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The Nature of Societal Conflict in Europe; an Archetypal Analysis of the Postmodern Cosmopolitan, Rural Traditionalist and Urban Precariat

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Abstract

We analyse the nature of contemporary societal conflict in Europe, conceptualizing conflict in terms of oppositional identities, represented by the archetypal extreme corner positions between which contestation takes place. By analysing key characteristics of 28,565 Europeans from seven countries in four distinct time periods, we find three archetypal corner positions. Each archetype represents an ideal-typical configuration of values, attitudes and socio-demographic characteristics which people identify more or less with. The first archetype (which we label Postmodern Cosmopolitan) represents an urban, higher-educated person with cosmopolitan values and attitudes. The other two archetypes (Rural traditionalist and Urban Precariat) present images of Europe that are more nationalistic and differ in their political-economic ideological position. Western and Eastern European countries differ markedly in the distribution of these archetypes over time. The novelty of this paper is our conceptualization and operationalization of the changing nature of societal conflict as changes in oppositional identities.

Keywords: Europe; cultural change; archetype; identities; societal conflict

Introduction

European societies are confronted with intensified societal tensions. Spurred by the 2008 Euro crisis and the refugee crisis (Braun *et al.*, 2019), ideological differences about European identity have become more vocal (Kriesi *et al.*, 1999; Fligstein, 2008). Nationalist voices have become louder (Appiah, 2018; Fukuyama, 2018; Norris and Inglehart, 2019) and have increasingly positioned themselves against liberal elites advocating cosmopolitanism (Goodhart, 2017). The rise of popular radical right parties is a reflection of this underlying societal tension (Mudde, 2009; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2018). This increasing polarization (Goodhart, 2017; Reiljan, 2020) is associated with significant changes in the political landscape in many EU countries (Kriesi *et al.*, 2006, 2012; Mudde, 2009; Polyakova and Fligstein, 2016), leading some to argue that Europe is in an existential crisis because of these societal tensions (Habermas, 2012; see also The Guardian, 2016).

The goal of our paper is to analyse contemporary societal tensions in Europe. We theorize that societal tensions are a function of the oppositional identities that people associate with (Iyengar *et al.*, 2012; Reiljan, 2020). These oppositional identities are defined as the extremes between which contestation takes place. They serve as reference points in a discussion, because tension is about conflict between extreme constellations (Ahler, 2014). Oppositional identities consist of comprehensive, unique configurations

of values, norms, attitudes, and socio-demographics. Individuals associate with these oppositional identities even if they do not share all its attributes. We label these oppositional identities as archetypes. Crucially, archetypes combine values, behaviours and socio-demographics that co-occur but need *not* be substantively related – the infamous association between liberalism and a preference for lattes is an extreme case in point (Della Posta *et al.*, 2015). In this paper we provide substance to these archetypes, analyse how individuals across European countries associate with these archetypes, and assess how these associations have changed over the past three decades.

We explore the above research questions in a sample of seven European countries that are present in all four waves of the European Values Studies (EVS) (results for a sample of 27 EU countries measured at different waves are comparable). We use a set of 18 questions from multiple waves of the EVS. These 18 questions relate to education level, whether one lives in a big city or on the countryside, well-being, trust, and values, norms and attitudes in important domains of life. Our sample consists of 28,565 individuals from seven European countries (Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania) interviewed between 1990 and 2018. The method we use – archetypal analysis (Eugster and Leisch, 2009) – allows us to identify the extreme constellations between which all individuals are located, and project these oppositions onto Europe. This method is well suited to explore societal conflict exactly because it focuses on the extreme corner positions in the population characterizing this conflict.

Our first finding is that oppositions in Europe are captured by three archetypes. We label these extreme positions ‘*Postmodern cosmopolitan*’, ‘*Rural traditionalist*’ and the ‘*Urban precariat*’. These labels are informed by the conflict between localists and globalists, social class and classic political-economic ideological oppositions (such as left–right). We show that each of the 28,565 individuals across these seven European countries is represented by a combination of these archetypal positions. Second, we find that countries differ in the relative prominence of the three archetypes. The Netherlands harbours more individuals closely identifying with the *Postmodern cosmopolitan* archetype than Poland, for example. As a result, the nature of societal conflict differs between European countries. In countries with a large share of people closely identifying with the *Postmodern cosmopolitan* archetype, for example, we find that the opposition between *Rural traditionalism* and *Urban precariat* is less relevant.

Finally, across Europe we find that dominant oppositions have generally shifted, driven by generational change. A general shift towards the *Postmodern cosmopolitan* archetype has put forward the tension between localists and globalists archetype as the main line of conflict. Yet whereas *Rural traditionalists* in Western Europe have become less prominent, the situation in Eastern Europe is more complex. In Eastern Europe we also observe a generational shift away from the *Rural traditionalist* archetype (small compared to the shift in Western Europe), but this generational shift is more than compensated for by the fact that all generations score higher on this archetype in 2018 compared to 1990. This upward Zeitgeist effect for *Rural traditionalists* in Eastern Europe goes together with a downward Zeitgeist effect in Western Europe for the same archetype. As a result, there is an increased tension between the archetypal *Postmodern cosmopolitan* prevalent in Western Europe and the *Rural traditionalist* prevalent in Eastern Europe.

Combined, these three findings improve our theoretical and empirical understanding of the changing nature of societal tensions in Europe. This matters because it relates to the

ideal image of Europe that different Europeans have, and because our analysis shows that the self-definition of the European Union as formalized in the Lisbon Treaty is contested (Akaliyski, 2019). These results do not bode very well for the future of the European Union.

