

Institute for Media
and Communications Management



University of St.Gallen



Prof. Dr. Miriam Meckel

Agenda

- Background on Twitter
- Theoretical Background of the study
- Research Methodology
- Results
- Limitations, Discussion, and Outlook



How Conversations on Twitter look like

[#IranElection](#) Facebook and YouTube have just been blocked.
8:57 AM Jun 13th, 2009 via web

[@twitter](#) Twitter is currently our ONLY way to communicate overnight news in Iran, PLEASE do not take it down. [#IranElection](#)
4:06 PM Jun 15th, 2009 via web

[@Change_for_Iran](#) [@gkarbaschi](#) confirmed on twitter 4pm today rally will go ahead, he asks everyone to join Mouasvi & Karoubi [#IranElection](#)
4:09 AM Jun 15th, 2009 via web

Photos from yesterday's Tehran protests:
www.flickr.com/mousavi1388 [#IranElection](#)
10:04 AM Jul 10th, 2009 via web

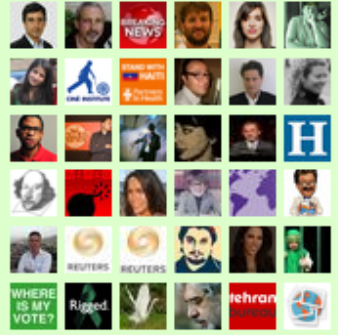
Name Robert Mackey
Location New York
Web <http://thelede.bl...>
Bio Reporter and Blogger for The New York Times

48 following 477 followers 47 listed


Tweets 239

Favorites

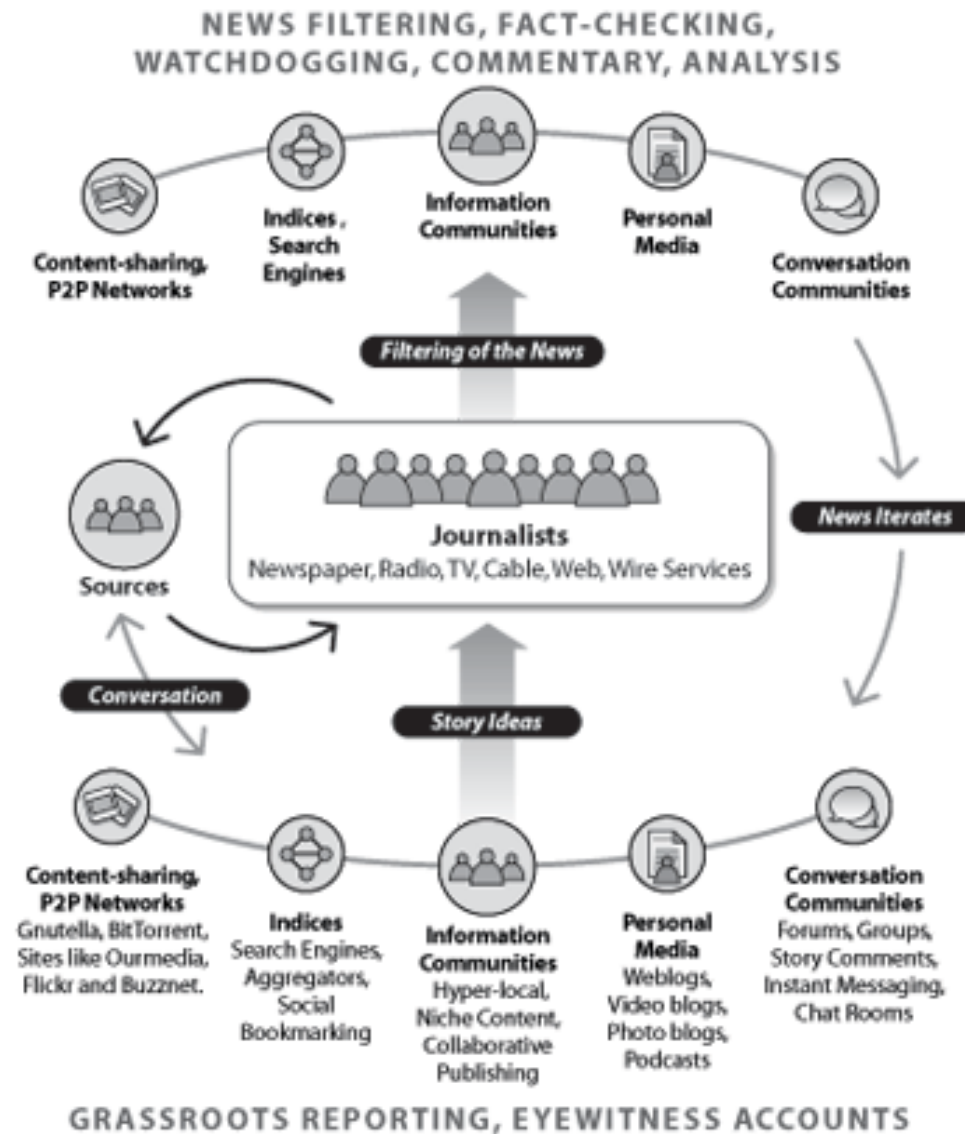
Following



[View all...](#)

 [RSS feed of RobertMackey's tweets](#)

