



FRAMiNG
THE DIGITAL
ALTERNATIVES

This featurette is distributed as part of the Everyday Digital Native video contest organized by The Centre for Internet & Society, India, and HIVOS Knowledge Programme, The Netherlands
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‘They effect social change through social media, place their communities on the global map, and share spiritual connections with the digital world - meet the everyday digital native. The video proposals show that the everyday digital native does not wake up in the morning and think, hmmm, today I will change the world. And yet, in their everyday lives, when they see the possibility of producing a change in their immediate environments, they turn to the digital to find networks that can start a change’

Nishant Shah, Center for Internet & Society



D I G I T A L N A T I V E V I D E O C O N T E S T

The Everyday Digital Native video contest has got its pulse on what makes youths from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds connect with one another in the global community – it’s an affinity for digital technologies and Web 2.0-mediated platforms coupled with a drive to spearhead social change. The contest invited people from around the world to make a video that would answer the question, ‘Who is the Everyday Digital Native?’ The final videos received more than 20,000 votes from the public and the top five winners will each receive EUR 500!



TOP 10 FINALIST

ANDRES FELIPE ARIAS PALMA | Baranquilla, Colombia

WHO IS A DIGITAL NATIVE?

I think many people are digital natives unknowingly. Being a digital native is a relationship with activism and society, not as they initially thought. It was a condition of being born in specific times and external factors. In the video, I will interview people about who is a digital native? How to use the Internet? What is internet advantages and disadvantages for society where everything is interconnected to the Web | <http://bit.ly/xp9MiY>



On being a Digital Native

I think that a Digital Native is somebody who has made technology a basic tool to cover all of her or his own needs. Anyway, there aren't any specific features that can define a digital native because it's a condition you define for yourself. I don't know if I'm a digital native, but technology has been very useful for my work and social initiatives.

You agree with a perception that the digital native is typically a “White, American, Young, Male” who’s always connected to his gadgets and apathetic to social issues?

I think it's just a stereotype, but there are people who don't have any social life and are stuck at home, online, all day long; and there is the person that works with social projects and makes use of technology as an instrument to optimize the labor as well. I think that the digital natives can be many, starting from being a web developer to responding to a simple tweet - you choose on what side or what kind of person you want to be.

Can digital natives from developing nations create an impact with digital activism?

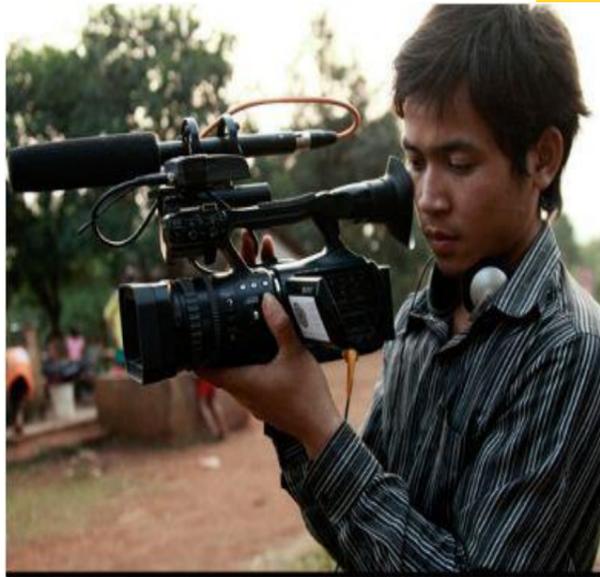
It is very important to know which one of the tools we employ is functional for what we want and what we need. For example, I am not going to use twitter to target a community that doesn't have any idea of what Web 2.0 is; in this case, perhaps it is more useful to use some other kind of technology or service. At present, I support the “Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica” on virtual workshops and with social media. Thus, I work with popular audiovisual education.

How effective are digital activism campaigns in raising awareness about an issue in comparison to traditional activism such as protest march or hunger strikes?

The traditional protest will never fade out. What's happening is that the network and the new technologies are making facts more visible, therefore issues are more transparent today and people are more aware. It depends on how each activist strategizes for his / her campaign. The real problem is when people mobilize support only through one platform and neglect the other. Both, digital and traditional (activism) go hand in hand.

The ‘Get Kony’ campaign created by US-based NGO Invisible Children has created controversy. What are your thoughts on the campaign?

Although I haven't seen it, the news and comments on the video brings to my mind the image of the typical ‘Young, White, American, Male’ stereotype that we just spoke about. However, it's worth mentioning that the “Get Kony” campaign has captured the attention of people, maybe because it uses a lot of audiovisual material and has received support from mainstream media, so perhaps something good might come out of it.



TOP 10 FINALIST

MARTIN POTTER | Australia

BIG STORIES, SMALL TOWN

Over a period of nearly four years, moving across small towns in Australia and South East Asia, I have seen the most extraordinary innovations at a local community level. My video will focus on these local stories which have a global impact. I am pursuing a PhD in participatory media and this will lend a uniquely academic perspective on the concept of collaboration, community life and innovation | <http://bit.ly/AqVKNb>



Do you identify with the term Digital Native – how do you define it?