I. Theoretical Background

An Archetypal Study of Societal Tensions

Our starting point is the observation that conflict is driven by relatively stable, coherent constellations of values, behaviours and social-demographic characteristics that underpin mutually exclusive ideological identities. The relation between these identities and the values individuals hold is not straightforward. Political scientists have long argued that ideological self-identification does not necessarily follow from commitment to the full body of values and attitudes that an ideological position entails, but serves more as a schema with an orientation function for individuals (Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Levitin and Miller, 1979). Recent research in social psychology and political science adds to this, showing that individuals base their attitudes and behaviour less on their own ideological beliefs or values than on the positions of the reference categories they identify with (Cohen, 2003; Gerber *et al.*, 2010; Goren and Chapp, 2017; Iyengar *et al.*, 2012). Professed attitudes follow reference group identification rather than the other way around. Even choices in leisure activities, consumption, aesthetic taste, and personal morality sort according to this pattern (Della Posta *et al.*, 2015).

What is more, in interactions with groups holding opposing identities, people adjust their attitudes and behaviours to move even further away from the positions of opposite reference groups (Bail *et al.*, 2018; Liu and Srivastava, 2015). Through the practice of moral stereotyping, agents exaggerate the moral conflict between ingroup and outgroup, ascribing more extreme positions to both of them (Graham *et al.*, 2012; Tajfel, 1981, 2010). This enhances the opposition between reference groups further (Byrne, 1971; Tajfel and Wilkes, 1963). The ensuing debate in a society divided between individuals identifying themselves with opposing value or attitude constellations becomes polarized, even if no individual ascribes to any of these extreme constellations completely (Baldassari and Gelman, 2008; McCoy *et al.*, 2018). Normative-ideological divisions in society are primarily pitting distinct groupings of concepts that belong together against each other, rather than individuals. Individuals typically express parts of several such opposing ideologies in their actions (de Wilde, 2019). These insights suggest that conflict is more about which constellations of values, behaviours and other characteristics individuals identify with, than about differences in people's actual characteristics. In other words, societal tension is not defined by the position of the representative member of society, but by the corner positions between which contestation takes place (Ahler, 2014). These archetypal corner positions represent unique configurations reflecting identifiable, comprehensive outlooks on society, which individuals more or less relate to. It is these archetypes – the archetypal liberal versus the archetypal conservative for example – that frame conflict and that people more or less identify with, even though individuals rarely ever completely share all the attributes of any of these extremes.

This role of identification with reference categories implies that, at certain times, the silent, gradual revolution described by Inglehart (1971, 1990, 1997, 2008) may become

rather noisy and abrupt. Slow changes in underlying value orientations for a long time do not alter the corner positions that frame societal conflict. Once these changes reach a tipping point, however, the axis forming the dominant opposition in society is replaced and a sudden realignment of identifications will occur. Understanding such processes requires an analysis of the extreme corner positions that serve as reference categories in societal interaction.

The Changing Nature of Societal Tensions

Theories on societal transformation are dominated by modernization theory, most notably Inglehart's evolutionary framework with a critical role for generational change. Postmaterialist younger generations replace older materialists as economic development proceeds and non-economic political values become increasingly more important (Inglehart, 1971, 1990, 1997, 2008). Since the 1980s, political parties and electorates alike have depolarized around issues pertaining to economic re-distribution between classes (Adams, De Vries and Leiter, 2012; Adams, Green and Milazzo, 2012; Munzert and Bauer, 2013). With the de-industrialization of the economy and the steady rise in standards of living, class has become a much less salient force for political mobilization for a long time. Ongoing secularization has likewise played down the relevance of oppositions between religious denominations. Over the past century, these oppositions (class and religion) have been replaced by a new structural conflict (Bornschieer, 2010; Kriesi, 2010; Kriesi *et al.*, 2006). As a result, 'a new axis of politics, based on polarization between post-materialist values and traditional cultural values' has emerged (Inglehart and Flanagan, 1987, p. 1302). This pits the highly educated, culturally liberal segments of the population against those defending traditional values and institutions, such as family, nation and authority.

Globalization has turbo-charged this development. Economically, opening up to global markets implies that workers increasingly compete with labour elsewhere, often earning much lower wages. This has exacerbated de-industrialization, bringing about a loss in job security and a steady decline in relative income for blue collar workers. This development has especially hit the lower-educated parts of the workforce, fueling opposition to global markets, competition and the erosion of the traditional national economy (Rodrik, 2017). In contrast, the winners of globalization are primarily found among the higher educated segments of the population. As the comparative advantage of rich countries shifted from manufacturing towards sophisticated services, the demand for labour featuring high-end skills and creativity increased. Support for cosmopolitan, liberal values among these segments increased.

On the cultural front, globalization has had different consequences for these groups as well. For higher-educated elites, the decline of national borders mainly meant an increased ability to travel, work and communicate with like-minded people elsewhere, and have the world at one's doorstep. The servicification of the European economy and the associated geographic concentration premium for higher-educated workers in cities have accelerated the differences between the big city and the countryside (Iammarino *et al.*, 2018). For low-skilled labour, globalization primarily meant an influx of migrants into their neighbourhoods, changing the traditional structures of family, community and shared norms and values people were accustomed to. While globalization boosted the

cosmopolitan orientation of higher-educated groups favouring open societies, it also triggered a counter-movement calling for restoration of traditional (nativist) structures and values, seeking to close off the economy and society to outside influences (Economist, 2016; Maxwell, 2019; Norris and Inglehart, 2019).

The question rises how these societal, political and economic determinants of societal change affect the nature of conflict across Europe. In the remainder of this paper, we empirically explore the nature and evolution of oppositional identities against the background of these societal changes.

II. Method and Data

Method

To operationalize the oppositional identities with which individuals identify we use a method that allows us to describe all individuals in the data using a few distinct observations at the boundary of the datacloud, called archetypal analysis (Cutler and Breiman, 1994; Eugster and Leisch, 2009). This statistical method has been applied in many different areas ranging from biology (Römer *et al.*, 2012) to business (Venaik and Midgley, 2015).

