

Pro-democracy platform advocacy: Fostering social media's accountability to dissident voices under authoritarianism (ProPA)

You are asked to participate in the study "Pro-democracy platform advocacy: Fostering social media's accountability to dissident voices under authoritarianism (ProPA)". Your participation is voluntary: you are not obliged to take part and if you refuse, this will have no negative consequences for you. Take enough time to decide whether or not you want to participate. You can also ask the researcher questions at any time if something is not clear. You can stop your participation at any time (in writing or orally) and you do not have to give a reason for doing so.

Below you can find more information about the study and how it will proceed. If you would like additional information, you can always contact the researcher or her supervisor.

Contact details

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This research is part of a postdoctoral fellowship funded by the European Union. The main goal of this research is to examine ongoing advocacy efforts on social media platforms' content moderation in Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia. The following research question will be addressed: **To which extent have advocacy efforts led to changes in digital platforms' content moderation practice?** The research will produce both academic and policy publications.

The participants are digital rights activists and other pro-democracy activists whose communities from Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia are politically active on social media.

Interviews will be conducted either physically in a neutral environment that provides adequate privacy for the participants or virtually via end-to-end encrypted communication tools.

An information document will be sent to participants one or a few days before interviews. Before each interview starts, the researcher will ask if the participant gives informed consent to participate in the research, then will audio-record the participant's verbal consent: "I have received a copy of the information document with the researcher's signature. I agree to participate in the described research and to the processing of my personal data for scientific research publication. I give permission to be quoted anonymously. My name will not be published and the confidentiality of the data is guaranteed during the research." If the participant agrees to have the interview audio-recorded, their verbal consent will further include: "I agree to have my interview audio recorded." If the participant agrees to have an interpreter present during the interview, the verbal consent will also include: "I agree to the participation of interpreter in my interview."

Audio recordings will be used in order to accurately capture the participants' responses for later analysis. The participants can refuse audio recording without being excluded from the research.

Each interview might last around 1 hour to 1.5 hours.

The researcher will make sure that the participants' identities are not exposed via research documents or publications. The researcher will not record the participants' personal identities (name, age, gender, ethnic/religious identity, organisation's name). Any communications between the researcher and participants will be via end-to-end encrypted channels.

After each interview, participants have the right to review their interview transcript to remove any unwanted parts.

Via the research, participants will gain improved knowledge and understanding about platform advocacy from Southeast Asia toward big tech on political content moderation. The researcher will share the research findings with participants.

The research findings will also inform the activists of effective advocacy strategies that they can integrate in their ongoing campaigns. *The combined impact will result in a **safer and more inclusive** digital environment in the long run.*

Privacy and confidentiality

As a researcher, I have a **duty of confidentiality** with regard to the data collected. This means that I undertake, for example in the context of a publication or a conference, never to reveal your name or any other data that could identify you. Nor will individual results ever be published.

In the course of this research project personal data will be collected from you. The collection and processing of your data is possible because I carry out scientific research and I receive your **express consent**.

The collection and processing of data is in accordance with the legal principles imposed by the European **General Data Protection Regulation** (GDPR), which has been in force since 25 May 2018. I, Mai Van Tran, supervise the correct processing of your personal data and the associated information obligation.

This obligation to provide information means that I have to inform you about:

- a. What **personal data** I collect from/about you, in particular: audio recordings (optional), your organization's work and types of stakeholders, the stakeholders' experience with social media activism, and your organization's advocacy engagement with social media companies.
- b. That the VUB (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussel, KBO 449.012.406) acts as controller of your data.
- c. That the data are collected and processed for the purpose of the aforementioned study. In accordance with the relevant legislation, data collected as part of the study will be retained for 5 years.
- d. That I may only use your personal data for scientific purposes.
- e. That you have the right to access and correct your data. You also have the right to erase your data, to limit their processing, to object to their processing and to transfer your data to third parties. If you have any questions, please contact the researcher and/or her supervisor.

- f. You have the right to withdraw your consent to the processing of your data at any time. The withdrawal of consent does not affect the lawfulness of the processing of the data obtained prior to the withdrawal of consent.
- g. That your details will only be viewed by the researcher appointed above and will not be shared with other institutions.
- h. Your data will be stored and secured in accordance with the guidelines of the VUB.
- i. If you wish to exercise your rights or if you have any further questions regarding your rights and the processing of your personal data, you can always contact the VUB **Data Protection Officer**: dpo@vub.be.
- j. That in order to guarantee your privacy the following protection measures will be taken:
 - The data collected are not anonymous in the first phase, which is why they are converted into codes (pseudonymisation) as soon as possible. This is a second dataset that is created where it is no longer possible to identify you directly. A "translation key" is therefore created which can convert the codes back to their original meaning. Only the researcher, Mai Van Tran, has access to this key and thus to the non-anonymous data. This ensures that only the researcher can link this data to you as a person. The encryption key is stored separately and securely.
 - The audio recordings made during the interview are converted to transcriptions as soon as possible and the audio recordings are then deleted.
 - Your data will only be stored on [REDACTED] This has strict access conditions and offers a high degree of protection. Your data is therefore never stored on the personal computer or on a USB stick (except when the data is encrypted on the USB stick) of the researcher and is never forwarded by e-mail.
- k. Finally, you also have the right to **complain** about how your data is being handled. You can do this with the Belgian supervisory authority responsible for enforcing data protection legislation, in particular:

Gegevensbeschermingsautoriteit (GBA)
 Drukpersstraat 35
 1000 Brussel
 Tel. +32 2 274 48 00
 e-mail: contact@apd-gba.be
 Website: www.gegevensbeschermingsautoriteit.be

Statement by the Researcher

I, the undersigned Tran, Mai Van, researcher, declare that I have provided the required information about this study orally, as well as a copy of the information document to the participant.

I confirm that no pressure has been exerted on the participant to have him/her consent to participate in the study and I am willing to answer any additional questions.

I confirm that I work in accordance with the ethical principles as stated in "The Code for Scientific Research in Belgium" and the ethical principles within my specific research discipline.

I confirm that I work in accordance with the legal obligations regarding the correct processing of personal data as stated in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Name, First Name, Date and signature of researcher

Tran, Mai Van
4/12/2023

