

**RC22 IPSA International Conference:
Political Communication in Times of Crisis
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Handling the European Crisis on Twitter

**Comparing the German and Spanish
Political Agenda**

**Christiane Grill
University of Vienna, Department of Communication**

Problem Definition

- European crisis and its consequences for Spain and Germany
- Communicating political steps, reasons and explanations
- Generating comprehension and support
- Gaining voters for future elections
- Strategically designed communication:
 - Traditional media: press releases, press conferences, interviews
 - Online media: social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube (Schmitt-Beck & Mackenrodt, 2010)
- Monopoly of the mass media and other professional communicators in setting the political agenda
- Social media disrupt linear communication patterns: political issues are publicly negotiated

- Twitter an ideal platform to spread political opinions among the public (Stieglitz & Dang, 2012)
 - Politicians on Twitter: share political and private information, discuss events, attack opponents (Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Cozma & Cha, 2011; Goldbeck et al., 2010; Waters & Williams, 2011)
 - Elections on Twitter: discuss candidates, influence public opinion (Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Jungherr et al., 2012; Larsson & Moe, 2012; Shamma et al. 2010; Thimm et al., 2012), even predict election results (Skoric et al. 2012; Tumasjan et al. 2010)
- Political tweets capable of changing perception of politicians
- Especially in times of crisis: proof of competence

How do the German and Spanish governments address the European crisis on Twitter?

Communication Patterns:

- With whom does the German and Spanish government interact on Twitter?
- And, do they make any references to each other in their tweets via addressing or mentioning names?

Importance of Twitter:

- To what extent does the German and Spanish government use Twitter?
- Which issues are discussed within the German respectively Spanish political Twittersphere and to what extent?

European crisis in particular:

- To what extent do the two governments use Twitter to communicate the European crisis?
- Are there any suggestions made for solving this crisis?

- Selection of representative governmental Twitter accounts
 - RegSprecher vs. desdelamoncloa
 - CDUCSUBT, fdp_de vs. PPopular, marianorajoy
- Data mining Python script and the open source library Tweepy (Twitter API)
 - Tweets from 1st of January to the 31st of May 2013
 - Included retweets, excluded replies
- Analysing data
 - Basic quantitative analysis via Excel and SPSS
 - Networks via Gephi and its layout algorithm Force Atlas
 - Topical analysis via Python's regular expression mechanism
 - Regular expressions: `\bkey\b`, `\w*key\w*` - case insensitive

- **Twitter use in general during Euro crisis**
 - Frequencies of tweets, addressing, hashtags, retweets and hyperlinks
- **Actor-networks during Euro crisis**
 - Addressing networks, geographical closeness, mentions in tweets
- **Issues addressed during Euro crisis**
 - Hashtags, policy fields
- **European crisis in particular**
 - Keywords of the European crisis

Results: Basic Data on Twitter



Steffen Seibert ✓
@RegSprecher

Hier twittet Steffen Seibert, Sprecher der Bundesregierung und Chef des Bundespresseamtes (BPA). Tweets seiner Mitarbeiter/innen enden mit dem Kürzel (BPA).
Berlin · bundesregierung.de

Name:	RegSprecher
User name:	Steffen Seibert
Tweets:	4,161
Followers:	111,318
Following:	68

4,161 TWEETS 68 FOLLOWING 111,318 FOLLOWERS  Following



La Moncloa ✓
@desdelamoncloa

Secretaría de Estado de Comunicación. Ministerio de la Presidencia. Gobierno de España. Normas de uso: lamoncloa.gob.es/VARIOS/Redesso...
Madrid (Spain) · lamoncloa.gob.es

8,755 TWEETS 2,761 FOLLOWING 245,884 FOLLOWERS  Follow

Name:	desdelamoncloa
User name:	La Moncloa
Tweets:	8,755
Followers:	245,884
Following:	2,761

Results: Basic Data on Twitter



Name:	cducsubt
User name:	CDU/CSU
Tweets:	2,771
Followers:	18,223
Following:	200

2,771 TWEETS	200 FOLLOWING	18,223 FOLLOWERS		
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Name:	PPopular
User name:	Partido Popular
Tweets:	11,158
Followers:	115,385
Following:	1,504

11,158 TWEETS	1,504 FOLLOWING	115,385 FOLLOWERS		
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Results: Basic Data on Twitter



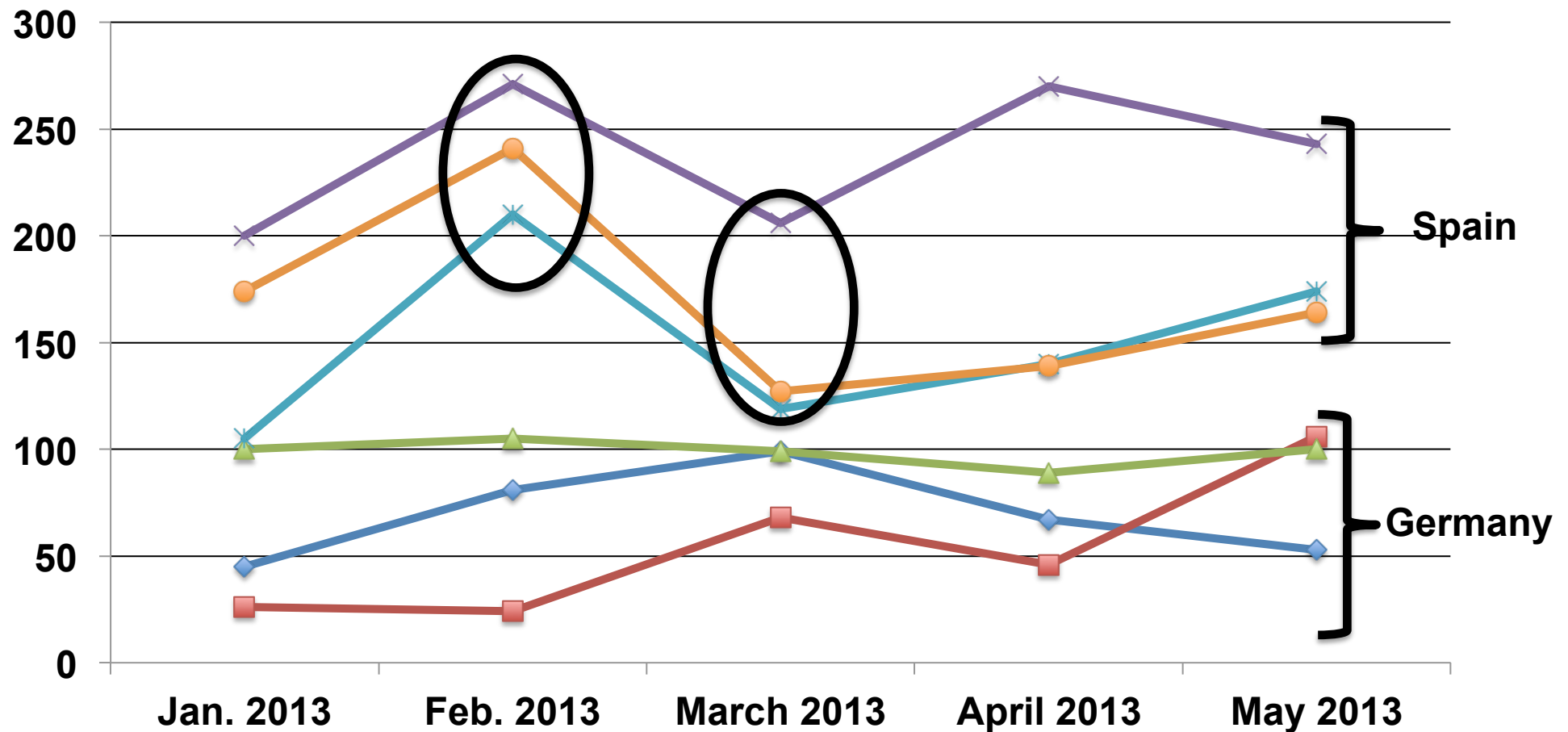
Name:	fdp_de
User name:	fdp.de
Tweets:	1,965
Followers:	13,474
Following:	547