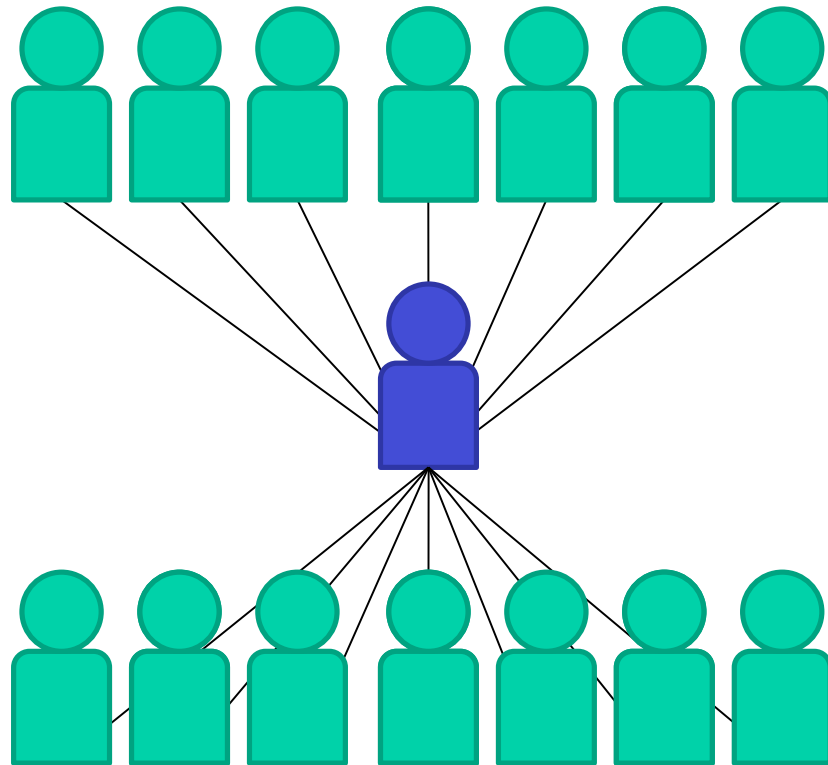
Emerging Media Ecosystem (Bowman & Willis 2005)



Theoretical Background

Theory (Author)	Context	Conceptualization within Twitter
Original "Two-Step flow of communication" (Katz & Lazarsfeld 1948/1955)	Media impact studies, Psephology	Information flow via opinion leaders
Opinion Sharing Model (among others: Grefe & Müller 1976, Troidahl & Van 1965, Wright & Cantor 1967)	Media impact studies	Information via linked opinion leaders
Brokerage and Closure (Burt) Intra and inter group communication processes (Weimann 1982)	Network Science	Search patterns for opinion leader within networks (in and between groups)

Methodology | Operationalization



- 1 • Which Twitter accounts refer to Iran?
- 2 • How is Mackey linked to accounts referring to Iran?
- 3 • How does Mackey forward the information from the sources to his readers?
- 4 • Which of Mackey's readers are interested in Iran?
- 5 • How is Mackey connecting sources on Iran with his readership?



1. Which are the most relevant twitter Iran accounts?

Starting with 2 Mio tweets, we extracted the 100 most relevant Twitter Iran sources.

Period of data collection 07.06.2009 - 26.06.2009:

Over 2.000.000 Iran related tweets*

#iranelection, #neda, #mousavi, #gr88
and keywords: Ahmadinejad,
Rafsanjani, ..

