

# Digital Social Innovation

## Societal engagement and cooperation through online social networks



### Field of Interest

The shift towards a horizontal information and network society and web 2.0 strengthens and nurtures the current trend of bottom up influence of private initiative and self-organisation within society. At Alterra Wageningen UR, we are exploring online social networks or communities and their societal impact, in order to develop insight in the emergence of social innovation. We examine different forms of online societal engagement and cooperation as seeds of social innovation, like crowdsourcing or crowd funding, societal movement platforms, and examples of self-organization. These new governance structures are of great impact on democracy and new roles and attitudes of governments.

**BOTTOM UP  
INFLUENCE**

## WHO ARE WE

As researchers of **Alterra Wageningen UR** (Research Institute for the green living environment, part of Wageningen University and Research centre in The Netherlands, [www.alterra.nl](http://www.alterra.nl)) we offer:

- Research experience in studying **on and offline civil initiatives, self-organisation** & bottom up processes and the **impact on governments** in different sectors, like cultural heritage, living environment, sustainability, creative industry, etc.
- Relevant projects within research program **Informational Governance**
- Theoretical framework** from the perspective of **Evolutionary Governance Theory**
- Development of a **multi-disciplinary research methodology** for studying social innovation practices through social media (e.g. online and offline data analysis, qualitative and quantitative, social disciplines and informatics)
- Network of grassroots initiatives** and platforms
- Experience as **research partner in European projects** (FP VII, FP VI, Interact)

# WE NEED YOU

**Projects** interested in the **emergence of social innovation** through on and offline social networks and platforms

**-Researchers, businesses, governments and practitioners** to explore the potentials of **ICT for bottom up influence by civil initiatives** in society and to facilitate the potentials for co-creation with governments and NGO's

**-Researchers** with experience in **social media analysis** (online SNA, semantic web analysis, ...)

**-Stakeholders** interested in exploring horizontal **social innovation practices** in order to prepare for their **new positions and responsibilities** within the public domain

**-Businesses** interested in **collaborative ICT** to stimulate new types of collective awareness, engagement and action for realizing goals within the public domain



**M.Sc. Irini Salverda**, Researcher at Alterra Wageningen UR, is doing research on citizens' initiatives and social entrepreneurship in the green environment and the changing role of governments in the public domain (see the series [Burgers & Landschap](#) and [Zo doen wij dat hier!](#)). Recently, she explored the [role of the Internet and social media in social innovation](#). This study explored the potential of social media for people to organize themselves, to cooperate and to influence societal issues. Currently, she is working on an in-depth study on how these informal social networks emerge through social media and how they generate and activate social capital in order to contribute to societal challenges in their own and sometimes unorthodox way.

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**M.Sc. Pat van der Jagt**, Researcher at Alterra Wageningen UR, focuses on social innovation research and social media, social capital, crowd funding, crowdsourcing, Do-it-yourself initiatives and research in the cultural and creative sector.

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