

Unsupervised learning for Optimal Transport plan prediction between unbalanced graphs

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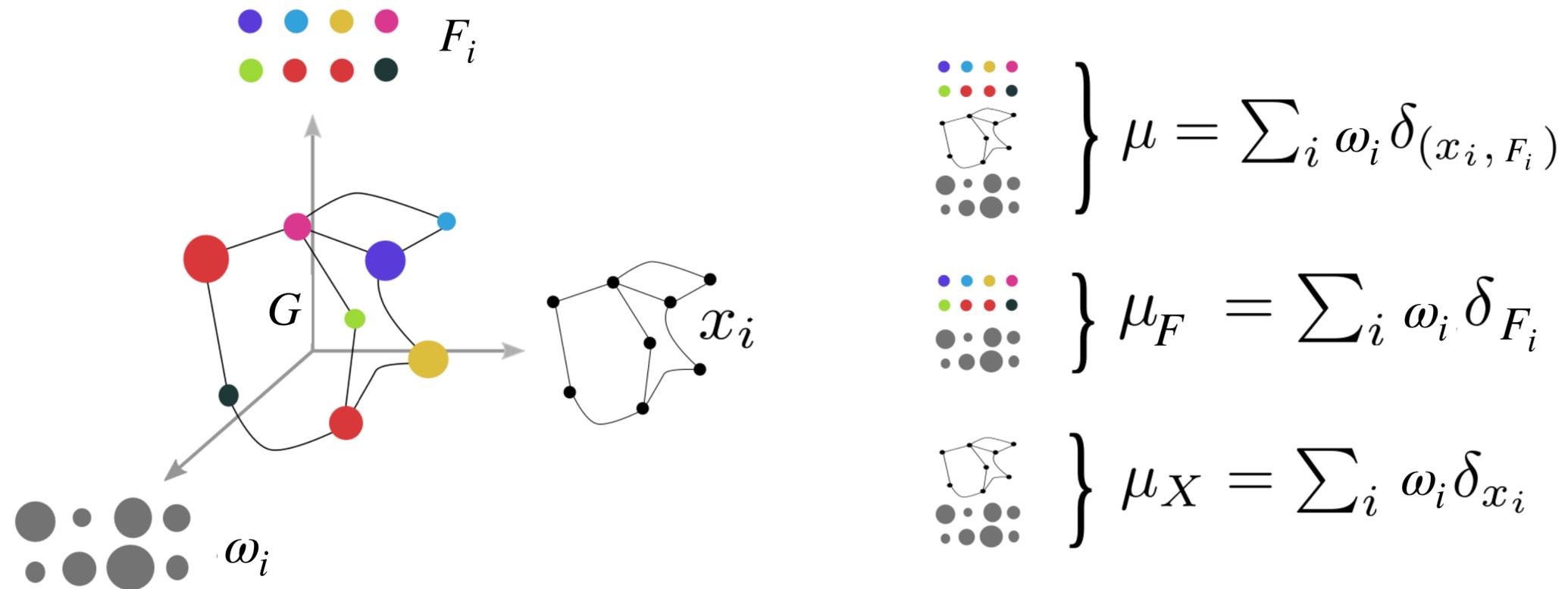
GLOW reading group - 11 February 2026



Optimal transport on graphs

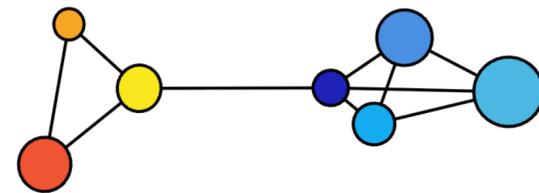
Graphs modeled as probability measures [Vayer et al., 2019] characterized by:

- geometry (adjacency matrix, shortest path distance matrix...): D
- node features: F
- node weights: ω

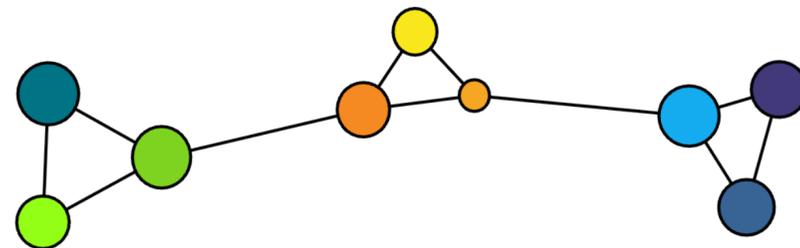


Graph matching

Goal: given a pair of graphs, find a matching between the nodes that preserves the graph geometry, node features and discards nodes that do not have a good matching.