Digital Natives use technology as a natural part of their day to day life – socializing, work, communications, and community building. We don't need to be born into an era of technology - these are skills and patterns of use that can be acquired, given the right circumstances. Maybe I am a digital native, who knows.... I don't think you need to belong to a particular economic group, however you do need to belong to a social context that facilitates peer engagement and networking and support, otherwise you may not be able to find something of interest in the technology without support.

Do you agree with the perception that the digital native is typically a “White, American, Young, Geek” apathetic to social causes?

Mostly agree. But the vital, inspiring and connected others who don't fit that description are the ones who seem to define the term - the use of social media to organize in the context of the recent Arab uprisings and the innovation in broad social use of media in developing regions is far more interesting. It seems the exceptions are defining the rules.

Can digital activists from developing nations create an impact through social media and online campaigns?

I'm from Australia (a developed country) where people still live in dire poverty in several areas. I see people in developing contexts (nations) leading the way in re-framing technologies for their use. I strongly believe that all levels of society can potentially participate in a digital world and can begin to address the unlevel playing fields of their societies and our global society.

Do you think traditional forms of activism are now supplemented by digital campaigns? What is your reaction to the “Get Kony 2012” video campaign?

One does not replace the other, but it can serve to enhance and expand the reach of such campaigns (traditional). As for Kony 2012, it's a very successful social media campaign with a problematic message; a great piece of polemic media, but to what end? Will it achieve its goal? In light of the meltdown of its maker and the questioning of the NGO Invisible Children will this encourage a cynical backlash from the people who invested in it - those that watched, shared and donated?

Are we seeing a trend where digital natives are more involved with local (neighborhood) causes than with global issues?

I think local causes may not have as much involvement. Robert Putnam's [Bowling Alone](#) points to a dilution of community at local levels. I think being connected to the world at a distance may lead to local social isolation. We have to focus on engaging with community and the people around us with the new tools, not opt out pretending we're a part of a bigger picture.



TOP 10 FINALIST

JAMES RAJASEKARAN | Madurai, India

LIFE IN THE CITY SLUMS

I live in the temple town of Madurai in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. I am a social worker and the plight of people living in slums is something that my NGO is closely associated with. My video will bring out the efforts of the people who live in the slums of Madurai by using community radio to record and retell their stories <http://bit.ly/ypDLQi>



What do you understand by the term Digital Native?

The term Digital Native is meant for users of digital equipment. Nowadays, even the common man utilizes digital devices in his daily life. In this sense, I consider myself a digital native.

There is a perception that the digital native is typically a Young, White, Male from the Global North (America), plugged in to his gadgets and apathetic to causes. Would you agree?

I cannot agree with this perception. People who are connected to gadgets have their own concerns on issues around them and if there is a chance to participate, the youngsters will participate. That's how we saw the youth participate in [Anna Hazare's](#) campaign against corruption in India.

Activism has changed in the last decade. Hunger strikes and sloganeering are exceptions to the rule. How effective are digital activism campaigns in raising awareness about an issue?

I don't think activism has changed all that much as we still march on the streets holding placards and utilize hunger strikes effectively to protest. Of course, digital activism campaigns can be a supportive mechanism in our protest to mobilize mass support.

Are digital natives taking the easy way out with what critics refer to as 'clicktivism'?

Sharing online is used as a tool for mobilizing mass support. However, it is also important to follow the matter in action on the field.

Are we seeing a trend where digital natives are more involved with local causes than with global issues?

I would say we are more interested in global issues than local situations. However, an issue always starts at the local level before it turns global. Unless the campaign has local importance it cannot achieve its goal.

Comment on the role of ICT in citizen action

Scientific progress has made it possible to use ICT tools for the development of society. It is in our hands to use these tools in a positive way to effect change.



Leon Tan, Jury

The contest has the potential to portray the lives of digital natives from around the world. The generosity of the contestants in creating proposals is commendable as is the range of ideas suggested. The ideas address both the risks and opportunities of what we might call



TOP 10 FINALIST

ANAND JHA | Bangalore, India

DEPLOYED

Bangalore is home to technology start-ups. A lot of geeks, who find it limiting to work for corporations, are driving a very open source-oriented, frugally-built, demanding culture. While their products stand at the bleeding edge of technology, their personal lives too are constantly driven to the edge, every launch being a make or break day. The video captures their stories and looks at the Indian software scene moving beyond the services and back-end office culture into a more risk prone but passionate business of technology | <http://bit.ly/AtHARs>



What do you understand by the term Digital Native? Do you consider yourself one? Are there factors that contribute to identifying oneself with the term?

Digital Natives are those who are comfortable with a part of their social and professional lives being spent over digital ecosystems. I consider myself one. Considering that this digital ecosystem is still out of reach for many people belonging to the other side of the digital divide, I feel there are clear socio-economic and geographic fault lines differentiating those who are digital natives and those who aren't.

There is a perception that the digital native is typically a Young, White, Male, American – a geek hooked to his gadgets and apathetic about social issues.

