

**THE SILENT REVOLUTION
OF FRATERNITY.**

INTRODUCTION

THE NEWS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ARE SATURATED WITH STORIES ABOUT POLARIZATION IN THE NETHERLANDS, EUROPE AND THE REST OF WORLD. KEY ISSUES ARE PRESENTED TO US ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY THROUGH A FRAMEWORK OF ANGER, FRUSTRATION AND CONFLICT. SOCIAL MEDIA FUELS THIS PROCESS. MAIN-STREAM MEDIA AMPLIFIES IT. IF WE SHIFT PERSPECTIVES WE CAN BEGIN TO SEE HOW ANGER, FRUSTRATION AND CONFLICT ALSO FUEL CONSTRUCTIVE PROJECTS, SO-CALLED SOCIAL INITIATIVES, AND A SENSE OF CIVIC TOGETHERNESS.

THIS PROJECT IS THEN AN EXPERIMENT IN CHANGING PERSPECTIVES WHEN IT COMES TO THE COLLECTION OF WEB DATA AND SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS. WE AIM TO BEGIN CAPTURING A DIFFERENT VIEW OF EUROPE. WHO ARE THE ACTORS OF THIS SILENT REVOLUTION OF FRATERNITY? WHAT FUELS CIVIC TOGETHERNESS? WHAT BLOCKS ENGAGEMENT?

SEARCHING FOR TOGETHERNESS

We spent one day **querying the web with a different perspective.**

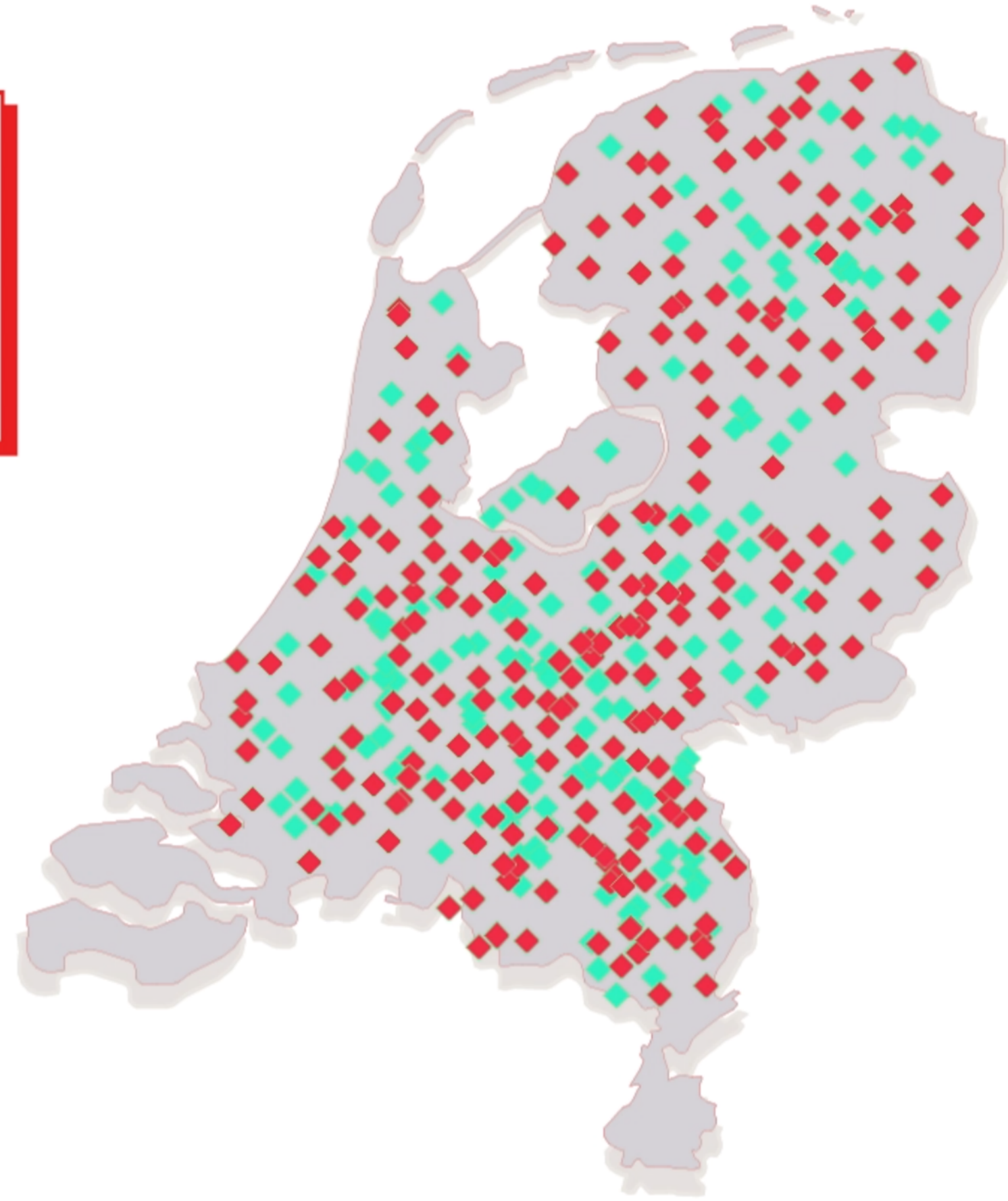
Earlier qualitative research from journalism students of the University of Amsterdam indicates that initiatives currently focusing on fraternity tend to operate in the fields of immigration, food, climate/sustainability, housing, health, new democracy, education, neighborhoods, etc.

From their insights **we build a list of keywords associated with the concept of togetherness.** We used these keywords to start our web search and query design in the context of three issues, namely, food, climate and migration (see the list).

In one day of research **we gathered more than 800 initiatives and projects** and started building a directory.

