become de facto ownership of private companies.

Misinformation, spread not only by politically extreme groups but also by “normal”, mainstream parties in the (desperate or calculated) attempt to influence voters, can undermine the quality and freedom of global debate. Information conflict thus becomes even more an object of state rivalry and diplomacy, but also the tool for the erosion of citizenship as the utmost form of participation in the commons. These phenomena are coupled with the fact that even values once considered unquestionable, such as the value of independent journalism, the value of human rights such as privacy and dignity, are being challenged.

The technological capabilities allowed the world over to express and share information and opinions, to connect and form alliances. However, they have also enabled the spread of misinformation, have been undermining the human right to privacy on digital communication channels, subjected vulnerable groups to more vulnerability, and provided for economic models putting at stake the fundamental pillars of democracy. Within this context, policies governing the fate of users’ data, citizens’ freedoms and the integrity of content have fallen short of helping pave the path to the desired communication environment. Regulatory responses capturing communication and information have oscillated between forms of a ‘knee-jerk’ reaction to resist any attempt to provide for the normative standards of content and a tendency to securitise communication as a matter of national security.

Importantly, critics argue that even where governance has allowed for more democratic processes in raising concerns and suggesting solutions, the gaps in connecting the dots are glaring. If governance refers to the role of ideas and principles, the role of actors and the processes of negotiation and solution, it is urgent to return, on the one hand, to the basic and fundamental rights questions and take stock of the achievements of hitherto frameworks. On the other hand, it seems crucial to interrogate what futures exactly are current policy frameworks shaping, especially in relation to a politics of care for young citizens and hence the future generations?

After having addressed global internet governance as a diplomacy issue at its first edition held in Paris in 2017, how to overcome inequalities in internet governance at the second edition held in Cardiff in 2018, and the role of Europe in the global governance of the internet at its third edition held in Salerno in 2019, this year’s GIG-ARTS conference turns its attention to the governance of online information, to address the relation of citizens to the quality of content online as an often neglected area of regulation and governance of the internet. In that respect, the conference continues the conversation on internet governance turning its attention from institutions and structural factors to the role of content and misinformation as an object of governance, and to internet users as forces of change. GIG-ARTS is inviting you to this conversation to help shape the debate of what kinds of futures might be desirable and envisioned in the process of internet governance, who and which actors might be most suitable to help shape such governance goals and under which conditions might these be achieved.

Hence, in addition to general internet governance issues and topics, submissions are particularly welcome on the following possible areas of investigation:

- The governance of fundamental freedoms online between global platforms, conflicts of jurisdictions and extraterritorial legislation
- The role of European and global institutions in shaping the conditions of free expression online
- Responsibility and liability of platforms and other intermediaries in content regulation
- Restrictive regulation and the securitization of content
- Privacy, misinformation, democracy: challenges to internet governance
- Structural role of individual targeting, behavioural advertising and other economic models of online platforms on the reshaping of fundamental freedoms and democracy
- From nudging to manipulation: consequences on autonomy and human dignity
- Successive copyright reforms and their impact on freedom of expression, freedom of the press and democracy
- Changes in and challenges to journalism practice through intentional misinformation
- Governance from below: how practices and principles by civil society aim to shape the conditions of technology for the advancement of democracies and human well-being
- Youth and access to information; news and misinformation in the online world; the purpose of thinking towards the future

Submission Information and Publication Opportunities

Authors are invited to submit their extended abstracts (no longer than 500 words), describing their research question(s), theoretical framework, approach and methodology, expected findings or empirical outcome. Submitted abstracts will be evaluated through a peer-review process.

Abstracts and authors' information should be submitted through the EasyChair conference management system at:

<https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=gigarts2020>

Authors of selected submissions will have the opportunity to submit their full manuscript for publication.

Key dates

Deadline for abstract submissions: 9 February 2020

Notification to authors: 19 March 2020

Programme publication: 9 April 2020

Conference dates: 7 & 8 May 2020

GIG-ARTS 2020 Co-Chairs

Meryem Marzouki (LIP6, CNRS & Sorbonne Université, France)

Katharine Sarikakis (Media Governance and Industries Research Lab & Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence FreuDE, University of Vienna, Austria)

GIG-ARTS 2020 Scientific Programme Committee

Francesco Amoretti (University of Salerno, Italy)
Wolfgang Benedek (University of Graz, Austria)
Eric Brousseau (Université Paris Dauphine, France)
Andrea Calderaro (Cardiff University, United Kingdom)
Jean-Marie Chenou (Universidad de los Andes, Colombia)
Loreto Corredoira y Alfonso (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain)
Wolfgang Hofkirchner (The Institute for a Global Sustainable Information Society, Austria)
Matthias C. Kettemann (Leibniz Institute for Media Research | Hans-Bredow-Institut, Germany)
Joanna Kulesza (University of Lodz, Poland)
Nanette S. Levinson (American University Washington DC, USA)
Ursula Maier-Rabler (University of Salzburg, Austria)
Robin E. Mansell (London School of Economics, United Kingdom)
Meryem Marzouki (CNRS and Sorbonne Université, France)
Trisha Meyer (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium)
Michèle Rioux (Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada)
Mauro Santaniello (University of Salerno, Italy)
Katharine Sarikakis (University of Vienna, Austria)
Yves Schemeil (Sciences Po Grenoble, France)
Ingrid Schneider (University of Hamburg, Germany)
Jan Aart Scholte (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

Venue

The conference will be held at the Concordia Press Club, in the heart of Vienna (<https://concordia.at/>).

Conference Registration and Fees

Registration fees are 100€ for regular participants and 50€ for students showing proof of status. The conference fees include a participant kit as well as coffee breaks and meals.

GIG-ARTS 2020 Communication Details

- Website: events.gig-arts.eu
- Email for information: events@gig-arts.eu
- Submissions: <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=gigarts2020>
- Twitter: @GigArtsEU - Hashtag: #GIGARTS20
- Mailing list for updates: <http://tinyurl.com/yc7rvxm4>