"Greater China" as Cultural and Political Entities:

A Comparative Analysis of Western Perceptions

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r/China, r/Taiwan, r/HongKong subreddits

'Western Perception': **49%** of Reddit Users from the **US**, followed by the **UK**.

Research Question What is the Western perception of Chinese **cultural** identity and **political** influence across mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong?

Literature Review

1. Western Perception of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (Kaeding, 2011)
   - Politically *(The Rise of China, Taiwan Strait, Hong Kong's protests)*
   - Culturally *(Travel Destinations, Movie and Literatures)*
2. 'Greater China' Historical Background:
   - **Hong Kong** was a former British colony that returned to China's rule in 1997 under the structure of **"One Country, Two Systems"**
   - **Taiwan**: De facto independent with democratic governance, although claimed by China.
3. Perceptions of Each Other Reinforce Western Perceptions
4. Reddit in Social Science Research
   - Social Identity and Groupings
   - Political Discourse Studies

Hypothesis

On Reddit, Western perceptions of China are more focused on political topics, while discussions surrounding Taiwan and Hong Kong are often centered around tourism and culture rather than politics.

r/中国

A community for discussing China and topics related to it. All viewpoints and opinions are welcome here, but please read the rules in the sidebar before posting.

Created Jan 25, 2008
Public

510K	**179**	**Top 1%**
Members	● Online	Rank by size ⬈

/r/taiwan: Welcome to Taiwan!

For those interested in Taiwan! Feel free to share content with the community.

Created Apr 7, 2008
Public

589K	**96**	**Top 1%**
Members	● Online	Rank by size ⬈

香港

A Subreddit for all things Hong Kong. From Travel, food, events, to local news and politics.

Created Nov 3, 2009
Public

636K	**78**
Members	● Online

Methodology

RQ

What is the Western perception of Chinese **cultural** identity and **political** influence across mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong?

Data Collection

Upwork Python API library (PRAW):
- Hot Posts
- Recent Rising Posts

For r/China, r/Taiwan, r/Hongkong

Preprocessing

1. Remove duplicates
2. Remove Personal Identifiable Information (PII)
3. Remove **stopwords**
4. Generate **node** and **edge** tables

TF-IDF

Displaying term frequencies over time and mapping subreddit similarity.

1. **TF-IDF**
2. **Manual peer-coding** into political & cultural
3. Plot **Top 10 and Category Grouped Subreddit Term Frequencies Over Time**
4. Map **Category Vectors**, after **normalizing summed** TF-IDF scores
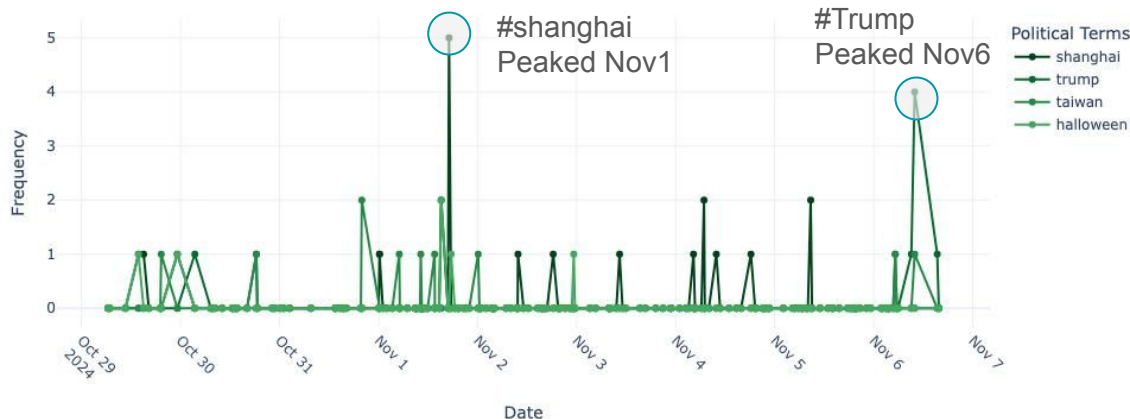
Network Analysis

Identifying the in-community engagement patterns.

1. **ForceAtlas2** used as layouting mechanism
2. **Inverted edge weights** configured
3. LinLog mode
4. Visual interpretation to **identify sub-reddit specific** engagement pattern

Results and Discussions

"Greater China" as Cultural and Political Entities
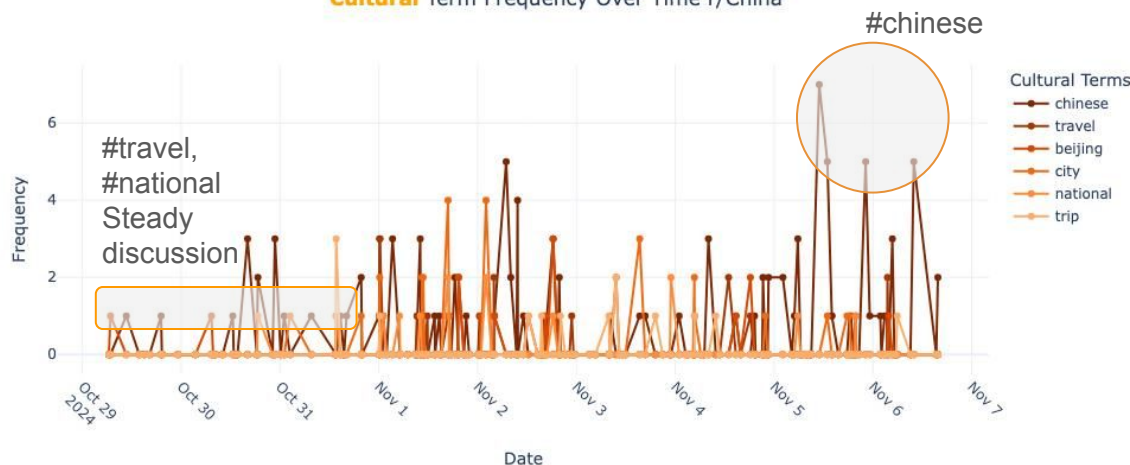
Political Term Frequency Over Time r/China

#shanghai
Peaked Nov1

#Trump
Peaked Nov6

Political Terms
- shanghai
- trump
- taiwan
- halloween

Cultural Term Frequency Over Time r/China

#chinese

#travel,
#national
Steady
discussion

Cultural Terms
- chinese
- travel
- beijing
- city
- national
- trip

Term evolvement:
Time Series Analysis
r/China

#shanghai Societal events

#trump International Relations

#Chinese Non-specialized
cultural discussions

In Shanghai, Halloween sends shivers down China's spine

Chinese authorities are seeking to limit Halloween celebrations in Shanghai, fearing that the festivities could serve as a platform for political dissent. For the regime, the October 31 holiday, imported from the United States, could become a means of criticising those in power through the choice of costumes with a political connotation.

Issued on: 31/10/2024 - 08:13 | ⏱ 4 min

By: Sébastian SEIBT

Halloween costumes worn in Shanghai in 2023, including protective suits like those worn by officials during the country's
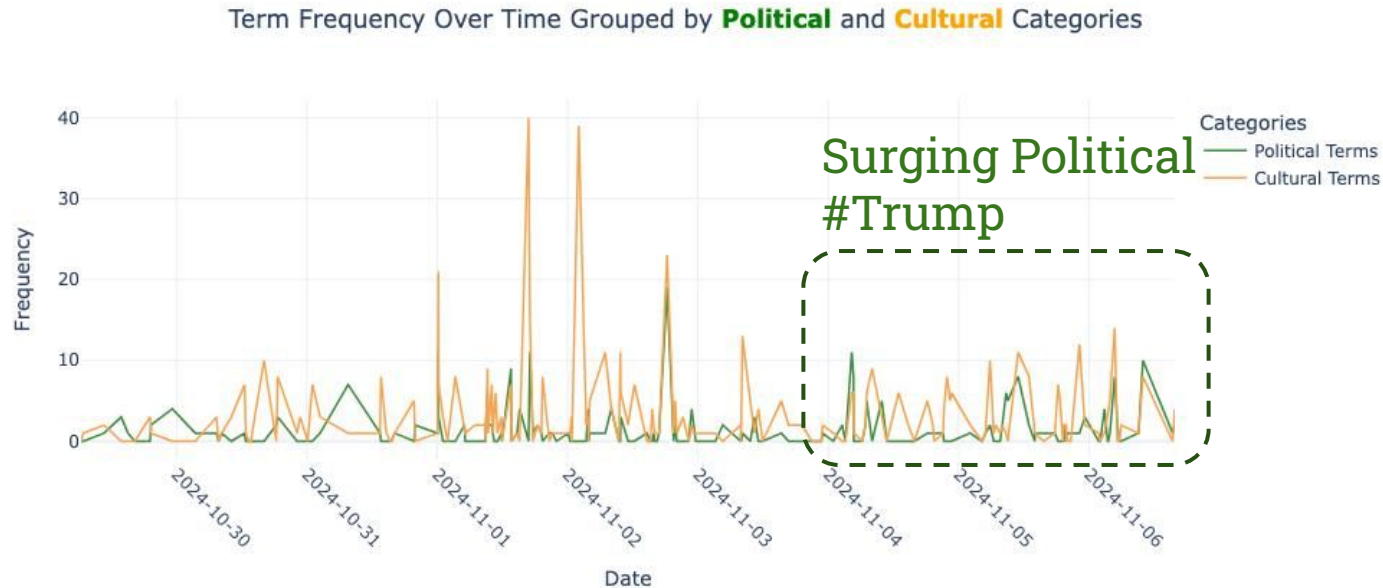
LIVEN

Australia ru
aiming to h

Trial opens
beheading
Prophet ca

How could
war in Ukra

🔘 northern_square ⋯

A naruto coser getting

arrested

Term evolvement: 'Greater China' shared patterns

Term Frequency Over Time Grouped by **Political** and **Cultural** Categories

Surging Political #Trump

Sustained cultural trends, dominated by posts in r/Hongkong and r/Taiwan

Western Perception: Who's more **political**?

Vectors in Non-Political-**Political** Space (Normalized)
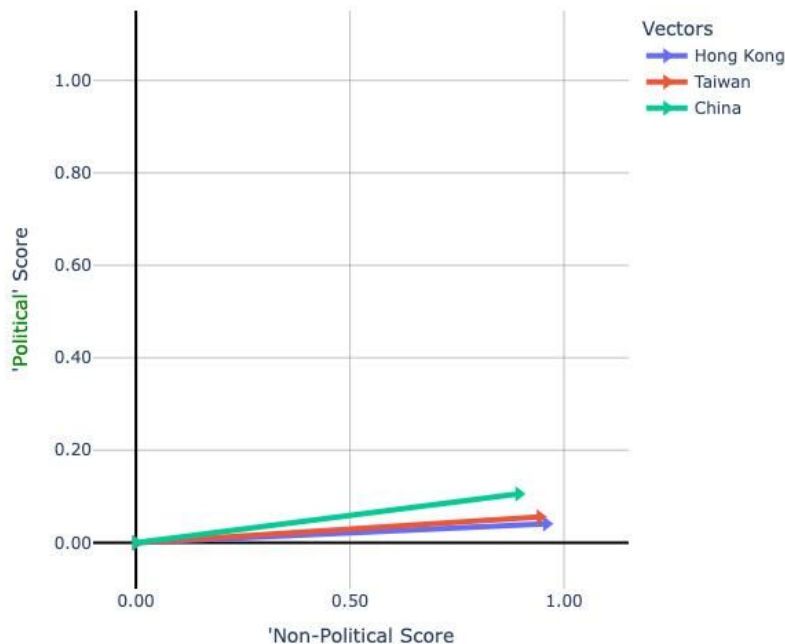
HongKong ↔Taiwan, China

Distance between Hong Kong and Taiwan: 0.02
Distance between China and Hong Kong: 0.09
Distance between China and Taiwan: 0.07

Angles between subreddit vectors:
Hong Kong vs Taiwan: 1.0°
China vs Hong Kong: 4.3°
China vs Taiwan: 3.3°

*Measurement normalized for bias control

Discursive use of stability in *New York Times*' coverage of China: a sentiment analysis approach

Guofeng Wang ✉, Yilin Liu & Shengmeng Tu

Western Perception: Who's more **cultural**?

