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A social network analysis on Twitter during the Italian electoral campaign of 2022: mapping the political communities

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Social media are increasingly becoming a meeting place for society, where information is shared and where public discussions and debates take place. Studying discussions on social media platforms such as Twitter can provide insights into the role played by social media in modern societies, and network analysis provides powerful tools to investigate the structures that comprise online groups and communities. This work focuses on exploring the community structure that took part in the political conversation during the last Italian electoral campaign: specifically, we worked on samples extracted from ITA-ELECTION-2022, a large-scale dataset of social media posts discussing the 2022 Italian General Election (Pierri et al., 2023). Based on a subset of approximately 2,500 users identified as active members, we explored the network community structure with a model-based hierarchical clustering, successfully identifying users with prominent positions. We then focused on the dynamics of the communications within and between these communities looking at the retweet and reply graphs, to evaluate evidence of echo-chambers and polarisation. Current empirical findings suggest that Twitter conversations on political issues rapidly become polarised, with individuals clustering around different influencers.

Keywords

Social media analysis, Twitter, Network analysis, Model-based, Political network, Network clustering

Topics

• Political networks, social movements and civic organization networks

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