Conceptually, archetypal analysis uses all scores of individual observations (in this case characteristics of individuals across Europe) as input to estimate a few observations at the boundary of the datacloud that together capture most information in the data. These observations are called archetypes and each archetype represents a specific profile that is based on the combination of the variables that served as input. The result of archetype analysis is that each individual in the data is a linear combination of the archetypal observations, with the coefficients of each archetype being non-negative and summing to 1.00. For example, with two archetypes, every observation is on the line between these two archetypes and its position is determined by a weighted combination of the two points indicating the archetypes. With two archetypes a line best describes the data, with three archetypes a triangle, with four archetypes a tetrahedron, and so on; the corners of these shapes are the archetypes. We refer to the Appendix for detailed technical information on the archetypal method.

Archetypal analysis distinguishes itself from other data reduction techniques in that corner solutions of the data cloud are the focus. Unlike cluster and factor analysis, that both focus on information within the data cloud, archetypal analysis focuses on the boundaries of the datacloud to describe the data. Moreover, a feature of archetypal analysis is that each observation can be directly linked to the archetypes (Cutler and Breiman, 1994). As our conceptualization of conflict defines extreme positions with which people more or less identify, archetypal analysis is the most appropriate technique (Seiler and Wohlrabe, 2013).

Sample and Variables

We use multiple waves of the European Values Studies (EVS) to operationalize oppositional identities. We select 18 questions, capturing key values and norms, political attitudes, societal and institutional trust, and socio-economic characteristics, such as education level and whether one lives in a big city or in the countryside. We limit ourselves to questions asked in all waves in as many countries as possible to be able to track

developments over time. This condition reduces the pool of EVS questions with relevant theoretical meaning. As explained before, archetype analysis does not require that the selected questions are part of an overall construct. Rather, items were selected to cover the broad range of issues that may be associated with contemporary societal tensions in Europe, such as opinions on migration (Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Oshri *et al.*, 2016; Van Houwelingen *et al.*, 2019), political values (Van Houwelingen *et al.*, 2021), trust in state institutions (McLaren, 2012), or urban–rural divisions (Kenny and Luca, 2021). Many of the selected questions have been used in existing studies and indices (Beugelsdijk and Welzel, 2018; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Welzel, 2013). The 18 questions are listed in Table 1. Conform our conceptualization of archetypes as oppositional identities, our archetypes combine variables that tend to co-occur rather than necessarily being substantively related.

Not all countries are sampled in all waves of the EVS. Seven European countries are covered four times (1990, 1999, 2008, 2018): Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania. Correctly assessing changes over time requires us to focus on a balanced sample, to avoid conflating time trends with effects of changing samples. Therefore, we discuss and report results for these seven countries. We note that we have missing observations on size of town for the Netherlands in 2018 and on education for Romania in 1990. For that reason, we have run various archetype analyses, in- and excluding urbanization and/or education. Moreover, we have also used an unbalanced sample of all countries covered in the EVS, irrespective of whether these countries are covered once or multiple times. Results for these 27 countries are qualitatively similar to the findings based on the sample of seven countries (see Appendix). The results we discuss in the remainder of the analysis are based on our sample of four Western European countries and three Eastern European countries.

The first question captures the preference of state versus private ownership, used to proxy political ideology (for example Lindqvist and Östling, 2010). Respondents can indicate whether they prefer private ownership (1 on the 1–10 scale) or state ownership (10 on the 1–10 scale). Questions 2 and 3 are traditionally included in the morally debatable behaviour scale (Crissman, 1942; Harding and Phillips, 1986) and refer to the justifiability of homosexuality and abortion respectively. Both are measured on a ten-point scale with higher scores indicating higher levels of permissiveness (Akaliyski and Welzel, 2020; Akaliyski *et al.*, 2021; Welzel, 2013). Question 4 measures whether respondents believe employers should give priority to own nationals rather than immigrants (yes is coded as 1, and no as 0). Questions 5 and 6 measure confidence in politics and the justice system (1 meaning no confidence at all, and 4 meaning a great deal of confidence). This question has been used extensively in the trust literature (for example Delhey and Newton, 2005; Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1993, 2000). Question 8 asks whether people think thrift is a child quality that is important to learn children. Questions 9, 10, 11 and 12 are part of Beugelsdijk and Welzel's (2018) Duty-Joy dimension. Question 9 asks for the importance of leisure time (with 1 indicating very important and 4 indicating not at all important). Question 10 asks how happy people are (with 1 indicating very happy and 4 indicating not at all happy) while question 11 asks for the degree of life satisfaction on a ten-point scale. Question 12 measures the extent to which people feel they have freedom of choice and how much control they have over life (with 1 indicating none at all, and 10 a great deal).

Table 1: List of EVS Questions

<i>Question</i>	<i>Scale</i>
1 Private versus state ownership of business	1 private ownership should be increased 10 state ownership should be increased
2 Please tell me if homosexuality can be justified	1 never justifiable 10 always justifiable
3 Please tell me if abortion can be justified	1 never justifiable 10 always justifiable
4 When jobs are scarce: Employers should give priority to (own nation) people than immigrants	0 agree 1 disagree
5 How much confidence you have in politics	1 none at all 4 a great deal
6 How much confidence you have in the justice system	1 none at all 4 a great deal
7 In general do you think most people can be trusted or that you need to be careful in dealing with people?	0 careful 1 trust
8 Important child quality: thrift saving money and things	0 not important 1 important
9 Importance of leisure time in life	1 very important 4 not at all important
10 Taking all things together, would you say you are:	1 very happy 4 not at all happy
11 Degree of life satisfaction	1 not satisfied at all 10 very satisfied
12 Please indicate how much freedom of choice and control you feel you have over the way your life turns out	1 none at all 10 a great deal
13 Ingleharts postmaterialism question: respondent indicates that maintaining order in the nation is an important goal	0 not mentioned 1 mentioned
14 Ingleharts postmaterialism question: respondent indicates that more say in government decisions is an important goal	0 not mentioned 1 mentioned
15 Ingleharts postmaterialism question: respondent indicates that fighting rising prices is an important goal	0 not mentioned 1 mentioned
16 Ingleharts postmaterialism question: respondent indicates that protection of freedom of speech is an important goal	0 not mentioned 1 mentioned
17 Education level of respondent	1 Low 2 Medium 3 High
18 Urbanization: respondent lives in city with	1 Under 5,000 inhabitants 2 5,000–20,000 inhabitants 3 20,000–100,000 inhabitants 4 100,000–500,000 inhabitants 5 500,000 and more inhabitants

