

FOREWORD

We're thrilled to launch a 2-part series, *The Next Digital Decade: Case Studies from Asia*. Volume 1, titled '*Traces and Divides*', reflects the path these case studies take: tracing the impact of the Internet on society, politics, and life in Asia, while identifying the many divides that persist. Asian societies are increasingly "digitally transformed", but the effects are unequally distributed, and often amplify long standing power imbalances along multiple axes.

At the heart of this project is the intention to find work on the region from within it, and to expand the discourse to include emerging scholars with unique vantage points. In this publication you will find a wide range of themes and authors from over 10 different countries in Asia, featuring established scholars and practitioners, as well as early career academics.

Asia has often been framed as a recipient of knowledge, a passive beneficiary of global best practices, and a target of development. This volume celebrates a more circular, bi-directional exchange. The "Western" English majority Internet is no longer the dominant paradigm. Local communities, governments, and companies are developing new applications and innovations, embedding local cultures and ideas in governance frameworks, e-commerce, and social media, and de-centering online spaces away from the global North.

The case studies were accepted in 2020, edited across 2021 – in "pandemic time" - and are being published now. Each piece went through rigorous editing process, including anonymous peer review by senior scholars and practitioners, who helped mentor these pieces towards readiness. Due to the longer than expected publishing cycle, some of the pieces – such as those which assess the early responses to COVID-19 by Asian governments, serve as a unique snapshot of a very particular moment, rather than a definitive or up-to-date analysis. We opted to preserve this "fly in amber" characteristic.

These works would not see light of day without the support of our partners, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Singapore. We are grateful to Christian Echle, Katharina Naumann and Ming Yin Ho for being outstanding collaborators whose investment in the vision for this project never wavered. We are also grateful to our editor, Ruchika Chanana, and the design team at yellow too, for shaping the final outputs. Above all, we thank all of our authors, whose work we are proud to share.

We hope you enjoy the rich diversity of this collection, and we invite you to dip into "*Volume 2: Spaces and Futures*" next.

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