



9th GIG-ARTS Conference

26-27 May 2025 Salerno

The Rise of Digital Sovereignty: Ambiguities and Challenges

Call for Papers Deadline: 31 January 2025

GIG-ARTS

The European Multidisciplinary Conference on Global Internet Governance Actors, Regulations, Transactions and Strategies (GIG-ARTS) gathers scholars and practitioners in an annual conference to debate the latest research on governing the global internet. Each conference highlights a main theme while also welcoming contributions on other aspects of global internet governance.

Earlier GIG-ARTS meetings have addressed themes such as “Global Internet Governance as a Diplomacy Issue” (Paris, 2017), “Overcoming Inequalities in Internet Governance” (Cardiff, 2018), “Europe as a Global Player in Internet Governance” (Salerno, 2019), “Online Information Governance” (Vienna, 2021), “Global Internet Governance and International Human Rights” (Nicosia, 2022), and “The Governance of Cybersecurity: Resilience, Human Rights and Democracy” (Padua, 2023), “Thirty Years of Multistakeholderism in Internet Governance: Assessments and Prospects” (The Hague 2024).

GIG-ARTS 2025

The Ninth GIG-ARTS Conference, to be held at the University of Salerno on 26-27 May 2025, takes as its main theme “The Rise of Digital Sovereignty: Ambiguities and Challenges.”

The concept of digital sovereignty has gained increasing attention and importance in recent years, driven by a complex array of political and economic motivations, geopolitical tensions, and technological developments. The idea of state sovereignty, once largely limited to territorial boundaries, is now being reimagined and redefined within the context of the digital age. National governments and non-state actors alike are struggling with the need to exert control over data, digital infrastructures, and technological ecosystems, while simultaneously navigating the challenges posed by the global nature of the internet and the influence of digital corporations.

The increasing centrality of digital infrastructure in economic development, national security, and societal well-being has led many governments to reassess their role in regulating and controlling digital networks. This reassessment has been especially prominent in the face of growing reliance on foreign technology providers, concerns over data privacy, and disruptions of global supply chains. Nations like China, Russia, and the European Union have developed policies aimed at asserting their digital sovereignty, each motivated by distinct yet interrelated factors, including national security, economic protectionism, and the safeguarding of fundamental rights. Digital sovereignty is thus positioned as both a response to external vulnerabilities and an assertion of strategic autonomy in an increasingly digital world. Also in the United States of America, the traditional model of internet governance based on private sector leadership, business self-regulation, and global economic competition has been called into question by recent policy initiatives, such as the Huawei ban, restrictions on Chinese apps, the CLOUD Act, and the Chips and Science Act.

Furthermore, many digital sovereignty conceptualizations go beyond a state-centric framework. One prominent perspective focuses on digital sovereignty from a grassroots point of view, which emphasizes the capacity of local communities, indigenous groups, civil society, and individuals to control their digital futures. These perspectives advocate for decentralized and community-driven approaches to digital governance, challenging both state and corporate dominance. Additionally, there are emerging discussions around corporate digital sovereignty as the tech giants' ability to become autonomous in their productive cycle (managing their own cables, data servers, storage farms etc.), or more broadly their ability to operate across borders, shaping global digital ecosystems and influencing governance decisions in ways that rival or even surpass state authorities. Finally, there are interpretations of digital sovereignty in terms of the sovereignty of cyberspace in itself, meant as self-governance by native digital institutions representing the so-called Internet Community.

The pursuit of digital sovereignty generates significant tensions, particularly between the desire for national control and the need for international and multistakeholder cooperation, and despite its growing prominence, digital sovereignty remains a deeply contested concept.

As a result, digital sovereignty is marked by several ambiguities and contradictions, which reflect the complexity of regulating the digital world. One prominent contradiction lies in the interplay between national autonomy and the extraterritorial projection of power. While governments seek to assert control over their digital landscapes, they also engage in actions that extend their influence beyond national borders, such as imposing data localization rules that have far-reaching implications for international businesses, or enacting digital policies that affect global internet governance. Additionally, digital sovereignty presents a paradox between constitutionalism and authoritarianism. On the one hand, some countries advocate for digital sovereignty as a necessary condition to constitutionalize the digital realm, ensuring that fundamental rights such as privacy and freedom of expression are upheld. On the other hand, the same concept can be used to justify authoritarian practices, such as state censorship, surveillance, and the restriction of access to information.

This conference aims to foster a critical dialogue on the rise of digital sovereignty, addressing its motivations, ambiguities, and contradictions. We invite papers that provide both theoretical insights and empirical analyses, drawing from a wide range of disciplines, including political science, law, economics, communication, science and technology studies. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in discussions that explore the future of digital sovereignty and its role in shaping the global digital order.

Therefore, the Ninth GIG-ARTS Conference especially welcomes papers that address the sorts of questions listed below. We aim to compile a selection of contributions in a journal special issue and/or an edited volume.

- Defining digital sovereignty: Conceptual frameworks and theories
- Comparative perspectives on digital sovereignty
- The economy of digital sovereignty: Protectionism vs. global digital integration
- The geopolitics of digital sovereignty
- Digital sovereignty and digital constitutionalism
- Digital sovereignty and national security
- Motivations and implications of data localization, network territorialization, and platform regulation
- Digital sovereignty and digital colonialism, authoritarianism, and imperialism
- The role of international organizations (WTO, ITU, etc.) in digital sovereignty
- Tech standardization and sovereignty: Competing global norms
- Global digital supply chains and strategic autonomy
- Cybersecurity, weaponization, and digital sovereignty
- Digital sovereignty and emerging technologies
- Digital sovereignty and environmental issues
- Digital sovereignty and Internet fragmentation

As always, alongside the main theme, the GIG-ARTS conference also welcomes papers on other aspects of internet governance.

Submission information

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 <https://conftool2025.gig-arts.eu/>

Key dates

- Deadline for abstract submissions: 31 January 2025
- Notification to authors: 1 April 2025
- Deadline for author registration (at least one author must register for a selected presentation to appear on the programme): 14 April 2025
- Programme publication: 20 April 2025
- Registration deadline: 15 May 2025
- Conference dates: 26-27 May 2025

Co-Sponsors

Internet & Communication Policy Center (ICPC)
<https://www.internetpolicyresearch.eu/>

Salerno Winter School on Internet Governance (SWING)
<https://www.internetpolicyresearch.eu/swing-2025>

Digital Constitutionalism Network (DCN)
<https://digitalconstitutionalism.org>

Italian Ministry of University and Research
Grant PRIN 2022KTTSBC - CUP Master D53D23007300006
Digital Sovereignty in Comparative Perspective: State Authority, Corporate Power and Fundamental Rights in Cyberspace

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Venue

GIG-ARTS 2025 will be held at the University of Salerno, Campus of Fisciano.

Conference Registration and Fees

Registration fees for the Ninth GIG-ARTS Conference are 120€ for regular participants and 60€ for students showing proof of status. Conference fees (non-refundable) cover a participant kit as well as coffee breaks, lunches, and reception. Registration deadline is 15 May 2025.

Communication Channels

- Website: www.gig-arts.eu
- Email for information: events@gig-arts.eu
- Submissions: <https://conftool2025.gig-arts.eu/>
- X/Twitter: @GigArtsEU - Hashtag: #GIGARTS25
- Mailing list for updates: https://gig-arts.eu/mailman/listinfo/maillinglist_gig-arts.eu