

Panel Title:

Multicultural Societies and Civic Division to Bridge Divisions in Myanmar, Thailand, and India

Conveners:

Makiko Takeda, Aichi Gakuin University, Japan

Pimonpan Chainan, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Discussant:

Dr. Chosein Yamahata (Aichi Gakuin University, Japan)

Description of Panel

The lack of a collective civic vision have caused hindrance in Myanmar, Thailand and India. In addition, globalization, urbanization, and industrialization, although beneficial overall, have left numerous populations and communities on the sidelines, not reaping the benefits of these transformative processes. Such marginalized groups of people and communities lack (1) freedom from man-made and natural disasters, (2) freedom from inequalities, and (3) freedom from want. Against this backdrop, this overarching theme holds significant relevance on today's interconnected world, where local communities grapple with both opportunities and challenges adapting to changing societal structures.

The salient aspect of the panel is to highlight the grassroots roles that communities play across diverse boundaries in knowledge transfer, social development, and building community resilience. Given that political contention, conflict, and antagonism arising from differences are not uncommon in societies like India, Myanmar, and Thailand, our goal is to explore viable alternatives and draw insights from case studies that require careful consideration in bridging the divisions within each society.

As civic identity demands individuals and states to respect the rights and self-determination of people of different identity groups, especially those who are marginalized, the panel is proposed in dynamic interplay between civic vision and the establishment of a multicultural society in order to bridge multiple divisions through strengthening resilience. By recognizing that civic identity necessitates the respect for the rights and self-determination of individuals from different identity groups, particularly those marginalized, the proposed panel focuses on the dynamic intersection of civic vision and the establishment of a multicultural society. This approach seeks to bridge multiple divisions by strengthening resilience and fostering a more inclusive and harmonious community. Civic identity and civic engagement should also not overlook the role of communication, which is at the centre of every community, country and the world as it raises public awareness regarding crucial public issues. This responsibility lies not only with the authority of governments but also with the cooperation of citizens in a functional alliance and correspondence with related organisations, including educational institutions. Through our collaborative presentations, we aim to highlight both interim and end-results through five dimensions: causative, curative, preventive,

promotive, and innovative approaches in analyzing case studies to yield meaningful contributions to the fields of civic vision, resilience, multiculturalism, and development.

Panellist 1:

Dr. Siwaporn Sukittanon, Chiang Mai University

ABSTRACT

Bridging the Generational Divide: Podcasts as Tools for Intergenerational Understanding among Thailand's Youth

This presentation discusses the burgeoning global podcast industry, with a specific focus on Thailand and Generation Z. The data reveal a substantial increase in podcast listeners globally, with Thailand showing significant potential for growth. This demographic detail is intertwined with a case study from Chiangmai University's Faculty of Mass Communication, where Gen Z students are producing podcasts. The podcasts aim to bridge the generational communication gap, primarily between Gen Z and older generations like Baby Boomers and Gen X. The course, 851331 Entertain Program Production 1, enables students to create content for their peers and older generations, encouraging them to understand and reconcile intergenerational differences. An online survey of 102 Gen Z students identified discomfort with older generations, attributing this to divergent views on gender, communication, and politics. The course leverages this discomfort, urging students to address these tensions in their podcast designs. The study will analyze the proposals of Gen Z students for podcast programs using thematic analysis to identify patterns and offer recommendations for using podcasts as a tool to alleviate intergenerational discord. The overarching goal is to foster digital empathy and societal cohesion through targeted educational podcasts.

Keywords: Podcast Growth, Generation Z, Intergenerational Communication, Podcast Production Education, Digital Empathy.

