Thinking outside the box: the political process model and far right party emergence

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ABSTRACT
Traditionally, a framework of demand- and supply-side factors provides insights into FRP emergence. This study proposes an alternative framework for FRP emergence by applying a more active – social movement – theory, namely the political process model. The political process model consists of three distinct dimensions that can individually affect FRP emergence. Together, they serve as necessary, but also sufficient, conditions for FRP emergence. First, political opportunities refer to dynamic factors outside the FRP that can provide a favourable (institutional) environment for emergence. Second, resource mobilisation refers to more structural factors through which people can mobilise and engage in collective action. Third, a situationally adjusted master frame includes cognitive and cultural factors that allow FRPs to attract both electoral and financial support. While the model is not without its criticisms, this study argues it provides a much-needed complement to more structural and variable-oriented theories of FRP emergence.

KEYWORDS
Far right parties; political process model; master frame; emergence

Introduction
The vast majority of West European political systems have experienced the emergence of a far right party (FRP) – at least to some extent – throughout the past three decades.1 In the FRP literature, the most common frameworks for FRP emergence describe demand and external supply side factors as the principal explanatory factors. This study argues these two factors are often too limited in their approach and do not capture the full scope of the dynamics responsible for FRP emergence. Both demand- and supply-side factors put the principal focus on explanatory variables, whereas such an approach largely overlooks processes. Therefore, it is useful to examine FRP emergence from a more dynamic and comprehensive mobilisation perspective, as is often done in the social movement literature (e.g. Koopmans et al. 2005; Caiani, della Porta, and Wagemann 2012; Castelli Gattinara and Pirro 2019).

Following the original design by McAdam (1982), this study proposes the multidimensional political process model (PPM) as a more appropriate and fitting explanatory framework for FRP emergence.

The PPM describes three distinct, yet complementary dimensions, which combine different aspects of the emergence process. First, the PPM describes political opportunities, which refers to (relatively dynamic) factors outside the FRP that have the potential to facilitate or impede FRPs’ emergence. Second, the PPM identifies resource mobilisation, which refers to (relatively structural) factors through which people can mobilise and engage in collective action. Third, the PPM refers to a master frame, which includes cognitive and cultural factors that can influence FRP emergence. In short, the inclusion of these dynamic factors...
indicates the PPM essentially complements some of the existing explanatory frameworks of FRP emergence, rather than reject them.

A successful combination of these three dimensions is not only essential and necessary for FRP emergence; it is also sufficient. The detailed discussion of the PPM indicates all essential factors for FRP emergence can be described within the model’s three dimensions. Like any theory, the PPM experiences criticism as well, notably from social movement scholars focussing more on cultural aspects, rather than just political ones. While this study does not necessarily argue the PPM is all-inclusive and explanatory, one of its core arguments is the added value of the PPM to the existing theoretical frameworks of FRP emergence. It can provide unique contributions and increase our understanding of FRP emergence in ways existing, more structural and variable-oriented theories are not able to. Even more, it is worth considering the benefits of this approach beyond FRP emergence. With this study, we hope to instigate future scholarship to consider the scope and benefits of the PPM when examining party emergence and consolidation.

Far right parties vs. social movements

There exists no uniform theory for FRP emergence. Rather, recent scholarship argues that developmental dynamics are time sensitive and different waves of FRPs might give place to changing explanatory frameworks (von Beyme 1988; Mudde 2019). Yet, most generally, the literature provides a set of extensively researched explanatory avenues, each with their own benefits and shortcomings. Typically, these explanatory factors are divided into general social breakdown theories and party-specific political opportunities (Eatwell 2003). A political party’s dependence on external factors during the earliest stages of its development confirms the importance of these latter factors. Specifically, political opportunities have the ability to directly facilitate or impede FRP development (Carter 2005), and therefore explain (i) why certain FRPs emerged and others did not, (ii) why an FRP benefits and not traditional parties, and (iii) why FRPs emerge at the time they do (Coffé 2005; Rydgren 2005a; Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Meguid 2005; Kriesi et al. 2012; Mudde 2007; 2019).2

However, some of these more traditional explanatory designs have important limitations. Most notably, despite their relevance, political opportunities consistently suffer from ambiguous conceptualisation and operationalisation. Some of the existing explanatory theories are often too limited in their scope because the dimensions of their components do not hold in a comparative context or do not allow for a cross-sectional implementation (Rydgren 2005a). In an attempt to avoid this, explanatory frameworks sometimes overemphasise structural factors and search for one universal cause (Jackman and Volpert 1996). Too often demand side factors, such as the increasing rates of immigration (Ignazi 2003) or political dissatisfaction (van der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie 2000), are ambiguously specified or overemphasised as a result of this. While this study does not argue demand-side factors are irrelevant, we do highlight that a singular focus on them cannot constitute a comprehensive explanatory framework.