Questions 13–16 have been used by Inglehart in his materialism–postmaterialism index (Inglehart, 1971) and related indices (Akaliyski and Welzel, 2020). We use the four underlying questions instead of the composite index. All four questions ask about the

priorities in what the government should do, asking respondents to indicate whether they rate a specific issue as first priority. The issues relate to maintaining order in the nation (question 13), giving people more say in important government decisions (question 14), fighting rising prices (question 15) and protecting freedom of speech (question 16).

Question 17 captures the education level of the respondent. EVS provides harmonized data on education level: low, medium and high.¹ Finally, question 18 measures whether the respondent lives in a big or medium sized city or small town. Size of town is measured on a five-point scale: fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, between 5,000–20,000, between 20,000–100,000, between 100,000–500,000 and more than 500,000.

We have full information on all 18 questions for 28,565 respondents. Table 2 shows the number of respondents per country. Across countries, 52 per cent is female, and the average age of the respondent at the time of the interview is 49 years old.

III. Results

We find three archetypes. This three-archetype solution is independent of the use of (random) subsamples, the exclusion of individual items, and the use of different starting points in our archetypal analysis (Eugster and Leisch, 2009). We also continue to find the same three archetype solution when analysing each wave or country separately (see Appendix).

The optimal three archetype solution results in three distinct (corner) observations that each combine the 18 questions in a unique way. As can be seen in Table 3, the archetypal observations have extreme scores on the variables, for instance, Archetype 1 (Column E) has a score of 10 (= maximum) on 'homosexuality being justified'.

Based on the differences in answers given to all 18 questions we label each of the three archetypes. By introducing labels we provide substantive meaning to the corner observations derived from our archetypal analysis. Acknowledging that any label given to such combinations of values is subject to debate, we think that the labels we introduce below capture the three archetypes in the best possible way. The labels we use are derived from the archetype characteristics, describe the changing nature of societal conflict well, and minimize the risk of country-specific interpretations of these labels (such as the meaning of liberal, which differs between countries).

Archetype one reflects a corner observation that can be characterized as an individual who finds homosexuality and abortion absolutely justifiable, and who finds that all people can be trusted. Archetype one has moderately high levels of confidence in politics and justice, and a slight preference for private ownership. Archetype one does not find thrift an important quality to learn children. Archetype one scores very high on postmaterialist values such as giving priority to giving people more say and protecting freedom of speech. Archetype one considers him/herself happy and has a high degree of life satisfaction. Finally, archetype one perceives him/herself to have a high degree of freedom of

¹Harmonized data on education level are missing for the 1990 wave. We use EVS question 733 on the socio-economic status of individuals. Upper and upper middle class are recoded as high education level. Education level of non-manual workers and skilled or semi-skilled manual workers are coded as medium. The education level of unskilled or unemployed manual workers are coded as low. Approximately 30 per cent of the respondents have a low education level, 50 per cent medium levels of education and 20 per cent have high education level.

Table 2: Overview of the Sample

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of obs.</i>	<i>Mean birth year</i>	<i>Gender (proportion female)</i>
Austria	4636	1957	0.55
Czech Republic	3536	1959	0.55
France	4606	1959	0.51
Germany	6582	1954	0.51
The Netherlands	2959	1952	0.52
Poland	3351	1960	0.53
Romania	2895	1962	0.52

Table 3: Scores on the Three Archetypes (1990)

<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>G</i>
<i>Question number</i>	<i>Question label (see Table 1 for details)</i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>Overall sample average</i>	<i>Archetype1 Postmodern cosmopolitan</i>	<i>Archetype2 Rural traditionalist</i>	<i>Archetype3 Urban precariat</i>
1	Private–State	1–10	4.64	3.73	3.84	6.76
2	Homosexuality justified	1–10	5.15	10.00	1.00	4.14
3	Abortion justified	1–10	4.98	9.53	1.00	5.70
4	Jobs own people (rev)	0–1	.29	.95	.00	.07
5	Confidence politics	1–4	2.57	2.22	1.96	3.82
6	Confidence justice	1–4	2.52	2.39	1.80	3.65
7	People Trusted	0–1	.33	1.00	.14	.00
8	Children Thrift	0–1	.40	.00	.70	.49
9	Leisure important (rev)	1–4	1.76	1.14	1.70	2.54
10	Happy (rev)	1–4	1.90	1.00	1.21	3.86
11	Life satisfaction	1–10	7.34	10.00	10.00	1.00
12	Freedom and choice	1–10	6.93	8.82	9.26	1.59
13	Maintaining order	0–1	2.03	.00	.86	.00
14	More say	0–1	.35	.33	.00	.49
15	Fight rising prices	0–1	.20	.00	.14	.51
16	Freedom of speech	0–1	.19	.67	.00	.00
17	Education level (low-high)	1–3	1.95	2.89	1.48	1.56
18	Size of town (small-large)	1–5	2.71	3.74	1.50	3.23

choice and control over life. This first archetype is typically found in big cities and has a high level of education. We label this archetype ‘*Postmodern cosmopolitan*’.

