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Abstract: Engaging with research on protest participation and gender inequalities, we examine how gender dynamics play a crucial role in shaping patterns of protest participation across the rural/urban divide. We argue that moving from a rural toward an urban setting leads to an increase in protest participation for women, but not for men. Using an original two-wave panel survey dataset collected for the same individuals between 2018 and 2019 and covering nine European countries, we are able to go beyond traditional correlation analyses and measure our key variables over time, thus developing a dynamic approach that links differences in gender, socio-geographical positioning and protest participation. Our findings demonstrate that the rural/urban divide as a driver of protest participation affects women and men differently, because it is shaped by different experiences of political socialization, socioeconomic status, and structures of domination and discrimination, leading to different opportunities and incentives for mobilization.

Keywords: gender, protest, rural/urban cleavage, panel data, European politics.
The existence of a gender gap in relation to political participation is one of the most stable findings in the literature (Burns et al., 2001; Inglehart and Norris, 2003), showing that women and men engage in politics to different degrees and in different forms. Men tend to participate more in political activities, particularly those that are institutionalized, time-consuming, and are more resource demanding, whereas women tend to prefer private, individualistic, small-scale activities, which are less formal (Lavizzari and Portos, 2021; Stolle and Micheletti, 2005). At the same time, empirical evidence supports the hypothesis of young people being more likely to engage in extra-institutional forms of activism, including protest (Melo and Stockemer, 2014; Norris, 2003; Sloam, 2016; Kitanova, 2019). As demonstrated by an established body of work, gender dynamics play a crucial role in shaping patterns of political participation (Burns, 2007; Conway et al., 2004; Hooghe and Stolle, 2004; Verba et al., 1995), and they interact with individual and contextual structural dimensions linked to activism and protest activities in particular (Einwohner et al., 2000; Robnett, 1997; Taylor, 1999).

However, there is very little available research that sheds light on the importance of gender dynamics for generating different patterns of political participation at large—and, more specifically, protest participation—across the rural/urban cleavage (Dodson, 2015). Our contribution advances this scholarship by focusing on two main sociodemographic traits, namely, gender and rural/urban domicile, and showing how they constitute interacting prompts for protest activities. Overall, we argue that changing domicile from a rural toward an urban setting leads to an increase in protest participation only for women, not for men. Not only do cities and urban contexts emerge as major sites for politicization, the social position within a given gendered rural or urban structure, for example, in terms of socioeconomic status, and structures of domination and discrimination, also provides different opportunities for political engagement.

Using an original two-wave panel survey dataset collected for the same individuals (n= 7,240) in nine European countries between 2018 and 2019, we go beyond traditional correlation analyses and move closer to causal inference. We can track and measure our key variables within a short time span,
thus developing a dynamic approach that links variation in these features to protest participation. Analyzing the longitudinal determinants of protest is relevant, given the mobilization capacity and impact on the broader European political landscape that, e.g., the feminist movements, climate change, and anti-austerity protests have had in contemporary European societies.

This article is structured as follows. In the next section we review the extant literature and theoretically develop the nexus between protest participation and its context, whether rural or urban, explaining how gender shapes this relationship. We then present the data, the empirical design, and discussion. We conclude by assessing the main findings and their implications, and indicate some avenues for further research.

**Gender Dynamics of Protest Participation in Rural/Urban Contexts**

Several factors shape the opportunities for groups of individuals to engage in politics, including protest activities (Dalton et al., 2010; Grasso and Giugni, 2016; Quaranta, 2015; Schussman and Soule, 2005; Vráblíková, 2014). When analyzing “differential recruitment”—what makes some individuals engage in action whereas others remain inactive (McAdam, 1986)—research on the individual drivers of protest can be divided into three broad lines of inquiry: biographical availability, meaning all those individual attributes and resources that affect the costs of participation; political engagement, which includes an individual’s capital with regard to political interest, knowledge, values, and access to information; and structural availability, namely, interpersonal networks, membership of organizations, and the development of human capital in terms of civic and sociopolitical skills (Dalton et al., 2010; Schussman and Soule, 2005). In sum, education, income, political interest, progressive values, and membership of organizations are among the most significant predictors of protest involvement (Norris et al., 2005; Schussman and Soule, 2005). However, the role of the place where people live (domicile) and the rural/urban cleavage as determinants of protest has received little attention.
Out of the four cleavages discussed in Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan’s (1967) seminal volume, “the gap between rural and urban society is perhaps the most intriguing and the least understood” (Tarrow, 1971: 341; Kriesi, 2003). Nonetheless, most recent empirical evidence shows that sizable urban–rural differences persist even after accounting for an array of individual-level characteristics, such as race, income and education (Gimpel et al., 2021). This has an impact, we argue throughout, on motivations and opportunities for engaging in protest politics.

