



WEBINAR SERIES ON

# DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND DEMOCRACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Join us every Monday from  
21 September to 2 November 2020

MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY PROGRAMME & INDONESIA STUDIES PROGRAMME

## About the Webinar Series

The rapid expansion of digital technologies is making a significant impact on the nature of political participation and governance across Southeast Asia. From the vastly amplified scope of political discussion online, to the rise of social media-driven protest movements, to cyber-propaganda and manipulation of information flows, to new technologies of state surveillance and new technologies of circumventing state controls, to novel modes of political education and identification — few aspects of political life remain unaffected by the increasing use of digital technologies for various political purposes. Digitised political practices, and the socio-technological infrastructures that enable them, create new opportunities but also pose new challenges to the state of democracy in Southeast Asia. This webinar series examines the role of digital technologies in contemporary political processes across countries in Southeast Asia, and provides insights into how government and civil society can shape present-day political uses of digital technology which may promote or hamper an inclusive “Democracy 4.0”.

## PROGRAMME

### WEBINAR 1

# Social Media and Democracy: A Complicated Relationship

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Monday, 21 September 2020

GMT 8.00am – 9.30am (Singapore, 3.00pm – 4.30pm)

For many years, social media such as Facebook and Twitter were hailed as effective tools to hold powerholders accountable and strengthen democracy. However, recent trends in political uses of social media indicate that the relationship between social media and democracy has become an ambivalent one. While democratic efforts continue to be channelled effectively through social media, social media's popularity and affordances are also exploited in ways that destabilise or erode democracy's functioning. This webinar discusses the complicated relationship between social media and democracy, at different levels of the political process, in various Southeast Asian settings. Joining the webinar discussion will be **Professor Merlyna Lim** (Carleton University) who will shed light on "Networked Spaces of Hope and Despair: Social Media and Grassroots Politics

in Southeast Asia" (via recorded video), **Dr Janjira Sombatpoonsiri** (Chulalongkorn University) who will talk about "Understanding the Triad of Social Media, Polarisation and Democratic Erosion/Collapse" in the case of Thailand, and **Dr Clarissa Lee Ai Ling** (Sunway University) who will talk about "When Race Becomes the Bait, or the Algorithms of Divide and Conquer in Malaysia's Politics".

This first webinar in the series will begin with Welcoming Remarks by **Dr Benjamin Loh** (Coordinator of the Regional Social and Cultural Studies programme, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute) and Opening Remarks by **Dr Yatun Sastramidjaja** (Visiting Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, and convenor of this webinar series).

### SPEAKERS:



**Professor Merlyna Lim**  
Canada Research Chair in Digital Media  
and Global Network Society  
Carleton University



**Dr Clarissa Lee Ai Ling**  
Research Fellow  
Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia  
Sunway University



**Dr Janjira Sombatpoonsiri**  
Researcher, Institute of Asian Studies,  
Chulalongkorn University  
Associate, German Institute of Global  
and Area Studies

### WELCOMING REMARKS:



**Dr Benjamin Loh**  
Senior Fellow  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

### MODERATOR:



**Dr Yatun Sastramidjaja**  
Visiting Fellow  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

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WEBINAR 2

## Old Politics, New Technologies: Social Media in the Democratic Process

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Monday, 28 September 2020

GMT 8.00am – 9.30am (Singapore, 3.00pm – 4.30pm)

In contemporary democracies social media may not only encourage political change; they can also be utilised to bolster political establishments and entrenched political relations, and thus to sustain a status quo. Furthermore, as political elites and other political stakeholders turn to social media to extend their influence, especially in times of heightened political competition such as elections, this often has the effect of exacerbating existing conflicts in society. This webinar discusses various ways in which digital technologies can be opportunities or weapons in institutional politics, and the transformative or detrimental effects this may have on the democratic

process. The webinar features **Dr Pauline Pooi Yin Leong** (Sunway University) who will speak on “Mediatisation of Malaysian Politics: The Impact of Digital Media on the Democratic Process”, **Mr Pradipa P. Rasidi** (University of Indonesia) will discuss “Manufacturing Conversation, Engaging Excitement: Political Buzzing and Fake Account Operations in Indonesia”, and **Dr Quinton Temby** (ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute) will examine “Social Media and Polarisation in Southeast Asia” from a comparative perspective. The webinar discussion is moderated by **Dr Benjamin Loh** (ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute).