So, rather than reject previous explanations for the simple reason they do not exhaustively capture the multi-dimensionality of FRP emergence, this study finds it more valuable acknowledging their validity and substantive value, build on and add to them. In order to capture the dynamic character of FRPs and their emergence, this study reemphasises agency and allows (dynamic) process to complement the existing (more structural) explanatory frameworks.

Social movement theory in political science

A number of scholars describe FRPs as successful movements (e.g. Kriesi et al. 2008; Rydgren 2005b; Pirro and Castelli Gattinara 2018). Furthermore, Caiani, della Porta, and Wagemann (2012) argue that mobilisation theories can accurately describe the broader ‘extreme right’ phenomenon. Combined, these existing arguments suggest that one could (should) apply a more dynamic and mobilisation-
oriented social movement approach to the emergence of FRPs. The following quote further endorses this,

“Some of the missing aspects in research on the extreme right have instead become central in social movement studies. Rarely applied to the analysis of right-wing groups, research on social movements has developed some concepts that we also believe to have high heuristic capacity in this field. In particular, it has stressed political opportunities rather than social threats, organisational resources rather than grievances, frames rather than ideology, repertoire rather than violence, networks rather than individual pathologies, and relations rather than structures.”

(Caiani, della Porta, and Wagemann 2012, 9)

The interpretation of a political phenomenon, such as FRP emergence, using social movement theory can only be justified if and when arguable differences between FRPs and social movements prove to be non-existent, or at least irrelevant. Generally, one could argue there are three fundamental differences between social movements and FRPs: (i) FRPs have (theoretical) access to official state power structures, (ii) FRPs have different bargaining styles, and (iii) FRPs participate in elections. Such diversity based on principle, process and purpose is not negligible. Yet, despite some of these differences, empirical research indicates that the actors, fortunes and structures of social movements and political parties (like FRPs) are often closely intertwined (Tarrow 1994). That is, while we recognise social movements and FRPs are two distinct and intrinsically different political actors, their contrasting features can be put in perspective in light of the current analytical framework (cf. also Pirro and Castelli Gattinara 2018).

Goodwin and Jasper argue ‘researchers in this tradition [mobilisation theory] view protest groups as being like political parties, except operating outside the electoral system’ (2009, 190). This limits their differences to just one: the participation in elections. Common goals between social movements and political parties emphasise similar processes, particularly when both are mobilising in the early developmental stages (Aminzade 1995; Maguire 1995). Therefore, this study argues social movements and FRPs both aim to translate popular preferences into policy – or more generally, influence – while operating in the same political space, but through different trajectories (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). This is in line with a recent set of studies that successfully reconcile social movement studies and FRP literature by looking at patterns of collective action (Pirro and Castelli Gattinara 2018) and the grassroots origins of far right collective actors (Castelli Gattinara and Pirro 2019).3

Given such situational equivalence, this study calls on social movement theory to describe FRP emergence. Generally, there are three initial theoretical approaches: (i) a classic model, (ii) resource mobilisation, and (iii) the political process model (PPM). In what follows, this study briefly revises the former two models and how they form the foundation of the PPM. Then, a more detailed discussion of the PPM advocates for its application as an explanation of FRP emergence.

The original social movement theories

When a system reaches certain critical conditions, it tends to create inner conflict or ‘structural strain’ (McAdam 1999; Merton 1957). In turn, this leads to a disruptive psychological state and changes social conditions in the form of either the economic structure (e.g. Marx and Engels 1967(1948)) or the cultural order (e.g. Durkheim 1951(1897)). Such changes increase the likelihood of contention and once this reaches a certain critical threshold, it also instigates the creation of social movements. In other words, theories in line with this rationale use psychological factors to explain social movement emergence.4

This interpretation was most prevalent during the 1950s and 1960s. Criticisms increased, however, because of the theory’s emphasis on deprivation and grievances as exclusive conditions for emergence. The aggregate level of structural strain is important and necessary, but not sufficient (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Scholars like Jenkins and Perrow (1977) saw it as relatively constant over time, thereby unable to explain longitudinal differences in social movement emergence. Scholars
also expressed growing concerns about the supposed irrational character of social movements, arguing that explanations for collective behaviour require attention to the selection of incentives, the interpretation of cost-benefit mechanisms and the implementation of available resources (Olson 1965; Oberschall 1973; see also Chong 1991). Differently put, the perception of protest as contentious or irrational gradually became replaced by a more rational interpretation.

