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Young democrats, critical citizens and protest voters: studying the profiles of movement party supporters

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Abstract

The rise of movement parties in Europe has disrupted traditional notions of party politics, introducing new avenues for citizen engagement and political mobilisation. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the electorate of movement parties, using nationally representative survey data from six European countries. We identify four types of movement parties: green/left-libertarian, far-right, eclectic, and centrist, and examine the distinct profiles of their voters. The only common characteristic we find across movement party supporters is their belief in the influence of protests. We argue that green/left-libertarian voters embody a generational gap in political participation, as they utilise both electoral and non-electoral engagement to express their post-industrial demands. Far-right voters are distinguished by their discontent with the democratic system and political elites, following the pattern of what others have referred to as 'protest voters'. Meanwhile, centrist and eclectic voters embody the profile of 'critical citizens', who support the democratic system but are dissatisfied with its current functioning. While we see movement parties as a genuine innovation in the internal structuring of party organisations, our study calls into question the utility of this concept when seeking to understand the behaviour of their electorate. We emphasise the importance of recognising the diverse motivations behind movement party support, enriching our understanding of the changing dynamics of party politics in Europe.

Keywords Movement parties · Voting behaviour · Political participation

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Introduction

In recent years, the rise of movement parties across Europe has disrupted traditional notions of party politics and opened up new avenues for citizen engagement and political mobilisation. Movement parties are the reflection of a wider socio-political transformation of increasing interconnection between electoral and non-electoral politics (Giugni and Grasso 2021; Hutter 2014; Hutter and Borbáth 2019). Despite their growing prominence, however, our understanding of the factors that contribute to their success remains limited. This paper fills this gap by examining the determinants of voter support for movement parties, drawing on novel nationally representative survey data from six European countries: Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Romania, and the United Kingdom.

We categorise movement parties into four political families: green/left-libertarian, far-right, eclectic, and centrist, and explore similarities and differences among their voters. We find that, in line with previous studies (Mosca and Quaranta 2017), movement party voters share an affinity for protest behaviour, as all of them believe in the capacity of protest to influence the workings of their country. Likewise, they take part in non-electoral activities to a greater degree than the rest of the population. However, beyond these characteristics, voters of different movement parties do not share many more features.

Looking into the characteristics of each category of voters, green/left-libertarian movement party voters tend to be younger and more educated and engage more in online political activities. Furthermore, they report having greater faith in democracy than in other, alternative, political systems. Far-right movement party voters express greater discontent both with democracy as a system as well as with political elites. They are also more likely to be men, less well-educated and have a full-time job than the average citizen. Centrist and eclectic movement party voters support democracy but are dissatisfied with how it currently works. They also report lower than average formal education and income.

We argue that each type of movement party voter reflects political transformations previously identified by other scholars. First, green/left-libertarian movement party voters reflect Dalton's identification of different patterns of participation across generations (Dalton 2006). Being often younger and more educated, this group shows clear support for democracy and views protest participation as a new mainstream and legitimate means for political expression. This group's vote reflects a generational shift with regard to protest repertoires as well as new policy issues, emphasising environmental and post-industrial concerns (cf. Inglehart 1977). Second, far-right voters represent a 'protest vote' (Alvarez et al. 2018; Birch and Dennison 2019), driven by discontent with a democratic system and its elites that they regard as having, by-and-large, ignored them (Hochschild 2016). In this way, their electoral and non-electoral participation may amount to a challenge to a political system they perceive as unresponsive. Finally, centrist and eclectic voters reflect a pattern similar to what others have referred to as 'critical citizens' (Norris 2011). While they are generally supportive of democracy, they also express dissatisfaction with its current state. In this context, they look



to expand their political repertoire, voting for new parties and engaging in non-electoral activities.

We conclude that the movement party concept may be useful when analysing the internal organisational dynamics of some parties but may have little to offer when one seeks a unifying understanding of their electorates. While movement parties represent organisational attempts to find new ways of rebuilding the link between parties and society that was eroded by the cartelisation of political parties (Katz and Mair 1996, 1995) and the ‘hollowing of western democracies’ (Mair 2013), their electorate is characterised by diversity. Beyond a general perception that protests can influence the situation in their country, we find that there is little else that voters of different movement party types have in common.

Our analysis contributes to the literature on party politics in several ways. First, it provides a more nuanced understanding of the voters of movement parties, showing that they ought not to be seen as a homogeneous group. Instead, they exhibit distinct patterns depending on their ideological orientation. Second, our study explores the factors that contribute to voter support for these parties, shedding light on the complex interplay between non-electoral participation, political attitudes, media consumption, and demographic characteristics. Finally, our analysis provides insights into the changing dynamics of party politics in Europe, highlighting the emergence of new political actors and voter profiles that are transforming European societies and political systems.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. First, with the help of the previous literature, we conceptualise movement parties and analyse their existing different political families across Europe. Second, we develop our hypotheses of what drives citizens to vote for movement parties, based on an overview of the literature on the topic. Third, we present our data and analytical approach. Fourth, we report the results of our binary logistic regression models. Finally, we highlight the conclusions of the paper and their importance for understanding party politics in Europe.

Understanding movement parties and their varieties

Movement parties are ‘coalitions of political activists who emanate from social movements and try to apply the organisation and strategic practice of social movements in the arena of party competition’ (Kitschelt 2006, p. 280). Because of their characteristics, these political actors bridge the concepts of ‘party’ and ‘movement’ (Gunther and Diamond 2003, p. 188). On the one hand, they are political parties insofar as their goal is electoral competition and supporting candidates who seek to legislate in parliaments and lead governments (cf. Sartori 1976). On the other, they are social movements because they employ non-electoral means to advance or oppose certain social and policy changes (cf. Della Porta and Diani 2006; Snow 2004). In this way, we could understand movement parties as either political parties who are part of social movement networks, who share ideological affinities and use some of their tactics, or as social movement organisations who have included electoral participation in their repertoire of action.



