METHODOLOGY

Twitter

Collected Data
We collect tweets with the help of the public Twitter Streaming API. It allows us to retrieve data by providing key parameters. In our case a list of hashtags and users. For this project, we carefully selected 239 relevant hashtags and 13,633 users. The user list includes accounts from political parties, politicians, media portals, journalists, bloggers, editors, correspondents, consultants and other important political actors. We do not only collect the tweets from these accounts, but also the mentions and retweets these users get.

For the hashtag list, we selected four types of hashtags:
- German political parties, e.g. #cdu, #fdp, #grünen
- German politics e.g. #finanzpolitik, #groko, #bundestag
- Media sites from all the political orientations e.g. #spiegel, #welt, #bild
- German politicians, e.g. #merkel, #gauland, #steinmeier

As researchers, we are objective about the results we are presenting. We do not bias our data to a specific political ideology. We tried to have a balanced list of hashtags and users that represented all the German political parties. We do not include the complete list of hashtags and users in this documentation. For further details, please send us an enquiry.

Note: Twitter only provides a sample of the complete tweets and this biases the data. Nevertheless, we collect a significant number of tweets and hope to have a representative sample that can give plausible insights.

Important: For all the plots, we only take into consideration tweets written in the German language.

Plots Creation
Counter: The counter on the dashboard shows the number of tweets we have in our database since we started the collection process in March 2017. The results presented in the Dashboard are live.

URLs: We preprocess all the URLs in the tweets by extracting the endpoint. For the dashboard, we do not consider URLs from other tweets, Facebook posts, YouTube videos, Instagram photos and Google/Bing searches. It is possible that sometimes URLs not related to media appear, this could be caused by spambots.

Supporters: Since March 2017, we have collected retweets from the main accounts of the German political parties. With this data, we can observe which users retweet the political accounts. From these users, we define a supporter as a user that has retweeted at least five times a political party. One user can be a supporter of more than one party. We do not explicitly collect all the tweets from these users. We obtain data only if they tweeted something that is politically relevant. For each party, we extract the hashtags used by its supporters in the last 24 hours.
Spider plot: To construct this plot, we use the information from the top ten used hashtags and the hashtags from the party supporters. We count the number of times each hashtag has been used by the supporters of each party in the last 24 hours. We normalize by the number of tweets collected for each party. We are interested in showing percentages and not absolute numbers. This allows us to compare the importance of a topic for the supporters of the parties. Each color-shape on the plot corresponds to a German party and it intersects the lines corresponding to the hashtags. For one hashtag, the dots closer to the outer circle tell us that the supporters of these parties are proportionally sharing the hashtag more often than the supporters of the other parties. If all the dots for one hashtag are close to the center, the supporters of all parties are discussing this hashtag in similar quantities.

Bavarian Dashboard
For this dashboard, we additionally collect tweets with a different list of hashtags and users. In this case, the list is smaller than the general dashboard and we therefore include it here:

Users
@AfD_Bayern, @Markus_Soeder, @Gruene_Bayern, @KathaSchulze, @LudwigHartmann, @LINKE_Bayern, @AtesGuerpinar, @fdpbay, @realMartinHagen, @BayernSPD, @NataschaKohnen, @FREIEWAEHLER_BV, @HubertAiwanger

Hashtags

Note: For the URLs in Bavaria, we explicitly removed URLs from the FC Bayern page. As we follow #Bayern, we get many tweets related to the football club.
Media

Collected Data
We collected online news media articles related to German politics with the help of the RSS feeds of the news media websites and the Python package BeautifulSoup. We retrieve data on articles in real time, including their title and full text. We filtered news that did not relate to German politics. For this project, we carefully selected the following 40 German online media sites:

- Ach Gut
- Allgemeine Zeitung
- Bild
- Bayerischer Rundfunk
- Cicero Online
- Compact-Magazin
- Der Spiegel
- Deutschlandfunk
- Die Presse
- Deutsche Welle
- Epochtimes
- Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung
- Focus
- Frankfurter Rundschau
- Freie Presse
- der Freitag
- Handelsblatt
- Huffington Post
- Journalistenwatch
- Junge Freiheit
- Jungle World
- Manager Magazin
- Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk
- N-tv
- Neues Deutschland
- Rheinische Post
- RT deutsch
- Stern
- Die Süddeutsche Zeitung
- Die Tagespost
- Der Tagesspiegel
- Tagesschau
- Die Tageszeitung
- Tichys Einblick
- Die Welt
- Wirtschaftswoche
- Die Zeit

Our selection procedure was based on three guidelines:
1. We wanted to cover media from all the different political orientations
2. We looked at the media included in the top sites of online traffic in Germany (Alexa)
3. We only considered the news media that an RSS feed. There are relatively few big media sources that do not have this service, for example, Reuters Germany.