In the 1970s, these concerns translated into resource mobilisation theory (McAdam and Zald 1977; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). This describes social movements as rational collectives of mobilising political actors that emphasise the importance of resources. It further includes the effects of external actors and events, thereby going beyond social strain as the sole causal mechanism for development. Social movements are no longer unitary actors, but comprise different social movement organisations, which play an important role in dividing resources and allow social movements to have a broader scope than just protest. In this process, both cooperation (i.e. achieving common objectives) and competition (i.e. resource rivalry) play an important role (Zald and McCarthy 1979).

This increased focus on resources entails that explanations of social movement development inherently neglected more dynamic (i.e. political) factors, which made scholars wary of the supposed structural role of external influences (McAdam 1999). In a more globalised environment, resource mobilisation theory provides an additional dilemma. It cannot explain the formation of transnational networks because the processes responsible for this surpass the national focus of mobilisation and collective action. Resource mobilisation further fails to indicate how social movements with limited resources can instigate social change or exercise influence on the state. Ironically, some of resource mobilisation’s criticisms directly follow its emphasis on political action and its shift away from structural strain.

The political process model

With those criticisms in mind, a more dynamic theory is essential to capture the speed, versatility and complexity of political action, or more specifically of FRP emergence. Therefore, this study draws on the more comprehensive PPM (see McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1983; Kitschelt 1986).

The PPM presupposes that an entity’s organisational features, action repertoires and their relative impact are determined by specific, yet external socio-political conditions (van der Heijden 1997). The model comprises three broad sets of explanatory factors that can help explain FRP emergence: (i) expanding political opportunities, (ii) indigenous organisational strength, and (iii) cognitive liberation (McAdam 1982, 51). The latter two concepts are more accurately described as mobilising structures (Gamson and Meyer 1996) and a master frame (Snow and Benford 1988), respectively. According to the PPM, these three dimensions are not only necessary for FRP emergence, but also sufficient; and they can explain both emergence and failure.

The multidimensionality of political opportunities

Several FRP scholars draw on political opportunities to explain FRP emergence (Eatwell 2003; Carter 2005; Mudde 2007). Tarrow (1996, 54) describes political opportunities as ‘consistent but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements’ (also Tarrow 1994, 1998). This refers to a relatively stable set of external opportunities that remain dynamic enough to change the incentives the available political space provides (Kingdon 2010; Koopmans 2004; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). Their precise effect is longitudinally and temporally contingent, and often depends on structural (e.g. electoral system), strategic (e.g. elite alliances) and/or cultural factors (e.g. mobilisation potential). Therefore, a comparative framework can only be overarching in its theoretical construction, not when discussing the effect and impact of different political opportunities (Carter 2005).
The multidimensionality of far right party’s political opportunities

Following theoretical frameworks by McAdam (1996) and Gamson and Meyer (1996), but largely based on the more elaborate works of Kriesi et al. (1992, 1995) and van der Heijden (1997, 2010), it is possible to distinguish five political opportunities that can impact if, how and when FRPs emerge.8

First, following several socio-political and economic evolutions in the 1970s, the original cleavage structure as described by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) lost much of its salience. Throughout Western Europe, dissatisfaction with political elites increased, while partisan identification with traditional parties decreased (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Putnam 2000). The ensuing processes of dealignment and realignment contributed to a more volatile electoral arena, and a more open political space (Franklin, Mackie, and Valen 1992; Dalton, McAllister, and Wattenberg 2002). A process of ‘defreezing’ challenged the original cleavage structure and indicates the rise of new socio-political cleavages (Ignazi 1992; Mair 1997). Traditional parties largely failed to adjust to these evolutions and new parties, such as FRPs, took advantage by gradually owning and taking advantage of newly salient issues like immigration, law and order and welfare chauvinism (Inglehart 1977; Perrineau 1997; Rydgren 2005b). In short, the nature of the socio-political cleavage structure played an instrumental role in the FRP emergence.

Second, the institutional state structure also plays a prominent role in determining whether and when FRPs emerge. More specifically, FRPs can benefit from federalism and the separation of powers because they provide multiple access point to a political system and thus independent opportunities for an FRP to emerge. Furthermore, an electoral system’s accessibility (e.g. proportionality) also influences to what extent FRPs gain access to political decision-making procedures. Other favourable access points are the availability of direct-democratic structures (e.g. referenda) and the access to state subventions and/or funding (Carter 2005).