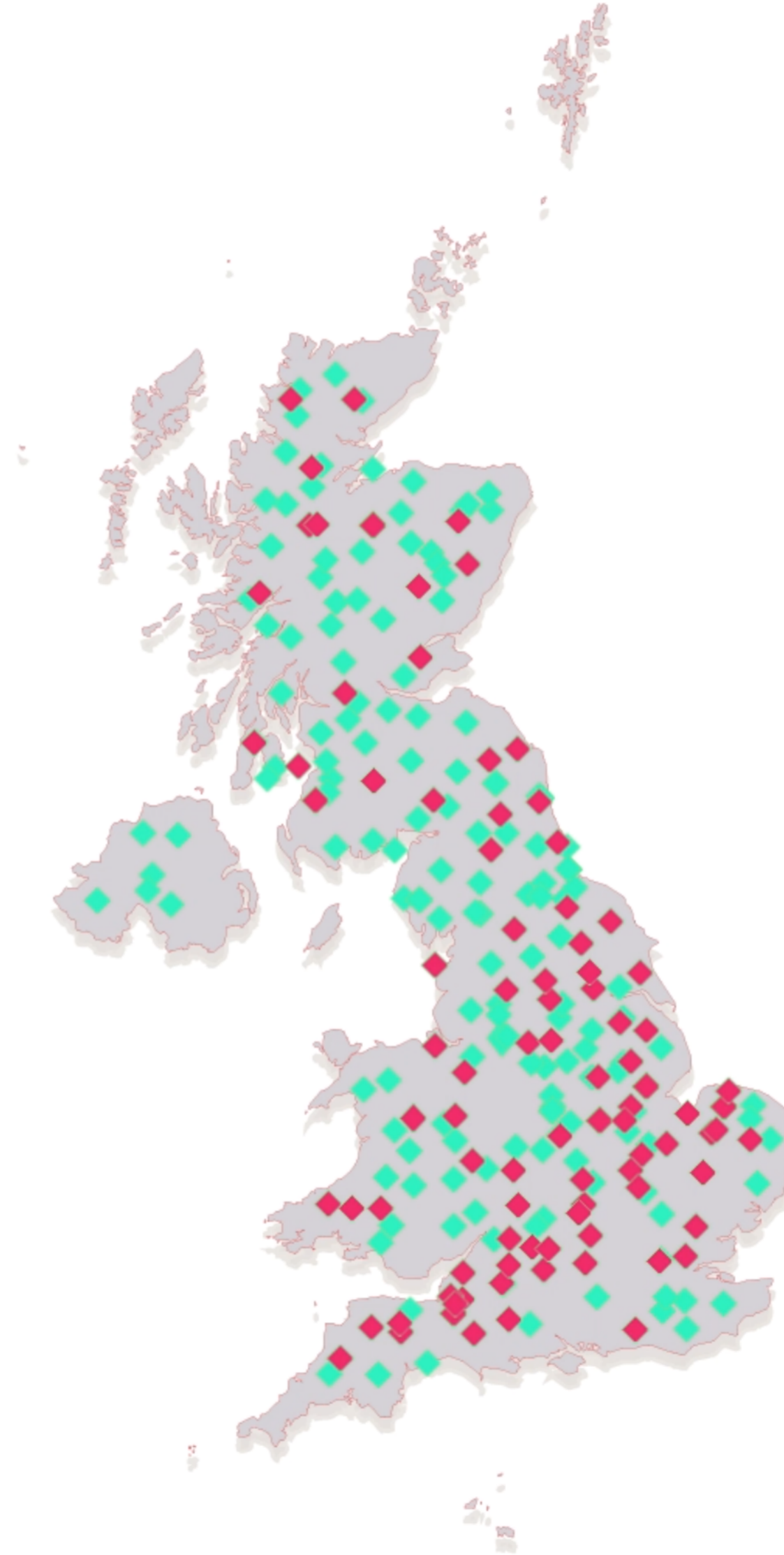
Netherlands civic initiatives

People come together through energy cooperatives and adapt solar panels and windmills. The aim is sustainability on local scale and lower energy costs. We found 260 initiatives.

