The Far-Right Protest Observatory

(FARPO)

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Outline

1. Why the Far-right Protest Observatory?
2. How does FARPO collect data?
3. Applications: Theoretical and methodological
4. Implications: The Far right and beyond

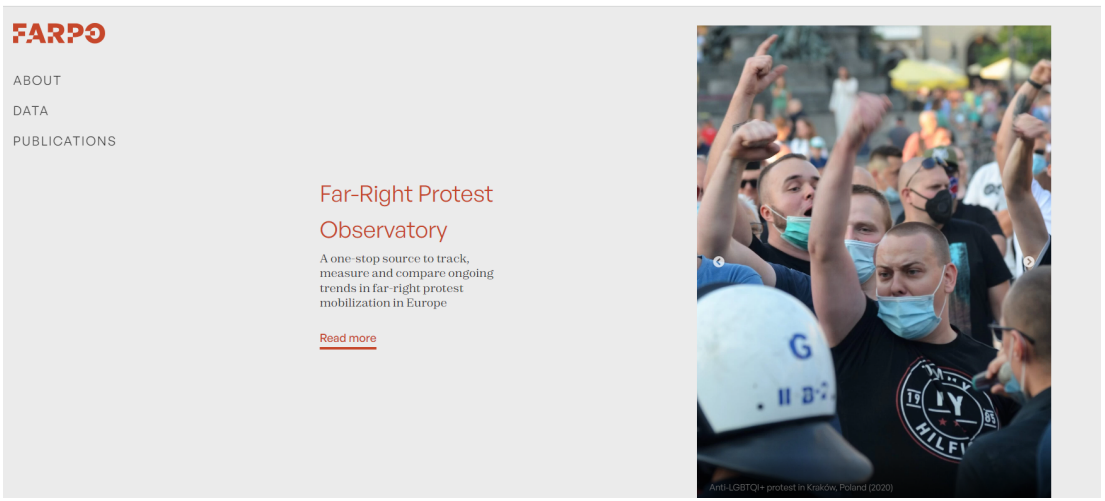
Overview of FARPO

https://farpo.eu

Unique data on far-right protests in Europe:

- Nativist actors in the protest arena (Mudde, 2007)
- Details: initiators, date, location, participants, motive

For students, researchers, decision-makers, civil society, journalists.



Significance of studying far-right protest

Increasing societal relevance:
(Castelli Gattinara et al., 2022)

- Limited knowledge beyond electoral arena
- SM research biased towards progressives
- CP research biased towards parties

Lack of systematic, comparative data.
(Hutter, 2014)

Data collection procedure

Protest Event Analysis (Kriesi, 1995; Rucht, 1998)

Quantitative content analysis
Established in social movement research

Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Qualitative & quantitative	Labor intensive and time consuming
Handles unstructured data	Requires proficiency in multiple languages
Context sensitive	Text corpus too large for comprehensive examination
Copes with large data	Limited analysis scope introduces bias
Combines multiple sources	Bias can only be minimized, not eliminated (sampling)

Data collection procedure

Coding unit: a protest event

A collective, public action by far-right actors to express critique or dissent, or advance demands via non-institutional means.

Data sources

One quality broadsheet newspaper per country

Event identification: boolean search string on newspaper databases (FACTIVA, EUROPRESS, Retriever)