Name:	marianorajoy
User name:	Mariano Rajoy Brey
Tweets:	6,403
Followers:	457,528
Following:	4,144

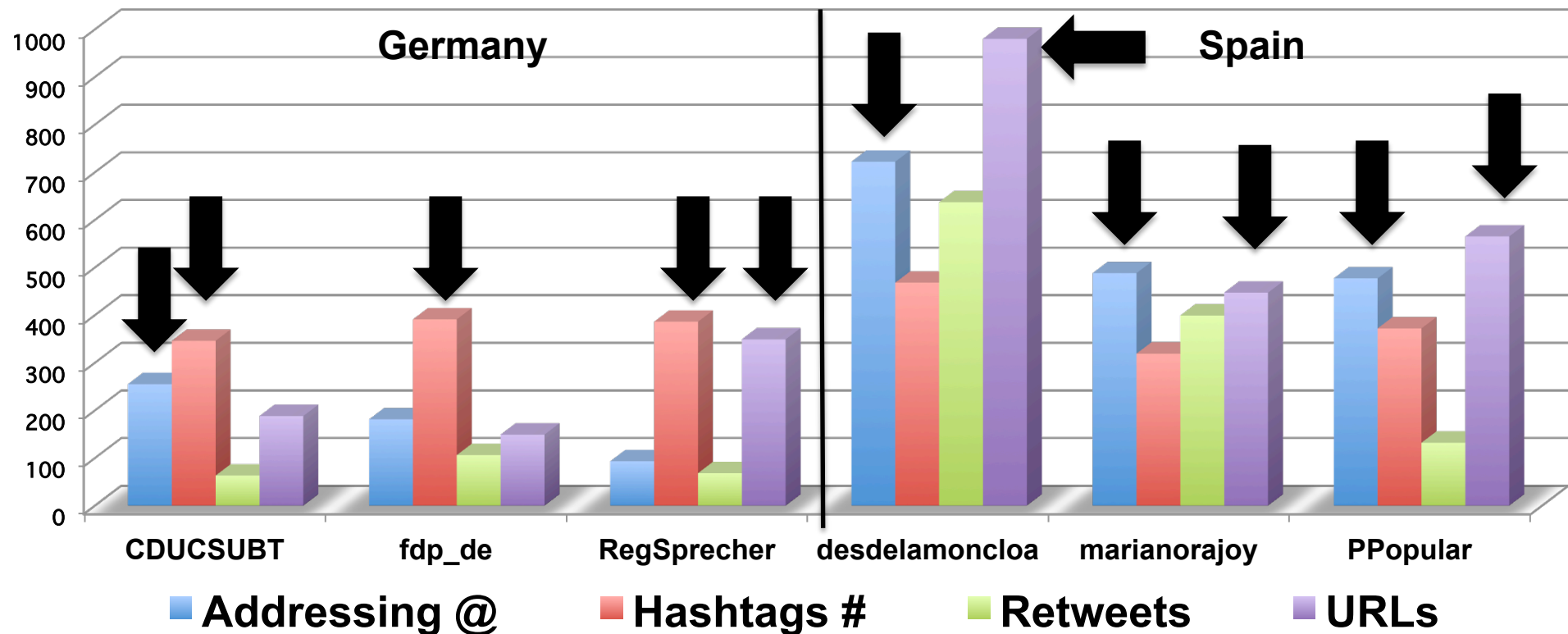


Results: Twitter Use in General: Tweets Over Time



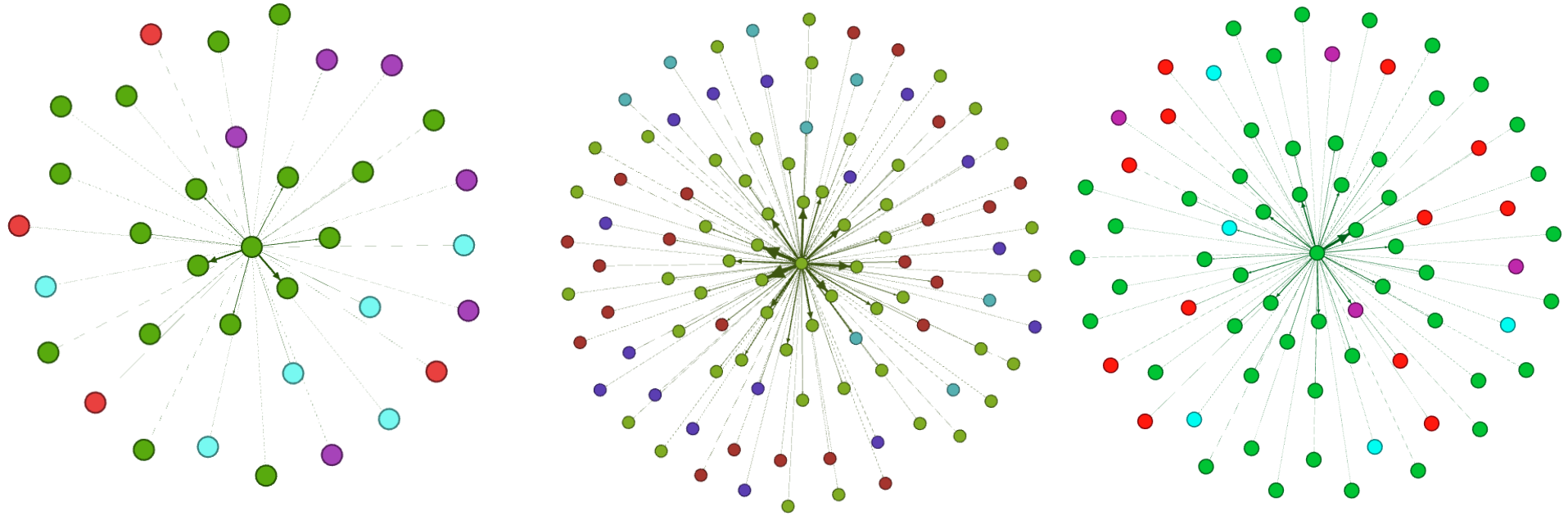
- Spanish accounts most active: *desdelamoncloa*: 7 tweets a day.
- German accounts least active: *FDP*: 1 tweet a day
- Influencing factor resulting in variations over time within Spanish Twittersphere

Results: Twitter Use in General: Addressing, Hashtags, Retweets and Hyperlinks



- German use of hashtags to define topic of the tweet
- Spanish government uses Twitter to enter into an online dialogue with others