The growth of movement parties across Europe happened after a period of grave concern about the increasing disconnection of conventional political parties from their electorates and societal demands. During the late 20th and early twenty-first century, political parties once considered as ‘mass parties’—because of their capacity to appeal to ample parts of the electorate and keep large and active membership bases—began to cartelise (Katz and Mair 1996, 1995). Given their increasing dependence on state subsidies and the professionalisation of their representatives, cartel parties started to lose connection with their members and their electorates, and their political manifestos became increasingly similar (*Ibid.*). In parallel, citizens across Europe reacted to this transformation by decreasing party membership, a reduced turnout in elections, and higher electoral volatility that signified lower loyalty to these parties (Mair 2013). In this context, movement parties can be understood as organisational attempts to rebuild the links between political parties and society (Della Porta et al. 2017). In addition to seeking to organise their electorates through active membership in the party, movement parties use their involvement in the non-electoral field as a bridge with society and its emerging demands.

The way in which movement parties merge political party and social movement features leads them to have certain unique characteristics that make them stand out from conventional parties. First, similarly to social movement organisations, movement parties typically maintain minimal formal internal structures and low membership requirements (Kitschelt 2006; Mosca 2020). Conventional political parties have a clear structure, expect contributions from their members and set a chain of command with a clear division of labour with the objective to coordinate the actions of their members and supporters (Kitschelt 2006). Conversely, movement parties lack mechanisms for mediating between leaders and rank-and-file members. Instead, progressive movement parties tend to emphasise bottom-up decision making through assemblies and grassroots initiatives (Kitschelt 1988), while radical right parties employ plebiscitary forms of engagement to secure the membership’s allegiance to leadership positions (Pirro and Gattinara 2018).

Second, movement parties tend to focus on specific issues that have received relatively little attention in political discussions. Rather than developing an overarching programme that covers a wide variety of interconnected policy issues like conventional parties do, movement parties tend to focus on single issues, often overlooked by the political establishment that are paramount to certain social groups (Kitschelt 2006). In the case of progressive movement parties, prominent issues have been the environment (Kitschelt 1988) and opposition to fiscal austerity (Font et al. 2021). By contrast, radical right parties’ programmes are predominantly guided by their nativist policies and opposition to migration (Kirkizh et al. 2022; Pirro 2019). Finally, centrist movement parties that have recently appeared in Central and Eastern Europe have democratic reform and the fight against corruption as their *raison d’être* (Dragoman 2021).

For Kitschelt (2006), this combination of factors renders movement parties as transitory phenomena. Their focus on a handful of salient issues, together with few to no membership requirements allow movement parties to mobilise large sections of the population at specific moments. However, their lack of structures—for formalising commitments from their members, for setting clear directions for the party and



for channelling disputes—poses serious challenges to movement parties' capacity to maintain their form and capacity over the long term. For this reason, Kitschelt asserts that after a period of balancing party and movement features, movement parties either tend to formalise their structures, becoming more similar to conventional parties; or to return to prioritising grassroots mobilisation through non-electoral means. However, insightful in respect to organisational structure, such arguments leave questions about the electorate of movement parties and its defining characteristics unanswered.

Movement parties in Europe

Given their characteristics, movement parties have, historically, appeared during moments of critical junctures and in places where political entrepreneurs have been able to politicise social demands ignored by the political elite (Della Porta et al. 2017). Moreover, the issues that gained salience during a specific historical period translated into distinct political ideologies that were the hotbed for the movement parties of that time. First, green parties materialised in western Europe following the so-called '68 Revolution', when environmental issues made it to the forefront of the political agenda (Kitschelt 1988). Animated by a similar progressive spirit, new radical left parties appeared in Southern Europe against the backdrop of the 2008 global financial crisis. Parties such as Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain and Bloco de Esquerda in Portugal channelled the large street mobilisations against austerity policies in those countries into electoral support (Carvalho 2022; Flesher Fominaya 2020; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014). While the green parties originating in the 1968 mobilisations and the new radical parties that emerged after 2008 formed two distinct political families, the increasing attention paid by the latter to environmental issues and the overarching concern of the former with social justice matters has led these two groups to become increasingly coordinated in their defence of a red-green agenda (Wang and Keith 2020).

In their turn, radical right movement parties in western Europe grew exponentially, riding the wave of the 2015 crisis prompted by the lack of capacity of European governments to manage the increase in migration flows originating from asylum seekers escaping the wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria. Parties such as the German Alternative für Deutschland and the British UK Independence Party capitalised on the growing resentment against migration in some sectors of the population for their institutional gain (Dennison and Goodwin 2015; Franzmann 2016). In Central and Eastern Europe, authors have explained the appearance of radical right movement parties as a result of the disappointment with the transition from state communism after the 1989 revolutions, as well as the reappearance of national political cultures following that historical moment (Minkenberg 2002; Pirro 2014). Parties such as Hungary's Jobbik, Romania's Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor, and Slovakia's Ľudová strana naše Slovensko have politicised the resentment felt by the 'losers' of the transition to market capitalism turning it into traditionalist and nativist policies that have brought them electoral support (Kazharski 2019; Norocel and Băluță, 2023; Pirro and Gattinara 2018).



Central and Eastern European countries' challenging transition from state communism has also provided the context for the appearance of another movement party family. Centrist movement parties emphasising the unfinished democratic reforms in those countries have also recently gained importance. Following a challenging transition to democratic politics and market capitalism, these parties have gained in prominence, in the region. Some relevant examples of centrist movement parties such as Momentum in Hungary and USR-PLUS in Romania have grown in importance by championing anti-corruption policies (Dragoman 2021; Olteanu and Beylerle 2018).