Third, the behaviour of traditional parties can also affect FRP emergence. The presence or absence of elite allies and the subsequent efforts to include (e.g. coalition) or exclude (e.g. cordon sanitaire) FRPs from politics can affect FRP emergence specifically, and development more generally (Meguid 2008). Differently put, the relative political space that is available to FRPs can facilitate or impede their emergence (Minkenberg 2001). When a party system is centripetal in nature and traditional right-wing parties remain insensible to their right, FRPs can take advantage of the free space (Cinalli and Van Hauwaert 2020). Popular examples of such scenarios in the 1980s are France (DeClair 1999) and Belgium (Coffé 2005; de Jonge 2020), but also the Netherlands more recently.

The fourth political opportunity this study advances is quite novel. Typically, social movements are more reserved in their opposition when the left is in power and more outspoken when the left is in opposition (Kriesi et al. 1995).9 Drawing from some of the similarities between FRPs and social movements, this study argues FRP opposition will be more moderate when culturally conservative parties are in power because this implies increased opportunities for access to power and political influence. Even more, when looking at the government participation of FRPs, they typically (if not always) form coalitions with traditional right-wing parties, thereby clearly marking lower levels of opposition or even ideological affinity for right-wing parties (Akkerman 2012; de Lange 2008; Heinisch 2003).

Finally, access of FRPs to broadcast media is an important component, particularly when publicising their ideology or familiarising the electorate with their ideas and personalities (Carter 2005; Ellinas 2010). Media have important societal functions that can greatly influence FRP emergence: agenda setting (influencing issues salience), status conferral, stereotyping, priming, gatekeeping and framing. Overall, media’s changed nature and expanded role allow it to select and allocate prominence to the public discourse of its preference. Media produce the first and most basic selection mechanism in the public sphere, namely visibility, which heavily influences the further transmission and diffusion of the public discourse (Koopmans 2004). While this was certainly the case in the 1980s and 1990s for public media, it is even more the case today with social media, which has far less restrictions and a much bigger reach.
Mobilising structures: renovating resource mobilisation

Not only do political opportunities need to be ‘open’ for FRPs to emerge, but mobilising structures must also be favourable. The main focus of mobilising structures is on resources from within FRPs, used for its continuous development – or in this case, emergence – and mobilisation (van Noort 1988; Kitschelt 1991; McAdam 1996). In more traditional political science explanations of FRP emergence this often falls under the denominator of ‘internal supply-side factors’.10

Originally, McAdam (1982) refers to mobilising structures as the resources of the aggrieved population that allow them to exploit the changes in the political opportunities and mobilise (also McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996, 5). In later definitions, the emphasis changes from ‘resources’, which is rather passive, to ‘collective action’. More comprehensively, McCarthy defines mobilisation structures as:

“Those agreed upon ways of engaging in collective action which include particular “tactical repertoires” [...] and “modular social movement repertoires”. I also mean to include the range of every-day life micro-mobilization structural social locations that are not aimed primarily at movement mobilization, but where mobilization may be generated: these include family units, friendship networks, voluntary associations, work units, and elements of the state structure itself.”

(McCarthy 1996, 141)

These organisational and social networks are often unjustly seen as pre-existing physical structures, rather than as information, ideas and emotions dynamically ‘flowing’ through them (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Jasper and Poulsen 1993). Based on a description by McAdam (1982) and the more extensive work by Goodwin and Jasper (1999), this study identifies three types of mobilising structures that could facilitate FRP emergence.

The multidimensionality of far right party’s mobilising structures

A first type of mobilising structures refers to FRPs existing networks. Per definition, societal entities share ties with other societal entities, which – in itself – can lead to solidarity. They can either be pre-existing (Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980; McAdam and Paulsen 1993) or originate from shared positions in, for example, networks of patronage (Gould 1998), urban residence (Gould 1995), political affiliation (Mische 1996) and many more formal and informal, ideological and institutional organisations (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). This is no different for FRPs, which typically split from a traditional party or develop as a coalition of different smaller FRPs or groups. Either way, both scenarios typically come with extensive networks FRPs can rely on.

However, FRPs can emerge in the absence of prior identities or social networks as well (Jasper and Poulsen 1993). Their supporters often share similar demographic and/or socio-economic characteristics, which limit the social distance between entities and contribute to mutual recognition but do not necessarily form pre-existing collective identities. For example, Betz (1993) uses the notion of ‘losers of modernisation’ to describe FRP supporters, which stems from a shared characteristic, not a collective identity. For this type of mobilising structure, FRPs first construct a collective identity, which only then leads to social networks and further institutionalisation (Buechler 1990; Jasper 1997; Klandermans 1997). In the 1990s, FRPs generated a collective identity amongst modernisation losers by explicitly associating globalisation and post-industrialisation to issues it owned, such as immigration, and holding the increasing immigration responsible for the hardship of this group (Kriesi et al. 2008).