Vectors in Non-Cultural-Cultural Space (Normalized)
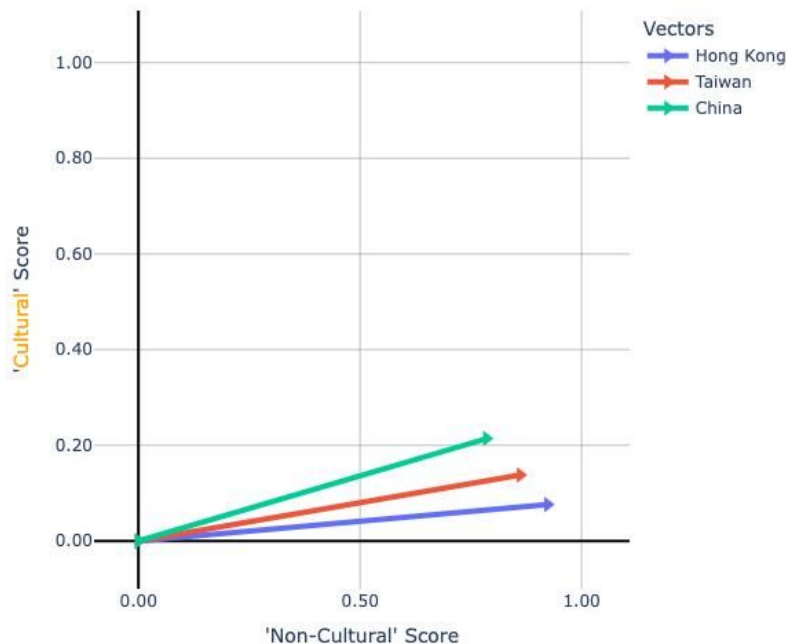
HongKong ↔Taiwan, China

Distance between Hong Kong and Taiwan: 0.09
Distance between China and Hong Kong: 0.20
Distance between China and Taiwan: 0.11

Angles between subreddit vectors:
Hong Kong vs Taiwan: 4.4°
China vs Hong Kong: 10.5°
China vs Taiwan: 6.2°

*Measurement normalized for bias control

r/China: A loose, lurker-based community

Politicalized discussions even in 'Cultural' Posts.
Peripheral users as lurkers on specific topic, without strong engagement
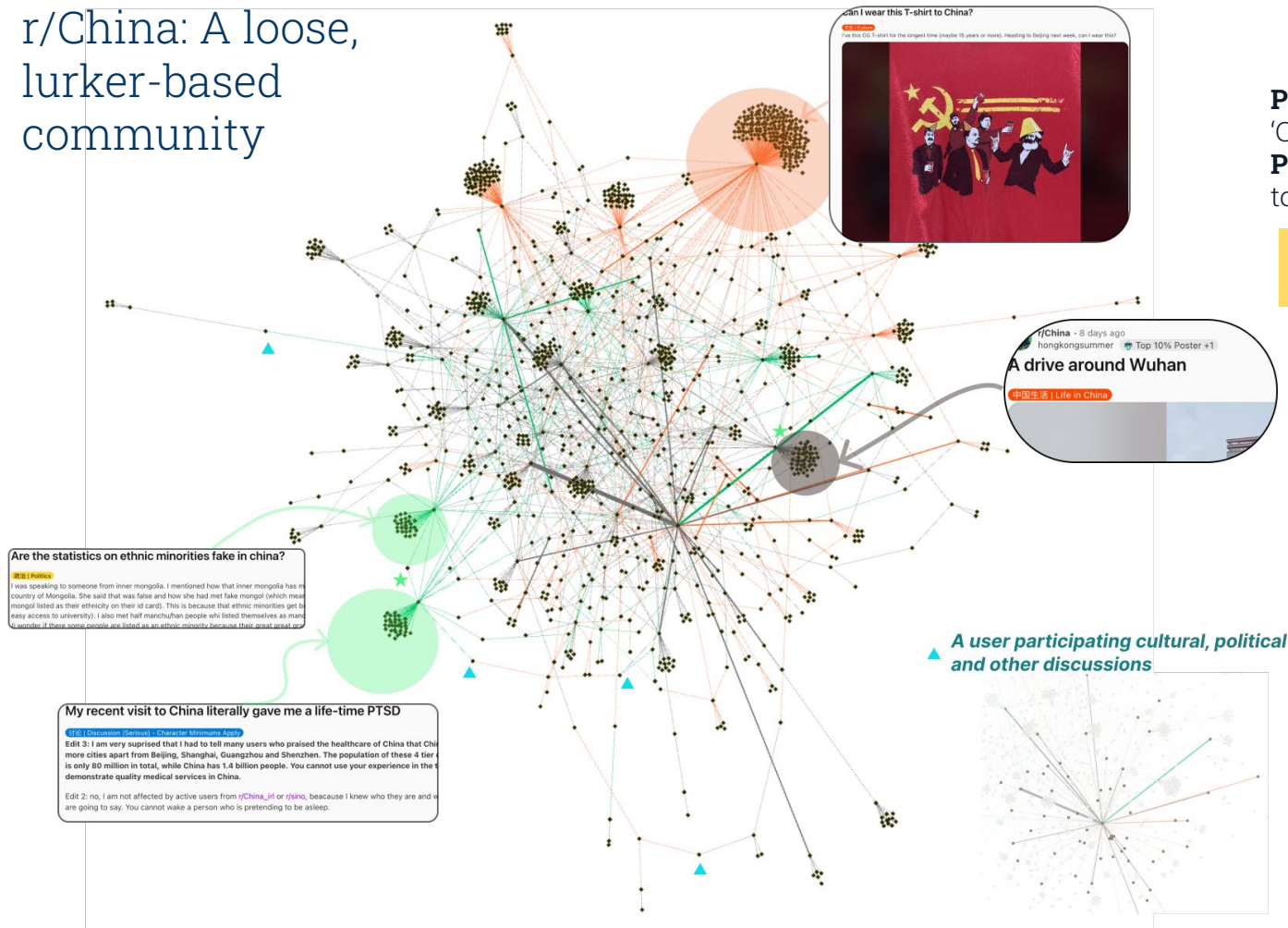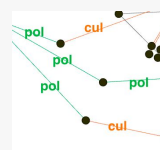
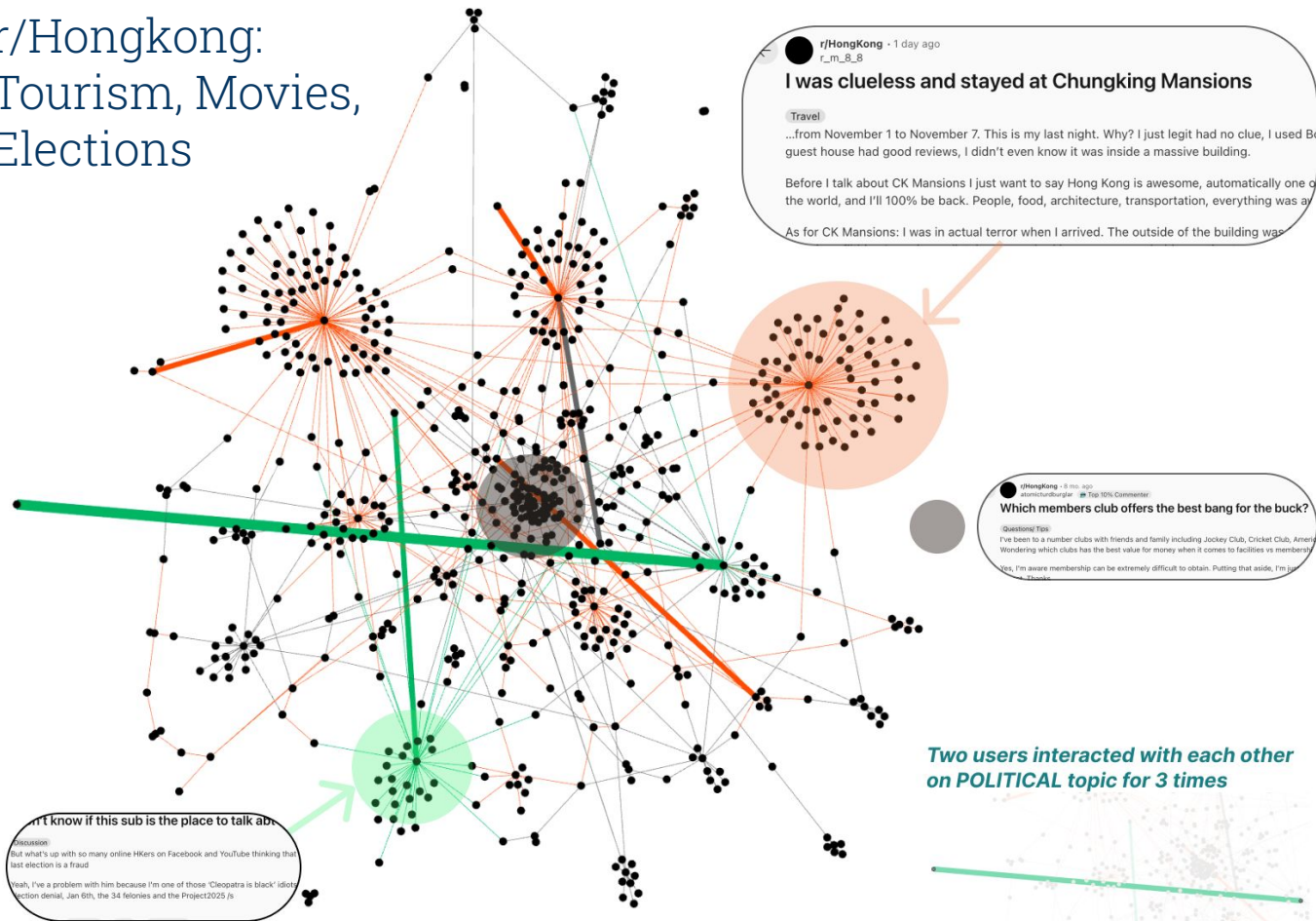| TF-IDF	#Chinese #Shanghai #travel #Trump #national #halloween

A **'broccoli'** shaped user component: One textual interaction, then left.

Inactively engaged users:
- Discussing on homogeneous topics more than once
- Discussing on both P+C

Can I wear this T-shirt to China?
文化 | Culture
I've this O.G. T-shirt for the longest time (maybe 15 years or more). Heading to Beijing next week, can I wear this?

r/China · 8 days ago
hongkongsummer · Top 10% Poster +1
A drive around Wuhan
中国生活 | Life in China

Are the statistics on ethnic minorities fake in china?
政治 | Politics
I was speaking to someone from inner mongolia. I mentioned how that inner mongolia has more country of Mongolia. She said that was false and how she had met fake mongol (which mean mongol listed as their ethnicity on their id card). This is because that ethnic minorities get be easy access to university). I also met half manchu/han people whi listed themselves as man I wonder if there some people are listed as an ethnic minority because their great great gra

My recent visit to China literally gave me a life-time PTSD
讨论 | Discussion (Serious) - Character Minimums Apply
Edit 3: I am very suprised that I had to tell many users who praised the healthcare of China that Chi more cities apart from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. The population of these 4 tier is only 80 million in total, while China has 1.4 billion people. You cannot use your experience in the t demonstrate quality medical services in China.