Finally, the eclectic ideology of the Italian Movimento 5 Stelle has become a category in its own right. While having its origins in the crisis of democracy that became apparent after the 2008 financial crisis (Mosca 2014), the party's emphasis on social policies as well as anti-immigration discourses complicated the party's categorisation, leading some authors to refer to its ideology as 'eclectic' (Mosca and Tronconi 2019). The party has governed with all types of allies, ranging from the far-right Lega to the centre-left Partito Democratico and the radical left Liberi e Uguali. It was also part of a government of national unity that included parties ranging from the far-right to the centre-left (Barbero 2021). Hence, given the diversity of policies this party has defended, and the variety of coalition partners it has sought, we follow Mosca and Tonconi's suggestion regard Movimento 5 Stelle as an eclectic movement party.

The bases of electoral support for movement parties

Given the electoral success of many movement parties across Europe, in this section, we focus on scrutinising the drivers of their electoral support. Our theoretical interest is to revisit hypotheses from previous studies that focused on a smaller number of cases and to compare competing explanations regarding the electoral support base of movement parties. Reflecting the literature we have reviewed, we divide the explanations of the vote for movement parties along their connection to protests, sources of grievances, media consumption, political attitudes, and ideology. Furthermore, we use earlier studies to build our hypotheses about what drives electoral support for movement parties.

The movement party vote has been termed 'the vote of protesters' (Lobera Serano and Rogero García, 2017; Mosca and Quaranta 2017). Previous studies of support for movement parties in Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal have pointed to a positive relation between having participated in a street protest and having voted for movement parties in those countries. Moreover, one of the main characteristics of movement parties is their connection to social movements and openness to their demands (Della Porta et al. 2017; Weisskircher and Berntzen 2019). Hence, we expect that this special connection is also reflected in support from members of social movement organisations, as well as citizens who believe protest can influence the situation in their country regardless of their non-electoral involvement, who are then more likely to vote for movement parties. Accordingly, we hypothesise that



H1a Participation in non-electoral activities is positively related to electoral support for movement parties.

H1b Membership of social movement organisations is positively related to electoral support for movement parties.

H1c Believing that protests can influence the situation in a country is positively related to electoral support for movement parties.

Other studies of support for movement parties have focused on the types of grievances their voters' experience. Some have described support for movement parties, such as the Movimento 5 Stelle, as a 'protest vote' (Passarelli and Tuorto 2018), operationalised by these authors both as discontent with the system and discontent with elites. We operationalise system discontent as either lack of support for the democratic system as a whole or as dissatisfaction with how democracy works in the country. Furthermore, we operationalise elite discontent as lack of trust in political parties. While Passarelli and Tuorto's analysis only found a positive relation between elite discontent and support for the Movimento 5 Stelle, given that our analysis goes beyond the Italian case, we explore hypotheses related to both types of discontent.

H2a Not believing that democracy is the best system of government is positively related to electoral support for movement parties.

H2b Dissatisfaction with democracy is positively related to electoral support for movement parties.

H2c Distrust of political parties is positively related to electoral support for movement parties.

Media consumption is also a relevant factor in understanding support for movement parties. Gibson and Ward (2009) note that information and communication technologies (ICTs) represent a significant resource for emerging political parties and those with limited access to mainstream media. Many movement parties have skilfully used information and communication technologies (ICTs) to set the political agenda and obtain public support (Mercea and Mosca 2021). Moreover, scholars have identified a positive relation between the use of ICTs for political information consumption and support for movement parties, in Southern Europe (Mosca and Quaranta 2017). Hence, we expect voting for movement parties to be positively related to the frequency of using ICTs for accessing information about politics.

H3 The frequency of ICT use for political information is positively related to electoral support for movement parties.



Moving to other political attitudes, Mosca and Quaranta's analysis (Mosca and Quaranta 2017) shows a positive relation between political interest and voting for movement parties, in Southern European countries. We, thus, expect that:

H4 Political interest is positively related to electoral support for movement parties.

Ideology has also been discussed as a relevant factor for understanding support for movement parties. Overall, and while conceiving of populism as a thin ideology (cf. Stanley 2008), previous research has highlighted the use of 'populist communication' by many movement parties (Della Porta 2021). Hence, we expect that parties' communication strategies resonate with their voters who are likely to display populist attitudes. Simultaneously, while scholars have identified commonalities among movement parties, they acknowledge that their policies and ideologies set them apart. Support for far-right movement parties has been associated mainly with their nativist and anti-immigration stances (Kirkizh et al. 2022; Stockemer et al. 2021), while environmental concerns are at the core of the vote for green/left-libertarian parties (Haute 2016; Hutter and Borbáth 2019). As the electorate in many Central and Eastern European countries is not as easily organised along the economic left–right axis as it is in western Europe (Coman 2017) and the issues at the core of movement party ideologies are better explained from a cultural liberalism/conservatism viewpoint (Abou-Chadi 2016; Hutter and Borbáth 2019), we approach these issues from the latter perspective. Consequently, we hypothesise that

H5a Populist attitudes are positively related to electoral support for movement parties.

H5b Cultural liberalism is positively related to electoral support for green/left-libertarian movement parties.

H5c Cultural conservatism is positively related to electoral support for far-right movement parties.