Important Note 1: We tried to stay unbiased and selected news media from different political orientations. If you, the reader, think that some media sources should be added please send us an email to contact@political-dashboard.com, and we will consider it.

Important Note 2: The full text from each article is under strict data protection, and should not be reproduced without the consent of the news media. The results we present are only aggregates and analysis on the data. We are not recreating the content in any way.
**Plots Creation**

**Counter:** The counter on the dashboard shows the number of articles we have in our database since we started the collection process in January 2019. The results presented in the Dashboard are live.

**News Topics:** To automatically understand the relevant topics in the news we use topic modeling with LDA (Latent Dirichlet Allocation). It is a machine learning method to find topics in documents. Moreover, we use optimization algorithms to find the optimal number of topics. We used the tmtoolkit Python package for this. The plot considers only the news articles in the last 24 hours. The articles have a given probability of belonging to each one of the topics. By summing the probabilities of all articles per topic, we calculate the importance of the topic. The percentage then shows the percentage of news articles that were reporting on the given topic. For each topic, we present the top 8 words. The relevance of each word is calculated according to this formula (with lambda 0.3):

\[ r(w, k | \lambda) = \lambda \log(\phi_{kw}) + (1 - \lambda) \log\left(\frac{\phi_{kw}}{p_w}\right) \]

which is described on this paper: [https://nlp.stanford.edu/events/illvi2014/papers/sievert-illvi2014.pdf](https://nlp.stanford.edu/events/illvi2014/papers/sievert-illvi2014.pdf)

**Spider plot:** To construct this plot, we use the information from the top seven topics from the topics plot. First, we categorize news sources in the database according to their political orientation: left, left-center, center, center-right and right. We then count the number of articles that belong to each group of political orientation. Finally, we calculate the relevance of each topic by summing the probabilities of each subset of articles. The topic proportions are not normalized as we report only seven topics and the algorithm calculates the optimal number of topics, which is normally larger than seven.

On the plot, we only present the top word for each topic. Each color-shape corresponds to media with a certain political orientation and it intersects the lines corresponding to the topics. For one topic, the dots closer to the outer circle tell us that the news media belonging to a political orientation are reporting more on this topic as other media with other orientations. If all the dots for one topic are close to the center, all the news media are discussing this topic in similar quantities.

**Party Attention:** We count the number of times the political parties’ names were mentioned in the articles. For this, we analyze the text of the news articles.

**Facebook Shares:** To obtain the number of Facebook shares for an article, we use the service Shared Count (https://www.sharedcount.com/). The service has a limit per day for 10,000 links. For this reason, we are only updating the database every two hours. Moreover, we limit ourselves to obtaining the shares only for articles that were published in the last 5 days.
European Elections

Collected Data

Twitter
We collect tweets with the help of the public Twitter Streaming API. It allows us to retrieve data by providing key parameters. In our case a list of hashtags and users related to the 2019 European Elections. We selected 13 relevant hashtags and 181 users. The users are members of the European Parliament or candidates for the election. We selected users representing the 7 political parties represented in the German parliament. This is the list of hashtags we employ for the data collection:

#FutureofEurope, #EP2019, #EUelections2019, #Europawahl, #MEP, #Europaparlament, #europaistdieantwort, #EUWahl, #EUWahl2019, #betterEurope, #deinEuropa, #europaSPD, #zukunftdeuropas

Note: For the plots, we only take into consideration tweets written in the German language.

Political Ads

We collect the German political ads on Facebook using its ad archive API. The analyses are done only on the active ads at the moment. For more information on the public API here: [https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/08/introducing-the-ad-archive-api/](https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/08/introducing-the-ad-archive-api/)

Plots Creation

Twitter URLs: We preprocess all the URLs in the tweets by extracting the endpoint. We do not consider URLs from other tweets, Facebook posts, YouTube videos, Instagram photos and Google/Bing searches.

Ads Counter: The counter shows the number of active ads on Facebook. The results presented in the Dashboard are live.

Targeting Map: Every ad has a region distribution where the advertiser can decide which federal state should be targeted. For the main Facebook page from each political party, we collect the ads and average the percentages of the regional targeting. Political ads from regional political pages are not included. Therefore, this only represents federal targeting strategies. The intensity of the color on the map represents the intensity for each federal state.

For the European Election Dashboard, we are thankful for the cooperation with the Landesanstalt für Medien NRW, Bayerischen Landeszentrale für neue Medien (BLM), der Medienanstalt Berlin-Brandenburg (mabb) and the medienanstalt rlp.
Licences

For the creation of the tables used in the different pages, we used the DataTables plug-in under the MIT license (https://datatables.net/license/mit)