Institute of Network Society (INS), China Academy of Art (CAA)
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Invitation to
the 9th Annual Conference of Network Society(2024)

Polyphonic Global South:
The Spaces of Technological Communication

The reliance on the North/Center narrative shaped by technological power has led to the entrenchment of a singular story about the Global South, one that captures and consolidates a phenomenon while overlooking apparent tensions, subtle complexities, and uncomfortable simultaneities, resulting in a form of chronic poverty. Traditional concepts such as the digital divide or digital inequality fail to grasp the realities of adverse digital incorporation. Building on eight years of theoretical and practical inquiry at the Network Society Annual Conference, this year's event strives to transcend conventional, particularly central, theoretical, and ideological perspectives. The theme, "Polyphonic Global South: The Spaces of Technological Communication, seeks to examine how technology exchange in the Global South, especially in East and Southeast Asia, adapts under the dual pressures of globalization and localization.

Polyphony captures the varied voices and perspectives arising from diverse cultural, economic, and social contexts within the Global South, emphasizing the region's internal complexity and the intricate dynamics of technological interaction. Technological communication encompasses the transmission, transfer, adaptation, and mutual influence of technology across different areas, facilitating the cross-border flow of knowledge, methodologies, and applications. Space encompasses not only physical locations but also the embedding and reproduction of technology within cultural, economic, and social frameworks. The Global South, a concept originally rooted in politics and later in economics, typically denotes regions and nations that are relatively disadvantaged within the global economic hierarchy, including but not limited to East Asia, Latin America, Africa, and South Asia. These areas have undergone complex interactions between technology adoption and localization during digital globalization, playing a crucial role in sustaining the world digital economy. This conference will concentrate on Southeast Asia, exploring how technology is transformed, reciprocally adapted, and redefines the contemporary world within these contexts.

China Academy Of Art

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The conference will delve into the multidimensional impacts of technological communication through four panels. First, we will explore the historical and contemporary roles of Southeast Asia as the world's factory, analyzing how technology flows through global production chains and impacts local economies and social structures. Second, the widespread adoption of social media has brought new challenges and opportunities for cultural communication and identity construction, which we will examine in the context of the Global South. Third, we will focus on mobile phones and mobile communication technologies, including mobile gaming, and investigate how they alter social interactions and economic models. Finally, the emerging technological forces of Web3, blockchain, and AI are reshaping the digital economy of the Global South, and we will explore their future potential and challenges.

The Institute of Network Society (INS) at the China Academy of Art, an emerging independent international teaching and research institution, is the first in China's higher education system to focus on network society, technology philosophy, platform cooperativism, and the history of cultural technology. The institute has hosted eight annual Network Society conferences, multiple art hackathons, and workshops, fostering an international network of hundreds of scholars, young artists, network activists, and technology experts. It is advancing towards a grassroots network and is committed to an epistemic praxis focused on knowledge itself.

Each panel discussion will feature 3-4 keynote speakers who will present and engage in discussions. The conference is hosted by the China Academy of Art (CAA) and co-hosted by International College of Digital Innovation (ICDI) and Chiangmai University Blockchain Association (CMUBA).

Panel 1: Manufacturing World

This panel will delve into the formation and development of Southeast Asia as a global manufacturing hub, exploring how technology flows within global supply chains and how these technologies are embedded and adapted within local social and economic structures. We will pay special attention to the localization challenges under globalized production models and the impact of technology transfer on local industries and labor markets.

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Panel 2: Social Media

The rise of social media in the Global South has introduced new modes and dynamics of cultural communication and identity construction. This panel will explore how social media platforms in Southeast Asia influence local cultural expressions and self-positioning in the process of globalization, and analyze the role these platforms play in social movements and public discourse.

Panel 3: Mobile Phones and Communication

This panel will focus on the development and widespread adoption of mobile phones and mobile communication technologies in the Global South, investigating how these technologies reshape local social structures, economic models, and daily life. We will examine the role of mobile communication technologies in facilitating cross-cultural exchanges and economic development, while also reflecting on the challenges they pose in terms of digital divides and social inequality.

Panel 4: Web3, Blockchain, Al

Web3 and blockchain technologies are at the forefront of the digital economy, creating new opportunities and challenges across the Global South. Simultaneously, the rise of Al is intensifying competition in Southeast Asia, whether through labor markets or as sovereign Al initiatives becoming strategic political and economic declarations. This panel will explore the application and development of these technologies in Southeast Asia, analyzing how decentralized technologies and AI competition are reshaping existing economic structures, and considering their potential in future digital governance and economic activities.

In light of these profound transformations, we cordially invite experts and scholars to join us for keynote speeches. Your participation will contribute significantly to the discourse on technology and society in the Global South, and we eagerly anticipate your insights and contributions.

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Over the past years, hundreds of scholars have delivered keynote speeches at the Annual Conference of Network Society hosted by INS, and five hundred plus artists, curators, and young scholars have shared their ideas through the open calls for papers combining Hackathon and Scifi-athon to bring together creative and critical minds from all over the world for co-production. This year's conference will be held from November 7-9, 2024, in CS Building, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

It would be our privilege if you could accept our invitation to participate. We are pleased to offer coverage for your round-trip airfare to Chiang Mai, accommodation expenses, and an honorarium for your speaking.

Yours Sincerely,

Prof. Huang Sun-Quan
Director of Institute of Network Society
School of Intermedia Art
China Academy of Art

Host: The Institute of Network Society at China Academy of Art
Co-Hosts: International College of Digital Innovation,
*   Chiangmai University Blockchain Association*
Facilitators: Global Chinese Community of Universal Digital Commons, 4seas