Data and methods

In this study, we utilise a unique dataset ($N=10,347$ participants) obtained from online panel surveys conducted across six European countries, covering both Eastern and Western Europe. These countries include Denmark ($N=1001$), Germany ($N=2024$), Hungary ($N=2051$), Italy ($N=2101$), Romania ($N=946$), and the United Kingdom ($N=2224$). Countries in the study were selected following a 'diverse method' (Seawright and Gerring 2008). We sought to cover a wide variety of movement parties, ranging from the green/left-libertarian and far-right movement parties already identified in the literature (Kitschelt 2006, 1988; Pirro and Gattinara 2018), to the new types reviewed earlier in this study (eclectic and centrist movement parties). We also selected country cases with the objective of covering a wide



diversity in the degree of openness/closure of their party system (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016). According to these authors, open party systems are more conducive to the emergence of new political parties and limit established parties' inclinations towards cartelisation, while in closed party systems challengers have more incentives to engage in non-electoral action or attempt to transform major parties from inside (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016, p. 266). These authors rank the UK, Denmark and Germany in top positions in their ranking, while placing Hungary and Romania towards the bottom in Europe and Italy in the middle. Through this selection, we attempted to have a comprehensive overview of the variety of movement parties in Europe, as well as of party systems. Sample differences across countries are due to our pollsters' operational capacity and their strategy for attaining a sample that matches national population dynamics as closely as possible. In order to assure that the results of our analysis are not guided by a potential excessive influence of some country or countries, we replicate our analysis excluding one country at a time, as well as restricting our data exclusively to each country. The results of these robustness checks, which we discuss in more detail in the section *Analytical approach*, can be seen in the appendix. The surveys took place from February 21 to March 11, 2022, and were carried out by the international polling firm YouGov, who employed quotas in each country to align the sample with national population statistics in terms of age, education, region, gender, and past voting behaviour.

Although concerns have been raised about the representativeness of online panel-based survey data (Elliott and Valliant 2017), later research using simulation and online experiment testing found the data to be 'broadly representative' due to the sophisticated sampling protocols developed by leading polling companies like YouGov (Miratrix et al. 2018). In the following section, we describe how we operationalised the aforementioned hypotheses using our survey data (for a complete list of survey questions used in the analysis, please refer to the online appendix).

Dependent variable

Our dependent variable identifies whether individuals voted for a movement party in the last general election. As part of our survey, we asked participants about their vote in the last general election in each country (2018 for Hungary and Italy, 2019 for Denmark and the United Kingdom, 2020 for Romania, and 2021 for Germany). Based on their answer, we created a binary variable whereby we assigned all movement party voters a value of 1 and everyone else a value of 0. Separately, we created another binary variable for each movement party family. Table 1 shows the distribution of the dependent variables in each of our models. So, in addition to exploring the predictors of voting for movement parties overall, we were also able to analyse the support for the different movement party families covered in the study.

Table 2 presents the political parties identified as movement parties in each country, as well as their categorisation. All of these parties share their origins in social movements that appeared at critical historical junctures. Moreover, despite some of these parties having lost their challenger status after going through a process of institutionalisation that culminated, in some cases, with them going into government



Table 1 Distribution of the dependent variables

	Movement party voter	Other voter
Model 1: All	1,912	8,435
Model 2: Green/left-libertarian	652	9,695
Model 3: Far-right	521	9,826
Model 4: Centrist & eclectic	739	9,608

Table 2 Selection of movement parties in the study

Country	Green/left-libertarian	Far-right	Centrist	Eclectic
Denmark	Alternativet	Nye Borgerlige	–	–
Germany	Bündis 90/Die Grünen	Alternative für Deutschland	–	–
Hungary	- LMP: Magyarország Zöld Pártja - Párbeszéd	- Jobbik - Mi Hazánk Mozgalom	Momentum	–
Italy	–	–	–	Movimento 5 Stelle
United Kingdom	- Green Party of England and Wales - Scottish Greens - Sinn Fein	- United Kingdom Independence Party - Brexit Party	–	–
Romania	–	Alianta pentru Unirea Romanilor	Uniunea Salvati Romania	–

(e.g. the German green/left-libertarian Bündis 90/Die Grünen, the Italian Movimento 5 Stelle, and the Romanian centrist USR), all of them remained involved in extra-institutional activities and sought to bring social movement claims to institutional debates. Hence, this diverse selection of parties allows us to account for the different varieties of movement parties present in Europe.

Independent variables

As per the predictors included in the model, we explain each of them below and report the descriptive statistics in Table 3.

We first describe the variables pertaining to an individuals' connection to protest activities. First, we include a binary variable accounting for whether, in the past two years, individuals participated in non-electoral activities that are commonly part of the repertoire of social movements. These activities include taking part in a strike, participating in the activities of a social movement, boycotting certain products, and joining a demonstration. Second, we add a binary variable for whether individuals were members of a social movement organisation. Finally, we use a variable ranging from 1 to 5 for whether the respondent believed that, by taking part in a protest, s/he could influence the situation in the country.



Table 3 Descriptive statistics of predictor variables

	Mean	Std. Dev	Median	Min	Max	Range	Skew	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Non-electoral participation	0.47	0.50	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.11	-1.99	0.00
SMO member	0.25	0.43	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.14	-0.69	0.00
Protest influence	3.13	1.29	3.00	1.00	5.00	4.00	-0.13	-1.00	0.01
Support for democracy	0.60	0.49	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	-0.41	-1.83	0.00
Satisfaction with democracy	5.66	2.95	6.00	1.00	11.00	10.00	-0.17	-1.04	0.03
Trust in political parties	2.27	1.03	2.00	1.00	5.00	4.00	0.32	-0.75	0.01
Online media consumption	3.14	1.60	3.00	1.00	6.00	5.00	0.17	-1.22	0.02
Political interest	2.44	0.91	2.00	1.00	4.00	3.00	-0.03	-0.81	0.01
Liberal	6.02	1.94	6.00	0.00	10.00	10.00	-0.18	-0.06	0.02
Populist	3.62	0.73	3.67	1.00	5.00	4.00	-0.26	0.35	0.01
Female	0.53	0.50	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	-0.12	-1.98	0.00
Age	47.58	15.87	47.00	18.00	99.00	81.00	0.05	-0.94	0.16
Formal education	0.54	0.36	0.50	0.00	1.00	1.00	-0.12	-1.07	0.00
Income	0.41	0.28	0.36	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.43	-0.77	0.00