480.000 Twitter accounts

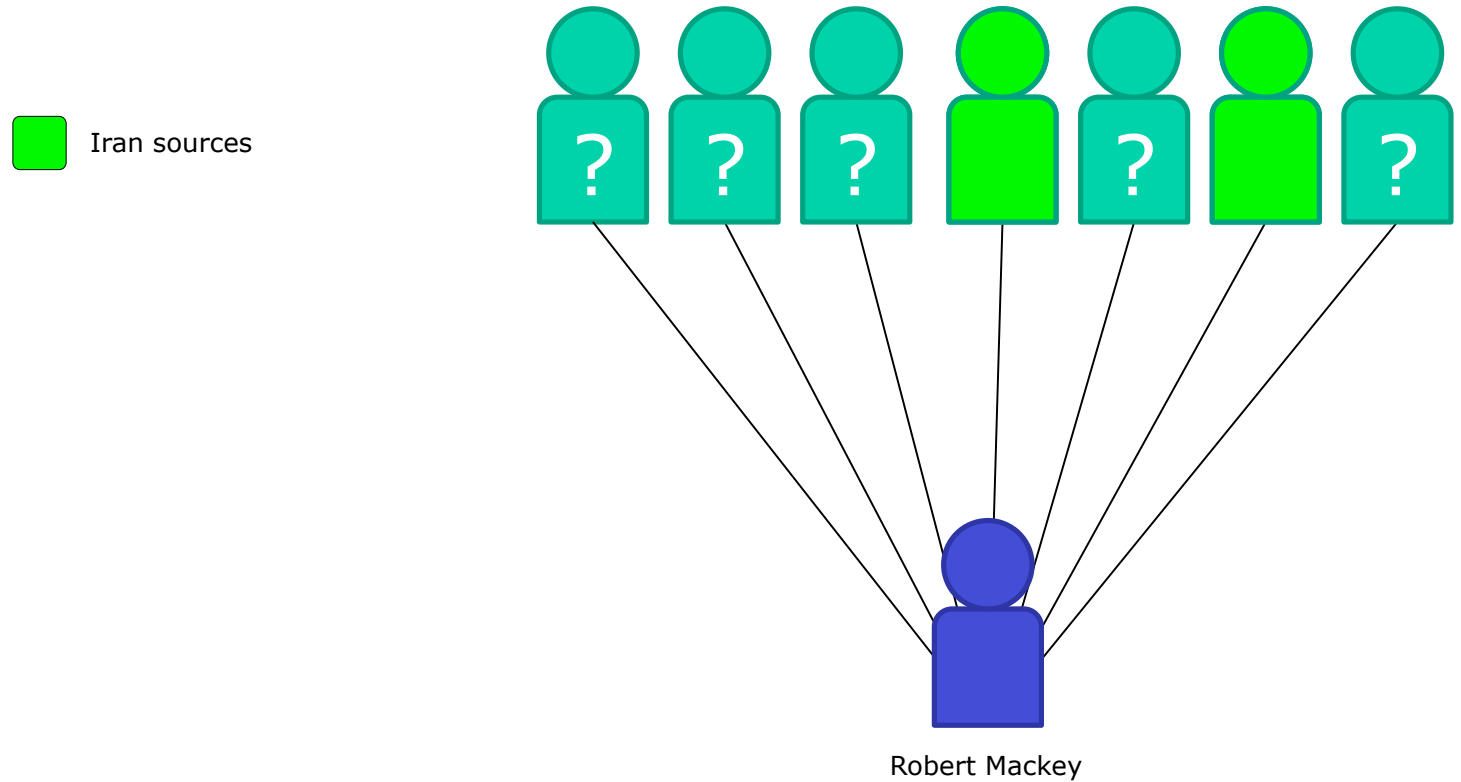
most tweets, most retweets

200 most active users

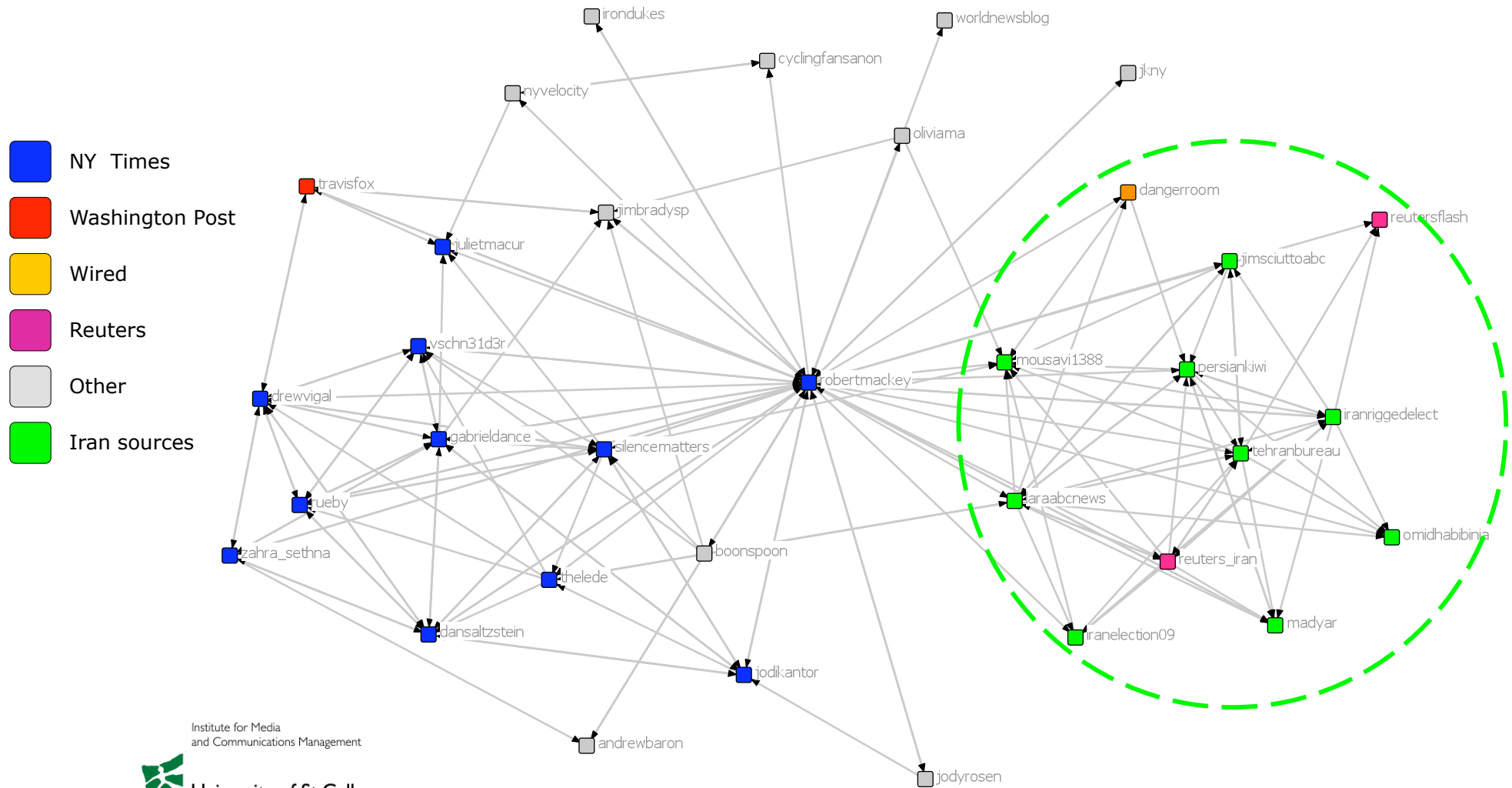
at least 1 Iran keyword / tweet
strongly Iran related
user generated content

