



Platform Futures: Social Media's Dis/Misinformation Problem

Transcript: Platform Futures: Social Media's Dis/Misinformation Problem

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Featuring:

Panelists

- Wolfgang Schulz, Research Director, The Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society
- Chris Fei SHEN, Associate Head, City University of Hong Kong
- Nurma Fitrianingrum, Good Governance Project Officer at Tifa Foundation

Facilitators

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Synopsis: News consumption today largely occurs in platform-dominated media environments. In the Asia-Pacific region, various combinations of Youtube, Facebook, Whatsapp, Line, Instagram, Wechat, Naver, Kakao, and Tik Tok are now the primary spaces where people find news. The spread of dis/misinformation on social media today impacts elections, inter-faith relations, pandemic measures, and public trust at large. Platforms and their algorithmically controlled feeds play a critical role in 'manufacturing consent' in society. The Dis/Misinformation problem on social media is one of the key concerns around Platform governance today. Governments in the APAC region have been making prominent regulatory interventions to tackle the spread of mis/disinformation online. Singapore's Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA) came into effect in 2019. Indonesia is reportedly proposing new rules to compel platforms to take down "unlawful content" with criminal liability and large fines for non-compliance. In Europe, the European Commission recently put out an updated 2022 Code of Practice on Disinformation, recognised under the co-regulatory framework of the DSA. In the face of government scrutiny and wider



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societal backlash, Platforms have made attempts at self-regulating. Facebook has their own 'Community Standards' and created an Oversight Board of independent experts to make recommendations on upholding of its Community standards. All platforms employ an army of human and AI tools to detect and take down certain types of content and work closely with NGOs and media organisations to integrate fact checking on platforms.

Video Link:

<https://www.platformfutures.asia/socialmedia-mis-disinformation-problem>

Dev Lewis: Hello, everybody and welcome to this platform futures roundtable discussion hosted by the Digital Asia Hub. For those of you not familiar, the Digital Asia Hub is a internet and society think tank based in Hong Kong, where we look at the implications for technology in society across Asia. The Platform Futures initiative is something we started in 2020, where we wanted to look at, create a network of experts, and create a space for dialogue and discourse around the governance of technology platforms here in the Asia Pacific. We've got today's roundtable discussion where we're going to be looking at the question of disinformation and misinformation on social media platforms. I know many of you tuning in work on these issues from multiple from a variety of different countries. We have a really fun and engaging and panel discussion planned for you. Just one housekeeping note, unfortunately, our fourth speaker Nighat, had to drop out at the very last minute due to a family emergency. So we won't have Nighat, join us for the panel but we have Norma, Chris, and Wolfgang, with promises to make for a really, really engaging discussion.

Wolfgang Schulz: Yeah, wonderful. Thank you. I'm very happy to share the European perspective. And thanks so much. To the Digital Asia Hub, Dev and Malavika, especially for bringing us together. Yeah. If I could be brief, that's not so easy because there's been a lot of regulation in Europe. And as you might remember, we have this very odd situation that we have this national level and European level of regulation sometimes competing with each other but also learning from the other and we'll talk about that in a minute when we talk about the Digital Services Act(DSA).

I'll start with a brief remark on the national level and that's not always a very, very encouraging story in Europe, I would say. Many of you will know that we have some



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countries in Europe that introduced specific regulation on mis/disinformation. And the Hungarian bill, specifically on health misinformation during the COVID crisis, is one of those examples. It is an example, at least in two ways. One is it's a law that really is linking the punishable offense to the statement being false or not false. So we have this truth and not truth distinction here. It's not about distribution patterns or other things but it's really about the statements being correct or not, and also about distorted information, which is, of course, a flexible term and many criticize that as being highly problematic in terms of misuse by, by government authorities. And when you do not have independent courts, then that might end up in something really, really problematic for freedom of speech.

