

Wikipedia 'edit wars' show dynamics of conflict emergence and resolution

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Wikipedia's crowd-sourced content generation has made it the world's largest encyclopedia, but this model also leads to "edit wars" when editors disagree. The dynamics of these conflicts provide an interesting window into collaborative content production and the emergence and resolution of conflicts in an online environment, all of which are explored in a paper published June 20 in the open access journal *PLoS ONE*.

The authors, led by Taha Yasseri of Budapest University of Technology and Economics, identified [Wikipedia](#) pages that are either controversial, such as the articles for homosexuality and George W. Bush, or "peaceful," like the pages for [Benjamin Franklin](#) and pumpkins. They found that the majority of pages are peaceful, but that edit wars were commonly waged between a small number of strongly disagreeing editors.

Yasseri adds, "Usually editors act in a rather independent, and uncorrelated manner, while during conflicts their activity becomes more intense and follows a more coherent pattern."

However, they also found that consensus is generally reached in a reasonable time, even for controversial articles. There are a small number of articles where this is not the case, classified as never-ending wars, and these generally have many different active editors who have fought at different times.

More information: Yasseri T, Sumi R, Rung A, Kornai A, Kertész J (2012) Dynamics of Conflicts in Wikipedia. *PLoS ONE* 7(6): e38869. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0038869](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0038869)

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