Are cities ever more cosmopolitan? Studying trends in urban-rural divergence of cultural attitudes

Huijsmans, T.; Harteveld, E.; van der Brug, W.; Lancee, B.

Are cities ever more cosmopolitan? Studying trends in urban-rural divergence of cultural attitudes

Twan Huijsmans [a,b,*], Eelco Harteveld [b], Wouter van der Brug [b], Bram Lancee [a]

[a] Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Department of Sociology, University of Amsterdam, Nieuwe Achtergracht 166, PO Box 15508, 1001 NB Amsterdam, the Netherlands
[b] Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, Nieuwe Achtergracht 166, PO Box 15578, 1001 NB Amsterdam, the Netherlands

A B S T R A C T

Many scholars and pundits have argued that there is a growing urban-rural divide in political attitudes in the US and Europe. However, it is an empirical question whether and how differences in political attitudes between urban and rural areas have changed over time. In this study, we investigate the urban-rural divergence in cosmopolitan-nationalist attitudes in the Netherlands over the last four decades. We focus on attitudes towards issues of immigration, multiculturalism and European integration. We use individual-level survey data from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (1994–2017) and the Cultural Changes Study (1979–2016). We find consistent support for divergence on cosmopolitan-nationalist issues between inhabitants of more- and less-urbanised municipalities over the last decades in the Netherlands, also when controlling for sociodemographic composition. This divergence is mostly due to the fact that the attitudes of people in the larger cities differ increasingly from people living in other parts of the country. Trends in smaller towns and villages are very similar to those in the most rural areas.

1. Introduction

Several authors have argued that there is growing divergence between the political attitudes of urban and rural inhabitants in the US (Bishop & Cushing, 2008; Johnston, Manley, & Jones, 2016; Rodden, 2019) and Europe (Jennings & Stoker, 2016; Maxwell, 2019). It has even been suggested that "urban-rural splits have become the great global divider" (Rachman, 2018). The idea of an growing gap between 'cosmopolitan cities' and the 'nationalist countryside' seems to be vindicated by recent elections across the globe, which saw nationalist parties and candidates flourish in rural areas but not in metropolitan areas. At the same time, most studies of attitudes in urban and rural areas are based on cross-sectional data, which cannot tell us whether this divide has indeed *increased over time*, as the abovementioned accounts suggest. Our study aims to contribute to this discussion by studying the development of cosmopolitan-nationalist attitudes across the rural-urban continuum over time in the Netherlands.

There exists some scattered evidence for a growing gap in the United States and the United Kingdom. One contextual-level study shows increasing geographical differences between 'backwater' and 'cosmopolitan' British constituencies over the last decade when it comes to attitudes towards European integration, multiculturalism and immigration (Jennings & Stoker, 2016). In the US, over the last decades, population density at the county-level has become increasingly related to the Democratic presidential vote share (Johnston et al., 2016; Rodden, 2019). To our knowledge, there are only two empirical tests of trends in the urban-rural divide over time *at the individual level*. First, Carter's (2010) study focused on ethnic intolerance in the US between 1972 and 2006 and provided mixed conclusions. Second, Johnston et al. (2004) concluded that the effect of rurality at the neighbourhood level on British voters' party preferences did not significantly vary between 1991 and 2001. While these studies shed important light on the geographical stratification of political attitudes in these two contexts, there is a scarcity of studies that assesses the urban-rural divide over multiple decades on the individual level. It therefore remains an empirical question whether political attitudes have indeed diverged over time between inhabitants of urban and rural areas outside the US.

Furthermore, it is an empirical question between *which types of areas*

---

this alleged divergence is taking place, and *how* this gap emerged. The attention in the literature on rural areas (e.g. Cramer, 2016; Hochschild, 2016) suggests that the countryside might have become increasingly conservative and/or nationalistic. On the other hand, recent studies indicate that differences in political attitudes are most pronounced between inhabitants of the inner-cities of large metropolitan areas on the one hand, and inhabitants of suburbs, smaller towns and rural areas on the other hand (Gordon, 2018; Maxwell, 2020; McGrane, Berdahl, & Bell, 2017; Scala & Johnson, 2017; Ströbele, 2017). If so, this pattern might have emerged because urban inhabitants became increasingly progressive while suburban and rural inhabitants did not, or because rural inhabitants became increasingly conservative while inhabitants of other areas did not. Answering these questions call for a refined classification of urbanity and data spanning decades.

We study the development of the urban-rural divide in cosmopolitan-nationalist attitudes by comparing trends at various urbanisation degrees, using individual level survey data covering four decades in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is a small and densely populated country. Even the political centre in The Hague, or the capital Amsterdam, is less than a 3-h drive from every rural area, which could make the Netherlands a least-likely case to find urban-rural differences in political attitudes. However, when it comes to developments that are theoretically related to urban-rural differences, like continuing processes of residential segregation (Ströbele, 2017) or globalisation and immigration, the Netherlands is similar to other Western-European countries. We study cultural attitudes in eight waves of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (DPES, see e.g. Van der Meer, van der Kolk, van der Brug, & Rekker, 2018), which were collected after each parliamentary election between 1994 and 2017, and data from the Cultural Changes study (CV, see e.g. Coumans & Knops, 2017), collected (bi-)annually between 1979 and 2016.

Our study focuses specifically on attitudes towards immigration, multiculturalism and European integration. We refer to these as 'cosmopolitan-nationalist attitudes' (Gustafson, 2009; Jennings & Stoker, 2016; Maxwell, 2020). Individuals with more cosmopolitan attitudes are more open to the world outside their own community and to different cultures, while nationalistic people feel that migrants and transnational institutions threaten the national interests and 'our' way of life (Haller & Roudometof, 2010; Helbling & Teney, 2015).[1] Geographical stratification of such attitudes is likely the result of both context effects and composition effects, as individuals with different attitudes sort themselves into different residential areas based on socioeconomic resources and lifestyle preferences (Carlson & Gimpel, 2019; Maxwell, 2019; Scala & Johnson, 2017; Ströbele, 2012). We therefore compare models with and without controls for such socio-demographic characteristics at the individual level.

We find consistent support for divergence on cosmopolitan-nationalist issues between inhabitants of more- and less-urbanised municipalities over the last decades in the Netherlands, also when controlling for the sociodemographic composition of these areas. This divergence is mostly due to the fact that the attitudes of people in the larger cities differ increasingly from people living in other parts of the country. The trends in smaller towns and villages are remarkably similar to those in the most rural areas. This has important implications for our interpretation of the urban-rural divide, which are discussed in the concluding section.

1.1. Urban-rural divergence: composition and context

Two underlying mechanisms could explain a growing gap between cosmopolitan urbanites and nationalist inhabitants of other areas. The first is the changing sociodemographic *composition* of different areas. Individuals sort themselves into residential areas, partially based on socioeconomic resources and lifestyle preferences (Carlson & Gimpel, 2019; Maxwell, 2019; Scala & Johnson, 2017; Ströbele, 2017). To the extent that these are related to political attitudes, the presumed divergence in political attitudes between 'cosmopolitan cities' and 'nationalist rural areas' could thus be the outcome of the changing *socio-demographic compositions* in urban and rural areas (Cunningham & Savage, 2017; Hochstenbach & Arundel, 2019). Furthermore, the increased mobility of people and capital has made large cities prosperous (e.g., Rodríguez-Pose, 2018), and increasingly dense and diverse, while many other areas are lagging behind (Cramer, 2016; Monnat & Brown, 2017). Presumed divergence in political attitudes between urban and rural inhabitants may then also be explained by changing *contextual* conditions in cities and other areas.

In the following section we outline why cosmopolitan attitudes may have diverged between urban and rural areas, drawing on compositional and contextual mechanisms in turn. However, it has to be noted in advance that our aim is to study the development of the divide between urban and rural areas, not to test which mechanisms produce it. Our data mostly lacks georeferences that would allow to explicitly measure contextual variables at a meaningful level. We will, however, compare models with and without socio-demographic controls. As we will explain below, this allows us to assess to what extent a divide remains after controlling for some of the factors that plausibly drive people's selection into urban-rural areas.

1.2. Changing compositions: selection and social sorting

Individuals with certain characteristics or lifestyle preferences, which are related to political attitudes, sort themselves into certain residential areas (Scala & Johnson, 2017; Ströbele, 2017). For example, individuals with higher educational attainment, who generally hold more favourable attitudes towards European unification (Hakhverdian, van Elsas, van der Brug, & Kuhn, 2013; Kunst, Kuhn, & van de Werfhorst, 2020), multiculturalism and immigration (Cavaille & Marshall, 2019), tend to select themselves into cities. This could be for economic reasons (such as job opportunities), but also because cities are considered more attractive places to live for individuals who hold cosmopolitan attitudes and lifestyle preferences. In sum, differences in political attitudes between 'cosmopolitan cities' and 'nationalist rural areas' partly reflect underlying social and demographic divides (Maxwell, 2019).

While this phenomenon is not new, there are reasons to expect growing differences in socio-demographic composition between (inner) cities and other areas. In the 1960s and 1970s households and businesses moved from the city centres to former rural areas surrounding the cities. This process of *suburbanization* created new types of semi-urbanised areas that tended to be more mono-functional, less dense and less diverse compared to inner cities (Ströbele, 2017). From the 1980s on, upper-middle-class people rediscovered inner cities, and inner-city neighbourhoods – once impoverished – became very popular and wealthy. In this process, lower-income households were pushed out of the city centres to the suburbs. Inequalities in housing prices between economically successful cities and struggling regions increased, as well as the within-city inequalities between the centres and the suburbs, thus deepening social polarization across space (Cunningham & Savage, 2017; Hochstenbach & Arundel, 2019). As access to residence in the cities became more restricted, it is likely that those individuals who did

---

[1] We use the term 'cosmopolitan-nationalist' attitudes rather than 'cultural' attitudes more broadly to clearly demarcate these 'globalization' issues from the 'older' cultural topics capturing traditionalism vs libertarianism, such as gender equality, LGBT rights, and democratic renewal.

have the resources to move (back) to inner-city neighbourhoods are especially cosmopolitan and post-materialist in their values, compared to individuals moving to (or staying in) other residential areas.