Finally, the process of collective identity attribution and network formation may also happen independently from FRPs or its supporters (Fantasia 1988; Hirsch 1990; Polletta 1998). Certain externalities can mobilise social entities that are unaware of each other or the movement that seeks to institutionalise their collective identity (Jasper 1997). For example, the mediatisation and the increasing number of political scandals during the 1980s in Western Europe generated general
sentiments of dissatisfaction, frustration and protest. This united previously unacquainted protesters and provided them with a foundation for a collective identity based on moral grounds. Further facilitated by a dualistic approach to politics, FRPs eventually used this foundation to create a collective identity and instigate their mobilisation efforts.

In sum, mobilising structures do not necessarily require pre-existing social connections or collective identities. Therefore, an FRP’s attempt to strategically and structurally frame these identities is crucial for further mobilisation, and eventually FRP emergence. In this context, the concept of a frame refers to the interpretative schema developed by an FRP in order to mobilise and recruit potential supporters (Snow et al. 1986).

The far right party master frame

A third dimension of the PPM specifies the importance of a master frame (Van Hauwaert 2014, 2019b). Following social movement theory, frames are understood as conscious tools by which a social entity – in this case an FRP – can express its perception of the societal sphere (Snow et al. 1986; Gamson 1992). They have an interpretative function by simplifying and condensing aspects of the ‘world out there’, but in ways that are ‘intended to mobilise potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilise antagonists’ (Snow and Benford 1988, 198). In short, frames represent an ‘action-oriented set of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organisation’ (Benford and Snow 2000, 614).

Master frames have a similar role, but are broader models upon which specific movements draw to obtain mobilising support. One could argue master frames are to frames and strategies as ‘paradigms are to finely tuned theories’ (Snow and Benford 1992, 138). They are not limited to the interests of a particular group or a set of related problems. Their scope and influence reach much further. A master frame is designed to attract a broader audience and deal with a broader set of problems. Contrary to collective action frames, master frames influence and constrain the orientations and activities of other social entities and can be considered a flexible and all-inclusive framework that goes beyond a set of ideologies (Snow and Benford 1992).11

What role do FRP master frames have?

A master frame often has a connecting role between interdependent sources of mobilisation. Therefore, its success is often contingent on its ability to attend to the interrelated problems of ‘consensus mobilisation’ and ‘action mobilisation’ (Klandermans 1984). The former can be seen as the efforts to increase the broader FRP appeal amongst the electorate (i.e. gather and instigate outside support), whereas the latter refers to the activation and mobilisation of existing support. This is typically done through the combination of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational components of the master frame (Wilson 1973; Snow and Benford 1988).

The diagnostic component of master frames identifies a situation as unjust or problematic. FRPs typically argue (amongst others) that the political system is corrupted, traditional parties collude against newcomers and citizens, rules only benefit the political class and a democratic deficit keeps citizens ineffectual. The critical nature and scepticism of the status quo typically serves as a decisive foundation for FRP mobilisation. The literature extensively describes such mobilising factors as either anti-elitism (Arter 2010) or populism (Rovira Kaltwasser 2014). The prognostic component suggests improvements and provides a normative societal view. What we could refer to as the proposed solutions to the previously established problems, are often described by means of ideational components. To varying degrees, all FRPs advocate for stricter obedience to authority, the protection and advancement of the nation and its people, and a certain degree of fear towards outside groups, like immigrants. In the political science literature, these components are more commonly known as authoritarianism, nationalism and xenophobia (Mudde 2007).12
Lastly, the motivational component provides incentives for potential supporters to either become a member of the party or allocate resources to the FRP. The most common incentives to provide electoral or financial support for a party are related to electoral success (e.g. power, governmental participation, policy change, etc.). However, closed political opportunities and limited resources in the early stages of development (e.g. no access to television in France or the cordon sanitaire in Belgium) might make this less likely as motivations for FRP support. Rather, they reject the status quo and provide promises of ‘change’, both of which are much more embedded in so-called doctrinal purity, rather than more concrete electability (Stone and Abramovitz 1983). Differently put, in the context of FRP emergence, the drivers or incentives for support are typically more moral or idealistic than pragmatic in nature (Van Hauwaert 2019b).