Comment.
Stereotypes exist for a reason. The developed countries of Europe and the Americas are the early adopters of digital technology and there will be a trickledown effect on the rest of the world. But the point about digital natives NOT being concerned with social causes is the part I do not agree with. The Internet has been the springboard for several people's movements across the globe. I remember stumbling upon riseup.net and Pirate Bay in 2005, and most of what the Web is made of today has been politico-social in nature, including the FOSS frameworks that empower it. These are the very same youngsters who initiated these movements.

Can digital natives from developing nations create an impact with digital activism?

Yes they can help attract attention to issues but this has to be matched with onsite campaign. With most of the television and print media being controlled by mega-corporations or funded by them, I see a lot of people consuming information from the P2P information channels. I rely mostly on mailing lists, news forums and video channels run by popular activist networks. I was once involved in managing and running such a mailing list, now I am just a consumer.

How effective is digital activism in comparison to traditional forms of campaigning?

Digital campaigns definitely have an impact as a lot of the traditional media outlets are now reflecting information from popular internet broadcasters-aggregators. But I still remain skeptical about the kind of issues that receive focus and how effectively these campaigns contribute to non-urban bases.

What would you say to critics who label digital native campaigns as ‘slacktivism’?

There is a certain audience on Facebook, and most of them are consumerists: they consume godmen and grocery with the same active passive behavior, with little time and patience to get into details and interdependencies. Their responses are also pretty moralistic and shaped up by the same assembly line thought processes that induces them to make the most important decisions of their lives through a template. I am a bit scared about the enthusiasm of “doing something”. People have spent entire lives understanding a lot of these issues that come from public spaces before they make even the slightest intervention. That degree of sensitivity and integrity is required for any solution to evolve. I don’t see that happening with online activism.

Are we seeing a trend where digital natives are more involved with local (neighborhood) causes than with global issues such as environment, poverty, corruption?

I wish there was a trend like that. From where I see it (and I am limited by what I can see). I guess people are broadcasting less and less about local issues. Social Web has still not been able to translate the neighborhood camaraderie into a digital forum buzzing with activity. And since the broadcasts are about generic topics concerning the globe, most of the momentum fizzles out. Often local issues also inspire a more physical behavior....I don’t know if the web is a space for contemplation or for action, especially when we talk about local issues.

Comment on the role of ICTs in fostering citizen action.

Access and agency are two important words that come to my mind. More people should be able to use ICT and in ways that suit them. Localization is still underserved in India. Accessibility in terms of most of the online media being inaccessible to senior-citizens, more demanding of high bandwidth, less on anonymity, English being the dominant language online, etc., are some of the problems that we face. I feel the real potential of such an ecosystem has still not been realized; there is a lot of space for people to start working on. Also, the question of what informs people and how, who is curating information and creating viewpoints and manufacturing opinions, how can information be true to its context and yet not sound like propaganda are frameworks that need rethinking and resolution.



Namita Malhotra, Jury

The videos are quite special as films with interesting ideas explored. One feedback for participants is to focus more on the visual aspect of making a video. They benefit from recording longer conversations so that people got comfortable with the camera, & stepped outside of an ICT4D discourse

Shashwati Talukdar, Jury

It was interesting to see how different all the proposals were. Some of them were taking the notion of digital native as a personal one and some were very clearly political and seek interventions in the real world. I am quite excited to see all the videos





TOP 10 FINALIST

CIJO ABRAHAM | India

DIGITAL DANCE

The power of digital media will be presented to audience with the help of showing tweet-a-thon panel discussions, blood aid tweets | <http://bit.ly/x8RVMY>



What do you understand by the term Digital Native? Do you consider yourself one?

Digital native means a person who understands the latest digital technologies as well as digital medium and uses the same for improvement of humanity's plight and in this respect I consider myself a digital native.

There is a perception that a digital natives typically belong to a certain socio-economic-geographical background: a geek who's always connected to his gadgets and not concerned about social issues and causes. Do you agree?

I disagree. Anyone can be a digital native as long as they use the latest digital technologies and digital interfaces for improvement of socio-economic conditions of people.

Can digital natives from developing nations create an impact with digital activism? Are you involved in a cause that relies on online campaigns?

I have been involved in local and global campaigns for a Twestival. Last year we raised more than 1,70,000 INR through social media. Youth from developing nations are creating national-level impact by using social media tools to solve problems.

How effective are digital campaigns in raising awareness about an issue in comparison to traditional activism?

Digital campaigns are so powerful that it can even bring down governments. The dictator in Egypt was brought down through the power of digital activism. Similar campaigns took place in Tunisia, Libya, Syria, London, San Francisco, Russia and India to bring global attention to the plight of the people of these countries, corruption, scandals and other issues. The one in India (campaign) against corruption (Anna Hazare-initiated) was not successful but it made the Government realize the power of digital activism campaigns.

What would you say to critics who label digital native campaigns as slacktivism?