Therefore, we expect *a divergence of cultural political attitudes between urban and rural areas over time*. In addition, we expect this divergence along the urbanisation *continuum to be most pronounced between highly urban areas on the one hand and all other areas on the other*. The process of suburbanization has blurred the socio-demographic line between (sub) urban and rural areas while it has sharpened the contrast between highly urban areas versus suburban and rural areas (Huning, Bens, & Hüttl, 2012; Ströbele, 2017). Indeed, recent studies found differences in cosmopolitan attitudes to be mainly present between the inhabitants of the inner-cities of large metropolitan areas and all other areas, since suburban inhabitants and inhabitants of smaller cities hold attitudes similar to rural inhabitants (McGrane et al., 2017; Ströbele, 2017).

1.3. Changing contexts: increasing diversity and economic polarization

Recent studies that analysed panel data found little evidence for contextual effects and have argued that sorting mechanisms are the key for explaining geographical polarization (Gallego, Buscha, Sturgis, & Oberski, 2016; Maxwell, 2020). However, other studies did find socio-economic and demographic contextual effects when controlling for individual-level characteristics (Salomo, 2019), or showed that there remain differences in attitudes along the urbanisation continuum after taking into account compositional effects (Gimpel, Lovin, Moy, & Reeves, 2020; Johnston et al., 2004; McGrane et al., 2017; Scala & Johnson, 2017; Ströbele, 2017). This implies that it is not just self-selection by its residents that makes areas cosmopolitan or nationalist, as the above discussion on composition effects would suggest, but that an urban or rural context can also *make* people cosmopolitan or nationalistic.

The first contextual explanation may be the increasing density and diversity in cities relative to other areas. Individuals with 'unconventional' beliefs and/or behaviours have a higher likelihood to meet each other in large, dense and diverse urban areas, which facilitates the formation of various subcultures in cities (Fischer, 1975). Since urban areas are characterized by higher population density and diversity, urban inhabitants have more diverse personal networks compared to rural inhabitants (Beggs, Haines, & Hurlbert, 1996). For urban inhabitants it is thus crucial to their economic and social success that they have successful social interaction with people who are different from them in various aspects (Warf, 2015), which incentivizes the development of tolerant or cosmopolitan attitudes (Huggins & Debies-Carl, 2015). Ethnic diversity in particular is substantially higher in stronger-urbanised areas, so while typical rural inhabitants encounter 'white-dominated homogeneity', ethnic heterogeneity is the norm for urban inhabitants (Lee & Sharp, 2017). This matters for their worldview, as – according to intergroup contact theory (Laurence, Schmid, & Hewstone, 2018; Pettigrew, 1998) – living in ethnically diverse areas is related to having more tolerant attitudes towards immigration (Janssen, van Ham, Kleinepier, & Nieuwenhuis, 2019). Therefore, urban inhabitants may adopt more tolerant political attitudes towards multiculturalism as compared to inhabitants of all areas with lower degrees of urbanisation. Over the last decades, urban areas have grown in diversity and density to a much larger extent than rural areas have. We therefore expect that differences in cosmopolitan attitudes between inhabitants of urban and rural areas have increased.

Second, increasing attention has been paid to the relationship between economic structure and political attitudes (Rodríguez-Pose,

2018). For example, economic deprivation spurs a feeling of economic uncertainty and consequently affects individuals' attitudes towards immigrants (Salomo, 2019). Moreover, local economic and industrial decline is a fundamental driver of the anti-EU vote in national elections in European countries (Dijkstra et al., 2019). Local contextual economic conditions could thus influence individuals' political attitudes beyond individual-level economic status. Over the last decades many large cities have become economic centres with post-industrial, service-based, high-tech economies. Inhabitants of these cities who work in these economic sectors benefit from different aspects of globalisation, like trade liberalization and labour migration (Lind, 2020). They are therefore likely to take relatively positive stances towards European integration and immigration. Inhabitants of less-urbanised areas outside these 'knowledge economy hubs' may suffer the negative consequences, like the offshoring of manufacturing jobs and low-skilled migrants competing for the remaining low-skilled jobs (Lind, 2020). Therefore, inhabitants of these areas are likely to hold more nationalist attitudes, meaning that they are more likely to oppose immigration and European integration. The differential effect of globalization on the inhabitants of urban and rural areas may thus have increased the differences in cosmopolitan-nationalist attitudes over the last decades.

Altogether, we expect that differences in cultural political attitudes along the urbanisation continuum have increased over time, even when differences in sociodemographic composition are taken into account. Again, we expect the over-time change to differ depending on the level of urbanisation. Especially the largest cities have become increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity, and have become the knowledge economy centres, over the last decades. Therefore, we additionally expect that the divergence of political attitudes over time mainly took place between very strongly urban areas versus all other areas, even when differences in sociodemographic composition are controlled for.

2. Data and methods

2.1. Data

To test whether cosmopolitan-nationalist attitudes diverged along the urban-rural continuum, we made use of two Dutch survey datasets that include information about respondents' positions on cosmopolitan-nationalist issues and cover at least the last two decades.

Firstly, we made use of eight waves of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (DPES/NKO), which were gathered during each parliamentary election in the Netherlands since 1971. Items capturing cosmopolitan-nationalist issues are available from 1994 on, so we used the data from the eight most recent parliamentary elections that were held between 1994 and 2017. From these waves of DPES we could extract measures of respondents' positions towards European integration, the integration of ethnic minorities, and asylum seekers.

Secondly, we made use of the Cultural Changes (*Culturele Veranderingen*, CV) data which were collected (bi-)annually between 1979 and 2016 by the *Netherlands Institute for Social Science Research* (SCP). Items measuring respondents' attitudes towards immigration and integration are available for an even longer time period then in the DPES data. Xenophobic attitudes can be studied using a comparable measure for the period 1979–2010, and tolerance towards ethnic minorities can be studied using a comparable measure for the period 1979–2016. Unfortunately, the CV data does not include a comparable measurement on respondents' attitudes towards European integration for a sufficiently long time period. We include each wave that includes both at least a dependent variable and a measure of urbanity, yielding 25 waves.[2]

---

[2] The CV waves of 2000, 2004 and 2012 use a different classification of urbanisation and are therefore not included.

By using two datasets that use slightly different measures and cover periods of different lengths we can observe whether the results are robust to such choices. In the next section, we describe how each variable was measured in both datasets. Descriptive statistics of all measures in both datasets can be found in Table 1.

3. Measurement

3.1. Dependent variables

We constructed the following three variables as indicators for cosmopolitan attitudes in the DPES datasets.

Intolerance towards ethnic minorities. This was measured by asking respondents on a 7-point scale to what extent they think that foreigners and ethnic minorities should be able to live in the Netherlands while preserving all of their own customs (1) or that foreigners and ethnic minorities should fully adjust themselves to Dutch culture (7). This variable is available in all eight elections since 1994.

Anti-asylum attitudes. This was measured by asking respondents on a seven-point scale the extent to which they think that the Netherlands should allow more asylum seekers to enter (1) or that the Netherlands should send back as many asylum seekers as possible (7). This variable is available in all seven elections since 1998.

Euroscepticism. Respondents were asked on a seven-point scale the extent to which they think European unification should go further (1) or that European unification has already gone too far (7). This is a common measure of Euroscepticism (Kunst et al., 2020; Schoene, 2019) that assesses respondents' policy evaluations rather than their regime evaluations (Hobolt & de Vries, 2016). This variable is available for all eight elections since 1994, except for the 2003 wave.

In the CV data we could only construct comparable measurements over a sufficiently long time period for attitudes towards immigration and integration, but, unfortunately, not for Euroscepticism.

Intolerance towards ethnic minorities. Respondents were asked: "Imagine that people from a different ethnic background[3] would become your neighbours, would you have no objections (1), would it depend (2), would you find it less pleasant (3) or would you resist (4)?". This question was asked in each wave since 1979.

Xenophobia. This variable was constructed by combining three items that were included in all waves between 1979 and 2010. Respondents were asked about three scenarios pertaining to a house becoming available, a job promotion coming up, and the need to fire an employee because the company is not doing well. The respondent indicated whether the house, job, or resignation should go to (1) a foreign [family/employee], (2) a Dutch [family/employee], or indicate that (3) it should not make any difference. We recode these three items by assigning value 1 to the respondents that favoured native family/employee over the foreign family/employee. Then we constructed the 'xenophobia'-variable by counting the number of items in which the respondent favoured the native family/employee. Each respondent thus was assigned a score ranging from 0 (not xenophobic) to 3 (strongly xenophobic). Unfortunately, the wording of the answer categories changed from 'foreigner' ('*buitenlander*' in Dutch) to 'non-native' ('*allochtoon*' in Dutch), which substantially affected the average response and the variance in responses between the three most recent (2012, 2014, 2016) and the other waves. Therefore, we decided to only include the waves between 1979 and 2010 in our analysis of xenophobic attitudes.

3.2. Independent variable

The CV data and the DPES data contain a measure of urbanisation at the municipality level. This measure was constructed by Statistics Netherlands based on the municipality in which the respondent lives. The measure was included by the collectors of the data before the data were further anonymized and made publicly available. Therefore, we do not know in which municipality the respondent lives, but we do know the urbanisation degree at the municipality level. The urbanisation degree was measured in five categories, based on a measure that is called 'surrounding address density'. This surrounding address density of a particular address is the number of addresses within a radius of 1 km surrounding this particular address. The address density at the municipality level is the average surrounding address density for all addresses within the municipality. Statistics Netherlands divided all municipalities into five categories (and corresponding values) based on this average address density:

- Very strongly urban (5): 2500 or more.
- Strongly urban (4): 1500 to 2500
- Mildly urban (3): 1000 to 1500
- Hardly urban (2): 500 to 1000
- Not urban (or: Rural) (1): less than 500.

The boundaries of these categories were chosen with the aim to allocate a more or less equal number of inhabitants to each category. This measure has only been used since 1992, which means that we had to recode the urbanisation variable for the waves that were collected before 1992. We did this in accordance with the harmonisation procedure as used in the DPES 1971–2006 dataset (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010; Todosijevic, Aarts, & van der Kaap, 2010). Fig. 1 visualizes the geographical distribution of urbanisation at the municipality level in the Netherlands, based on the urbanisation degrees of all municipalities in 2015.

