

# Social Media as the new playing field for the governance of sustainable food

Twitter hypes, controversies and stakeholders' strategies

Informational Governance



The aim of this research is to clarify the role of social media hypes and controversies in the governance of food sustainability.

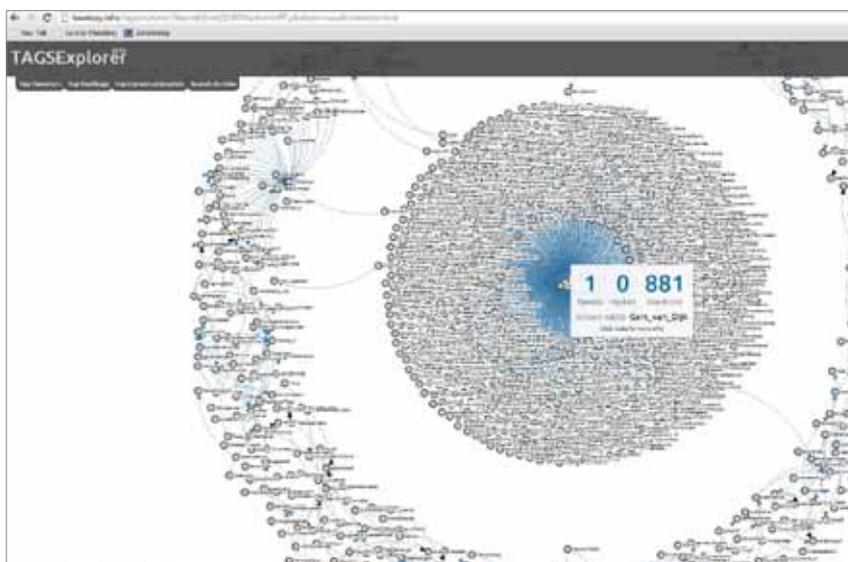
Governmental, business and civil society organizations engaged in the governance of agro-food face the challenge of dealing with an increasingly powerful but capricious public sphere formed by the social media.

Food sustainability is continuously at issue on social media, such as on Twitter conversations, where new information can exponentially diffuse through social networks and media channels, creating public hypes or controversies.

Little is known, however, about how information travels through social media networks and how hypes or controversies arise. To deal with this capricious public sphere, governmental, business and civil society organizations are developing and trying out strategies for monitoring and engaging with social media, but little is known about what these communication strategies entail and what their impact is. Moreover, it is unclear how media hypes impact on decision-making processes in the agro-food system.

## Highlights project

- How does information diffuse through social media networks?
- What is the interplay of social media and mass media in the emergence of hypes?
- How do governmental, business and civil society organisations deal with social media hypes?
- What is the effect of stakeholder's Twitter activity on the social media discourse?
- What is the impact of hypes or controversies on decision-making processes?



Network of Retweets.

This research aims to:

- 1 Clarify the spread and transformation of information when it travels through social media networks and media channels
- 2 Identify the role of governmental, business and civil society organisations in the food sustainability discourse on social media
- 3 Understand the impact of social media hypes on decision-making processes in the agro-food sector

## Twitter

To understand the role of social media hypes in agro-food governance, three cases of peak Twitter activity on topics around food sustainability will be selected. Twitter is a connecting thread of public discourse that incorporates all types of media messages and actors: stakeholders make public statements, mass- and social media messages are posted through hyperlinks and all people interested in the topic attribute meaning to an on-going stream of information. It serves as a basis to understand the interplay of various media platforms; the relation between stakeholders' media activity and the social media discourse, and; the relation between the social media discourse and decision-making processes in the agro-food system.

## Approach

To understand the role of Twitter networks, communities and hubs in the spread of information, a social network is drawn based on interaction (@'s and RT's). A framing analysis of tweets will identify the main frames and actors, but also the framing-processes throughout time. In combination, the framing-analysis and social network analysis will reveal the dynamics of opinion and group formation. Messages on other media forums are collected to understand the interplay between Twitter, other social media and mass media.

The first case is the discussion around the production and consumption of meat-chickens in The Netherlands, known as 'plofkip'.



Twitter conversation on 'Plofkip'.

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