At the EU level is more heavily discussed lately, very, very briefly on on on that, two instruments that are interesting: one is a really binding instrument that has been enacted last year, and will come into force step by step until February of 2024. And the code of practice on this information, the famous, could say, notorious Digital Services Act of the EU. If you want to get a an understanding of the concept, then I think one interesting element is that it does not define what disinformation is. It refers to illegal content. And even illegal content is not defined in the Digital Services Act. But it refers to the national definitions of legal and illegal content. Coming in back to Hungary, that means that this kind of content that is deemed illegal in Hungary is something that can be now enforced under the concept that the DSA is constructing. And that is being built right now as we speak. The companies are working on implementation of the DSA. So that is something you might already see that I'm not a big fan of the DSA. Will come some good out of it, I'm sure. But there are some downsides as well. The regular concept is again, we do not look at an individual piece of content under the DSA. But it's all about structures and procedures, it's about effective complaint mechanisms that platforms have to to establish. There is a system however, trusted flaggers can be accredited by national coordinators or the regulators under the DSA. And that we now have to set up Germany. It's a big fight, who should be recording whether different entities want to be there because they see there's will be an important duty is to be fulfilled? There is data access for researchers, something which I think is important because the knowledge phase plays a role. There's an interesting element here that we call hybrid regulation. That is that the DSA acknowledges that there is a level of private regulation community standards, and wants to influence how companies act on their own private rules and want to force them to recognize the users freedoms. That's



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freedom of speech, obviously, but it's also freedom for academic research, that can play a role here we are working on that. And there is the obligation to have a risk assessment as also would include to see does a specific service element trigger this information and what harm can flow out of that and what could be mitigating measures, and Code of Conduct efforts that have been already a tradition in Europe are included in the concept as well? That brings me to the last point, and that's the the Code of Conduct Code of Practice on dis/misinformation.

That is something that the European Commission which is the kind of acting entity, the some say in inverted commas, the government of the EU. What they have as a kind of concept I have been using for a while and that is trying to get in negotiation for the industry and have them set up some rules voluntarily and monitor then how that works. And when it does not work, then some stricter measures might be enacted. And that's an effective but also, I think, a little bit dangerous element because sometimes governments and the European Commission attempted to try things out by convincing the industry that they could not enact in a law because maybe it's too tough to match restricting speech. So we have to have a think very carefully. Look at how that unfolds and because my time is over, I think we're not going into every point here. But I think the list is impressive and shows that when you want to fight disinformation, at least in Europe, people believe that you have to use a lot of different tools, you have to see what kind of disinformation can be effectively dealt with by demonetization, because people just want to get money out of it. But some others don't: I am not interested in money because they want to influence political processes, and then demand that taxation is not really a good instrument, then you need others. And so that's why these list of different measures has been implemented here. And in regular reports, you can see how companies are implementing that and how they proceed. So that was my input from a European perspective. A little bit too long. But I hope it was interesting anyway, and looking forward to hearing what the others bring to the table. Thank you.

Dev Lewis: Thank you so much, Wolfgang, that was a really informative, and really nice overview on what's happening in Europe. And I'm sure we'll dive deeper into some of the details in the discussion. Next, I'm going to invite Nurma, who's joining from Jakarta. Nurma has done a lot of work on the question of media and rules for



platforms, especially in Indonesia. And Nurma, I will let you share your slides. And have your opening remarks done.

Nurma Fitrianingrum: Hello, my name is Nurma Fitrianingrum. And I'm from Indonesia. Today, I'll be presenting about the regulation trends on moderation of misinformation and disinformation condensed in Indonesia.

So, the regulation in Indonesia, so spreading false information is a criminal offense in Indonesia. And yes, we don't have the term of misinformation or disinformation, but it's spreading false information. And according to the criminal court law, it's one of the offence and even though this regulation just revised last year, actually in the original law, which is dates back to 1946 already mentioned about this clause, and later, the government also enacted Electronic and Information transaction law, e80 law specifically regulates the distribution of false information on the internet. Based on this regulation, misinformation, or disinformation contents could be requested to be removed from social media or from because they violate the existing laws in Indonesia. And in 2020, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Moci) they came with various technical regulation about content moderation which is they don't use the term of false or false information again, but here they use prohibited contents as a whole.