Results: Actor-Networks of German Twitter Accounts

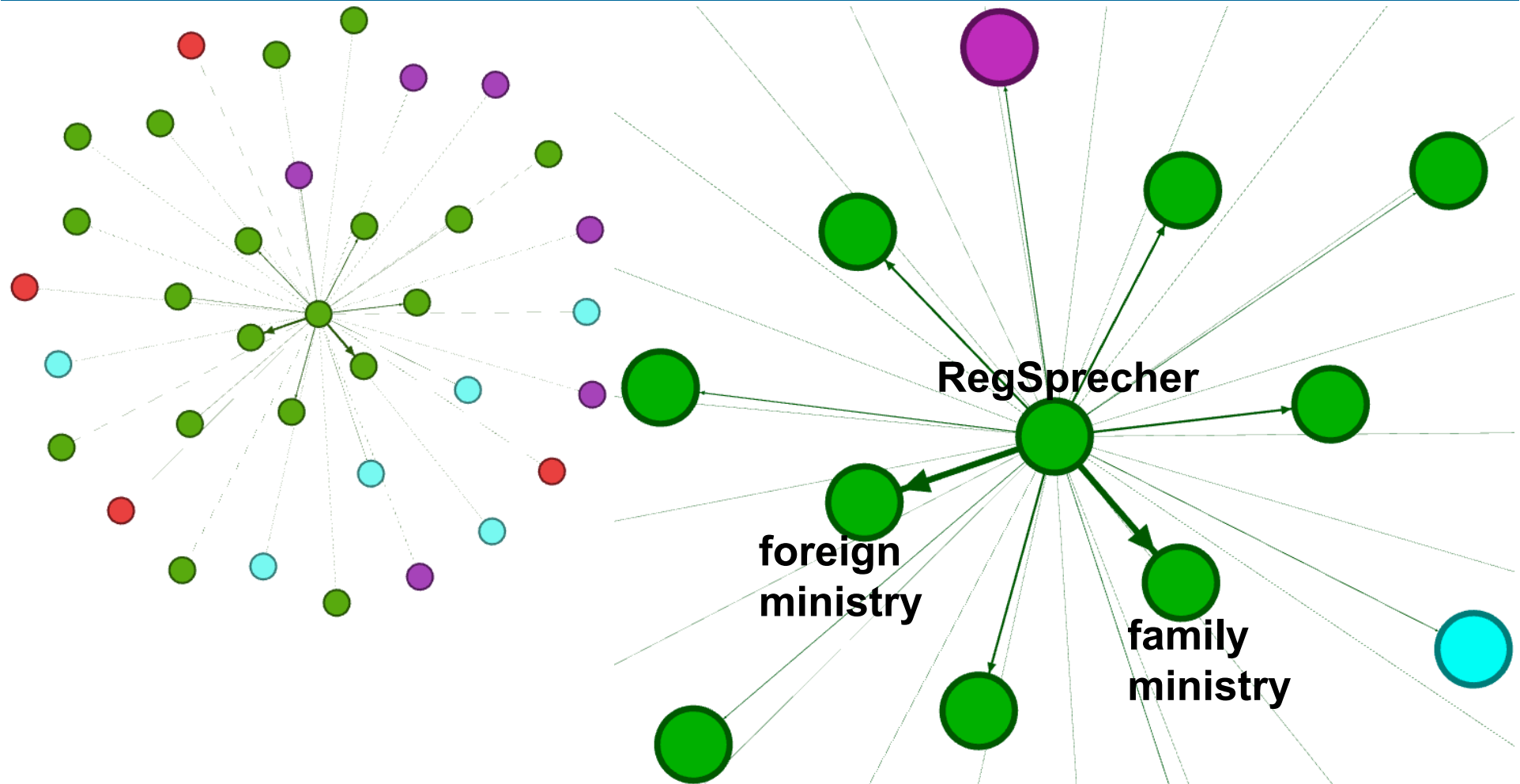


***RegSprecher* (left), *CDUCSUBT* (middle), *fdp_de* (right)**

The colors symbolize different user categories: **politics (green)**, **media (red)**, **citizens (purple)**, and **organizations (cyan)**.

- All three German actor-networks are dominated by politicians' user accounts.

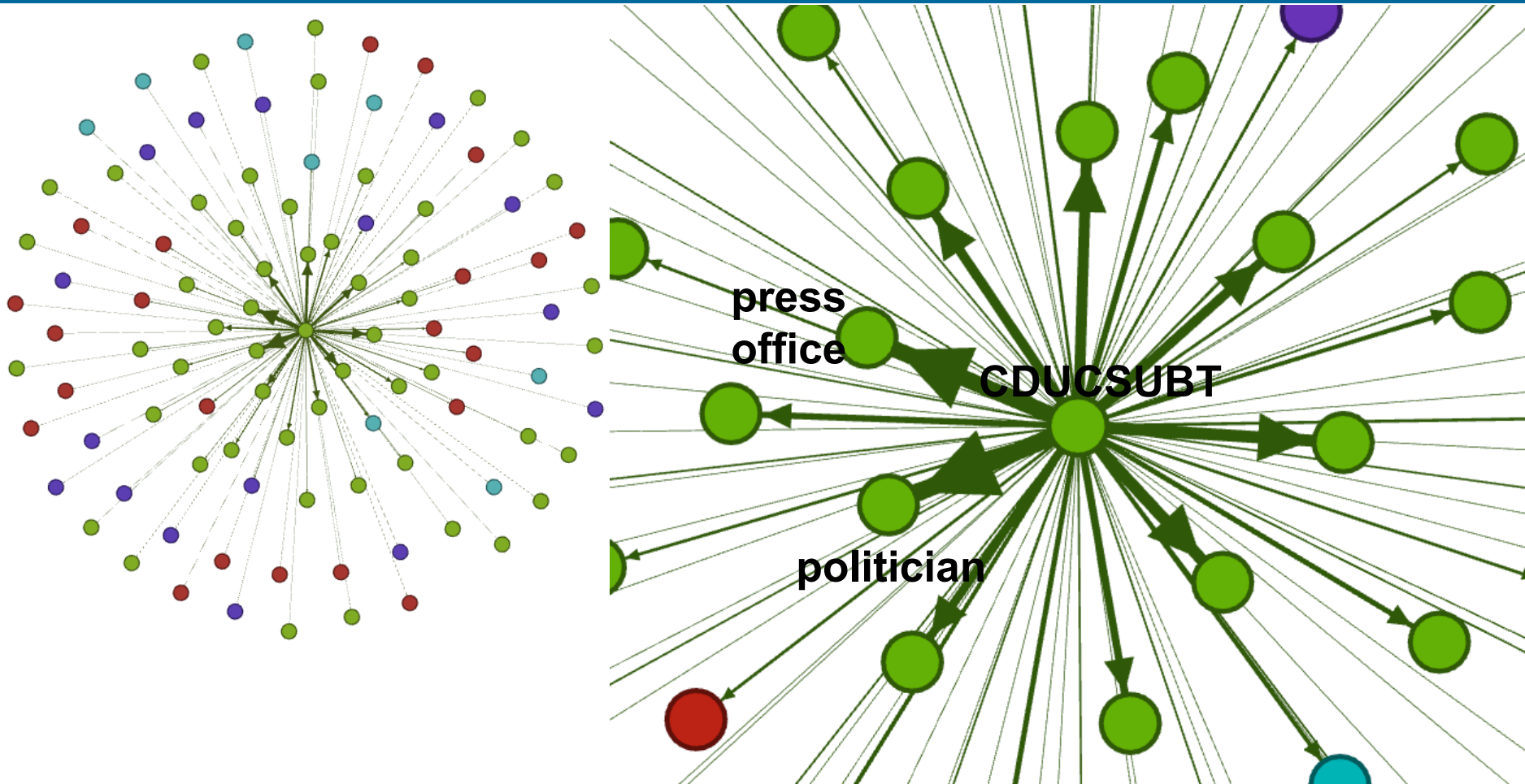
Results: Actor-Network of *RegSprecher*



- 34 addressees: 55% politicians, citizens & organizations 17%, media 11%
- Foreign and family ministry: 16 addressings each

politics (green), media (red), citizens (purple), and organizations (cyan)