Edit 2: no, I am not affected by active users from r/China_irl or r/sino, beacause I knew who they are and w are going to say. You cannot wake a person who is pretending to be asleep.

A user participating cultural, political and other discussions

pol cul
pol
pol pol
cul

r/Hongkong: Tourism, Movies, Elections

r/HongKong · 1 day ago
r_m_8_8

I was clueless and stayed at Chungking Mansions

Travel

...from November 1 to November 7. This is my last night. Why? I just legit had no clue, I used B[...]
guest house had good reviews, I didn't even know it was inside a massive building.

Before I talk about CK Mansions I just want to say Hong Kong is awesome, automatically one o[...]
the world, and I'll 100% be back. People, food, architecture, transportation, everything was a[...]

As for CK Mansions: I was in actual terror when I arrived. The outside of the building wa[...]

r/HongKong · 8 mo. ago
atomicfundburglar · ▲ Top 10% Commenter

Which members club offers the best bang for the buck?

Questions/ Tips

I've been to a number clubs with friends and family including Jockey Club, Cricket Club, Americ[...]
Wondering which clubs has the best value for money when it comes to facilities vs membership[...]

Yes, I'm aware membership can be extremely difficult to obtain. Putting that aside, I'm j[...]

Two users interacted with each other on POLITICAL topic for 3 times

[...]n't know if this sub is the place to talk ab[...]
Discussion
But what's up with so many online HKers on Facebook and YouTube thinking that [...]
last election is a fraud

Yeah, I've a problem with him because I'm one of those 'Cleopatra is black' idiots [...]
[...]ection denial, Jan 6th, the 34 felonies and the Project2025 /s

Civil political engagement:
Elections, the missing "One Country-Two System"
Cultural touches on **Tourism**, second by **Movie** discussion

TF-IDF   #octopus #market #local #experience #country #hotel

Actively engaged users
- back-and-forth debate with specific user (The weighted edge)

Central hubs. Influential users engage a wide array of users across r/HongKong

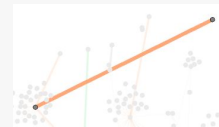Interaction Chain. Deep engagement in debatable topics.

r/Taiwan: A casual civil lifestyle community

Second Trump Presidency - What would this mean for Taiwan?

Politics

Share your thoughts now that Trump has won.

⬆ 409 ⬇   💬 608   🔖   ↪ Share
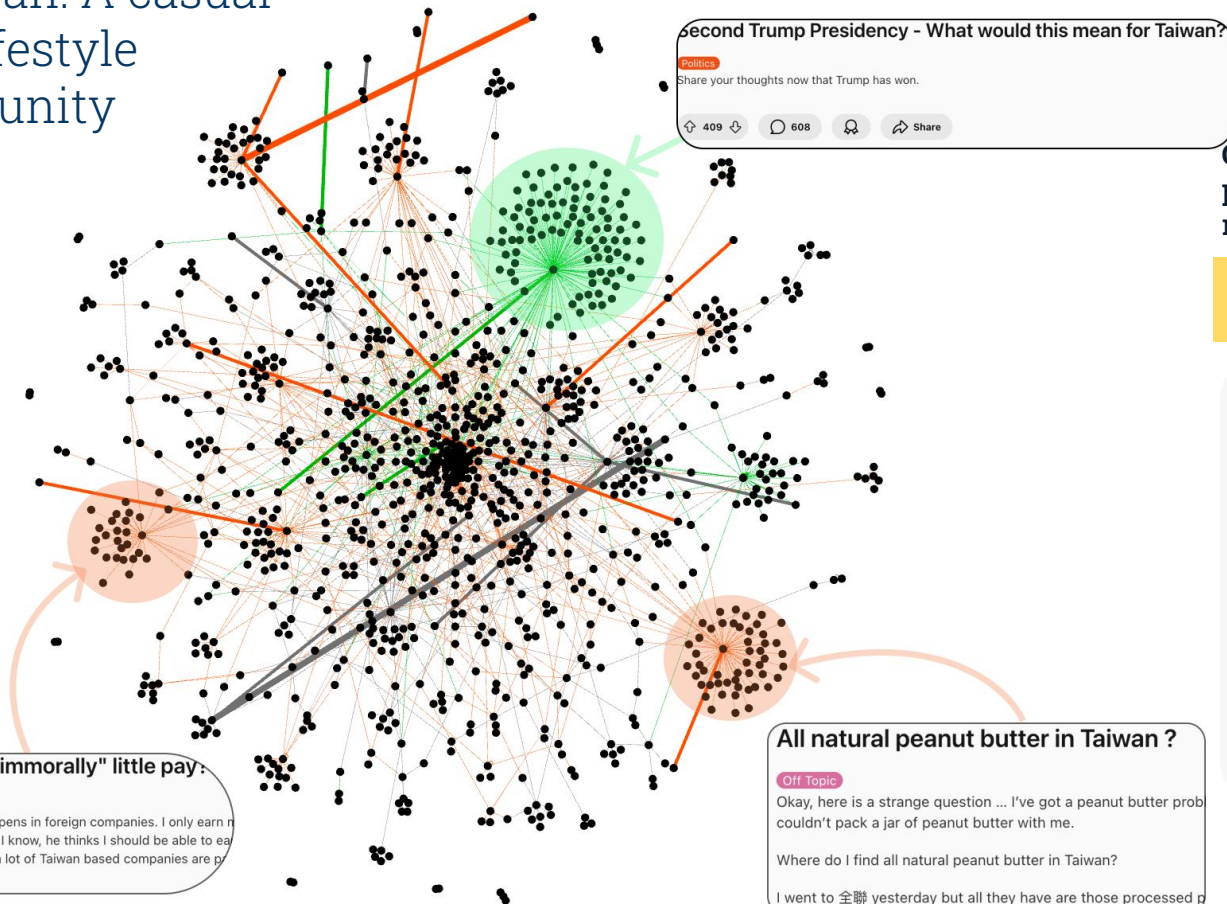
Casual lifestyle exchange, serious political debates (international relations)

TF-IDF   #work #typhoon #plan #travel #experience #event #city

User repetitively asking Qs in the Travel thread

Weekly Travel, Questions, & Mandarin Thread

Discussion

This thread is for:

re you earning "immorally" little pay:

Discussion

I do not know if this also happens in foreign companies. I only earn
But according to a boss who I know, he thinks I should be able to ea
f the skills I have, and that a lot of Taiwan based companies are p
loyees.

All natural peanut butter in Taiwan ?

Off Topic

Okay, here is a strange question ... I've got a peanut butter prob
couldn't pack a jar of peanut butter with me.

Where do I find all natural peanut butter in Taiwan?

I went to 全聯 yesterday but all they have are those processed p

Implications & Conclusions

What is the Western perception of Chinese **cultural** identity and **political** influence across mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong?

WHY THIS MATTERS?

1. **China**
   a. Fragmented Network
   b. Viewed More Through Political Lens
   c. Fewer Reddit Enthusiasts

2. **Taiwan**
   a. Travel Destination, lifestyle engagement

3. **Hong Kong**
   a. In Between: HK movies, and recent elections

Thank you

Questions?

Alexis Harrell

Stéphanie Jolie

Ying Lim

Charlie Wang

Joy Ward

Jie Zhao

Term Frequency Over Time by Category
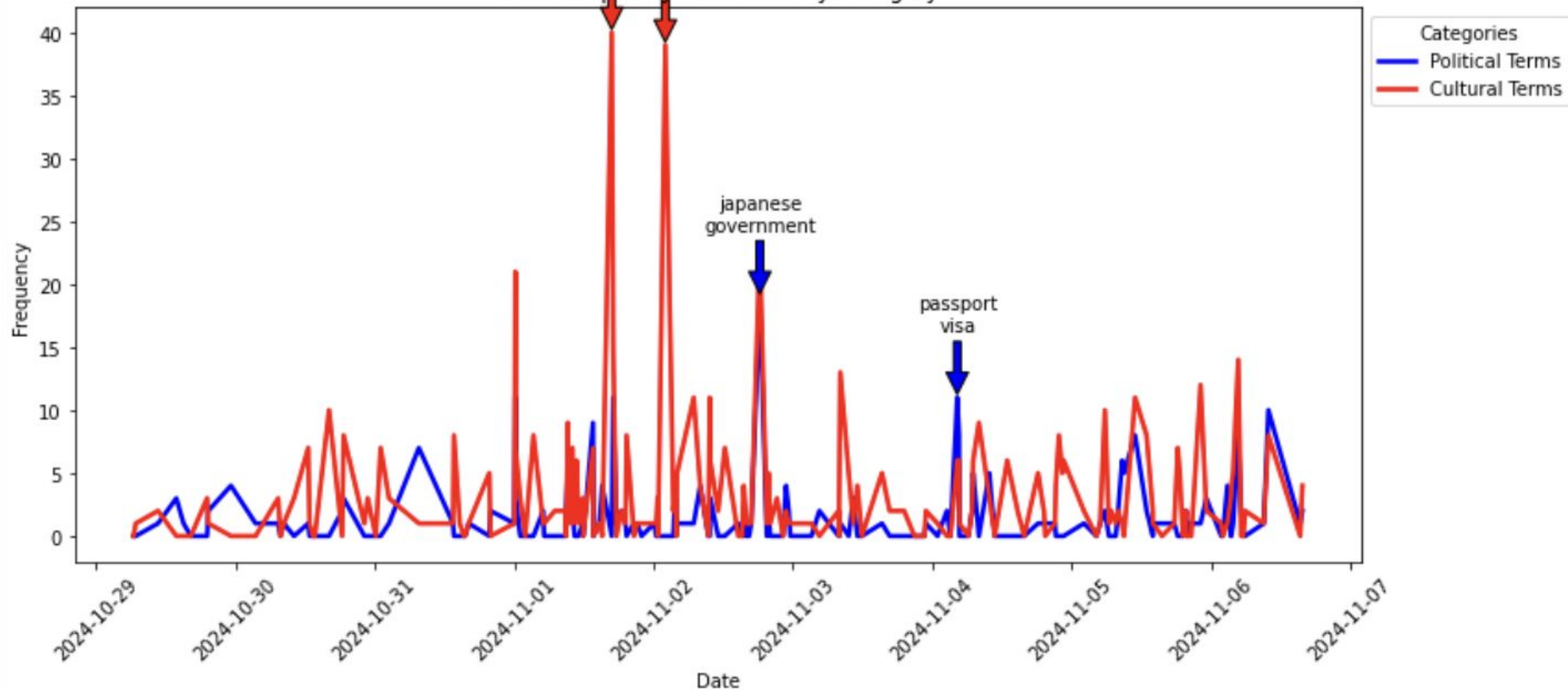
Term Frequency Over Time