The next one is about the prohibited content in Indonesia. So according to this regulation, the prohibited contents are defined as contents that fall at least into one of these following classification. And I will maybe focus more on the classification, which is creates public disturbance and disrupt public order. In my opinion, this sits very problematic because it leaves wide gray area with risk of multi interpretation from different interest groups and many civil society organization as well as activists in Indonesia has been criticizing this term and this regulation. They are afraid that this clauses costs especially will be used or misused by the ruling government. To limit the freedom of speech, as well as a limiting civic space, which is already systematically seen, shrunken, or from many directions in Indonesia, right now, especially since 2019. According to this law, the procedure for removal of prohibited content, actually public as well as government institution can report any content that they believe to be false and to be prohibited for, especially to the Moci whoever because the public has to report first to any government agency. And from the report they submitted more to the



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Ministry of Communication and Informatics (MOCI), they make the decision by themselves about the content which whether the content is a prohibited or not missing information or not. And they that they will or deliver platform to remove the content. And platform only has four hours for urgent content reload related to terrorism, child pornography as well as content that disrupt public order, which is very problematic. And 24 hours if they fail to remove those contents, the government will file administrative fines, and if they still fail to remove they will order the internet service provider to block access to this part from. This is quite a direct order from the government from the MOCI itself without any court process. Actually, there are a lot of problems with this regulation. But I will focus on the lack of proper due process and the deliberative decision making because here MOCI is the only actor, stakeholder who will make decision and there is no mechanism for accountability or transparency. or even the both the one who posted or or the platform cannot appeal the decision from MOCI and in this regulation MOCI only limits moderation to content takedown in the regulation itself, it's only written takedown and there is no other options such as demonetizing, warning users, or depublishing or also demoting the content.

The last but not least, the government put very unrealistic timeframes for the removal, especially in the four hours limit for urgent material and and we actually don't know how they decide between urgent and non-urgent. Disinformation or prohibited contents in Indonesia and and the term it's very, very gray, even a lot of platform companies they rejected or protested above this cause, because it's very hard for them, especially for international tech companies, where they need to coordinate with the headquarters to make a decision that's unclear within their specific company's regulation. And this is the data of the content moderated by platforms in Indonesia. Facebook is actually the only one who lists data of misinformation removal requested by the government of Indonesia, especially from MOCI. During COVID pandemic actually, MOCI has requested Meta to remove 1000s of COVID-19 and vaccination disinformation contents from their platform. This is apart from the restriction access that Meta has already self imposed. So the government of Indonesia has been actively requesting the takedown contents. And also, within Facebook, Indonesia is among the top country where it's from the government and from the public to request content removal from Google. But my posting statement, it will be to show that Indonesia is one of the case where platforms limited transparency about content moderation, finally met with a very repressive regulation, in my opinion and lack of accountability from the government.



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That it's, for me, it's even really hard to find, what kind of content to removal that actually the government requests so far, from platforms. Yeah, that's my introduction for the issue of moderation in Indonesia.

Dev Lewis: Next, I'll introduce our speaker, Chris, Chris Fei SHEN. He is the associate head at the City University of Hong Kong. And Chris has done a lot of work on fact checking and how exposure to fact checking on social media can influence misinformation perception. So I think we would love to hear more from Chris, on this issue. And so with that, Chris, I'll turn over the mic to you.

Chris Fei Shen: Hey, thank you, Dev. And good afternoon, everyone. So the staff have already introduced my research is mostly about fact checking. I've done some studies the past few years with my students on this topic. So in the end, a very quick share of the research findings, preliminary research findings, we find out that exposure to fact checking basically cannot change people's political attitudes, but it can slightly reduce effective polarization and political polarization as well. To some extent, it can also help correct misperception. The other thing we investigate, related to fact checking is about partisan bias, because even the fact checking organizations, can be professional in terms of their fact checking effort, but still in terms of in terms of selecting the topics to fact check, there is a partisan bias we find out different organizations in Hong Kong. And interestingly, we we also, that is designed to three conditions actually. Condition A is the pro government fact checking. Condition B is the pro democracy side of factchecking. And then we also designed a balanced fact checking condition. So as we expected, we find out people who are expected to balanced fact checking condition has achieved, will achieve the best effect in terms of misinformation correction. So if people are constantly fed with one sided checking, there also could be some problems. So these are some of the preliminary findings I want to share as an opening. And then I look forward to discussing this topic with you further. Thank you.