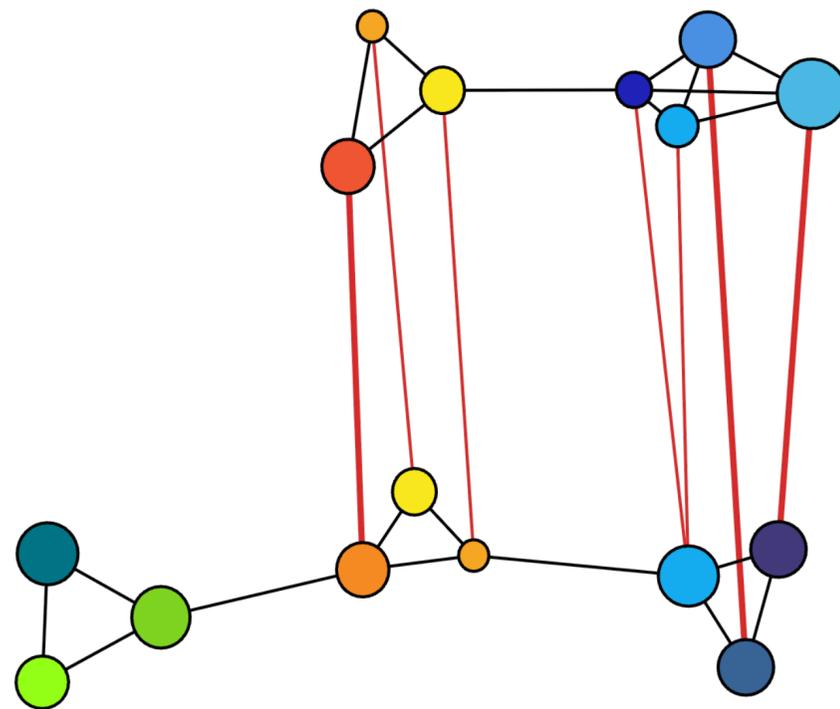
$$G_1 = (F_1, D_1, \omega_1)$$



$$G_2 = (F_2, D_2, \omega_2)$$

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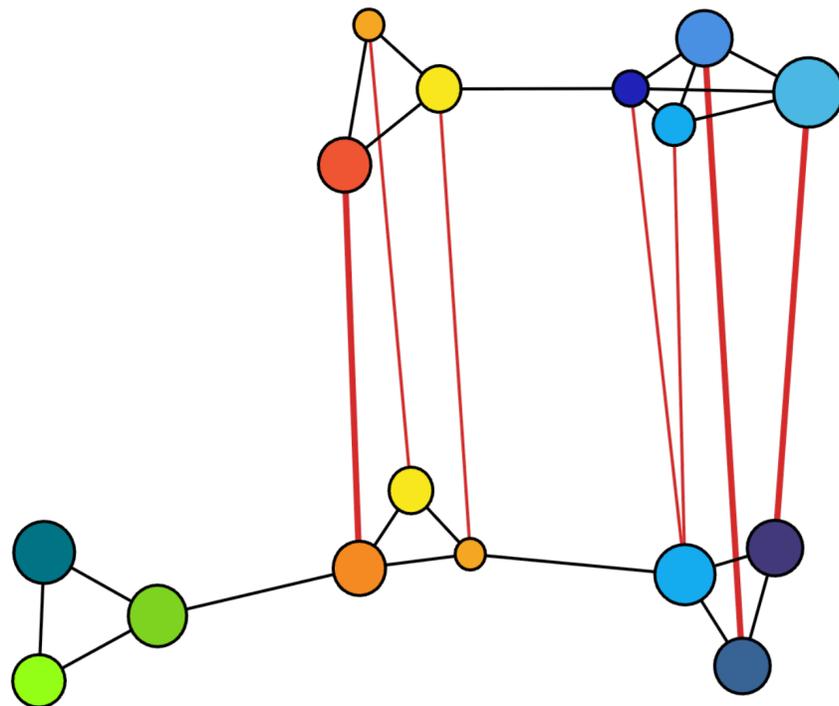


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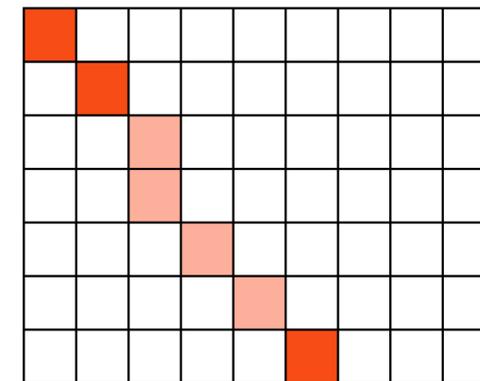
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optimal transport plan P:

$P_{i,j}$ = mass transported from $n_1(i)$ to $n_2(j)$

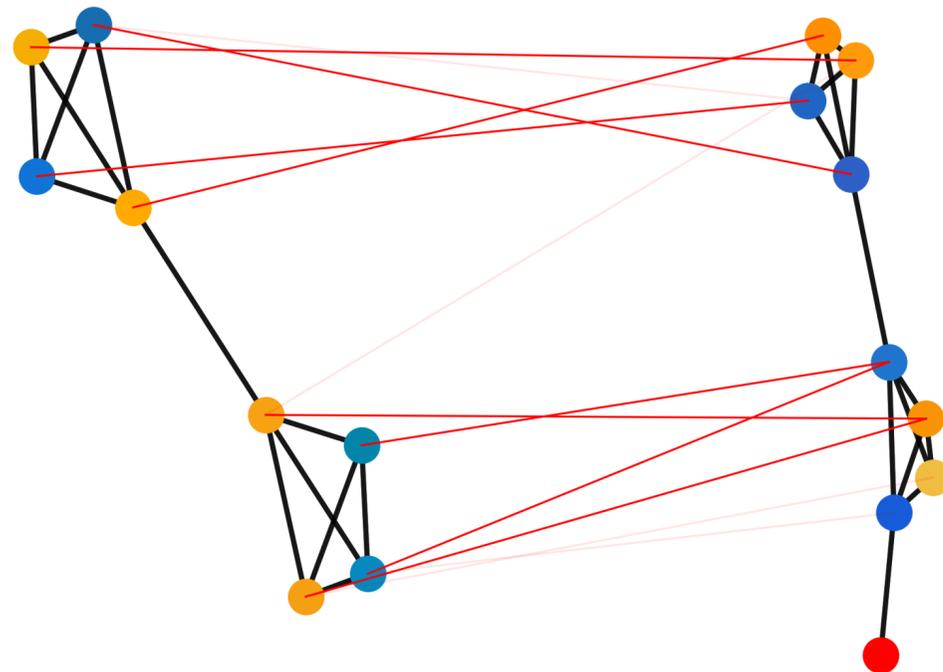


Optimal transport distance between graphs

Fused Unbalanced Gromov Wasserstein (FUGW) optimal transport loss [Thual et al., 2022]

$$L^{\alpha, \rho}(G_1, G_2, \mathbf{P}) = (1 - \alpha) \sum_{i,j=1}^{n_1, n_2} \left\| (\mathbf{F}_1)_i - (\mathbf{F}_2)_j \right\|_2^2 \mathbf{P}_{i,j} + \alpha \sum_{i,j,k,l=1}^{n_1, n_2, n_1, n_2} \left| (\mathbf{D}_1)_{i,k} - (\mathbf{D}_2)_{j,l} \right|^2 \mathbf{P}_{i,j} \mathbf{P}_{k,l} + \rho (\text{KL}(\mathbf{P}_{\#1} \otimes \mathbf{P}_{\#1} | \omega_1 \otimes \omega_1) + \text{KL}(\mathbf{P}_{\#2} \otimes \mathbf{P}_{\#2} | \omega_2 \otimes \omega_2))$$

match nodes with similar node features preserve local geometry discard nodes that do not have a good match



$$\mathbf{P} = \arg \min_{\mathbf{P} \geq 0} L^{\alpha, \rho}(G_1, G_2, \mathbf{P})$$

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FUGW distance: $\text{FUGW}^{\alpha,\rho}(G_1, G_2) = \min_{\mathbf{P} \geq 0} L^{\alpha,\rho}(G_1, G_2, \mathbf{P})$

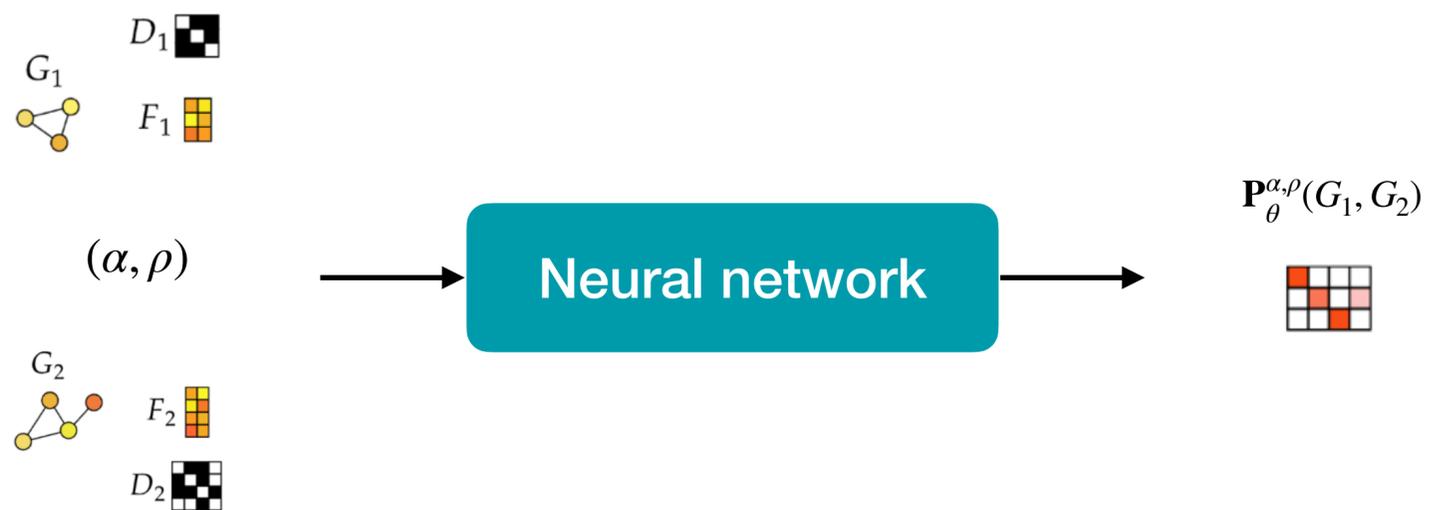
Solve the OT problem: batch coordinate descent with complexity $O(kn^3)$ for k the number of iterations and n the number of graph nodes.

→ unscalable for large graphs

Predicting FUGW plans

Goal: learn to predict FUGW plan $\mathbf{P}_\theta^{\alpha, \rho}(G_1, G_2)$ for all graph pairs $(G_1, G_2) \sim \mathcal{D}$ and parameters $(\alpha, \rho) \sim \mathcal{P}$.