Term Frequency Over Time by Category
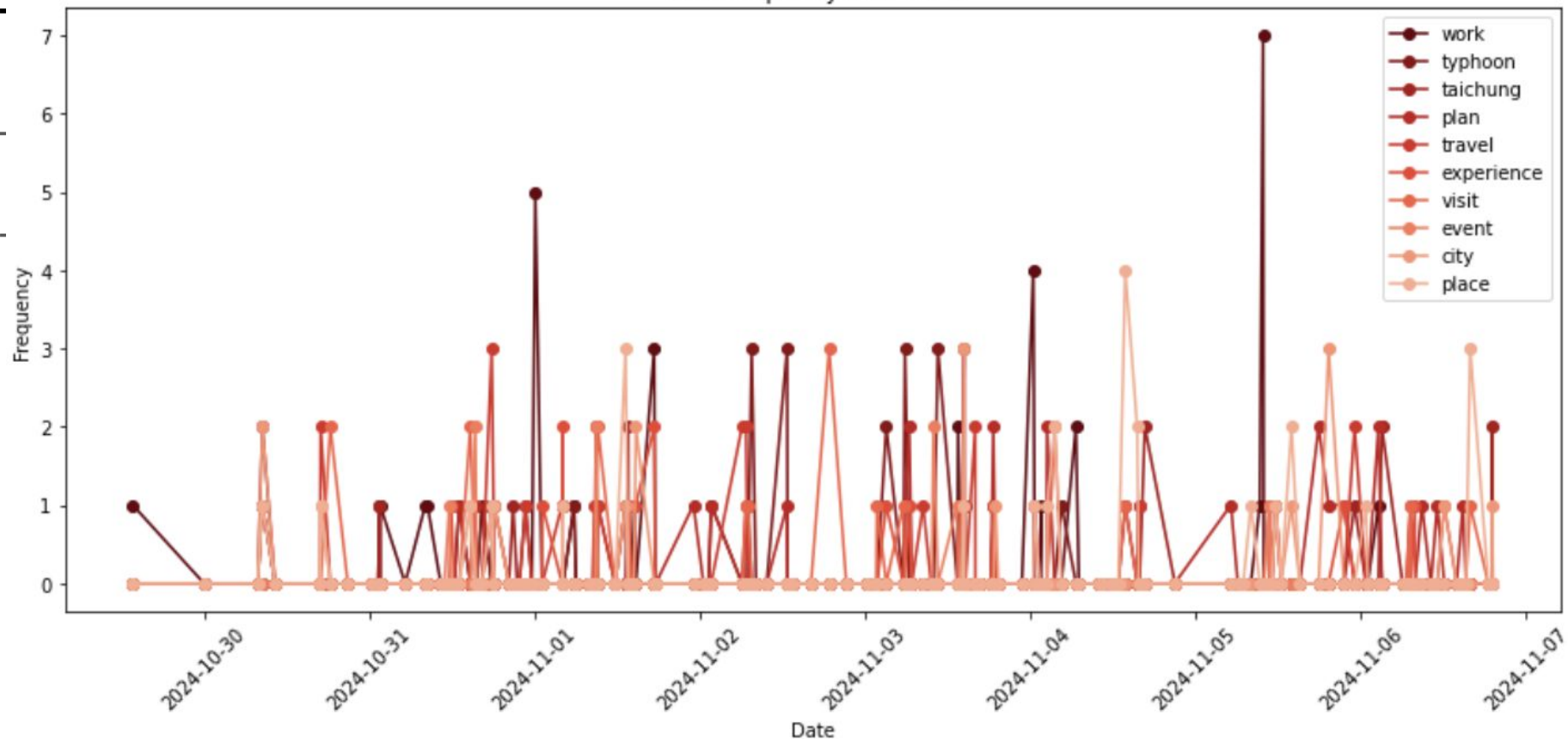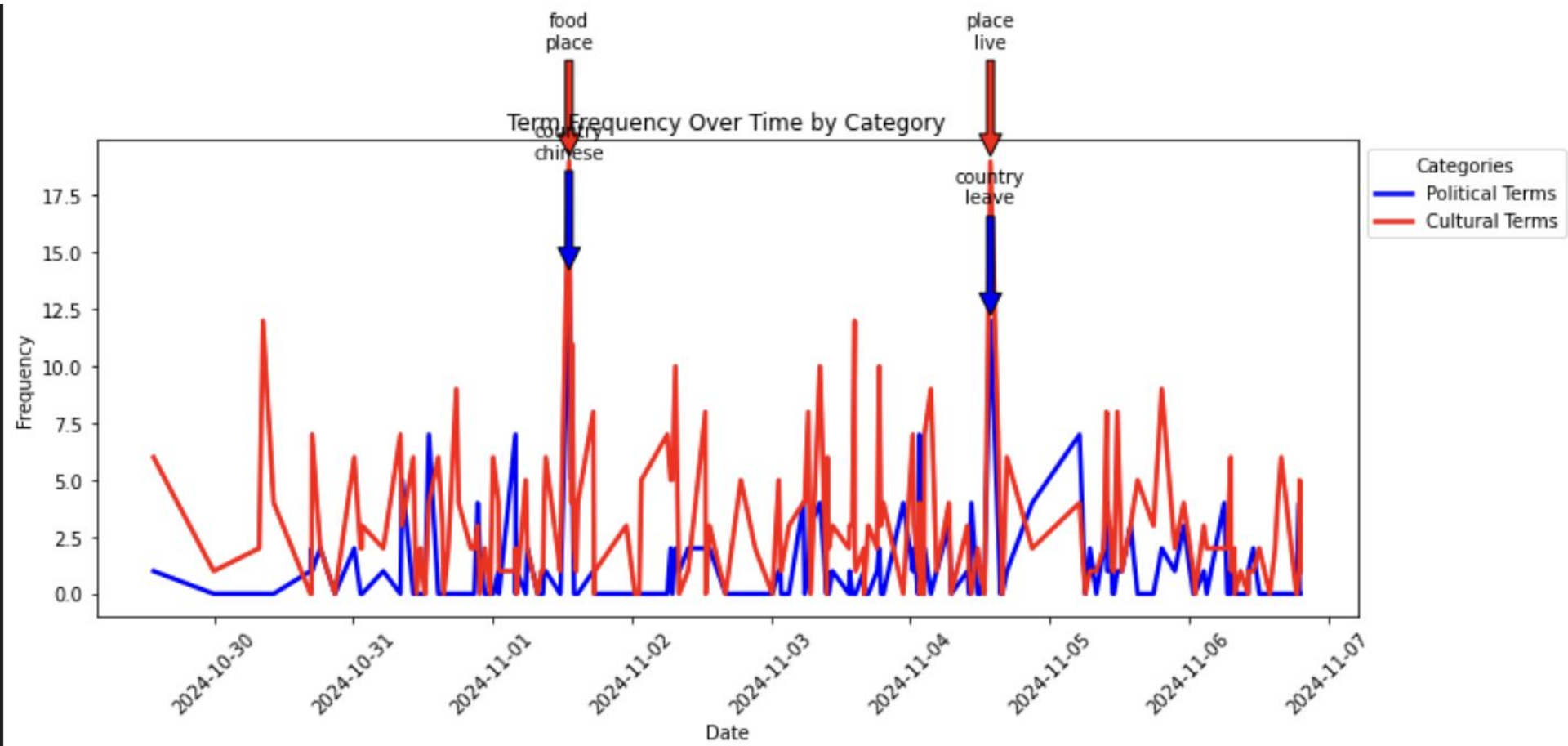
Term Frequency Over Time
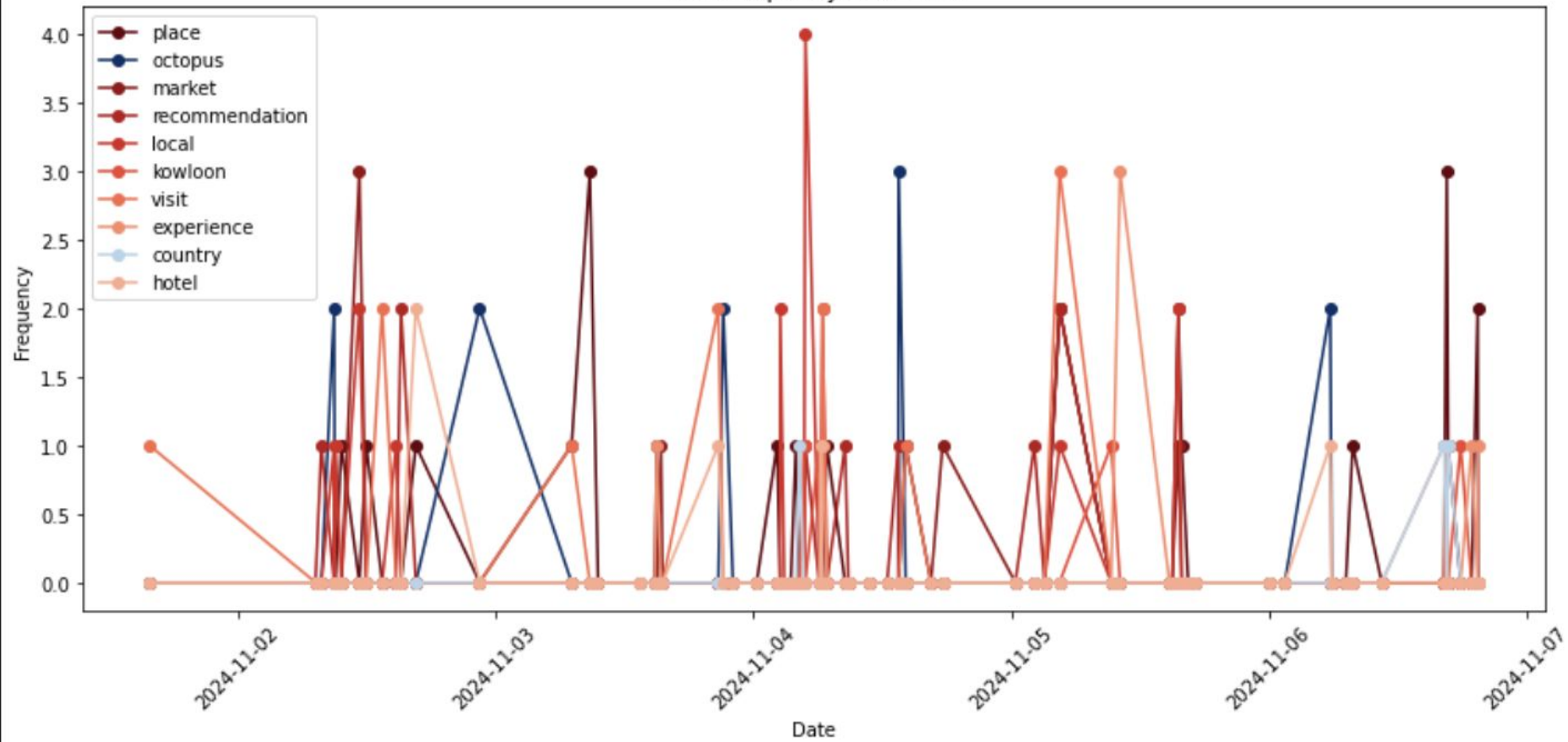
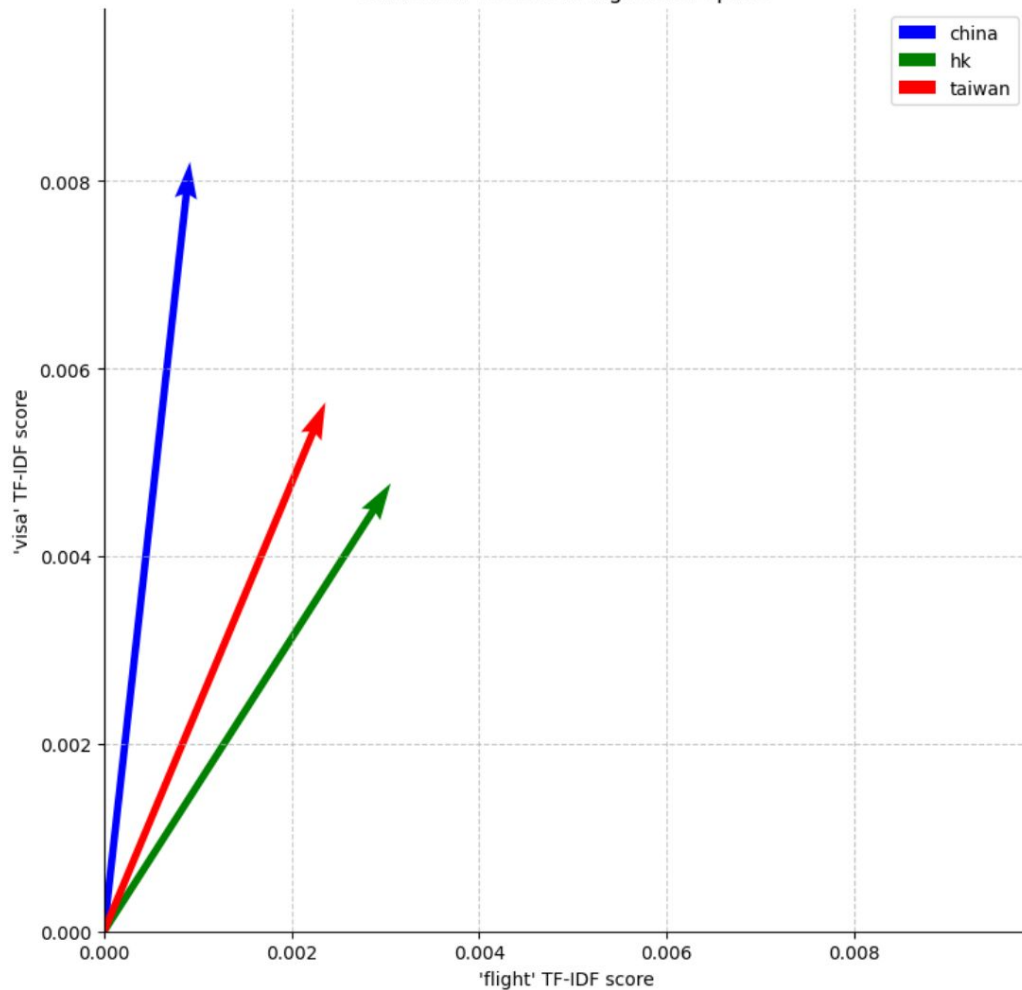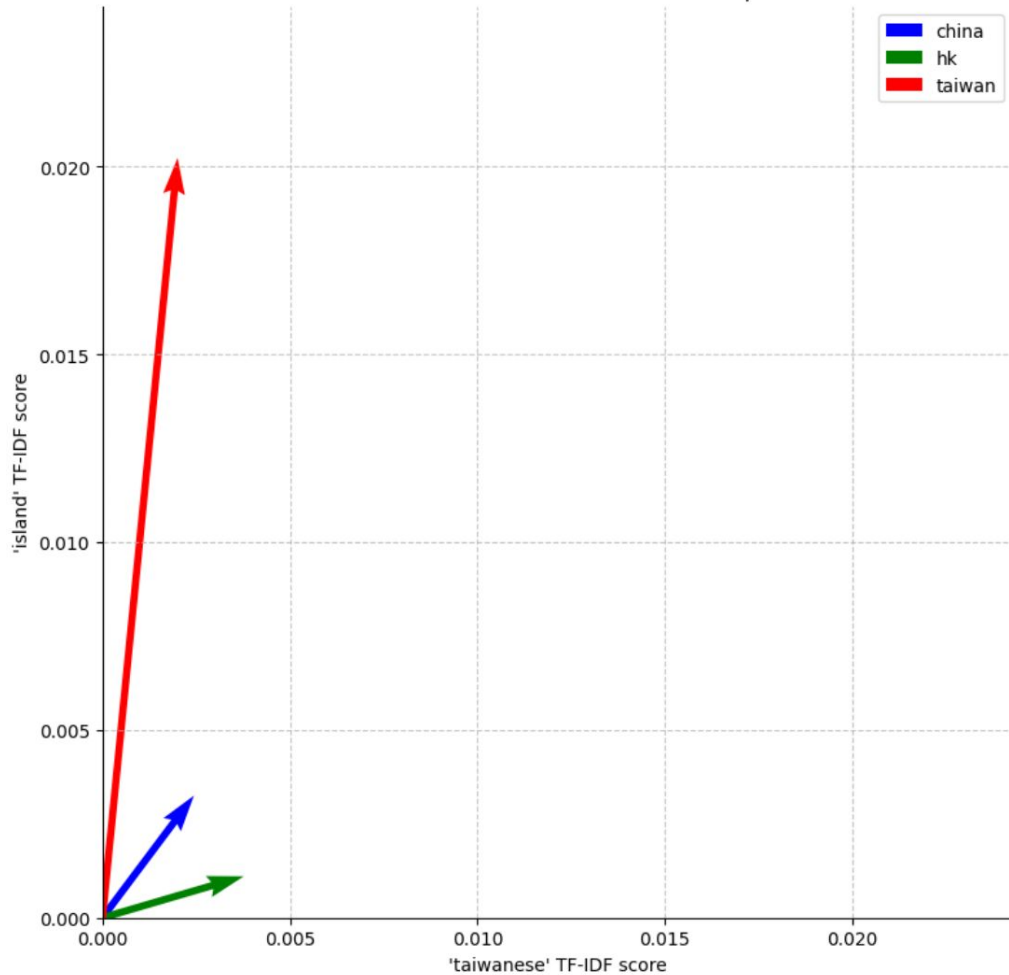Subreddit Vectors in foreign-local Space
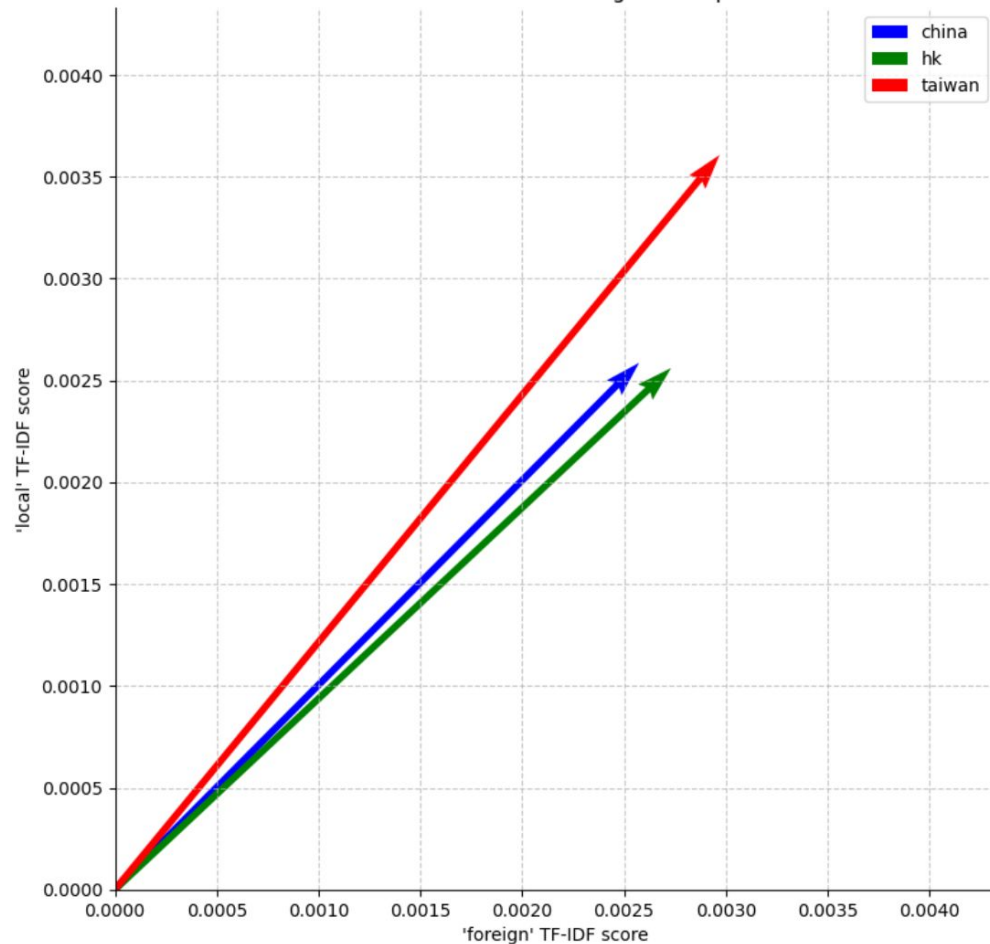
Distance between china and hk: 0.000159
Distance between china and taiwan: 0.001095
Distance between hk and taiwan: 0.001073