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Dev Lewis: Thanks, Chris, thanks for sharing your work on on fact checking and social media platforms coming in from Hong Kong. Great. With that, we'll move into our moderated discussion section, during which Wolfgang and the rest of the participants will be on the virtual panel, so to speak. And we will then have an audience Q&A section right after that. So, I'll turn over the mic to you Wolfgang.

Wolfgang Schulz: Yeah, thanks. Thanks so much. So I have the pleasure to kick this conversation off. And I will start with a follow up to you Nurma because I like to better understand the system. Could you elaborate a little bit on how platforms are held accountable in this system? On content moderation, would be interested in learning more about that.

Nurma Fitrianingrum: Yeah. Actually, according to the regulation of Ministry of Communications and Informatics (MOCI) number five, platforms should be responsible for the contents that's on their space. So they, they should be proactively cleaning or debunking misinformation and disinformation. But also, in a lot of cases, the government directly requested them to remove certain contents that they deem as misinformation and disinformation. And, in a lot of cases, I ask friends who work for those platforms, actually, they are more like following the government orders here, and because we have quite strict government, and but I also found the data that actually the average of the social medias they follow those orders are like, between 15%. So so there is still room for them to to challenge the government decision, but but it's harder for the people who posted those materials and got removed because they can only challenge after you remove all at not during the decision making process.

Wolfgang Schulz: Okay, now the better understand what would your view be? So one of the obvious question, I think is that we have been in the in the process of thinking about systems to deal with the disinformation problem. How does it work to link systems to a judgment of the statement being true or false? And as I've demonstrated in the European system, it's much about structures, procedures, and things like that and a little bit shy away from the decision on what disinformation actually is. And there



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might be some value in that. But they are systems and some national states, as demonstrated in Europe that really say there has to be a judgement, whether that's true or false. And what would normally your take would be having studied the system and your country. Does it work at the problem? Is it really feasible approach? Really, to make decisions about the statements? Because we all know languages and things like that, what are your views on that? Because I think that's for the future, how we proceed, really makes a difference?

Nurma Fitrianingrum: Yeah. In my opinion, this is kind of like very unfair. And I will not suggest anyone to follow what Indonesia is doing right now, even though when I asked a friend who work from the Ministry Moci, they said that actually in the decision making process, the government in false also a fact checking organizations, but we never really know about how for they make the decision, like the process because so far there is no transparency report from the government about what kind of content that they actually requested the platforms to, to remove and and yeah. A lot of civil society organizations here actually also suggested the approach that the EU already is initiated about, like, working together with platforms, and then the government organizations, civil society organizations, and media to make a national platform council or something like that to to really solve the problem of misinformation and not just solely rely on the government and decision because it's the situation of political situation in Indonesia right now. It's, I don't want to say it's close to authoritarian, but yeah, we are going to that way. So it's, yeah, we need to control or limiting the control of the government.

Wolfgang Schulz: Thank you for this frank frank remarks. I personally remember that when when the Network Enforcement Act in Germany was coming into effect. Some people might remember that was one of the first laws enacted worldwide and specifically mandating social media companies to come up with an compliance mechanism that is capable of deleting content in 24 hours if it's manifestly illegal, and I've been to Indonesia that time, and the government was really interested in this law. I remember that that. Oh, that's interesting. That's something we might want to implement in a similar way. And that brings us back to this question that the same set



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of rules can mean completely different things and different political and cultural contexts. Also talked about that and Hungary example and the court system is maybe not completely independent and courts checking these kinds of things can be problematic.

