

# Toeing the Party Line: Election Manifestos as a Key to Understand Political Discourse on Twitter

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**MOTIVATION**

Political discourse on Twitter is constantly evolving

- ▶ Reliable annotation of policy-related topics to capture **ideological positions** virtually impossible
- ▶ Need for *coordinates* to assess political positions

Can we use genre-specific signals to fine-tune models to capture meaningful ideological distances between parties?

**DATA**

- ▶ Corpus of German Politician's Tweets
- ▶ Encoding Tweets with SBERT models trained on
  - ▶ Paraphrases (SBERT<sub>Vanilla</sub>)
  - ▶ Party information (SBERT<sub>Party</sub>)
  - ▶ Policy domain information (SBERT<sub>Domain</sub>)
  - ▶ Political tweets' hashtags (SBERT<sub>Hashtag</sub>)

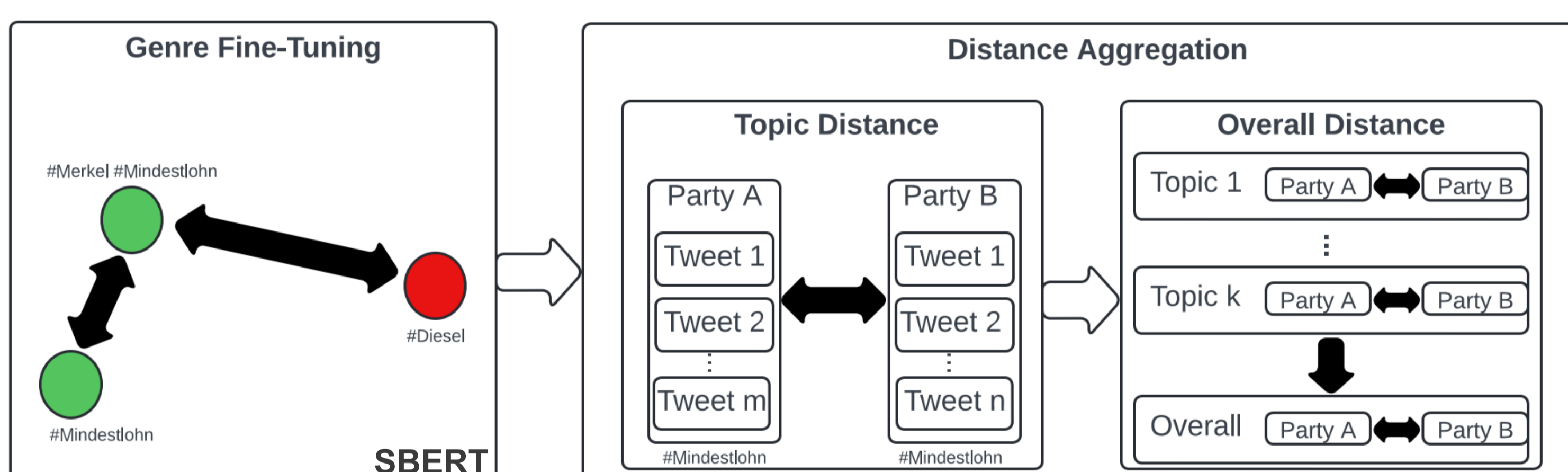
Year	Tweets	Politicians
2013	573,953	668
2014	554,566	732
2015	601,370	838
2016	645,272	962
2017	870,007	1,187
2018	954,681	1,240
2019	1,019,515	1,321
2020	1,246,018	1,439
2021	1,423,427	1,587
Overall	10,220,767	1,924

