

From the computer to the pitchfork and back:
Finding a place as a *scholactivist* between mediatizing,
protesting, researching and farming



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Context: Participation in/and the news

From « participatory journalism », as the diversity of discourses and practices putting forward the active role of audiences in legacy media (Borger et al., 2013 ; Domingo et al., 2008 ; Paulussen et al., 2007)

To « participation to local news ecosystems », as the diversity of discourses and practices of a diversity of actors to the production of news (Wiard, 2019a)

Using an actor-network theory inspired research strategy (Latour, 2005; Domingo & Wiard, 2016)

To follow actors during local news controversies (Wiard, 2019b)

Today :

- Critical look on “No buildings on the field”
- Focus my position as researcher, participant, protester and ‘mediatizer’
- Material : News items (N=97), interviews (N=9)

And Notebooks (N=4), emails (N=too many), posts on social media (N=even worse)



Chronology of the events

Context :

1960's - 2016 : Greater Brussels urbanization
1964 : Social housing gets a field, lends it to farmer
2005 : Regional housing plan
2010 : Field abandoned by farmer

2012 – 2014 : beginning of the project

2012: Start of collective gardens

Apr. 2014 : Creation of the non-profit with

different sub-axes (1) Citizen collective gardens, (2) Cooperative professional gardening, (3) Sheep raising and milking, (4) Medicinal plants



2014-2020 : the controversy

Jul. 2014 : New minister of housing (and environment)

Sept. 2014 : The municipality publishes a housing plan

Sept. 2014 – Nov. 2015 : internal debates

17th Feb. 2016 : consultation meeting by the region

Mar. 2016 : “activist” group is created

Mar. 2016 : petition is launched

Apr. 2016 : measurements on the field

Apr. 2016 : the municipality ask for the project to be stopped

Jun. 2016 – Jun. 2017: activists meetings and actions (letter to minister, letter to municipality, alternative media, door to door with petition)

Apr. 2017 : documentary

Jul. 2017 : minister freezes the project

2017-2019 : research project

Participating actors

- For the construction
 - The minister
 - The government of Brussels
 - The SLRB (regional public housing)
 - Some inhabitants
- Against the construction
 - Most members of the non-profit
 - Locals
 - General public (who signed the petition)
 - Activists
- Mobilisation of allied
 - The field
 - The petition
 - Political parties
 - Social networks (Facebook groups)
 - The social housing coop
 - “Demain” the movie
- Mobilisation of media / news Producers
 - Traditional “national”
 - Traditional local
 - Personal blogs and websites
 - ‘Alternative’ news (non legacy media)
 - Political, associative and ‘activists’ websites

Produced news items

Type	Producer	# items
Websites of activists & NGOs	Friends of de field	2
	Tout Autre Chose	1
	Mr Mondialisation	1
	CoinDuBalai	1
	Diab	1
	GASAP	1
	Grand Prix des Générations Futures	1
	GreenPeace Magazine	1
	Herbae	1
	Leefmilieu Brussels	1
	Les compagnons de la transition	1
	Watermael-Boitsfort	1
	FGF / STG	1
	Les Potagers Urbains	1
	Quartier Durable logis-floréal	1
	Réseau idées	1
	BioGuide	1
Personal Blogs	Marc *****	1
	Jeremy Van *****	1
	Le monde selon Den	1
Political Parties , politicians	ECOLO WB	2
	Minister (CDH)	1