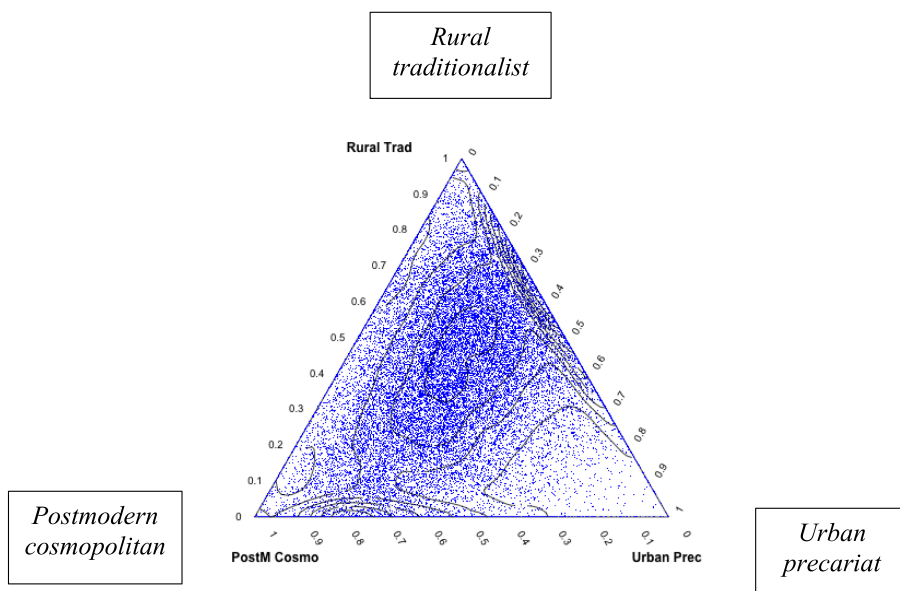
Archetype two is characterized by a very low score on justifiability of homosexuality and abortion, and has no confidence in politics and justice. Thrift is a very important child

quality. Unlike the first archetype, it has low levels of societal trust. Archetype two is moderately happy and has a strong sense of freedom of choice and control over life (and resembles archetype one in these matters). It finds it very important that order is maintained, and does not see freedom of speech or having more say in government decisions as an important priority. Archetype two lives in small towns and has a relatively low education level. Given the characteristics of this second archetype we label it '*Rural traditionalist*'.

Archetype three scores low on perceived freedom of choice and control over life, on societal trust, and does not consider him/herself to be very happy. It is not satisfied with its life. Archetype three also scores moderately low on justifiability of homosexuality and abortion. This archetype has the highest score on preference for state ownership relative to the other archetypes. Archetype three is characterized by very high levels of confidence in politics and the justice system. Thrift is a child quality it finds relatively important to teach their children, and just like the second archetype, archetype three feels that jobs should go to own nationals rather than immigrants when jobs are scarce. This third archetype gives priority to fighting rising prices and wants more say in government decisions, which resonates well with the perceived lack of control over its life. Just like the first archetype, archetype three lives in bigger cities, but has a low education level. Given the above characteristics, we label archetype three as '*Urban precariat*'.

These three archetypes are the corner observations of a three-pronged pyramidal framework of societal conflict. Figure 1 shows the ternary plot (Smith, 2017) for all

Figure 1: Ternary Plot of All Observations. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



Note: Figure 1 is a ternary plot of the three archetypes. Each point within the triangle refers to an actual observation in the data.

28,565 individuals in our sample. All individuals in Figure 1 are located based on their archetype scores summing to 1. The average individual in the sample is located at $\alpha_1 = 0.32$ (*Postmodern cosmopolitan*), $\alpha_2 = 0.39$ (*Rural traditionalist*), and $\alpha_3 = 0.29$ (*Urban precariat*). The highest density in the seven European countries together is slightly right of the middle, leaning towards the *Rural traditionalist* archetype.

Figure 1 shows that the distribution of individuals blends from one distribution into the other and that distinct groups of people with (highly) different sets of values, norms, and attitudes do not exist. This highlights the usefulness of archetypal analysis, which is able to identify relevant oppositions when the distribution of individual positions does not show distinct groupings.

Different Centres of Gravity between Countries

Table 4 shows the distribution of the three archetypes across the seven countries. Table 4 ranks the countries based on their scores for archetype one (*Postmodern cosmopolitan*).

Each country has a different mean in the archetype solution. The four Western countries (Austria, France, Germany and the Netherlands) have an average score on the *Postmodern cosmopolitan* archetype of 0.38 and the Eastern European countries (Czech Republic, Poland and Romania) of 0.22. The Eastern European countries have an average score on the *Rural traditionalist* archetype of 0.46 and the Western European countries of 0.35. The scores on the *Urban precariat* archetype are highest in Eastern European nations (0.32) and lowest in Western European nations (0.26), with the Netherlands scoring lowest (0.21).