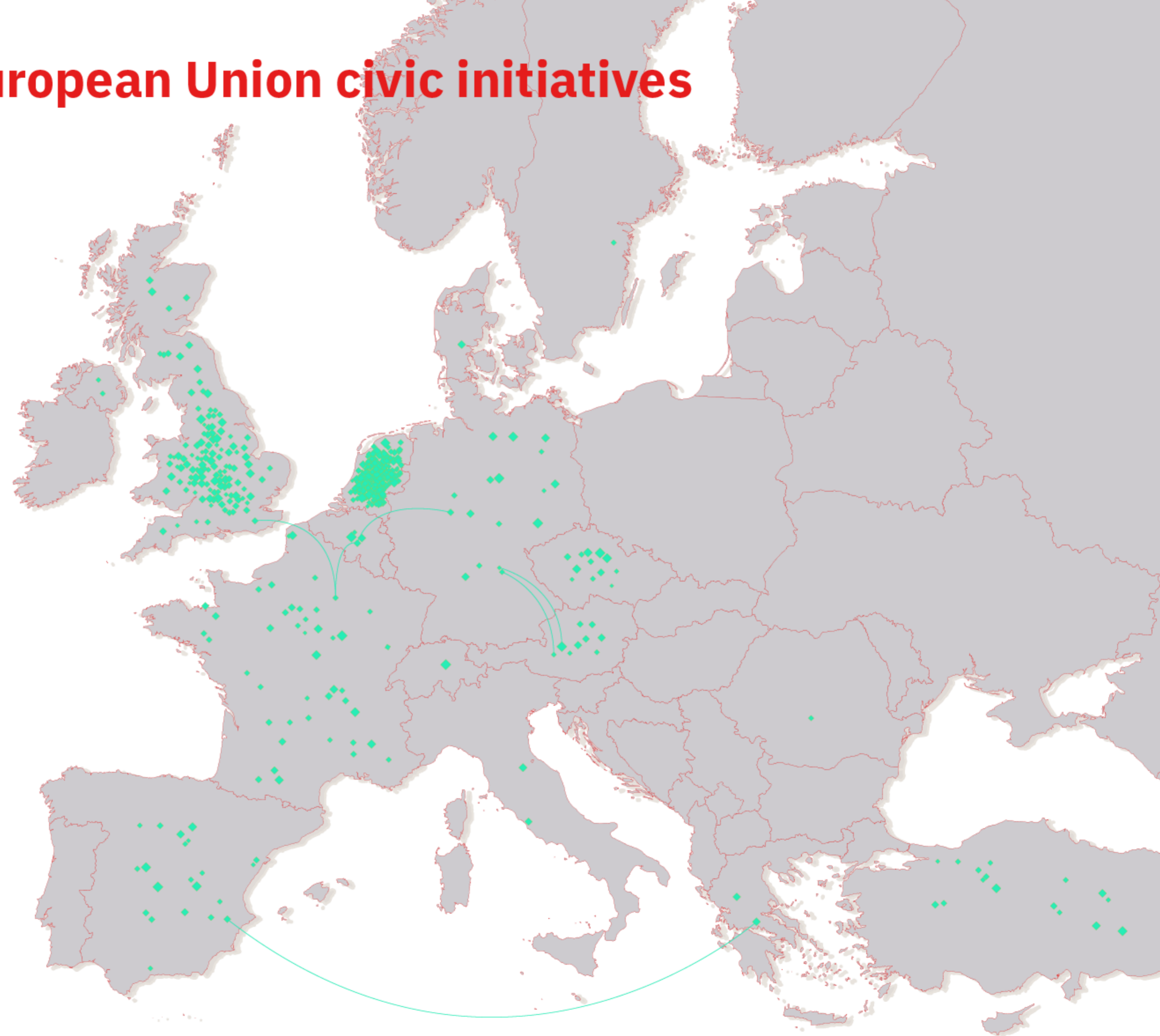


United Kingdom civic initiatives

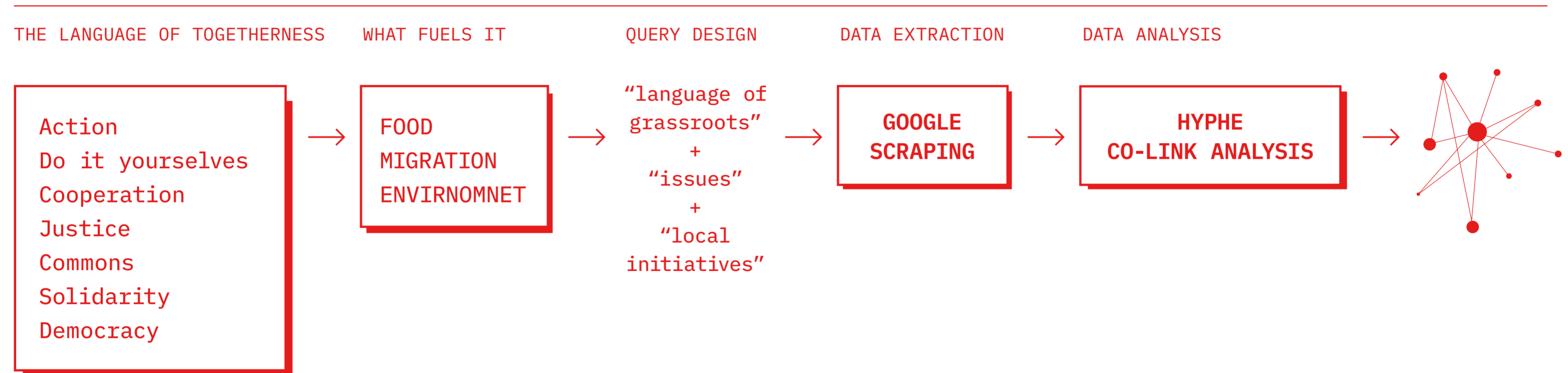
People are coming together around food. We found 15 urban farming projects and 122 Food aid initiatives, and 2 group using cooking as means to support the integration of refugees.



European Union civic initiatives



CREATING THE DIRECTORY.



**The directory of initiatives
in the field of togetherness
is ongoing** and on-the-making.

You can visit it here.

DUTCH GRASSROOTS AND THEIR NETWORKS

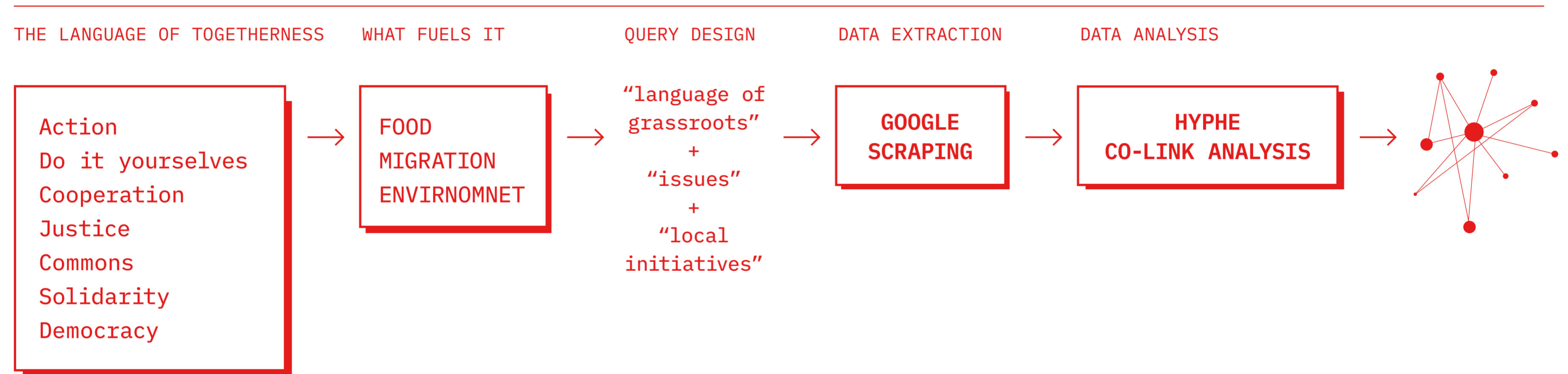


We ask, how grassroots organizations working in climate, food, and migration connect with government and fundings organizations? What type of networks do they assemble and what holds them together? We employed web link analysis to explore a selections of dutch organizations and their websites, currently working on each of the issues.

Through the analysis, we see different types of networks and stories assembling around each of the issues.

WHO ARE WE? WHERE ARE WE?

using digital methods to locate grassroots initiatives.



After collecting our data, we had a directory of around 500 websites of local grassroots initiatives on migration, food and climate in The Netherlands.

Through Hyphe we discovered that 359 climate-, 33 food-, and 119 migration related initiatives respectively link to 6835, 2432 and 2902 other web entities. From all these discovered websites, we categorized the most cited ones, using

the following tags: 'grass roots collective', 'connectors', 'companies', 'media', 'education', 'ngo', 'local government', 'government' and 'others'.

Now we could see how our grassroots initiatives are related on the web to websites of the media or the government.

The migration data was also analyzed through using the programme Gephi.

ANALYSING THE NETWORK

People tend to be ever more dissatisfied with the fragmentation of society as a result of expanded individualism. There seems to be a strong need for new inspiring stories about how people try to create new ways of democracy and alternative ways of living and working together. By doing a Google query and a search through Facebook and Twitter we tried to create a directory of grassroots initiatives. Subsequently, we carried out an analysis through the web corpus curation tool Hyphe. In this way we tried to give a kick-off for (re)searching these stories in The Netherlands.