(relevant far-right actors) AND (protest terms) + snowball

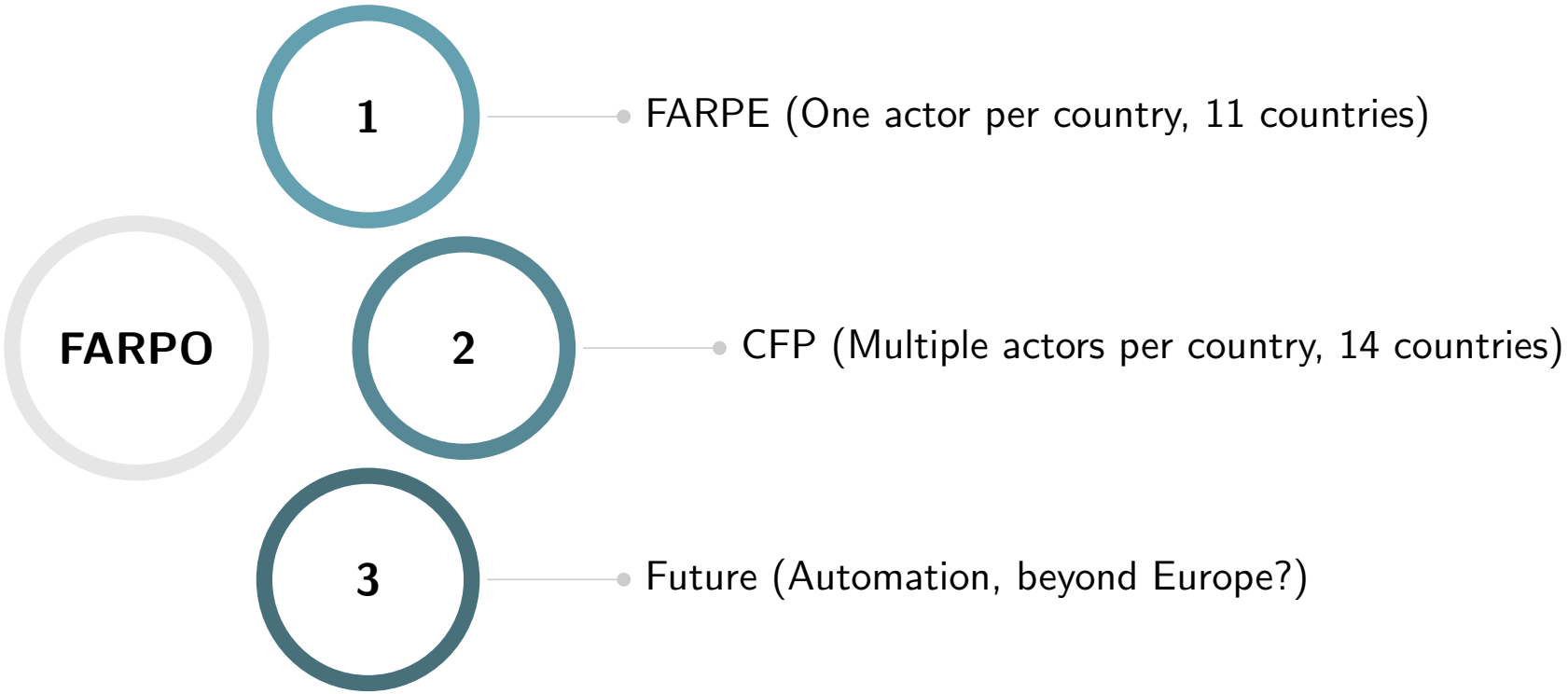
Three-step process

1. Preliminary tasks and testing
2. First round of coding with 3-step validation
3. Snowball search + second round of coding

Codes

Basics: Country code, Source, Event ID, Date, URL/headline, Place, Level
Actor-specific: Name, Role, Type, Scope
Event-specific: Size, Counter mob., Police, Type, Issues, Description

Evolution of FARPO



Fundings: Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) University of Oslo, Marie Skłodowska-Curie by P. Castelli Gattinara (No 883620), Fondation Nationale de Sciences Politiques by C. Froio (SAB-20222025).

Application : theory

Far-right contentious politics in times of crisis: Contingent adaptation or incremental transformation?

w/ Pietro Castelli Gattinara (University of Bruxelles) & Andrea Pirro (University of Bologna)

R & R *Journal of European Public Policy*

Crises and far-right protest

- The far right can be understood in two ways:
  - As a phenomenon that **reacts** to social and economic downturns (Kerbo, 1982).
  - As a movement that proactively **manufactures** a sense of crisis. (Moffitt, 2015; Taggart, 2000)

- The far right is typically seen as benefiting from periods of heightened and accelerated transformation.

- Is the mobilization of the far right actually linked to crises, or is it part of a broader, long-term process of transformation?

Crises and far-right protest

FARPO (CFP) data is used to examine if crises relate to four aspects of protest:

- **Numeric**
  - The rate and size of far-right protests.
  - Whether far-right protests attracted more participants.
- **Performative**
  - The repertoire of action used in far-right protests.
  - Whether protests became more contentious and violent.
- **Thematic**
  - The themes the far-right mobilized around.
  - Congruity between crisis type and mobilization themes.
- **Synergetic**
  - The networks and cooperation in far-right protests.
  - If crises offered prospects for cooperation between political parties and social movements.

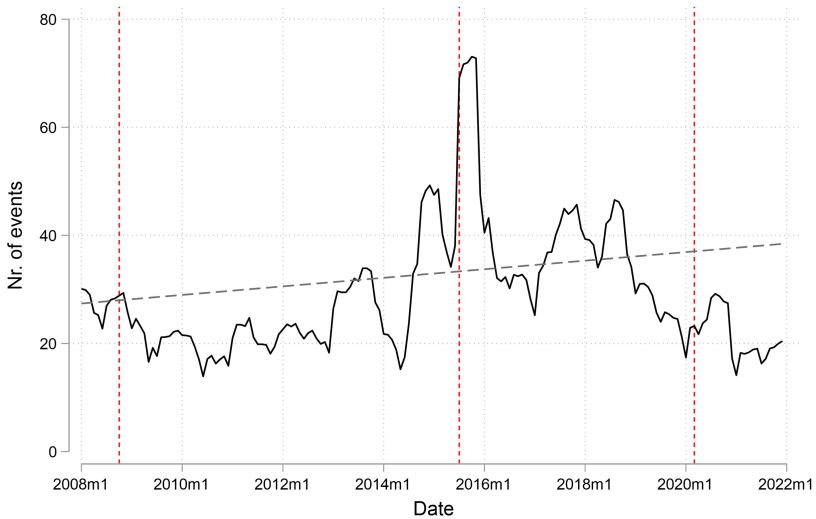
Crises and far-right protest

Data and design

- **Countries**
  - AT, BE, DE, ES, FR, IT, NL, NO, PL, SE
- **PEA**
  - Actor-centered with snowball sampling (N=4,440)
- **Periodization**
  - 01 Jan 2008 – 31 Dec 2021
    - Great Recession (Oct 2008 – Jun 2015)
    - Migration Crisis (Jul 2015 – Feb 2020)
    - COVID-19 (Mar 2020 – Dec 2021)
- **Indicators**
  - Overtime trends: monthly frequency of protest average size
  - Repertoires radicalness: conventional; confrontational; violent
  - Issue focus
    - GR: Anti-elitism; Europe/EU; Economy, Banks, Industry, Welfare; Youth
    - Migration: National identity and culture; Immigration; Islam
    - COVID-19: Healthcare + specific items
  - Type of actors interactions: political parties social movements