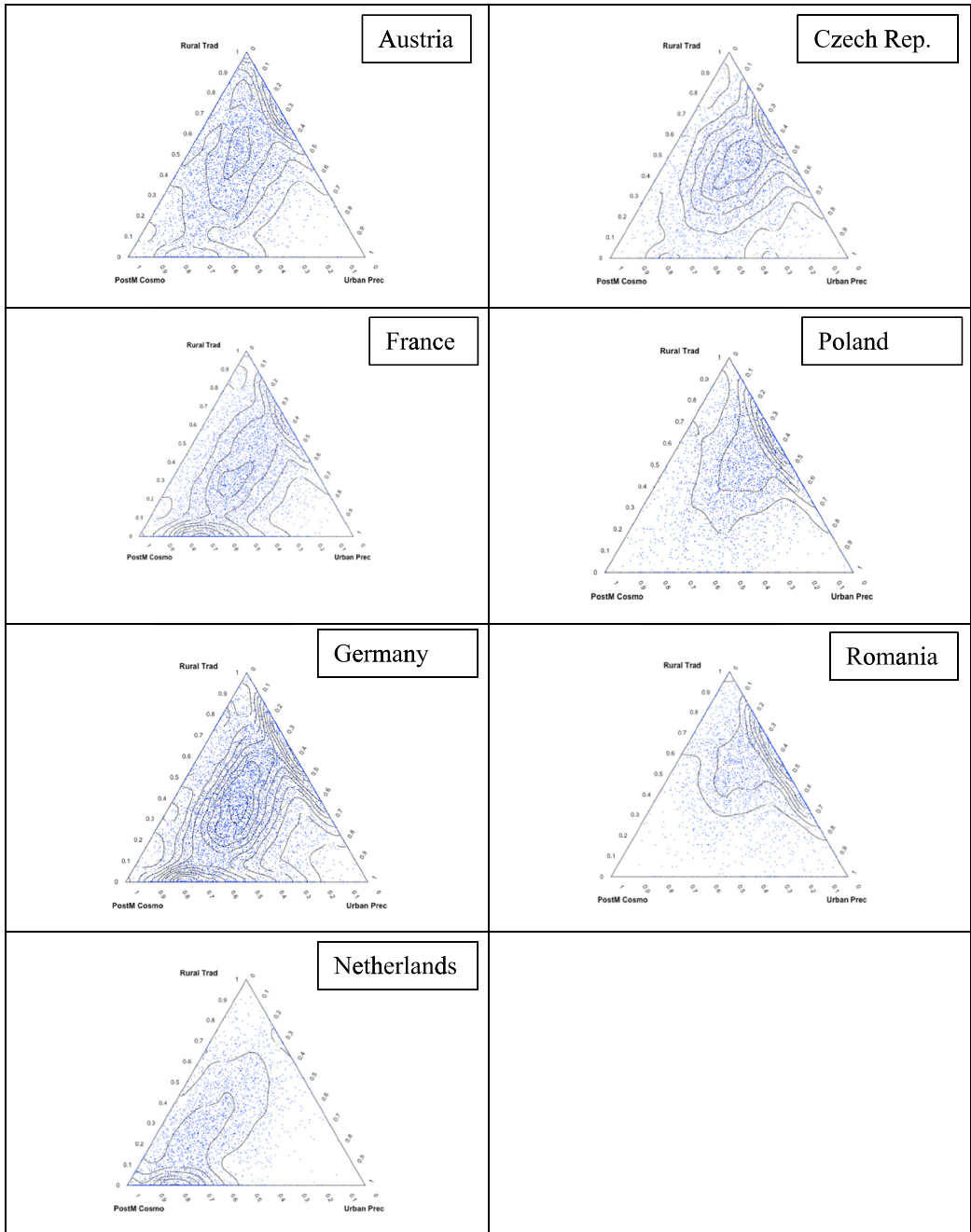
To illustrate these country differences, Figure 2 shows the ternary (density) plots for all seven countries, with the Western European countries on the left and the Eastern European countries on the right. Both the mean (as also shown in Table 4) and associated dominating axis in the ternary differ substantially. The density plot informs us on the nature of the divisions and oppositions in each country. The centre of gravity in Romania is located towards the *Urban precariat* and *Rural traditionalist* archetypes, while for the Netherlands the highest density is observed close to the *Postmodern cosmopolitan* archetype. A formal test across all observations indicates that country is a significant predictor of the centre of gravity in a country (*Postmodern cosmopolitanism*: $F_{(6,28,558)} = 806.0$, p

Table 4: Archetype Coefficients per Country Sorted by Archetype1

<i>Nation</i>	<i>Archetype1 (Postmodern cosmopolitan)</i>	<i>Archetype2 (Rural traditionalist)</i>	<i>Archetype3 (Urban precariat)</i>
The Netherlands	0.51	0.28	0.21
France	0.36	0.34	0.30
Germany	0.34	0.36	0.30
Austria	0.32	0.44	0.24
Czech Republic	0.28	0.40	0.32
Poland	0.21	0.47	0.32
Romania	0.17	0.50	0.33

Note: N: 28,565.

Figure 2: Density Distributions of Individuals in Seven European Countries. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



Note: The figures are ternary plots. They capture the three archetypes. The bottom left reflects the ‘Postmodern cosmopolitan’ archetype, the top the ‘Rural traditionalist’, and the bottom right the ‘Urban precariat’. The contour lines indicate where the density is higher.

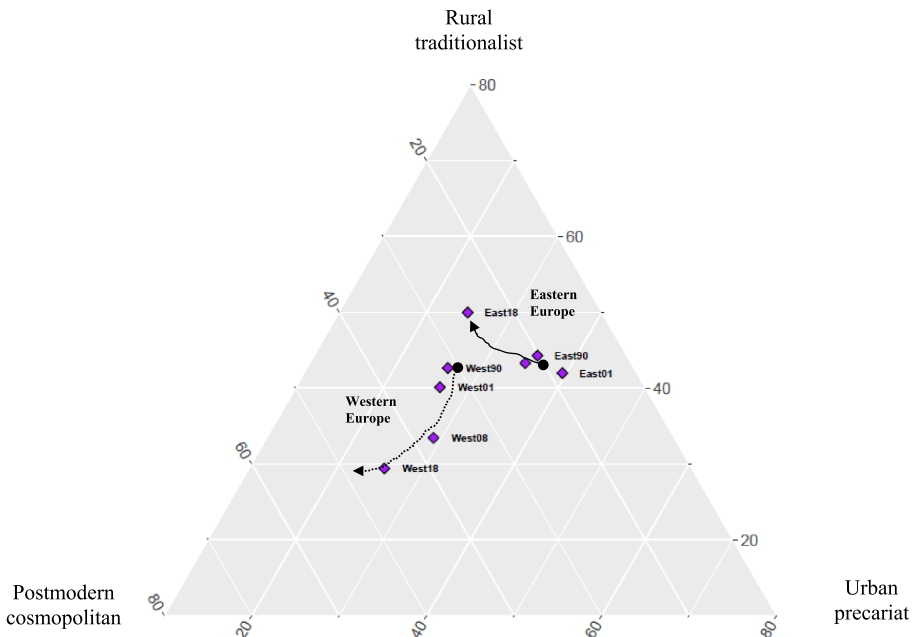
< 0.001 , eta-squared = 0.14; *Rural traditionalist*: $F_{(6,28,558)} = 399.8$, $p < 0.001$, eta-squared = 0.08; *Urban precariat*: $F_{(6,28,558)} = 265.2$, $p < 0.001$, eta-squared = 0.05). These effect sizes can be considered large (0.14 for *Postmodern cosmopolitanism*) and medium (0.08 for *Rural traditionalist* and 0.05 for *Urban precariat*) (Cohen, 1988).