100 most
relevant
users

2. How is Mackey linked to accounts referring to Iran? Analysis of Mackey's friends (sources) on Twitter



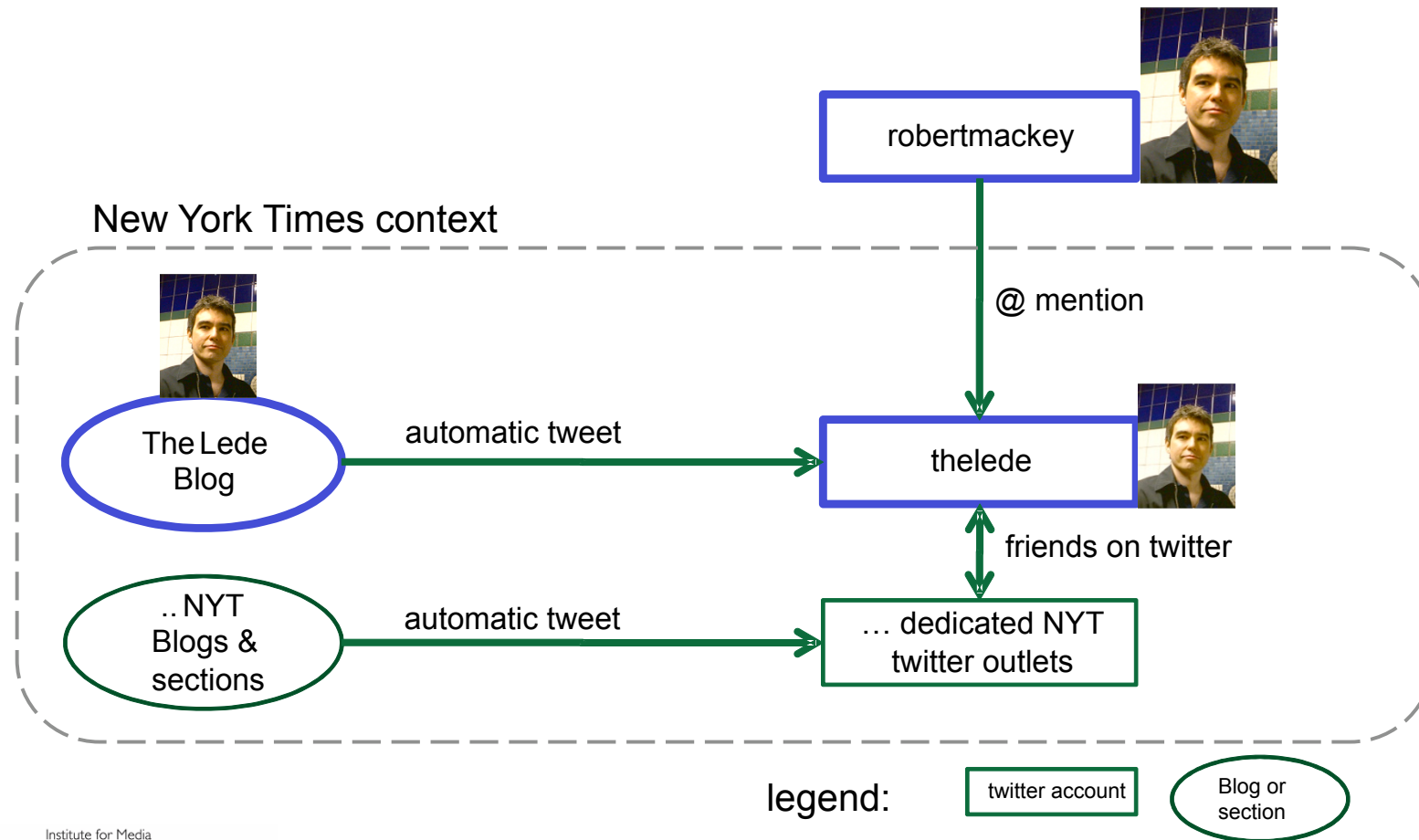
2. How is Mackey linked to accounts referring to Iran? Mackey has chosen 12 highly relevant Iran twitter sources.



Robert Mackey's friends (sources) on Twitter

3. How does Mackey forward the information from the sources to his readers?

Mackey uses his blog to post about Iran and then links to his postings on Twitter.





3. How does Mackey forward the information from the sources to his readers?

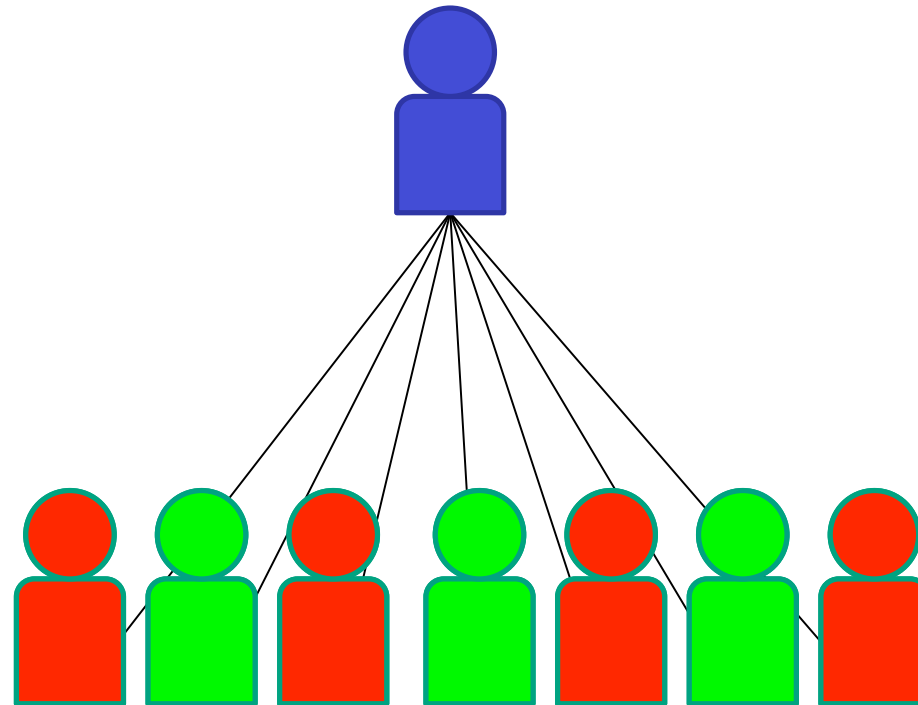
3

Almost 60% of his Iran related blog entries show mentions of Twitter users as sources.