Feminist research has acknowledged not only the importance of place but also the significance of gender in relation to location. As Susan Hanson claims, “the two are completely bound up with each other, to the point of almost being inseparable” (2010: 6). Indeed, gender dynamics vary from place to place, consistent with the different geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts. In addition, scholars have suggested that domicile may have a dumping effect on the multiple dynamics according to which individuals start engaging in protest activities (Sampson et al., 1997; 1999). The cornerstone of these approaches is the degree of social control exercised in different contexts, that is, urban, suburban, and rural communities. Social control is defined as the various informal and formal means through which a society can regulate the behavior of its members (Kurlychek, 2018), emphasizing the relationships, values, commitments, and beliefs that encourage conformity (Janowitz, 1975). According to this view, and while it is arguably difficult to pin down empirically, the degree of social control in rural areas tends to be higher than in urban ones. This first observation hints at the idea that, on the one hand, a lower level of social control in urban communities might favor involvement in protest-related activities. Factors facilitating this include anonymity and a lesser possibility of general collective norms being imposed on the population (Miller and Nicholls, 2013). On the other hand, it has been noted that “urbanization may weaken local kinship and friendship networks and impede social participation in local affairs” (Sampson and Groves, 1989: 782). Moving from a rural area to an urban site, for example, from a village to a city, may temporarily constrain individuals’ ability to mobilize, due to a lack of thick ties and the absence of long-lasting interpersonal networks. However, in line with this idea, it is likely that the combination of a lower level of social control and
the (momentary) lack of resources such as networks, might make individuals more likely to engage in protest-related activities compared with other forms of political participation (e.g., contacting a politician or joining a civil society organization).

The urban context presents a series of features that, taken together, provide individuals with opportunities to engage in politics in general, and protest activities in particular; the importance of resources in terms of time, costs, and networks is clear. Cross-national surveys often indicate a strong positive relationship between national affluence and protest activity, that is, economic growth produces the resources that facilitate political action (Dalton et al., 2010: 55). Thus, large cities, where much wealth and resources are concentrated, provide an environment that is supportive of collective action. The importance of educational and financial resources was mentioned in the introduction. As well as these, exposure to political information, which can encourage people to engage in protest and political activities, is also crucial. Indeed, universities and other educational institutions are usually present in higher numbers in urban contexts. In addition, some studies focusing on indirect political mobilization emphasize the relevance of spillover effects within cities, notably across neighborhoods (Foos and de Rooij, 2016; Sinclair, 2012). For instance, the presence of social and cultural centers hosting all sorts of political, cultural, and economic activities in which citizens and members can engage (libraries, theater or music groups, popular sports clubs, evening classes, and so on), increases their exposure to political information.

In terms of networks, citizens are more likely to be recruited into political activity in urban contexts where the existence of the voluntary sector and a significant number of civil society groups, as well as other groups such as unions, political parties, and informal political clusters, can favor membership of organizations that are often interlinked. The density of the support network among clusters of these organizations may also be higher, thus pooling resources for political activities, at the same time reducing transaction costs among them. Therefore, “dense communication structures, mass education, urbanization and high degrees of social mobility [are all] factors that can increase the resources available to protest groups” (Dalton et al., 2010: 54).
Finally, cities are often seen as places from which endless feeds of political news and information emanate, and residents are constantly exposed to these: the probability of seeing a news magazine in a coffee shop, finding flyers available at the entrance to the university campus or the supermarket, being able to join a demonstration or protest march at will, or even seeing posters and graffiti containing political content is higher in urban settings. In short, agents and instances of political socialization in urban settings are manifold and, thus, opportunities for joining in are numerous. Considering the literature presented so far, we first hypothesize:

\[H1: \text{Relative to living in a rural area, living in urban setting— or moving from a rural toward an urban area— increases protest participation.}\]

To advance our theoretical argument, we account for the role of gender in shaping the association between (change in) domicile area and protest participation. Notably, we build on the literature that analyzes changing patterns of political engagement between women and men (Burns et al., 2001; Dodson, 2015; Hooghe and Stolle, 2004; McAdam, 1992). We explore whether the level of participation in protest activities varies for men and women depending on their domicile, that is, if they live in— or move from— a rural toward an urban context. A growing number of survey studies have empirically supported the progressive closing of the gender gap in confrontational activities and protest events with cross-sectional comparative data and country-specific case studies in Europe, particularly in relation to young people (Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Roth and Saunders, 2019; Lavizzari and Portos, 2021). Yet, Kyle Dodson emphasizes how most of this research has focused on the amount of protest activity in which women and men engage, neglecting the crucial role shared attitudes toward gender roles play in influencing tactical choices, in his words, “the relevance of gender ideology” (2015: 378). Gender roles and relationships are shaped both by individual characteristics and the structural context of the power relationships in which they are embedded (Risman, 2004; Lavizzari, 2020). Hence, to identify gender dynamics of protest, it is important to understand how different gendered opportunity structures affect the tactical choices and strategies
available to social movement organizations and groups, and the individuals who join them (Blee, 2002; Ferree et al., 2002; Taylor, 1996).