Nurma Fitrianingrum: Yeah, actually, I think this regulation is also kind of mirroring the regulation for Germany but they make it more strict especially when it comes to the timeframe from a removal for hours for urgent content and then 24 hours maximum for other missed information, this information that's not that they that they consider not urgent. So it's very, I think, for the chairman, they have longer time frame, if I'm not mistaken, 24 hours as, as well as Indonesia, in this regulation they do not consider the size of the platform. So for, especially when it comes to this timeframe, it will be harder to platforms who has less or small resources to hire a lot of fact checkers or are like to just doing the minimum.

Wolfgang Schulz: Yeah, that's an interesting thing to observe when you have regulation, and you adapted to another country and situation and change timeframes and things like that, it can mean completely different things. Completely understand that. Chris, I was really intrigued by how you ended your presentation when you said that you might have fact checkers from different perspectives, and neutral and more one side of the polarization situation and the other side. And then at first glance seems a little bit strange, because when we talk about fact checking, then we are talking about something true or not true, you can't get different opinions on whether that's true or not. And that seems to highlight again, the problem of this kind of distinction. So if you could talk a little bit more about that, that would be fascinating. What what do you learn when you look at these different check checking perspectives?

Chris Fei Shen: Thank you Wolfgang. Well, maybe I didn't clear my point clear enough when I introduced the last part of my study. I'm in Hong Kong. As I mentioned, there is a lot, quite a few different fact checking organizations. And some of them have partisan bias. By saying partisan bias, I'm not saying when they do the same topic fact



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check, they will give you different results. But they are what I'm saying is they are doing different types of different topics of fact checking, for example, you know, there is a rumor about party A, were I'm supporting for party A so I want to clarify that. But as for rumors, or misinformation is for party B, which I'm against, I wouldn't do that kind of fact checking, you know, that this is what the type of bias I'm talking about. It's mostly about topic selection. Topics selection. And, I'm not sure if this kind of phenomenon also exists in other parts of the world. Because my study so far only looks at the situation of Hong Kong. You know fact checking organizations are supposed to be you know, neutral, but in reality, it could be difficult, right? In reality, you can have a partisan bias. But there's actually a study conducted by a Chinese University of Hong Kong scholar, the conclusion is kind of similar to mine. That is that different types of fact checking organizations in Hong Kong, when they conducting a fact check, they do it professionally. In terms of topic selections, there are natural bias to them, you know? Yeah.

Wolfgang Schulz: Yes, when when we had the chance to talk with fact checking organizations here over in Europe and Germany a couple of weeks ago, and one of the issues was that it might be helpful and some have it already to have a more step approach. The first one is to assess what kind of statement is that actually, is that something that can be fact checked? And that you not only come up with that is true or not true, but that may be that is misleading, or, yeah, there are some arguments that go to this direction. So that's not just about saying that's bluntly false, but giving some context for example, do we have similar observations there? What is your view on that?

Chris Fei Shen: Yeah, exactly. I mean, fact checking organizations are not does not possess, you know, God sized perspective. So, in particular, most of the misinformation, it cannot be answered cannot be judged by true or false. In particular, many of them are, you know, has had very complex contexts. Sometimes, the use of wording is misleading. Sometimes, you know, the picture could be misleading, you know. So, I see Hong Kong Baptist University's fact checking organization, they, the answer they provide to anu factchecking is not true or false answer. In fact, they come



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up with a paragraph and details the problem with certain pieces of information and explain why in which aspect this is wrong, or this is not accurate, you know, so that's my basically, we need to provide context and details, rather than a simple yes or no or true or false.

Wolfgang Schulz: Yeah, and the the what I find extremely interesting in your research is that you look into the effects, which is normally the most important, but also the methodologically most challenging element. And my assumption would be, and if you have a reflection on that I would be really happy is that when we talk about the effects of misinformation, it might be good to look at different groups of people. If you are really deep into conspiracy, for example, it will be really hard to have factchecking making any kind of effect. It's just more convincing you that there are dark powers behind platforms and governments or what whosoever you're thinking is directed term. But if you are more neutral, then maybe it makes a difference that you have I think they're even saying someone not that is false. But some people question whether that is correct or not. Would you agree that there's a monument looking at different different groups, but perception is helpful?