3.3. Control variables

We included several sociodemographic control variables in our analyses to see to what extent changes in the differences in political attitudes between urban and rural areas could be explained by changes in sociodemographic composition. First, we controlled for respondents' *gender* (1 = female; 0 = male). Second, we controlled for *age*. Since this was only measured in five categories in the recent waves of the CV dataset, we divided respondents from the other waves and dataset in these five age categories too. The categories are: lower than 30, between 30 and 40, between 40 and 50, between 50 and 60 and older than 60. Third, we controlled for *marital status* (1 = married; 0 = not currently married). Fourth, we controlled for *educational level*. Since the most recent waves of the CV data only distinguish between low, medium and high levels of education, we harmonized the education variables from the other waves and dataset in accordance with these three categories. Fifth, we controlled for *employment status*. In the CV data we could distinguish between: unemployed, employed, student, retiree, housekeeper, incapacitated and other. In the DPES data, we could only distinguish between employed (1) and unemployed (0). Sixth, we controlled for *religious denomination*. In both datasets we distinguished between: not religious, catholic, other Christian, and other. Finally, we could additionally control for *religious upbringing* in the CV data, which indicates whether respondents were raised religiously, and was measured in the same categories as religious denomination.

---

[3] Before 2008 the question referred to 'people from a different race'. The change in the operationalization does not seem to have affected the average response or the variance in responses between waves. Therefore we have harmonized this variable across all waves between 1979 and 2016.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for all variables used in the analyses in both datasets.

Cultural Changes 1979–2016						Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies 1994–2017					
Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Urbanisation degree	49,348	3.24	1.32	1	5	Urbanisation degree	17,359	2.93	1.31	1	5
Ethnic intolerance	53,191	1.68	0.86	1	4	Ethnic intolerance	16,711	4.93	1.62	1	7
Xenophobia	41,156	0.74	1.08	0	3	Anti-asylum	13,685	4.59	1.55	1	7
						Euroscepticism	14,153	4.29	1.79	1	7
Female	56,081	0.52		0	1	Female	17,438	0.51		0	1
Age category						*Age category*					
≤29	53,335	0.23		0	1	≤29	17,440	0.16		0	1
30–39	53,335	0.21		0	1	30–39	17,440	0.18		0	1
40–49	53,335	0.18		0	1	40–49	17,440	0.20		0	1
50–59	53,335	0.15		0	1	50–59	17,440	0.18		0	1
≥60	53,335	0.23		0	1	≥60	17,440	0.28		0	1
Education level						*Education level*					
Low	55,751	0.44		0	1	Elementary	16,453	0.09		0	1
Middle	55,751	0.32		0	1	Low vocational	16,453	0.15		0	1
High	55,751	0.24		0	1	Secondary	16,453	0.14		0	1
						Middle vocational or higher secondary	16,453	0.30		0	1
						Higher vocational or university	16,453	0.32		0	1
Religious denomination						*Religious denomination*					
None	55,150	0.58		0	1	None	16,993	0.31		0	1
Catholic	55,150	0.20		0	1	Catholic	16,993	0.40		0	1
Other Christian	55,150	0.16		0	1	Other Christian	16,993	0.24		0	1
Other	55,150	0.05		0	1	Other	16,993	0.05		0	1
Employment status						Employed	16,957	0.60		0	1
Unemployed	55,529	0.03		0	1						
Employed	55,529	0.47		0	1						
Student	55,529	0.08		0	1						
Retiree	55,529	0.13		0	1						
Housekeeper	55,529	0.22		0	1						
Incapacitated	55,529	0.04		0	1						
Other	55,529	0.03		0	1						
Religious upbringing											
None	51,755	0.30		0	1						
Catholic	51,755	0.37		0	1						
Other Christian	51,755	0.28		0	1						
Other	51,755	0.06		0	1						
Married	56,057	0.58		0	1						

3.4. Analytical strategy

For each of the dependent variables in both datasets, we followed similar steps using OLS regression models. First, as a descriptive analysis, we estimated the trends in the predicted values of the dependent variables for the five categories of urbanisation. We did so by interacting a time variable as well as its quadratic term with the urbanisation categories to explore possible non-linear trends. These trends are visualized for each dependent variable in the left-side panels of Figs. 2–6.

Subsequently, we formally tested whether cosmopolitan-nationalist attitudes diverged along the urban-rural continuum by following four steps, for all dependent variables in both datasets. In the first step (Model 1a), we tested whether differences along the urbanisation continuum have increased over time. We did so by interacting our urbanisation variable with a linear time variable, rather than with the nonlinear term. While these are some cases where trends in public opinion develop in a nonlinear fashion, the interactions focus on the *gap* between more and less urban regions. We expect these gaps to grow in a linear fashion, and this is what the interactions test. We do, however, provide some additional tests of this assumption. The resulting 'urbanisation X time' interaction coefficient shows whether differences in political attitudes along the urbanisation continuum changed significantly over time. In a second step (Model 2a), we added the sociodemographic control variables – and their interaction with the time variable – to this model. The interaction coefficient shows whether overall differences along the urbanisation continuum have changed, after controlling for (changing) differences in sociodemographic composition.

In the third step (Model 1b), we tested *where* in the urban-rural continuum (i.e. between which categories) the divergence occurred.

We did so by replacing the continuous urbanisation variable with dummy variables for each urbanisation category. In a fourth step (Model 2b) we again added the sociodemographic control variables, to see whether the differences between certain categories have significantly changed after controlling for (changing) sociodemographic composition. 'Very strongly urban' was used as the reference category in Model 1b and 2b in the tables in Appendix 1. As such, the interactions between the urbanisation category dummies and time estimate whether the differences between the very strongly urban areas and the other categories significantly changed over time. We estimated Models 1b and 2b multiple times; once with each urbanisation level as the reference category. The right-side panels of Figs. 2–6 visualize the interaction coefficients from those models. The coefficients indicate how the difference between a pair of categories has changed over time, with the accompanying confidence intervals.

Besides these four steps that constitute our main analysis, we performed some additional analyses to test the robustness of our results. First, our data consists of many waves of individual-level surveys. This means that individual observations are clustered in years. Ideally, we should correct the standard errors for this clustering. Because of the low number of clusters, this was not possible in the DPES data. However, it is possible for the CV data, so we estimated all models based on this dataset with standard errors clustered by year. The results of these robustness checks can be found in Tables A6 and A7 in the supplementary materials. These tables show that our conclusions would not substantively differ based on these results (Table A5).

Second, we performed additional analyses in which we model the divergence between urbanisation categories in a non-linear fashion by including a squared term of time to the interaction (see Tables A11 and A12, and Figs. A4 and A5, in the supplementary materials).
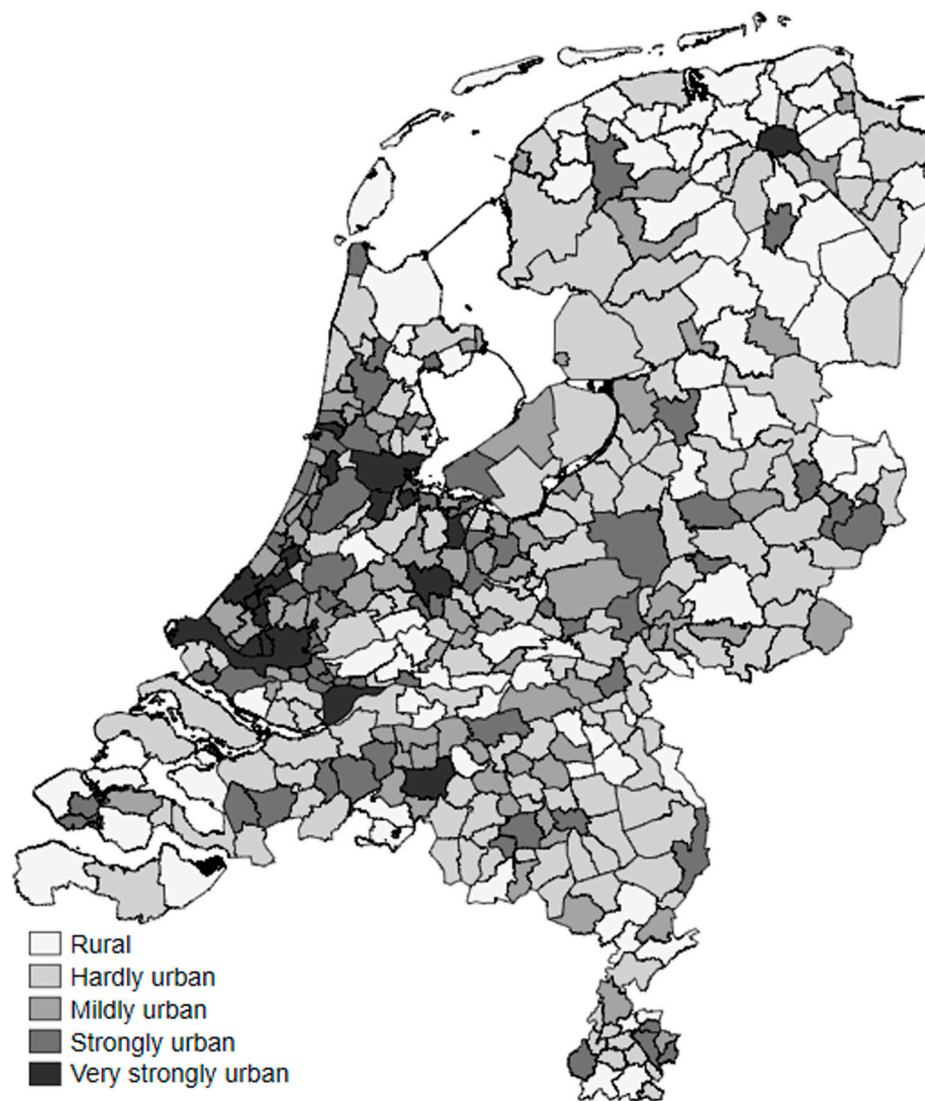
Fig. 1. Geographical distribution of urbanisation at the municipality level in the Netherlands in 2015 (Source data: Statistics Netherlands).