- The blog contains over 51 entries related to the Iran election
- Almost 60% of those blog entries show mentions of Twitter users.
- 469 tweets on the twitter account **thelede** link to the blog
- Mackey's personal account **robertmackey** contains mostly (92%) tweets mentioning the twitter account **thelede**
- Some examples:
 - *"More from the Twitter feed of **Persiankiwi**, apparently finding a way to get online in Tehran: "We have heard what sounds like gunshots in distance. still have people on streets we have not heard from." (Date 15.06.2009: Updates on Iran´s disputed election.)*
 - *"Earlier on Sunday one Iranian Twitter user, using the name **Change_For_Iran**, tweeted: "according to rumor mousavi requested all people to gather near his office at 12:30 pm today." (Date 13.06.2009, Landslide or Fraud? The debate online over Iran´s election results.)*

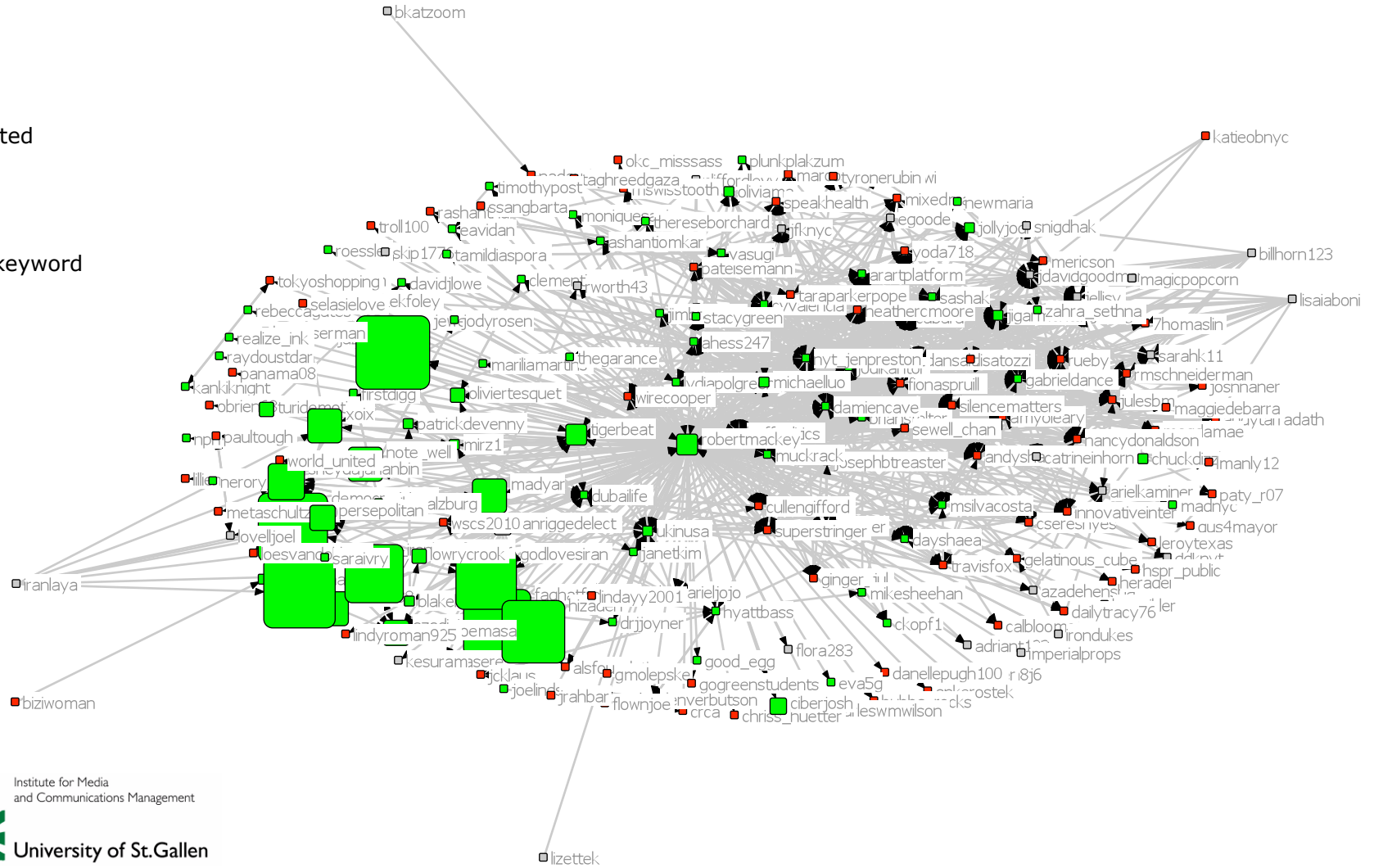
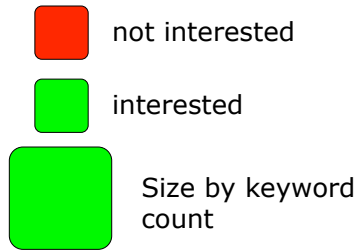
4. How interested are his readers in the Iran topic? Analysis of Mackey's followers (readers) on Twitter