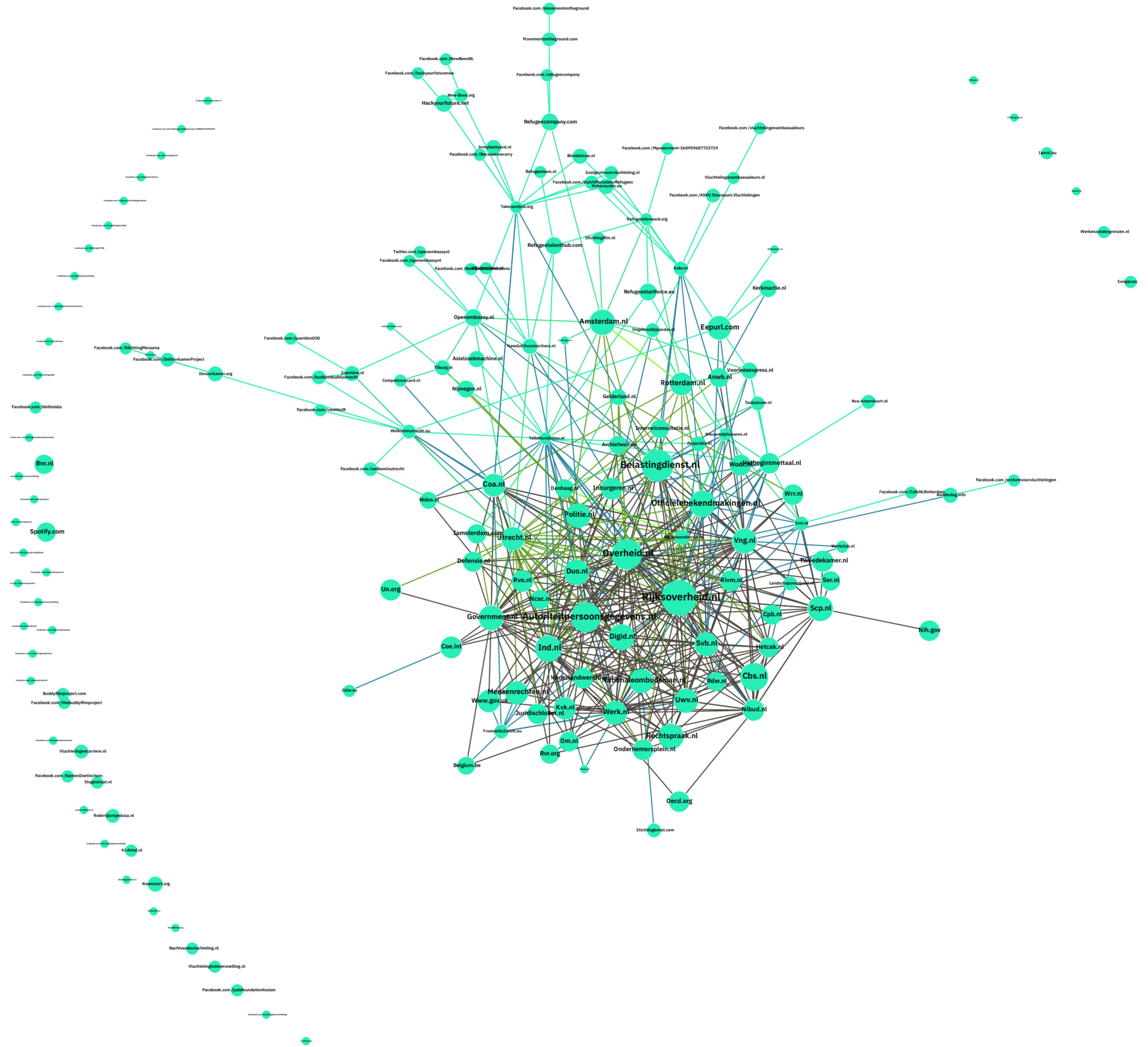
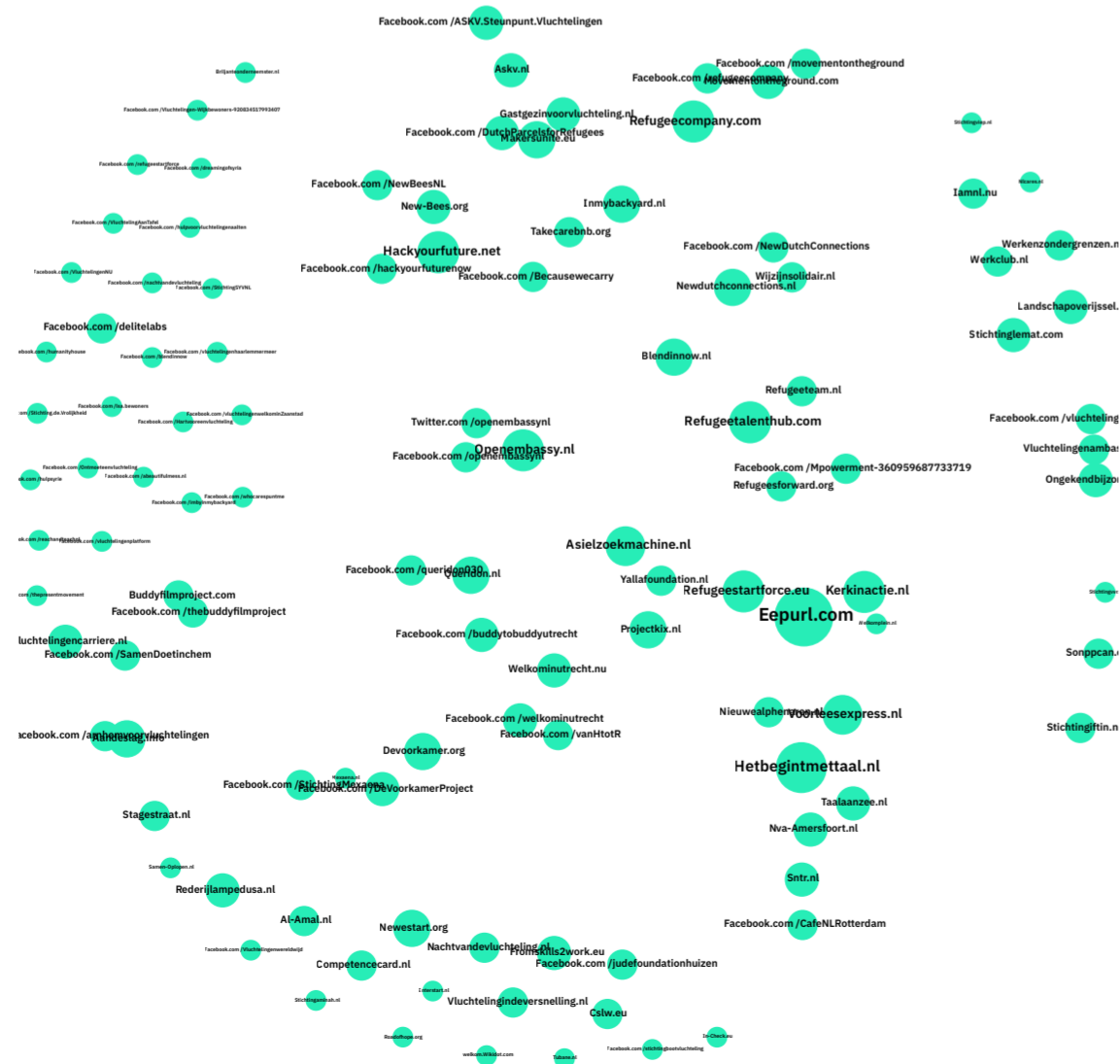
What stands out is that there is a collaboration between actors in every network - but the collaboration is designed differently in every case. By analyzing the amount of times the websites were cited and by categorizing them, we hope to give an indication of how the collaborations between different actors in the networks function: to what extent are they interconnected to each other? And are the actors more related to state affairs, supported by funding or mainly self-sufficient?

MIGRATION

In the network of initiatives related to migration we see that the initiatives are linking most to funders and governmental institutions.

