

How Duterte Used Facebook To Fuel the Philippine Drug War | BuzzFeed News

By Davey Alba

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Davey Alba does a deep-dive into Facebook's predominance in the Philippines, where the platform is increasingly used as a source of news, a means for relating to the internet, and a medium for social life. She argues finds that Facebook's widespread use enabled the election of the country's autocratic president, Rodrigo Duterte. Alba goes on to explore the ways in which the Duterte administration now uses Facebook as a tool of repression. With interviews from ordinary Filipinos, Alba also demonstrates how trust in institutions, facts, and social relationships are quickly degrading.

If you want to know what happens to a country that has opened itself entirely to Facebook, look to the Philippines. What happened there — what continues to happen there — is both an origin story for the weaponization of social media and a peek at its dystopian future. It's a society where, increasingly, the truth no longer matters, propaganda is ubiquitous, and lives are wrecked and people die as a result — half a world away from the Silicon Valley engineers who'd promised to connect their world.

[...]

Facebook's struggle to wrangle fake news in the United States is well known. But that struggle extends far beyond the borders of the US, and it is particularly difficult in markets like the Philippines, where in many cases, Facebook lacks the cultural context to police its platform. The company says it is growing its team of 7,500 content reviewers — a mix of full-time employees, contractors, and companies Facebook partners with for content review — which allows it to cover every time zone. Facebook also said its teams can evaluate content in over 50 languages, including Tagalog and other Filipino dialects like Ilocano, Cebuano, and Tausug. It says it is investing in people, and will have 20,000 working in safety and security by the end of this year. But according to Filipinos who have experienced harassment on the platform, the social network's systems are woefully inadequate.

[...]

The story of Facebook's rise in the Philippines is, in many ways, the story of Facebook's original mission of "making the world more open and connected," and its unexpected, calamitous consequences. It's the story of Facebook working exactly as designed in a country that seemingly had so much to gain from embracing it. It's the story of what happens in a society when truth no longer matters. And, if you've paid any attention at all to what's happened in the [United States](#) this past year, what's happened in [France](#), in [Mexico](#), and in [Myanmar](#), it's a familiar one.

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