Third, we performed several checks to investigate how sensitive our findings are to the exclusion of a variable for occupation, which might explain cosmopolitan attitudes (Maxwell, 2019) but which is not available over the entire period due to changing classifications. In a subset of waves (2006–2017 in DPES, 1979–2002 in CV) in which this variable was available we estimated three models. First, we estimated the effect of urbanisation category over time without control variables. Second, we added the control variables from the main analyses. Third, we additionally added the measure of occupation. The results of these models – in comparison to our main analysis - are visualized in Figs. A1 and A2 in the supplementary materials. We find that adding occupation as an extra control variable, hardly affects the results of our main analysis. We therefore think that the conclusions that we draw from our analyses would not have substantively changed if an occupation variable had been available that was comparable across all DPES and CV waves.

The results of all models from our main analysis are summarized by dataset and dependent variable in Tables A1-A5 in Appendix 1. We describe the results of all these models the following paragraph. Table 2 summarizes the results of the main analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Euroscepticism

According to the DPES data, there were only slight differences in Euroscepticism between the urbanisation categories in the period 1994–2006. The trends on the left side of Fig. 2 show that Euroscepticism grew substantially in the Netherlands between 1994 and 2006, which is in line with earlier findings by Lubbers and Scheepers (2010). This increase is observed in all categories until 2006, but then Euroscepticism decreased again in the very strongly urban category, whereas it stabilized in the other urbanisation categories. Model 1a in Table A1 shows that the effect of urbanisation on Euroscepticism significantly changed towards a negative effect over the period 1994–2017 (Model 1a: $b_{urban} = 0.106$, SE $= 0.053$; $b_{urban * time} = -0.017$, SE $= 0.005$). When controlled for sociodemographic background variables, the interaction between urbanisation and time remains mostly unaffected (Model 2a: $b_{urban} = 0.082$, SE $= 0.054$; $b_{urban * time} = -0.013$, SE $= 0.005$). This indicates that the divergence in Euroscepticism along the urban-rural continuum over time cannot be fully explained by sociodemographic composition.

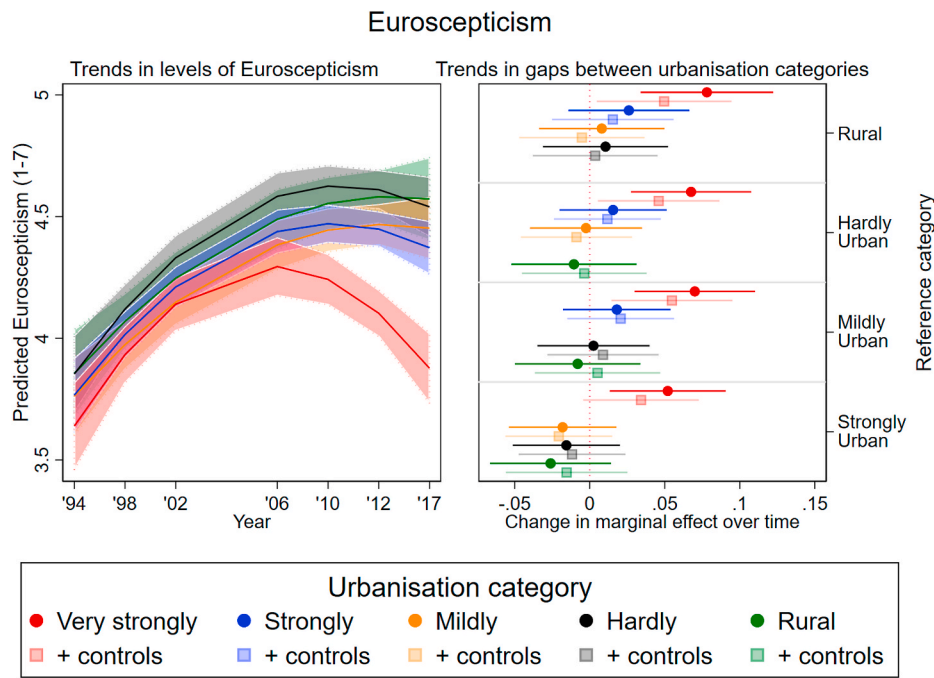Moving to differences between specific urbanisation categories, the

Euroscepticism

Fig. 2. Results of the descriptive analysis: Trends in predicted values of Euroscepticism for the five urbanisation categories (Left panel); Results of models 1b and 2b: Trends in the gaps in Euroscepticism between urbanisation categories (Right panel).
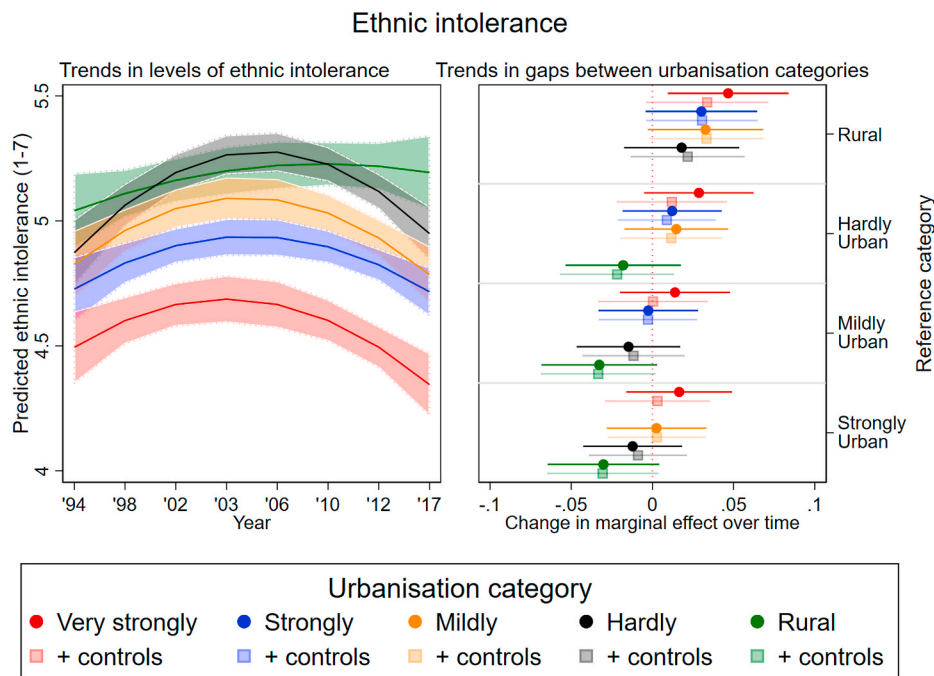
Ethnic intolerance

Fig. 3. Results of the descriptive analysis: Trends in predicted values of ethnic intolerance for the five urbanisation categories (Left panel); Results of models 1b and 2b: Trends in the gaps in ethnic intolerance between urbanisation categories (Right panel).

coefficient plot in Fig. 2 (right panel) displays how the differences in Euroscepticism between all pairs of urbanisation categories have changed over time. Only when confidence intervals around these estimates do not include zero is the increase in the gap between the two categories statistically significant. Model 1b in Table A1 shows that the differences between the very strongly urban category and all the other categories have significantly changed over time The coefficient plot shows that the differences between other combinations of categories did not increase significantly over time. This means that the divergence in

Euroscepticism along the urban-rural continuum mainly took place between the very strongly urban areas versus all other categories. These results do not substantially change after including the sociodemographic control variables and their interactions with time. The only exception is that the divergence between the very strongly urban areas and the strongly urban areas is not significant anymore (Model 2b: $b_{\text{Strongly urban}}$ = −0.211, SE = 0.220; $b_{\text{Time X Strongly urban}}$ = 0.038, SE = 0.020).

Altogether, the results suggest that attitudes towards European integration diverged over time along the urban-rural continuum, which
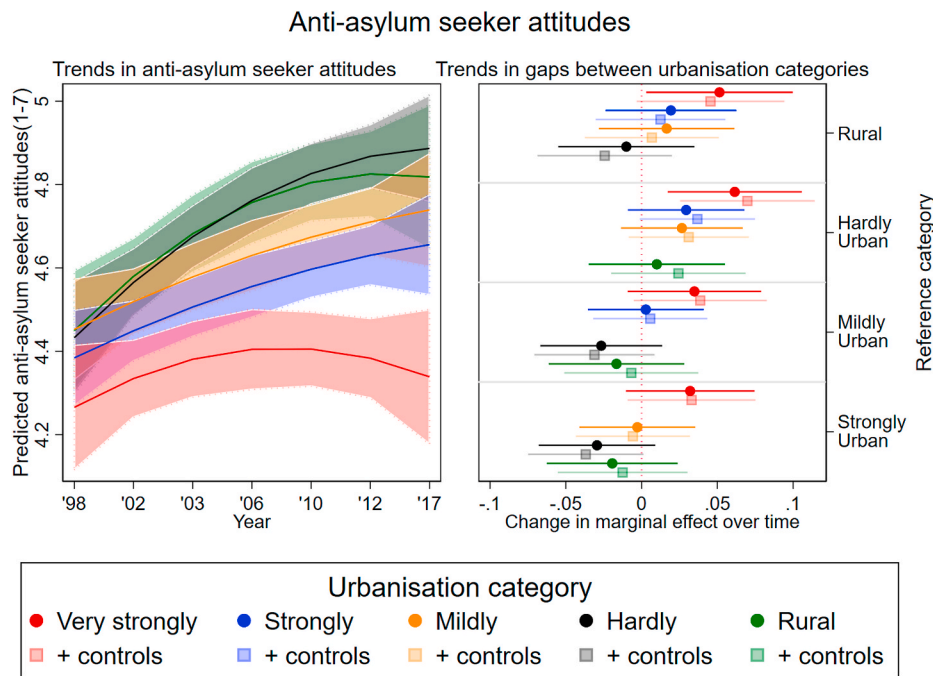
Anti-asylum seeker attitudes

Fig. 4. Results of the descriptive analysis: Trends in predicted values of anti-asylum seeker attitudes for the five urbanisation categories (Left panel); Results of models 1b and 2b: Trends in the gaps in anti-asylum seeker attitudes between urbanisation categories (Right panel).

could not be fully explained by (changes in) sociodemographic composition, and that this divergence took place mainly between the very strongly urban municipalities and all other categories.[4]

5. Views of immigrants and multiculturalism

5.1. DPES

The DPES data has two indicators: ethnic intolerance, starting in 1994, and anti-asylum seeker attitudes, starting in 1998.

