Doubel panel + laboratory proposal

EuroSEAS 2022, Paris, France

TechnoEnvironments

Digital technology enables invisible, physical and social infrastructures accumulating into TechnoEnviroments. These networks of artifacts, relations and human and non-human bodies and landscapes are increasingly becoming the core of life, work, culture and identity in Southeast Asia.

It is necessary to put these interweaving into a critical perspective by positioning the realities of the digital and technological world in a context of colliding socio-political, cultural and natural environments (Jurriens & Tapsell 2017). We are interested in the relationship between infrastructural materialities and contemporary socio-technical and natural environments in particular with respect to power relations, social imaginaries and methods to research such materialities. This critical approach contributes to the conceptualization of TechnoEnvironments constituted as hybrid spaces with consequences for social and political in- and exclusions, economic advantage and exploitation and the ecological relations between humans, non-humans and the world.
This double panel in combination with a laboratory investigates the effects of emerging TechnoEnvironments in Southeast Asia and the resulting methodological challenges.

We further aim to elaborate what a critical post-COVID and postcolonial theorizing of these social and technological spaces entails. Southeast Asia presents itself as a laboratory for technological futures. The panels in conjunction with the interactive laboratory seeks to investigate these interrelated thematic areas from anthropological, political science, and social-ecological perspectives. The goal of our interlinked sessions is to discuss new ways of conceptualizing TechnoEnvironments against the background of the discourse on sustainability as mutually constitutive processes or trajectories. Contributions on a conceptual basis and with a comparative approach as well as case studies from different Southeast Asian countries are most welcome. We invite contributions to the following questions:

1. **Panel 1: Social power relations in TechnoEnvironments** How do media and other technologies hide, normalise, expose or veil power relations in the network of TechnoEnvironments?

2. **Panel 2: Imaging TechnoEnvironments in Southeast Asia:** How can we analyze the diverse imaginaries of TechnoEnvironments as part of discourses and future orientations in Southeast Asia?

3. **Laboratory: Methods and materialities in TechnoEnvironments**: Which intersectional conceptualisations of TechnoEnviroments shape the debate on socio-materiality and how could an emancipatory research design in a transdisciplinary, reflective manner look like? **The laboratory aims at highly interactive exchange excluding formal presentations, but rather focus in short think pieces**.

We welcome theoretical, empirical and reflexive contributions and aim at publishing special issues with TRANS and/or IN CONTEXT

Call for Panel 1:
Title: Social power relations in TechnoEnvironments

Convener:
Wolfram Schaffar Professor, University of Passau, Germany, wolfram.schaffar@uni-passau,de

The emergence of new technical environments through digitalisation and the transformation of societies has been analysed from different standpoints. We can distinguish three prototypical positions, which define a field, in which specific analyses can be situated. Most common is arguably the view which departs from the technical specifications, for example the programmes and functions of social media applications, the role of algorithms. The materialist view focuses on the concrete infrastructure and on the appliances, which are needed as hardware. A third view can be characterised as social constructivist and takes processes of appropriation of technical appliances as primary dynamics – or even further, would question the primacy of the material basis of technical developments.

Social power relations are reproduced, augmented and challenged in new technical environments. Here, we observe the transformation of power relations affecting the political sphere, the organisation of labour and class divisions. The appropriation of nature as well as cultural and religious processes may be analysed.

Southeast Asia is the world region, where digitalisation processes are most advanced and where we find the highest penetration of social media. The area constitutes an important field for research in two respects: As a laboratory, which shows general trends and trajectories and as a dynamic region, which exhibits area specific characteristics, some of which seem to be augmented and develop into distinct features. We are looking for contributions which investigate the connection between technically transformed environments and power relations. Contributions which compare different societies or countries in the region are welcome:

- How are social relations challenged or maintained by techno-environments?
- How are these power relations mediated by class, the reproduction of labor or patron-client relations?
- How can these techno-environments be conceptualized in an intersectional manner?

