

# Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

<b>Primary SDG</b>	<b>16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</b>
<b>Broad theme</b>	Technology, social movements and finance
<b>Research</b>	Documenting the role technology is playing in social movements in Malaysia and in the finance sector in Indonesia
<b>Impact region</b>	SE Asia
<b>Faculty</b>	Business
<b>School/Institute</b>	Information Systems
<b>Academic</b>	Dr Carmen Leong
<b>Project partners</b>	Malaysia: University of Malaysia
	Indonesia: University of Indonesia, UNSW-Indonesia Seed Fund – grant of \$10,000
<b>Related SDGs</b>	9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
	10: Reduced Inequalities

## Elevator pitch

Carmen documented the pivotal role social media is playing in social movements in Malaysia, helping to understand how these movements gather momentum. In Indonesia she illustrated the role technology is performing in delivering cheaper banking services to entrepreneurs in a complex financial sector.

## The Challenge: Much contested election process in Malaysia, a dated financial system in Indonesia

In Malaysia, the same government has held power since independence in 1957. Critics have argued the government is corrupt and has failed to adequately develop the country. Vehement sections of the population are not happy with the government as a result. At the same time, social media is as popular and present in Malaysia as in any modern country, and is providing fertile ground for social movements to gain traction and be heard.

Nearly two thirds of people in Indonesia do not have a bank account. Over 50 million people access money through 60,000 microfinance institutions (MFIs). But transaction costs for these MFIs are typically high, people are not encouraged to save money, and the MFIs do not have access to banking systems and IT, relying instead on paper, pen and word of mouth.

## UNSW's solution: Document social media role in social movements, and influence of fintech

Carmen's research is concerned with how technology can empower marginalised communities. In Malaysia in 2015, she researched the role social media played in mobilising social movements and rallies protesting against the government. She examined Facebook groupings, and interviewed heads of movements to grasp the extent of social media's role in movements like Occupy Wall Street, which saw 90 cities around the world, including cities in Malaysia, participate.

In Indonesia, Carmen researched how Indonesian entrepreneurs are leveraging fintech (financial technology) to access banking services they couldn't access before because of high transaction costs. Working together with the University of Indonesia, she interviewed over 70 customers (entrepreneurs), MFIs and new companies providing financial transaction services by mobile. Her research examined the social implications of this financial inclusion and the effect on access to capital for entrepreneurs.

Before coming to UNSW, Carmen examined the role social media was playing before and during floods in Thailand in partnership with Thammasat University. Thailand experienced its worst flood in 2011. Carmen interviewed the former mayor of a city and conducted an analysis of Facebook groups to illustrate how social media was helping people to understand the impact of floods, how to react and where to find safe ground.

**The Impact: Help social movements, financial policy makers and companies to be more effective**

Carmen's work in Malaysia has raised awareness of the significant role social media is playing in mobilising protests. This information will help organisers to be more efficient and effective in their activities, increasing and sharpening support for social movements seeking justice. Her findings will also be of interest to academics and government officials looking to understand and respond to social media's power.

Documenting the disruption of the financial sector as a result of technology in Indonesia is helpful for policy makers looking to encourage small businesses and minimise financial hurdles. They can ascertain the rate of change and its direction, and develop policies and legislation accordingly. The research is also of help for fintech companies looking to be ahead of the curve in their provision of timely services to entrepreneurs and citizens. Ultimately, it is the people of Indonesia who will benefit through lower financial costs and easier access to capital.

**Researcher**

Dr Carmen Leong is an early career researcher in Information Systems at UNSW Business School. She received her PhD degree from The National University of Singapore in 2015. Her research interests include digital empowerment in social studies and digitally enabled strategic transformation in organisations. Previously, she worked for four years in the private and public sectors in Singapore and Malaysia. Having grown up in Malaysia, Carmen is passionate about the social implications of development in emerging countries.

Ben Falkenmire 04.04.18