Furthermore, we integrate a number of variables to account for respondents' discontent with democracy. To proxy individuals' discontent with the system, we include two predictors. Firstly, a binary variable that reflects whether respondents thought democracy was the best system of government or not. Secondly, a variable ranging from 1 to 11 that measures respondents' degree of satisfaction with the way democracy works in their country. As for discontent with elites, we include a predictor ranging from 1 to 5 accounting for the level of trust individuals have in political parties.

When it comes to individuals' online media consumption, we measure it with a variable ranging from 1 to 6 for the frequency of ICT use for information about politics. We create this variable averaging the frequency of consumption, ranging from the maximum option of 'several times a day' to the minimum of 'not once in the last seven days' for online video platforms, social media, and messaging apps. As to political attitudes, we measure interest in politics with a variable ranging from 1 to -4.

When it comes to ideology, we account for it through two scales. First, we measure respondent's populist attitudes through a commonly used index proposed by Akkerman et al. (2014), composed of six items that range from 1 to 5. Second, we measure respondents' cultural liberalism through the five-item index originally proposed by Heath et al. (1994), ranging from 0 to 10. Both of these scales have acceptable internal consistency scores (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$ for the former and 0.76 for the latter).



Finally, we control for respondents' socio-demographics that studies have shown to influence voting behaviour (Bermeo and Bartels 2014; Bernhagen and Marsh 2007; Brady et al. 1995; Inglehart and Norris 2003). These include sex (0 = 'man', 1 = 'woman'), formal education (standardised as a 0–1 range variable), and income (standardised as a 0–1 range variable prior to merging each national dataset). We also include individuals' age in the model, standardised as a 0–1 range variable, as studies have shown that voters of movement parties tend to be younger than the average population (Mosca and Quaranta 2017; Segatti and Capuzzi 2016). Finally, we include country controls. Prior to running our models, we standardise all non-binary variables to a 0–1 range so the magnitude of regression coefficients can be compared across predictors.

Analytical approach

After recoding all variables, we employed multiple imputation (Rubin 1987) to address the prevalent problem of incomplete data in survey research. Due to respondents frequently skipping survey questions, some observations contain missing data. We utilised the R package 'mice' (Buuren and Groothuis-Oudshoorn 2011) to generate five datasets using a probabilistic model with the variables incorporated in our analysis. Each imputed value includes a random element to factor in the uncertainty of the predictions. Once the datasets are generated, estimates are independently calculated and later the results are pooled.

As for the analysis, we employed four binary logistic regressions in each of which we used a different dependent variable. In the first model, we explore the correlates of voting for any movement party. In the other three models, we explore the predictors of voting for the different movement party families: green/left-libertarian movement parties, far-right movement parties, and eclectic and centrist movement parties. Given the limited number of cases of eclectic and centrist movement parties, we decided to pool these two categories in the same analysis. To assure that our analysis reflects broader national dynamics, we include post-stratification country weights. Furthermore, in order to control for national contexts, and to account for the non-independence of our data points, as we expect that responses from individuals within the same country will be more similar to each other than to those from other countries, we cluster observations by country. We also perform several robustness checks, which are reported in the appendix. First, we confirm that no country is driving our results by running six separate models, excluding a different country in each of them. Second, we assess whether our general conclusions are broadly representative of the dynamics in each country by analysing a separate model for each country. The results of all these models are broadly in line with the ones presented in the main text of the paper, giving us confidence in the robustness of our results.



Results

We report the results of our binary logistic regressions in Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 4. In these forest plots, the left column contains the variable names. The central column displays the coefficient plots. The black circle represents the coefficient estimates, while the line covers the span of the 95% confidence interval. The dashed vertical line highlights the value ‘0’. When a dot is located on the right of the dashed vertical line, it means that there is a positive relation between the predictor and the outcome variable. Conversely, when a dot is located on the left of the dashed vertical line, it means that there is a negative relation between the predictor and the outcome variable. If the horizontal line representing the span of the confidence interval does not cross the vertical dashed line, it means that the correlation is statistically significant at 95% probability. Conversely, if the horizontal line representing the confidence interval overlaps with the dashed vertical line it means that the correlation is not statistically significant at 95% probability. Finally, the column on the right lists the numerical values of the coefficient estimates, as well as the 95% confidence intervals in brackets, represented in the plot. Positive coefficients point to a positive relation between the outcome and predictor variables while negative coefficients indicate a