**MANIFESTOS VS TWITTER**

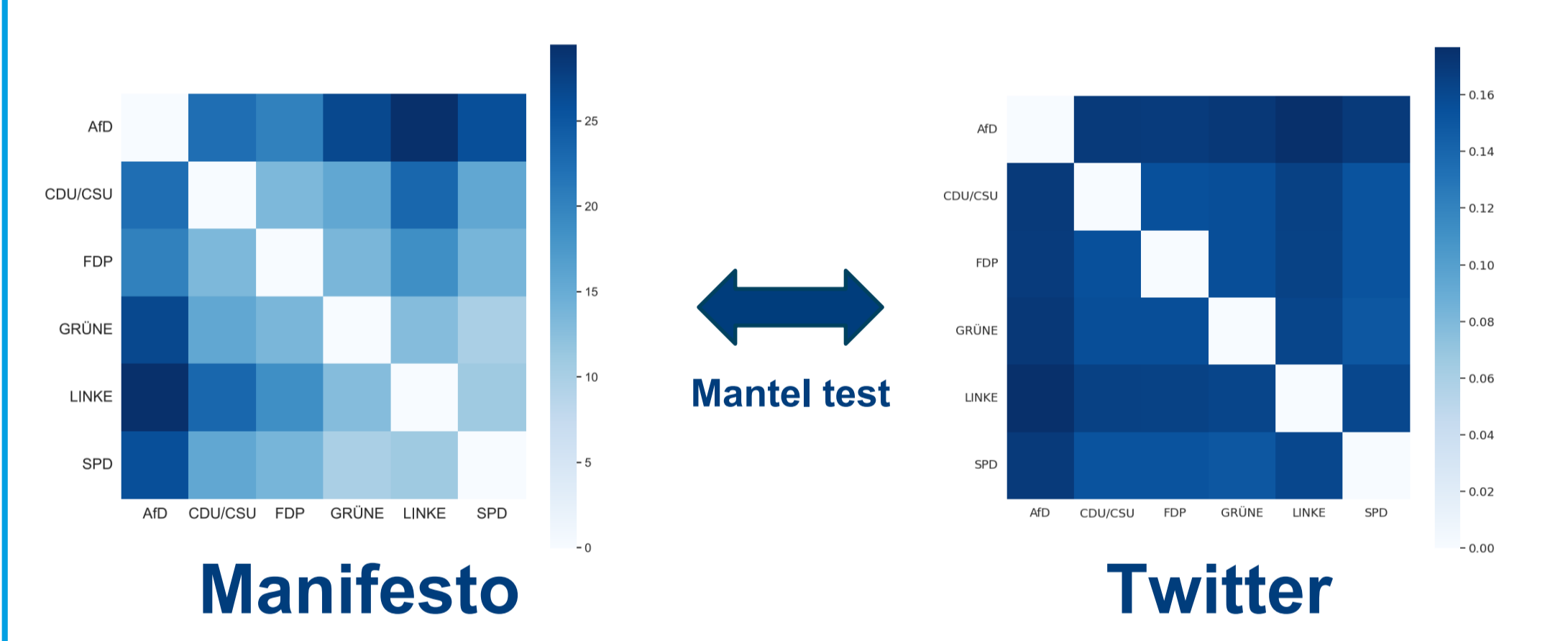
▶ Hashtags provide topical information

▶ Positional+topical overlap with **manifestos**

**METHOD**



**EVALUATION**



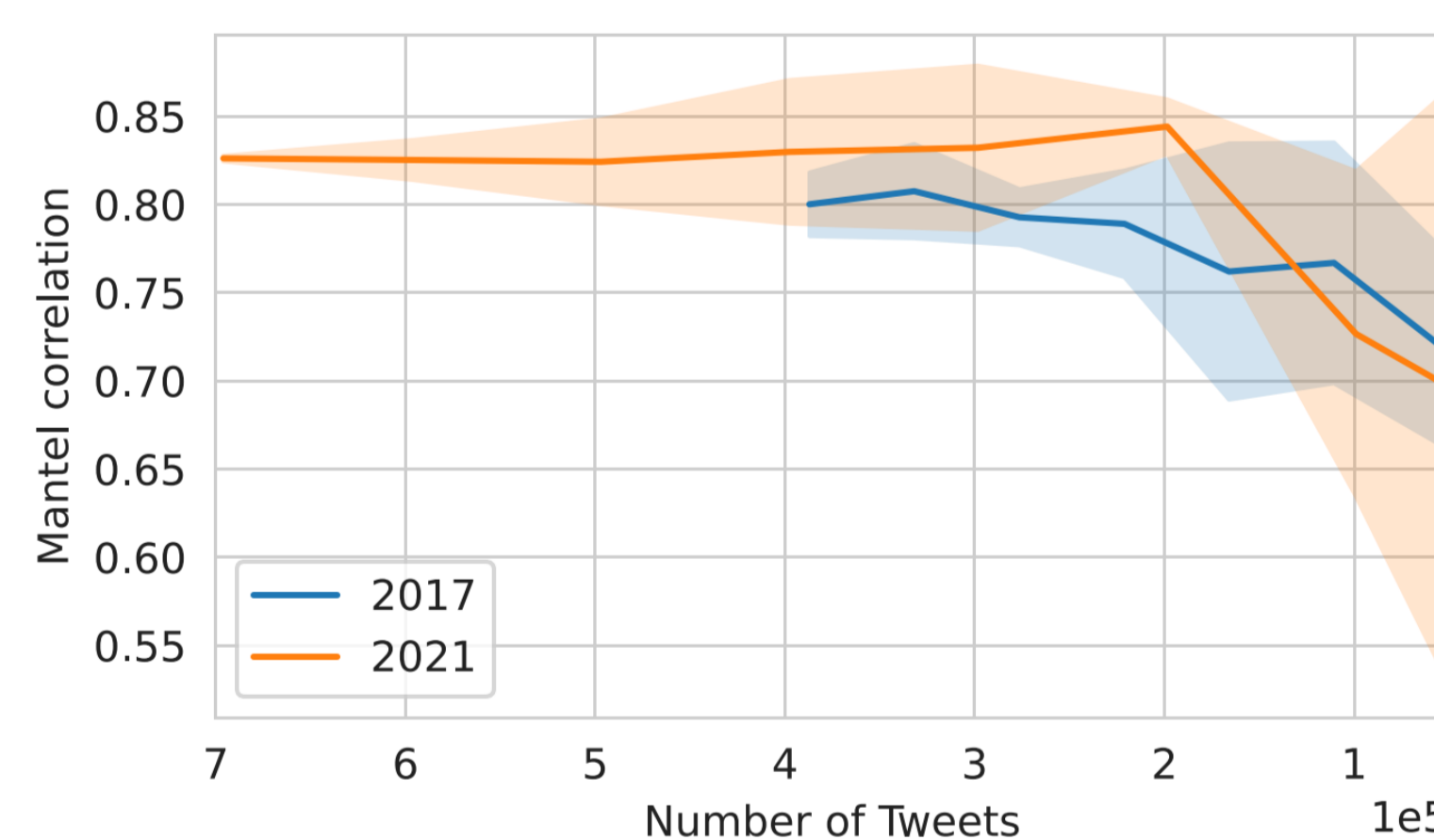
**RESULTS**

Does hashtag fine-tuning work?

Model	2017	2021
SBERT <sub>Vanilla</sub>	-0.461	0.369
SBERT <sub>Domain</sub>	-0.025	0.352
SBERT <sub>Party</sub>	0.649	0.813*
SBERT <sub>Hashtag</sub>	0.803*	0.817*

