

Astroturf Lobbying Tactics Will Rule the Politics of the Future | Quartz

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In an attempt to stymie problems before they arise, platforms will become increasingly privacy oriented, barring peoples' connections to unknown users and using tougher and tougher verification methods. They will effectively be publicly regulated, if not by governments then by public opinion. While politics remains hogtied by its own partisanship and a lack of understanding of new media, citizens will act the role of a mercurial public jury. Companies' PR campaigns about what they are doing to address disinformation will continue to grow, and they will become more transparent about the groups working to manipulate their platforms and the algorithms that allow for said manipulation.

But if social media companies, governments, and the public don't begin to generate actual solutions to this problem—rather than one-dimensional transparency reports—then the next generation of children may be born into a world where it is nearly impossible to tell truth from fiction both on and offline. Some groups are already working on ideas. My own lab at the Institute for the Future recently collaborated with game designer Jane McGonigal and the Omidyar Network to develop the [Ethical OS Toolkit](#), a series of future-focused exercises geared toward helping tech designers develop digital products that consider the benefit of society. Groups like [Witness](#) put digital power in the hands of the people by allowing citizens to produce videos that work to protect human rights. More ideas are popping up everywhere—good, bad and in-between: using blockchain for verification and voting; structural banning of social bots; and doing away with online anonymity.

Whatever happens, we cannot go back to where we were; social media and the internet are no longer blindly assumed to be vehicles for democracy and the open flow of information. In the vacuum that has been created, there is space for the next generation of actors to promote a new vision of online communication. In order for this to happen, however, they themselves must not get sucked into the

vacuum of conspiracy and confusion.

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