Ethnic intolerance. Fig. 3 shows that inhabitants of the most-strongly urbanised municipalities were the least intolerant towards ethnic minorities over the whole period 1994–2017. For all urbanisation categories we see a slight increase in the predicted value of intolerance between 1994 and 2003, and a slight decrease thereafter. Model 1a in Table A2 shows that urbanisation degree did not significantly affect intolerance towards ethnic minorities in 1994, but this effect changed significantly over time (Model 1a: $b_{urban} = -0.039$, SE = 0.044; $b_{urban * time} = -0.010$, SE = 0.004) towards a significant negative effect. The interaction effect remains unaffected after controlling for sociodemographics (Model 2a: $b_{urban} = 0.000$, SE = 0.045; $b_{urban * time} = -0.010$, SE = 0.004).

Model 1b in Table A2 shows that the differences between the very strongly urban and the rural municipalities have significantly increased over time (Model 1b: $b_{Rural} = 0.123$, SE = 0.207; $b_{Time X Rural} = 0.047$, SE = 0.019), and this does not substantively change after controlling for sociodemographic composition (Model 2b: $b_{Rural} = -0.026$, SE = 0.207; $b_{Time X Rural} = 0.046$, SE = 0.019).

The coefficient plot in Fig. 3 (right panel) displays how the differences in ethnic intolerance between all pairs of urbanisation categories have changed over time. The graph indicates that the difference between the very strongly urban and the rural category is the only one that

significantly increased over time. While attitudes towards ethnic minorities diverged over time along the urban-rural continuum, this can mainly be attributed to a significant divergence between the two extreme categories, the rural and the very strongly urban areas, rather than pitting the largest cities against all others areas.

Anti-asylum seeker attitudes. Fig. 4 confirms that anti-asylum seeker attitudes, too, were substantially lower for inhabitants of very strongly urbanised municipalities compared to the other municipalities (see Fig. 4). The anti-asylum seeker attitudes have substantially increased over time for inhabitants of all but the very strongly urbanised municipalities, and therewith differences along the urbanisation continuum seem to have increased. The results from Table A3 confirm that anti-asylum seekers attitudes have diverged along the urban-rural continuum (Model 1a: $b_{urban} = 0.065$, SE = 0.058; $b_{urban * time} = -0.014$, SE = 0.005) and this is not explained by the sociodemographic control variables (Model 2a: $b_{urban} = 0.097$, SE = 0.058; $b_{urban * time} = -0.014$, SE = 0.005).

Model 1b in Table A3 and the coefficient plots of Fig. 4 show that this divergence is, again, most pronounced between the extremes: the most urbanised areas on the one hand and the rural and hardly urban areas on the other (Model 1b: $b_{Rural} = -0.222$, SE = 0.273; $b_{Time X Rural} = 0.051$, SE = 0.025; Model 1b: $b_{Hardly urban} = -0.318$, SE = 0.253; $b_{Time X Hardly urban} = 0.061$, SE = 0.023). After controlling for sociodemographic composition, the increase in the difference between very strongly urban and rural municipalities is not significant anymore (Model 2b: $b_{Rural} = -0.314$, SE = 0.273; $b_{Time X Rural} = 0.047$, SE = 0.025). Altogether, the results suggest anti-asylum attitudes diverged between the rural and hardly urban areas on the one hand and the very strongly urban areas on the other, and this might be partly due to changes in sociodemographic composition.

5.2. Cultural Changes (CV)

The CV data has two variables: ethnic intolerance and xenophobic attitudes, starting in 1979.

Ethnic intolerance. Fig. 5 (left panel) shows that there were no substantial differences in intolerance towards ethnic minorities between urbanisation categories in the early eighties. However, the trends over

---

[4] For Euroscepticism, the divergence between some categories follows a non-linear pattern. The interaction coefficients in our main analyses will somewhat underestimate, rather than overestimate, divergence for these variables. See for details Table A11 and Fig. A4 in Appendix 2 in the supplementary materials.
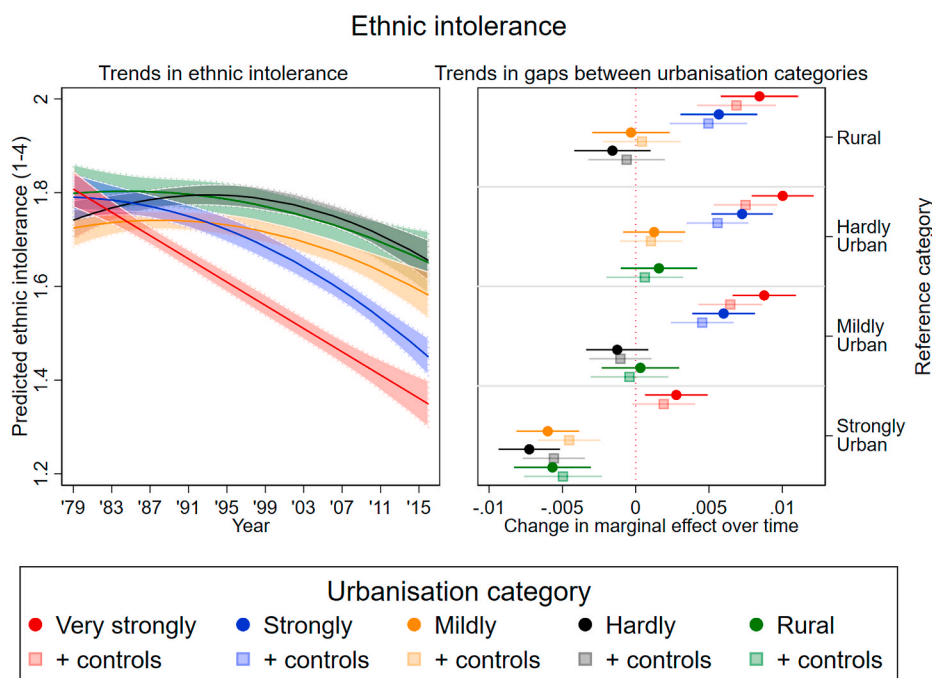
Ethnic intolerance

Fig. 5. Results of the descriptive analysis: Trends in predicted values of ethnic intolerance for the five urbanisation categories (Left panel); Results of models 1b and 2b: Trends in the gaps in ethnic intolerance between urbanisation categories (Right panel).

time again seem to differ substantially between urbanisation categories. For the (very) strongly urbanised municipalities, intolerance towards ethnic minorities decreased, whereas intolerance towards ethnic minorities seems to have been stable, or only slightly decreased, over time for the other categories. This is confirmed by the models: the effect of urbanisation on ethnic intolerance was not significant in 1979, but over time developed towards a negative significant effect (Model 1a: b_{urban} = 0.001, SE = 0.005; $b_{urban * time}$ = −0.003, SE < 0.001). Also when accounted for the control variables, we see significant change in the effect of urbanisation on ethnic intolerance (Model 2a: b_{urban} = 0.015, SE = 0.006; $b_{urban * time}$ = −0.002, SE < 0.001). Fig. 5 (right panel) confirms that the most-urbanised categories did significantly diverge from the three least-urbanised categories, while the three least-urbanised categories did not diverge from each other. The two most-urbanised categories did also diverge from each other, but this pattern is not significant once controlled for socioeconomic background variables. The results thus suggest a pattern of divergence between the very strongly urban municipalities and the rest.[5]

Xenophobic attitudes. The findings for xenophobic attitudes mirror those of the other items concerning immigrants and ethnic outgroups. While there were no substantial differences in the average xenophobia score between urbanisation categories in the eighties and early nineties (Fig. 6), the average xenophobia score in the higher-urbanised municipalities decreased more strongly over the whole period 1979–2010 compared to the lower-urbanised municipalities. Model 1a in Table A4 confirms this pattern. The effect of urbanisation on xenophobia was even slightly positive in 1979, but decreased significantly over time (Model 1a: b_{urban} = 0.025, SE = 0.008; $b_{urban * time}$ = −0.004, SE = 0.000) towards a significant negative effect, even under control for sociodemographic background variables (Model 2a: b_{urban} = 0.034 SE = 0.008; $b_{urban * time}$ = −0.004, SE = 0.000).

These differences again played out especially between the very strongly urban on the one hand and all other categories. Fig. 6 (right panel) shows that the second-most urban ('strongly urban') category also significantly diverged from all others, except that the divergence from the mildly urban category is not significant after controlling for socioeconomic background variables. Further, the mildly urban areas did also significantly diverge from the rural and hardly urban areas. Although divergence is mostly pronounced between very strongly urban municipalities and the rest, there seems to be a broader pattern of divergence, between the strongly urban municipalities and the rest, and between the two least-urbanised categories and the rest, as well.

6. Summary

The results of our main analyses are summarized in Table 2. This table shows that we found broad support for overall divergence of cosmopolitan-nationalist political attitudes along the urban-rural continuum. Inhabitants of less-urbanised municipalities hold more negative attitudes towards immigration, multiculturalism and European unification as compared to inhabitants of municipalities with higher degrees of urbanisation, and these differences have increased over time, even when controlling for sociodemographic composition.