Angles between subreddit vectors:
china vs hk: 2.0°
china vs taiwan: 5.4°
hk vs taiwan: 7.4°

Subreddit Vectors in foreigner-local Space
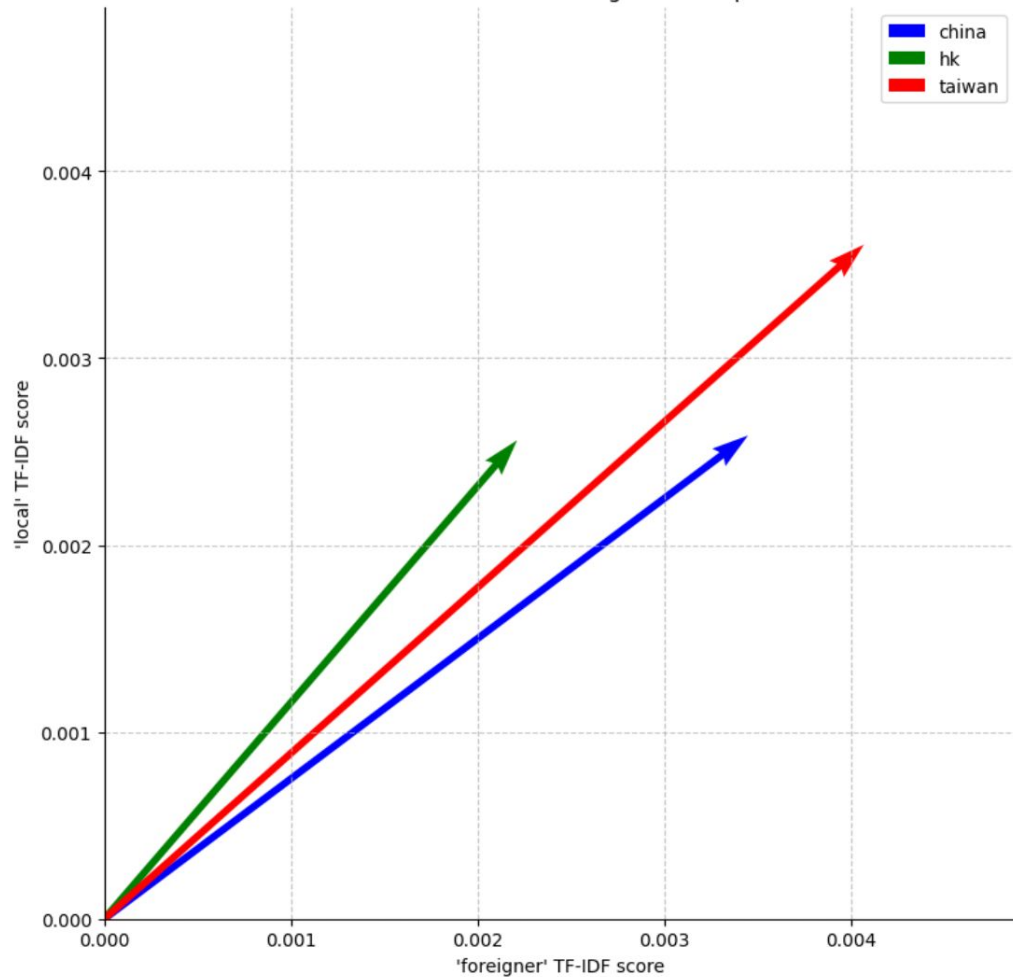
Distance between china and hk: 0.001237
Distance between china and taiwan: 0.001194
Distance between hk and taiwan: 0.002131