I disagree with them. Digital natives are creating unique ways to reach out to the common man and highlighting issues that digital activism can help solve. Likes, clicks and shares are ways of showing the protest through digital medium. This doesn't stop us from going out in public to stand for our rights.

Are we seeing a trend where digital natives are more involved with local causes? How do strategies differ for both?

No, digital natives are always aware of global issues like global warming, financial crisis, poverty, blood donation, etc., but we need to begin from ourselves, then resolve the issues in our society and country then move on to the global scenario. We approach local causes and global ones differently. It is easy to build a local campaign as the person is aware about the response of the people. The same analysis is not possible when it comes to a global audience. It is highly important that we build a campaign that goes viral.



JURY WINNER

JOHN MUSILA | Nairobi, Kenya

FROM WILD INTO THE DIGITAL WORLD

Map Kibera Trust is an organization based in Kenya's Kibera slums. Using digital gadgets and technology, they have transformed the community by placing it on the map as it was only seen as forest when viewed on a map. They also film stories around the community and share them with the world on their YouTube channel and other social networks like Facebook and Twitter. Through this they have been able to highlight and raise awareness about the challenges the community faces. Our video would show Kibera's role in bringing about change | <http://bit.ly/GCae2m>

10,317
PUBLIC
VOTES
TOP 5

What do you understand by the term Digital Native? Do you consider yourself one? Do digital natives belong to a particular socio-economic-cultural demographic?

Digital Native is a person who uses digital technology in their day to day life; it can be a phone, computer, cameras, or any other form of digital technology. I am a digital native since I have grown up surrounded by and using digital technology. You do not have to be from any particular socio-economic background to be considered a digital native as long as you are using digital technology in your life then you are a digital native.

Do you agree with the perception that the digital native belongs to a certain socio-economic background from a developed nation?

I disagree because a digital native can be anyone from any part of the world. The world today is a 'global village' and whatever gadgets a young American guy uses, there is another Young Asian/ African / European/Latin person who is using similar gadgets for a different purpose. It can be for their own amusement or



Citizen action and ICT

We live in a global community connected by digital technology and it is very rare to find a part of the world where technology is not being applied. The power is shifting back to the people and the only way we are going to succeed is through encouraging fellow citizens to take action through use of ICT

it can be for bringing about social change, for example an American can be using his gadget to entertain him/herself and another person on another part of the world (like where the Arab Spring took place), could be using a similar gadget to share information on what's happening with the rest of the world.

Can digital natives from developing nations create an impact with digital activism?

Yes, digital natives can make an impact by using social media, mobile phones and other digital technology to create awareness by sharing information, mobilizing people and encouraging them to take necessary action required. I am part of the [Avaaz](#) campaigning community that brings people- powered politics to decision making worldwide.

How does digital activism differ from traditional forms of ground campaigning?

Digital activism is a very effective way of raising awareness since a lot of people are spending most of their time online and it is easy to get them to join your cause as long as they believe in it. This can be done through signing online petitions, getting people to pressure decision makers using social media through their Facebook pages and twitter account, and encourage people to join the campaign by just a click of a button.



Are digital natives taking the easy way out by setting up Facebook pages to 'Save the Planet', clicktivism as it's called?

No, they are not taking the easy way out because information is power and one of the ways to share the information is creating the Facebook pages by which people can be made aware of issues. I believe the likes, clicks and shares are the first steps that need to be taken before going out there and doing something.

A recent example of digital activism is the Get Kony video campaign. What is your response to the criticism it has received?

I have seen the video and it is a great campaign. The use of social media was very effective, clearly showing how clicking, liking and sharing can have such a great impact. The response is great and I believe the campaign will succeed since more people are joining the initiative from different parts of the world. Although it has been done by a White, male, American, there should be more of us digital native, in places like Africa, rising and joining in to do such campaigns.



TOP 5 FINALIST

THOMAS J BURKS | Alabama, USA

DIGITAL COVERAGE IN A DIGITAL WORLD

We have a small production company in Birmingham, Alabama. I was hired on a year ago to do film and commercials for them as they expand into advertising and video coverage of events. We only have about three employees including myself, working out of our homes. We recently acquired a space to open a studio and retail location downtown where we live. We use Facebook, blogs, and viral marketing all the time to get our name out there. Our account executive is constantly monitoring our Facebook for client orders and bookings. We are beginning to use twitter to provide information more fluidly to people. We believe this might be a year of growth for our small company, as we are becoming able to provide much higher quality content. We're fully digital, constantly updating our websites and blogs, and I believe we would be able to tell a great digital story. We submit numerous small films and skits, we cover awesome concerts, and rely so heavily on the digital world to show our content | <http://bit.ly/yIsoXt>

9,622
PUBLIC
VOTES

What do you understand by the term Digital Native? Do you consider yourself one?

The term digital native, I understand, is any person living a lifestyle dominated by technology. It is a facet in their day to day lives and a staple in their structure and organization. I do consider myself a digital native; I spend more time a day dealing with technology than not. I don't think your background could have anything to do with someone's status as a digital native, unless their location and situation would keep them from accessing it. But the beauty of the internet and our way of life is that the world is much smaller today. Our window to the world is becoming a doorway.