SPEAKERS:



**Dr Pauline Pooi Yin Leong**  
Associate Professor in Political  
Communication  
Sunway University



**Mr Pradipa P. Rasidi**  
Research Assistant Digital Anthropology,  
University of Amsterdam



**Dr Quinton Temby**  
Visiting Fellow  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

MODERATOR:



**Dr Benjamin Loh**  
Senior Fellow  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

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WEBINAR 3

## Resistive Identity and Radical Ideology Claims in Cyberspace

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Monday, 5 October 2020

GMT 8.00am – 9.30am (Singapore, 3.00pm – 4.30pm)

Social media have become vital arenas for competing political identities and ideologies. For minority groups, digital platforms may offer a space for empowerment and positive resistance. For other groups that are excluded or feel alienated from the nation-state's dominant identity, they may provide channels to more radical or extremist alternatives. This webinar examines various cases in which differences of race, ideology and religion may become organising principles in resistive identity and radical ideology claims in cyberspace. The webinar discussion is joined by **Dr Asha Rathina Pandi** (National University of Singapore) who will discuss

“Race, Resistance and Digital Culture in Malaysia”, **Mr Ibnu Nadzir** (LIPI) will speak on “Digital Resistance and Fragmented Citizenship: Experiences of Indonesian Exiles”, **Mr Rheinhardt Sirait** (University of Western Australia) will discuss “Making Islam Cool Again: Online Branding of the Pemuda Hijrah Movement, Indonesia”, and **Ms Nur Aziemah Azman** (S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies) will examine “Online Extremism and Propaganda: IS in Southeast Asia”. The moderator of this webinar is **Dr Norshahril Saat** (ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute).

SPEAKERS:



**Dr Asha Rathina Pandi**

Lecturer in Communications and New Media  
National University of Singapore



**Mr Ibnu Nadzir**

Research Centre for Society and Culture  
Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI)



**Mr Rheinhardt Sirait**

PhD Fellow  
University of Western Australia



**Ms Nur Aziemah Azman**

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

MODERATOR:



**Dr Norshahril Saat**

Senior Fellow  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

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WEBINAR 4

## Cyber-controls and Censorship: The End of Democratic Space Online?

Monday, 12 October 2020

GMT 8.00am – 9.30am (Singapore, 3.00pm – 4.30pm)

In recent years, the popular belief that the Internet is an inherently liberating space for free political expression and participation has been tempered by encroaching government control, censorship and surveillance of online political communications. Southeast Asia's 'netizens', especially activists and dissidents, can risk legal persecution or other repercussions for critical views posted online, and the Internet appears to have become an increasingly undemocratic space. This webinar discusses various manifestations of cyber-controls and online censorship in Southeast Asia, their potentially stifling effects on open political debates online, and how netizens respond and circumvent such controls. The webinar discussion is joined by **Mr Damar Juniarto**

(Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network) who will speak on "Internet Shutdown in Indonesia: The New Normal Policy to Censor Information Online?", **Mr Arnoud Zwemmer** (University of Amsterdam) will discuss "The Unevenness of Internet Controls in Malaysia", **Mr Arthit Suriyawongkul** (Foundation for Internet and Civic Culture; Thai Netizen Network) will speak on "Evolving Cyber Tactics against Dissidents in Thailand, from Web 1.0 to Encrypted Web", and **Mr Dien Nguyen An Luong** (ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute) will speak on "Online Censorship and Circumvention in Vietnam". **Dr Benjamin Loh** (ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute) is the moderator of this webinar.

SPEAKERS:



**Mr Damar Juniarto**  
Executive Director  
Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression  
Network



**Mr Arnoud Zwemmer**  
PhD Fellow  
University of Amsterdam



**Mr Arthit Suriyawongkul**  
Co-founder, Foundation for Internet and  
Civic Culture;  
Coordinator, Thai Netizen Network  
PhD Fellow, Trinity College Dublin



**Mr Dien Nguyen An Luong**  
Visiting Fellow  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

MODERATOR:



**Dr Benjamin Loh**  
Senior Fellow  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

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WEBINAR 5

## Contested Hegemonies and Changing Struggles in Cyberspace

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Monday, 19 October 2020

GMT 8.00am – 9.30am (Singapore, 3.00pm – 4.30pm)

Cyberspace provides a new battle arena both for state propaganda and for civil society struggles against corruption and authoritarianism. In taking these efforts online, both the state and civil society actors need to adapt their strategies to the affordances of social media to maximise the impact, which can change the very nature of the struggle. This webinar examines how state and civil society interactions in cyberspace affect various ongoing democracy and anti-corruption struggles in Southeast Asia. The webinar features **Ms Thieu-Dang Nguyen** (University of Aberdeen) who will

present on “State-Society Interaction in Cyberspace in the Formosa Crisis: A Counter-Hegemonic Project?”, **Mr Muhammad Zamzam Fauzanafi** (Leiden University; Gadjah Mada University) will talk about “Digital Affective Citizenship and Anti-Corruption Movement in Indonesia: A Provincial Case”, and **Ms Kieu Ngoc Hoang** (University of Amsterdam) will discuss “Everyday State Propaganda and Activists’ Strategic Responses on Social Media in Vietnam”. **Dr Yatun Sastramidjaja** (ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute) is the moderator of this webinar.