The concatenation of four reasons helps us understand why women engage more in protest activities as they move from rural contexts to more urban areas, whereas men maintain similar levels across geographical areas. First, there is a higher level of support for gender equality in cities. Second, and relatedly, cities host a multitude of opportunities for aggregation and politicization, and this facilitates collective action. Third, cities are places where less social control is exercised, which, in turn, favors and enhances women’s opportunities for political engagement. Finally, economic circumstances and grievances, the organization of the job market as well as the division of labor by gender is uneven across rural and urban contexts and may have an impact on women’s availability to engage in protests. In the following, we will delve deeper into each of these arguments.

In gender egalitarian contexts and regimes, women are more likely to employ a wider variety of tactics, including protest repertoires of action (Roth and Saunders, 2019). Indeed, looking at cross-national surveys on gender attitudes, Dodson finds that

“In traditional gender environments, men are more likely than women to employ tactics that involve either only confrontational activities or both confrontational and nonconfrontational activities. Conversely, in these environments, women are more likely to employ tactics that focus only on nonconfrontational activities” (2015: 388).

Although we can observe a general increase in protest participation across genders in these contexts, the variation in levels of engagement for men—in both protest and non-protest political activities—is not as great as that for women (Dodson, 2015). Research on gender also finds that residents in urban milieus tend to be more supportive of gender equality. That is, cities can generally be considered as contexts that are more gender egalitarian (Dirksmeier, 2015; Duncan, 1996; Evans, 2019). In this sense, we can expect urban communities to be more sympathetic toward women’s involvement in protest activities.
The perception of community efficacy, which is built through moments of collective association that foster social support and strengthen communal ties, is another important element. In this sense, the possibility that women could overcome the structural dynamics of gender oppression and change their perception of the public space—often charged with insecurity and fear of physical and symbolic violence—takes place through collective action. Cities facilitate association and are more supportive of women’s involvement in politics (Evans, 2019). Several feminist scholars emphasize the importance of “voluntarily gendered spaces,” such as women’s centers, feminist bookstores, health clinics, and so on, that have been established over time through the accomplishments of the Second Wave movement, notably by adapting existing urban places to meet women’s needs (Spain, 2014; 2016). In this sense, feminist spaces are also incubators in which women mobilize for political action: “[g]athering together after work, urban residents have more opportunities to share, learn from, be inspired by, and collectively rethink heterogeneous gender ideologies and practices. Association and exposure reinforce a positive feedback loop” (Evans, 2019: 964). Cities “provide a vital platform for men and women to think themselves into politics, to make themselves into citizens, to initiate social politics” (Bender, 2002, in Spain 2016: 16). However, this opportunity is contingent on the presence of a network of groups, collectives, spaces, and places in which women can claim their rights. The concentration and high numbers of groups and organizations (including feminist and women’s groups but not exclusively so) increase the likelihood of membership—or at least the embeddedness of these movement networks in the society—thus increasing their potential for collective action and protest.

Following from our first hypothesis, the degree of social control is a key mechanism that shapes women’s involvement in the amount of political activity they get involved in and also its type, based on where they live, either a rural or an urban context. Feminist scholars have stressed how social control is linked to two further phenomena: gender-based/sexual violence and social isolation (Lanier and Maume, 2009). Social isolation and rates of violence are intertwined, and the degree to which this happens varies along the rural/urban divide. On the one hand, socioeconomic segregation, which affects the distribution of resources and social capital in geographically dislocated communities,
increases the levels of social isolation, and this, in turn, has an impact on the rates of violence (Pitts and Hope, 1997). On the other hand, sociocultural isolation, as a consequence of patriarchal ideology applied to gender roles and family life, may be exacerbated in rural contexts where women suffer from remoteness, “passive policing,” and intimate violence (Websdale, 2002). Concurring with other scholars, Christina Lanier and Michael Maume claim that “this situation is made even worse by the generally impoverished conditions of rural areas and the lack of structural resources available in more affluent communities (e.g., health care, social services, transportation)” (2009: 1316). As Rachel Pain underlines in her work on space, sexual violence, and social control, “[t]he spatial patterns of women’s perception of risks, of the actual risks they are exposed to, and of their behavioral response have implications for their equal participation in society” (1991: 415). Therefore, taken together, higher degrees of social control and isolation in rural areas, along with risk’s perception and actual risks associated to it, are important contextual factors to consider for the participation of women in protest events and activities.