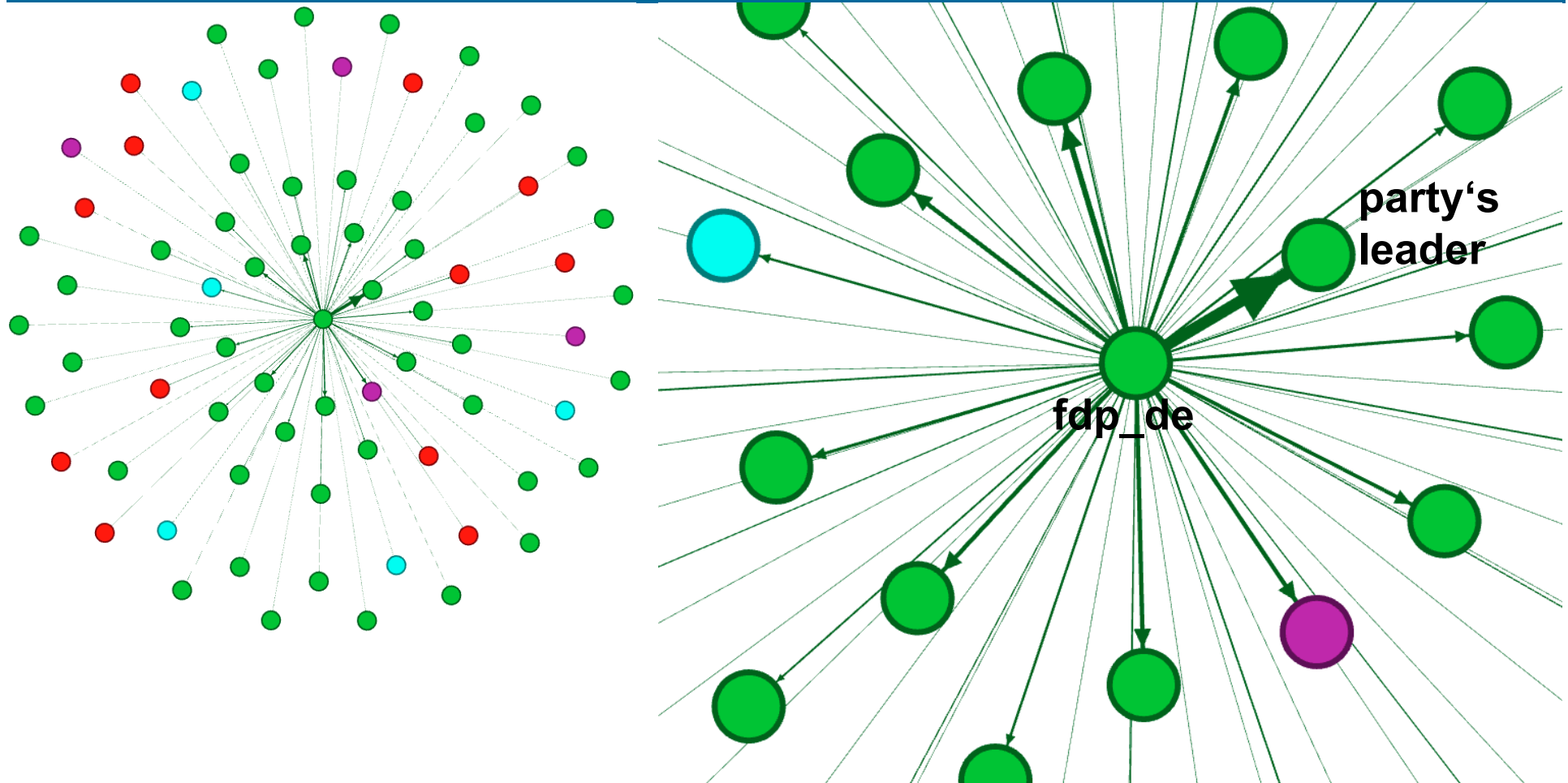
Results: Actor-Network of *CDUCSUBT*



- 98 addressees: 54% politicians, media 22%, citizens 16%, organizations 8%
- Politicians of own party and own party's press office are mostly addressed

politics (green), media (red), citizens (purple), and organizations (cyan)

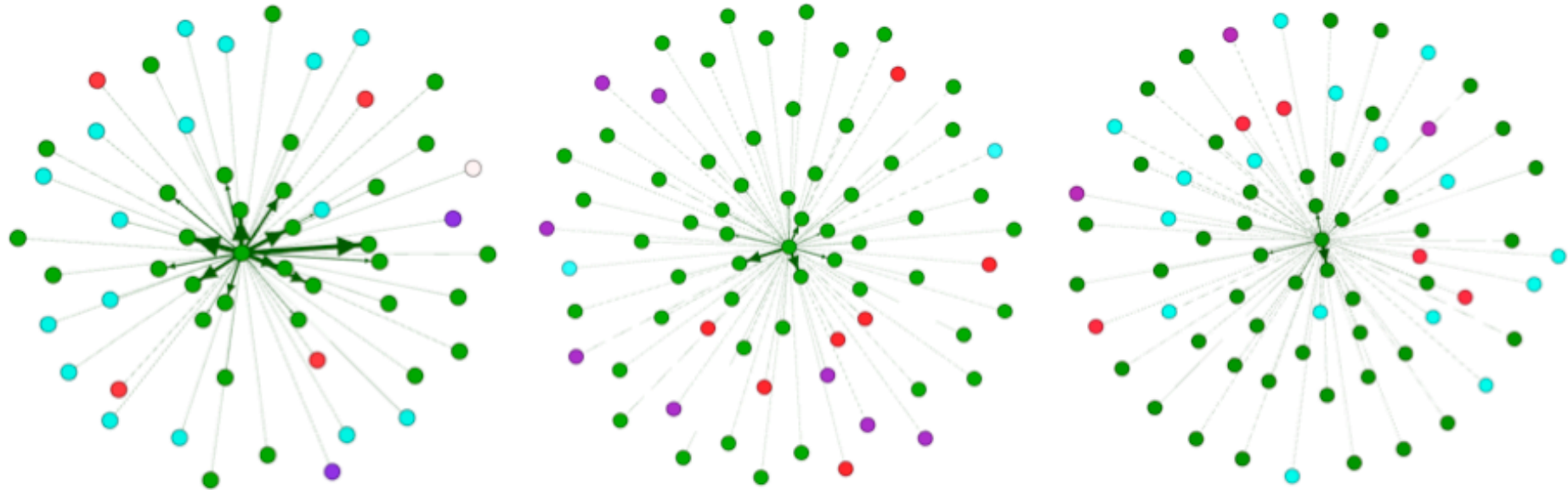
Results: Actor-Network of *fdp_de*



- 71 addressees: 71% politicians, media 17%, organizations 7%, citizens 5%
- Party's leader: 19 addressing

politics (green), media (red), citizens (purple), and organizations (cyan)