Angles between subreddit vectors:
china vs hk: 12.3°
china vs taiwan: 4.7°
hk vs taiwan: 7.6°
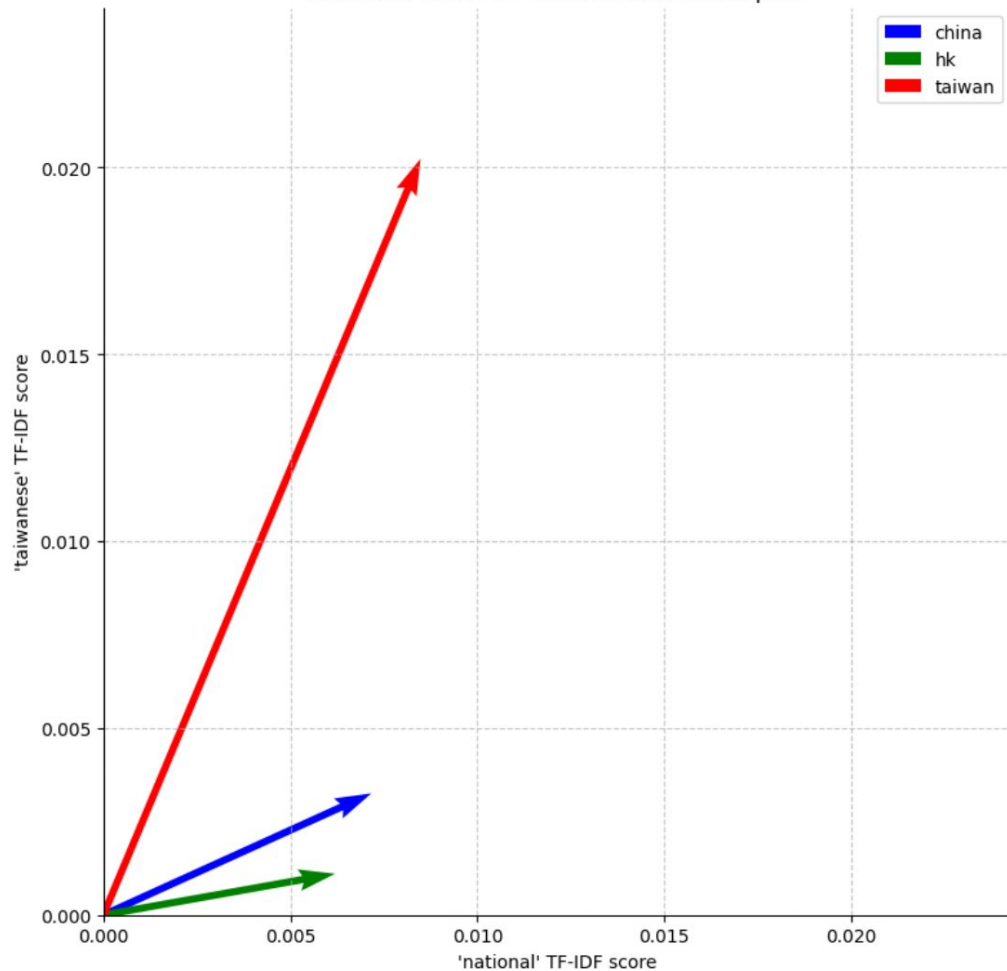
Subreddit Vectors in free-ban Space
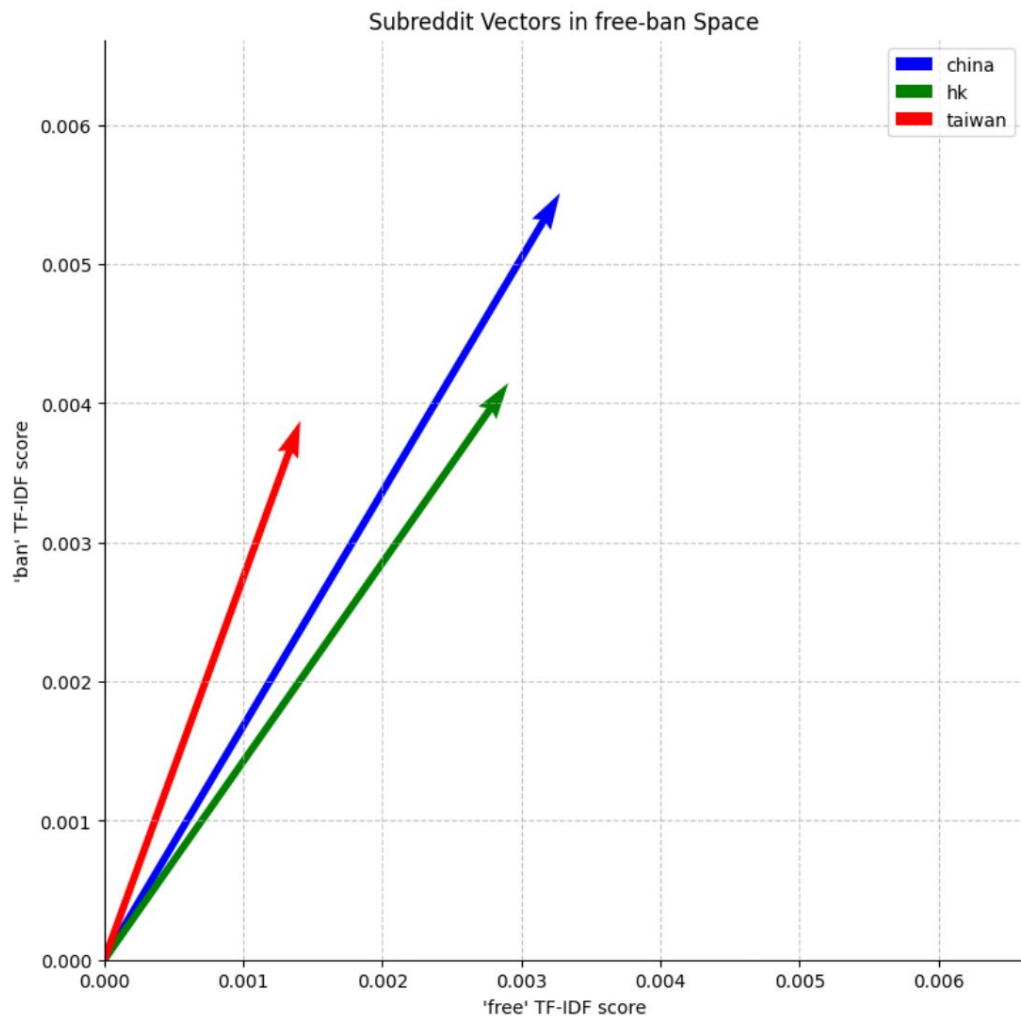
```
Distance between china and hk: 0.001414
Distance between china and taiwan: 0.002482
Distance between hk and taiwan: 0.001520

Angles between subreddit vectors:
china vs hk: 4.3°
china vs taiwan: 10.7°
hk vs taiwan: 15.0°
```

Subreddit Vectors in west-local Space
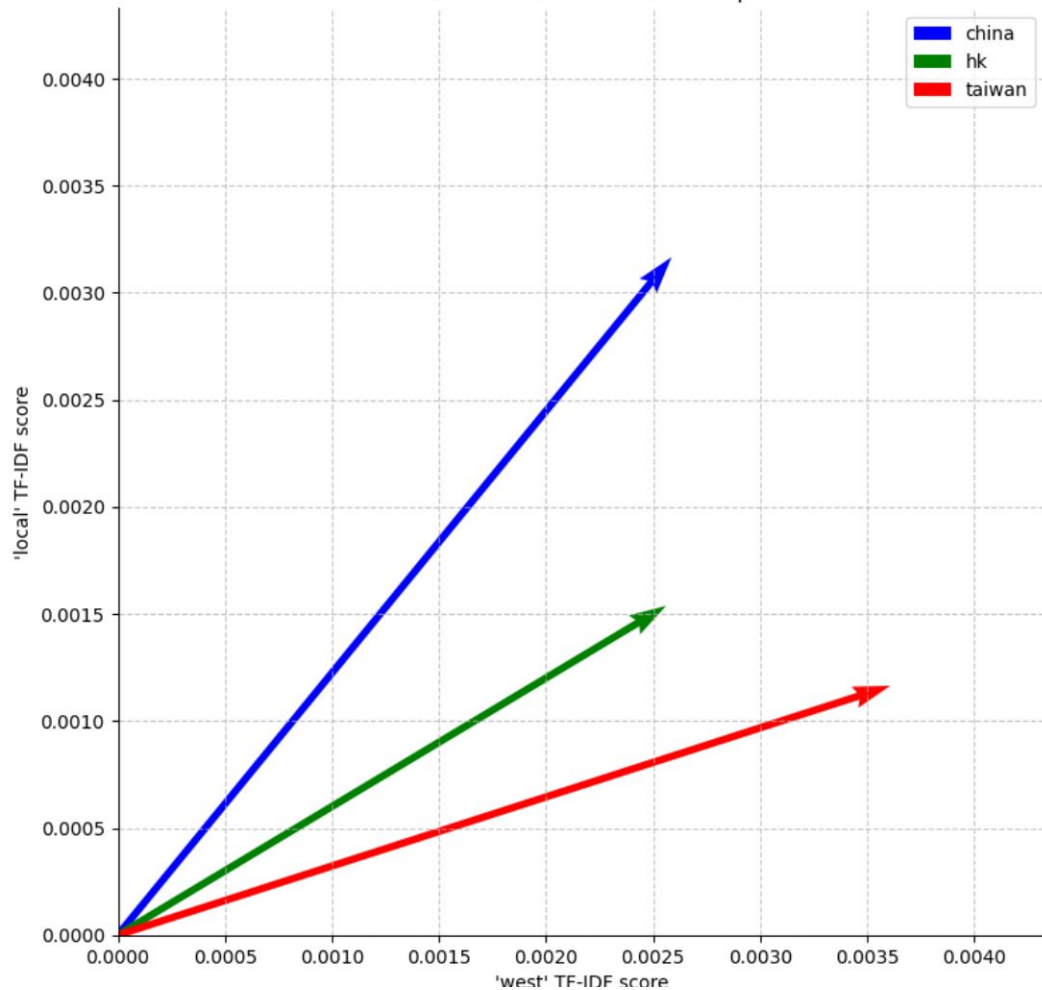
Distance between china and hk: 0.001629
Distance between china and taiwan: 0.002247
Distance between hk and taiwan: 0.001111

Angles between subreddit vectors:
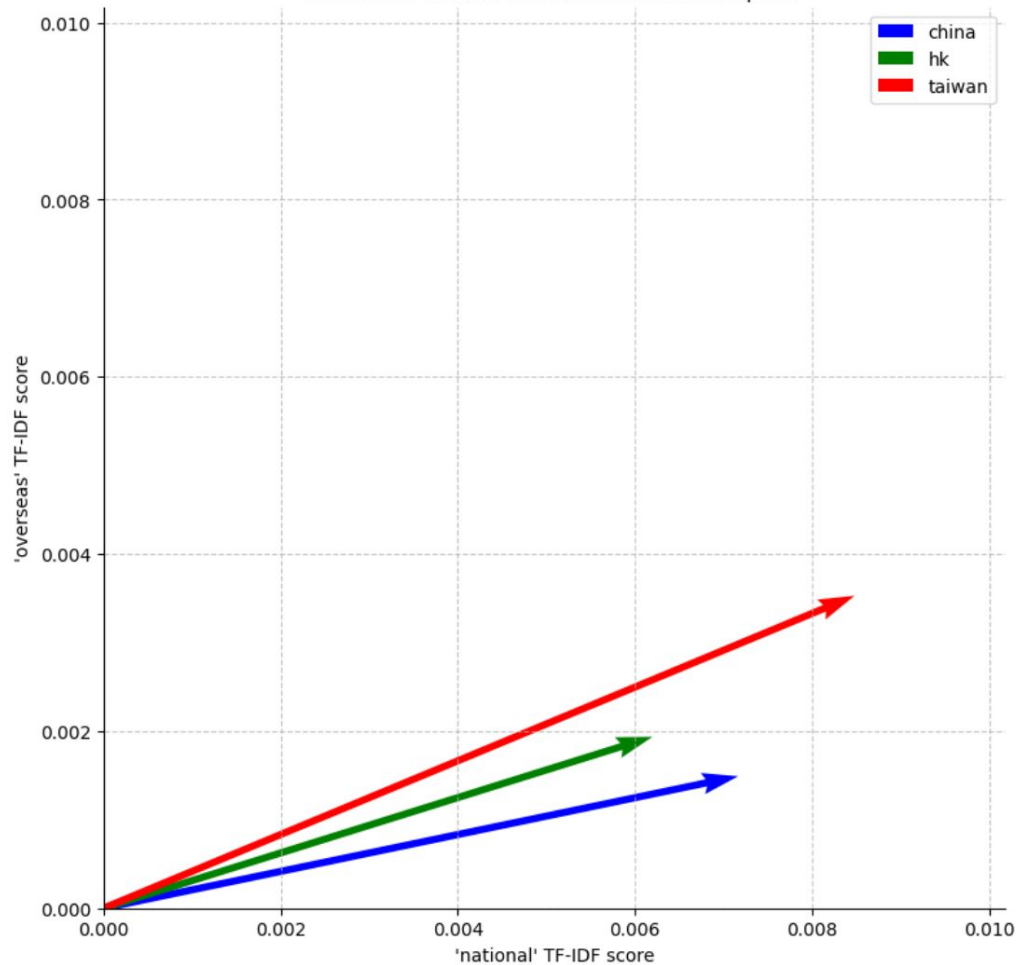china vs hk: 19.8°
china vs taiwan: 32.9°
hk vs taiwan: 13.1°

