

(1) Title

Drones, Governance and Civil Society in Southeast Asia

(2) Convener

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(3) Chosen format

Single Panel

(4) Brief description of panel

Unmanned, camera-equipped drones are often associated with state surveillance of particular territories in Southeast Asia, whether in the South China Sea, for border security or suppression of protest movements. They are a cost-effective means of monitoring and surveillance. Unmanned drones are also increasingly used by civil society as they are affordable, require little knowledge to operate and the low probability of causing physical harm to humans (Floreano, Wood 2015). Drones create knowledge by taking aerial photographs of landscapes, events and places that are not easily captured in other ways. This panel invites contributors to address the opportunities and obstacles that drones present in Southeast Asia. Panellists are invited to reflect on the spaces and opportunities in which drones are used, how and why their use is regulated differently in various Southeast Asian countries, and what the political agendas are. In Thailand, for example, videographers have used drones to film violence against protesters (Viernes 2020). How are drones used in protest movements and state control? To what extent are they used in political campaigns?

Another area of interest is how drones are used in environmental conservation, such as ecosystem monitoring, wildlife research and management and ecotourism (López, Pázmány 2019). A case in point is Greenpeace using 300 drones to prompt action on conserving the environment in one of their videos¹. How are drones used for conservational purposes by conservationists in Southeast Asia? Drones are also employed in artwork and in film. Videographers have used them to capture beautiful images of cities or special places, they are used in films or are part of art installations that are uploaded and made available on public platforms such as YouTube. What aesthetic components of drone images can be identified? How are they used alongside other modes of artistic expression?

References:

- Floreano, Dario and Wood, Robert J. (2015) Science, technology and the future of small autonomous drones. *Nature* 512: 460-466.
- López, Jesús Jiménez and Margarita Mulero-Pázmány (2019) Drones for Conservation in Protected Areas: Present and Future. *Drones* 2019 3 (1): 10. <https://doi.org/10.3390/drones3010010>
- Viernes, Noah (2020) Drones, Cinema, and Protest in Thailand. In: Viernes (Noah) 2020, *The Aesthetics of Global Protest*, chapter 8. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

(5) single session

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJAJ5-WZnxl>