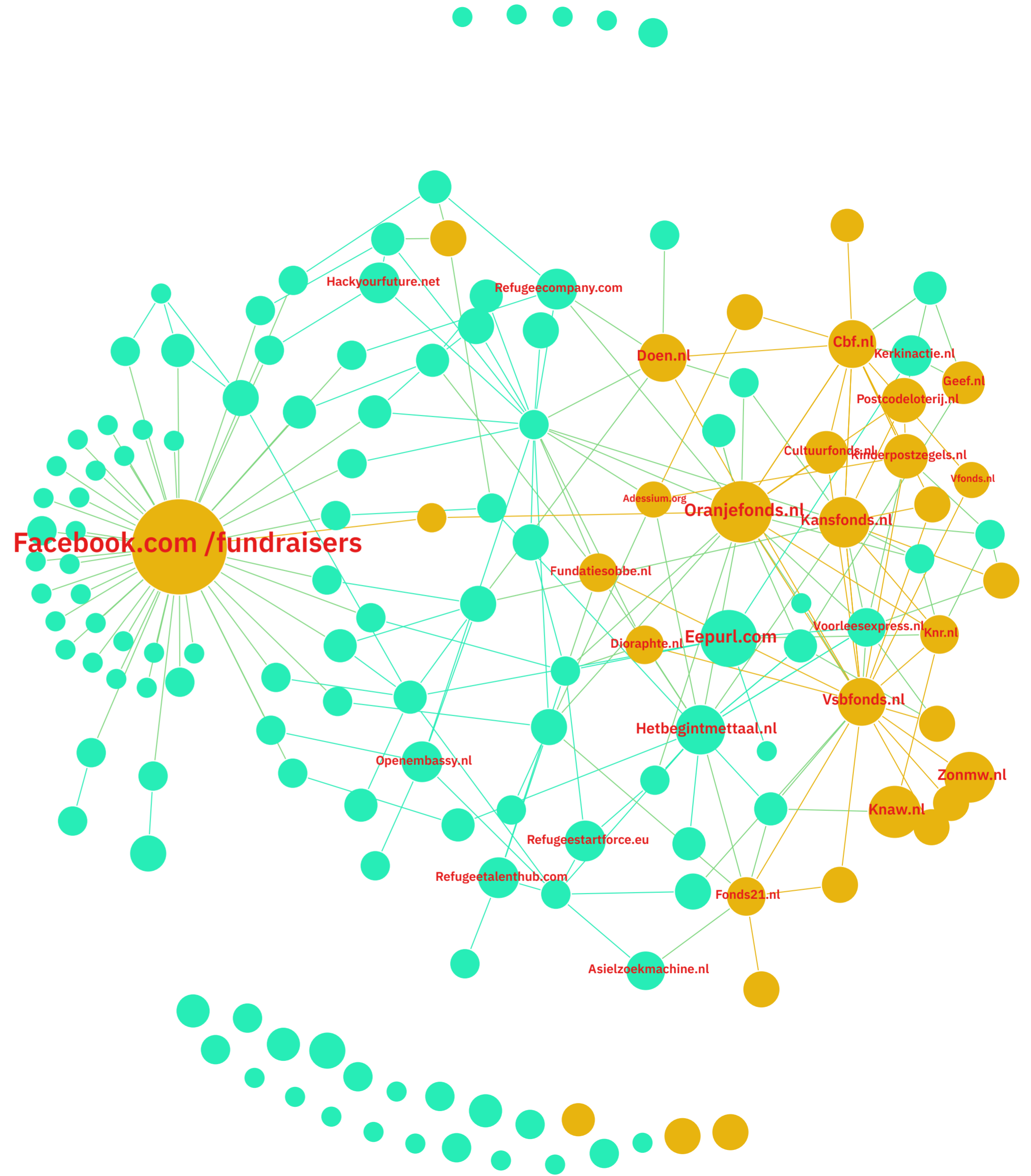
Firstly, a lot of websites of grassroots initiatives are linked to a Facebook fundraising page. This page is a way for grassroots initiatives to raise money through crowdfunding, rather than through funds or subsidies. At the same time, we see many links between grassroots initiatives and other funders, such as Oranjefonds or Vsb fonds.

Secondly, we see links between the grassroots initiatives and governmental institutions, at both the local and national level. The Belastingdienst and Rijksoverheid are, unsurprisingly, the main players.



Another things that stands out is the lack of connections between all the different grassroots initiatives.

As can be seen in the image BESIDE, only a few initiatives are linked to each other. They mostly connect to bigger (governmental) institutions and funders, rather than to each other; which might be a missed opportunity.

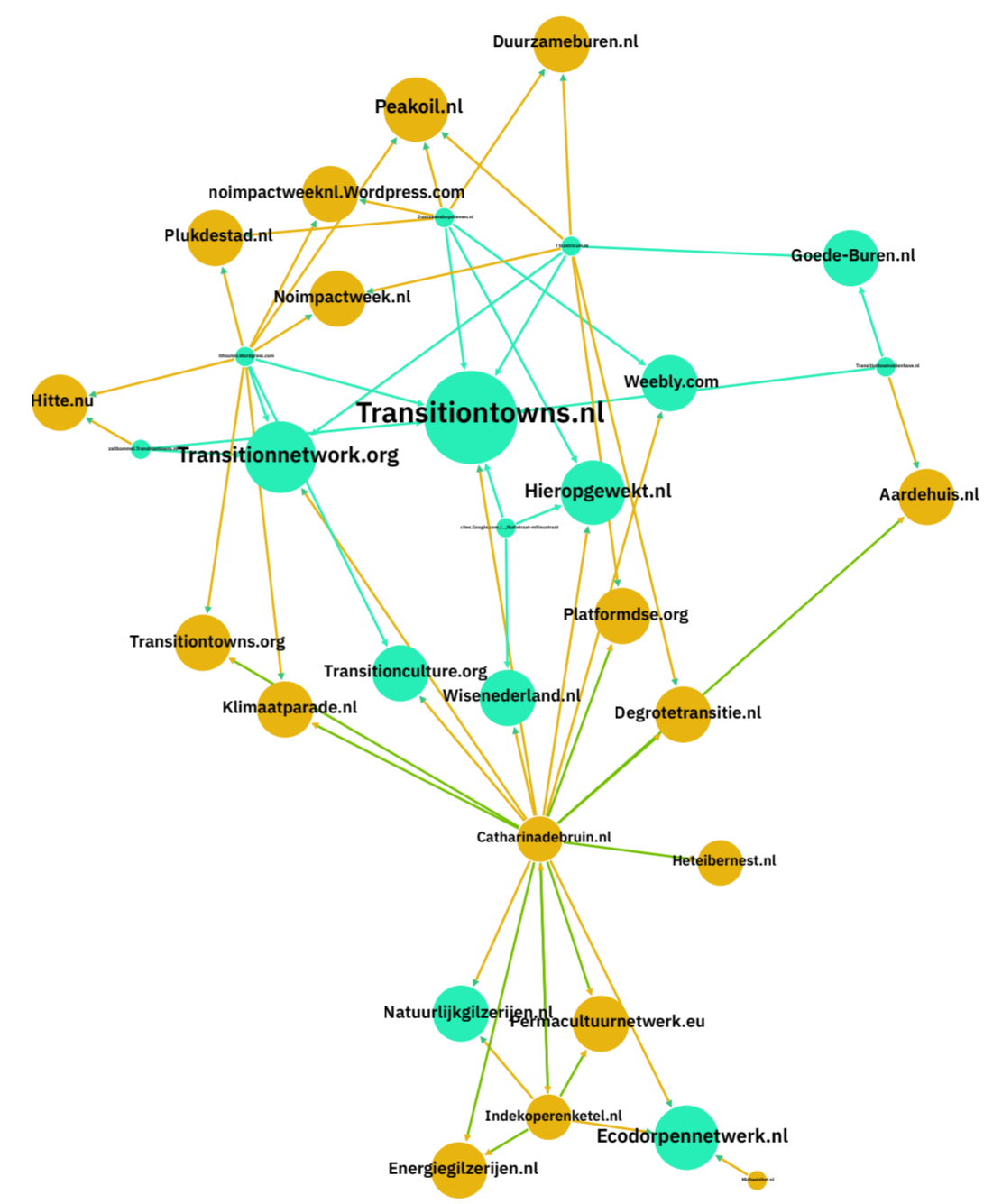


FOOD

It stands out that many websites can be described as 'connectors'. They link multiple initiatives together.

