

Social Cohesion as a societal phenomenon: differences in degree or in kind?

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Point of departure of my 2011 study on social cohesion*

Limitations of existing approaches to social cohesion:

- many definitions
- theoretical and normative
- elaborate and multidimensional
- empirical grounding?
- macro or micro phenomenon?

* Janmaat, J.G. (2011). 'Social Cohesion as a Real-Life Phenomenon: Assessing the Explanatory Power of the Universalist and Particularist Perspectives', *Social Indicators Research*, Vol 100, No 1, 61-83.

Key questions

- Can a *coherent empirical* manifestation of social cohesion be identified?
- If so, does this manifestation (or manifestations) conform to the modernist/universalist or the particularist/regimes perspective?

Two contrasting perspectives

Modernist/universalist:

“Social cohesion is a coherent unidimensional phenomenon and reflects the stage of socio-economic development of a country”

Hypothesis: countries differ in *degree* of social cohesion and this variation is linked to economic development indicators

Particularist/regimes:

“Social cohesion is a regionally specific, path-dependent phenomenon rooted in distinct cultural and institutional traditions”

Hypothesis: the social cohesion profiles of countries differ in *kind* and are relatively enduring

Policy relevance:

If social cohesion is consistent with the particularist perspective, emulation of desirable forms of social cohesion by other countries will not be successful

Green and Janmaat's (2011) 'regimes of social cohesion' approach as example of 'mild' particularism

Theoretical regimes of social cohesion derived from the literature on varieties of capitalism, nationalism and citizenship				
	Liberal	Social-democratic	Conservative	East Asian
Equality	-	+	+/-	+
Order	-	+/-	+	+
Civic participation (active and passive)	+	+/-	-	-
Social trust	+/-	+	+/-	+/-
Tolerance	+	+/-	-	-
Value diversity	+	+	-	-
Social hierarchy	-	-	+	+
Countries	English-speaking	Scandinavian	Continental European	Japan, South Korea, Taiwan

Provisional definition

“Social cohesion is the property that keeps societies from falling apart”

- Neutral in terms of content
- Explicit in terms of level (society)

Which components of social cohesion to select?

Relying on four macro-level approaches

Macro-level approaches				
	Green et al.	Chan et al.	Council of Europe	Kearns and Forrest
<i>Ideational</i>	Social trust	Social trust Sense of belonging		Common values Sense of belonging
<i>Relational</i>	Institutional trust Social order and compliance	Civic participation/ social capital	Civic participation/ political engagement Tolerance ^a Equality	Civic participation/ social capital Social order and compliance Equality

Data and methods

Data:

- WVS Survey data from 2000 + administrative data on 70 countries worldwide
- Used as indicators for the social cohesion components suggested by the four macro-level approaches

Methods:

- Principle component analysis (default option) to uncover one or more syndromes of social cohesion
- Correlations to assess relations of social cohesion syndrome(s) with GDP pc
- Group means to assess the substantive profile of the postulated regimes
- Cluster analysis to assess the country membership of the postulated regimes