Finally, feminist research has long emphasized the intertwined relationship between gender (women’s) equality—that is, the possibility of women exercising their full rights as citizens, including claiming their rights through collective action—and employment outside the home in the money economy (Foreman, 1974; Spain, 2014). The amount of unpaid household labor that women undertake and the length of time they have to act as a caregiver inside the home are major determinants of the extent to which women are actually able to perform any other type of work or engage in any other type of activity: “[b]eing on call for others, whether by choice or necessity, interrupts women’s lives in ways that men seldom experience” (Spain, 2016: 18). Therefore, women’s employment in the labor market outside the home is the fundamental basis of their ability to be economically independent, increase their resources, and reorganize their time. The difference between productive work and reproductive domestic and social work is crucial for shaping women’s biographical availability. In this sense, the structure of the labor market and the organization of work in general also vary between rural and urban areas, affecting both women and men, although
differently. In European urban contexts, the job market is usually structured around fixed hours during the day, whereas in rural areas the working time may be longer, including a combination of different (potentially hazardous) activities—this also holds true beyond the Global North (Chant, 2013). Differences also exist in terms of income and stability. In addition, in urban contexts, women have greater access than men to part-time jobs (ILO, 2016), as these types of posts (administrative, clerical, etc.) are still usually considered to be more suited to women.²

Recent grievance-centered studies have stressed that (young) women are particularly vulnerable to economic downturns and have been significantly affected by recent economic crises in the European periphery, being one of the social groups most affected by precarious unemployment (ETUI, 2018). As we know that, under certain circumstances, grievances contributed to triggering mobilization, often in the form of mass protests (della Porta, 2015; Portos, 2021), we expect that people who have experienced economic difficulties could become more willing to protest than those who have not faced economic strain when resources for mobilization are made available. Thereby, employment and socioeconomic factors create a rural/urban divide in which women’s participation in political activism may vary greatly depending on where they live and work, because this has a direct effect on the organization of women’s time, resources, and opportunities.

Taking all these four aspects together, we hypothesize:

**H2:** Relative to living in a rural area, living in urban setting—or moving from a rural toward an urban area—increases protest participation only for women (not for men).

**Methods and Data**

The EURYKA representative survey covers nine European countries, that is, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. The first-wave results were collected between 15 April and December 2018, whereas the second-wave fieldwork took place one year later (throughout 2019). A specialized polling agency collected the data *ad hoc* through administered
online panels using balanced country quotas in terms of sex, age, region, and education level to match national population statistics (for further information and detailed sampling procedures, see EURYKA, 2018). This database has a unique advantage. It consists of 7,240 individuals who filled in valid questionnaires for both waves (i.e., valid recontacts)—see EURYKA (2018). Panel surveys have an important advantage that is central to the aim of this work. By providing multiple time point observations of indicators for a given individual, panel data measure citizens’ values and behavior more reliably. This allows us to weight alternative explanations for protest participation and analyze the evolution of contextual and attitudinal factors between the different stages of the fieldwork. Most surveys at hand do not allow us to go beyond correlation to determine adequately whether—and to what extent—attitudinal and protest participation-related variables are the cause and the consequence, given that “there is a time ordering between causes and effects” (Blossfeld and Rohwer, 1997: 366). In a non-experimental design, panel data are useful in addressing the “cause must precede the consequence in time” requirement (Galais and Blais, 2016: 216). In sum, the EURYKA panel survey provides an excellent resource for closely examining whether a change in domicile from a rural toward an urban setting leads to a change in protest participation and whether and how gender shapes this relationship, controlling for other alternative explanations.

**Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable is a binary measurement of protest participation. The respondent has participated in a protest provided she/he declares that she/he has “attended [a] demonstration, march or rally” or “joined a strike” in the past 12 months. Although electoral and non-electoral participation are meant to represent a continuum in terms of political engagement (Quaranta, 2015; Bazurli and Portos, 2021; Pirro and Portos, 2021), protest participation has distinct features as compared with other types of political action that could reasonably be classed as “unconventional” (Grasso and Giugni, 2016). Specifically, in the 2018–2019 European context, the movements for climate justice and feminism stood out for their capacity to mobilize support. The international wave of contestation
of the Fridays for Future student strikes brought millions of participants out onto the streets during the global climate strikes of March 2019—the 20–27 September 2019 campaign alone mobilized 7.6 million people around the world in 6,000 protest events across 185 countries (de Moor et al., 2020). The news daily *El País* wrote of the success of feminist mobilizations in March 2018 in Spain: “this year it was overwhelming, with hundreds of protests taking place across the country, a general 24-hour strike [the only one in the world], partial walkouts by five million workers, and massive demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of people. Its success placed Spain at the cusp of a global movement” (in Portos, 2019: 1463). As these examples illustrate, street protests and strike activities are not strictly associated with the labor movement nowadays; we consider them throughout as “modal” expressions of social movement activism (Tarrow, 1996).

