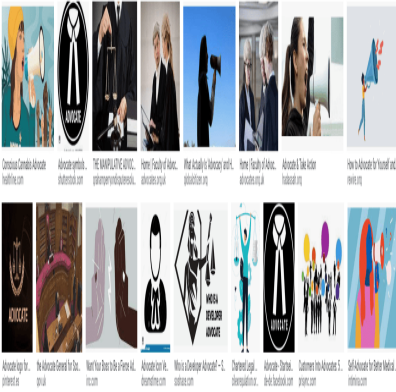




The advocate

Description

It is common in professional life to advocate on behalf of a client (student, patient, customer, group, special interest, idea). I recall as an architect in practice advocating for planning permission for a white corrugated iron clad holiday home. Whereas the local council wanted “natural” colours (olive green and brown) to blend in with the vegetation, we argued that white was as natural as it gets: it’s the colour of the bark of a eucalyptus tree, clouds, white crests on the sea, etc.

The duty of the advocate is to advance the positive merits of a case. Advocates do their best to make the case, relying on an opponent to present the counter-case, and a judge, jury, voters, or decision-makers to decide.

Advocacy involves making the best case for someone. Barristers can defend clients even if they think them guilty. As long as the barrister tells no lies, nor counsels the client to lie in court, then it is up to the court to decide the verdict.

Advocacy assumes a rational or balanced forum in which both sides can be heard, and some good will about the rules of the debate. Power structures intervene inevitably. Both sides do not always enjoy the same access to information or resources. Nor do they share the same abilities. Not all judges and juries operate entirely dispassionately, or are able to assimilate all the arguments presented.

Our advocacy of the white corrugated iron cladding was taken up by the local press. I don’t know if that had any influence on the decision makers, but we were allowed to proceed with the white cladding.

It is easiest to advocate for something when you agree with the proposition you are defending and are invested in the outcome. A recently staged debate amongst students about whether online surveillance threatens personal liberty started with initial unease, but demonstrated how readily people slot into a role “a performance” as participants had to advocate for views contrary to their own. Advocacy involves a performance.

I want to see to what extent advocacy drifts into persuasion, which leads to hyperbole, exaggeration, promotion, embroidered narratives, false, deceptive and misleading narratives, and even lies. That’s part of an argument that moves my understanding of online communities and conspiracy theories from

ideas of truth versus falsity, to something closer to pragmatist and hermeneutical concepts of how beliefs develop.

See posts: [Truth, lies and architecture](#), and posts tagged [interpretation](#).

Category

1. Architecture

Tags

1. hermeneutics
2. law
3. performance
4. truth

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