**An interdependent framework: integrating different PPM components**

As an overarching concept, a master frame unifies different components. The process that provides congruency between these components is referred to as frame alignment and becomes particularly important when the master frame is new and/or travels across socio-political contexts (Goffman 1974; Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988). While the literature describes four frame alignment processes, namely frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension and frame transformation, the former two are most prevalent for FRP emergence.

One of the more vital alignment processes when FRPs seek to emerge is arguedly frame bridging (Van Hauwaert 2019a). It aggregates individuals who share common grievances and attributional orientations, but who lack the organisational base to express their discontent and to act in pursuit of their interests. Concretely, FRPs often bring together smaller groups or partisan factions, while providing bridges (i.e. a common denominators) between them. Additionally, the clarification and increased understanding of an interpretative frame through the invigoration of beliefs or values is also important, even more so when a potential support base is rather heterogeneous. The literature refers to this process as frame amplification. It is most common amongst culturally conservative agents and agents that have constituted long-standing subcultures of resistance and contention. This is something we clearly saw throughout the emergence of the Front National (now Rassemblement National) in France. A combination of extreme right, far right, radical right and populist right groupuscules came together under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen to form a single and harmonised political unit. As part of this process, the FN’s eventual master frame included some of the components all (or most) of these groupuscules shared, namely some form of Republicanism and nationalism. These components formed the so-called bridge between the groupuscules and gave them a common reason to subscribe to the FN’s broader scope and purpose.

Considering the overall dynamic nature of the PPM, it would be erroneous to assume its other components operate independently from one another (McAdam 1982). Particularly, the vital relationship between political opportunities and the master frame deserves some attention (Koopmans and Duyvendak 1995; Noonan 1995; Zuo and Benford 1995; Oberschall 1996; Diani 1996; Gamson and Meyer 1996). The FRP literature describes this relationship as the influence an environment can have on an FRP’s ideology or rhetoric (Madde 2007). It has been documented that unfavourable political opportunities produce more extreme master frames, whereas favourable political opportunities not only facilitate FRP emergence but also moderate its master frame (della Porta and Diani 2006; Rydgren 2005a). Since the public can observe the favourability of political opportunities, a variation in its composition provides a cognitive indication of when and how to change a master frame, and what the relationship of that change implies for the likelihood of FRP emergence (Van Hauwaert 2019a).

A less documented connection is that between mobilisation structures and the master frame. In most cases, an FRP needs to develop some form of collective identity amongst its supporters before it can successfully emerge. There must be some incentive for supporters to mobilise, otherwise they will not. Therefore, FRPs develop a collective identity or a group feeling that allows for a master
frame to strive. Typically, a master frame does not create entirely new collective identities; rather it ‘redefines existing roles within established organisations as the basis of an emerging identity’ (Friedman and McAdam 1992, 163). Overall, the mechanisms by which the master frame links to pre-existing networks is by making the ‘attribution of similarity’ more likely between the identity of network members and the mobilising claims by network challengers (Strang and Meyer 1993; Gould 1995).

Socio-economic processes have a direct effect on both political opportunities and mobilising structures, but not vice versa. These processes have been extensively discussed in the FRP literature, where they are commonly referred to as demand-side factors. On occasion, they are argued to have a direct effect on FRP emergence, often leading to a misspecification of their influence. Their place in the PPM corresponds to the role as a possible breeding ground for FRP supporters. They can influence overall conditions for FRPs; however, they cannot explain the variation in emergence or success because their scope does not allow them to differentiate between FRPs. Therefore, the role of socio-economic factors on the eventual FRP emergence remains indirect and restricted.

The PPM as a complement to traditional explanations of FRP emergence

Existing political science theories of FRP emergence are widely developed and comprehensive in nature. This study adds to and expands the scope of some of the existing explanatory accounts of FRP emergence by directly applying a more ‘active’ social movement theory (cf. also Pirro and Castelli Gattinara 2018). More particularly, this study relies on the political process model to explain FRP emergence, thereby allowing for process-oriented explanations to complement existing demand- and supply-side frameworks. The situational differences between social movements and FRPs are not necessarily relevant within this analytical context. As far as their emergence dynamics go, FRPs are perhaps more closely related to social movements than to traditional political parties (Pirro and Castelli Gattinara 2018). This is exemplified by their mobilisation dynamics, the inclusion of far right actors who were not part of political parties in previous decades and their extensive usage of public (online) platforms. Additionally, most social movements combine political aspirations with more culturally oriented efforts, both of which can also be attributed to FRPs. This is further highlighted by the mainstreaming of far right ideas, the transitioning of movements into (successful) political parties and the influence they exert over politics. Therefore, based on how the PPM can complement some of the more structural environmental facilitators and political opportunities, this is not something we should overlook.