Results: Actor-Networks of Spanish Twitter Accounts

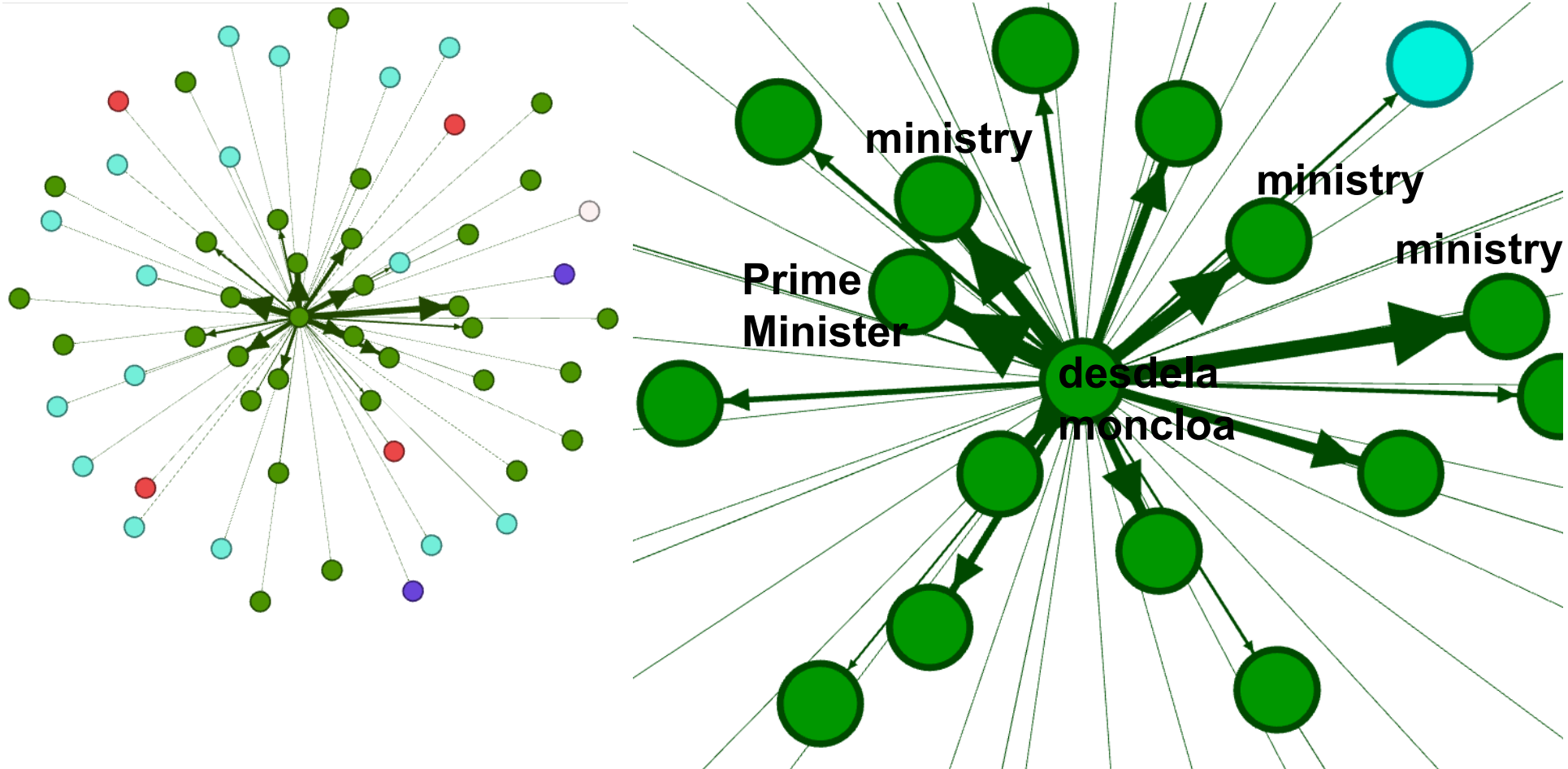


desdelamoncloa (left), *PPopular* (middle), *marianorajoy* (right)

The colors symbolize different user categories: **politics (green)**, **media (red)**, **citizens (purple)**, and **organizations (cyan)**.

- Like the German governmental Twitter accounts, also the Spanish accounts mainly interact with politicians on Twitter.

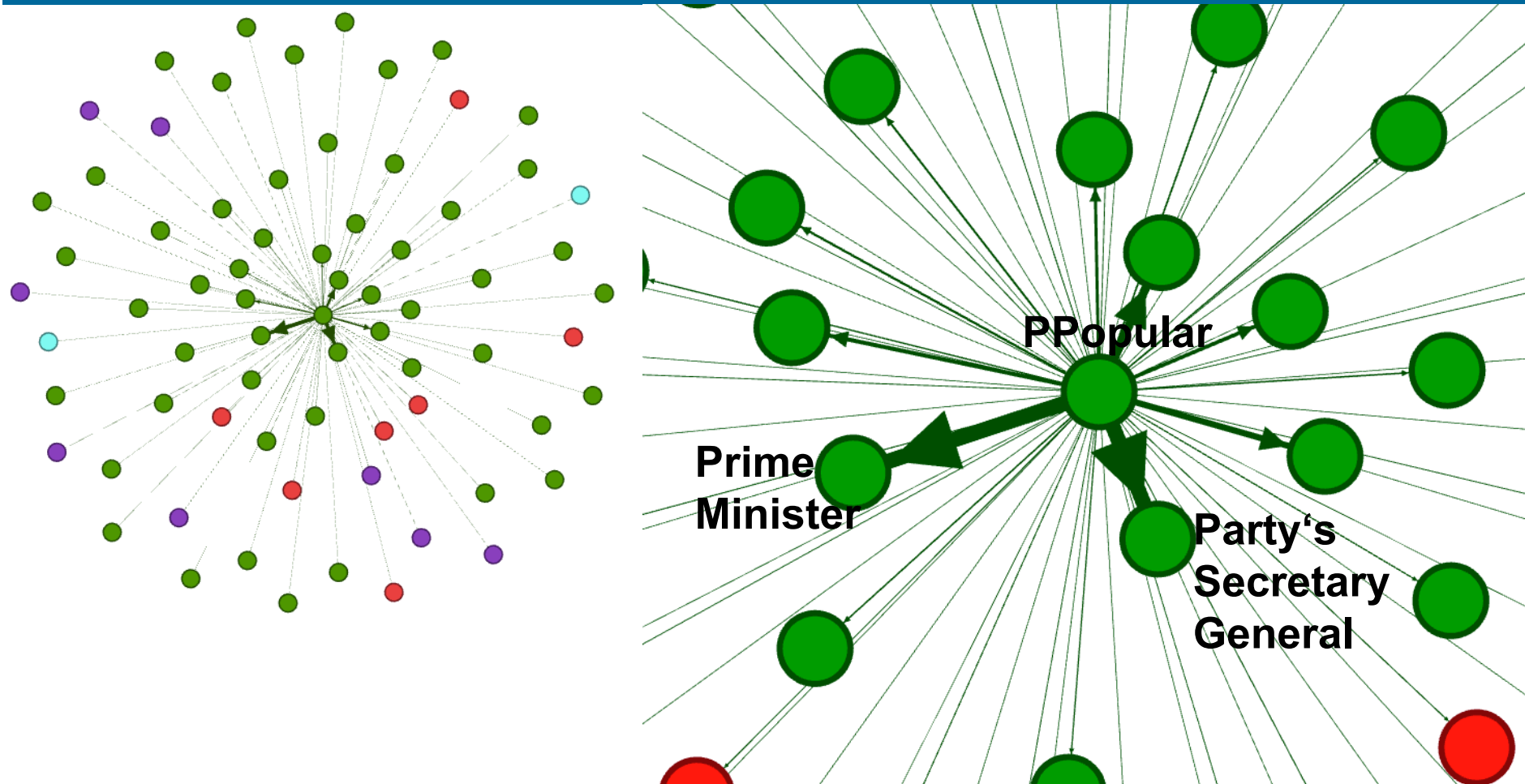
Results: Actor-Network of *desdelamoncloa*



- 54 addressees: 60% politicians, organizations 29%, media 7%, citizens 4%
- Prime Minister: 86 addressings, ministries 67 – 80 addressings

politics (green), media (red), citizens (purple), and organizations (cyan)