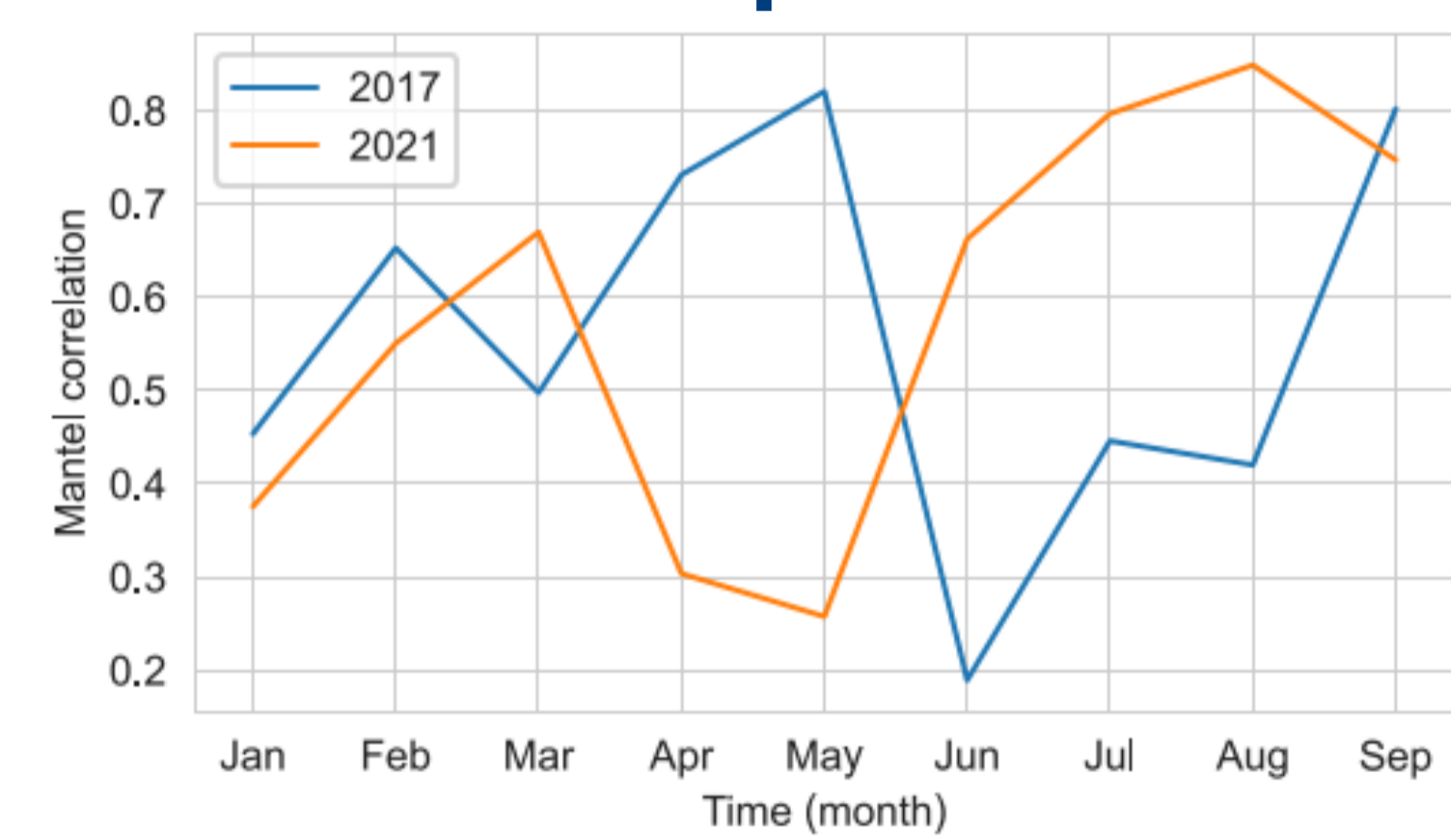
Hashtag-tuned sentence encoders outperform other models.

How much data?



Correlations are stable until <200k Tweets.