The PPM recognises three principal components that contribute to the explanation of FRP emergence: political opportunities, mobilising structures and the master frame. Political opportunities refer to a set of dynamic factors external to the FRP that have the possibility to either facilitate or impede FRP emergence. Mobilising structures refer to a variety of organisational and social networks that can support or obstruct FRP emergence. The master frame refers to some of the more cultural factors that ascertain individuals to organise and/or mobilise around FRP ideas and proposals. Each of these components has the possibility to independently or in combination affect FRP emergence. In the end, the combined favourability of these three dimensions is not only necessary but also sufficient for FRP emergence, which is where the contribution of the model originates. Differently put, while the model as a whole is comprehensive, it is also parsimonious and in line with Occam’s razor. Even though it is possible to formulate more intricate models of FRP emergence, the PPM presents a relatively straightforward, yet far-reaching and inclusive explanatory framework.

Through illustration, we can highlight these three components – thereby giving further credence to how useful the PPM can be when explaining FRP emergence. A wide variety of scholars has systematically used the notion of political opportunities to refer to the political entry points FRPs may have (e.g. Mudde 2007). To just give one brief example from France, the inability of mainstream parties (especially the mainstream right) to provide a credible answer to the growing politicisation of
immigration opened a discursive space for the FN. Regarding mobilising resources, numerous FRPs have made use of so-called grassroots organisation for the creation of amplification of collective identities throughout their emergence, none more important than Jobbik in Hungary – but also Casa Pound in Italy. Finally, in terms of the master frame, nearly all FRPs have in some way, shape or form used the FN’s original master frame.

Even though this model has great explanatory value, it is not without its critics. Most importantly, so-called ‘new social movement’ scholars refer to the PPM’s excessive focus on the political and its inability to account for the cultural aspects of emergence (Cohen 1985; Klandermans 1991; Raschke 1985). Yet, McAdam (1994) argues that all movements play both a cultural role and take political stances. He even argues that movements that do not wish to partake in the political environment or opt out of any conventional contestation to power, still take a political stance of – what he refers to as – quietism. Brandt (1986) takes this even further and argues all social movements combine both dimensions and still attempt to transform power relations. In this regard, both social movements and FRPs bridge the cultural and political spheres. While this was already true in the so-called third wave of FRPs (von Beyme 1988), this is even more the case in what Mudde (2019) describes as a fourth wave of far right politics – where the normalisation of far right politics puts the cultural and political at the forefront of mainstream politics. This is further amplified in the contemporary political climate, which sees structural conflict between nationalists and globalists, as well as the increasing penetration of identity politics across different societal spheres. While the PPM is apt and ample at explaining FRPs in the past decades, present-day evolutions only add to its suitability as an explanatory framework for FRP emergence.

More generally, the advantage of this model, particularly over other social movement theories, is its focus on ‘how’ an entity emerges, rather than ‘why’ it emerges (Melucci 1985; Klandermans and Tarrow 1988). At the same time, the PPM also provides valuable insights into the ‘when’ and ‘where’ of emergence dynamics across similar and dissimilar contexts (Tarrow 1994). Considering one of this study’s primary intentions is to contribute to the existing FRP literature by providing a complementary and more comprehensive account of the factors that underlie FRP emergence, the application of this particular model allows us to do exactly that. It includes, but also expands - and, thus, complements - existing scholarly accounts of FRP emergence.

Like any explanatory framework, the PPM has limitations and should not be thought of as complete or all-inclusive. After all, some of the conceptual and operational disagreements within the FRP literature make it difficult to formulate one single dominant framework that can explain the emergence or even life-cycle development of all FRPs. Rather, an important intention of this study is the generation of an explanatory model that can be comprehensive in its approach, complements the existing frameworks and simultaneously serves as a building block for further research.

Most notably, it is important to empirically apply this model in future research endeavours, so as to expand this study’s scope (i.e. validity) and to eventually analyse cross-sectional patterns of variation in specific emergence dynamics. This does not necessarily need to be in the form of a large-scale quantitative study, as the dynamic nature of this model or even the emergence process might be challenging to quantify. A set of valuable alternatives that also allow for causal claims could be a most similar or most different systems design. For example, Carter (2005) has provided an important step towards a more comprehensive cross-sectional analysis by systematically including political opportunities in her cross-sectional framework. Building on this, later research by Rydgren (2005a), Arzheimer and Carter (2006) and Mudde (2007) provides important additions to this.