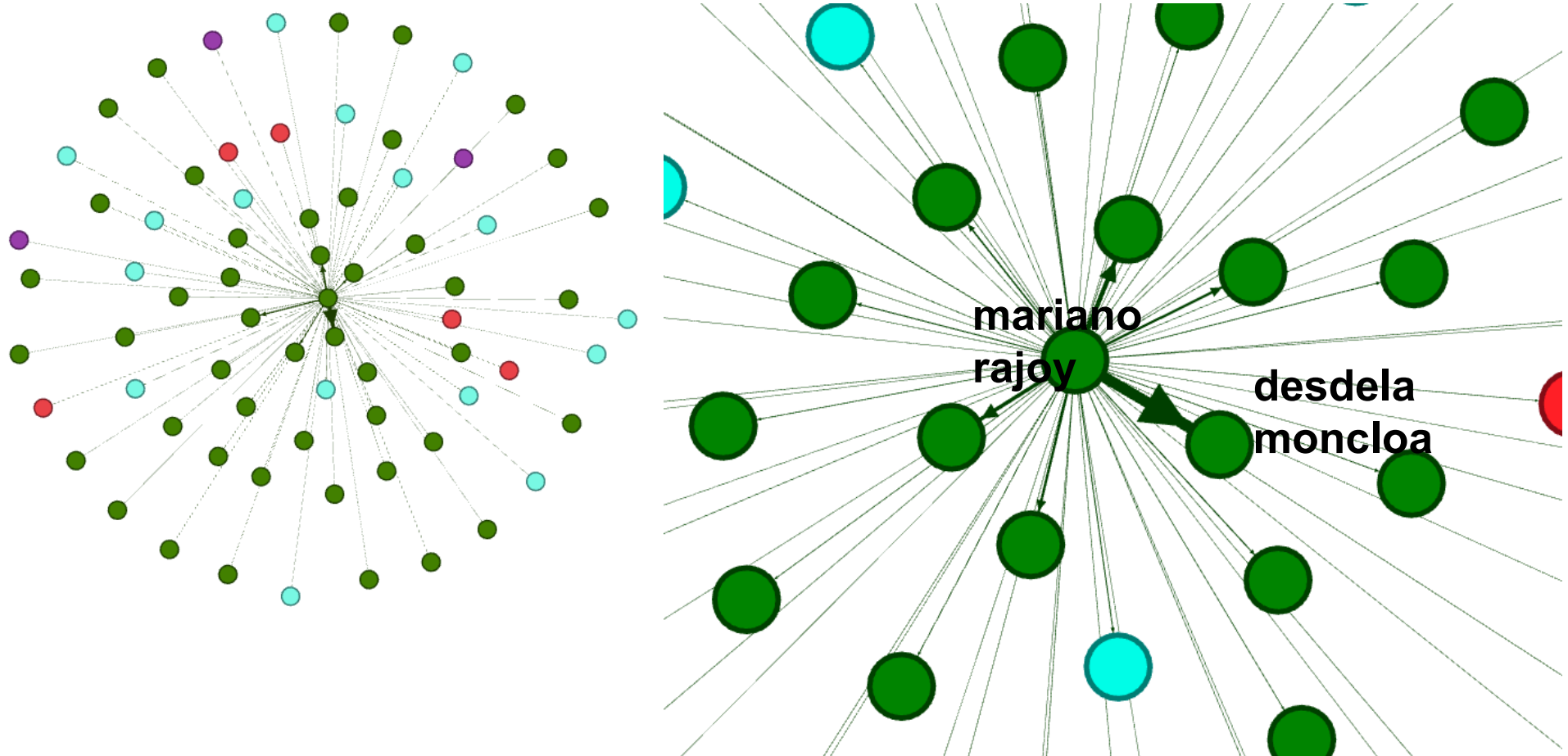
Results: Actor-Network of *PPopular*



- 70 addressees: 76% politicians, citizens 11%, media 10%, organizations 3%
- Party's leader and party's Secretary General: 183 addressings

politics (green), media (red), citizens (purple), and organizations (cyan)

Results: Actor-Network of *marianorajoy*



- 70 addressees: 66% politicians, organizations 23%, media 7%, citizens 4%
- Spanish government: 140 addressings

politics (green), media (red), citizens (purple), and organizations (cyan)

Results: Actor-Networks: Geographical Closeness

- Very strong geographical closeness to users of their own country
- “*RegSprecher*”: least geographical closeness with 89%

Geographical Closeness	
German government	Spanish government
European	European
U.S. American	U.S. American
global	global
primarily: France	primarily: South American

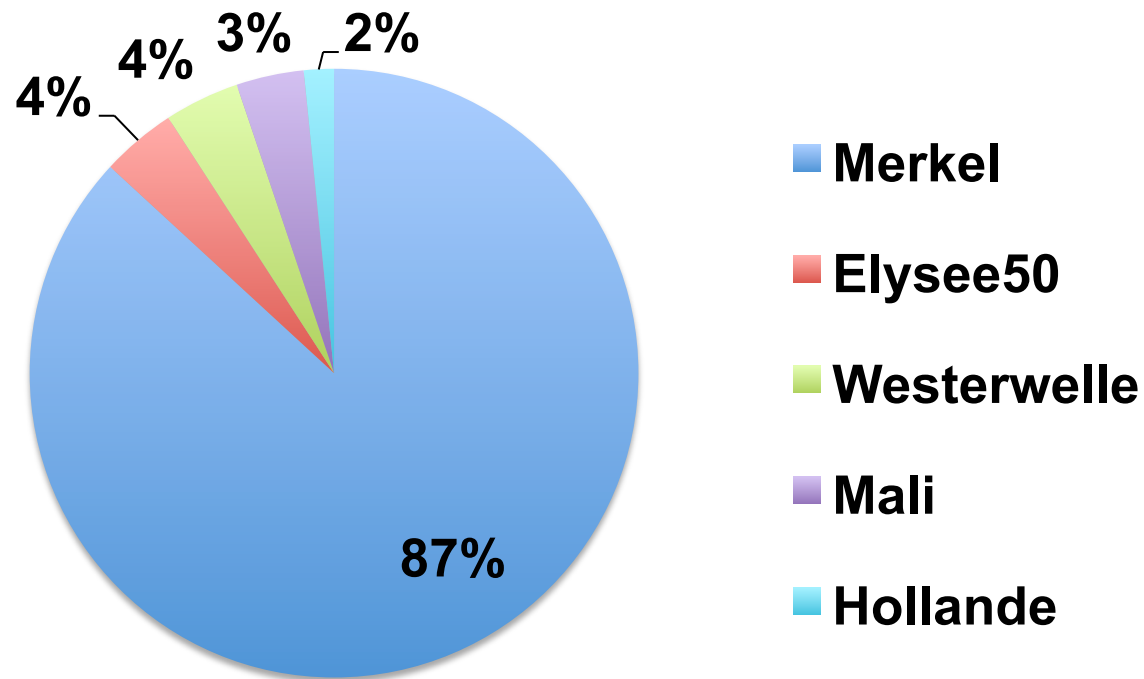
- German and Spanish government did not refer to each other via addressing

Results: Actor-Networks: Mentions in Tweets

- Python script searching for:
“spani/espa”, “rajoy”, “deutsch/aleman”, “merkel”
+ additional keywords for French and South American governments

Mentions in Tweets	
German	Spanish
Merkel & Germany	Rajoy & Spain
European Union	Germany
Hollande & France	France
Rajoy & Spain	other European countries
EU – Latin America Summit	South America