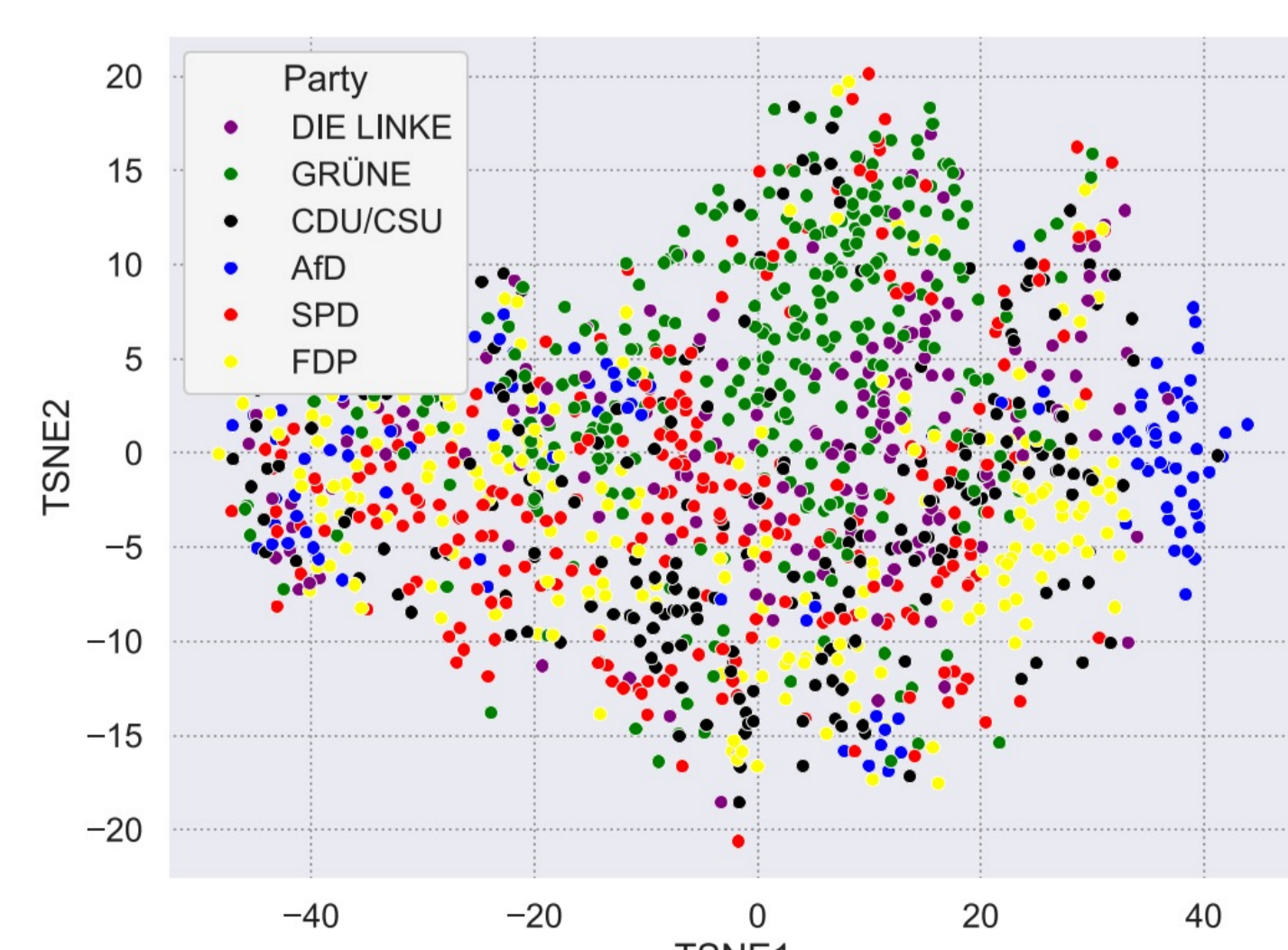
Temporal differences?



Stable correlations sampling >3 months. Pronounced differences on a monthly level.

**Analysis:** Centroids of individual politicians and differences between groups of politicians

	Old	Continuing	New	All
Mantel	0.328	0.854*	0.792*	0.817*



**Finetuning sentence encoders on hashtags enables robust capturing of ideological distances between parties on Twitter.**