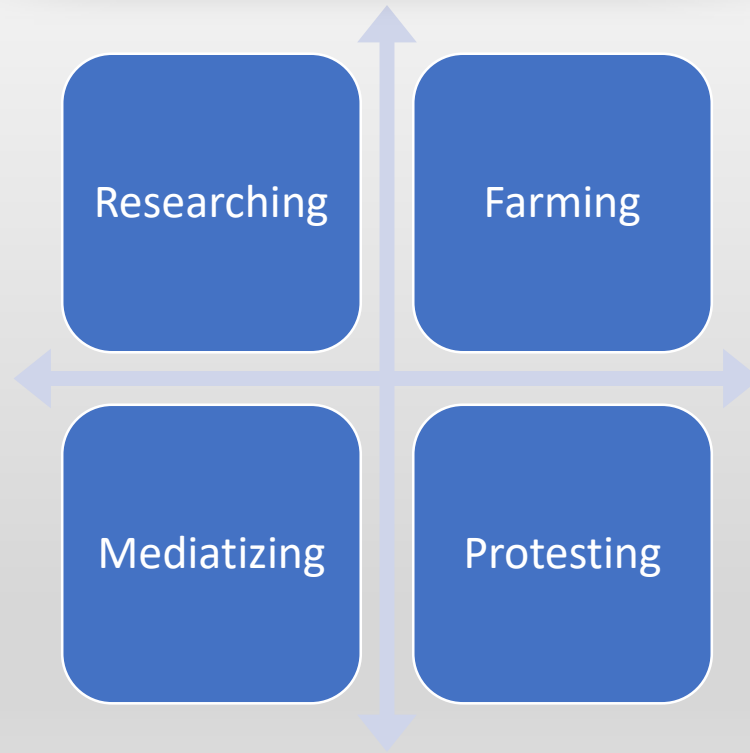
Type	Producer	# items
Citizen news media	What for	11
	Dazibao	1
In-betweeners	BrusselsLife	1
	Brusselblogt	1
	NoVilles.be	1
	Alter échos	1
Business news	QueFaire	1
Institutional communication	Commune de Watermael-Boitsfort	4
	Le Logis	3
	Région de Bruxelles (Good Food)	1
	ULBMetropolitan e-studio	1
"National" Tv	RTBF	4
	RTL	1
"National" Press	LeSoir	6
	LaDH	2
	De Morgen	1
	La Libre	1
Local Press	Bruzz	3
	L'Avenir	1
Local Tv	Bx1	1



A diversity of participatory practices

Participatory practices / Types of actors	Access	Dialogue	Deliberation
Citizens	-Being present	-Being present	/
Journalists of traditional media	-Assist (events, advice, conferences) -Contact -Responding to invitations	-Ask for feedback -Questioning -Discuss	-Collaborate (within the org.) -Write (write, film) -Publish
Activists / media alt.	-Get organized, make yourself visible -Organize event/invite (cit. and press)	-Communicating with the media -Answering questions	-Publish (alt. or own media) -Giving shape to the event (through public action)
Political actors	-Organize -Publish	-Negotiate (short- and medium-term) -Answering questions	-Negotiate (long-term) -Give shape to the event -Publish on its own sites
Technologies	-Providing space -Giving access to an audience	-Providing a space for interaction -Providing certain affordances	/
Other material and symbolic objects	-To exist, to be mobilized	/	/

Dealing with multiple roles and practices

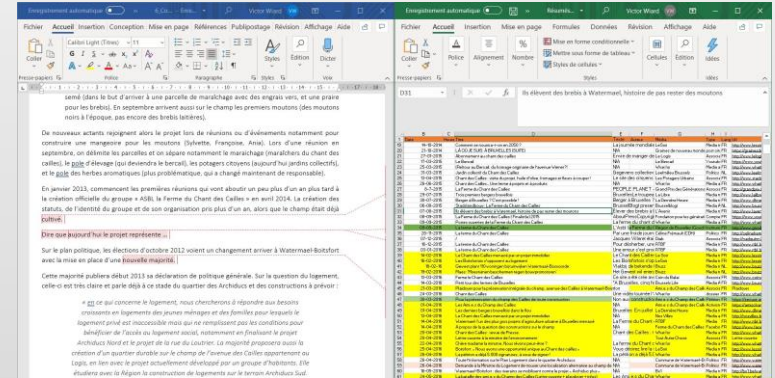


Dealing with multiple roles

Researching

Usual research process
literature review
Methodological instruments
Data gathering and analysis
Meetings and emails

...On and around the field
Interviews
Media monitoring



-> Main difficulty : dealing with people and things you know

"Hi Victor,

No worries, rather on December 18 or 19 at 2pm for example, would it be okay? I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about an idea that I have had for a long time: that of showing the daily reality of the farm via communication channels to be defined. At first, I was thinking about Facebook but maybe you have other ideas?"