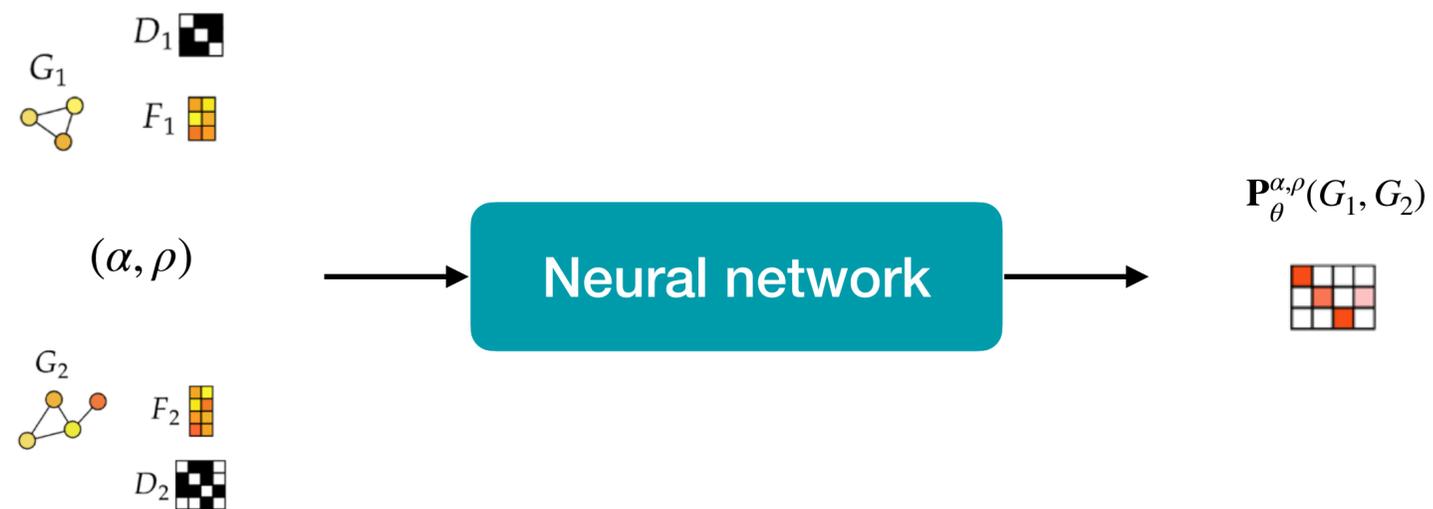
Method: Neural Network based on cross attention and Graph Convolutional Networks that predicts OT plans.



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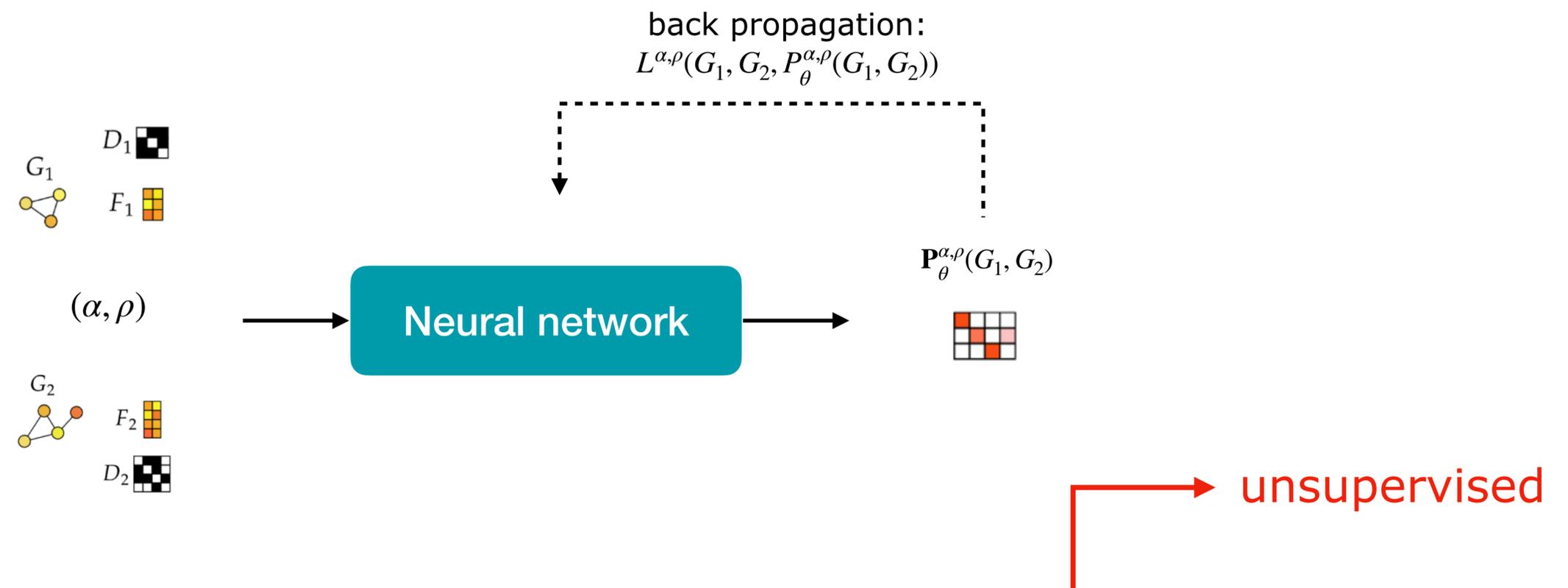