Call for Panel 2: Imaging TechnoEnvironments in Southeast Asia

Convener:
Arndt Graf, Professor, Professor of Southeast Asian Studies Goethe University of Frankfurt, Germany, arndtgraf@yahoo.de

In Southeast Asia, imagining TechnoEnvironments has been part of discourses of cultural modernization that can be traced back at least to the 1970s, for instance to science-fiction literature in Indonesia and the Malay world, but also non-fictional discourses on mechanization and automation. Technical imaginaries have since also been translated into national strategies to enter the "4th industrial revolution", such as "Malaysia 4wrd" (building on "Horison 2020" / "Wawasan 2020"), "Thailand 4.0" or "Making Indonesia 4.0". These political visions and strategies are widely embraced as future-oriented development plans. But we also find critical perspectives on (imagined) effects of modernization, mechanization, and mediatization in a variety of artistic examinations, contributing to public discourses and imaginaries on living conditions in TechnoEnvironments. These, in turn, are widely circulated and communicated via new media technologies, creating ever more mediatized TechnoEnvironments in Southeast Asia.

In this panel, we analyze the diverse imaginaries of TechnoEnvironments as part of discourses and future orientations in Southeast Asia. This includes different actors and drivers in the creation and pluralization of creative, argumentative, and narrative discourses but also the content and form of imaginaries, which are also subject to change in emerging TechnoEnvironments. The panel seeks to investigate these interrelated thematic areas from various disciplinary perspectives within Southeast Asian Studies. Contributions on a conceptual basis, with a comparative approach as well as case studies from different Southeast Asian countries are most welcomed.

We are looking for contributions to imaginaries of TechnoEnvironments in Southeast Asia, focusing on (but not limited to):

- How are TechnoEnvironments represented literary and/or in media?
- How do political visions and strategies for TechnoEnvironments, e.g. in discourses on Industry 4.0 shape imaginaries?
- What are the public discourses and imaginaries on living conditions in TechnoEnvironments?
- How do artists critically examine future scenarios for TechnoEnvironments?

Call for Laboratory
Title: Methods and materialities in TechnoEnvironments

Convener:
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TechnoEnvironments describe newly evolving socio-materialities connected to technology in environmental transformations in SEA. TechnoEnvironments are constituted and mediated by material infrastructures, connecting and simultaneously excluding people, things, and ideas. More empirically grounded work is needed in the field of socio-materiality to reveal interlinkages between newly introduced technologies and socio-political realms. We look at how material characteristics of things and technology dictate the particular forms for their conceptualization (Holbraad 2011). According to Latour (2005) we define 'the social' as an assembly of human and non-human interactions. We link to Alaimo and Hekman's (2008) understanding that the non-human realm has signifying force and intersectionality determines human-material connections.

We aim to discuss methods to analyse socio-material imaginaries and practices and to examine the relations that hold them in place and the labours that sustain them (Suchman 2012). We thus need to investigate the specific agential intra-actions determining the boundaries and properties of a phenomena and turn particular embodied concepts meaningful. We are interested in how to research complex socio-material practices to understand ever new relations between the "natural"and the technological, their meanings and imaginaries (Le Cain 2017). Against the background of sustainability discourses, we test transdisciplinary approaches as well as the potential of art-based-research. We warmly welcome short think pieces on

- How do the conceptualizations of TechnoEnvironments travel globally and are implemented locally? Which knowledge is produced by whom, for whom and transferred?
- How does intersectionality play a role in thinking about socio-materialities in respect to class, race and gender for example in defining technology as male and 'nature' as female?
- How can a transdisciplinary research approach involve different knowledge producers under semi-authoritarian conditions and for example employ art-based-research?

We invite contributions coming from STS (Science and technology studies), sustainability science, environmental anthropology and area studies to contribute to an interactive workshop. Conveners will present the results of these meetings to a larger audience at the end of the conference.

Literature

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