Subreddit Vectors in flight-visa Space

Distance between china and hk: 0.004042
Distance between china and taiwan: 0.002944
Distance between hk and taiwan: 0.001109

Angles between subreddit vectors:
china vs hk: 26.2°
china vs taiwan: 16.3°
hk vs taiwan: 9.9°
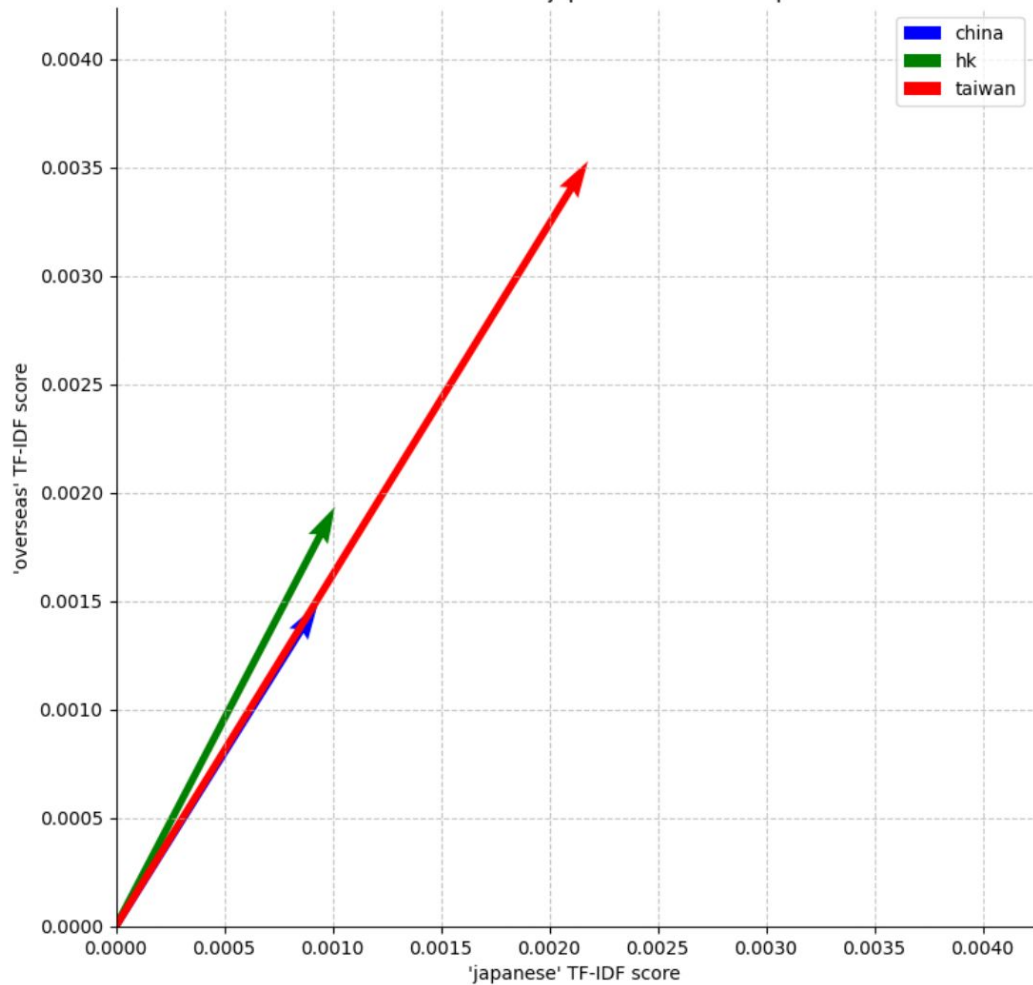
Subreddit Vectors in taiwanese-island Space

```
Distance between china and hk: 0.002527
Distance between china and taiwan: 0.016980
Distance between hk and taiwan: 0.019206

Angles between subreddit vectors:
china vs hk: 36.8°
china vs taiwan: 31.2°
hk vs taiwan: 68.0°
```

Subreddit Vectors in national-taiwanese Space

Distance between china and hk: 0.002358
Distance between china and taiwan: 0.017025
Distance between hk and taiwan: 0.019260

Angles between subreddit vectors:
china vs hk: 14.3°
china vs taiwan: 42.8°
hk vs taiwan: 57.2°

Subreddit Vectors in national-overseas Space

Distance between china and hk: 0.001065
Distance between china and taiwan: 0.002425
Distance between hk and taiwan: 0.002783

Angles between subreddit vectors:
china vs hk: 5.6°
china vs taiwan: 10.8°
hk vs taiwan: 5.3°
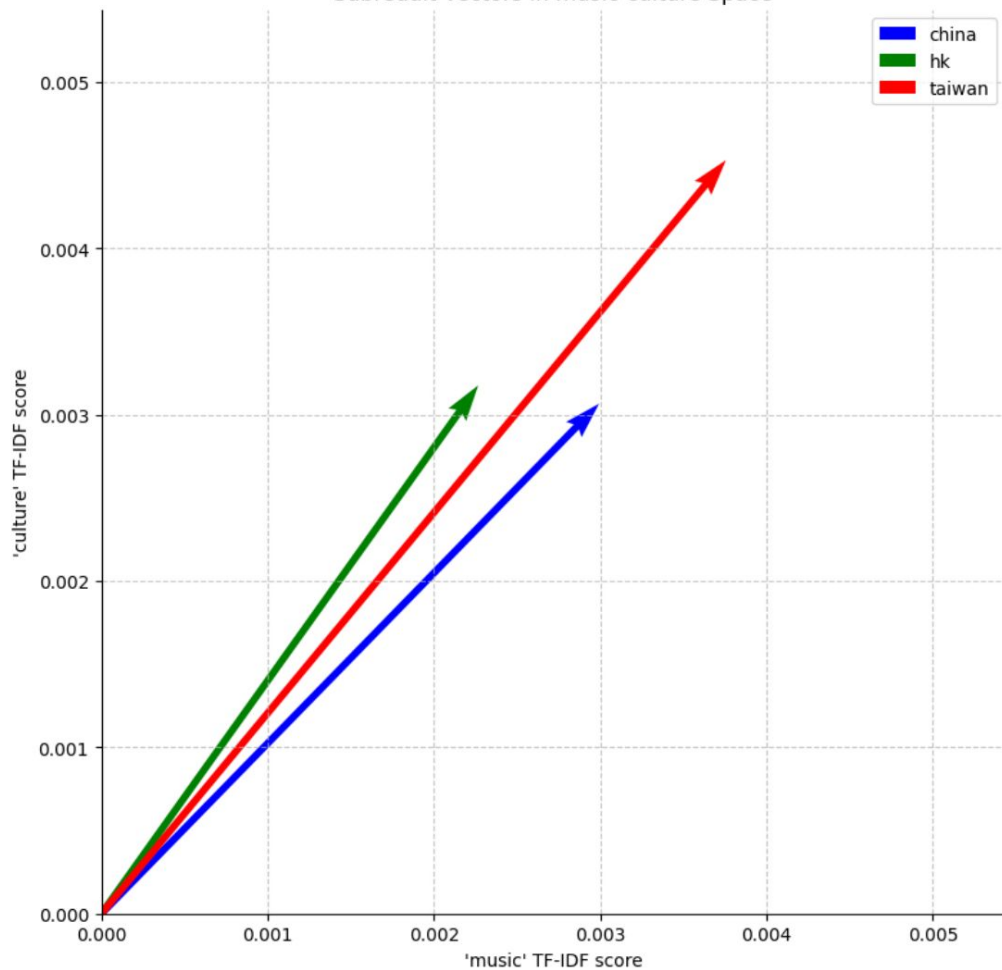
Subreddit Vectors in japanese-overseas Space

Distance between china and hk: 0.000452
Distance between china and taiwan: 0.002388
Distance between hk and taiwan: 0.001975

Angles between subreddit vectors:
china vs hk: 4.5°
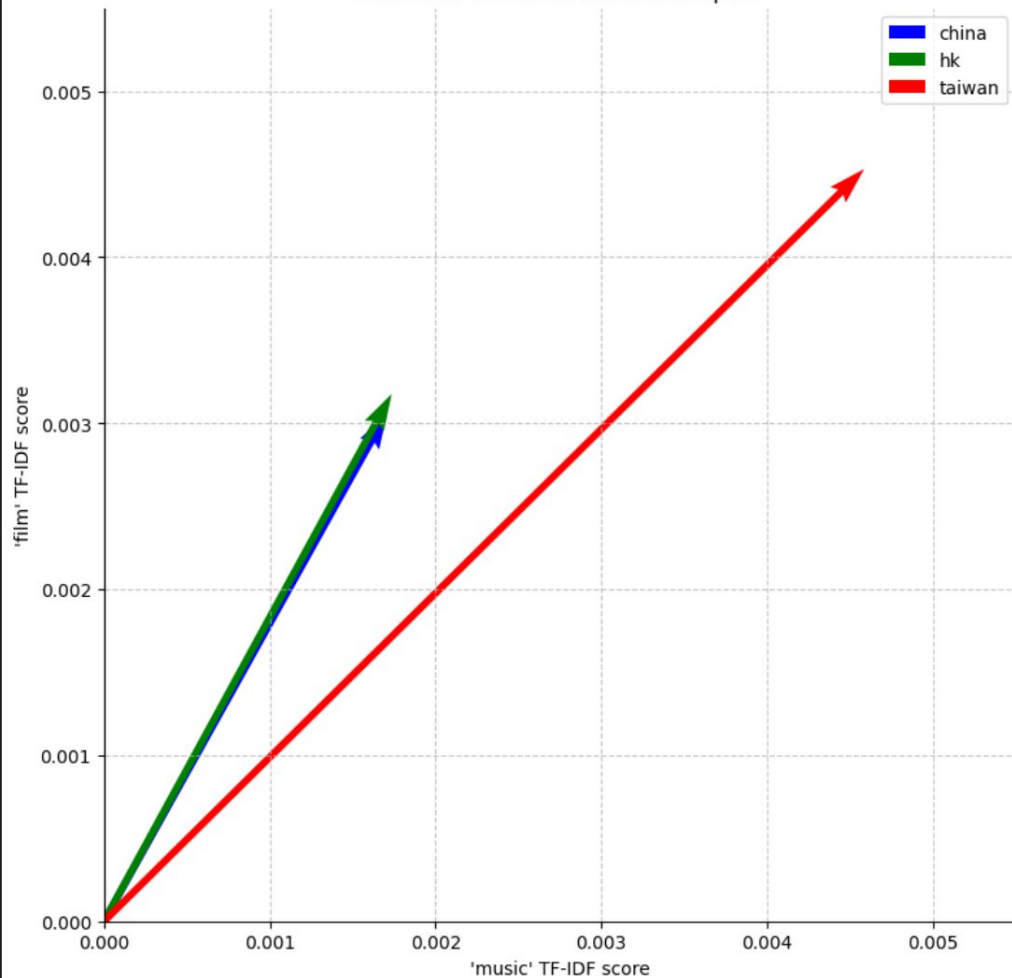china vs taiwan: 0.4°
hk vs taiwan: 4.1°