As mass protests unfolded in Europe during 2018 and 2019, we observe a generalized increase in the levels of protest participation across waves—the average levels of protest increased from 0.11 to 0.19. There are pronounced differences in the levels of protest across countries, with Spaniards being very keen to engage in protest activities (protest participation increased from 0.30 in Wave 1 to 0.37 in Wave 2) and Swedes much less so (note the share of protesters doubled in the Scandinavian country, going from 0.06 in Wave 1 to 0.12 in Wave 2). Differences notwithstanding, the cross-wave increase in protest participation is generalized across countries (Figure 1) and for the two repertoires of action included in the main measurement (Figure 2).  

[FIGURES 1-2]

**Explanatory Variables**

We have two main predictors. The first is an ordinal indicator of *domicile*. We ask the respondents “which of the following best describes the area in which you live?” (1= farm or home in the countryside; 2= country village; 3= town or small city; 4= suburbs or outskirts of a big city; 5= a big city). Although the cross-wave correlation is high (Pearson’s $r=.81$), 1,679 respondents changed their area of residence between protest waves, representing 26.3% of the sample (Table A2, Appendix II).
While this figure is arguably high, note that young people are overrepresented in our sample (EURYKA, 2018). This is important because young people are more mobile, less likely to be homeowners and more likely to be in temporary and/or precarious jobs, have higher mobility due to work/studies, and be in better health (see Giugni and Grasso, 2021). The mean change on the 5-point rural/urban scale is -0.05, meaning that the average of the scale decreased by 0.05 points (i.e., people in the nine European countries tended to describe they are they live in as slightly more rural). Cross-country differences are again noticeable, with Greeks and Italians moving down (i.e., moving from urban toward rural domiciles) 0.11 points on the rural/urban scale and Swedes moving up (i.e., moving from rural toward urban domiciles) by 0.02 of a point (Figures A1-A2, Appendix II).

Alternatively, as we are interested in tracking actual change, we represented the transitions between rural/urban domicile across the two waves (Figure A3, Appendix II). This led us to operationalize the domicile variable as categorical, which we coded in two different ways. We first calculated the cross-wave difference in domicile: if it has a 0 value (thus no change, staying in the same domicile area, we give it a 1 score), the score is 2 if the cross-wave difference has a positive value (moved domicile from an urban to a town/rural area) or 3 if it moved from rural to town/urban settings (negative value). On the other hand, we recoded the original 5-point ordinal scale, collapsing the categories at each end of the rural/urban spectrum, i.e., countryside/ village and suburbs/ big city, respectively. This allows us to observe more neatly the flows of change from rural to urban settings (Figure A4, Appendix II), which we have again simplified in three categories (staying the same, moved domicile from an urban to a town/rural area, or from a rural to a town/urban setting).

The second main predictor is gender. To enhance the relevance of gender dynamics in our analysis, and complement the theoretical argument from which we draw our hypotheses by discussing the role of gender in the protest–domicile nexus, we use the question “How do you describe yourself?” The possible answers are the categories “male,” “female,” or “do not identify as female or male.” To the detriment of the sex binary, we stick to our (time invariant) gender variable because it potentially
allows us to consider further and possibly intersecting sources of discrimination (Lindqvist et al., 2021).\textsuperscript{8}

Controls

Building on research that analyzes the determinants of protest, we include several control variables to strengthen our argument against alternative explanations. Among these variables, we distinguish between four different groups: biographical availability and grievances; political attitudes and network exposure (Dalton et al., 2010; Schussman and Soule, 2005; Vrábliková, 2014; Portos, 2021). Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the variables included in the main models for Waves 1 and 2— the detailed operationalization is specified in the Appendix I. We also account for the specific (e.g., institutional, historical, cultural) characteristics of each country that might be correlated with protest through country fixed effects.