Panellist 2:

Dr. Win Myint (Environmental Care & Community Security Institute, Myanmar)

ABSTRACT

Empowerment of Rural Women and Building Socioeconomic Resilience through Development of Aquaculture

This presentation explores the e-Women project in Myanmar, which is dedicated to empowering women in rural areas through aquaculture entrepreneurship. The project's core objectives include boosting women's income, improving food intake, and fostering savings through training and support for fish farming activities. Various challenges are identified, such as delays in budget allocation, logistical hurdles, limited creativity, insufficient marketing knowledge, and resistance to modern technologies. A SWOT analysis reveals strengths like increased income and opportunities for diversification, alongside weaknesses such as skill shortages and inadequate work availability. The project underscores the significance of collaborating with governmental bodies to ensure sustainable development outcomes. It seeks to address prevalent issues like poverty, limited job prospects, and marketing obstacles by nurturing leadership capabilities, creating employment avenues, and enhancing self-assurance among women. Encouraging women to enhance existing enterprises, explore innovative technologies, increase production levels, and engage in collaborative group efforts are key strategies advocated by the project for fostering economic empowerment and sustainable livelihoods among rural women in Myanmar. Overall, the e-Women project aims to reduce poverty, enhance self-sufficiency, and promote long-term sustainability in rural communities through women's empowerment in aquaculture.

Keywords: e-Women project; aquaculture entrepreneurship; women's empowerment; gender equality; socioeconomic resilience.

Panellist 3:

Dr. Soumen Mitra (Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, Shibpur, India)

ABSTRACT

The Dynamics of Youth Activism in Contemporary India: Catalysts and Challenges

The study explores the dynamic landscape of youth activism in India, illuminating the motivations and transformative power of the young generation in addressing societal, economic, political, and environmental challenges. It articulates the two primary catalysts for youth activism: the lack of basic amenities and ethical societal structures, and the pressing need to address environmental and societal issues for future sustainability. Through a historical lens, it recounts the significant role of Indian youth in the fight for freedom and ongoing societal reforms, noting the current trend of shifting focus from national to community-centric activism facilitated by technology. The rise of digital platforms has revolutionized the means of activism, with social media emerging as a pivotal tool for mobilizing and educating the youth.

The essay underscores the essential role of civic knowledge and political trust in integrating young people into the fabric of activism, recognizing their diverse cultural contexts and the importance of peer influence over institutional drives. The narrative acknowledges the multifaceted nature of youth activism, characterized by the pursuit of freedom, policy interventions, combat against unemployment and injustice, and resistance to authoritarian educational systems and societal alienation.

Furthermore, it critiques the "Youth Deficit Model," advocating instead for a model that listens to, validates, authorizes, and mobilizes the youth. The study points to the positive and negative impacts of activism, from steering societal norms to inadvertently causing division and violence. It highlights the need for policies that bridge education, employment, and social settlement, and recognizes the potential of the youth to act as visionary leaders for profound development rather than revolutionaries for change.

The narrative concludes by presenting youth activism as a crucial element in shaping a sustainable future, emphasizing the importance of harnessing the potential of the young generation. It advocates for inclusive and flexible policies that address the challenges of education, employment, and societal integration to foster a more stable and prosperous South Asia.

Keywords: Youth Activism, Digital Mobilization, Societal Reform, Civic Engagement, Technological Empowerment.

Panellist 4:

Dr. Satoshi Ota (Tama University, Japan)

ABSTRACT

Exploring Naga people of Northeast India and Baptist Christianity: Bridging the Gap between the Youth and Adults

This presentation examines the intricate relationship between the Naga people and Baptist Christianity. The Naga is a diverse ethnic group in Northeast India and Northwest Myanmar. The study aims to understand the generational gap that exists within this community. Due to recent economic growth and the widespread dissemination of information through mobile phones from around the world, Naga's traditional values are changing. Many young people communicate with each other through mobile phones and have less time to spend with people from other generations. However, there are still many young Nagas who attend church on Sundays, which provides an opportunity to interact with people from other generations.

The presentation begins by providing a historical overview of the Naga people and their conversion to Baptist Christianity during the British colonial period. It then explores the current religious landscape, highlighting the central role of Baptist Christianity in shaping Naga society and culture. Next, the presentation examines the challenges and conflicts arising from this generational gap.