There is a perception that a digital native is typical of a young, American geek who's plugged in to his devices 24x7 and apathetic to social causes. You agree?

I agree that this perception exists. Most people's first thought about my country (U.S.) when you think of a techie or a social media addict is a hipster in a coffee shop with an indie band and a hemp beanie. But this is only in my country; I see people of all cultures and creeds flourishing with technology all the time, involved with causes and doing their bit for society, whether they come from America or other countries.

Can digital natives from developing nations create an impact with digital activism?

Absolutely! Take the Kony 2012 campaign. Although it ended badly for the director, it caused a major buzz in less than a week. It's only a matter of time before pop culture takes a hold of it and we see it in major media like sitcoms and cartoons. I try to stay involved with film making endeavors going on around my town through Facebook and Twitter. I did a digital ad for "Operation Warm", a charity that provides coats to children in need.

Activism has changed in the last decade. How effective are online campaigns in raising awareness about an issue vis-à-vis onsite deployment?

I think it's much more effective than it was five years ago, and seems to still be growing, especially where the younger generation is involved. The only drawback to the effectiveness of digital activism is that it discourages educating yourself about an issue in its entirety. Once again, take Kony2012, so many people took it at face value. But it raised ire with many due to the Foundation's shaky background and vague details. It's easy to get your message to the masses, but it's also easy to not see the whole picture.

Are digital natives taking the easy way out by what critics say is 'slacktivism': tweeting, linking and liking about grave social issues?

Unfortunately, yes I think so. Some get so wrapped up in "getting their message out" that they don't remember to ACT. You'll affect more lives out there on the street, than you ever will behind a computer. You have to find balance in the two.

A recent example of digital native activism is the Get Kony video campaign. What are your thoughts on the criticism it received?