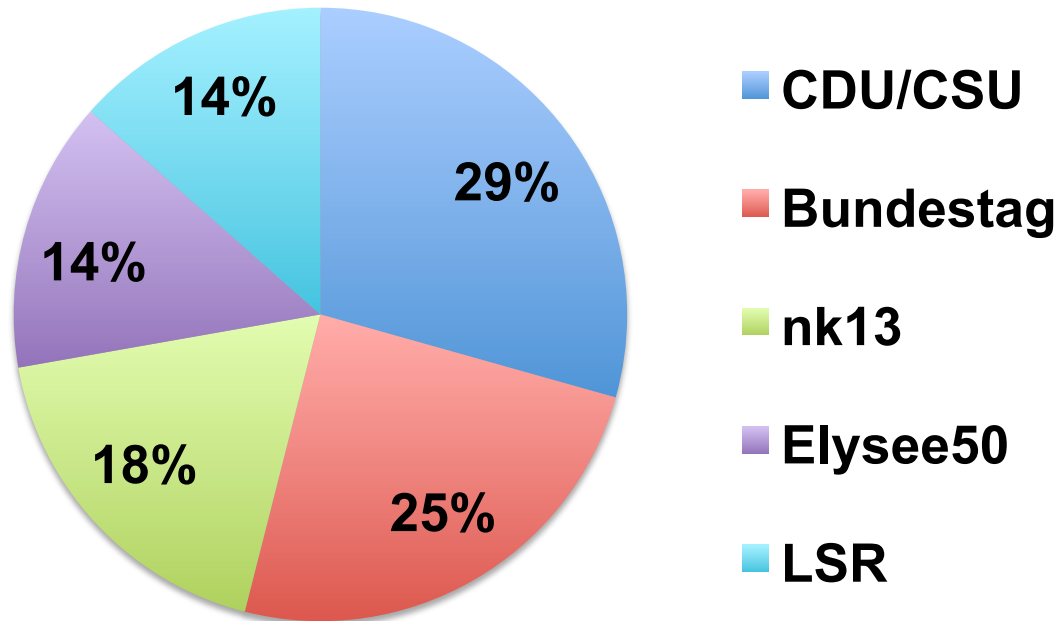
Results: Hashtags used by *RegSprecher*



- Strong focus on German – French relationship
- German troop in Mali sent by Foreign Minister Westerwelle

5 most frequently mentioned hashtags # out of 111 overall hashtags.

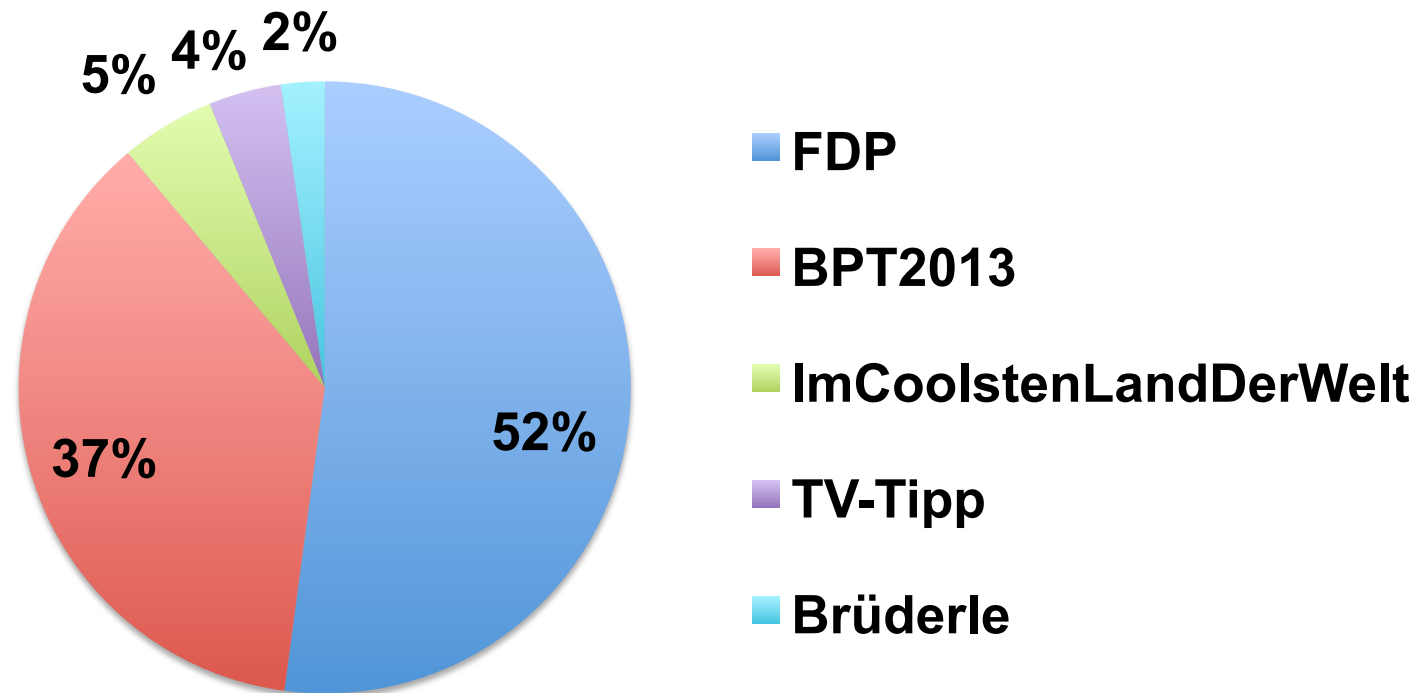
Results: Hashtags used by *CDUCSUBT*



- Strong self reference: CDU/CSU, Bundestag
- Legislature: nk13, LSR

5 most frequently mentioned hashtags # out of 127 overall hashtags.

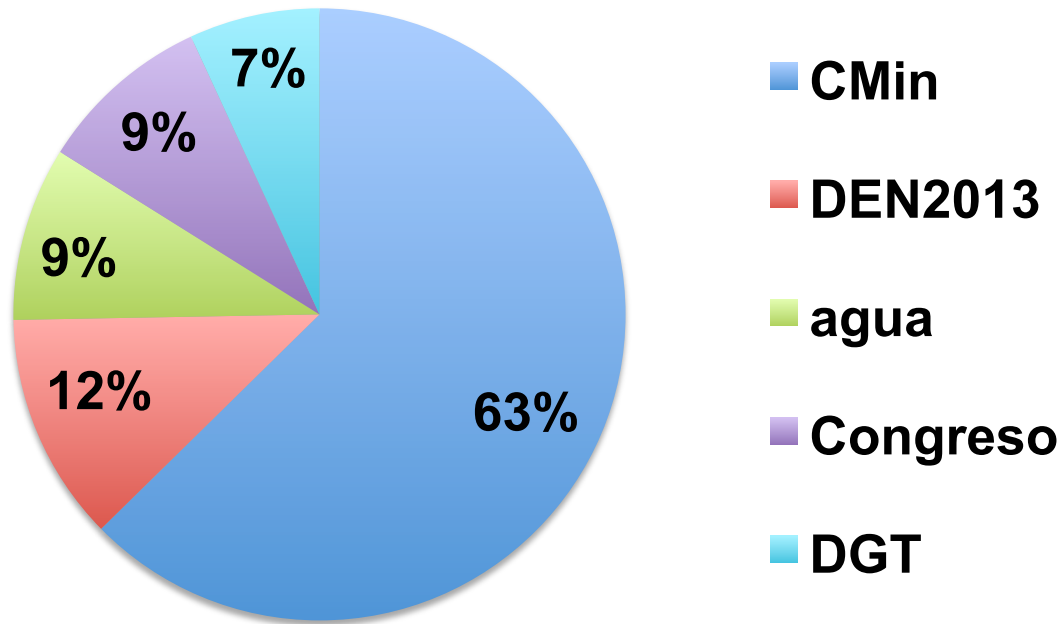
Results: Hashtags used by *fdp_de*



- Strong self reference: FDP, BPT2013, Brüderle
- Glorification of Germany

5 most frequently mentioned hashtags # out of 100 overall hashtags.