Dealing with multiple roles

Farming

Actual farming

- Planting seeds
- Working the soil
- Carrying manure

Participate in events

- Carrying equipment
- Providing information to visitors
- Working at the bar

Participate in the organization

- Participate in meetings
- Emails

-> Main difficulty : finding my place, feeling legitimate



Dealing with multiple roles

Protesting (activism through actual protests)

Participating to activities

Going door to door

Writing letter to the minister

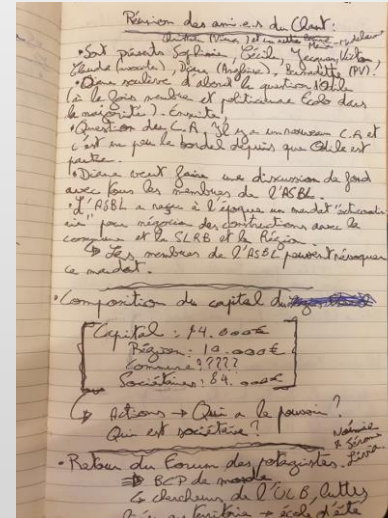
Have the petition signed

Participating in the organization

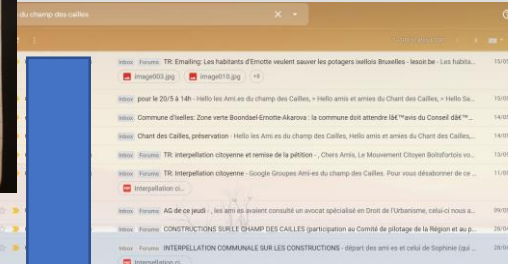
More meetings

More EMAILS

« As a general rule, we don't do politics on the farm, it is written in our status... So I wouldn't post anything political about the field on social media ». A farmer, about a post on social media



-> Main difficulty : taking position in public, voicing my opinion



Dealing with multiple roles

Mediatizing (activism through media productions)