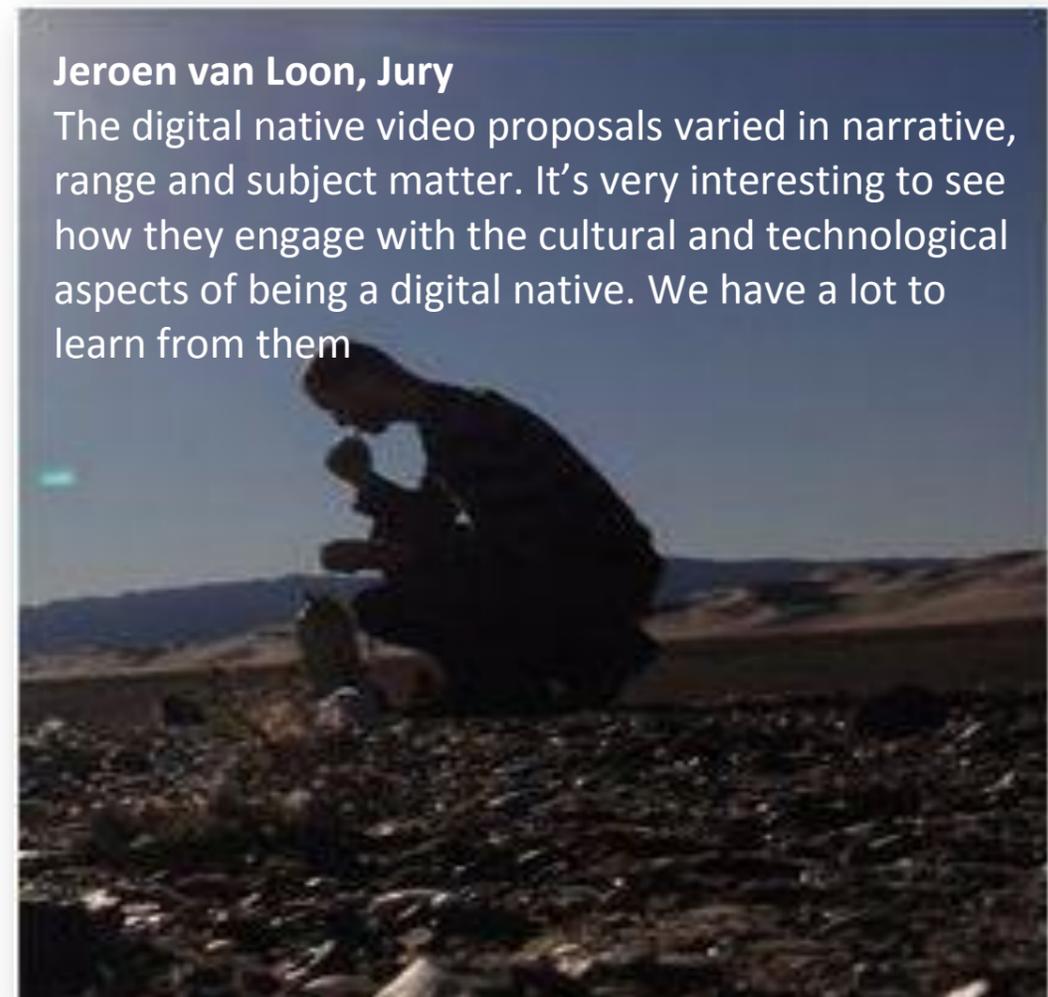
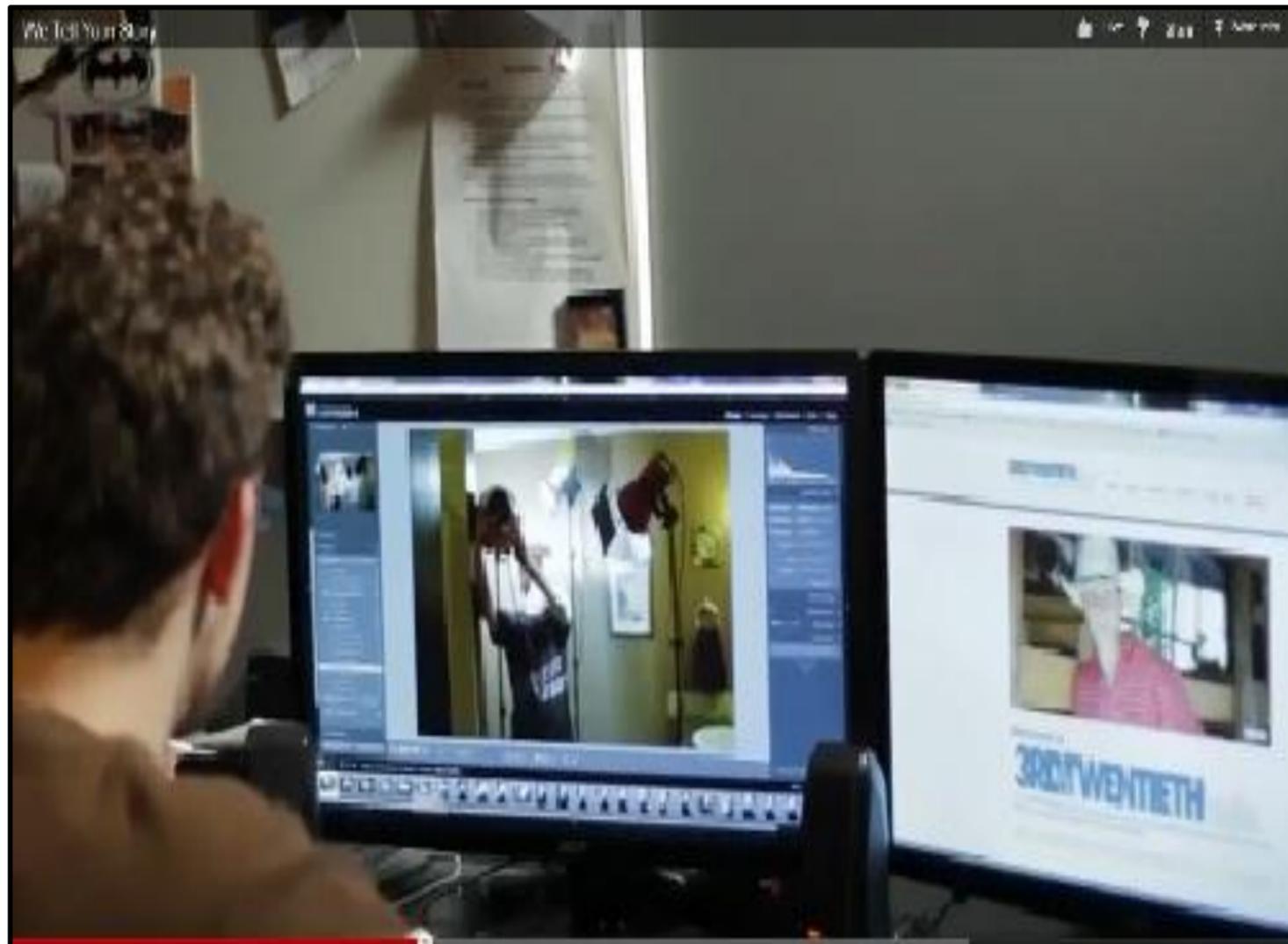
I honestly thought the video was well edited and shot, and delivered a message strongly. But further digging led to details that were not so noble about the Invisible Children's organization; the possibility that Joseph Kony has not been heard from in years and may be dead. It's just important to step back and say, "Okay, they seem to have a strong argument here, but what if..."

Are we seeing a trend where digital natives are more involved with local causes than with global issues?

It's just easier for most people to tackle things close to home, and that's okay. Imagine if EVERYONE focused on their own community and well being, everyone would be better off. That's no reason to try and help someone who's far away, but you can do more good in person than you can do over the internet. It's good to incorporate it into your strategy, but remember it's your actions that count.

Your thoughts on Citizen Action and the use of ICT

I think we're going through a transition, people are learning more and more through the internet, and have access to such powerful tools. It's going to be a renaissance of knowledge and creativity. I have learned more technical details for my trade off the internet in a year, than I have during my time in school. It's an exciting time to be alive.