Supervised training? Unscalable

Predicting FUGW plans

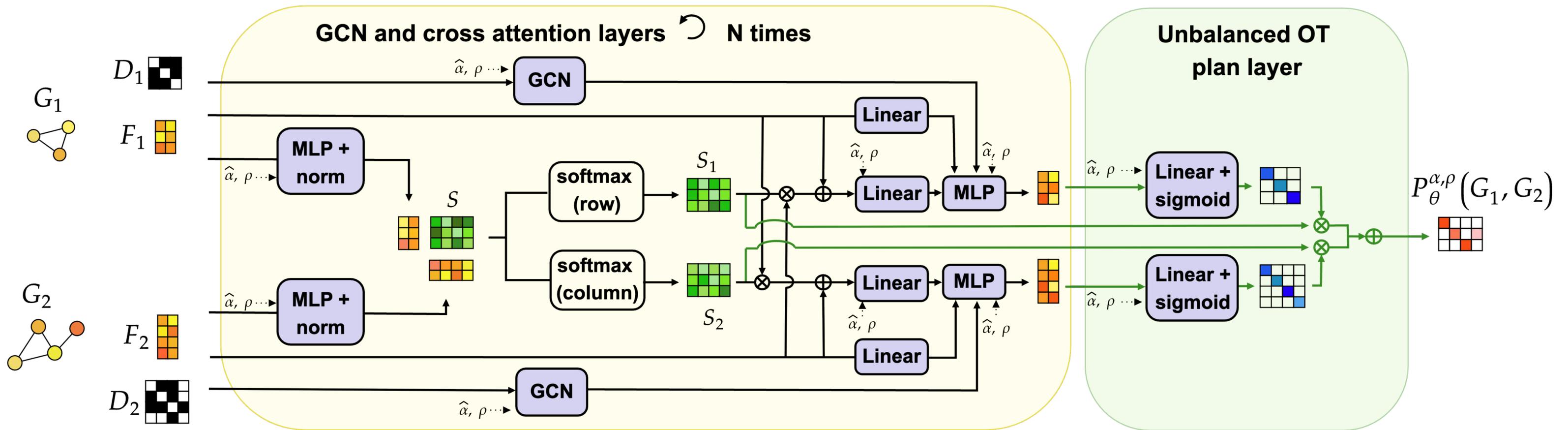
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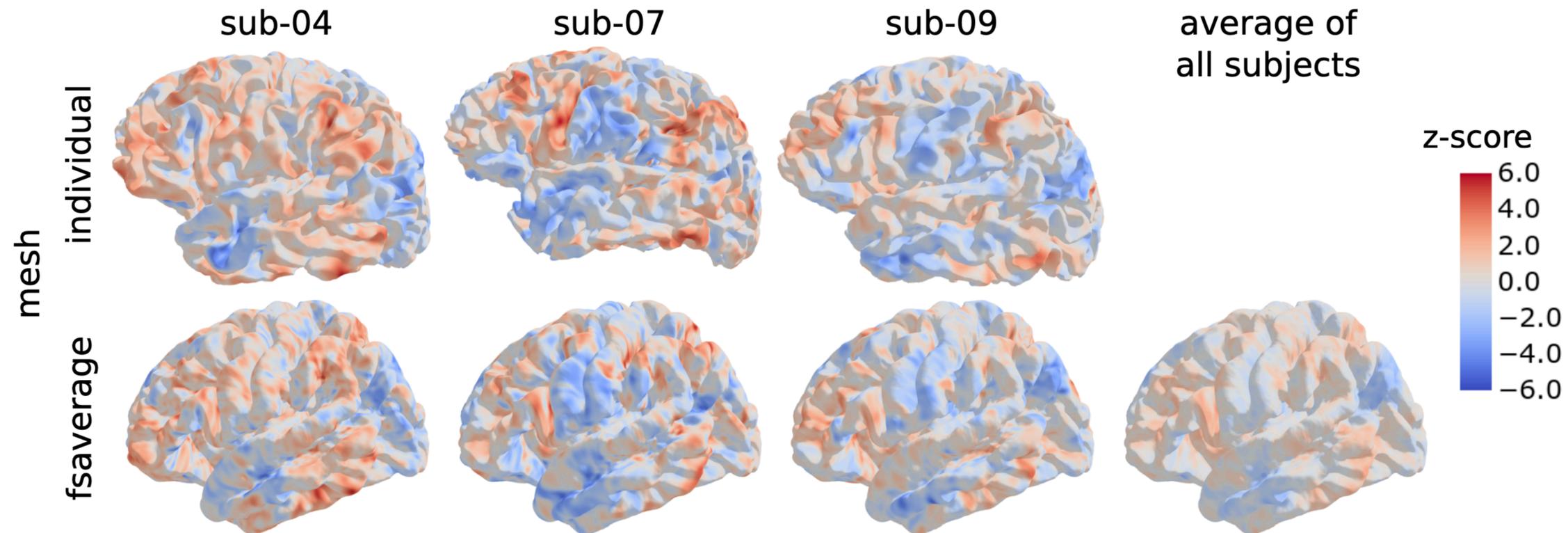
Amortized optimisation (Amos et al., 2022): $\min_{\theta} \mathbb{E}_{G_1, G_2 \sim \mathcal{D}, \alpha, \rho \sim \mathcal{P}} \left[L^{\alpha,\rho}(G_1, G_2, \mathbf{P}_\theta^{\alpha,\rho}(G_1, G_2)) \right]$