Chris Fei Shen: Definitely. That's, that's a very important question to ask. I think in past few years, I did some different studies in Hong Kong and also in mainland China about misinformation effects influence on people. And, in general, I agree with your view. In particular, there are several typical groups that are vulnerable, very vulnerable to misinformation. One is the, you know, disadvantaged group of people, people with low socio economic status, they have lower education. So they have relatively less, lower level of media literacy to start with. So it's very difficult to help them to understand what are the features of misinformation. And another group of people who are vulnerable to misinformation is people who are, you know, high on ideological extremes, you know. If you are supporting a certain party or are partisanship or group of people, you have strong identity, then those kinds of misinformation tend to have the biggest effect on people. You know, in mainland China, it's about if you have a misinformation about the United States government, then Chinese people will be very happy to believe because it's in line with their preconception. Same thing in Hong



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Kong, and I think elsewhere in the world, in the United States, political polarization is also deeply intertwined with the issue of misinformation. So partisans are more likely to believe in those kind of accurate description or emotionally laden information.

Wolfgang Schulz: So we look a little bit to the future what what do you think of having studied this phenomenon and the instruments combating it closely? What are promising avenues that we should follow? What information do we need? What should the academic community provide like like you present your research to optimize the system. Nurma, what is your take on that. What are promising things and instruments that that we might work on in this field?

Nurma Fitrianingrum: Yeah. For Indonesia that I believe that a lot of fact checking organizations also NGOs CSOs, already working on this issue to increase digital literacy and then also debunking a lot of information. Even though we need, we really need to measure the activity of all this approach because the government itself already spends billion to the effort of digital education, digital literacy program, and also fact checking program. But actually, for me, especially for now, I don't really know which which is the most effective way or what what way that we should take to fight misinformation. But I believe that platforms should be included in the in the discussion in the, in the work, the working process, to really eradicate that because we thought those without their participation, it will be hard. And so far, we only measured or see or fact check the misinformation in social media. But we never know in Indonesia, with social messaging apps, especially with WhatsApp like 90% of Indonesians use WhatsApp and from my experience with my family, I saw a lot of this information in those applications in WhatsApp and, and there, there is no one who do in the fact check there. And and I think it the problem will be there, instead of social media, especially for Indonesia.

Wolfgang Schulz: So this evaluation element is definitely something we have to put on the list. And I remember that you mentioned before that transparency, and not only transparency about the actions of the platforms, which is important, definitely, but also



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transparency about government measures. And that is, I think, something important as well. Chris, what's your take on that? What is a promising future avenue in factchecking? I think fact checking if it is nuanced enough, is something. There is a question in the chat that's, again, coming back to the preconceived bias or ideology and that that limits the effect of fact checking. I think you mentioned that already. But maybe you can elaborate on that a little as well.

Chris Fei Shen: Sure. Sure. Well, I think, first of all, we need to be realistic about this. I mean it's just like we now all over the world are living with the pandemic, living with the virus. I think we have to live with misinformation for the rest of our lives and our future generations' lives. We cannot get rid of it, right? It will be there. So harsh regulation could be one solution, but it cannot cure all the problem. I mean we, we, we need multiple approach to this problem. And on the audience side, I think, to foster a healthy fact culture, it's in line with our most of our education philosophy, that is to have a critical eye on all the information received. In particular, in such an era we live in this massive amount of information we encounter online on a daily basis. So which is true, which is not, which is partially true, which is partially because we all need to be having a really critical eye on those. So, on the other side, I think platforms may also have a responsibility to, you know foster a fact checking culture. Just like Facebook could be used as a platform to distribute false information. It can also be a responsible platform, to maybe, you know, fund or even organize scholars and studies and fact checking organizations to make their influence more powerful. I mean, they can design algorithms to send fact checking information to people. To some extent, mainland Chinese companies under government pressure, they are doing this. You know, you know, big companies like Tencent or Baidu, they all, they all have their fact checking team. But obviously you can say that there's a political bias to it. But regardless, they're fact checking kind of effort is very powerful. There's a strong presence of Chinese social media that fact checking information of various kinds, but obviously, they don't touch on sensitive political issues. You know. That's something I think platforms can learn from some of the Chinese companies practice.