\textbf{[TABLE 1]}

\textbf{Results and Discussion}

We first fit several panel regressions with random effects. Whereas in Models 1-2 (Table 2) we study to what extent the gender and domicile predictors account for variation in protest engagement without and with country dummies, in Model 3 we include controls related to biographical availability and grievances (logged age, household income, education, deprivation, main activity). Note that in all model specifications with the EURYKA panel survey data that are reported throughout, 1) we treat the log of age, income and country dummies as time invariant\textsuperscript{9}; 2) we observe substantial variation between panel waves in all the time variant controls (Table 1). Although value configurations tend to be rather stable over time in general, with panel data, attitude change is more likely to occur in relation to younger people, public beliefs, and very salient issues (Kiley and Vaisey, 2020). In Model 4, we add time variant having children as well as variables related to political
attitudes and network exposure (left-right ideology, political information, gender ideology, social control and meeting with friends). We add marital status, political efficacy and change the indicator of social control in Model 5. Taking Model 4 as the benchmark, we split the sample and run the models for males and females separately (Models 6-7), expecting to find a significant coefficient for domicile in the subset of females—but not in the subset of males. In Model 8 we test whether gender identification moderates the impact of domicile in protest participation through an interaction—we report a matrix of correlations between dependent variables, key predictors and controls in Table A3, Appendix II (-0.24< Pearson’s r< 0.2310). Model 9 includes the full model specification. Finally, we include a three-term interaction to assess whether social control moderates the impact of the domicile-gender nexus on protest behavior (Model 10).

[TABLE 2]

First, we observe that social capital and network exposure (meeting with friends) and political attitudes (left-leaning ideological self-placement and the acquisition of political information) are strongly and positively associated with protest participation. Crucially, living in an urban area positively affects the prospects of protest participation, at least for the nine European countries covered and for the 2018–2019 period. Specifically, a one unit change in the 5-point rural-urban scale increases the odds of protesting by 1.16 units (Model 4, Table 2). This key finding is robust to replacing the protest dependent variable with the demonstrations-only indicator (Table A6, Appendix II) and across countries (Figures A5-A6, Appendix II). Overall, urban settings seem to emerge as major sites for politicization and protest participation— thus validating H1.

[FIGURE 3]

Our analyses go further and allow us to nuance this argument by showing that the domicile–protest nexus is not merely additive but is conditional on gender. That is, gender infiltrates the association between the rural/urban divide and protest participation (Models 6-7-8-9, Table 2; Figures 3-4).
While the levels of protest remain constant across domicile change, protest participation increases dramatically when a woman goes from a rural toward a more urban area. Specifically, the conditional marginal effect along the rural-urban scale is 0.25 for women—but it is not significant for men (Figure A7, Appendix II). It means that, on average, the predicted probabilities of protesting increase from 7 to 14 percentage points if the woman lives in the countryside relative to a big city (Model 8, Table 2; Figure 4). This finding nicely complements our additive model, demonstrating that we cannot quite speak of a neat partition between mobilized urban milieus and politically inactive and disengaged rural citizens. In other words, the rural/urban distinction and its effect on protest involvement is gendered, because it holds only for the subset of women, not for that of men (Models 6-7-8-9, Table 2; Figures 3-4)—thus validating Hypothesis 2. Looking at the breakdown of results by country, while there is no evidence countering this argument, empirical support turns out to be particularly strong among Swedish respondents (Figures A5-A6, Appendix II; see Roth and Saunders, 2019). Our key results also hold with the demonstration-only dependent variable (Models 6-7-8-9, Table A6; Figure A13, Appendix II).

[FIGURE 4]

Importantly, to properly track domicile change across the rural/urban divide, we also measure the cross-wave change of rural/urban domicile with three categories. Descriptive evidence indicates that protest likelihood in Wave 2 is 19%, 26.1%, and 22% for men who stayed in the same residential area, for those who moved from urban to town/rural or from rural to town/urban contexts, respectively (males protested 20.1% on average)—Table A4, Appendix II. The picture is different for women, as protest participation is 16.9%, 17.3% and 22.6% for the three categories of domicile change (mean value is 17.7%)—Table A4, Appendix II. While those who moved toward urban settings are the group that is most likely to protest among females, that is not the case among males. Additionally, we run regressions with the two three-category variables of rural/urban domicile based on the cross-wave difference and the direct recoding of the original 5-point ordinal scale as described in the ‘Methods
and Data’ section (Models 1-5 and 6-10, Table A5, Appendix II; Figure 5; Figure A8, Appendix II; also splitting those who stayed in rural/town and urban areas in Model 11, Table A5, Appendix II). While males who stayed in the same residential area or who moved from urban to rural contexts were more likely to protest than females in the same categories, there is no gender difference in terms of protest participation for those who moved from rural toward urban areas. In other words, the gender gap closes as people abandon rural areas and move to urban contexts—or stay in urban relative to rural settings (Figure A9, Appendix II).