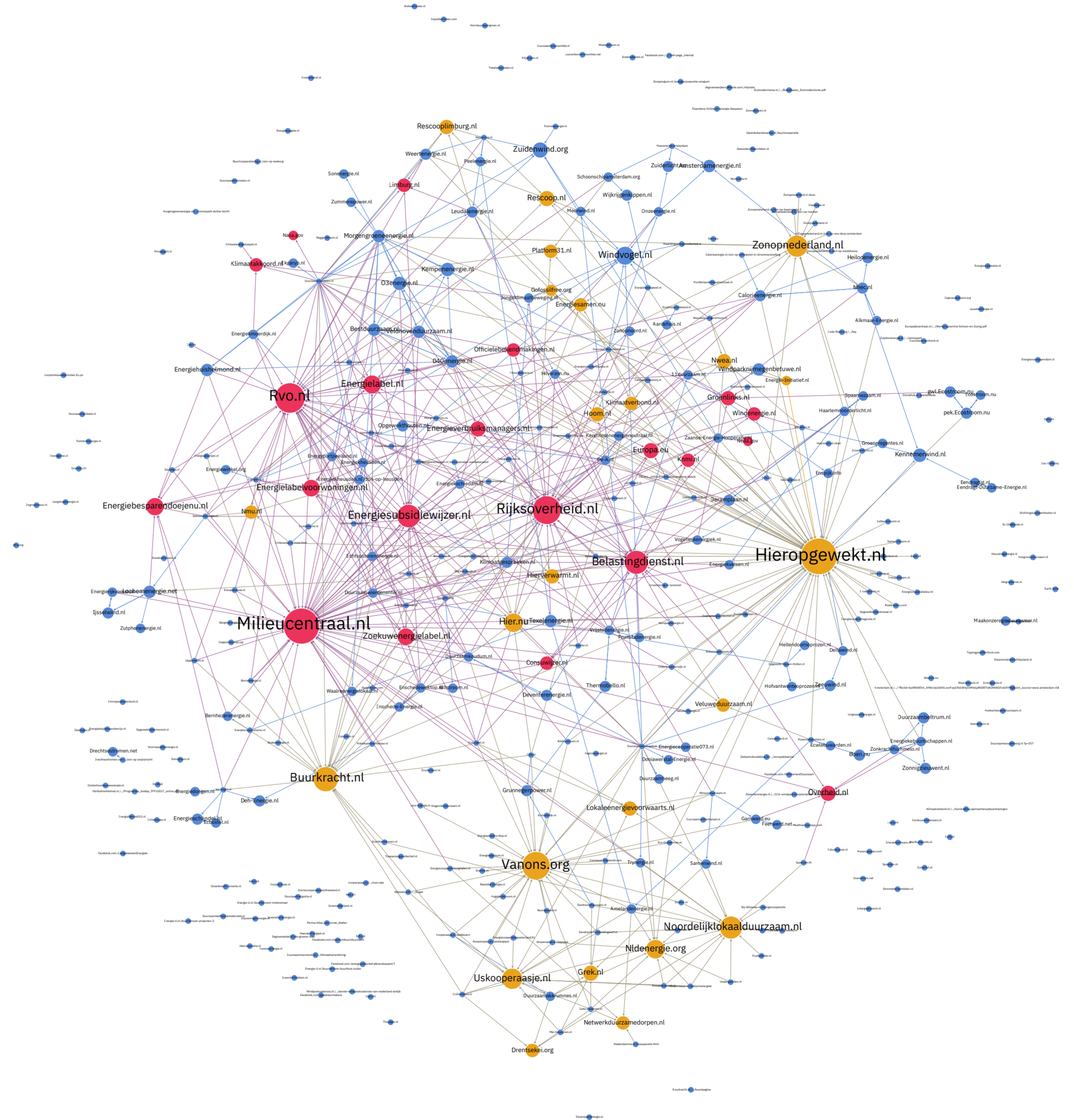
Compared to the migration and environmental networks, there is a lack of governmental institutions. If these initiatives are less political, what creates their nature of 'togetherness', then? One of the reasons people come together seems to be cure a feeling of loneliness between people; a certain amount of initiatives states as goal on their website that they want to 'bring people together' or 'get people out of their houses'. If we look at the role of these 'eating together'-initiatives in the network of websites, it stands out that these initiatives are less interconnected with the each other.

Another accelerator that seems to create a feeling of 'togetherness'/ 'fraternity' is the fact that people want to work together for a better future. Concerning food, this means people want to use their resources (like land, food, money, energy) in a more sustainable way. Those initiatives are more connected to other websites. They are connectors and activators at the same time. It is important to note that although 'the future' plays a big role in this part of the network, cohesion and getting to know your neighbors seem to be important as well. So, it is not possible to completely separate these two motives from each other.



CLIMATE CHANGE

What characterizes the network of grassroots initiatives that focus on climate change and sustainability is that a lot of their websites link to governmental websites and websites of connectors. A lot of these could be defined as knowledge platforms. Websites on which you can do an energy check, or on which you can see whether your house is fit for solar panels. The presence of websites of companies and governments is also significant. Grassroots initiatives on climate change and sustainability seem to be more dependent on institutions that can supply them with knowledge and money, for example through subsidies.