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Wolfgang Schulz: Yeah. That's that's a lot of things to consider as well. I have some some questions from the people listening to our conversation, maybe we can, can open it now. And I just, we, as a panel can see what we can address. And please chime in whenever you find it helpful. But I start maybe with one question from from the chat that I got a couple of minutes ago that's from Thailand.

And a question for all speakers is how to increase platform transparency and accountability. And how could a small country, such as Thailand, require platforms to create effective complaint mechanisms at a national level, when there is only state or marketing office without any decision making power present in the jurisdiction? That's an important question that, that there is only a set of marketing officers even true for some very large countries. But of course, that makes a difference how big the market is, and how important the platform's view this kind of market. What's your view on that? Any any ideas?

Nurma Fitrianingrum: Maybe this is my personal opinion that maybe the government can impose incentives or disincentives in terms of economic when, for example, platforms can effectively increase their transparency and accountability, the government can change the or mixed incentive or in terms of their tax or something. But also this is this requires the government's political will and commitment because Thailand is very unique, very unique, has very unique political structure, in my opinion, so and where the freedom of expression is a bit limited. So it will, if they ask are the people and the government asked for more transparency, of course, the government is that will be affected in that terms.

Wolfgang Schulz: Chris, feel free. It's not so much about your empirical perspective but please feel free to give your views as well. So my 10 cents on that is that it can help when national regulators try to copy ideas from other countries, because as I see it, big platforms, it's all about scalability. And if they have the feeling that for Thailand, they have to build something completely new, then it is more costly for them to do that. But when you say I've seen we have created a system there, that will be something that can help here as well. And that would be maybe the first steps to convince them to come up with this kind of kind of thing. And the second thing is you need the powerful



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person within a company that lobbies for you as the regulator if you do not have the the power to formally formally request that, but it's an extremely interesting question, I would say. Well, that is possible and happy to talk about that later on if you're interested. So she is now working with the regulator in Thailand, as far as I know, as a former colleague of mine from Chulalongkorn University. Hello, good to hear from you again, by the way Other questions from we had someone wanting the floor, but I don't see the hand anymore. Please chime in.

Audience Member (Cherian George, Professor, Hong Kong Baptist University):

Thanks so much, Wolfgang. I guess a comment, although I welcome your reactions as well, I think it struck by some of the discussions that went before, I think it may be useful to distinguish counter disinformation from fact checking. They're not the same thing. Because we know from propaganda studies, we know from hate speech research, for example, that very, very effective propaganda, very effective hate campaigns can actually be fueled by purely factual information. And it is really the framing of the fact, the selectivity of the facts that can be very, very powerful, often more powerful than, you know, what the Americans called pants on fire lines, right? So a typical example would be if you curate factual news stories of immigrants or you know, unpopular religious minorities involved in sexual offenses or crimes, those individual stories can be purely true. But simply by selectivity, by framing, you can create what we would certainly call disinformation. So I've always been a bit skeptical about putting our eggs so much, so many of our eggs into the fact checking basket, I'm really quite excited about the effects in the long term against disinformation.

Wolfgang Schulz: Thanks very much for this important insight. Anyone wants to comment on that, Chris? Any any more questions on that? We had a question sent before there was one on the EU again, but I'm happy to, to answer that later on, because good to see what the perspectives from other parts of the world are.

Dev Lewis: We also had a question provided earlier on was on the role that social media platforms can play in dismantling state sponsored disinformation? So for



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instance, we I mean, I think Nan in the chat talked about how in Thailand, after doing some research and fact checking, we found that most of the you know, disinformation was actually from government policy, or government sources. Yeah, I was wondering how that sort of strikes at a very core issue of interests, where the state and maybe platforms don't align. I was wondering, maybe, maybe Numa, you might have some some thoughts from Indonesia, but also Chris, in Hong Kong.