The study also explores a recent movement of uploading gospel songs on YouTube to spread Christian values to a wider audience. The use of new technology to reach out to the younger generation is emerging among the Naga communities. This underscores the importance of acknowledging and addressing these generational differences for the preservation and continuity of Naga culture.

This presentation contributes to the broader discourse on religion, generational gaps, and social change, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of a unique ethnic-religious community in Northeast India.

Panellist 5:

Dr. Pimonpan Chainan (Chiang Mai University, Thailand)

ABSTRACT

**Navigating Resilience and Informed Citizens:
The Pillars of an Open Society in the Age of Disinformation**

The concept of the informed citizen is pivotal for democracies valuing openness and transparency. Such citizens actively engage in societal discourse, dedicating time and effort to comprehensively understand policy issues, thereby making well-informed judgments. However, in the era of information overload, disinformation poses a significant challenge. It blurs the line between truth and falsehood, leading to widespread deception. This is particularly problematic within political communication, where misinformation can profoundly affect democratic processes and public opinion. This study focuses on the accumulation and integration of knowledge related to disinformation within the communication studies field in Thailand and ASEAN. Employing meta-analysis, it critically evaluates data from open and accessible academic databases between 2018 and 2022. The research categorizes findings into four key areas: mechanisms of disinformation dissemination, the consequences of information pollution, the enhancement of Media and Information Literacy (MIL), and the variety of policy responses to these challenges. The first area explores the tactics used to spread disinformation, identifying how and why it proliferates. The second assesses the broader impacts of disinformation, particularly how it contaminates the informational ecosystem. The third advocates for the strengthening of MIL, an essential tool for citizens to navigate the complex media landscape. Lastly, the study examines the responses implemented at policy levels, evaluating their effectiveness and suggesting improvements. The expected outcome is a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge regarding disinformation and its implications for ASEAN societies' political communications. The ultimate goal is to provide citizens with robust guidelines for enhancing media literacy, thereby fostering a more critically engaged populace. This research not only contributes to the academic discourse but also serves as a crucial resource for policymakers, educators, and the general public in combatting the pernicious effects of disinformation. By equipping individuals with the skills to discern reliable information, societies can encourage rational discourse, informed decision-making, and ultimately, a more vibrant and healthy democracy.

Keywords: Disinformation, Media and Information Literacy, Informed Citizenship, ASEAN, Meta-Analysis.

Panellist 6:

Phwe Yu Mon (Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand)

Dr. Chosein Yamahata (Aichi Gakuin University, Japan)

ABSTRACT

The Roles of Social Capitals and Emergence of Local Governance Amidst Political Fragility: A Case Study of Chin State in Myanmar

This study examines the critical role of social capital in fostering local governance during periods of political instability, focusing on Chin State, Myanmar, post-February 1, 2021 coup attempt. Amidst the chaos resulting in weakened public administration, economic strife, and diminished access to public services and legal structures, this research explores the adaptive measures communities take to maintain societal order and deliver essential services. Utilizing social capital theory, the study investigates the formation of grassroots governance systems empowered by the mutual trust, established social networks, and reciprocal norms within the community. The research highlights how, in response to the political void, democratic advocates and the wider community, including the diaspora, have been instrumental in creating local governance entities that emphasize transparency, accountability, and civic involvement. This has led to the conduct of community-driven elections and the provision of education, healthcare, humanitarian assistance, and food security, essential for maintaining the rule of law and daily life in the region. Interim judicial measures have also been taken, using customary laws to uphold judicial independence temporarily. Through qualitative methods such as interviews and document analysis, the study sheds light on the significant function of social capital in the rise and efficacy of these emergent governance bodies. Despite their efforts, these local administrations face ongoing hurdles, including resource and technical constraints, underscoring the complex challenges of building governance infrastructure during a crisis.

Keywords: Local Governance, Social Capital, Political Fragility, Community Participation, Myanmar