

NEW EC(H)O SYSTEMS: DEMOCRACY IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

16-17 March 2021
National Centre for Peace
and Conflict Studies,
University of Otago &
online

A conference on social media, democracy and
the post-pandemic engagement with violence,
identity, rights & peace.

Save the date.

Details will be posted at
<https://www.otago.ac.nz/ncpacs>



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Te Ao o Rongomaraeroa

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Purpose & contribution

Purpose: The pandemic is an invitation to revise political, policy and profit models no longer fit for purpose. Coronavirus has accelerated the pace of social media's use and abuse. At the same time, opportunities arising from new norms around remote working and virtual connections provide fertile landscapes to seed and strengthen prosocial content and conversations. To grasp these positive potentials requires meaningful and enduring exchanges among stakeholders in exploring and improving various frameworks of cooperation for positive social cohesion.

Contribution: In framing a daily contest between democratic potential and divisive propaganda, this conference will strengthen the critical appreciation of contemporary challenges facing social media users, analysts, developers, and regulators around the interfaces of social media, governance, conflict, and peace. Featuring input from academia, government, Silicon Valley companies, activists, journalists, and civil society, a range of critical perspectives, including best practices from Aotearoa-New Zealand, will highlight emerging opportunities and festering issues facing societies across the globe.

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Major themes

- 1. The double-edge of democracy and social media:** It is not enough to see the dangers of social media undermining effective, representative governance. Inextricably entwined in governance and government, social media provides rich, new, and exciting potential to strengthen democracy. Responsibility, responsiveness, and transparency are key words in this string of governance, accountability and oversight.
- 2. The social psychology of users and digital communities:** The diversity of uses and users complicates meaningful responses to hate and violence in social media. Users shape social media as much as social media content shapes users' actions, and through engagement, public perceptions, and real-life actions. Language, context, and culture in particular impact platform usage and these interactions require deeper exploration.
- 3. The political anthropology of on-line indigenes and activists - giving voice to the marginalised vs deleting the margins:** What can we learn from historically marginalised communities that have creatively adopted, adapted, and deployed social media tools to advance emancipatory and liberative movements in real time?

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