Making news

Writing contents

Making videos

Reading other's pieces

Managing the media

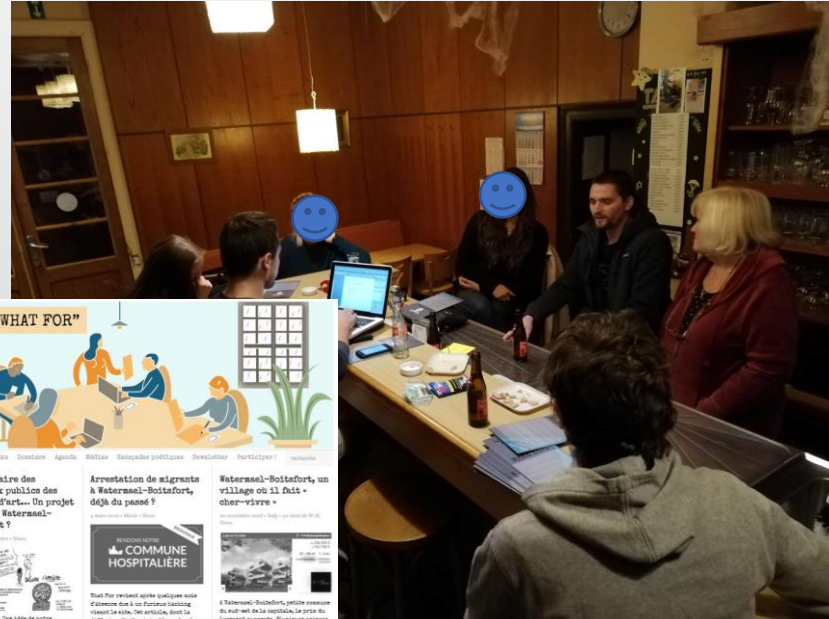
Managing website

Encouraging people to produce

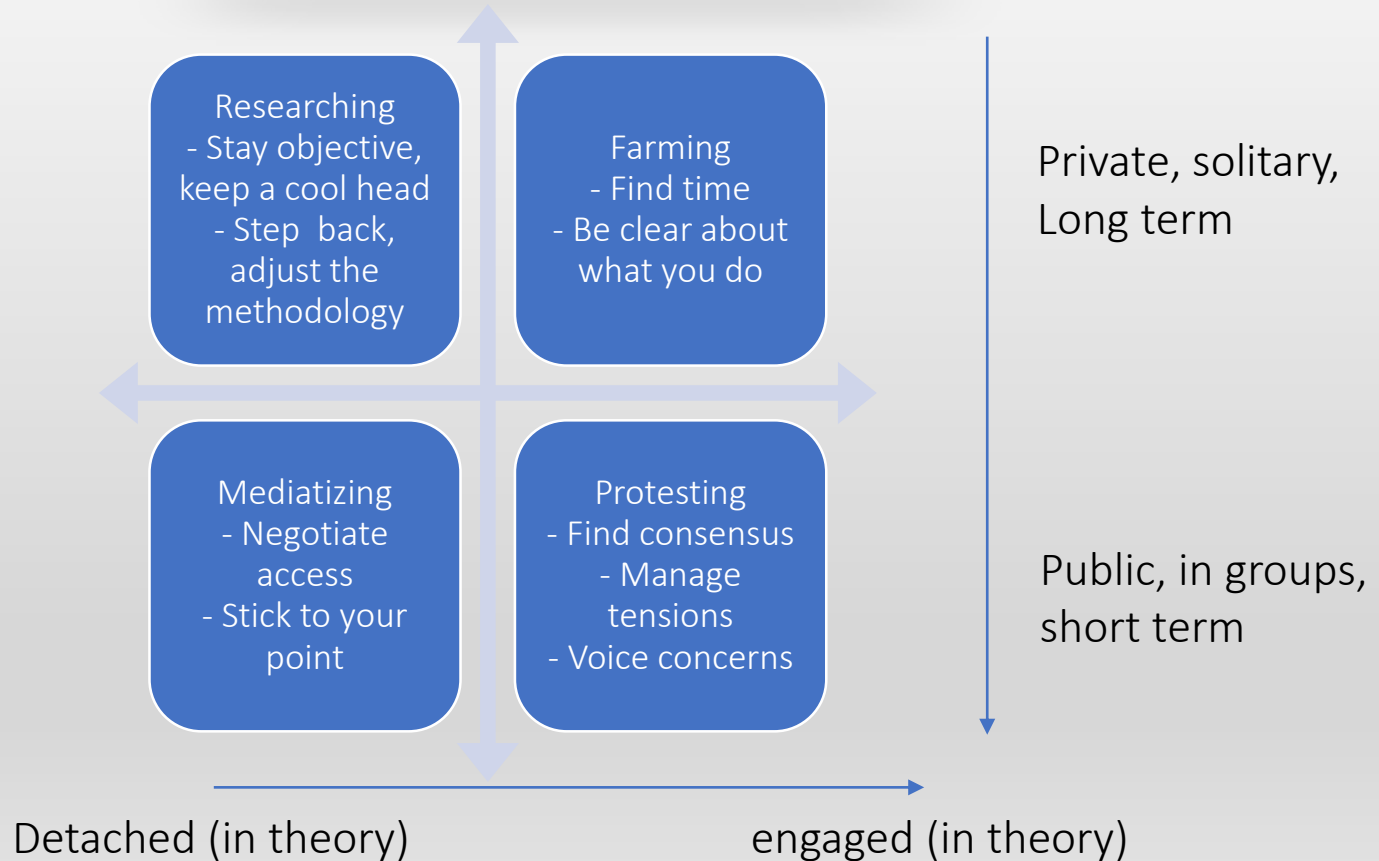
Finding equipment

More meetings... and emails

-> Main difficulty : negotiate access, making your intentions clear



Conclusions : reflexion on trying to keep sanity (kind of)



Conclusions : dealing with tensions

Rich but challenging process

Creates tensions as well as opportunities

Activism vs other roles (tendency to spill)

Being factual vs being engaged

Helping yourself vs fighting for others (or the cause)

Short term impact on a specific issue
vs long term impact on society



Thank you !