Changes over Time

Our study includes four time periods (1990, 2001, 2008 and 2018). When comparing 1990 with 2018 we observe an increase in the average coefficient of *Postmodern cosmopolitanism* (from 0.30 to 0.36; $p < 0.001$). *Rural traditionalist* goes down from 0.43 in 1990 to 0.38 in 2018. *Urban precariat* drops slightly from 0.27 in 1990 to 0.25 in 2018 (and was 0.31 in 2001 and 2008). Since the variation between countries is substantial, we compare the changes over time for Western and Eastern European countries separately. Figure 3 shows the average archetype coefficients for Western Europe (Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands) and Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Poland, Romania) for 1990, 1999, 2008 and 2018.

Over time Western Europe systematically moves towards the *Postmodern cosmopolitan* archetype. For Eastern Europe, we also observe a higher score on *Postmodern cosmopolitan* when comparing 1990 with 2018, but compared to the overall changes for Western Europe, Eastern Europe has moved much more in the direction of *Rural traditionalist*. One important reason for this shift towards *Rural traditionalist* in Eastern

Figure 3: Changes in Archetype Scores over Time (1990, 2001, 2008 and 2018). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



Europe is the combination of a small downward shift observed for the youngest generation (small compared to the generational shift in Western Europe) that is compensated by an overall upward time effect when comparing 2018 with 1990. We unpack these developments in more detail below.

To measure generational change we follow Norris and Inglehart (2019) who define four birth cohorts. Norris and Inglehart (2019) refer to the generations born before 1945 as the Interwar generation, those born between 1946 and 1964 as the Baby Boomers, those born between 1965 and 1979 as Generation X, and those born after 1980 as Millennials. To distinguish cohort effects from wave-specific effects (also referred to as *Zeitgeist* effects) we calculate the archetype scores across waves and for the 1990 and 2018 waves separately. We use this information to explore to what extent the nature of the oppositions between the corner solutions has shifted across these generations, and to what extent there is a *Zeitgeist* (wave-specific) effect.

As Table 5 demonstrates, in Western Europe, the average coefficient for the *Postmodern cosmopolitan* increases from .26 for the Interwar generation to .48 for the Millennials across waves; in Eastern Europe the average coefficient for *Postmodern cosmopolitan* score increases from .15 to .30 over the same generations and all waves. Both *Rural traditionalist* and *Urban precariat* obtain lower coefficient scores when comparing younger with older generations. In Eastern Europe, *Urban precariat* becomes less prominent over time while the picture for *Rural traditionalist* is more complex.

Table 5 demonstrates that both Western and Eastern Europe have experienced a generational shift from the *Urban precariat-Rural traditionalist* to *Postmodern cosmopolitan* archetype. However, we also observe across all cohorts in Eastern Europe that the 2018 coefficients for *Rural traditionalist* are higher than in 1990. This implies that the generational shift away from *Rural traditionalist* is compensated by a *Zeitgeist* effect in Eastern Europe. This is a unique observation that does not apply to Western Europe. In Western Europe we observe a downward shift for the coefficient of *Rural traditionalist* both across generations and when comparing the 2018 scores with the 1990.

Table 5 shows that the changes over time are to some extent region-specific. For Western Europe, our findings suggest that divisions have centred more on the tension between *Rural traditionalist* and *Postmodern cosmopolitan*. We observe a clear shift in the distribution of individuals towards *Postmodern cosmopolitan* in Western Europe. A radical shift occurred for the Baby boomers. This continued dominance of *Postmodern cosmopolitan* in Western Europe is not representative for Eastern Europe. Although Eastern Europe has also experienced a shift towards *Postmodern cosmopolitan*, the coefficient of especially *Rural traditionalist* has not become as small as in the Western European nations. In contrast to the gradual disappearance of *Rural traditionalist* in Western Europe, *Rural traditionalist* grows in popularity in Eastern Europe. Overall, these temporal shifts in the distribution of the three archetype coefficients suggest a social-cultural division across Europe between *Postmodern cosmopolitan* in Western Europe and *Rural traditionalist* in Eastern Europe. Our observation on the distinctive patterns in Eastern and Western Europe is in line with other recent studies showing a lack of cultural convergence between Western and Eastern Europe (Van Houwelingen *et al.*, 2019).

Table 5: Archetype Coefficients for Generations across Western and Eastern Europe

Panel 5a: Postmodern cosmopolitan					
	<i>Generation</i>	<i>Birth years</i>	<i>Postmodern cosmopolitan wave average</i>	<i>Postmodern cosmopolitan 1990</i>	<i>Postmodern cosmopolitan 2018</i>
Western Europe	Interwar	1900–1945	.26	.23	.32
	Baby Boomers	1946–1964	.39	.38	.43
	Generation X	1965–1979	.43	.40	.48
	Millennials	1980–1999	.48	–	.51
	Eastern Europe	Interwar	1900–1945	.15	.15
	Baby Boomers	1946–1964	.21	.24	.22
	Generation X	1965–1979	.25	.26	.26
	Millennials	1980–1999	.30	–	.31
Panel 5b: Rural traditionalist					
	<i>Generation</i>	<i>Birth years</i>	<i>Rural traditionalist wave average</i>	<i>Rural traditionalist 1990</i>	<i>Rural traditionalist 2018</i>
Western Europe	Interwar	1900–1945	.47	.50	.40
	Baby Boomers	1946–1964	.34	.36	.31
	Generation X	1965–1979	.31	.36	.26
	Millennials	1980–1999	.27	–	.25
	Eastern Europe	Interwar	1900–1945	.47	.48
	Baby Boomers	1946–1964	.44	.39	.50
	Generation X	1965–1979	.45	.44	.50
	Millennials	1980–1999	.46	–	.49
Panel 5c: Urban precariat					
	<i>Generation</i>	<i>Birth years</i>	<i>Urban precariat wave average</i>	<i>Urban precariat 1990</i>	<i>Urban precariat 2018</i>
Western Europe	Interwar	1900–1945	.27	.27	.28
	Baby Boomers	1946–1964	.27	.26	.26
	Generation X	1965–1979	.26	.24	.26
	Millennials	1980–1999	.25	–	.24
	Eastern Europe	Interwar	1900–1945	.38	.36
	Baby Boomers	1946–1964	.35	.36	.27
	Generation X	1965–1979	.30	.31	.24
	Millennials	1980–1999	.24	–	.20