[FIGURE 5]

Overall, what our results show is that while people may be divided when it comes to partisanship and ideology, there are also significant divisions based on their geography or “place” (Fudge, 2020). Moreover, rooted in the idea that different places harbor varying degrees of spatial mobility, resources and social control to it, our findings demonstrate that change of domicile drives European people’s protest likelihood, and that gender plays a conditioning role on the impact of a change of domicile for protest prospects. However, none of the variables related to a short-term change in biographical availability and labor market conditions (having children, education, marital status, main activity, income) have a direct impact on protest (Models 8-9, Table 2)—nor they moderate the change of domicile-gender interactive terms (see, e.g., Models 1-2-3, Table A7, Appendix II). Differences in the average values of, e.g., education, having children and income, between women and men do not substantially change depending on whether their domiciles are in the countryside or a big city (Figures A17-A18, Appendix II).

In contrast, building on an emerging body of literature on protest at times of economic downturn (della Porta, 2015; Grasso and Giugni, 2016; Portos, 2021), our results show that a change in perceived relative deprivation, that is, a respondent now declaring that she/he is “experiencing real financial difficulties”, is strongly associated with an increase in the likelihood that she/he will protest,
especially as far as male respondents are concerned. The effect of grievances on protest is also gendered: if men feel deprived, they seem more likely to protest; however, women are not (Models 6-7, Table 2). Importantly, grievances moderate the change of domicile-gender nexus for protest participation: predicted probabilities of protesting for an aggrieved woman increase from 7 to 15 percent if she moves from the countryside to a big city; and they remain however constant for men (Model 4, Table A7; Figure A12, Appendix II). In a similar way, our indicators of social control also condition the urban-rural domicile and gender interaction (Model 9, Table 2; Models 5-6, Table A7, Appendix II; Figures A10-A11, Appendix II). Specifically, probabilities of engaging in protest among women who agree that “children should be taught to obey authority” increase from 5 to 11 percent as they move from the countryside to a big city—those for men remain constant (Figure A10, Appendix II).11

In sum, we advance two empirical contributions throughout. First, to the detriment of static accounts and explanations on the urban/rural-protest nexus, we interpret this association in a dynamic way: not only remaining but moving toward an urban context—relative to moving from an urban towards a rural setting or staying rural—decreases the cost of protest. Second, and partially qualifying the previous argument: urban contexts increase propensity to participate in protest only for women, not for men, closing the gender gap. Our results suggest this moderation does not happen through a short-term change in labor market conditions, gender ideology and opportunities for political socialization. While further research is needed to conclusively ascertain the specific mechanisms through which gender moderates the impact of change in domicile on political mobilization, our preliminary evidence points at changes in social control as well as grievances emerging as more plausible explanations.

Conclusion
This article has addressed a seldom explored aspect of protest participation and gender (in)equality, namely, how gender dynamics and a change of domicile influence protest participation. We have come to two key conclusions. First, in line with extant research, cities, and urban contexts (relative to rural areas) emerge as major sites for politicization. However, we have not only focused on the largely unexplored role of spatial mobility in the analysis of political engagement but, drawing on feminist literature, we have also underlined the importance of social position within a given gendered structure (i.e., rural or urban context) in shaping patterns of political engagement and protest participation. Specifically, we argue that the role of domicile as a driver of protest is uneven across gender, because it is shaped by different experiences of politicization, structures of domination and discrimination, leading to different opportunities and incentives for protest participation between men and women. Thereby, the relationship between domicile and protest is gendered because the rural/urban dimension is a key driver of protest only among women (not among men)—the female/male gap in protest participation closes as people move from rural areas toward urban contexts—or stay in urban relative to rural areas.

Second, the article advances both our theoretical and empirical knowledge by confirming that mobility and gender strongly relate to protest among a significant highly mobilized subset of the population during the period at stake, namely European women between 2018 and 2019. Analytically, our article qualifies the association between variables as not just static but dynamic, thus reinforcing the causal association. This has significant implications for the literature on political mobilization, demonstrating the importance and complexity of politicization processes, especially the role played by a change of domicile in influencing changes in protest participation, even over a short period of time. Although sociodemographic aspects are slow to change, if a shift in (subjective) domicile takes place, it does influence the motivation to protest. However, this effect is conditional on gender identification, it does not simply add to it.