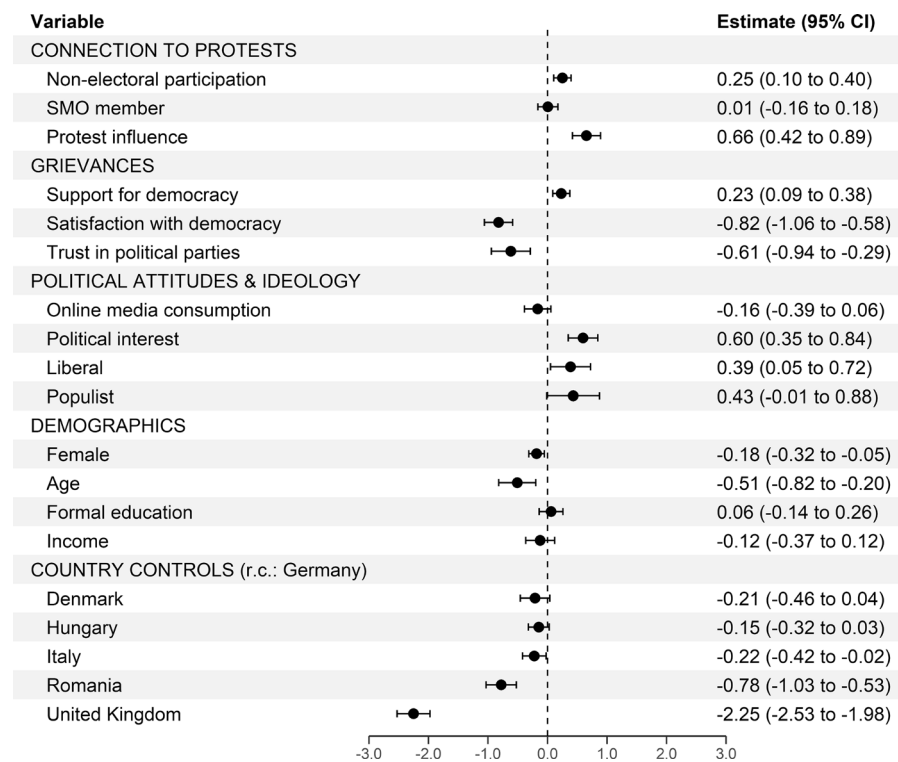


Fig. 1 Predictors of electoral support for movement parties (N=10,347 respondents)



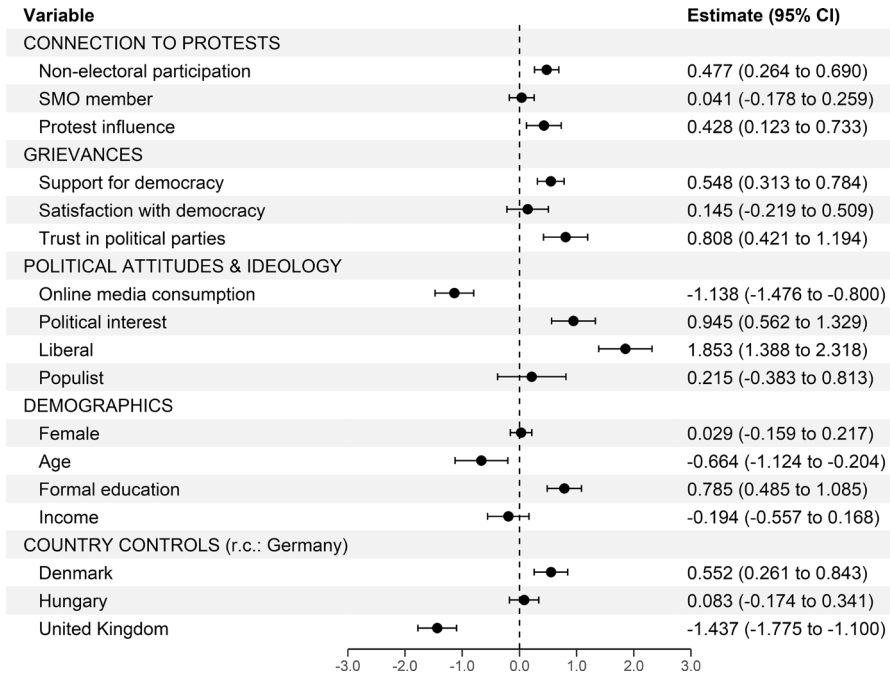


Fig. 2 Predictors of electoral support for green/left-libertarian movement parties ($N=10,347$ respondents)

negative relation. If the lower and upper bounds of the confidence interval have the same symbol, either negative or positive, the correlation is statistically significant at 95% probability. If they have opposite symbols, the correlation is not statistically significant at 95% probability. Overall, it is interesting to see that while there are some commonalities among movement party voters across categories, our hypotheses need to be qualified because voters from different ideological families show distinct patterns. Hence, overall, our analysis calls for a more refined analysis of movement parties and their voters that avoids simplistic generalisations.

When it comes to movement party voters' connection to protests, our results confirm previous studies that showed a positive relationship between protest participation and voting for a movement party. Individuals who have experience with participating in contentious politics (H1a) are more likely to vote for movement parties. When exploring differences across movement party families, the effect is similar for voting for green/left-libertarian as well as centrist and eclectic movement parties, while it is not significant for far-right movement party voters. Notably, membership of social movement organisations (H1b) has no significant effect on the propensity to vote for movement parties. Conversely, believing that protest can have an influence on the country (H1c) is positively related with voting for movement parties across families. Overall, these results indicate that movement party voters are more likely to believe that protest participation is an influential component of citizens' political repertoire. Moreover, green/left-libertarian, and centrist and eclectic movement