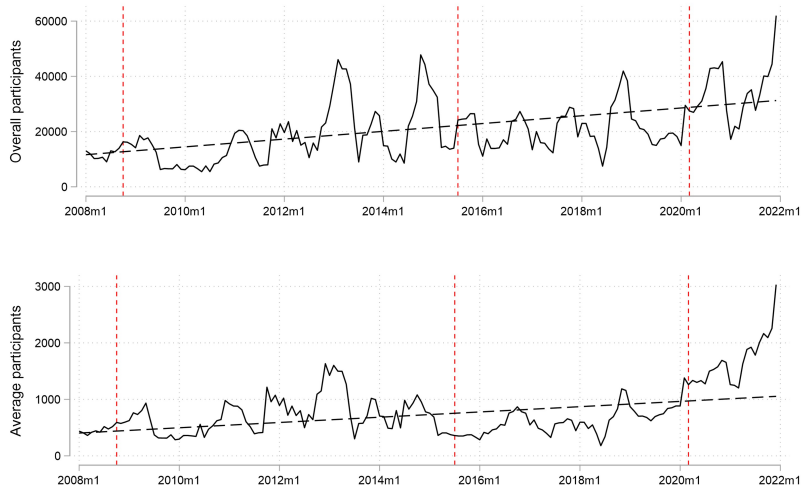
Crises and far-right protest / numeric

Figure 1a: Rate (frequency)



Note: Incremental growth of protest mobilization rates.

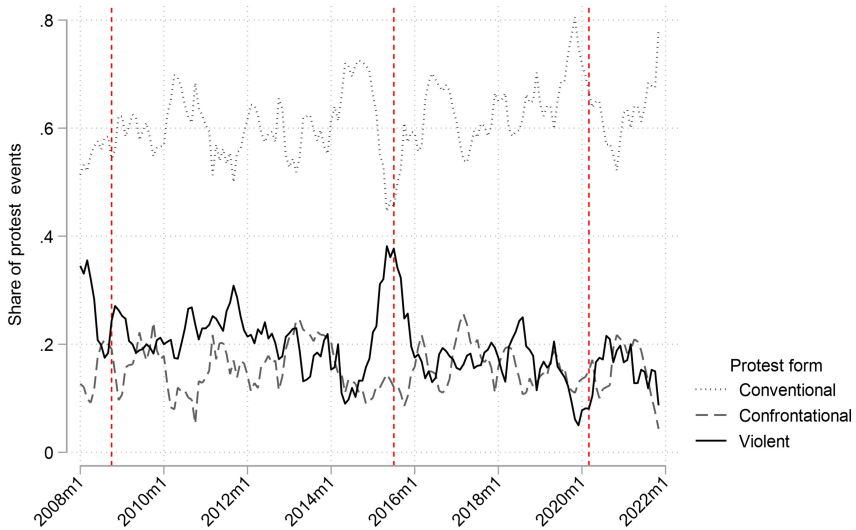
Figure 1b: Size (participants)



Note: Little evidence of crisis or conjunctural effects.

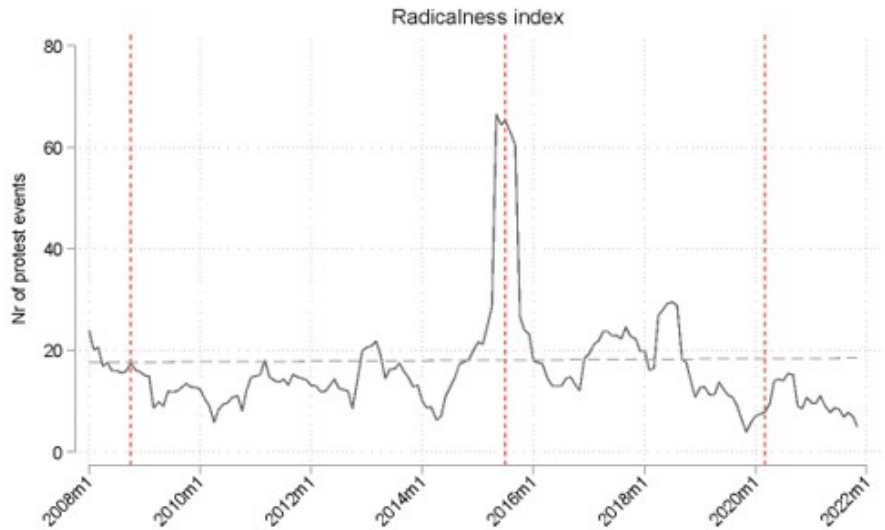
Crises and far-right protest / performative

Figure 2a: Tactics (monthly shares)