Unbalanced learning of Optimal Transport plans (ULOT)



Complexity: $O(n^2)$ for n the number of graph nodes

Application to brain alignment



[Thual et al., 2022]

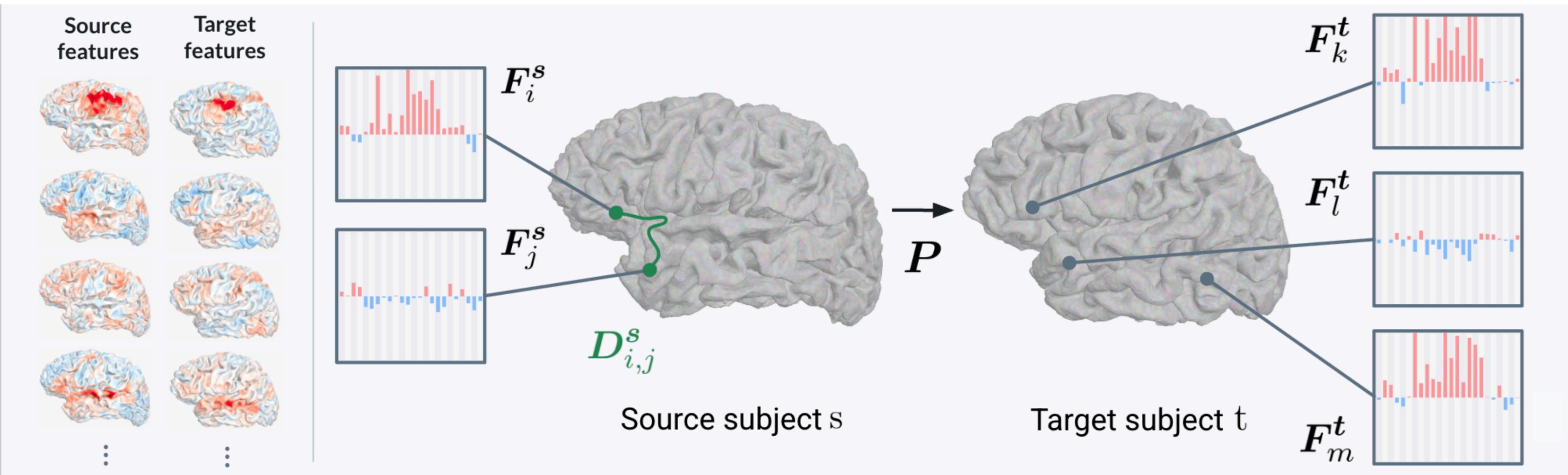
High inter subject variability (in terms of brain geometry or functional signatures) prevents generalization of observations made on a group of subjects.

Current methods: map the data to a common template, resulting in loss of detail.

FUGW for brain alignment

[Thual et al., 2022]: Brain alignment with FUGW transport plan.

Graphs constructed from the brain surface geometries and functional MRI activations for different tasks from the Individual Brain Charting dataset, 1000 nodes.

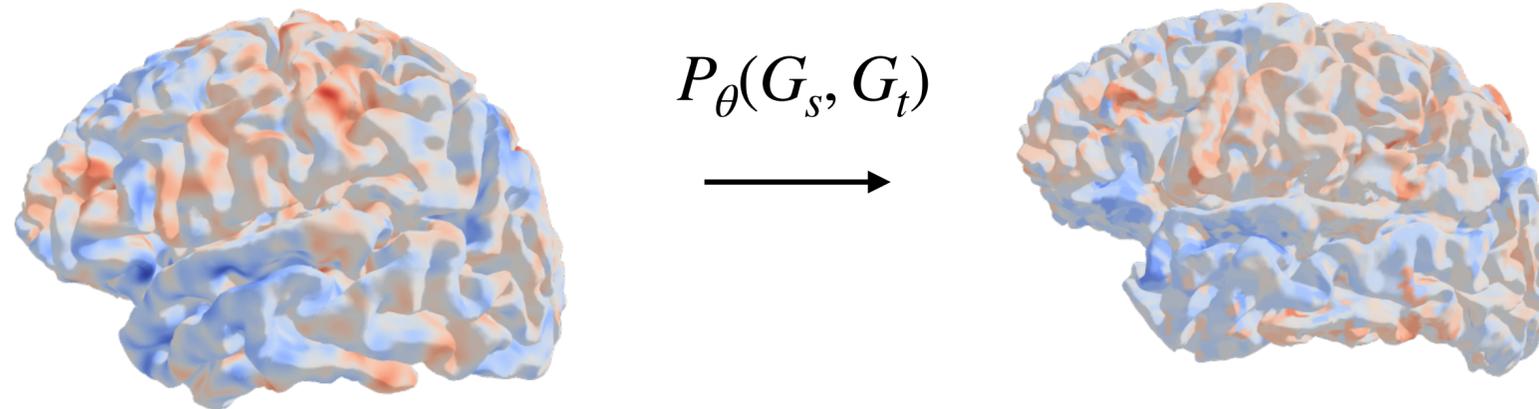


FUGW for brain alignment

Computational time:

- 4 minutes for aligning one pair with 10k vertices on a single GPU.
- Limits applications for computing alignments on large populations.