 not interested
 interested



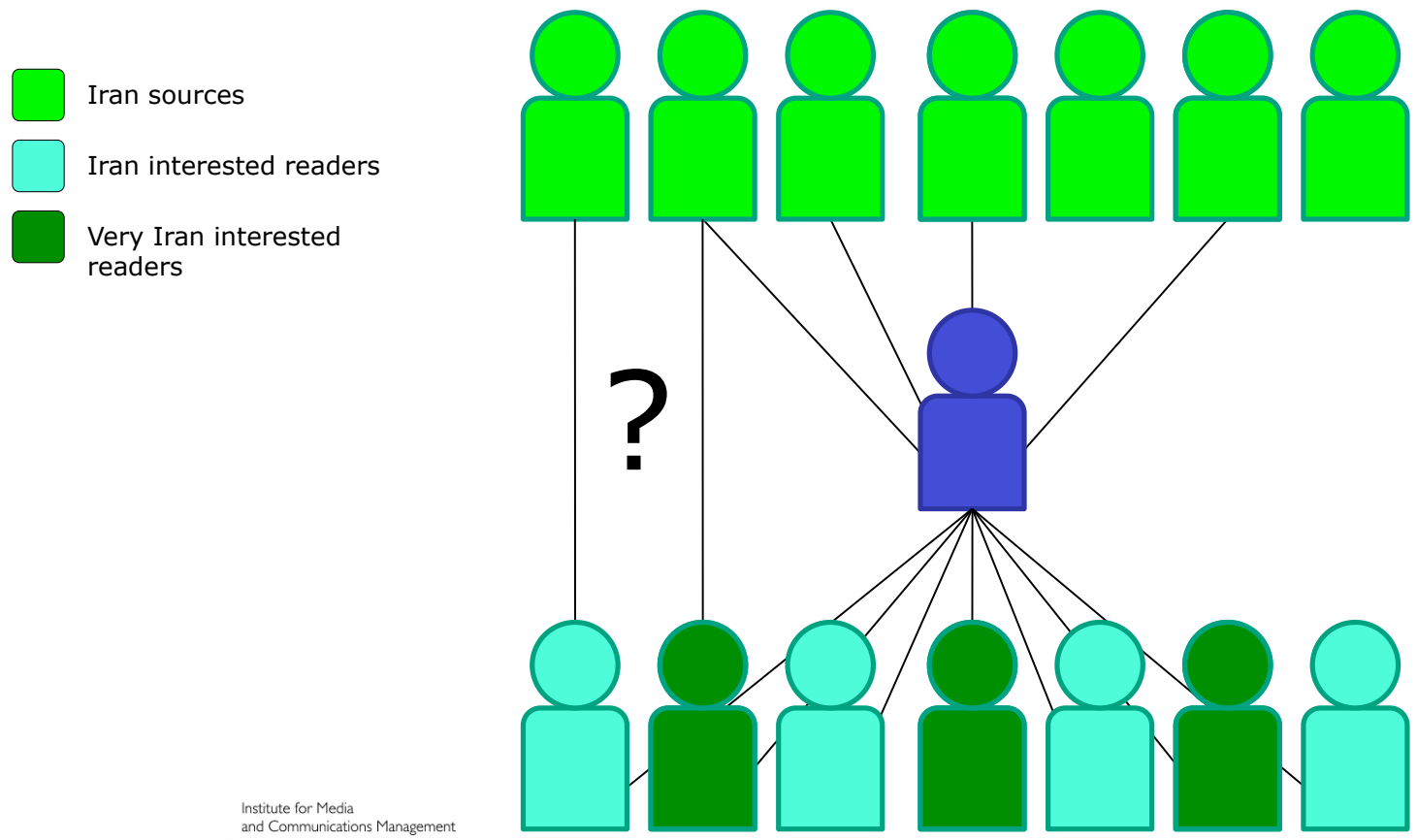
4. How interested are his readers in the Iran topic?




Based on keyword usage, we identified non-interested, interested, and very interested readers.



5. How is Mackey connecting sources on Iran with his readers?

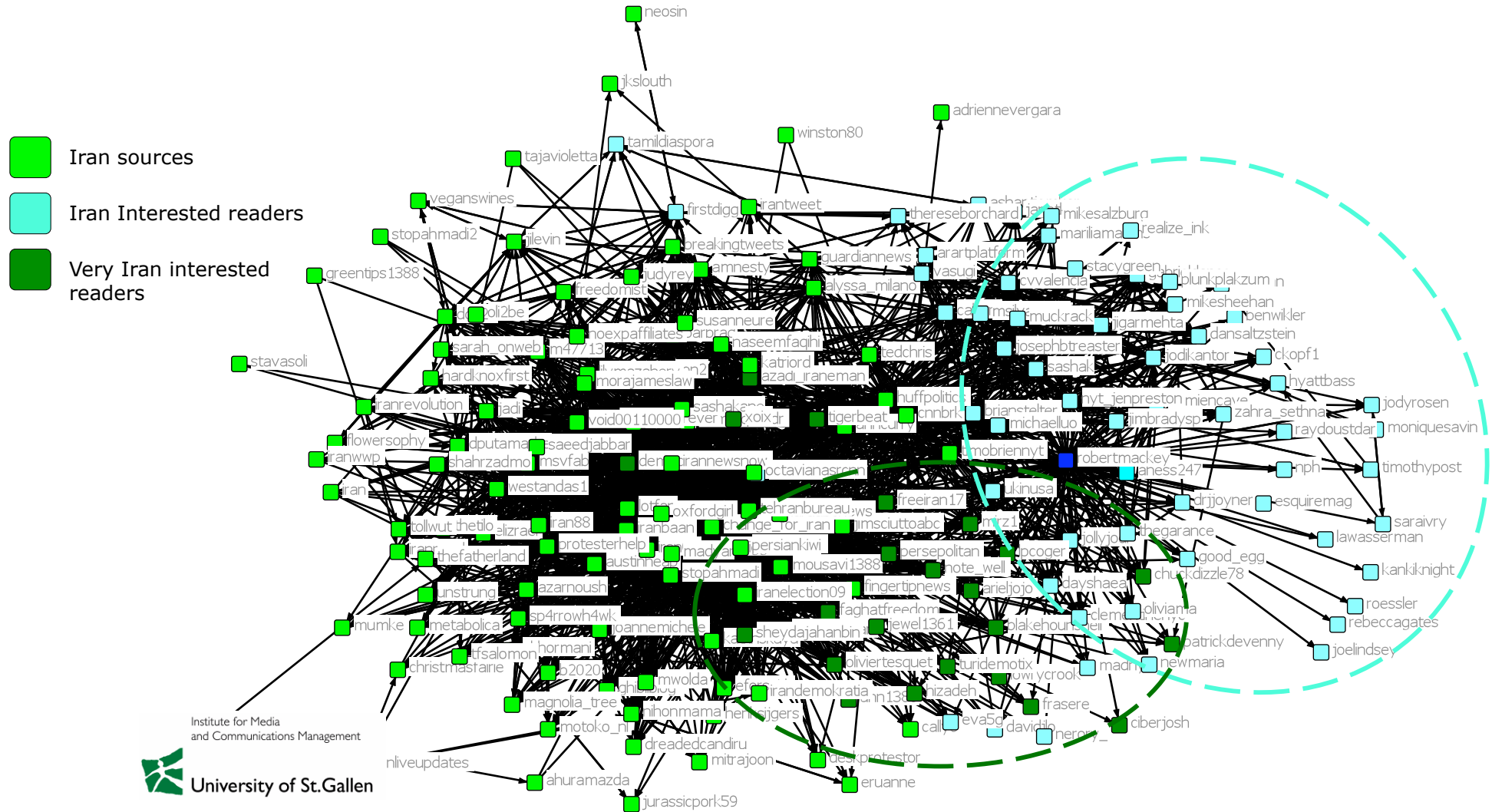
Analysis of linkage between Iran sources and Mackey's Iran interested followers on Twitter .