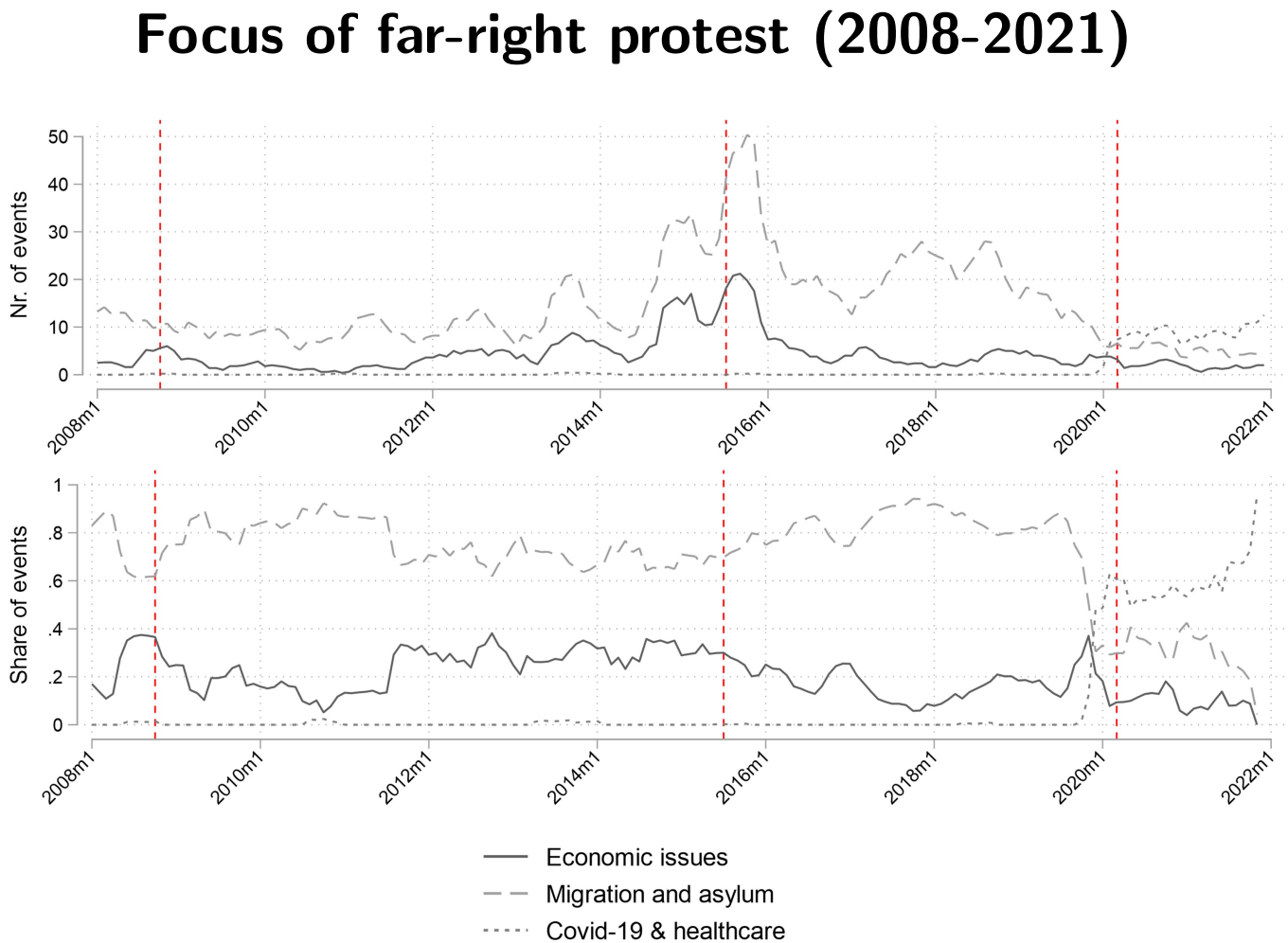
Note: No systematic impact of crises on tactics.

Figure 2b: Radicalness (monthly shares)



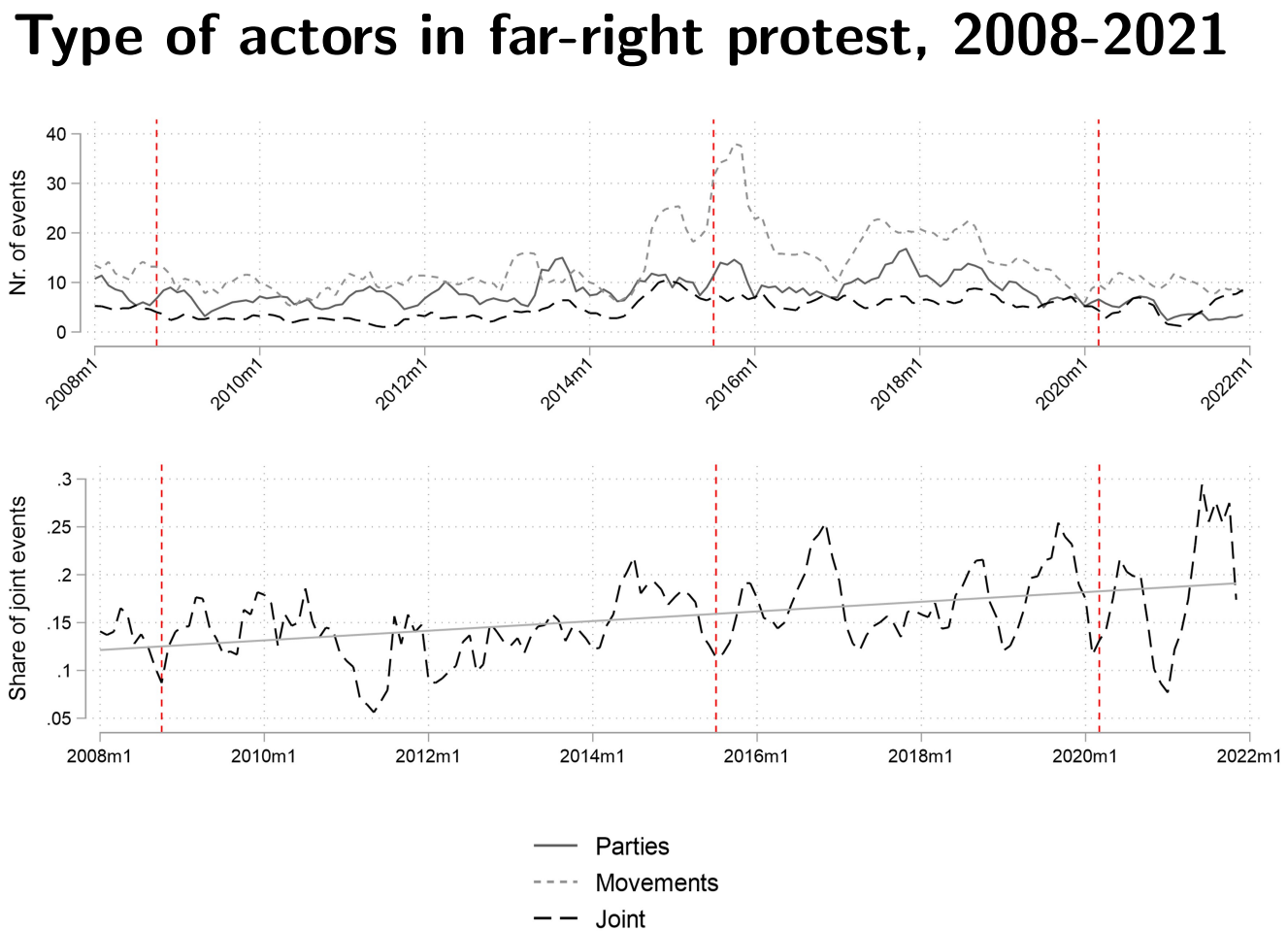
Note: Radical tactics during migration crisis, no trend.