Further readings

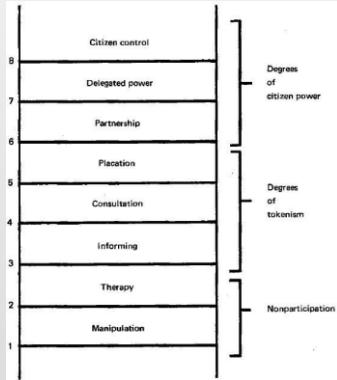
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Actor-Network Theory

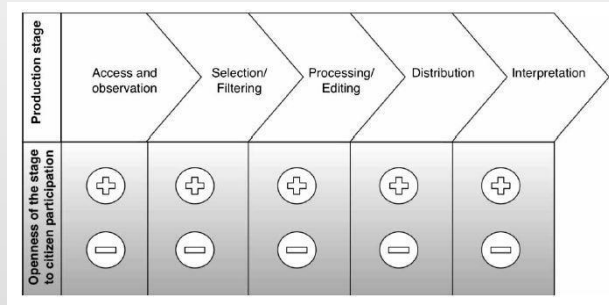
- ANT sees society and social phenomena as network effects
- The notion of **Actor-network** embodies the work of assemblage
- made by **actants**
- during **controversies**
- by **translating** meaning and each others positions
- and going through **obligatory passage points**.
- **ANT** as a research strategy : follow the actants, no a priori judgment on who they are or what they do
Methodology : keep four notebooks

Des modèles existants pour catégoriser la participation...

Modèle de la participation citoyenne (Arnstein, 1969 : 217)



Modèle des pratiques de participation en 5 phases (Domingo et al., 2008 : 333)



Types de pratiques de participation en ligne pour les citoyens et journalistes (Kammer, 2013 : 123)

	Role of the audiences	Role of the journalist
Information	Source; resource for the journalist	Gatekeeper
Collaboration	Journalistic producer	Gatewatcher; journalist
Conversation	Conversation partner	Gatewatcher; conversation partner
Meta-communication	Reflexive audience	Gatewatcher; source for the audience

Modèle AIP comme présenté par Carpentier (Carpentier, 2011 : 130)

Access (presence)				
	Technology	Content	People	Organizations
Production	Presence of (proto-)machines to produce and distribute content	Presence of previously produced content (e.g., archives)	Presence of people to co-create and distribute content	Presence of organizational structures and facilities to produce and distribute content
Reception	Presence of (proto-)machines to receive relevant content	Presence of (relevant) content	Presence of (sites) of joint media consumption	Presence of organizational structures to provide feedback to
Interaction (socio-communicative relationships)				
	Technology	Content	People	Organizations
Production	Using (proto-)machines to produce content	Producing content	Co-producing content as group or community	Co-producing content in an organizational context
Reception	Using (proto-)machines to receive content	Selecting and interpreting content	Consuming media together as group or community	Discussing content in an organizational context (feedback)
Participation (co-deciding)				
	Technology	Content	People	Organizations
Production (and reception)	Co-deciding on/with technology	Co-deciding on/with content	Co-deciding on/with people	Co-deciding on/with organizational policy

Modèle matriciel (Ahva & Wiard, 2018: 68)

Étapes de la participation / Domaines	Accès (Comment avoir un accès ?)	Dialogue (Comment produire des échanges ?)	Délibération (Comment faire la différence ?)
La communauté de pratique	Entrer dans un projet ou une organisation qui gère une publication	Construire des relations réciproques et un sentiment d'appartenance à la communauté	Faire une différence dans la gestion de la communauté ou du projet, trouver des objectifs communs
Les processus de production de contenu	Obtenir un accès à l'offre, la sélection et la production de contenu	Exercer des modes de collecte d'information et de présentation qui facilitent l'interaction	Influencer les décisions sur les contenus et la définition de l'actualité
Les problèmes publics	Reconnaître les citoyens comme des acteurs dans la détection des problèmes publics	Participer à un échange de points de vue aboutissant à la formulation d'un problème	Avoir un impact sur la façon dont les problèmes sont résolus via une discussion et résolution citoyenne

Modèle multidimensionnel des pratiques (Ahva, 2017 : 155).