Subreddit Vectors in music-culture Space

'music' TF-IDF score

'culture' TF-IDF score

china
hk
taiwan

```
Distance between china and hk: 0.000735
Distance between china and taiwan: 0.001651
Distance between hk and taiwan: 0.002013

Angles between subreddit vectors:
china vs hk: 8.8°
china vs taiwan: 4.6°
hk vs taiwan: 4.2°
```

Subreddit Vectors in music-film Space

Distance between china and hk: 0.000113
Distance between china and taiwan: 0.003227
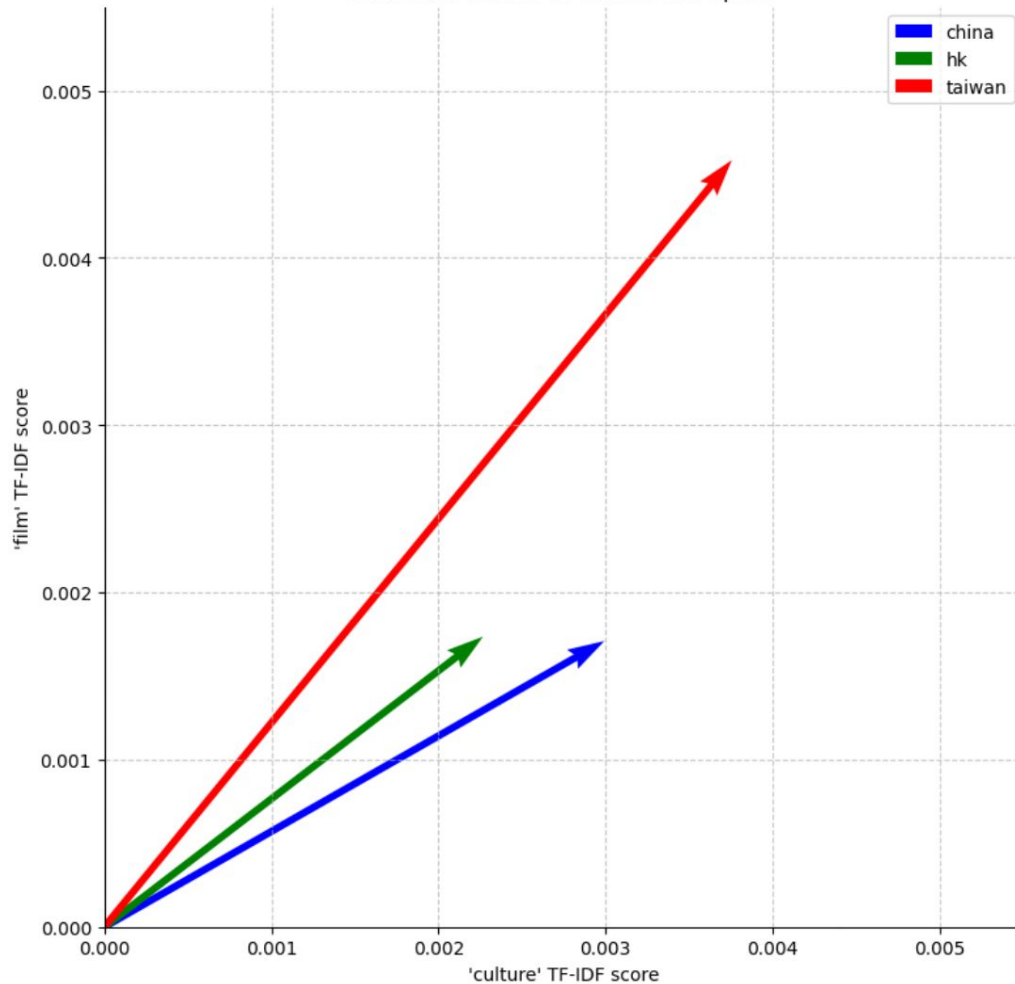Distance between hk and taiwan: 0.003154

Angles between subreddit vectors:
china vs hk: 0.5°
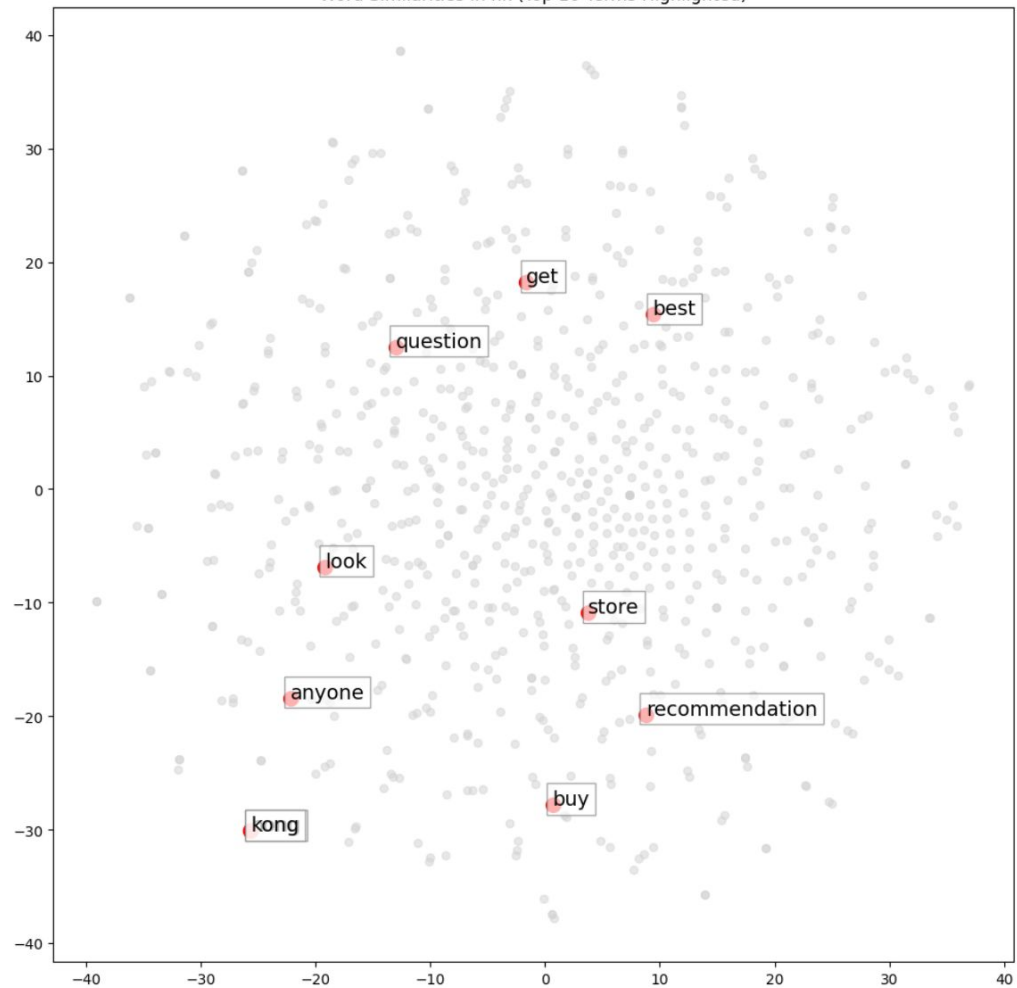china vs taiwan: 16.2°
hk vs taiwan: 16.7°
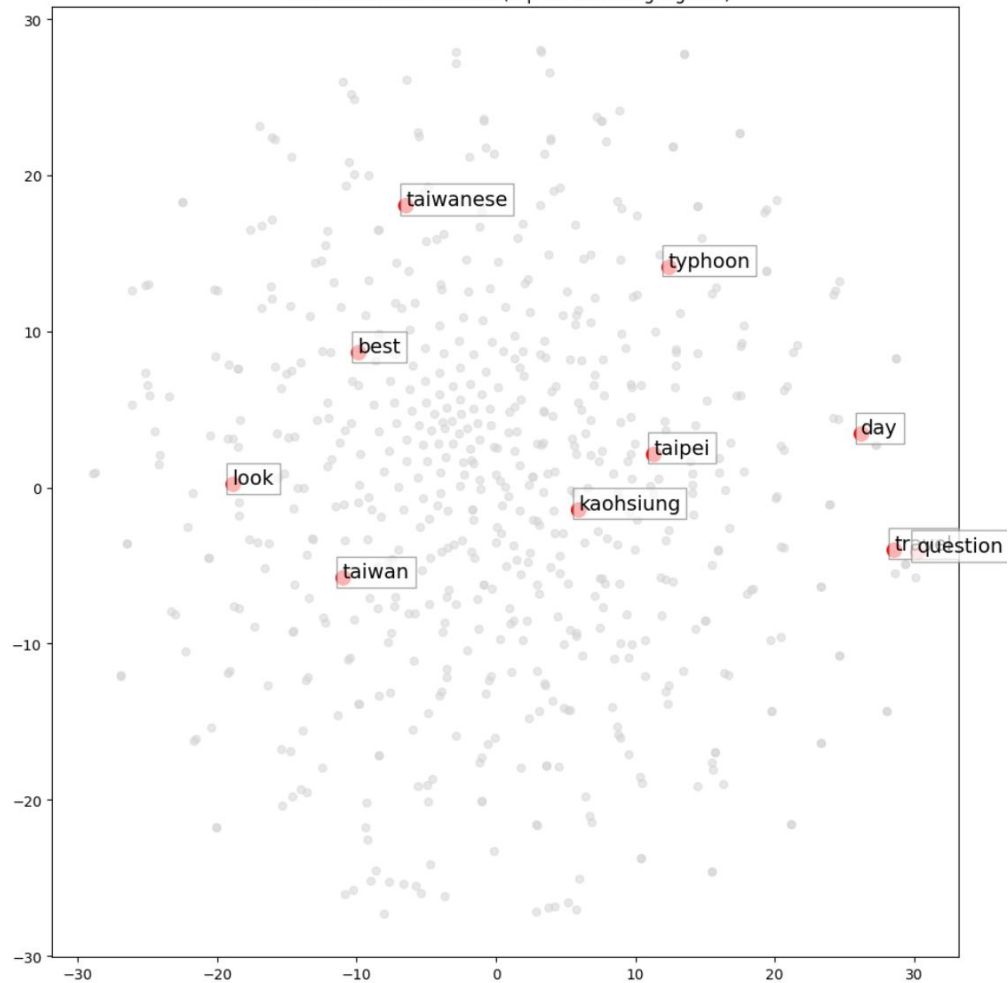
Subreddit Vectors in culture-film Space

Distance between china and hk: 0.000727
Distance between china and taiwan: 0.002975
Distance between hk and taiwan: 0.003215

Angles between subreddit vectors:
china vs hk: 7.7°
china vs taiwan: 20.9°
hk vs taiwan: 13.2°

Word Similarities in hk (Top 10 Terms Highlighted)

Word Similarities in china (Top 10 Terms Highlighted)

Word Similarities in taiwan (Top 10 Terms Highlighted)