Jeroen van Loon, Jury

The digital native video proposals varied in narrative, range and subject matter. It's very interesting to see how they engage with the cultural and technological aspects of being a digital native. We have a lot to learn from them

1,113
PUBLIC
VOTES
TOP
5

JURY WINNER

MARIE JUDE BENDIOLA | Singapore

CONNECTING SOULS, BRIDGING DREAMS

I come from a third world country where technology seemed hard to reach in the 90s, especially by the not-so-privileged. As we progressed, technology has not only become ubiquitous (in malls, institutions and companies) but also, it has come to be used by the common man. My video will answer how technology bridges the gap between dreams and reality | <http://bit.ly/zX4MRj>



What do you understand by the term Digital Native? Do you consider yourself one? Do you think you need to belong to a particular socio-economic-geographical background to be considered a Digital Native?

For me, Digital Native means being equipped most of the time with gadgets that we have nowadays. The idea pertains to the usage of these gadgets to alleviate day to day activities or for mere pleasure. I can say that I am a Digital Native because from the moment I wake up, go to work, eat or rest I usually have a gadget in my hand. Being a Digital native doesn't entail belonging to upper class of the society. In Philippines, most citizens own a cell phone or television. Government and private institutions bring mobile libraries or computers to depressed areas so they can be empowered by technology. One of the primary requirements of being a digital native is not your political, regional, societal or even physical status but instead it requires a level of openness or acceptance to the new technology that's in your hands. I think the issue is how you plan to utilize this gadget to help yourself in your daily life, and how responsible you are in carrying out their functions for the promotion of the common good which may not be detrimental to others. If you're an open and responsible user of technology then I think you are worthy to be called a Digital Native.

How effective are digital activism campaigns in raising awareness about an issue?

The online platform is an instrument for freedom of expression. Just like any protests on the street, technology provides a bigger arena to anyone to fight for their rights. But I would also add that though it is good to state what you believe in and what you're supporting online, we should also be more responsible as users of technology. As long as we still respect others and there are no derogatory statements that may harm others, social media platforms have been useful in many ways.

A recent example of online activism is the 'Get Kony 2012' video campaign created by US-based NGO Invisible Children. What are your thoughts on the campaign?

It's heart-breaking but at the same time empowering. The video compares life in a developed country with that of a developing one and exposes what is happening in Uganda. It effectively motivates us to do something good, now.

Are we seeing a trend where digital natives are more involved with local causes than with global, larger issues that don't immediately impact their lives?

I think the use of technology empowers everyone, from high officials to ordinary individuals to push their cause, stand for their rights and make this world a better place. Any local cause from a community which is posted online is no longer just a local cause but can transform into an issue that has global resonance. Somewhere in the world, other places might be experiencing the very issue that a small community is trying to highlight, so social media platforms help project a local cause into a global one. It makes our world closer so that everyone can lend a helping hand no matter how many miles we are all apart.

369
PUBLIC
VOTES
TOP 5

T.J. KM | New York, USA

WITH NO DISTINCTION

My video explores the spiritual aspect of digital technology and how rather than getting in the way of our spiritual expression, it is actually bringing us face to face with it, if only we choose to look. The video will be a mixture of live action and stop motion animation/puppetry where digital devices take on a transcendent character similar to nature spirits in various cultures. I plan to investigate the tendency to exclude digital devices and technology from being categorized alongside nature as if it is somehow exempt from or superior to this category. My video will create a world where the technology we use daily is viewed not just as a means for socio-cultural exchange and communication but is available for the nurturing of our souls if we so choose | <http://bit.ly/z4gW3i>



What do you understand by the term Digital Native? Do you consider yourself one?

A “native” is somebody who has a love for a place and whose heart & soul are connected to that place. To me a “digital native” is anyone who has a place inside of them where technology grows and nurtures their soul.

There is a perception that digital natives occupy certain demography, namely, the Young, White, Male, American who are often apathetic to social causes. Do you agree?

I think often digital technology is used superficially to augment and support the ego. Anyone belonging to any demographic can fall victim to this shallow use of technology, just as anyone can become a true digital native using technology to transcend the limitations of their ego.

Can digital natives from developing nations create an impact with digital activism?

Absolutely, digital technology has a very unique ability to be utilized by anyone in the world with a creative ability to apply it to achieve their goals. I personally use digital technology to discover and support causes that I would not ordinarily be informed about from other media. This allows me to direct my energies where I choose and not have those choices made for me by media companies and governments.

Ground activism has changed in the last decade. How effective are digital campaigns in raising awareness about an issue?

I believe digital technology is most effective when it is partnered with real world street activism and gatherings of people face to face. On its own digital technology is profoundly effective at creating awareness about issues but that alone is not enough to effect lasting changes.

Critics refer to digital natives with the pejorative term ‘slacktivist’. You agree?

The first and most important step to any campaign for any cause is in the minds of the people. “Likes, Clicks and Shares” are a valuable step towards reaching people who gather their opinions and determine their actions through digital technology.