Moreover, attitudes regarding European unification mainly diverged between the very strongly urban municipalities and the other categories and not among these other categories. When it comes to attitudes towards immigration and ethnic outgroups, the urban-rural divergence seems to occur somewhat more generally, or only between the most extremely urban and rural areas, in the DPES dataset, while the unique trajectory of the most (or second-most) urbanised areas was clearly visible in the CV dataset. This difference between the findings could not be explained by the differences in the time periods under study in both datasets: when we analysed the CV data over the same period as the DPES (1994–2016) we still found largely similar patterns. Across the board, we conclude that there is evidence for a broader pattern of divergence regarding immigration attitudes but that this is probably most pronounced in cities. Importantly, the underlying trends show that the inhabitants of large cities have adopted a more cosmopolitan attitude over time, rather than inhabitants of smaller towns and villages

---

[5] For ethnic intolerance in the CV data, the divergence between some categories follows a non-linear pattern. The interaction coefficients in our main analyses will somewhat underestimate, rather than overestimate, divergence for these variables. See for details Table A12 and Fig. A5 in Appendix 2 in the supplementary materials.
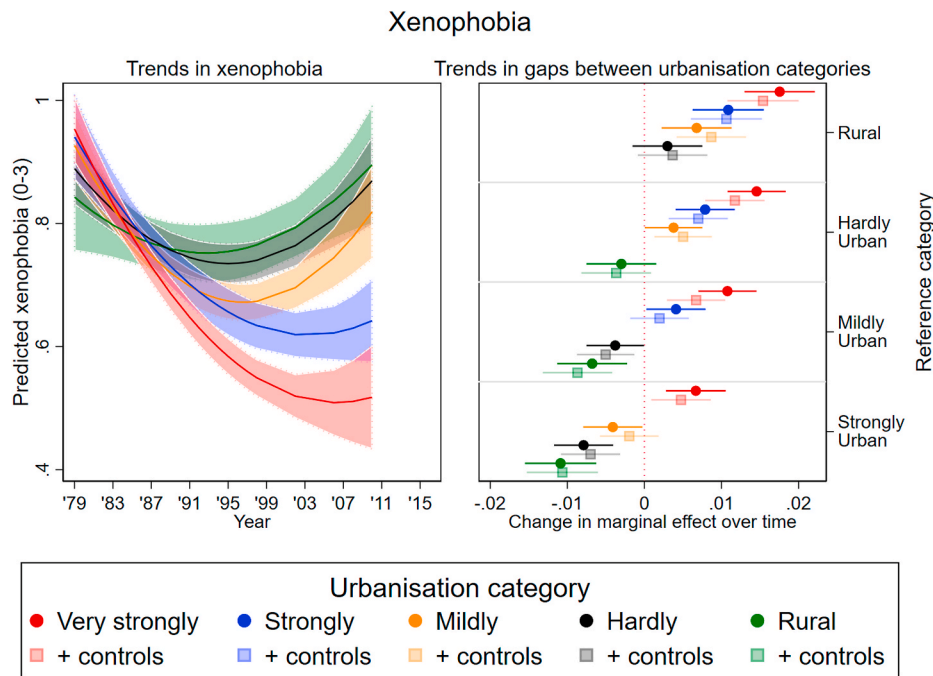
Xenophobia

Fig. 6. Results of the descriptive analysis: Trends in predicted values of xenophobia for the five urbanisation categories (Left panel); Results of models 1b and 2b: Trends in the gaps in xenophobia between urbanisation categories (Right panel).

Table 2
Trends in the effects of urbanisation on all dependent variables in both datasets.

	DPES survey			CV survey	
	EU-scepticism	Ethnic intolerance	Anti-asylum	Xenophobia	Ethnic intolerance
Period	1994–2017	1994–2017	1998–2017	1979–2010	1979–2016
Trend linear effect					
Without controls	Divergence	Divergence	Divergence	Divergence	Divergence
With controls	Divergence	Divergence	Divergence	Divergence	Divergence
Trend very strongly vs. the rest					
Without controls	Divergence	None	None	Divergence	Divergence[a]
With controls	Divergence	None	None	Divergence[a]	Divergence[ab]

Note: [a] Broader divergence: strongly urban areas also significantly diverged from the lower-urbanised categories; [b] No significant divergence between very strongly and strongly urban areas.

7. Conclusion and discussion

In this study we investigated whether urban and rural areas have drifted apart in cosmopolitan-nationalist attitudes over the last four decades. We studied attitudes towards immigration, multiculturalism and European integration, which have become salient issues on the cultural dimension of political conflict all over Western Europe over the last decades (Kriesi et al., 2006). Data from eight waves of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (NKO/DPES, 1994–2017) and 25 waves of the Cultural Changes study (CV, 1979–2016) allowed us to systematically track cosmopolitan-nationalist attitudes along the urbanisation continuum over the span of up to four decades. We additionally analysed between which types of areas this alleged divergence took place, and in what direction the attitudes changed in these areas. To explore the extent to which the presumed divergence is due to changing social compositions, we investigated whether it could be accounted for by individual-level sociodemographic characteristics.

Our results show broad support for divergence of cosmopolitan-nationalist attitudes along the urban-rural continuum. Inhabitants of rural and less-urbanised municipalities hold more negative attitudes towards immigration, multiculturalism and European unification as compared to inhabitants of municipalities with higher degrees of urbanisation. These attitudinal differences were largest between inhabitants of the very strongly urban municipalities and all other areas. This is in line with previous studies suggesting that inhabitants of the inner-cities of large metropolitan areas hold uniquely progressive cultural values compared to all other areas (Gimpel & Karnes, 2006; Gordon, 2018; Maxwell, 2019), while suburban inhabitants and inhabitants of smaller cities hold similarly conservative cultural attitudes compared to rural inhabitants (McGrane et al., 2017; Scala & Johnson, 2017; Ströbele, 2017).

This is the first study to systematically establish that these differences along the urbanisation continuum have increased over time in the Netherlands. Regarding Euroscepticism, this divergence is mainly found between inhabitants of very strongly urban municipalities versus all other areas. This is in line with the idea of the emergence of global cities (Warf, 2015) or cosmopolitan cities, where globalization and European integration are regarded as sources of prosperity (Lind, 2020; Maxwell, 2019). We found more mixed evidence when it comes to attitudes about immigration and multiculturalism: only for some of the indicators did we find that divergence mainly took place between the very strongly urbanised areas and all other areas. In some cases, strongly urban areas (the second category) also significantly diverged from the lower-urbanised areas. While the pattern thus depends somewhat on the indicator and time period, the overall pattern is one of a growing

urban-rural gap in cosmopolitanism that is brought about mostly – and sometimes even exclusively – by the most urbanised areas.

These patterns of divergence remained mostly unaffected after controlling for socioeconomic background characteristics (and their interaction with time). This suggests that divergence of cosmopolitan attitudes along the urban-rural continuum cannot only be explained by continuing or accelerating processes of social sorting. Instead, part of the increasing differences might be explained by changing sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts in both urban and rural areas. As metropolitan areas grow, diversify, and transform due to economic and cultural globalization, its citizens become increasingly unlike others in society. The maps of recent elections testify to exactly these geographical differences.

While our study is the first to systematically compare cosmopolitan-nationalist attitudes across the urban-rural continuum over a period of decades, more research is needed to further disentangle the mechanisms involved since our data did not allow to investigate the specificities of individuals' changing residential contexts. We found that inhabitants of less-urbanised municipalities developed stronger anti-asylum attitudes, while inhabitants of very strongly urbanised municipalities did not. Simultaneously, inhabitants of (very) strongly urbanised municipalities became less xenophobic and less intolerant towards ethnic minorities over time, while inhabitants of less-urbanised municipalities did not. An obvious possible explanation for this would be the increasing ethnic diversity in urban municipalities. While previous studies confirmed that living in ethnically diverse areas is related to having more tolerant attitudes towards immigrants (Janssen et al., 2019), and changing ethnic composition of neighbourhoods is related to changing attitudes towards immigration over time (Van Heerden & Ruedin, 2019), other studies found no effect (De Blok & Van der Meer, 2018) or a curvilinear effect of ethnic diversity (Van Wijk, Bolt, & Tolsma, 2020). We implicitly assumed that this mechanism would apply to both immigration and European unification attitudes, since previous studies found that these attitudes are closely related to each other (Hobolt & de Vries, 2016) due to the importance of immigration as a policy domain of the European Union. However, future studies might benefit from studying how changes in specific contextual conditions might be related to changes in specific attitudes over the last decades.

Of course, ethnic diversity is not the only factor distinguishing cities and the countryside. We found that inhabitants of very strongly urban municipalities became less Eurosceptic over the last decade, while inhabitants of all other areas did not. The differential effect of globalization on the inhabitants of urban and rural areas and economic restructuring in the last decades may party explain this divergence. That this diverging trend was only observed after the start of the financial crisis in 2008 might provide additional insights. Economic and social deprivation, like rising unemployment rates and deterioration of public facilities, in rural areas are important for explaining political attitudes (Gordon, 2018; Monnat & Brown, 2017; Scala & Johnson, 2017). Although social and economic deprivation are not unique to rural areas, it is often argued that these processes have spatially uneven impacts. Inhabitants of less-urbanised areas appear to be more vulnerable during times of austerity (Murphy & Scott, 2014). Since austerity policies may be linked to solidarity between EU-member states in individuals' minds, these geographically uneven effects of austerity policies might explain why dissatisfaction with European integration differed between more- and less-urbanised areas after the financial crisis. Further research is necessary to explain how changing economic contexts may explain divergence of political attitudes between large cities and other areas, especially since recent studies only found little or no evidence for contextual mechanisms explaining geographical polarization (Gallego et al., 2016).

All in all, there are several important strengths to this study. First, our datasets cover periods of four (CV) and two (DPES) decades with comparable measures of political attitudes, plus comparable measures of urbanisation at the municipality level, and individual-level

sociodemographic background variables, over time. These data sources allowed us to systematically track cosmopolitan political attitudes along the urbanisation continuum over the span of several decades, while controlling for individual-level sociodemographic characteristics. Although both datasets include slightly different operationalizations of attitudes towards immigration and multiculturalism, the results overall patterns are highly similar in both datasets, which indicates that the results are robust to differences in operationalizations of the variables and differences in the time period under study.