Crises and far-right protest / thematic



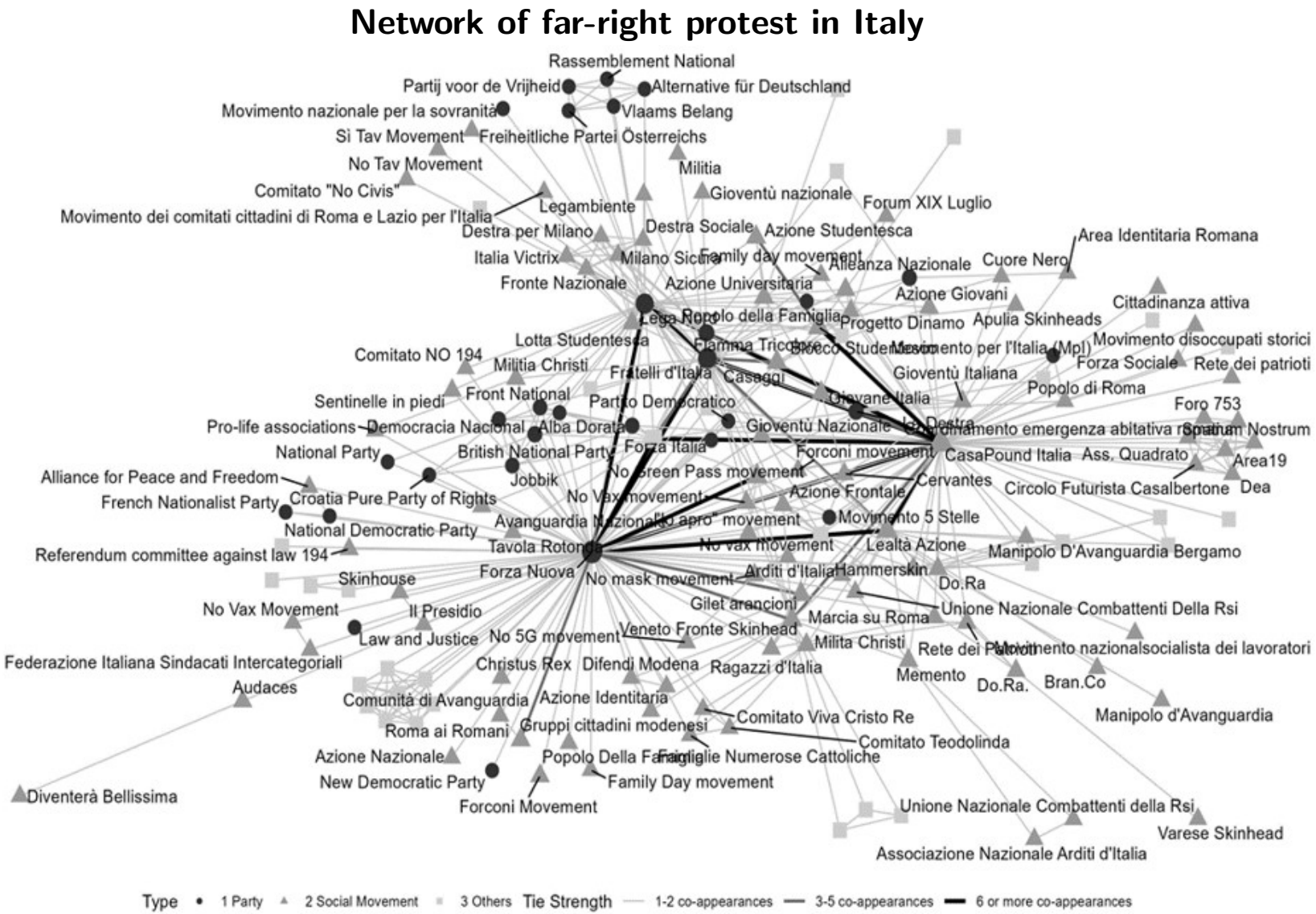
Note: Issue-focus continuity with contingent attention shifts. 'Trademark' issues and mix of immigration and economy. Adaptation to specific stock of grievances (COVID).