In conducting our study, we pursued a line of research that can provide “evidence-based data on the disparity between women and men that can persuade analysts and policy makers of the need for
gender equality policies” (Kantola and Lombardo, 2017: 197; Roth and Saunders, 2019). Our results are based on nine countries and further inquiry should delve deeper and extend the comparative scope of the analysis within and beyond Europe. It is likely that in the context of less politicized and mobilized (urban, young, women) milieus, the trends will look different. Further research is needed to unravel how gender opportunity structures influence the way in which different social norms, expectations concerning gender roles, and relationships in rural/urban contexts provide women and men with different opportunities to participate in protest. Because there are different patterns of protest participation, future studies should also try to distinguish between protest engagement by type and frequency of protest. Finally, the qualitative nuance between different categories of domicile and the role of nonbinary gender categories (and how these infiltrate the rural/urban dimension) as determinants of protest participation deserves closer empirical examination. However, what this study has shown is that when assessing the impact of the rural/urban divide on protest, attention needs to be paid to the longitudinal and gender dimensions.
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Notes

1 This usually includes measures of marital status, family, employment status, income, age, education, and gender/sex (McAdam 1986).

2 According to ILO (2016) data, on average, 44.2% of women (only 14.8% of men) “work less than 35 hours per week” in Northern, Southern, and Western Europe.

3 While 27,446 individuals participated in Wave 1, the panel survey had a smaller scope. Attrition rate was 73.62 percent, corrected via weights and refreshments. No significant deviations have been found in terms of sociodemographic information and political socialization between respondents in the first wave and the panel pool (see EURYKA, 2018).

4 The list also includes information on petitioning, boycotting, boycotting, joining a rally, contacting a politician, donating money, displaying a political logo/badge/sticker, and occupying.


6 As a robustness check, we replicate our analysis with the demonstration-only item.

7 While our survey design explicitly acknowledges—and measures—gender identity as a non-dichotomous variable, the third category in the gender identity variable offers very few observations (21 individuals in Wave 1 and just 9 in Wave 2, representing 0.33% and 0.14% of the total observations in each wave). We stick to the male/female distinction and drop the third category—making meaningful statistical inferences with a very small number of observations is not possible. See Table A1, Appendix II.

8 We replicate our analyses with the traditional binary question “What sex were you assigned at birth, on your birth certificate?” (1= female; 0= male). Given that biological sex and gender identity report a near perfect correlation (Pearson’s $r=.99$), replacing gender with sex does not change the results reported throughout in any substantial way.

9 Treating them as time variant does not change the main results. Age varies across time, but not at a different rate between individuals.
Marital status is moderately correlated to other variables (-.07< Pearson’s r< .34)—it is excluded from Model 8 (Table 2) due to endogeneity concerns.

These findings are robust to replacing the protest dependent variable with the demonstrations-only indicator (Models 8-11, Table A6, Appendix II; Figures A13-A16, Appendix II).
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protests on 20-27 September, 2019, in 19 cities around the world.
https://osf.io/asruw/?fbclid=IwAR0N0uOHP_qV1KGY_2W0JJ2r3tXRCrzClq6K9_kRapmh
sJzVraHvRrT_es.


Author biographies

Anna Lavizzari is a research fellow at the Scuola Normale Superiore, Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, in Florence, where she is part of the COSMOS (Centre on Social Movement Studies) research team. Her research interests include gender and politics, social movement studies, and youth political participation.

Martín Portos is Conex-Plus Marie Curie Fellow, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. He holds a PhD in Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute. Winner of the Juan Linz Best Dissertation Award in Political Science and the ISA’s Worldwide Competition for Junior Sociologists, he studies political participation, social movements and inequalities. His publications appeared in American Behavioral Scientist; European Societies; Information, Communication & Society; Politics; Regional Studies; Social Movement Studies; West European Politics, among others. His latest monographs are ‘Grievances and Public Protests’ (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) and ‘Resisting the Backlash’ (Routledge, 2022, with Della Porta et al.).
Tables

Table 1: Summary statistics of variables included in the statistical analyses, Waves 1 and 2

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Table 2: Panel logit regression models with random effects. DV: protest participation (full sample in Models 1-2-3-6; male-only subset in Model 4; female-only subset in Model 5). *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01, ****p<0.001

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Figures

Figure 1: Average protest participation in Waves 1 and 2 by country
Figure 2: Average change in forms of protest (demonstrating and striking) between Waves 1 and 2 by country
Figure 3: Plot of coefficients, panel logit regressions, with male-only and female-only sub-samples (Models 6-7, Table 2)

Note: 95% C.I. Country fixed-effects are included in the models but are not reported in the plot.
Figure 4: Predicted change in protest participation as a function of domicile by gender (logit panel regression, full sample; Model 8, Table 2)

Note: 95% C.I.
Figure 5: Predicted probabilities of protest participation in Wave 2 as a function of change in (3-category) domicile—measured through the cross-wave difference—by gender (logit regression with change in predictors and controls, full sample; Model 4, Table A5, Appendix II)