At the same time, we identify some limitations. First, although we did find significant variation in political attitudes between municipalities of different urbanisation degrees, the proportion of explained variance is rather low in the models without control variables. On the one hand, this is reason to expect that municipalities within an urbanisation category can still differ substantially in the political attitudes of their inhabitants. For example, inhabitants of different rural areas were found to differ substantially in their political preferences, based on the type of economy of these areas (Scala, Johnson, & Rogers, 2015). Similarly, cosmopolitan attitudes might substantially differ between inhabitants of booming knowledge economy cities and industrialized cities. On the other hand, it suggests that there is as much, if not more, variation in political attitudes between inhabitants of different neighbourhoods *within* these municipalities. For example, we argued that increasing spatial polarization in housing prices leads to deepening social polarization across space. However, inequality in housing prices did not only increase between successful and struggling municipalities, but also within-city inequalities between the centres and the suburbs increased (Cunningham & Savage, 2017; Hochstenbach & Arundel, 2019). Other possibly important contextual characteristics, like ethnic diversity and unemployment rates, also differ substantially between neighbourhoods within municipalities. This might partly explain why suburban inhabitants, while living in large cities, may still hold attitudes similar to rural inhabitants (Ströbele, 2017), or why spatial polarization in the US was found to be stronger at the precinct-level as compared to higher scales like divisions, states and counties (Rohla, Johnston, Jones, & Manley, 2018). Future studies would thus benefit from having lower-level (e.g. neighbourhood) urbanisation degree measures.

Second, in order to empirically distinguish the extent to which changing sociodemographic compositions or changing contextual characteristics are related to divergence along the urbanisation continuum, we would need longitudinal panel data linked to neighbourhood- or municipality-level contextual data (Lancee & Schaeffer, 2015). This would be a fruitful direction for further research.

Third, we did not take other dimensions into account along which geographical polarization might occur. Density is just one of the factors along which citizens sort and that shapes their experience of the world. Citizens also live (to a smaller or larger extent) in the 'centre' or 'periphery', and this too shapes their economic, cultural and political outlook (Harteveld, Van der Brug, & De Lange, 2019). The distance between an individual's residential area and the nearest city is related to his/her political attitudes, additional to the effect of population density (Gimpel et al., 2020). We did not distinguish between municipalities close to the cultural and political centre of the Netherlands, and municipalities that lie closer to the border or in other more peripheral areas.

Despite these limitations, we found strong support for divergence on cosmopolitan-nationalist issues between inhabitants of more- and less-urbanised municipalities in the Netherlands. Since this small and densely-populated country may be regarded as a least-likely case to find these trends, they are likely also present in other Western democracies. Inhabitants of large cities have adopted a more cosmopolitan attitude over time, and their attitudes diverged from the rest of the country. This may provide some insight into why rural inhabitants may feel like their values and way of life are not valued by urban inhabitants and that they are neglected by policy makers (e.g. Hochschild, 2016; Cramer, 2016). However, the geographical divergence does not create a cleavage between rural areas and the rest of the country, but mainly sets apart the

people in the largest cities from those in the rest of the country. This underlines the need to also understand the areas in between the two extremities, which often do not feature in the public debate. If this trend would continue, it will be a challenge for political parties to represent inhabitants of large cities and inhabitants of other areas simultaneously. This is especially important in countries with majoritarian electoral systems, as geography plays a big role in shaping political parties' support in these democracies (Rodden, 2019). Since our results suggest that attitudinal divergence is partly related to changes in contextual characteristics in both urban and rural areas over the last decades,

overcoming this may require place-sensitive policies that invest in the areas that have not benefited as much from economic restructuring and globalisation (Ianmarino, Rodríguez-Posé & Storper, 2019; Rodríguez -Posé, 2020), without a priori pitting the most rural areas against the rest.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102353.

Appendix 1. Regression tables

Table A1

Regression models including interactions between urbanisation and time on Euroscepticism from the DPES data

	Model 1a		Model 2a		Model 1b		Model 2b	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Time	0.132***	0.016	0.293***	0.037	0.023	0.015	0.214***	0.035
Urbanisation (continuous)	0.106*	0.053	0.082	0.054				
Time X Urbanisation	−0.017***	0.005	−0.013**	0.005				
Urbanisation (Very strongly = ref.)								
Rural					−0.511*	0.250	−0.359	0.250
Hardly					−0.355	0.231	−0.276	0.231
Mildly					−0.531*	0.230	−0.456*	0.228
Strongly					−0.322	0.223	−0.211	0.220
Time X Rural					0.078***	0.023	0.055*	0.023
Time X Hardly					0.068***	0.020	0.052*	0.021
Time X Mildly					0.070***	0.021	0.059**	0.021
Time X Strongly					0.052**	0.020	0.038	0.020
Constant	3.093***	0.178	1.674**	0.375	3.783***	0.173	2.182***	0.357
Control variables X Time included	No		Yes		No		Yes	
Adjusted R^2	.015		.078		.016		.076	
N	14,114		13,218		14,114		13,218	

* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

Table A2

Regression models including interactions between urbanisation and time on intolerance towards ethnic minorities from the DPES data

	Model 1a		Model 2a		Model 1b		Model 2b	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Time	0.029*	0.014	0.123***	0.030	−0.025	0.013	0.073**	0.028
Urbanisation (continuous)	−0.039	0.044	0.000	0.045				
Time X Urbanisation	−0.010*	0.004	−0.010*	0.004				
Urbanisation (Very Strongly = ref.)								
Rural					0.123	0.207	−0.026	0.207
Hardly urban					0.258	0.191	0.148	0.191
Mildly urban					0.257	0.192	0.218	0.189
Strongly urban					0.112	0.185	0.103	0.182
Time X Rural					0.047*	0.019	0.046*	0.019
Time X Hardly urban					0.029	0.017	0.025	0.017
Time X Mildly urban					0.014	0.017	0.008	0.017
Time X Strongly urban					0.016	0.017	0.011	0.017
Constant	5.086***	0.149	4.514***	0.268	4.820***	0.142	4.445***	0.288
Control variables X Time included	No		Yes		No		Yes	
Adjusted R^2	.015		.094		.016		.096	
N	16,679		15,645		16,679		15,645	

* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

Table A3
Regression models including interactions between urbanisation and time on anti-asylum attitudes from the DPES data

	Model 1a		Model 2a		Model 1b		Model 2b	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Time	0.094***	0.017	0.075	0.041	0.014	0.017	−0.005	0.039
Urbanisation (continuous)	0.065	0.058	0.097	0.058				
Time X Urbanisation	−0.014**	0.005	−0.014**	0.005				
Urbanisation.(Strongly = ref.)								
Rural					−0.222	0.273	−0.314	0.273
Hardly urban					−0.318	0.253	−0.531*	0.253
Mildly urban					−0.131	0.250	−0.280	0.248
Strongly urban					−0.174	0.242	−0.274	0.239
Time X Rural					0.051*	0.025	0.047	0.025
Time X Hardly urban					0.061**	0.023	0.071**	0.023
Time X Mildly urban					0.035	0.022	0.041	0.022
Time X Strongly urban					0.032	0.022	0.036	0.022
Constant	3.826***	0.192	4.472***	0.430	4.211***	0.192	5.035***	0.412
Control variables X	No		Yes		No		Yes	
Time included								
Adjusted R^2	.010		.067		.010		.066	
N	13,678		12,958		13,678		12,958	

* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

Table A4
Regression models including interactions between urbanisation and time on ethnic intolerance from the CV data

	Model 1a		Model 2a		Model 1b		Model 2b	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Time	0.002*	0.001	0.009***	0.003	−0.012***	(0.001)	−0.002	(0.002)
Urbanisation (continuous)	0.001	0.005	0.015**	0.006				
Time X Urbanisation	−0.003***	0.000	−0.002***	0.000				
Urbanisation (Very strongly = ref.)								
Rural					0.023	(0.026)	−0.048	(0.028)
Hardly					−0.008	(0.021)	−0.048*	(0.022)
Mildly					−0.041*	(0.020)	−0.058**	(0.021)
Strongly					0.038	(0.022)	−0.002	(0.023)
Time X Rural					0.008***	(0.001)	0.007***	(0.001)
Time X Hardly					0.010***	(0.001)	0.007***	(0.001)
Time X Mildly					0.009***	(0.001)	0.006***	(0.001)
Time X Strongly					0.003*	(0.001)	0.002	(0.001)
Constant	1.801***	0.019	1.552***	0.047	1.808***	(0.014)	1.631***	(0.044)
Control variables X	No		Yes		No		Yes	
Time included								
Adjusted R^2	.013		.064		.014		.064	
N	46,507		43,215		46,507		43,215	

* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

Table A5
Regression models including interactions between urbanisation and time on xenophobia from the CV data

	Model 1a		Model 2a		Model 1b		Model 2b	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Time	0.007***	0.002	0.021***	0.005	−0.016***	0.001	0.003	0.004
Urbanisation (continuous)	0.025**	0.008	0.034***	0.008				
Time X Urbanisation	−0.004***	0.000	−0.004***	0.000				
Urbanisation (Very strongly = ref.)								
Rural					−0.108**	0.038	−0.158***	0.039
Hardly					−0.074*	0.030	−0.101**	0.032
Mildly					−0.064*	0.030	−0.030	0.030
Strongly					−0.023	0.032	−0.039	0.033
Time X Rural					0.018***	0.002	0.015***	0.002
Time X Hardly					0.015***	0.002	0.012***	0.002
Time X Mildly					0.011***	0.002	0.007***	0.002
Time X Strongly					0.007***	0.002	0.005*	0.002
Constant	0.749***	0.027	0.679***	0.069	0.878***	0.021	0.846***	0.063

Table A5 (*continued*)

	Model 1a		Model 2a		Model 1b		Model 2b	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Control variables X Time included	*No*		*Yes*		*No*		*Yes*	
Adjusted R^2	.007		.064		.007		.064	
N	37,493		34,479		37,493		34,479	

[*] $p < 0.05$.
[**] $p < 0.01$.
[***] $p < 0.001$.