THE UPTAKE OF THE LANGUAGE OF TOGETHERNESS

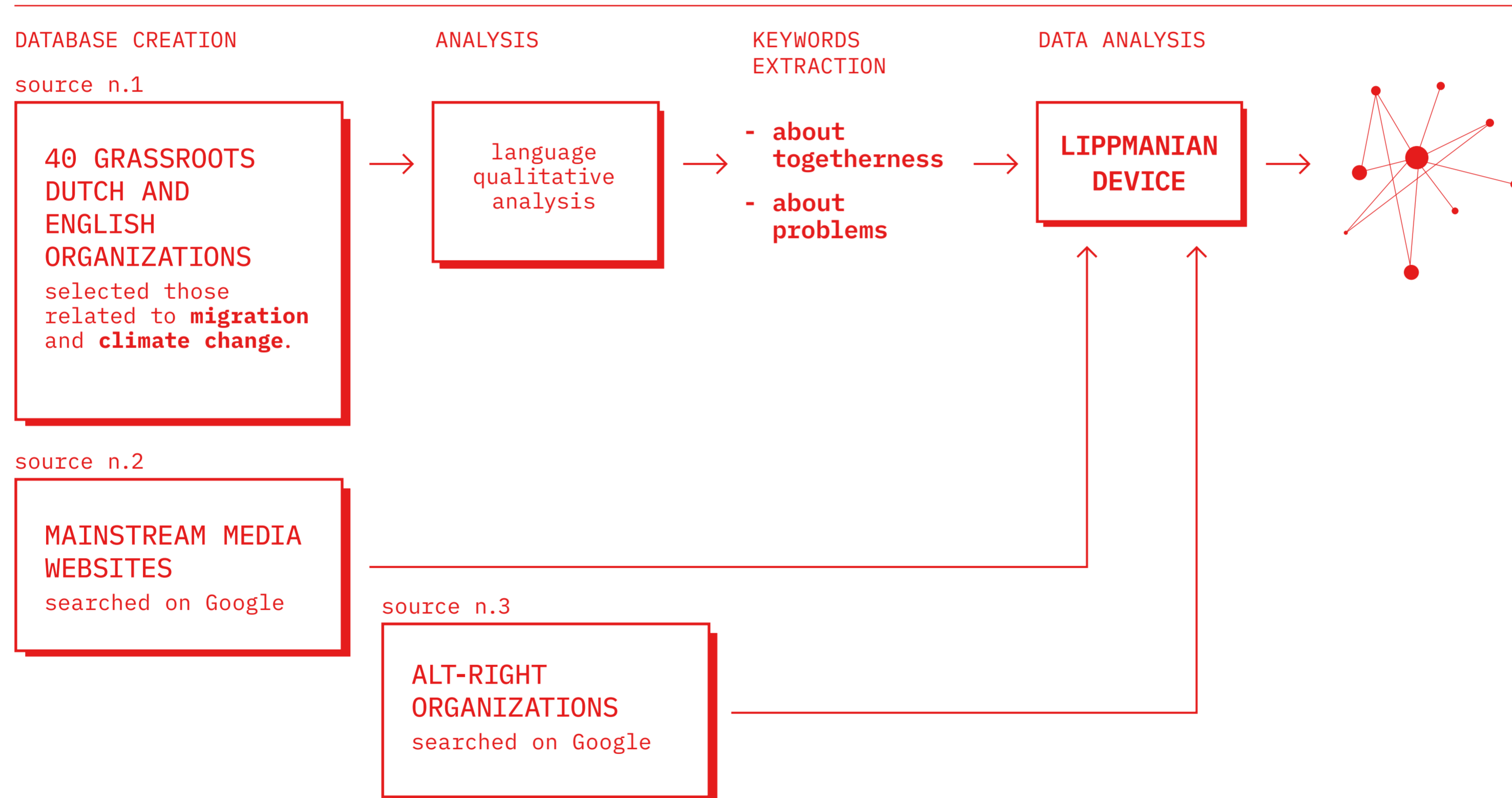


Issues such as climate change and migration tend to evoke negative feelings and also scandalous narratives.

However, can these same issues be framed differently and go beyond divisive language?

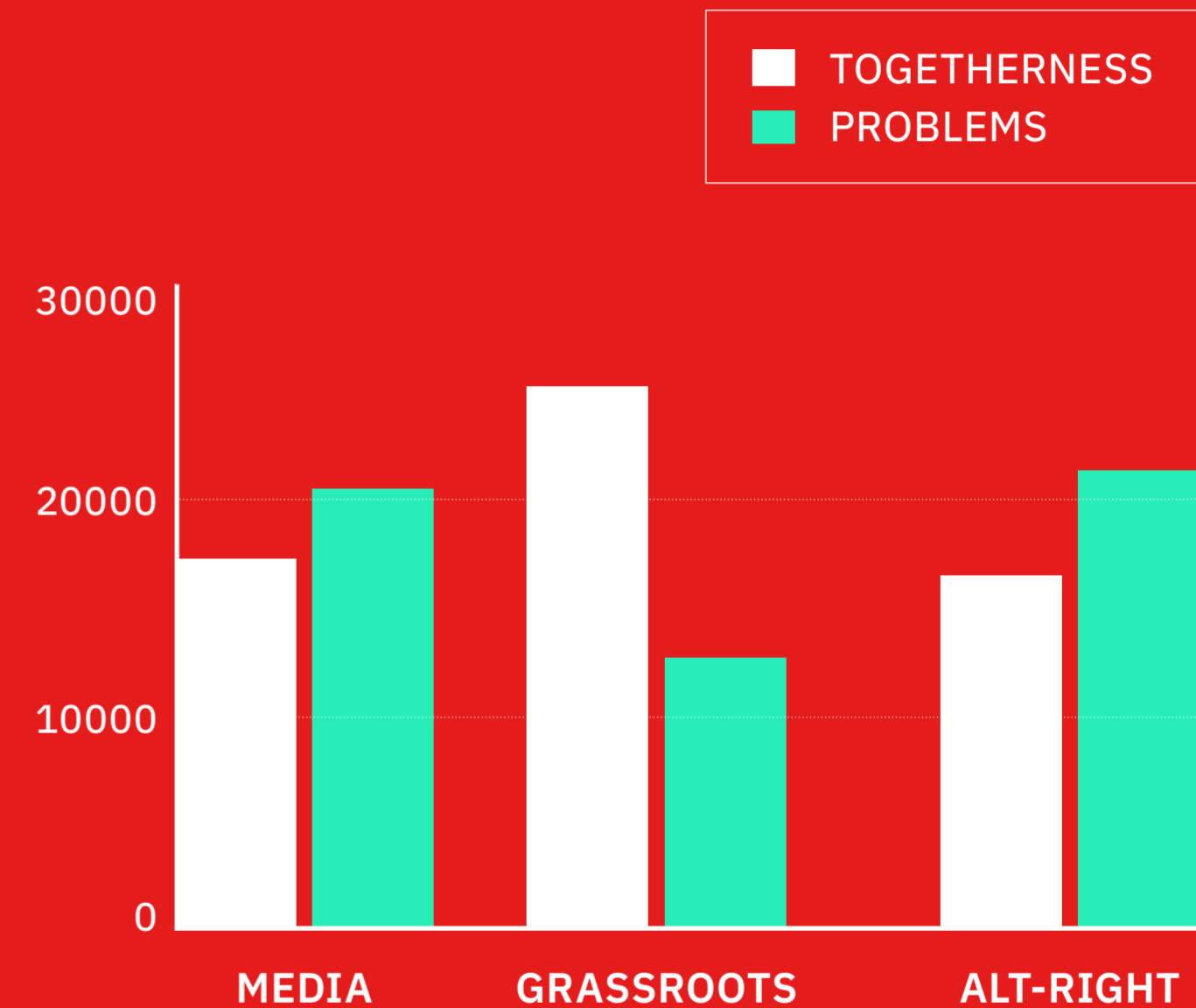
What happens when climate change or migration are spoken about together with the language of togetherness? How often is this happening in the news media? Does the language of 'togetherness' resonate also in the alt-right?

THE LANGUAGE OF TOGETHERNESS.



WHERE IS TOGETHERNESS?

We started out with an aim to identify the language of fraternity online. Do issues like climate change and migration drive polarisation or are they reasons that make people band together? Our initial analysis of grassroots organisations showed that while they frame these issues as problems, they become reasons that animate calls to solidarity. Then we located how this dynamic played out in the media and alt-right websites. Grassroots, evidently, drive the conversation on togetherness in the face of crises. Surprisingly, the media and the alt-right strike a balance between using the language of togetherness and focusing on the problems when discussing climate change and migration. The language of fraternity is on the rise!