SPEAKERS:

**Ms Thieu-Dang Nguyen**  
PhD Fellow  
University of Aberdeen



**Mr Muhammad Zamzam Fauzanafi**  
Lecturer Visual and Digital Media Anthropology  
Gadjah Mada University;  
PhD Fellow  
Leiden University



**Ms Kieu Ngoc Hoang**  
MSc Candidate Media Studies  
University of Amsterdam

MODERATOR:



**Dr Yatun Sastramidjaja**  
Visiting Fellow  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

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WEBINAR 6

## Confronting Online Manipulation and Disinformation

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Monday, 26 October 2020

GMT 8.00am – 9.30am (Singapore, 3.00pm – 4.30pm)

Fake news and other forms of online disinformation are a major concern for governments and civil society alike for its capacity to disrupt information flows in the public spheres and erode public trust. However, official counter-policies are often biased towards certain forms of fake news and particular groups held responsible, while those fabricating and disseminating false information may also include state actors and their supporters. This webinar examines various recent cases of online disinformation and civilian counter-efforts in Indonesia, which show that the power to manipulate public opinion online, and the perpetrators and targets of such online disinformation, are contingent on changing political circumstances. The webinar will be joined by **Dr Amalinda Savirani** (Gadjah Mada University) and **Mr M. Hikari Ersada** (former member of Student Executive Body,

Gadjah Mada University) who will discuss “Dealing with Disinformation surrounding #GejayanMemanggil: The Yogya Student Movement 2019”, **Mr Roysepta Abimanyu** (former Advisor of the Executive Office of the President of the Republic of Indonesia) will talk about “Mapping Civilian Interventions in Countering Disinformation and Misinformation in Indonesia”, **Dr Wijayanto** (Diponegoro University; LP3ES), and **Dr Ismail Fahmi** (Islamic University of Indonesia, Yogyakarta; Drone Emprit) who speak on a very recent case of disinformation around the Covid-19 crisis: “Normalising the New Normal? Public Opinion Manipulation on Social Media to Support the New Normal Policy in Indonesia”. The webinar is moderated by **Dr Siwage Dharma Negara** (ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute).

SPEAKERS:



**Dr Amalinda Savirani**  
Head of Department of Politics and Government  
Gadjah Mada University



**Mr Roysepta Abimanyu**  
General Manager Daksi Ada Data;  
former Advisor of the Executive Office of the President of the Republic of Indonesia



**Dr Wija Wijayanto**  
Lecturer in Politics and Government  
Diponegoro University;  
Director, Centre for Media and Democracy (LP3ES)



**Dr Ismail Fahmi**  
Lecturer in Information Technology  
Islamic University of Indonesia;  
Founding Director, Drone Emprit

MODERATOR:



**Dr Siwage Dharma Negara**  
Senior Fellow  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

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WEBINAR 7

## Between Memes and Mobilisation: Youth, Digital Literacy, and the Evolution of Political Expression and Action

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Monday, 2 November 2020

GMT 8.00am – 9.30am (Singapore, 3.00pm – 4.30pm)

Despite the various challenges and threats that political uses or abuses of digital technologies may pose to the democratic process, the younger generation of “digital natives” in Southeast Asia offers hope for digitised politics to evolve into more transformative and ultimately democratic directions. Attuned to the creative possibilities of digital political communications, and aware of the potential pitfalls of politics online, Southeast Asia’s youth are reinventing democratic politics through digital media. And while education in digital literacy is crucial to guide the digital energies of youth in positive ways, it is also youth’s innate digital literacy that may guide the democratisation processes in Southeast Asia. This webinar examines the role of

youth in the evolution of digital political communications. **Ms Lestari Saraswati Hapsoro** (Lund University) will speak on “Meme-ing ‘Democracy’: Conveyance of Political Dissent through Contemporary Public Discourse among Indonesian Youth”. **Dr Fiona Suwana** (University of South Australia) will talk about “Indonesian Young People and Digital Media Literacy for Digital Activism”. **Dr Yatun Sastramidjaja** (ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute) will conclude with a comparative analysis of “Digital Youth and Evolving Politics of Online Expression in Southeast Asia”. This webinar is moderated by **Dr Benjamin Loh** (ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute). Dr Yatun Sastramidjaja and Dr Benjamin Loh will also provide the Concluding Remarks to this webinar series.

SPEAKERS:



**Ms Lestari Saraswati Hapsoro**  
Senior Communications Manager, Sirclo



**Dr Fiona Suwana**  
Tutor and Researcher at the University of South Australia



**Dr Yatun Sastramidjaja**  
Visiting Fellow  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

MODERATOR:



**Dr Benjamin Loh**  
Senior Fellow  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

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