

# Governing Technologies

## Exploring datafied practices, imaginaries, and digital state assemblages in Asia

Call for papers for research workshop (20-21 October 2022, online)

The world over, we see states imagining and implementing the digitisation of governance and services through practices of datafication – and technology actors assuming the functions of government. From biometric citizenship and identity systems for service delivery to the making of humanitarian data systems, the making of digital cities to deliberate internet blackouts disconnecting entire populations, digital technologies today have become closely entangled with social power structures and with how (state) authority is performed. In the COVID-19 pandemic, the socio-technical imaginaries – that order ideas, practices and policies and depict how our (future) societies will be functioning – have become even more datafied and digitalised.

But there exist cracks, chasms, and ruptures in these assemblages: Akin to former arrangements of government, they are intertwined and coexisting with other forms of authority and structures of marginalisation; and are contested by a range of emergent, decentralised actors that have carved out spaces for re-interpreting, questioning, and resisting in the current landscape of digital infrastructures. These mobilisations include populations marginalised by a variety of such power structures, whose agency and struggles have to be analysed with a post/de-colonial lens against the region's histories.

This workshop aims to problematise past and current socio-technical imaginaries and datafication practices of the rapidly digitising nation-states in Asia, and gather critical analyses of where the digital, government, and power intersect: Who are the (human and non-human) actors propelling these initiatives and new arrangements? What do their discourses around these imaginaries reveal about their ambitions, interests, and conflicts? What role do communities and the people play in shaping, adapting, and resisting digital plans and practices, and who decides?

**Deadline extended: Abstracts until 15 June 2022**

We seek to bring together scholars interested in unravelling these politics and practices of the digital in an online workshop hosted by Monash University Malaysia, in October 2022. We invite exchange on empirical and conceptual contributions from multiple disciplines that critically examine current arrangements of digital technologies, societies, and/or states in Asia. Secondly, we also would like to make this an opportunity to establish research networks and discuss possible future research collaborations across the region and concurrent disciplines. This could, for example, take the form of a planned special issue in an academic journal or plans for collaborative and transdisciplinary research projects.

Contributors may address issues including, but not limited to, the following topics:

- the making and un-making of socio-technical imaginaries and their material arrangements in Asia;
- specific usage of digital technologies in government in Asia, for instance, through Digital IDs and credit scoring;
- continuities and ruptures of today's datafied arrangements of authority with colonial and postcolonial practices of governing;
- diverse array of actors involved in the making of governance systems, for instance, the role of private (tech) corporations in exercising state functions;
- (re)invention of the spatialities and associated identities, for instance, as seen in the (re)drawing of intra-and inter-state borders and associated citizenships;
- digital mobilities, as seen through societal conflicts, political mobilisations, and social movements in the digital age;
- infrastructures of surveillance and resistance, and practices that are required to maintain, alter, and perform them;
- new (and old) forms of marginalisation in an interconnected Asia;
- governance of (personal and non-personal) data in Asia through critical lenses;
- data-centric practices in Asia and their ramifications for labour codes and policies;
- implications of open data imaginaries and public interest technologies for governance;
- conceptual, theoretical, and methodological innovations to research society, technology, and the state in Asia.

Please send us an abstract of 500 words to [governingtechnologies2022@gmail.com](mailto:governingtechnologies2022@gmail.com) by 15 June 2022. Selected paper presenters will be notified by 30 June 2022. Full papers of a maximum of 8,000 words will be due by 31 August 2022.

We look forward to bringing together a diverse array of vignettes, perspectives, and reflections on how the digital and societal structures are articulated in Asia today, and to critically inquire into the facets of what is often described as one of the most rapid transformations of our time.

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