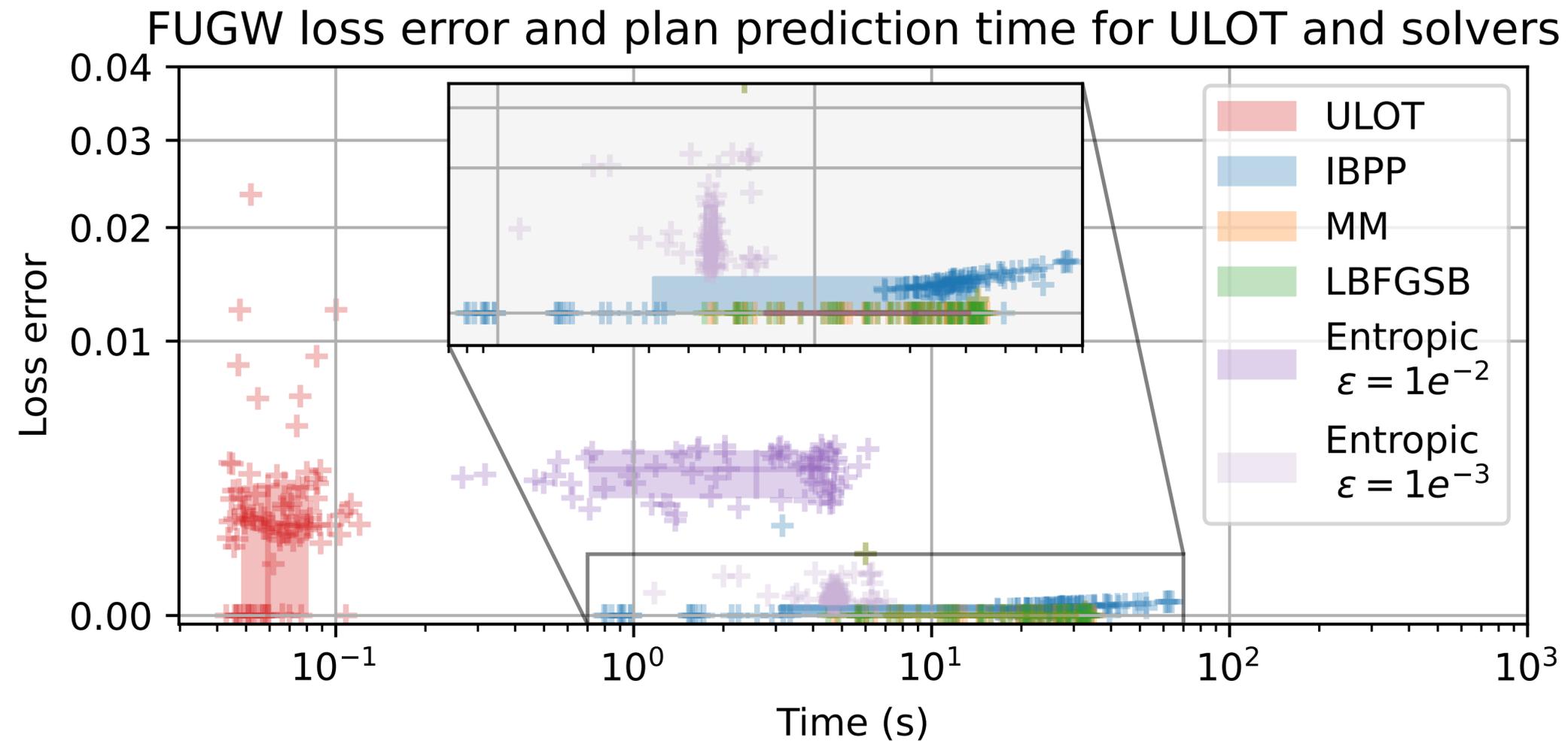
Proposed solution: Align brains with ULOT transport plans