-  Iran sources
-  Iran interested readers
-  Very Iran interested readers

5. How is Mackey connecting sources on Iran with his readers?

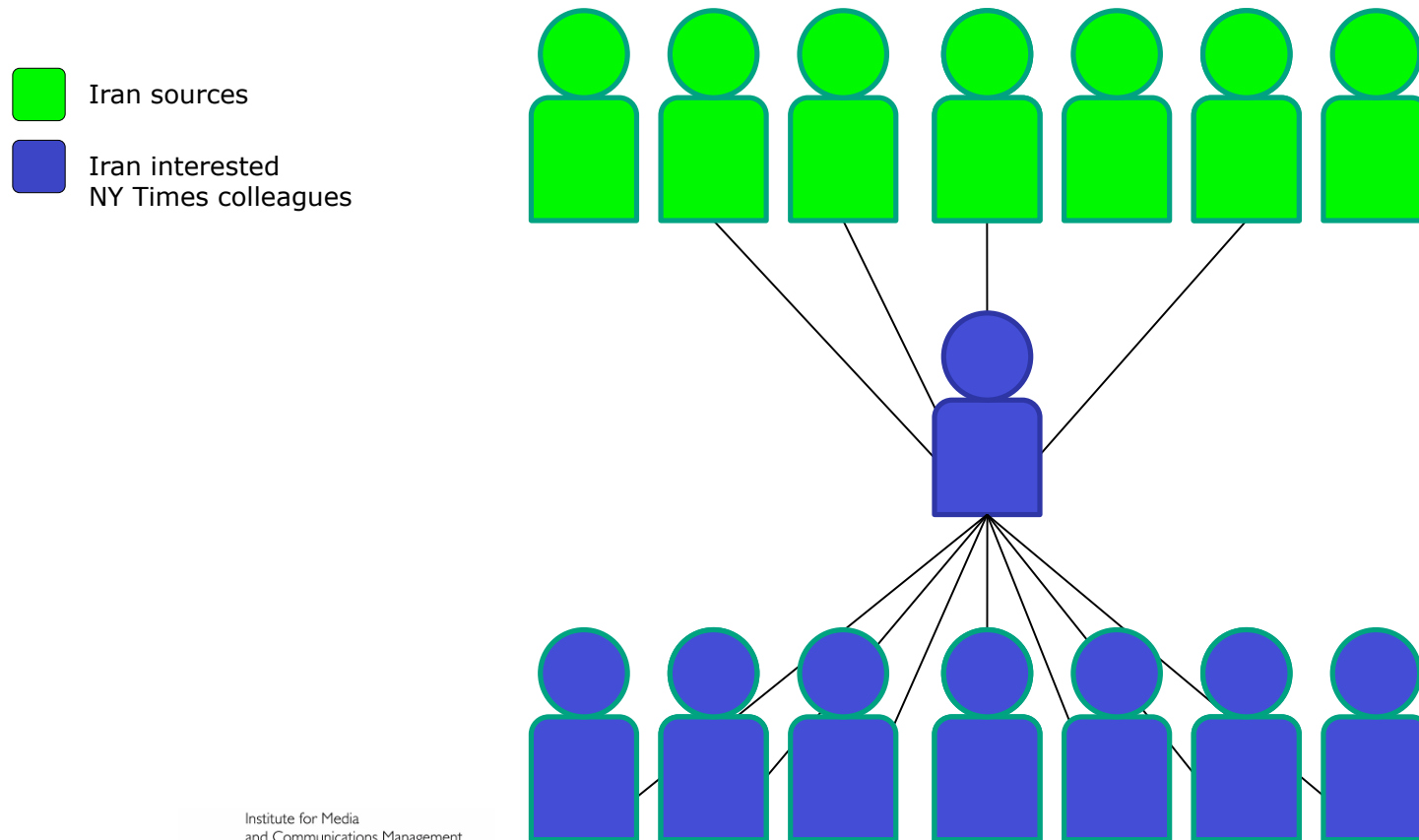
For interested readers Mackey plays an intermediate role, but very interested readers prefer to use the original sources instead.