Orientation of participation	Domain	Anchoring practice	Description
Participation through journalism	Public issues	Influencing	Getting ignored issues known and contributing to solving shared problems
Participation in journalism	Journalistic content	Mobility	Having an impact on the selection and presentation of the covered stories
Participation with journalism	Community	Belonging	Being recognized and accepted in the community of practice and being able to affect how the community is run
Participation around journalism	Cultural life	Project work	Working actively in projects that are attached to the media outlets
Participation for journalism	Working life	Learning and earning	Acquiring a sense of control in terms of career and professional development

... à un modèle adapté au terrain exploré

Les processus de production et de circulation de contenu (participer au)

La communauté (participer avec)

Types d'acteurs	Pratiques
Citoyens	Pratiques des différents acteurs –en termes d'accès de dialogue et de délibération– leur permettant de participer à différentes organisations produisant des informations d'actualité.
Journalistes	
Activistes	
Acteurs politiques	
Technologies	
Contenus	
Autres (événements, objets, etc.)	

Pratiques participatives / Types d'acteurs	Accès	Dialogue	Délibération
Citoyens	Pratiques des différents acteurs –en termes d'accès de dialogue et de délibération– leur permettant de participer aux processus de production de contenu d'actualité des différents producteurs		
Journalistes			
Activistes			
Acteurs politiques			
Technologies			
Contenus			
Autres (événements, objets, etc.)			

Les problèmes publics (participer à travers)

Types d'acteurs	Pratiques
Citoyens	Pratiques des différents acteurs –en termes d'accès de dialogue et de délibération– leur permettant de participer à la définition (et à résolution) de problèmes publics.
Journalistes	
Activistes	
Acteurs politiques	
Technologies	
Contenus	
Autres (événements, objets, etc.)	

Methodology and research questions

- Research questions
 - How do news actants connect to one another during “local” controversies?
 - How do they define and shape (local) news production?
- Data collection, follow the actors by
 - Online (social-)media monitoring and observation (*to detect a controversy*) enhanced by crawling and scrapping techniques (*to gather data*)
 - Content analysis of news items
 - Observation, participant observation, interviews
- Case studies: controversies about urban development in Brussels
 - Parkings, RER, pedestrian area, etc.
 - Today : La ferme du Chant/mp des Cailles, (No) buildings on the Quail’s field

La ferme du Chant/mp des Cailles

Collecte
d
material

- 77 informational items
- Video, photos, sounds, websites, etc.
- Content on social networks
- Participant observation



Still to
collect

- Interviews with main actors
 - Workers (of the farm)
 - Activists ("Friends" of the field)
- Interviews with journalists

(No) buildings on the field (4)

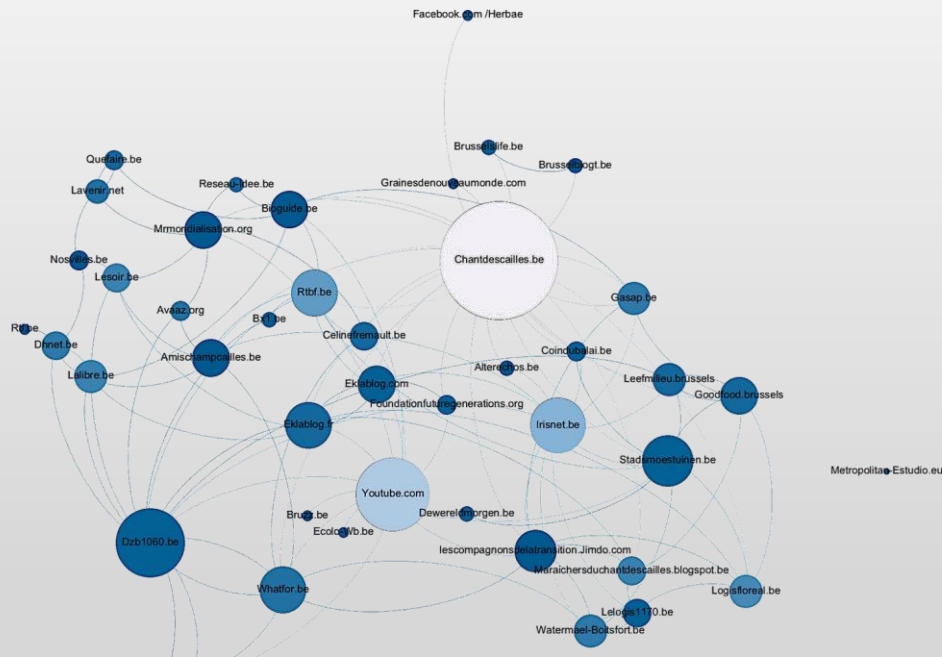
Contents
and
contents
producers
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Size : In-degree (10 – 40)