A recent example of online activism is the ‘Get Kony 2012’ video campaign. Have you watched it?

Yes, it’s an incredibly powerful and imaginative work for a very worthwhile cause.

Are we seeing a trend where digital natives are more involved with local (neighborhood) causes than with global issues?

Everything is connected. One person making a personal choice on an issue in their daily life has as much importance as the largest global campaign. The small personal gestures lead to local gestures which in turn lead to global gestures, there is NO DISTINCTION.

Share your thoughts on ICT-led Citizen Action. Where do you see it headed?

The more we creatively embrace the “new” of any kind, technological or otherwise, and apply our imagination with our deepest Love, the more our world will resemble that Love.



JAMES MLAMBO | Zimbabwe

GHETTO DIGITAL NATIVE

As a digital native living in a developing country, I have carried out a series of both online and offline projects, which have striven to benefit Zimbabweans in a number of ways. These projects have greatly increased my interactions with computers. I might say, I got married to a computer in 2000 when I bought my first PC; in a way, my relationship with my computer is intimate. Even though this computer I bought is an old 386 machine made obsolete by the faster Pentium III models, this did not change my love for the computer. My video will focus on a dream-like moment of my digital life | <http://bit.ly/GCae2m>

**321
PUBLIC
VOTES
TOP 5**

What do you understand by the term Digital Native? Do you consider yourself one?

Being a digital native is a point in time and space when reaching for technology becomes second nature to you. A digital native pushes a step further from using ICT for his personal needs to a level where he or she uses it in a creative way that is beneficial to people near him, the community and society at large. Digital natives transcend socio-economic-geographical boundaries. Even in poor and remote places, a digital native can be seen. Along the glittering streets of Brooklyn, New York, a digital native can be seen working on his IPAD 3 on a climate change app and in the dusty streets of Chipinge, Zimbabwe another one can be seen running an SMS info alert service using old GSM phones.

What sort of an impact do digital natives from developing countries have on society?

Digital natives from developing countries can create an impact with digital activism. However, for it (their campaigns) to have a greater impact, the right technologies and appropriate strategies need to be employed. What works in one country does not necessarily work in another country. Developing countries have different levels of technological advancement. For example, in Zimbabwe, YouTube is not popular because of bandwidth constraints as well as high broadband charges. Very few people watch videos let alone upload videos. As for Twitter, unofficial estimates of resident Zimbabweans on the social media platform are less than 10,000. And most of these are not active accounts. Facebook is the most popular site in Zimbabwe. To reinforce this fact, one ICT commentator once said, “For a lot of people in Zimbabwe, the Internet is synonymous with Facebook”, hence Facebook is the right platform to use for any successful digital activism effort. However the current prosaic “STOP CORRUPTION, NO TO VIOLENCE” Facebook campaigns need to be revised, repackaged and redeployed if they are to make significant impact.

How effective are digital activism campaigns in raising awareness about an issue in comparison to street campaigns?

The only time I saw digital activism work is when subscribers to a certain private Zimbabwean telecom company launched a campaign on Facebook egging this telecom company to stop profiteering on call charges as well as to improve their service. This campaign received enormous backing and eventually this telecom company was forced to reduce its charges a little bit.

Are digital natives taking the easy way out by creating Facebook pages to “Save the Environment”, in what critics refer to as ‘clicktivism’?

Digital natives are not taking the easy way out by creating Facebook pages. They are in fact responding digitally to offline problems. People online don't really know each other. So the focus on likes, clicks and shares is important to gauge whether online activism has got enough support before the issue is taken offline [streets].

A recent example of online activism is the Get Kony video campaign created by US-based NGO Invisible Children. What are your thoughts on the campaign?

I first saw the Get Kony video on France24 before watching it on YouTube. The video is a classic example that erases the widely held view that a digital native is not concerned about social issues and causes. This Kony 2012 video topped more than 84 million views on YouTube alone prompting the African Union to act when it made a statement to the effect that it “plans to deploy 5,000 troops to hunt down Joseph Kony”. In an unprecedented move, the African Union was forced by digital natives to act as a result of views, likes, tweets and shares of a simple 30 minute video highlighting Joseph Kony's atrocities. For the first time, an African problem did not require special envoys or plenary sessions to get the immediate attention it deserved.

Are we seeing a trend where digital natives are more involved with local (neighborhood) causes than with global issues that are not immediately related to them?

In Zimbabwe many digital natives identify themselves with global issues rather than local issues. This might be due to the fear of possible persecution if they get involved in local issues. There is a big amount of evidence that suggests so on Facebook. Local Facebook group pages on democracy, human rights etc., have very few members. Even likes or shares on news articles along such themes are few. The fear to get through what Zimbabwean Vikas Mavhudzi went through might be one reason to explain this phenomenon ([Read](#)).



The ‘Digital Natives with a Cause?’ Project is a three-year research inquiry jointly undertaken by CIS and HIVOS into the field of youth, technology and change. Read about the project and download the four-book collective *‘Digital AlterNatives with a Cause?’* from our website <http://cis-india.org>