

Dance teacher Willem Engel who started #ikdoenietmeermee condemns the combat against the virus

It is no coincidence that the substantial role of journalists has been jeopardized by the current pandemic, according to the National Dutch coordinator for Security. Disseminating comprehensive information following governmental measures are crucial in the battle against COVID-19.

Simultaneously, numerous people find their beliefs confirmed in campaigns of misinformation, conspiracy theories, distrust of science, (health) institutions and traditional media. One of those assemblies is "The Truth behind the Virus", shepherded by dance teacher Willem Engels. An information hoarder, Engels now has substantial power and prominent Dutch stars such DJ Hardwell backed him by announcing in a social media video to their million followers to "free the people". Fearmongering a flu is nothing but futile. How have these anti-government activists put journalists in a state of flux?

According to a Dutch governmental institution, 87 percent of those 12-year-old and over used social media channels substantially in 2019. In 2020, roughly 3.4 million Dutch citizens use Instagram every day. Not only is the use of social media pernicious, it also emphasizes a one-sided viewpoint and advertises ephemeral hype– the consequences including: immediate attention, flashing news covers and signs of discord. A Yiddish saying once said that a half truth is a whole lie, and I share that opinion. Indeed, social media and journalism are interdependent, but the distinction should be made clear: traditional media is based on thorough research, interviews and reports, social media, on the viewer's perception. The latter, therefore, facilitates a self-fabricated news story generating a visual euphemism.

DJ Hardwell removed his video message two weeks later. He realized after long discussions with virologists, "the seriousness of making unsubstantiated statements".