



GLOBAL NETWORK OF INTERNET AND SOCIETY RESEARCH CENTERS

# 2024 NoC Annual Meeting Outcomes & Summary

OCTOBER 17 & 18, 2024

BANGKOK, THAILAND

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<p>The 2024 Network of Centers (NoC) Annual Meeting in Bangkok, hosted in collaboration with the Digital Asia Hub Thailand, gathered a diverse group of thought leaders from academia, government representatives from different countries, private sector representatives, and civil society to address pressing issues surrounding artificial intelligence (AI) and digital transformation. Through a mix of presentations, panels, roundtables, and discussions, participants emphasized the need for unified strategies to tackle challenges and harness opportunities presented by the Internet, AI, and emerging technologies (e.g., quantum).</p>
<b>DAY 1</b>	<p><b>Exploring the Big Picture</b></p> <p>The day began with an opening keynote on the global landscape where emerging AI technologies intersect with complex societal challenges, providing context on recent transformations driven by AI's interaction with and significance in society. Participants delved into the importance of international collaboration to shape inclusive and innovative AI tools, with special emphasis on enhancing collaboration among Majority World nations, where shared challenges and opportunities in AI adoption could benefit from collective solutions and mutual support.</p> <p>Academia's role in maintaining ethical and accountable AI practices was underscored, highlighting its potential to lead independent research that aligns the implementation of AI with public interest and people's well-being. Connectivity challenges for some participants underscored the need for better infrastructure to ensure accessible and effective remote engagement. Regional updates provided a backdrop for exploring localized approaches to digital governance. The introduction of the HEMISPHERES initiative proposed a new academic partnership between EU and Latin American institutions to share knowledge and shape technology policy. Critical reflections were made about the framing of AI and humanity, encouraging us to move away from language that implies that this technology unilaterally impacts society.</p>
<b>DAY 2</b>	<p><b>Discussing Practices</b></p> <p>The second day centered on practical strategies for AI governance and technology's interaction with society. It began with insights into effective community engagement practices, focusing on how public, non-moderated forums, such as mailing lists, can foster open dialogue and knowledge-sharing among stakeholders. Participants noted diverse methodologies Centers implemented to interact with various actors, ranging from constructive criticism to supporting companies and governments in specific projects, emphasizing transparency and clarity in objectives for harmonious collaboration. Thailand's AI Governance Center, developed with support from the Electronic Transactions Development Agency (EDTA), served as a case study in local governance.</p> <p>People-centered AI development was further explored, highlighting the roles of media, civil society, and the research community in ensuring public participation. Inclusive participation was deemed essential, particularly involving underrepresented groups, to enhance society's interaction with AI.</p>



KEY INSIGHTS

The NoC Annual Meeting 2024 was a convergence point for innovative ideas and cross-regional insights, reinforcing a need for ethical, people-centered, and sustainable AI governance. Below are the key insights from the meeting:

- **Global Cooperation:** Collaborative efforts are essential for creating inclusive and forward-thinking AI solutions, especially among Majority World regions facing shared challenges and opportunities in AI adoption.
- **Governance Structures:** Diverse governance frameworks are necessary to address specific cultural, legal, and societal factors, ensuring responsible AI development and ethical deployment.
- **People-Centered Design and Development:** AI development must prioritize human rights and democratic principles. Conversations explored the roles of media, civil society, and research institutions in fostering active public participation in digital governance. Inclusive participation and broad stakeholder engagement are crucial for the design and development of AI and its surrounding strategies, implementation, and governance. It should especially involve underrepresented groups such as women, indigenous populations, and youth, whose voices are essential to shaping an inclusive AI environment.
- **AI and Sustainability:** As technology advances, climate adaptation and mitigation strategies must evolve to address AI's environmental impact, emphasizing the need for sustainable practices in AI development.
- **Embracing Diversity in Digital Transformation:** In order to foster North-South and South-South collaborations, embracing and understanding the diversity of digital transformation across contexts is necessary particularly, as we cooperate in making visible alternative narratives that could counter-balance the hegemonic discourse of a single mode of digitization.



FUTURE PROPOSALS

- **Roadmap Progress and Continuation:** The roadmap established in 2024 has guided the network’s work, and its continued implementation is essential. As new needs arise, the roadmap should evolve, emphasizing deeper engagement strategies to maintain relevance.
- **Communications:** While substantial work is underway, it’s crucial to share these achievements strategically with broader audiences. Increasing communication channels, crafting targeted messaging, and enhancing digital presence — aligned with the website update — will amplify NoC’s impact.
- **Incubating Centers and Hubs, and Connecting with Funders:** There is an evident need to support Centers facing serious resources and other challenges, as well as the creation of regional hubs and other new centers. Strengthening the “buddy system” to support new centers and hubs with guidance from established ones is crucial. The emergence of new centers aligned with national agendas is anticipated in the coming months.
- **Enhancing Knowledge Exchange on AI Governance:** This highly relevant topic requires diverse ideas and perspectives. The Network, through its centers, is engaged in governance projects across Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, MENA, and the United States. Sharing these experiences is essential to participating in global governance discussions and supporting related initiatives. NoC Centers and Secretariat should increase inclusion and diversity in this dialogue, continuing collaboration as the ones started with African colleagues. Inclusion on AI governance should become a priority for the Network, while developing an agenda that considers the role of AI centralization, access, and social interaction.
- **Initiating Agendas on Emerging Technologies like Quantum Computing and Neurotec:** There is a growing need to expand agendas to cover emerging technologies, starting with quantum computing, which holds critical implications for the future. Helping centers to understand and develop agendas related to these technologies should become a priority.
- **Joint Research Initiatives:** Centers are eager to collaborate on joint research efforts and support in these areas. The Secretariat is expected to lead these efforts, coordinating regional or global research projects.
- **Supporting Work with International Organizations and Facilitating Access to Knowledge:** Strengthening collaborations with international organizations and easing access to valuable knowledge are essential steps in enhancing NoC’s influence and capacity-building initiatives globally. This would also be essential for these entities to overcome geo-political complexities.