Report LACIGF 13

Session title: A new cycle for LACIGF: opportunities for community participation and the impact of Internet policies in our region + CIERRE

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Session summary:

On September 10, 2020, at 2 pm (Brasília time), the 6th session of LACIGF began, whose theme was "a new cycle for LACIGF: opportunities for community participation and the impact of Internet Policies on our region". The session was divided into two parts, initially, with a general explanation on the topic, followed by a discussion on the future of LACIGF, which was carried out within smaller working groups. The first part was moderated by Andrés Sastre and speakers Ernesto Majó, Miguel Ignacio Estrada, and Lia Hernandez. The purpose of the panel was to question what were the expectations for the future of the Internet in Latin America and to reflect on the participation of the community in this process.

However, to understand the present and make future projections, it is necessary to understand the past. With this in mind, the first speaker, Ernesto Majó, presented the path taken by LACIGF over the years. The program now has a Steering Committee, composed of 12 people, and a Secretariat, which together organize the agendas of annual events and promote social inclusion through fellowship programs. However, even with the improvements experienced in recent years, the realities are made from ruptures, and the speaker pointed out that LACIGF needs changes. It is essential to think of a more attractive and transparent format, in which the participation of different stakeholders is balanced and can generate tangible results that transcend the program.

The second speaker, Miguel Ignacio Estrada, presented worksheets that demonstrate the main innovations brought by "LACIGF 2.0". In the model, the community would select themes and set up a multistakeholder committee itself, responsible for proposing workshops. All of this would generate an annual meeting, where documents, success stories, papers, and a high-level meeting could be presented. The format would be similar to that of the IGF. The main intention of this would be to generate greater social engagement in order to reach society as a whole. From a more plural and participatory LACIGF, it would be possible to achieve the effective development of public policies. The idea, too, would be to have the event linked to other forums in the world, in order to create a global governance network.

Finally, the third speaker, Lia Hernandez, spoke about the need to empower the population. For the panelist, the paradigm shift can only happen if the community takes the lead and recognizes its importance within Internet events. The work is extensive but necessary. It is not possible to change the current format of LACIGF without effective multistakeholder action, and, as it stands now, the event is not sustainable.

Then, the second part of the session began, with the division of participants into three working groups, facilitated by Ernesto Majó, Lia Hernández, and María Paz Canales.

The discussion of group 1, moderated by Ernesto Majó, was initially guided by the question of how LACIGF should understand the diversity criteria to contemplate its processes, considering that our region is huge and has multiple realities. In this sense, the importance of implementing subjective criteria of diversity was highlighted, considering that in the same sector different perspectives coexist. Therefore, other inclusion criteria should be added, in addition to the existing ones. In addition, attention was drawn to the possibility of greater integration of the discussions of local IGFs at the regional level, as these are spaces that generally have no concrete role within the LACIGF agenda, and which have a lot to contribute. Then, he questioned about the structuring of intersectional groups. At this point, it has been suggested that the emergence of these groups be integrated with the needs of the community, where LACIGF offers minimal operating guidelines to moderate participation, but the community is responsible for coordinating the group horizontally. In the last moment, when the moderator asked about new ideas, some were brought up: the possibility that LACIGF will host or enhance a digital inclusion project to connect the next millions in the region; greater incorporation of academia, an actor who can build many bridges with communities; and, finally, the formalization of a link between local spaces in each country and the regional process.

In turn, group 2 started with questions posed by the facilitator, Lia Hernández, among them: how should LACIGF deal with diversity issues in the future? Which criteria should be maintained and which should be changed? How should the working groups be organized and what would be the themes? How many working groups should there be? She also addressed the issue of targeting fellowships; gender and region equity should be sought. Christian Ofla, from ISOC, spoke of how we can influence and improve groups. Roberto Zambrana, from ISOC Chapter Bolivia, said that the channels and conditions for participation must be clear. In addition, there must be the possibility of bringing people's own experiences in the dialogue with other countries, something that is also missing from the IGF. The options for group discussions are great, but there are other formats that can also make the process more dynamic and participatory.

Esther Lidia Perez Coello, from Cuba, shared the experience of her country's national governance forum and addressed the problem of the hegemony of large telephone and software companies, which affect the impact of the role of governance forums - something that is not understood as only technical, but multisectorial, with the participation of representatives from fields such as journalism.

Alfredo Velazco spoke of the importance of including people with disabilities and indigenous people in this discussion. It would also be good if remote participation was encouraged and improved - even though this problem is global and also occurs at the IGF. He praised the composition of the board of directors and the tables of debate.

Group 3, whose activities were facilitated by María Paz Canales, had English as their main language. Like the other groups, this one was made up mostly of members from the Caribbean subregion, discussing the three main issues proposed for the debate. Throughout the exhibitions, Jacqueline Morris highlighted how issues related to diversity at LACIGF are established, given that there is a quantitative perspective in relation to it, but there is a lack of diversity among those who participate as exhibitors. They also pointed out that there is a lack of language diversity, which leads to an underrepresentation of the Caribbean region, due to the fact that it is a region with great linguistic diversity. In addition, they added the need to include people with disabilities and warned about the dangers of inclusion criteria, if they do not cover all possible scenarios. All the participants who spoke up converged their speeches to the differences existing within the Caribbean region itself. In addition, they pointed out the importance of including young people in

the debates, highlighting the positive outcome of the youth forum held in the Caribbean with the Caribbean forum on Internet Governance. Other points converging between the speeches dealt with the difficulty that the group participants felt in connecting with LACIGF, as well as the positive points of adopting intersectional work models, highlighting the quality of the professionals of the region.

Finally, after reviewing each group's discussion and concluding the session, the Forum closed and the closure was led by Oscar Robles. During his speech, Oscar highlighted the challenge imposed by the pandemic scenario of COVID-19, considering that this context prevented the event from being held in person and it was the first time that LACIGF happened completely online. Despite the challenges, he added that this format allowed for greater democratization in participation.

In addition, Robles pointed to the importance of young people and sectors interested in maintaining a permanent discussion on Internet Governance. Throughout his speech, he brought some statistical data, highlighting the gender parity during the event days, the participation of young people, as well as the diversity of countries that were present during the two days of the forum.

Oscar highlighted the evolution of LACIGF, showing that it is no longer a preparatory event for the IGF Global, but a space for discussion on the issues related to Latin America and the Caribbean. Oscar thanked the organizations that made the event possible, as well as the program committee and the LACIGF secretariat.

He ended his speech by expressing the need to maintain efforts to promote an open Internet, in view of it being a tool for human rights and calling on everyone to make a commitment to facilitate dialogue and inclusion with the objective to make the right decisions.

Outputs and other relevant links:

Complete part 1 + group wrap up: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ai25cFR8-OY&t=2903s
Closing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkb1gLH1Kfs