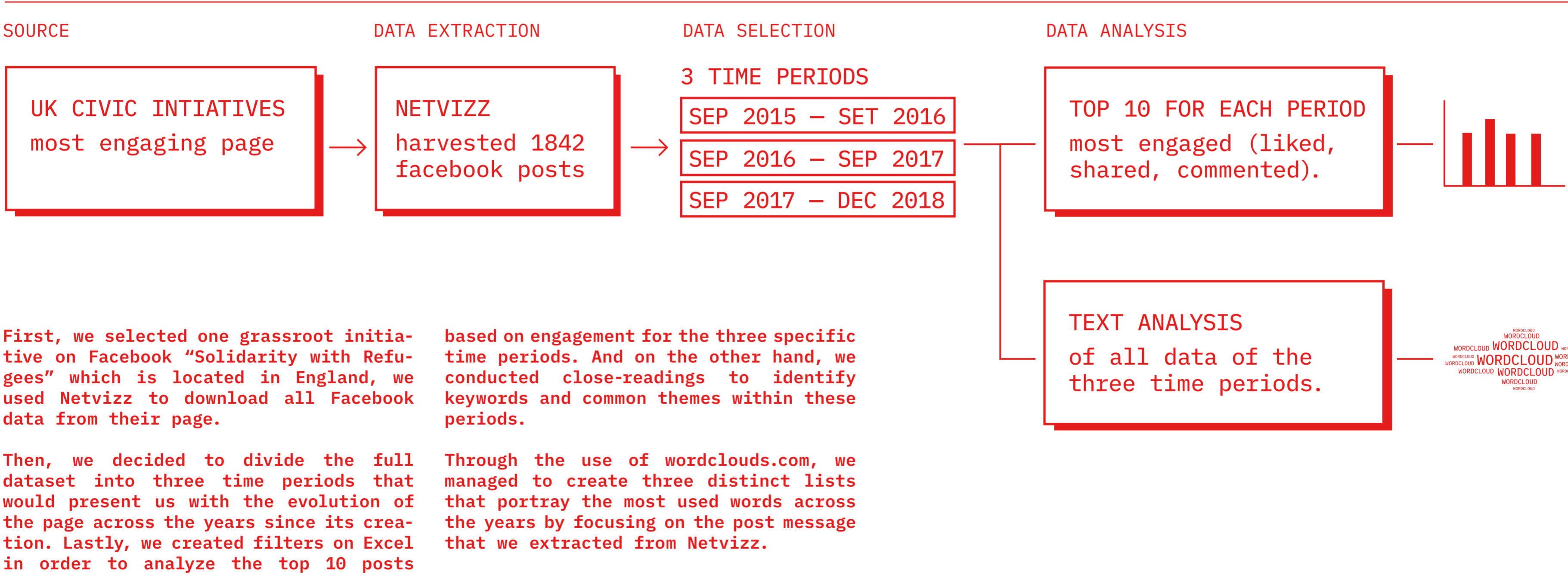


**STUDYING ENGAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY
ON FACEBOOK: "SOLIDARITY WITH REFUGEES".**



We selected a grassroots initiative on Facebook, "Solidarity with Refugees", which is located in England and in 2015 helped organize one of the largest pro-refugees marches in the UK. We ask, what happens to a large event page like "Solidarity with Refugees" after the event/crisis has taken place? Do the page continue to engage with its audience? What becomes of these spaces? We used Netvizz to download all Facebook data from the page and study engagement over a period of time.

THE FORMAT OF PERSISTENCE.



“SOLIDARITY WITH REFUGEES”

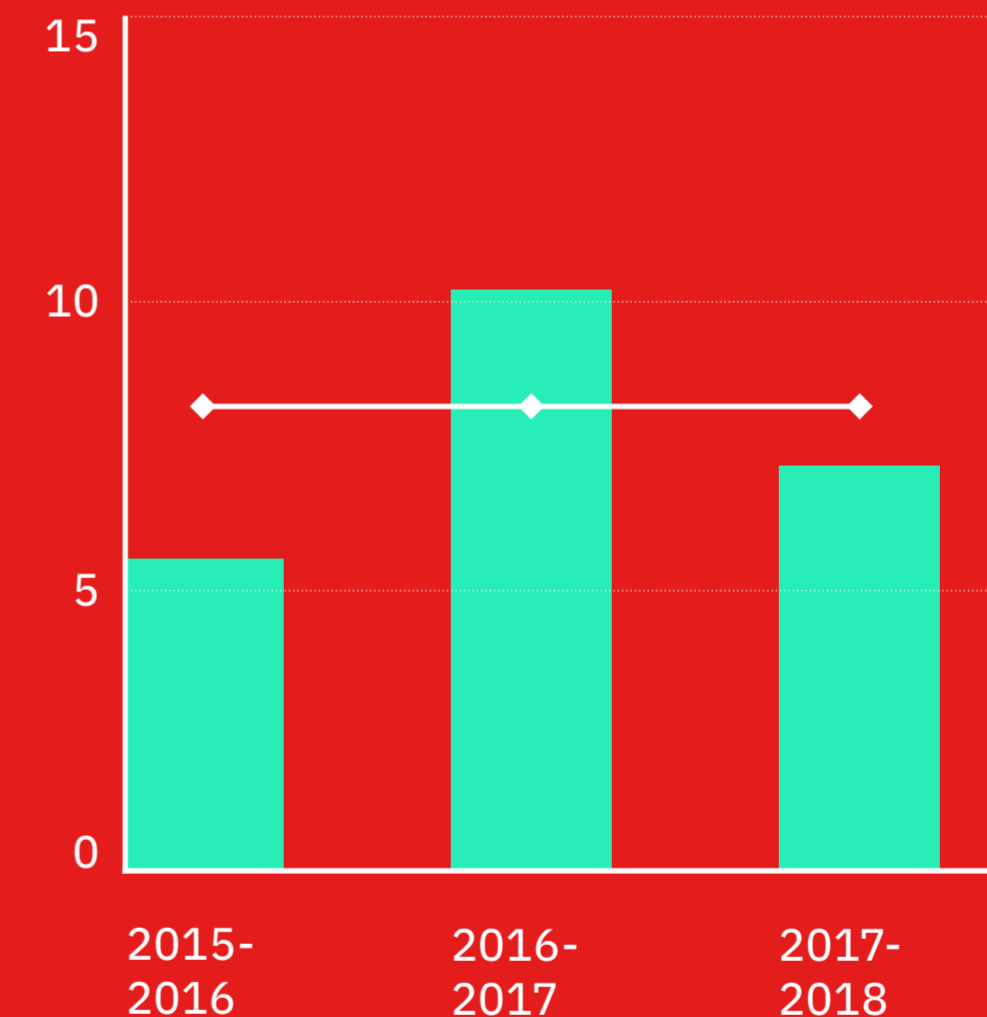
In the first part of the chosen timeline, as a grassroots initiative, Solidarity for Refugees showcased togetherness, creating a community of sustainability within a space to discuss and act proactively towards the refugee influx.

Although the second part demonstrated the peak engagement in comparison to the other two periods, it only managed to create one big event to help the refugees. Throughout the second half of this period, we see a decline in the collective action of this page which became even more apparent when Brexit was announced, as noted by the co-founder of the initiative.

The third part showed that sustainability of togetherness needs to be maintained after the aims of the page have been met. The Solidarity for Refugees page today is purely re-posting links to their newsfeed, rather than creating and sharing their own content or organizing events.

Furthermore, surprisingly after organizing the two most successful marches for refugees in the UK, Solidarity with Refugees only has 4,201 likes currently and 4,137 followers whilst an estimated of 90,000 people came to the marches, including celebrities and politicians.

POST ENGAGEMENT



The first period showed the relation between current events, such as Alan Kurdi's death (3-year-old Syrian child, drowned and washed up dead on a beach in Turkey), the Bataclan attacks (series of organized terrorist attacks in Paris), and European governments' responses to the Syrian Refugee Crisis.

The second timeframe contained original content and demonstrated citizen journalism, by having live, on-the-go participants share and post videos of the marches as they were occurring and developing especially during the second part of 2016.

In 2018 the format of reporting changed as Solidarity with Refugees employed a new method of reporting narratives, reposting stories from secondary sources, rather than creating their own content.

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