References

Beggs, J. J., Haines, V. A., & Hurlbert, J. S. (1996). Revisiting the rural-urban contrast: Personal networks in nonmetropolitan and metropolitan Settings. *Rural Sociology, 61* (2), 306–325. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1549-0831.1996.tb00622.x

Bishop, B., & Cushing, R. (2008). The big sort: Migration, community, and politics in the United States of 'those people'. In R. A. Teixeira (Ed.), *Red, blue and purple America: The future of election demographics* (pp. 50–75). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Carlson, C., & Gimpel, J. G. (2019). Political implications of residential mobility and stasis on the partisan balance of locales. *Political Geography, 71*(1), 103–114. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.02.011

Carter, J. S. (2010). A cosmopolitan way of life for all?: A reassessment of the impact of urban and region on racial attitudes from 1972 to 2006. *Journal of Black Studies, 40* (6), 1075–1093. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934708325464

Cavaille, C., & Marshall, J. (2019). Education and anti-immigration attitudes: Evidence from compulsory schooling reforms across western Europe. *American Political Science Review, 113*(1), 254–263. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055418000588

Coumans, M., & Knops, J. (2017). *Onderzoeksverantwoording Culturele Veranderingen en SCP Leefsituatie Index 2016*. Heerlen: Statistics Netherlands.

Cramer, K. J. (2016). *The politics of resentment: Rural consciousness in Wisconsin and the rise of Scott Walker*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Cunningham, N., & Savage, M. (2017). An intensifying and elite city. *City, 21*(1), 25–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2016.1263490

Dijkstra, L., Poelman, H., & Rodríguez-Posé, A. (2018). The geography of EU discontent. *Regional Studies, 54*(6), 737–753. https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1654603

Fischer, C. S. (1975). Toward a subcultural theory of urbanism. *American Journal of Sociology, 80*(6), 1319–1341. https://doi.org/10.1086/225993

Gallego, A., Buscha, F., Sturgis, P., & Oberski, D. (2016). Places and preferences: A longitudinal analysis of self-selection and contextual effects. *British Journal of Political Science, 46*(3), 529–550. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123414000337

Gimpel, J. G., & Karnes, K. A. (2006). The rural side of the urban-rural gap. *PS: Political Science & Politics, 39*(3), 467–472. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096506060859

Gimpel, J. G., Lovin, N., Moy, B., & Reeves, A. (2020). The urban-rural gulf in American political behavior. *Political behavior*. Advance Online Publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09601-w

Gordon, I. R. (2018). In what sense left behind by globalisation? Looking for a less reductionist geography of the populist surge in Europe. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, 11*(1), 95–113. https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsx028

Gustafson, P. (2009). More cosmopolitan, no less local: The orientations of international travelers. *European Societies, 11*(1), 25–47. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616690802209689

Hakhverdian, A., van Elsas, E., van der Brug, W., & Kuhn, T. (2013). Euroscepticism and education: A longitudinal study of 12 eu member states, 1973-2010. *European Union Politics, 14*(4), 522–541. https://doi.org/10.1177/1465116513489779

Haller, W., & Roudometof, V. (2010). The cosmopolitan-local continuum in cross-national perspective. *Journal of Sociology, 46*(3), 277–297. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783310371401

Harteveld, E., Van der Brug, W., & De Lange, S. L. (2019). Peripherality, not rurality? Measuring and explaining regional discontent in The Netherlands. In *Paper presented at the ECPR general conference*. Wroclaw, Poland.

Helbling, M., & Teney, C. (2015). The cosmopolitan elite in Germany: Transnationalism and postmaterialism. *Global Networks, 15*(4), 446–468. https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12073

Hobolt, S. B., & de Vries, C. E. (2016). Public support for European integration. *Annual Review of Political Science, 19*(1), 413–432. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-042214-044157

Hochstenbach, C., & Arundel, R. (2019). *Spatial housing market polarisation: National and urban dynamics of diverging house values. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12346

Huggins, C. M., & Debies-Carl, J. (2015). Tolerance in the city: The multilevel effects of urban environments on permissive attitudes. *Journal of Urban Affairs, 37*(3), 255–269. https://doi.org/10.1111/juaf.12141

Huning, S., Bens, O., & Hüttl, R. F. (2012). Demographic change beyond the urban-rural divide: Re-framing spatial differentiation in the context of migration flows and social networks. *Die Erde: Journal of the Geographical Society of Berlin, 143*(1–2), 153–172.

Ianmariano, S., Rodríguez-Posé, A., & Storper, M. (2019). Regional inequality in Europe: Evidence, theory and policy implications. *Journal of Economic Geography, 19*(2), 273–298. https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lby021

Janssen, H. J., van Ham, M., Kleinepier, T., & Nieuwenhuis, J. G. (2019). A micro-scale approach to ethnic minority concentration in the residential environment and voting for the radical right in The Netherlands. *European Sociological Review, 35*(4), 552–566. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcz018

Jennings, W., & Stoker, G. (2016). The bifurcation of politics: Two englands. *The Political Quarterly, 87*(3), 372–382. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12228

Johnston, R., Jones, K., Sarker, R., Propper, C., Burgess, S., & Bolster, A. (2004). Party support and the neighbourhood effect: Spatial polarisation of the British electorate, 1991–2001. *Political Geography, 23*(4), 367–402. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2003.12.008

Johnston, R., Manley, D., & Jones, K. (2016). Spatial polarization of presidential voting in the United States, 1992–2012: The "Big sort" revisited. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 106*(5), 1047–1062. https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2016.1191991

Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Lachat, R., Dolezal, M., Bornschier, S., & Frey, T. (2008). *West European politics in the age of globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kunst, S., Kuhn, T., & van de Werfhorst, H. G. (2020). Does education decrease euroscepticism? A regression discontinuity design using compulsory schooling reforms in four European countries. *European Union Politics, 21*(1), 24–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/1465116519877972

Lancee, B., & Schaeffer, M. (2015). Moving to diversity: Residential mobility, changes in ethnic diversity and concern about immigration. In R. Koopmans, B. Lancee, & M. Schaeffer (Eds.), *Social cohesion and immigration in Europe and north America: Mechanisms, conditions, and causality* (pp. 38–55). London: Routledge.

Laurence, J., Schmid, K., & Hewstone, M. (2018). Ethnic diversity, inter-group attitudes and countervailing pathways of positive and negative inter-group contact: An analysis across workplaces and neighbourhoods. *Social Indicators Research, 136*(2), 719–749. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1570-z

Lee, B. A., & Sharp, G. (2017). Ethnoracial diversity across the rural-urban continuum. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 672*(1), 26–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716217708560

Lind, M. (2020). *The new class war: Saving democracy from the managerial elite*. United States of America: Portfolio/Penguin.

Lubbers, M., & Scheepers, P. (2010). Divergent trends of Euroscepticism in countries and regions of the European Union. *European Journal of Political Research, 49*(6), 787–817. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2010.01915.x

Maxwell, R. (2019). Cosmopolitan immigration attitudes in large European cities: Contextual or compositional effects? *American Political Science Review, 113*(2), 456–474. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055418000898

Maxwell, R. (2020). *Geographic divides and cosmopolitanism: Evidence from Switzerland*. Comparative Political Studies. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414020912289. Online first.

McGrane, D., Berdahl, L., & Bell, S. (2017). Moving beyond the urban/rural cleavage: Measuring values and policy preferences across residential zones in Canada. *Journal of Urban Affairs, 39*(1), 17–39. https://doi.org/10.1111/juaf.12294

Monnat, S. M., & Brown, D. L. (2017). More than a rural revolt: Landscapes of despair and the 2016 presidential election. *Journal of Rural Studies, 55*, 227–236. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.08.010

Murphy, E., & Scott, M. (2014). Household vulnerability in rural areas: Results of an index applied during a housing crash, economic crisis and under austerity conditions. *Geoforum, 51*, 75–86. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2013.10.001

Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. *Annual Review of Psychology, 49*(1), 65–85. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.49.1.65

Rachman, G. (2018). Urban-rural splits divide the world. *Financial Times* Retrieved from https://www.ft.com/content/e05cde76-93d6-11e8-b747-fb1e803ee64e.

Rodden, J. A. (2019). *Why cities lose: The deep roots of the urban-rural political divide*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2018). The revenge of the places that don't matter (and what to do about it). *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, 11*(1), 189–209. https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsx024

Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2020). The rise of populism and the revenge of the places that don't matter. *LSE Public Policy Review, 1*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.31389/lseppr.4

Rohla, R., Johnston, R., Jones, K., & Manley, D. (2018). Spatial scale and the geographical polarization of the American electorate. *Political Geography, 65*, 117–122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2018.05.010

Salomo, K. (2019). The residential context as source of deprivation: Impacts on the local political culture. evidence from the east German state Thuringia. *Political Geography, 69*, 103–117. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2018.07.001

Scala, D. J., & Johnson, K. M. (2017). Political polarization along the rural-urban continuum? The geography of the presidential vote, 2000-2016. *The Annals of the*

American Academy of Political and Social Science, 672(1), 162–184. https://doi.org/
10.1177/0002716217712696

Scala, D. J., Johnson, K. M., & Rogers, L. T. (2015). Red rural, blue rural? Presidential
voting patterns in a changing rural America. *Political Geography, 48*, 108–118,
0.1016/j.polgeo.2015.02.003.

Schoene, M. (2019). European disintegration? Euroscepticism and europe's rural/urban
divide. *European Politics and Society, 20*(3), 348–364. https://doi.org/10.1080/
23745118.2018.1542768

Ströbele, M. F. (2017). *What does suburbia vote for?: Changed settlement patterns and
political preferences in three European countries (1st ed.). Baden-baden: Nomos*.

Todosijevic, B., Aarts, K., & van der Kaap, H. (2010). *Dutch parliamentary election studies:
Data source book 1971-2006. The Hague: DATA archiving and networked services*.

Van Heerden, S., & Ruedin, D. (2019). How attitudes towards immigrants are shaped by
residential context: The role of ethnic diversity dynamics and immigrant visibility.
Urban Studies, 56(2), 317–334. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017732692

Van Wijk, D., Bolt, G., & Tolsma, J. (2020). Where does ethnic concentration matter for
populist radical right support? An analysis of geographical scale and the halo effect.
Political Geography, 77. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.102097

Van der Meer, T., van der Kolk, H., van der Brug, W., & Rekker, R. (2018). *Dutch
parliamentary election study 2017: Research description and codebook: University of
Amsterdam (UvA)*. Dutch Electoral Research Foundation (SKON).

Warf, B. (2015). Global cities, cosmopolitanism, and geographies of tolerance. *Urban
Geography, 36*(6), 927–946. https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2015.1067408