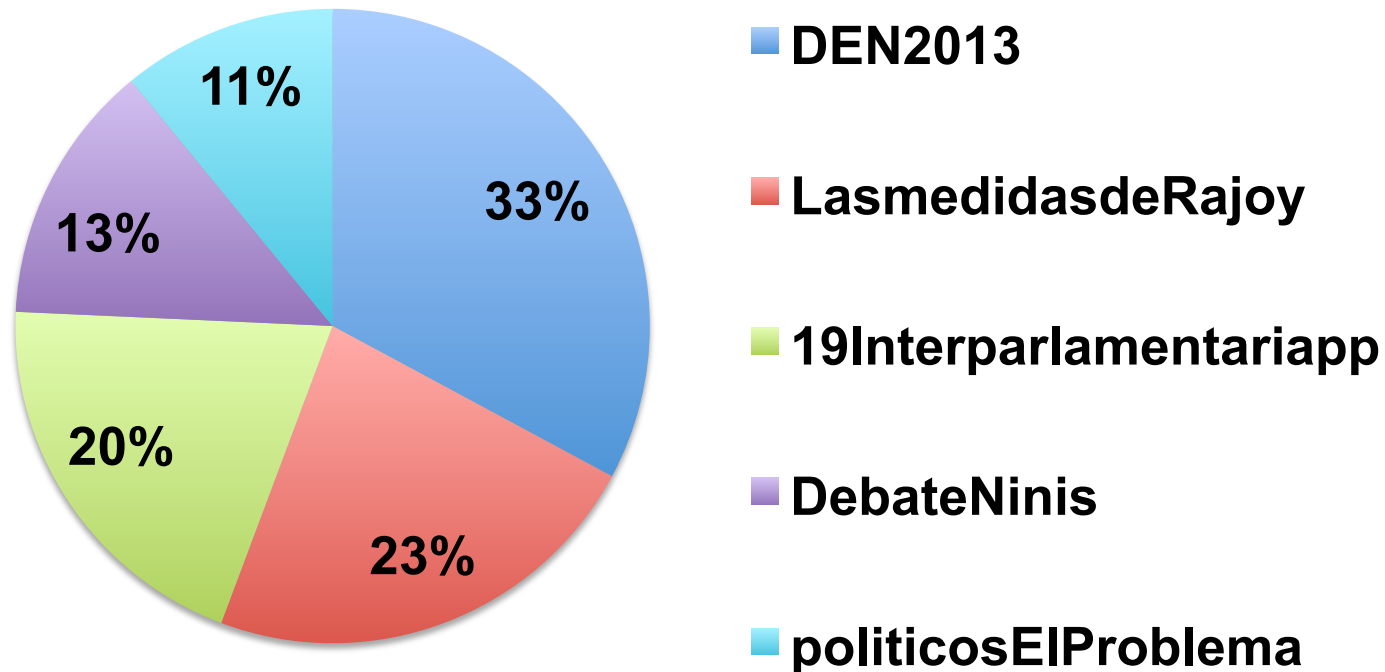
Results: Hashtags used by *desdelamoncloa*



- Strong focus on political steps: CMin, Congreso, DGT, DEN2013
- Everyday issue

5 most frequently mentioned hashtags # out of 167 overall hashtags.

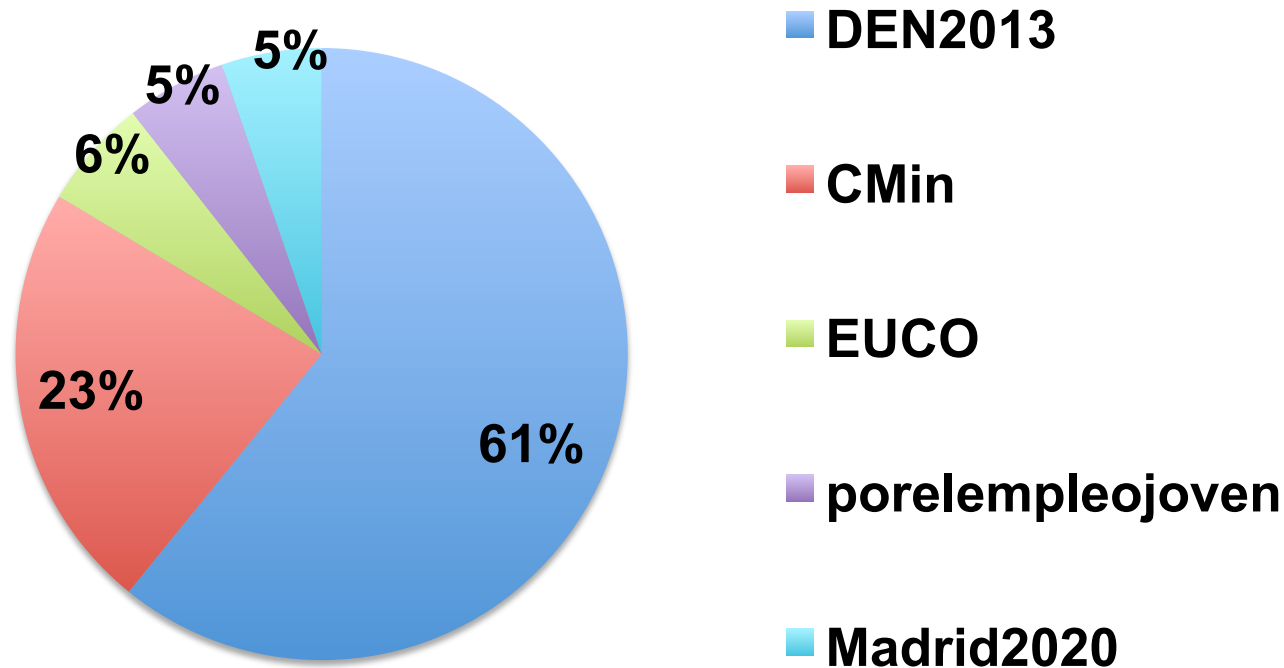
Results: Hashtags used by *PPopular*



- Party's performance: DEN2013, 19InterparlamentariaPP
- Political steps: LasMedidasDeRajoy, DebateNiNis
- Self reflection: PoliticosElProblema

5 most frequently mentioned hashtags # out of 51 overall hashtags.

Results: Hashtags used by *marianorajoy*



- Party's performance: DEN2013
- Spanish and European legislature
- Political steps: porelepleojooven
- Nonpolitical issue: Madrid2020

5 most frequently mentioned hashtags # out of 73 overall hashtags.

Results: Issues addressed: Policy Fields

- Python script searches for policy fields, e.g., defense, economy, labor.

Policy Fields addressed	
German government	Spanish government
labor	employment
education	labor
legal affairs	security
financial affairs	defense
economical affairs	youth
family	economical affairs
	financial affairs

- Both governments → employment & labor

Results: European Crisis in Particular

- Keywords: *“krise/crisis”, “euro/euro”, “zusammen/junto”, “lösung/solucion”, “lös/resolv”, “hilfe/ayud”, “schulden/deuda”, “rezession/recesion”, “börse/bolsa”, “schlecht/mal”, “attac/attac” and “occupy/occupy”*

Most used keywords	
German	Spanish
joint measures	help
aids	joint measures
crisis	crisis
debt	intra EU collaborations
help	

- Both governments → “crisis” and “joint measures”
- Germany → “debt”
- Spain → intra EU collaborations

Conclusions & Limitations

- Both governments: more addressing of politicians vs. less addressing of citizens
- Germany: focus on France
- Spain: focus on South America
- Both governments: focus on employment and labor
- Germany: joint measures during crisis
- Spain: help to face to crisis

→ Strong focus on current events within the offline political landscape

- Future research: enlarging sample of Twitter accounts and time period

Thank you for your attention!