Crises and far-right protest / synergetic

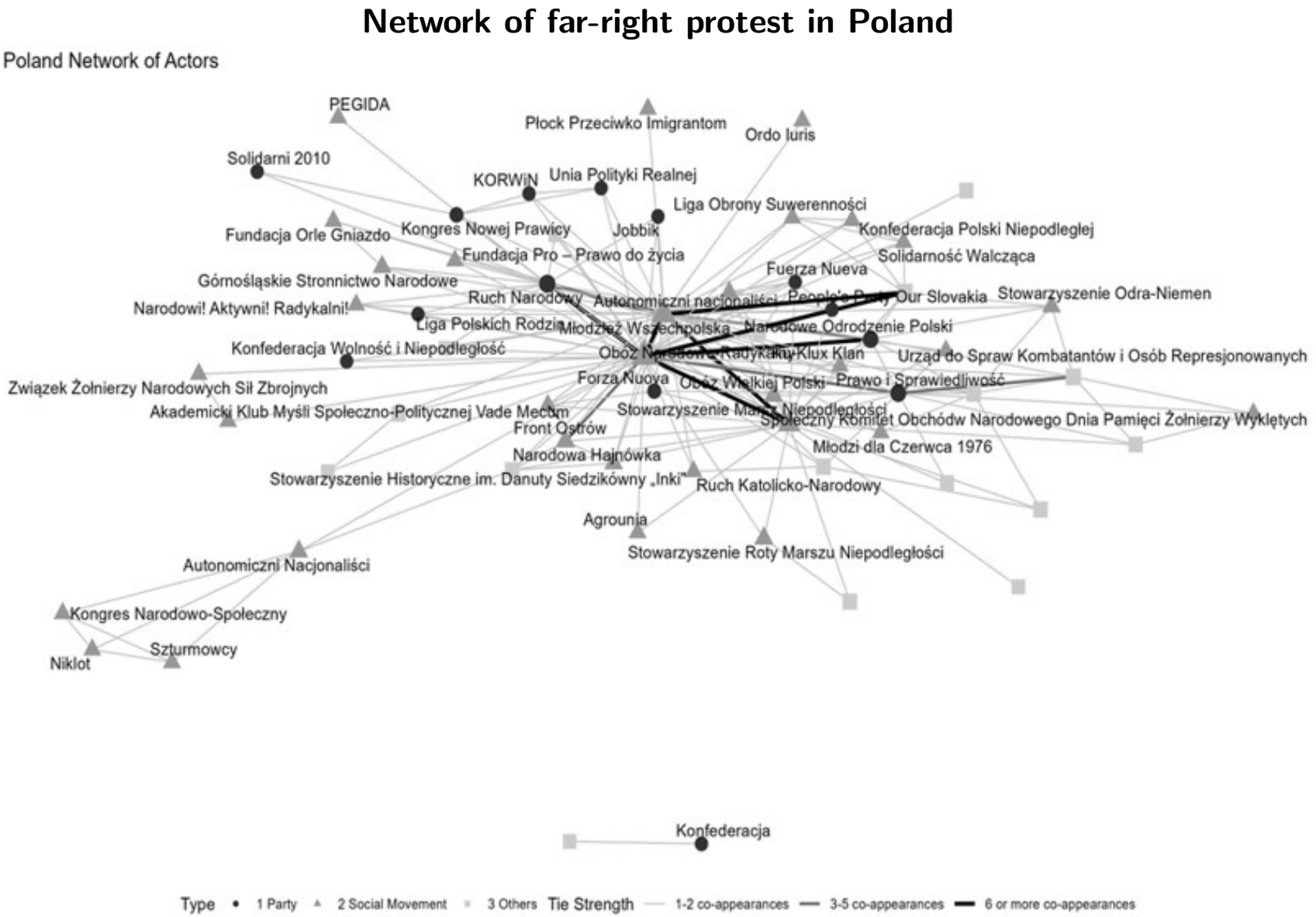


Note: Protest arena no longer exclusive domain of non-institutional actors. Increasing collaboration not a product of migration crisis.

Crises and far-right protest / synergetic / networks



Crises and far-right protest / synergetic / networks



Conclusions

In sum:

- Steady increase in size/rate: ongoing societal penetration.
- Radicalness stable post-migration crisis: protest politics normalized.
- Focus on nativism: not crisis-driven.
- Growing party/movement collaboration: new protest dynamics.

Challenges:

- Defining crisis timelines.
- Identifying "non-crisis" periods.
- Overlapping crises: economic, migration, COVID-19.
- Complex protest engagement.
- Institutional capture timing?

Application : methods

Analysing cross-country protest dynamics: a supervised machine learning approach to newspaper content

w/ Pietro Castelli Gattinara (University of Bruxelles) & Giuliano Formisano (University of Oxford)

In preparation

Automating protest event analysis (PEA)

Motivation:

- Limiting time, costs and increasing replicability of protest event analysis (Lorenzini et al., 2022).
- How LLMs can enhance the efficiency and accuracy of cross-country protest event analysis?

