

Reproduced from *From Grassroots Activism to Disinformation: Social Media in Southeast Asia*, edited by Aim Sinpeng and Ross Tapsell (Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021). This version was obtained electronically direct from the publisher on condition that copyright is not infringed. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the prior permission of ISEAS Publishing. Individual chapters are available at <<http://bookshop.iseas.edu.sg>>.

From  
**Grassroots**  
**Activism** to  
**Disinformation**

**The ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute** (formerly Institute of Southeast Asian Studies) is an autonomous organization established in 1968. It is a regional centre dedicated to the study of socio-political, security, and economic trends and developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geostrategic and economic environment. The Institute's research programmes are grouped under Regional Economic Studies (RES), Regional Strategic and Political Studies (RSPS), and Regional Social and Cultural Studies (RSCS). The Institute is also home to the ASEAN Studies Centre (ASC), the Singapore APEC Study Centre, and the Temasek History Research Centre (THRC).

**ISEAS Publishing**, an established academic press, has issued more than 2,000 books and journals. It is the largest scholarly publisher of research about Southeast Asia from within the region. ISEAS Publishing works with many other academic and trade publishers and distributors to disseminate important research and analyses from and about Southeast Asia to the rest of the world.

From  
**Grassroots  
Activism to  
Disinformation**

Social Media in Southeast Asia

EDITED BY

**Aim Sinpeng • Ross Tapsell**

**ISEAS** YUSOF ISHAK  
INSTITUTE

First published in Singapore in 2021 by  
ISEAS Publishing  
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace  
Singapore 119614

*E-mail:* [publish@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:publish@iseas.edu.sg)

*Website:* <<http://bookshop.iseas.edu.sg>>

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.

© 2021 ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

*The responsibility for facts and opinions in this publication rests exclusively with the authors and their interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views or the policy of the publisher or its supporters.*

---

### ISEAS Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

---

Name(s): Sinpeng, Aim, editor. | Tapsell, Ross, editor.

Title: From grassroots activism to disinformation : social media in Southeast Asia / edited by Aim Sinpeng and Ross Tapsell.

Description: Singapore : ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: ISBN 978-981-4951-02-9 (paperback) | 978-981-4951-03-6 (PDF)

Subjects: LCSH: Social media—Political aspects—Southeast Asia. |

Disinformation—Political aspects—Southeast Asia. | Communication in politics—Southeast Asia.

Classification: LCC JA85.2 A9F93

---

Cover photo: Ray Yen

Typeset by International Typesetters Pte Ltd

Printed in Singapore by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd

# CONTENTS

<i>About the Contributors</i>	vii
1. From Grassroots Activism to Disinformation: Social Media Trends in Southeast Asia <i>Aim Sinpeng and Ross Tapsell</i>	1
2. Curing “Patient Zero”: Reclaiming the Digital Public Sphere in the Philippines <i>Pamela Combinido and Nicole Curato</i>	19
3. The Political Campaign Industry and the Rise of Disinformation in Indonesia <i>Muninggar Sri Saraswati</i>	43
4. Disinformation as a Response to the “Opposition Playground” in Malaysia <i>Niki Cheong</i>	63
5. Social Media, Hate Speech and Fake News during Myanmar’s Political Transition <i>Nyi Nyi Kyaw</i>	86
6. Securitizing “Fake News”: Policy Responses to Disinformation in Thailand <i>Janjira Sombatpoonsiri</i>	105
7. Cambodia: From Democratization of Information to Disinformation <i>Mun Vong and Aim Sinpeng</i>	126

---

8. Social Media's Challenge to State Information Controls in Vietnam <i>Dien Luong</i>	145
9. Social Media and Changes in Political Engagement in Singapore <i>Natalie Pang</i>	167
10. Democratic Backsliding and Authoritarian Resilience in Southeast Asia: The Role of Social Media <i>Marco Bünte</i>	192
<i>Index</i>	213

# ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Marco BÜNTE**, Professor, Institute of Political Science, Friedrich-Alexander University, Erlangen Nuremberg, Germany

**Niki CHEONG**, Lecturer, School of Media and Performing Arts, Coventry University, UK. Formerly Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Cultural, Media and Visual Studies, University of Nottingham, UK

**Pamela COMBINIDO**, Independent Researcher, The Philippines

**Nicole CURATO**, Associate Professor, University of Canberra

**Nyi Nyi KYAW**, Visiting Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

**Dien LUONG**, Visiting Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

**Natalie PANG**, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Policy Studies, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy; and Senior Lecturer, Department of Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore

**Muninggar Sri SARASWATI**, Deputy Head, Communication Studies Department, Swiss German University, Indonesia

**Aim SINGPENG**, Lecturer, Government and International Relations, University of Sydney, Australia

**Janjira SOMBATPOONSIRI**, Researcher, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University; and Associate, German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA)

**Ross TAPSELL**, Senior Lecturer, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University

**Mun VONG**, PhD candidate, School of Government and International Relations, Griffith University, Australia