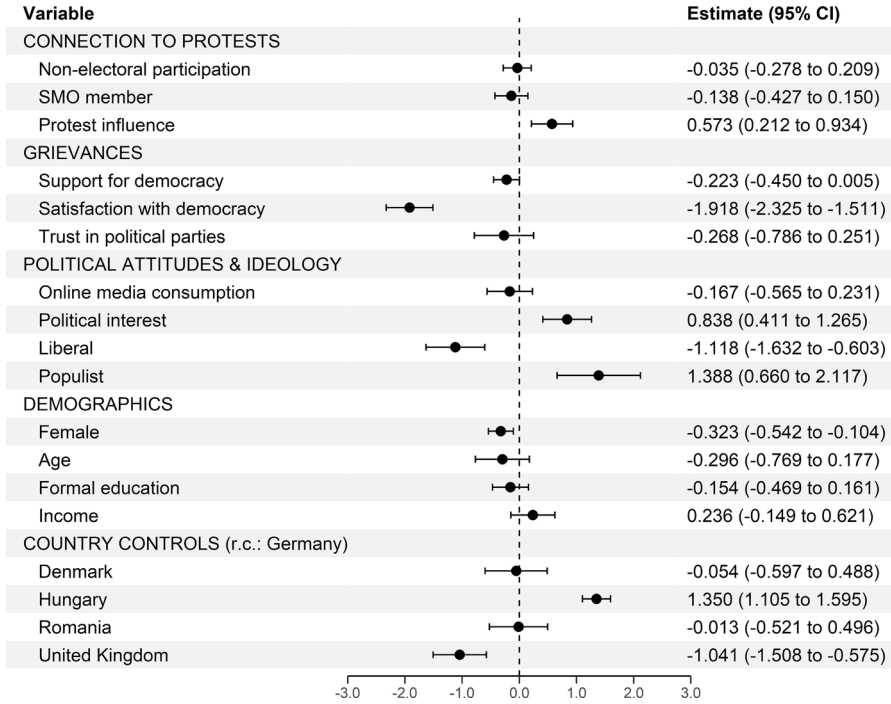


Fig. 3 Predictors of electoral support for far-right movement parties (N=10,347 respondents)

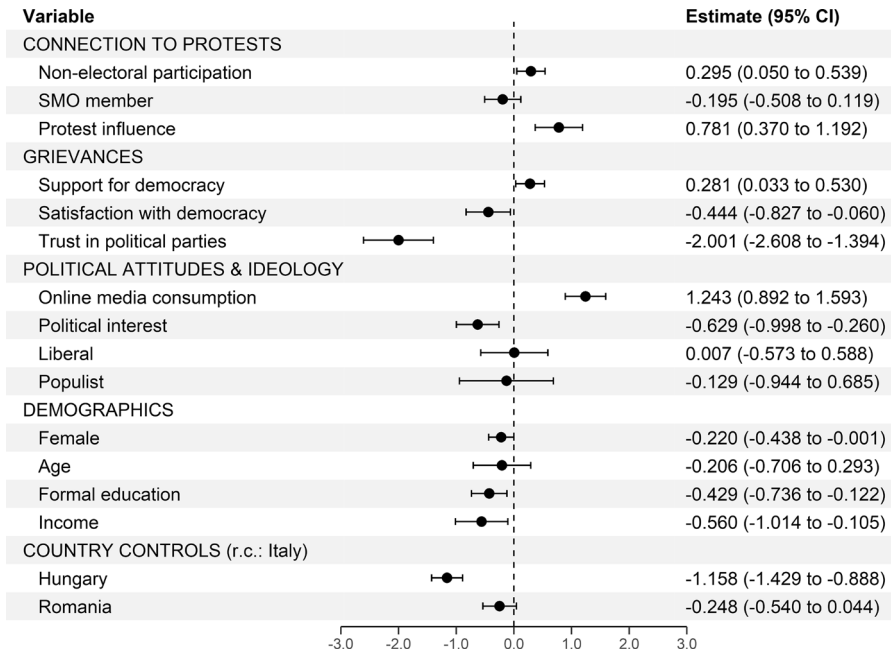


Fig. 4 Predictors of electoral support for centrist and eclectic movement parties (N=10,347 respondents)



party electorates do not only believe in protest participation but also show a greater propensity to engage in non-electoral activities than the rest of the voters.. Notwithstanding, we can also extrapolate from our results that movement party voters are more likely to be protest participants but not protest organisers, as these tasks are commonly performed by members of organisations and our results do not show any significant relation between these variables.

Our analysis of the relation between different sources of dissatisfaction and movement party voting speaks clearly against a generalisation of a single movement party voter profile. While an undifferentiated analysis of movement party voters would lead us to conclude that there is a positive association between voting for this party variety, satisfaction with the system and dissatisfaction with elites, a finer grained scrutiny shows specific patterns for each type of movement party voter. Believing that democracy is the best system of government (H2a) is positively related to voting for green/left-libertarian, as well as centrist and eclectic movement parties. However, the association is negative but not significant in our model predicting voting for far-right movement parties. Indeed, at a level of significance of 90%, the results would indicate that those who do not believe that democracy is the best system of government are more likely to vote for far-right movement parties. Focusing on satisfaction with democracy (H2b), we observe a positive correlation between dissatisfaction with democracy and the movement party vote. However, this effect is driven mostly by far-right movement party voters, as this is the only model in which this association is statistically significant, being the greatest coefficient to explain support for far-right movement parties.

When it comes to dissatisfaction with elites, trust in political parties (H2c) is positively associated with voting for green/left-libertarian movement parties and negatively related to support for centrist and eclectic movement parties. Trust in political parties is negatively associated with support for far-right movement parties but the association would only be significant at 90% probability and not 95%. Based on these results, we can conclude that green/left-libertarian movement party voters contradict our theoretical expectations and display both system and elite satisfaction. The opposite is true for far-right movement party voters, for whom their vote is associated with system and elite dissatisfaction. Finally, centrist and eclectic movement party voters seem to be rather supportive of the general principle of democracy but distrustful of the performance of the current political parties.