Two key objectives:

- **Protest identification:** Differentiating actual protests from non-relevant mentions.
- **Protest description:** Coding protest characteristics in terms of:
  - Action repertoire (authorized vs non-authorized)
  - Issue focus (i.e., religious and ethnic minorities vs others)

Automating PEA

Methodology

- Prepared data for machine learning.
- Developed three classifiers using CFP multilingual newspaper articles.
- Fine-tuned pre-trained language models (LLMs):
  - XLM-RoBERTa
  - mBERT
- Models trained on CFP human-annotated articles for relevance and protest characteristics.
- Training steps included:
  - Data splitting: training, validation, test - 60/20/20%, 70/15/15%, and 80/10/10%
  - Parameter tuning and model evaluation
- Assessed model performance using:
  - Accuracy
  - F-score
  - AUC (aiming for at least 75% accuracy and an AUC of 0.75).

Automating PEA

Task1.Identifying protest events

Model	Seed	Split	Accuracy	Average F-score	Individual F-scores	AUC
XLM roBERTa	449	60% training 20% validation 20% testing	78%	77%	75% vs 80%	0.77
	257		76%	76%	77% vs 75%	0.76
	861		74%	74%	72% vs 76%	0.74
	385	70% training 15% validation 15% testing	78%	78%	76% vs 80%	0.79
	206		73%	72%	70% vs 75%	0.75
	920		76%	76%	77% vs 75%	0.76
	102	**80% training 10% validation 10% testing**	73%	73%	72% vs 74%	0.73
	835		79%	79%	79% vs 79%	0.79
	373		**80%**	**80%**	**78% vs 81%**	**0.80**
mBERT	493	60% training 20% validation 20% testing	77%	77%	77% vs 77%	0.78
	89		75%	75%	78% vs 72%	0.75
	759		74%	74%	73% vs 75%	0.74
	501	70% training 15% validation 15% testing	76%	76%	78% vs 72%	0.75
	895		76%	75%	73% vs 78%	0.76
	946		80%	80%	77% vs 82%	0.80
	477	80% training 10% validation 10% testing	76%	76%	74% vs 78%	0.77
	832		73%	72%	67% vs 77%	0.73
	50		74%	74%	73% vs 75%	0.74
Frozen XLM roBERTa	532	80% training 10% validation 10% testing	79%	79%	80% vs 76%	0.78
	987		71%	70%	74% vs 67%	0.71
	270		70%	70%	75% vs 64%	0.69
	431		74%	73%	76% vs 70%	0.74

Automating PEA

Task2. Characteristics (ethnic /religious minorities vs others)

