

Trolling for Truth on Social Media | Scientific American

By Joan Donovan

October 16, 2020

During the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle, tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets with banners and puppets to push back against economic globalization. They were met with a violent militarized suppression. At the same time, a small group of artist-activists called the Yes Men created a parody Web site pretending to be the WTO. Cloaked in its official logos and design, they made critical claims about the organization. This hoax was so successful it landed the Yes Men speaking engagements *as* the WTO at several conferences around the world. As the absurdity grew, viewers began to question what they saw—which was the point.

Realizing that they could pull off similar pranks using mimicry of official Web sites, the Yes Men made a career out of punching up, posing as the National Rifle Association, the *New York Times* and Shell, among many others. In an eerie foreshadowing of today's disinformation campaigns, these activists poked fun at George W. Bush's gaffes as a presidential candidate at GWBush.com.

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Source: [Trolling for Truth on Social Media – Scientific American](#)