Looking into online media consumption, next, we find some interesting results. Frequency of consumption of political information online (H3) is inversely correlated with voting for green/left-libertarian movement parties. Conversely, high frequency of ICT usage increases the odds of being an eclectic and centrist movement party voter, while it has no relation to voting for far-right movement parties. These results qualify previous studies that found an overall positive relation between online media consumption and voting for movement parties (Mosca and Quaranta 2017). Next, with regard to political interest (H4), our results partially confirm previous studies that found a positive relation between high political interest and electoral support for movement parties (Mosca and Quaranta 2017), which we can confirm is present among green/left-libertarian and far-right movement party voters but not among supporters of eclectic and centrist movement parties.



We now move on to exploring the relation between ideology and electoral support for movement parties. Overall, we find that the relation between populist attitudes and movement party voting is positive but only marginally significant (H5a). Looking at our specific movement party profiles, we see that this association is only statistically significant for far-right movement party voters, for whom it is the second largest coefficient in the model. Hence, despite movement parties tending to use populist communication strategies (Della Porta 2021), only far-right movement party voters seem to display more populist attitudes than the rest of the population. Finally, regarding their cultural liberalism (H5b), as expected, this relation is very different across movement party families. This coefficient is the largest biggest in the model explaining the vote for green/left-libertarian movement parties and shows a positive relation between cultural liberalism and support for this type of movement party. Conversely, cultural liberalism decreases the odds of voting for far-right movement parties (H5c), being the third largest coefficient in the model. As far as support for centrist and eclectic movement parties is concerned, cultural liberalism has no statistically significant relation in this case.

In summary, our analysis indicates that, with the exception of their belief in the capacity of protests to influence the situation in their country, movement party electorates are quite distinct from each other, when broken down along ideological lines. The profiles of movement party voters are quite different in respect to an array of theoretically pertinent features. Green/left-libertarian movement party voters seem to be keen supporters of democracy who, being younger and more educated, see protest participation as yet another legitimate tool to express their political desires, as Dalton (2017) has pointed out when he theorised a generational participation gap. Hence, green/left-libertarian movement party voters may be understood as part of a wider generational change that is reflected in greater attention to environmental and other post-industrial issues (cf. Inglehart 1977) as well as an expansion of citizens' repertoire of political participation.

Quite differently, far-right movement party voters could be framed as exponents of a 'protest vote' (Alvarez et al. 2018; Birch and Dennison 2019). Far-right movement party voters seem to be guided by their discontent with the democratic system, as well as their populist attitudes. They are also the only movement party voters who do not necessarily channel their political views through non-electoral political means. In this way, the electoral participation of far-right voters may be associated with an intention to challenge a political system that has disappointed them and that they perceive is not open to change. In between these two poles, eclectic and centrist movement party voters seem to fall into a pattern previously labelled as 'critical citizens' (Norris 2011). Their vote may reflect a general support for democracy but dissatisfaction with how political parties currently work. Against this backdrop, they seek to express their demands by supporting electoral alternatives as well as taking part in non-electoral activities.

Conclusion

In recent years, the rise of movement parties has shaken political landscapes across Europe. These parties, which combine elements of traditional political parties and social movements, have disrupted established notions of party politics and opened



up new avenues for citizen engagement and political mobilisation. Despite their growing prominence, however, our understanding of who the voters of movement parties are, has remained limited. This paper sought to address this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the factors that contribute to the electoral success of movement parties, drawing on nationally representative survey data from six European countries. By shedding light on the key correlates of voter support for these parties, we hope to deepen our understanding of the changing dynamics of party politics in Europe.

Overall, our results suggest that movement party voters cannot be seen as a homogeneous group, but rather as exhibiting distinct patterns depending on their ideological orientation. On the one hand, we corroborate an earlier finding that movement party voters value and participate in protests more than the rest of the population and show this to be the case across ideological lines. On the other, we contend that there are distinct patterns that differentiate the voters of each movement party family. We distinguished four types of movement parties: green/left-libertarian, far-right, eclectic, and centrist and identified the sources of voter support for them.

We argued that green/left-libertarian movement party voters fit the profile of the new generation of democrats already identified by Dalton (2017). These younger and more educated voters, who are keen believers in the merits of democracy, view protest participation as another valid means to express their political opinions. Green/left-libertarian movement party voters stand out for their culturally liberal worldview, which may be part of a wider socio-cultural transformation in post-industrial societies (cf. Inglehart 1977) that has brought new political issues and repertoires into mainstream politics.

Far-right movement party voters' profile is closer to what other authors have referred to as a 'protest vote' (Alvarez et al. 2018; Birch and Dennison 2019). These voters display, on average, greater discontent both with the democratic system as well as with political elites. Having little faith in the openness of the political system to change and being largely more conservative than the rest of the citizens, their political participation may seek to challenge a political system that has brought rapid social changes and has made them feel 'strangers in their own land' as Hochschild (2016) once pointedly put it.

In turn, the characteristics of the supporters of eclectic and centrist movement parties appear to align with what some authors have referred to as 'critical citizens' (Norris 2011). Although they are strong supporters of the democratic system, these voters express disappointment with how the current democratic system works and with the political elites that shape it. Through a political repertoire that spans electoral and non-electoral actions, they turn to new parties that seem more open to listening to bottom-up demands.

In sum, our results indicate that the movement party framework is valuable for dissecting internal party dynamics but falls short when one is attempting to paint a comprehensive picture of their voter bases. Movement parties have been billed as new organisational vehicles for bridging the gap between societies and their electoral representatives. Yet, when it comes to the electorate, aside from a shared belief in the potential of protests, there is not much more tying voters of different movement parties together. Our study, ultimately, encourages scholars to avoid



generalisations about the sources of electoral support for movement parties, showing that their profiles differ significantly depending on their ideological orientation. Through our analysis of the profiles of the voters of four distinct types of movement parties, we have sought to offer a more nuanced view of the European political landscape and have highlighted the importance of taking a more refined approach to the analysis of these new parties and their electorates.

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