

Digital Media, Democracy, and Exclusion in Myanmar

Conveners:

Dr. Hilary Faxon, UC Berkeley

Myat The Thitsar, UMass Lowell / Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation

Panel Description:

Myanmar has become an archetypal case in the global debate over the emancipatory possibilities and repressive practices of digital connection. Social media both reflects and shapes Myanmar's contested democratic transition: internet access increased astronomically in the wake of telecoms privatization in 2014 and Facebook has become a key platform for politics, information and hate speech. This panel brings together scholars and scholar-activists working on the urgent topic of social media in Myanmar. We prioritize grounded perspectives that embed analysis of online practices in Myanmar's longer political and cultural histories, including for example the 'Burmanization' of ethnic minority languages or traditional modes of agricultural production and expertise.

We plan to include four presenters in this single session and have secured partial funding to cover registration and travel costs. Provisional titles, presenters and affiliations are below.

Empowering or Endangering Minorities? Facebook, language, and identity in Myanmar
Myat The Thitsar, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Social Media and Misinformation in the 2020 Myanmar Elections
Myat Thu, Myanmar Tech Accountability Network

Small Farmers, Big Tech: Reshaping agrarian commerce, knowledge and connection through Myanmar Facebook
Hilary Oliva Faxon, University of California, Berkeley

Hate Speech on Digital Streets
Win Win May, Phandeeayar

In addition to individual papers, we plan to use this panel as the basis of a co-authored book chapter that Hilary has been invited to submit to a volume on Social Media and Polarization in Southeast Asia, to be published by ISEAS press in 2022.