IV. Discussion

Key Findings

The goal of our paper was to document, analyse and interpret the changing nature of contemporary societal conflict in Europe. We conceptualize the changing nature of societal conflict in Europe as a shift in the positions of individuals relative to the archetypal positions. Based on such a conceptualization we analysed 28,565 European individuals from seven countries. We find that Europeans move between three archetypes, each representing an ideal-typical configuration of values, behaviours and social-demographic characteristics. Europeans identify more or less with these stable archetypes; each individual's score is a weighted sum of the three archetypes. Each of these three archetypes represent specific ideal-typical contested sets of characteristics and represent the contours of societal conflict within Europe. While one of these archetypes (which we label *Postmodern cosmopolitan*) reflects the open cosmopolitan identity, the other two archetypes (*Rural traditionalist* and *Urban precariat*) present images of Europe that are more traditional and less liberal. The vast majority of Europeans combines these extremes, with people tending towards the *Rural traditionalist* or *Urban precariat* types forming the majority of the European population as a whole. Secondly, differences in Europe are significant, with Western European countries (and the Netherlands in particular) being (increasingly) dominated by *Postmodern cosmopolitans*; and Eastern Europe by the *Rural traditionalist*-type. Thirdly, as younger generations replace older generations we observe a general shift from an opposition between *Urban precariat* and *Rural traditionalist* to one between *Postmodern cosmopolitan* and either of the other two archetypal identities in Europe.

Contribution

This paper makes three contributions to the literature. First, we argue that societal conflict is about the emergence of oppositional constellations that individuals identify with. These oppositional constellations – which we dub archetypes – consist of empirically associated behaviours, values, and socio-demographic characteristics that together define the public debate-space in Europe. Individuals relate more or less to these extreme corner positions. Conceptualizing societal conflict as individuals' identification with these oppositional constellations, and subsequently measuring these corner solutions and identifications for 28,565 Europeans allows us to explore the changing nature of societal conflict. We are thus able to define the contours of societal conflict in Europe, and trace the evolution of individuals' identification with various archetypal extremes.

Doing so, we complement modernization theory and Inglehart's cultural backlash thesis by uncovering the extreme positions that shape contemporary societal conflict (Norris and Inglehart, 2019) and how individuals in European societies move between these extremes. Our analysis shows that traditional political economic left–right distinctions only have relevance for individuals identifying with the *Urban precariat* and *Rural traditionalist* archetype, stressing the decontested nature of materialist concerns at the *Postmodern cosmopolitan* extreme. The local–global conflict in our model does not represent varying positions along a single continuum, but opposing archetypal identities.

Second, methodologically we introduce archetype analysis as an appropriate approach to study oppositional constellations and the degree to which people identify with them.

Our method follows our theoretical conceptualization of the nature of societal conflict. We first identify archetypes at the individual level in a European sample and proceed by looking at the distribution of individuals located between these archetypes within and between 7 European countries. The ability to define societal conflict in terms of corner solutions, operationalized as a limited number of archetypes characterized by different configurations is an important methodological contribution.

Third, our finding on the significance of national differences in Europe has implications for the future of European politics. The Lisbon Treaty speaks of a community of shared European values and defines these very much as emancipative values with a strong postmodernist flavor. This notion of shared European liberal and cosmopolitan values bears resemblance with the strong version of Inglehart's argument that the world is gradually becoming cosmopolitan and liberal. However, whereas the *Postmodern cosmopolitan* connects strongly to this definition, our analysis reveals that a majority of Europeans does not identify with this liberal, cosmopolitan image of Europe. If Europe is about 'pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men' (Article 2, Lisbon Treaty), that is not the Europe of most Europeans. Across Europe, the rise of the *Postmodern cosmopolitan* has amplified the opposition between such notions of society and the large segments of society that relate to the *Rural traditionalist* or *Urban Precariat* archetypes. This trend is likely to fuel the counter-movement to postmodern cosmopolitanism. Within Eastern Europe, the identification with the *Rural traditionalist* archetype has grown even stronger over the past decades. A post hoc analysis shows that especially the *Rural traditionalist* archetype perceives the EU to be a threat to national identity (details available upon request), an observation which is directly linked to contemporary discussions between leaders of Eastern European countries and their Western European counterparts. With Western Europe moving more towards the *Postmodern cosmopolitan* type and Eastern Europe more towards the *Rural traditionalist*, the conflict between traditionalist and cosmopolitan identities that is increasingly dominating all European societies is translating more and more into inter-country oppositions, and thus also affecting the future of the EU. The notion of Europe as a community of shared values is an overstatement, and our results suggest this is not likely to change soon. Western European leaders such as Macron pose as champions of the cosmopolitan version of Europe, while Eastern European leaders such as Orbán represent the *Rural traditionalist* archetype. Such East–West divisions do not bode well for the future of the EU. Underneath that divide, however, lies a conflict that is increasingly common to all European societies—that of the rising tension between the *Postmodern cosmopolitan* oriented members of society and those identifying with especially the *Rural traditionalist*. Polarization of Europe between and within countries is not a coincidence but the result of structural patterns.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Data S1. Supporting information