Nurma Fitrianingrum: Thank you, maybe I will add some of the data or experience in Indonesia, because I think a few years ago, the international community and also Indonesian organisations noticed that there were some organize activity in social media. In Indonesia, they are known as a buzzer who make engagement and also create a narrative about certain issues and some of them are allegedly sponsored by state actors. I will not say it's state agency or, but it state actors and, and from based on from the research, it's it's quite clear that those was true. And actually Facebook, then remove those accounts and their activities without noticing, or without consultation with the government under the reason of coordinating the inauthentic activity and engagement. So I think in the sense that actually part from can take part in such activity to reduce fake news or, or hate speech, but sometimes it's also hard because we have one case also, when the one of the government bodies actually requested Facebook to take down a hate speech, but Facebook refused because they don't see any violence factor in those statements. So they use a global context to judge the Indonesian case. So I think, yeah, here, of course, social media platforms should be more proactive.

Dev Lewis: So, thanks for that, Nurma. So we have one question from Pauline. And then perhaps we'll find alternative to maybe give you a final take on the Digital Services Act question that we had earlier. And we can maybe end with that. So I think Pauline's question was perhaps Chris is the best person to take that, which is, do you agree that factchecking has a limited impact on people with preconceived bias ideology? And do you think that psychology might be more useful in combating misinformation?



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Chris Fei Shen: Yeah, I definitely agree with that. But fact checking cannot cure all the problems and responding to Pauline's earlier question on this, you know, she mentioned, when it comes to contentious issues, it wouldn't be able to fact checking is not possible, right. But I think we do what we can do. And maybe there are 80% of things that we have factual information that can be fact checked the rest of the 20% we try our best, you know, and in terms of population or group differences, we try to influence people that can be influenced first, and then focus on those who are difficult to reach. And misinformation studies, effects that is in academia is very similar to persuasion studies that are popular after the Second World War, you know, when cognitive psychologists are interested in how to change people's attitude. So basically, it's the same question. But the stimuli become different early on, it could be political propaganda, but now it's just misinformation. Yeah, I agree. We cannot solve every problem. Yeah, we try our best.

Dev Lewis: Thank you, Chris. I think we were running out of time, but we'll just leave this discussion has been so great. So I think I'll let Wolfgang have the final word. I think we had the question on the EU's Digital Services Act, and how effective it is you I think you already gave you a view at the start, but perhaps may want to like double click a little bit on that.

Wolfgang Schulz: Yeah, we'll make it really, really brief. I think the Digital Services Act in that respect is very overrated. But I would give it the chance that the very brief answer to that. And second thing, I believe that what we need, and we are in the progress of setting that up. And we need a kind of network of NGOs and also academic observers for DSA implementation. And my take is that this network has had to have arm's length distance not only to the platform, but also to the European Commission and additional coordinators, and to really give a fresh perspective on the process. And we hope that we can deliver on some things, and I'm happy to share the the insights we get when we have a discussion like that the year or two. So back to you, Dev and many, many thanks. I've learned a lot.



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Dev Lewis: Thank you so much, Wolfgang, and yeah, I'm sure we could keep this conversation running for another hour at least. But unfortunately, we're gonna have to put the pause here. Thank you to firstly to all our speakers, Wolfgang, Nurma, and Chris, for joining us and sharing your views and your research. I think that was really, really valuable and insightful. Thank you for the great questions from everyone joining in. I think they really push the discussion forward. And of course, our conversation doesn't end here. We will be putting some recordings available on YouTube. And we'll be continuing this conversation over the coming months, looking at many other areas around platforms and how they're impacting our lives. And so I encourage all of you who have not subscribed to our YouTube channel or Twitter or a newsletter to do so so you get all the updates. Finally, thank you all and have a good rest of the day. Thanks for joining. Goodbye.