Furthermore, future research should not limit itself to expanding this study’s geographical scope; there are also possibilities to expand the temporal scope of this study by examining FRP development beyond its emergence. There is no reason to expect the extent and the impact of the different dimensions of the PPM to remain constant throughout an FRP’s development. In other words, it would be fair to assume temporal conditionality of the PPM. McAdam (1999) suggests an adjusted PPM for social movements past their emergence. Even though this does not fall within the analytical
scope of this study, and considering the substantial overlap and similarities between McAdam’s suggested models for emergence and consolidation, future research should analyse whether it is possible to also use this social movement model in an FRP context.

Another avenue to apply and expand the scope of this study is to go beyond the FRP family. In other words, it is worth considering how the PPM can benefit the analysis of other party families and their emergence. If we are to look at the validity of the theory, and not only at its application to FRPs, it would stand to reason that the model as a whole or some of its components could applies to other non-traditional parties (e.g. Green parties, populist parties, extreme right parties, etc.), extreme right- or left-wing movements (e.g. fascist or neo-Nazi movements, animal rights movements, etc.) or other groups seeking political influence (e.g. squatting movements, civil society actors, etc.). Even more, can we even extend this model to explaining the evolution of traditional parties? All in all, future research should consider the benefits of this model when exploring the dynamics underlying party development.

Notes

1. For one of the more comprehensive discussions of different terminologies, see Ignazi (2003). In line with previous studies (e.g. van Spanje 2010, Van Hauwaert 2014; 2019a; 2019b), we rely on the term far right parties. While this study relies on a different terminology, the parties comprised in the party family mostly correspond to what most scholars refer to as populist radical right parties (e.g. Mudde 2007).
2. We do not take anything away from the numerous more recent and empirical studies have been done in this field. We merely highlight some of the more comprehensive and classic studies in this regard.
3. This latter study is the introduction to a special issue in European Societies (volume 21, issue 4) that includes several interesting and relevant contributions.
4. Unlike other theories based on psychological factors (e.g. Adorno et al. 1950), these social movement theories do not account for individual-level explanations, only for those on a more aggregate level.
5. Social movement organisations (SMOs) are defined as specific, organised components of a social movement. They usually share the social movement’s goals and have coordinating roles, but they do not employ or direct most of the supporters (Zald and McCarthy 1979).
6. For a more comprehensive discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of resource mobilisation theory, I refer to McAdam (1982: chapter 2) and van der Heijden (2010: chapter 2).
7. For example, in addition to being a target for protest, the role of the state also became more perceived as an arbiter for grievances.
8. Since the focus is on democratic political parties and not on contentious politics, this framework only considers those political opportunities that channel political action into legal and electoral routes. In other words, the political opportunities for FRPs are quite possibly very different from those for extreme right or anti-democratic parties, which can include semi-legal (or even illegal) and disruptive routes rather than just discursive ones.
9. The underlying rationale for this claim is that most social movements advocate culturally progressive values and culturally left-wing political parties will advocate such policies.
10. This particular component of the PPM shows some similarities with the earlier resource mobilisation theory. Except, mobilising structures complement other dimensions; they do not propose to be the sole decisive factor throughout the emergence phase.
11. Ideology is too monolithic and structural to successfully capture the cultural dynamics of FRP emergence and the trans-national and longitudinal variation in emergence patterns (Caiani, della Porta, and Wagemann 2012). ‘A master frame can capture and bridge different aspects of the mobilisation process, rather than just focus on collective identities. Whereas master frame refers to a cluster of fairly extensive and inclusive rhetorical strategies from which FRPs can draw (Swart 1995; Carroll and Ratner 1996), ideology refers to support for more specific articulations of theory and value nested within more general ones (Oliver and Johnston 2000). In other words, a master frame does not necessarily include the socio-political theory and normative value systems that characterise an ideology.’ (Van Hauwaert 2019b)
12. Mudde (2007) considers the combination of nationalism and xenophobia to be – what he terms – nativism. He, more broadly, defines nativism as ‘an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that nonnative elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state.’ (Mudde 2007: 19).
**Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank anonymous reviewers and Steve Buechler, Sarah de Lange, Caterina Froio, Pietro Castelli Gattinara, Keith Mann, Nonna Mayer, Andrea Pirro, David Snow, Hein-Anton van der Heijden and especially Pascal Perrineau for their valuable comments and insights. Preliminary versions of this paper have been presented at various locations, including the Midwest Sociological Society Annual Meeting and the ECPR General Conference. I am grateful to participants and panel members for their feedback, comments and suggestions.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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