Color : Degree

Spatialization : Multi-

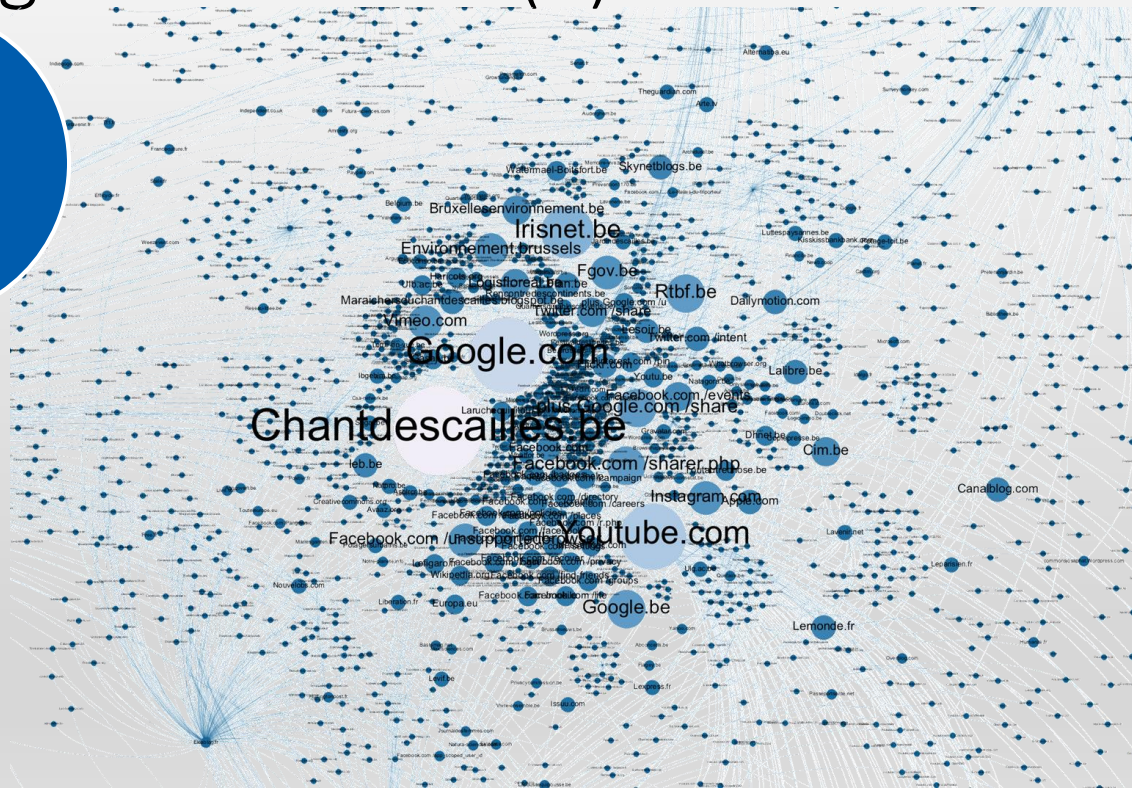
Niveau d'Yifan Hu



No buildings on the field (5)

Contents
and
contents
producers
online

Size : In-
degree (10-
200)
Spatialization :
Force Atlas 2



(No) buildings on the field (6)



- The project (the field/farm) went from a black-box to an actor-network
 - Many heterogeneous actors involved
 - The field/farm as an O.P.P
- Participants to the project, politicians and activists as main translators trying to change public opinion through
 - Meetings
 - Actions (events, petitions)
 - Traditional and alternative media
- Traditional Media as O.P.P and translator