Iran sources, Robert Mackey and his Iran interested followers on Twitter

5.1 How is Mackey connecting sources on Iran with his readership?

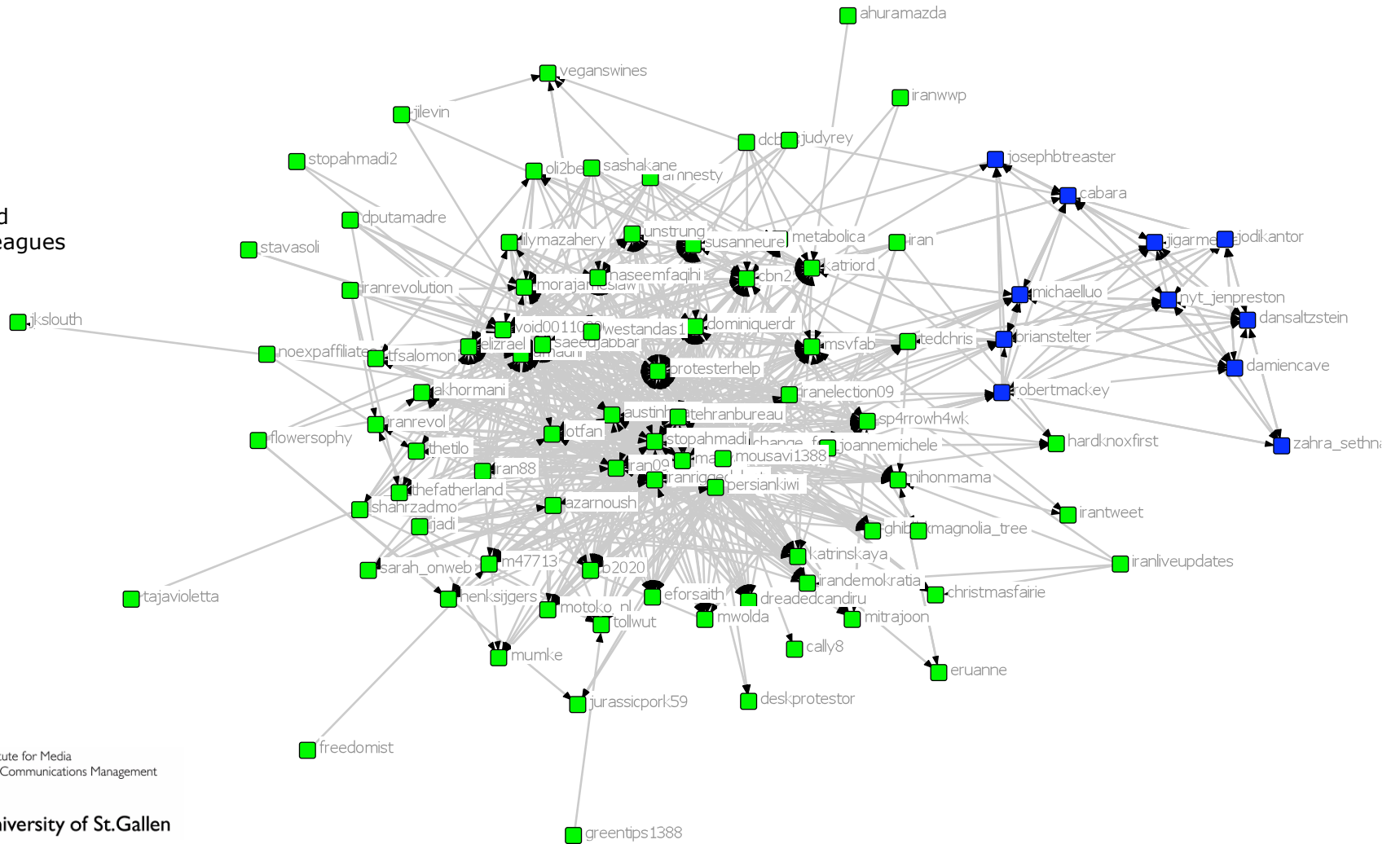
Can we find a group where the pattern of a broker is more emergent?



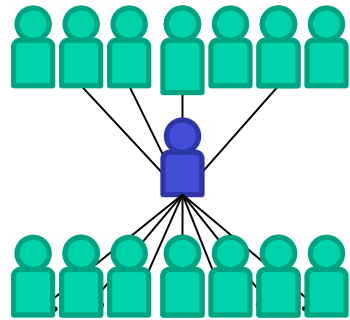
5.1 How is Mackey connecting sources on Iran with his readership?

Robert Mackey acts as a broker for his colleagues, the NY Times journalists.

- Iran sources
- Iran Interested NY Times colleagues



Wrap up and Results



- Out of 480.000 Iran twitterers, we extracted the 100 most relevant Twitter sources contributing to this topic.
- Mackey himself has chosen 12 highly relevant Iran twitter sources.
- Almost 60% of his Iran related blog entries show mentions of twitter users as sources.
- He uses his blog to post about Iran topics and then links to his postings on twitter.
- Based on keyword usage, his Iran interested twitter followers can be categorized into interested and very interested readers.
- While Mackey plays an intermediate role for interested readers, very interested readers prefer to use the original sources instead.
- For his colleagues - the group of Iran interested NY Times journalists - Robert Mackey acts as strong intermediary.

Limitations & Implications

- **Limitations**
 - Single-case design,
 - Other sources than Twitter exist
- **Implications**
 - *Practical*
 - Twitter as an outlet for journalists (binding element among social media platforms)
 - Interconnected media ecosystem with varying roles in media production and consumption processes
 - Journalists can save cognitive work for their readers by selecting the right sources and professionally filtering content.
 - Building one's own brand as a trusted expert becomes more relevant.
 - *Theoretical*
 - Social Media Journalism allows for new roles
 - Opinion leader theory provides search patterns for roles in networks
 - Roles are not as strict as with original formulated theory (Burts)
 - *Methodological*
 - Twitter is a valuable source to researchers
 - Closed platform architecture allows easy and complete data acquisition.

Thank you for your attention

