



Responding to climate change

RTCC – COP18 event review

Supporting climate policies through social media - opportunities and limits

This event, moderated by **Ed King**, RTCC, examined the role, challenges and potential of social media in climate change negotiations.

Nathan Thanki, Earth In Brackets, **Iain Keith**, Avaaz Foundation, **Heather Libby**, TckTckTck.org, and **Joshua Wiese**, Adopt A Negotiator, introduced their organizations. Wiese noted the recent transformational changes in the Arab Spring through social media, highlighting the evolution of the Ushahidi platform and the Moveon.org campaign as harnessing innovative forms of media.

Keith highlighted two main roles of social media: supplementing the lack of attention to climate change by the mainstream media, and allowing people to directly influence the climate change negotiations by building a critical mass of support. Libby described the role of social media in fact checking reports by corporations.



Moderator **Ed King**, RTCC, discusses Weibo with a Chinese participant.

One participant discussed use of Weibo in China, noting it is an alternative channel of information that is difficult for the government to control. Another said Twitter has changed the way communication is done, highlighting that it enables outreach to others beyond the “usual suspects.”

King noted the publication of fake British Petroleum and Shell websites. One participant said the fake websites stood out from other campaigns in their creativity. King wondered whether the media, who felt they had been conned by the fake sites, would be less likely to cover or respond positively to other actions in their wake.



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Thanki said social media coverage of the UNFCCC climate negotiations is complicated as it is challenging to reduce the nuances of negotiations to 140 characters, a short blog post or video blog (v-blog). He noted that on occasion this results in immediate mass misinformation. Keith said campaigns should engage people with humor, issues that speak to people and issues of the moment, noting that messages should be “catchy, sticky and easily transportable.”

Kelly Rigg, TckTckTck.org, via Skype, said the best social media campaigns allow participants to actively engage in the real world, citing Greenpeace’s Green My Apple campaign. Wiese said that in response to being named “Fossil of the Day” on Tuesday, Turkey has already responded with a request to meet with non-governmental organizations, as the v-blog had been picked up by the international press.

Keith responded to a question posed by a participant via Twitter noting the potential for social media to create an ecosystem for discussion of how to move forward. Thanki said the best use of social media is shaping understanding of climate negotiation outcomes.



Panel (L-R): **Heather Libby**, TckTckTck.org; **Joshua Wiese**, Adopt a Negotiator; **Iain Keith**, Avaaz Foundation; and **Nathan Thanki**, Earth In Brackets.



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