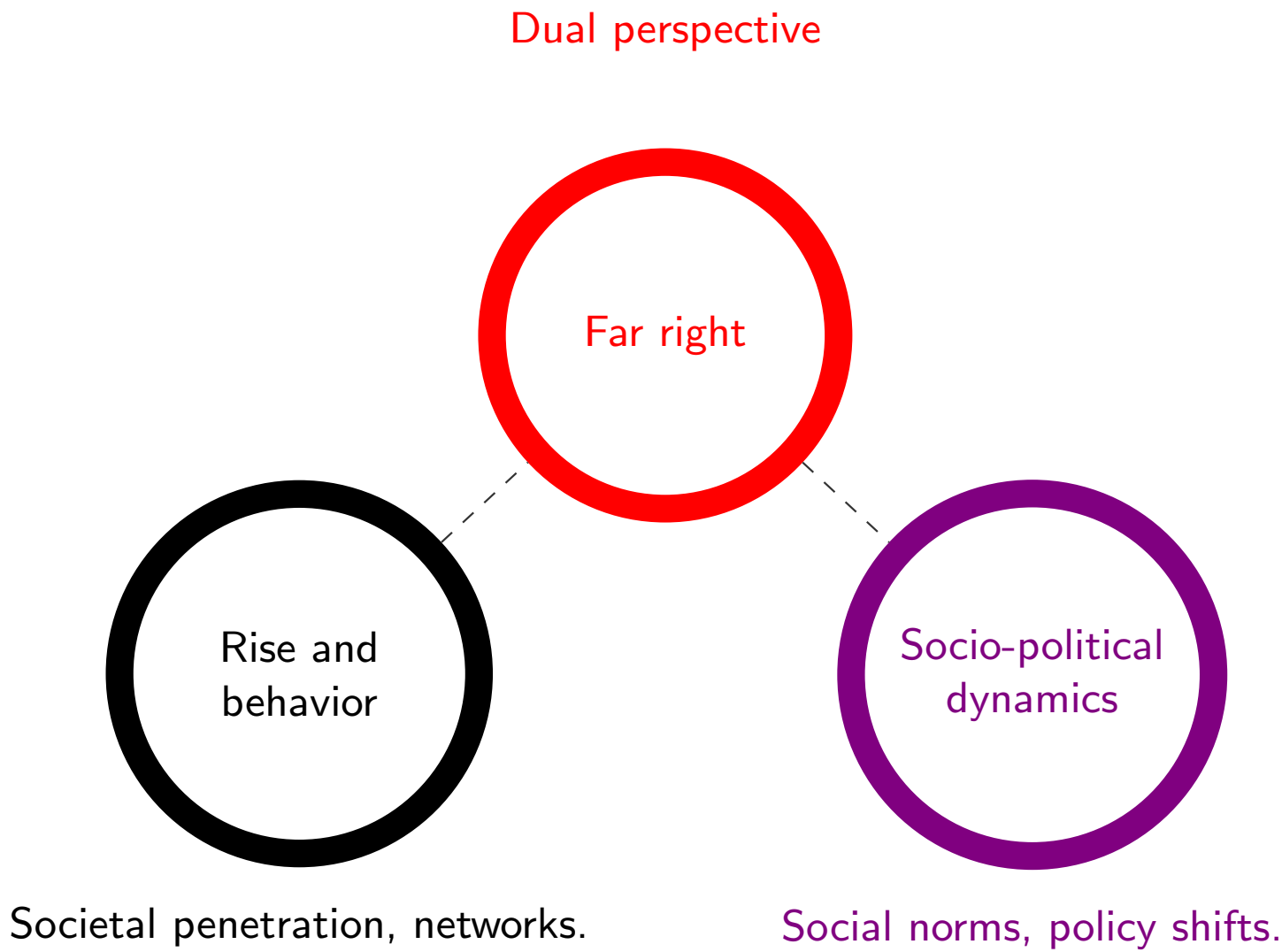
Model	Seed	Split	Accuracy	Average F-score	Individual F-scores	AUC
XLM roBERTa	129	60% training 20% validation 20% testing	69%	69%	70% vs 67%	0.69
	624		71%	70%	63% vs 76%	0.69
	917		70%	69%	72% vs 68%	0.71
	516	**70% training**	**75%**	**75%**	**72% vs 77%**	**0.75**
	387	**15% validation**	72%	72%	63% vs 78%	0.70
	789	**15% testing**	69%	68%	61% vs 74%	0.68
	122	80% training 10% validation 10% testing	70%	70%	68% vs 71%	0.70
	8		74%	74%	68% vs 79%	0.73
	804		68%	67%	60% vs 73%	0.66
mBERT	28	60% training 20% validation 20% testing	67%	67%	66% vs 67%	0.67
	661		70%	70%	67% vs 73%	0.70
	499		67%	66%	60% vs 72%	0.67
	714	70% training 15% validation 15% testing	71%	71%	68% vs 73%	0.71
	564		70%	70%	65% vs 74%	0.70
	135		67%	67%	66% vs 68%	0.67
	75	80% training 10% validation 10% testing	73%	73%	75% vs 72%	0.73
	327		74%	74%	71% v 77%	0.74
	613		69%	68%	61% vs 74%	0.67
Frozen XLM roBERTa	907	70% training 15% validation 15% testing	61%	54%	30% vs 73%	0.57
	752		56%	46%	22% vs 69%	0.55
	623		53%	36%	00% vs 69%	0.50

Automating PEA

Task3. Characteristics (authorised vs non-authorised demonstrations)

Model	Seed	Split	Accuracy	Average F-score	Individual F-scores	AUC
XLM roBERTa	718	60% training 20% validation 20% testing	64%	65%	67% vs 62%	0.66
	65		73%	72%	79% vs 62%	0.70
	541		68%	68%	71% vs 64%	0.68
	374	**70% training 15% validation 15% testing**	66%	66%	68% vs 64%	0.67
	129		70%	69%	76% vs 60%	0.68
	973		**75%**	**75%**	**78% vs 71%**	**0.77**
	386	80% training 10% validation 10% testing	68%	69%	72% vs 63%	0.69
	650		75%	74%	81% vs 64%	0.72
	812		69%	69%	76% vs 57%	0.66
mBERT	826	60% training 20% validation 20% testing	73%	72%	79% vs 62%	0.70
	901		70%	70%	75% vs 64%	0.70
	541		69%	68%	75% vs 60%	0.67
	553	70% training 15% validation 15% testing	61%	62%	65% vs 57%	0.62
	471		60%	60%	62% vs 56%	0.62
	270		68%	68%	69% vs 68%	0.70
	747	80% training 10% validation 10% testing	69%	70%	74% vs 63%	0.70
	75		66%	66%	71% vs 59%	0.65
	457		70%	70%	77% vs 60%	0.68
Frozen XLM roBERTa	626	70% training 15% validation 15% testing	59%	44%	74% vs 00%	0.50
	358		59%	44%	74% vs 00%	0.50
	191		55%	39%	71% vs 00%	0.50

Implications of FARPO



Thank you for your attention!

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APPENDIX

List newspapers and archives

Country	Newspaper	Archive
Austria	Die Presse	Factiva
Belgium	De Morgen (Flanders) Le Soir (Wallonia)	GoBelga Europresse
France	Le Monde	Europresse
Germany	Tageszeitung	Factiva
Italy	La Repubblica	Factiva
Netherlands	De Volkskrant	Lexis Uni
Norway	Aftenposten	Retriever
Poland	Gazeta Wyborcza	Lexis Uni
Spain	El Pais	Factiva
Sweden	Dagens Nyheter	Retriever

Radicalness index

(Radicalness): (Kriesi et al. 2020: 3-28):

$$\text{Radicalness} = 2 \times \text{Radical\_Tactics} + \text{Conventional\_Events}$$

where:

- Radical_Tactics represents the count of radical tactics (e.g., confrontation, violence).
- Conventional_Events represents the count of conventional events.

Protest distribution and tactics in Europe (2008-2021)