source subject G_s

target subject G_t

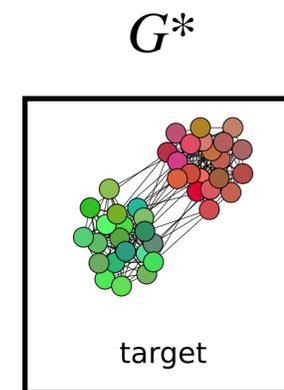
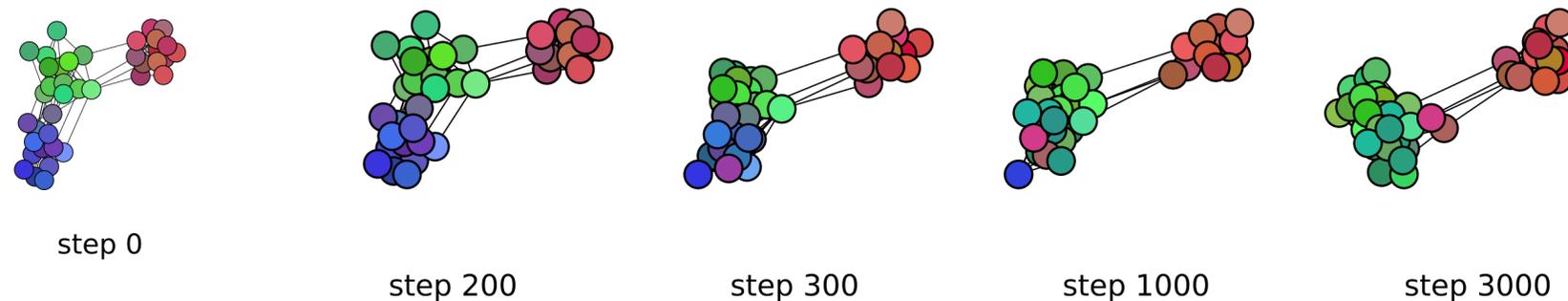
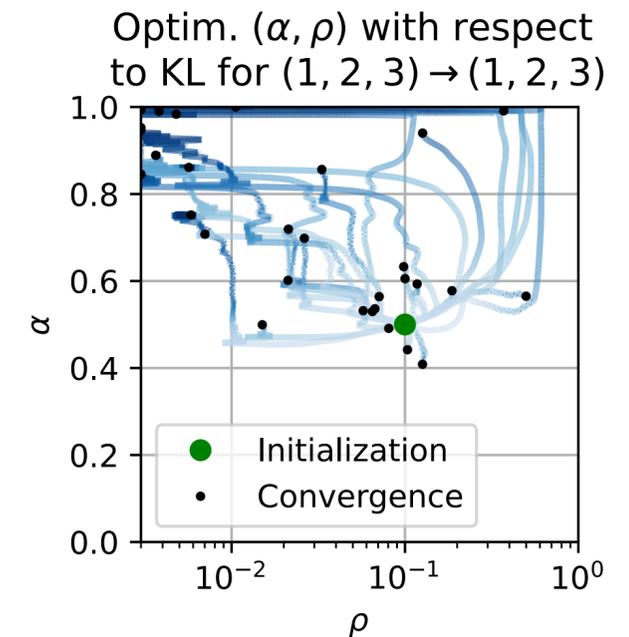
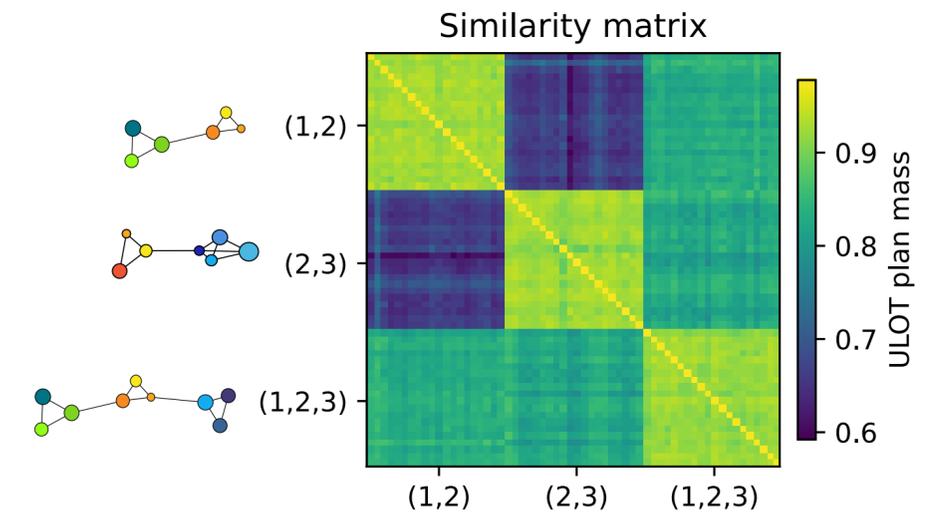
Results on fMRI data



ULOT predicted plans with low error compared to solvers, and up to 100 times faster: allows extensive parameter selection and scalability to large graphs.

Applications

- A **quadratic graph similarity measure**: mass of the ULOT transport plans
- **FUGW hyperparameter selection** with bi level optimization
- Optimization of **functionals of the ULOT plan**



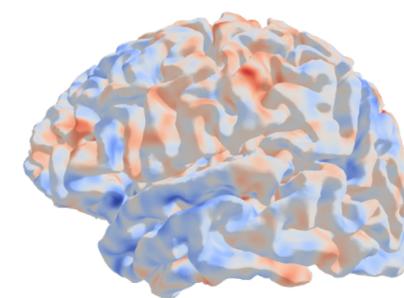
Conclusion



- Efficient method for transport plan prediction between graphs with low error and up to 100 times faster than classical solvers.
- Enables FUGW hyper parameter selection, and applications that involve computing many transport plans (barycenters, minimization of functionals of the transport plan).
- Limitation:
 - transport plan error can still be a problem in some applications where high precision is needed: ULOT can be used to initialize an OT solver.



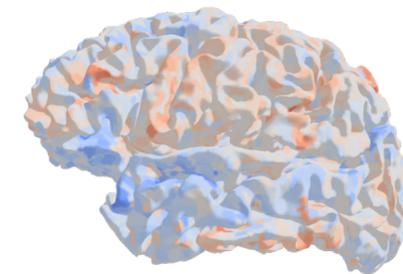
paper



source subject G_s

$$P_{\theta}(G_s, G_t)$$

→



target subject G_t