

HASHTAGS, MEMES, AND MORE: CREATIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR ADVOCACY

In the age of social media, compelling communication strategies that interact with internet culture are essential for supporting effective advocacy campaigns. Designers and social media strategists can draw upon the latest theories of digital and social engagement to mobilize audiences and effect real change. But design becomes especially challenging across borders. Different countries and cultures share different vernaculars, including variances in language, tone, color, space, and even sense of humor and satire. Visual advocacy campaigns are not one-size-fits-all and even have the potential to subvert an otherwise well-intentioned cause.

This workshop aims to develop frameworks for understanding internet culture and how it can inspire impactful advocacy campaigns. It consists of a series of case studies, an overview of creative process for advocacy work, and a training session.

WHO WE ARE

NOEMI LARDIZABAL- DADO

Blog Watch Citizen
Media

Noemi Lardizabal-Dado is the editor of Blog Watch Citizen Media, otherwise known as [@momblogger](#) in social media, making a difference in the lives of her children and advocating social change for social good.

Blog Watch Citizen Media is composed of independent-minded bloggers, citizen advocates, and social media users who leverage new technology tools to advocate for social change and serve as a nonpartisan citizens' watchdog and collective conscience for transparency and good governance. Their website is at [blogwatch.ph](#) and [blogwatch.tv](#)

JANE T. UYMATIAO

Blog Watch Citizen
Media

Jane T. Uymatiao is a Co-Founder of Blog Watch, a citizen advocacy group that pushes for transparency and good governance through the written word as well as through social media engagement. On Twitter, she is known as [@philippinebeat](#). Jane is a Certified Public Accountant. She has a Master's degree in Business Administration from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.

AN XIAO MINA

The Civic Beat

An Xiao Mina is an artist, writer and creative technologist passionate about the space where art and technology meet social change and human rights issues. She is co-founder of The Civic Beat and works at the SF-based Meedan Labs as product owner for Bridge, a platform for social translation of social media. Having recently served as a section editor for Ai Weiwei: Spatial Matters, she is currently working on a book about online creative culture and civic engagement around the world.

[The Civic Beat \(www.thecivicbeat.com\)](#) is a research collective and online magazine focused on creative engagement and global social movements in global contexts. Members have presented their work at SXSW and the Personal Democracy Forum and have written for publications like the Atlantic, the New Inquiry and the Los Angeles Review of Books.

MAREK TUSZYNSKI

Tactical Tech

Marek makes different things: he can write, talk and draw. He likes basic and complicated ideas. He is also good at listening to other people and politely turning their thoughts into his own. He can also produce things: books, films, events and shapeless objects. He is never bored. You can read his recent stuff [here](#); watch [here](#) or listen to [here](#). And more importantly he also likes to inspire other people to do things and stay politically tuned in that's why he co-founded Tactical Technology Collective a good 12 years ago.

Tactical Tech ([@Info_Activism](#)) is a non-profit organisation, working since 2003 to advance the use of information and digital technologies by advocates and activists worldwide <https://tacticaltech.org/>

ANQI LI (MODERATOR)

Access

Anqi Li is the Visual Designer at Access, the global digital right advocacy group, where she works to translate the complex information into meaningful messages with her design skills. She used to be an editor and marketing planner in China, where she grew up as the first generation of netizens.

[Access \(https://www.accessnow.org/\)](https://www.accessnow.org/) defends and extends the digital rights of users at risk around the world. By combining innovative policy, user engagement, and direct technical support, we fight for open and secure communications for all.

WHY WE ARE DOING THIS WORKSHOP

- To develop frameworks for understanding internet culture and how it can inspire impactful advocacy campaigns
- To critically evaluate what contributes to viral online content for advocacy
- To develop messaging strategies that are current, innovative, interactive, nimble and effective

CASE STUDY

#epalwatch

This campaign is bringing about continuing changes in government policies in the Philippines. "Epal" is Filipino slang referring specifically to public servants who conspicuously append their names and pictures to posters, tarpaulins, and other items announcing their involvement in public projects. The hashtag campaign allows netizens to tweet epal photos by tagging #epalwatch with validating details. Together with another group of netizens at the facebook.com/nomoreepal, the #epalwatch campaign is bringing about continuing changes in government policies.

#UmbrellaMovement & #BlackLivesMatter

An overview of online strategies in two highly visible advocacy campaigns on two continents. (Comparative Studies: visual media / micro affirmations and actions; the role of viral media and the death of digital dualism; creativity through iteration; identifying/recognizing the pattern, the timing, and the chance, context; validating the trends, long term/short term hashtags, as well as the purposes of hashtags.)

WORKSHOP

5 MINUTES

Brainstorm on specific issues to discuss. Each person writes down one issue within the larger topic and the group discusses options.

Scenario (Pick one out of three): Internet Shutdown, Censorship, Net Neutrality

5 MINUTES

Take out a sheet of paper and start writing #hashtags. I'll set a timer, and every 20 seconds will ask folks to write a new hashtag. This will be tiring and will stretch our creative brains. But in the end, each person in the group will have 15 hashtags. It's okay if they're repetitive. Language: English, with the awareness that the group is very diverse in culture, and people are coming from different backgrounds.

1 MINUTES

Review your own hashtags and start circling the ones that you like. On each post-it note, try to trim down to 4-5 hashtags.

5 MINUTES

Paste your hashtags on the wall, and everyone can start looking at them. Don't discuss them... yet :) The point is that we'll see those hashtags in isolation, as we might encounter them on the web. Use your pens to place a dot on the hashtags that seem particularly interesting.

7 MINUTES

Small groups: Take the 3-5 most popular hashtags and leave them on the wall. Remove the rest. Now start discussing- what is interesting about them? How did they resonate? How might you craft a strategy?

10 MINUTES

10 minutes (big group): Choose one, and we'll share it with the group. Your reasons. And how you might use it in a campaign.

TIPS

- Make sure to search the hashtag you create before using it
- If it's already taken, append it with your country abbreviation or year
- Avoid using terms that misleads or is inappropriate
- Keep it short and sharp! (KISS)
- Choose between local or global language based on who you want to engage
- Test it out and don't be afraid to iterate