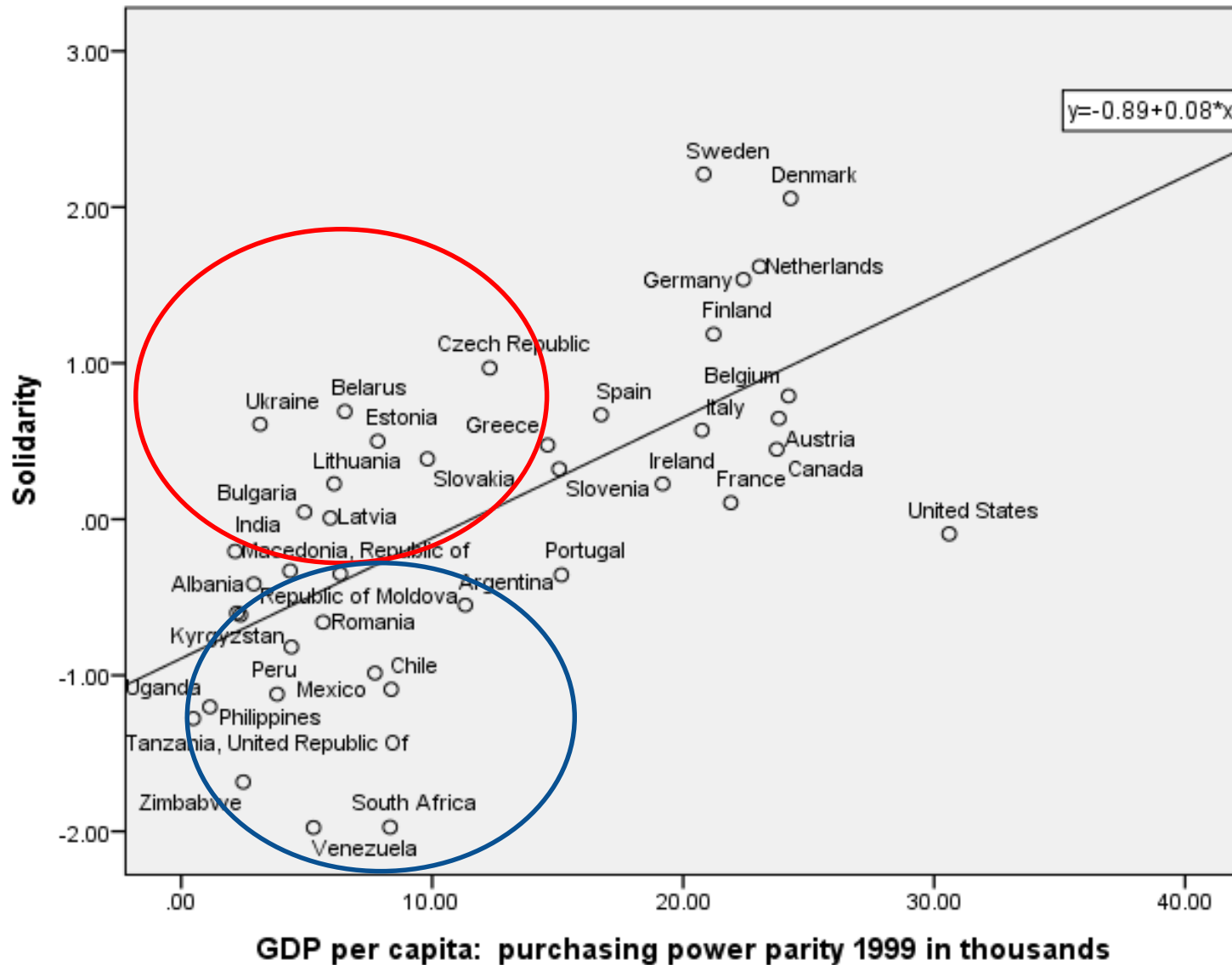
Testing the universalist perspective

- Can a coherent unidimensional syndrome of social cohesion be identified?
- Is this syndrome related to GDP pc as indicator of socio-economic development?

Principle component analysis on social cohesion indicators

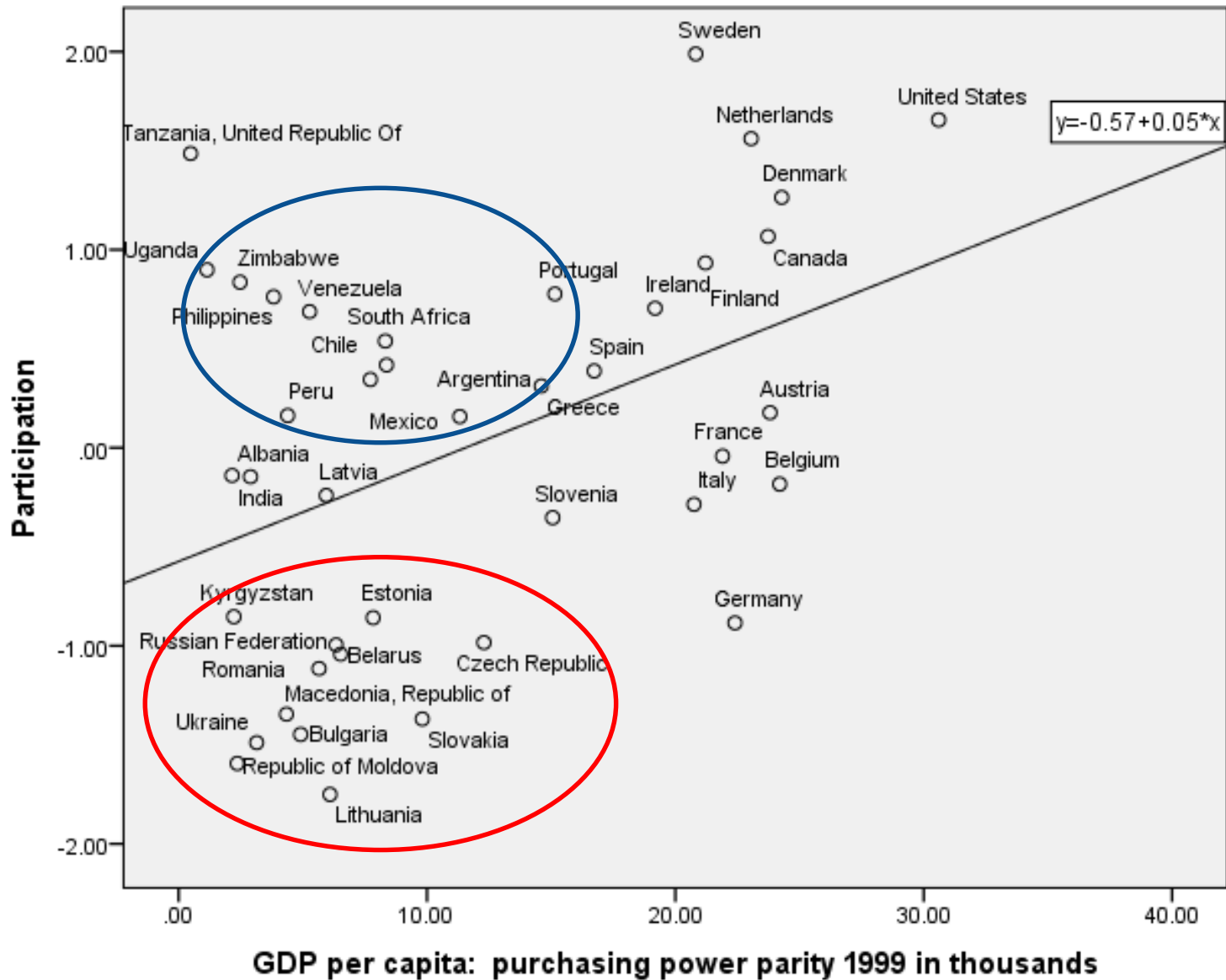
		Extracted dimensions			
Components of social cohesion	Indicators of social cohesion			3	4
		solidarity	participation		
Civic participation / political engagement	Discussing politics	.40	-.37	.64	.26
	Belonging to different organizations	.09	.75	.43	.35
Tolerance	No objection to immigrants as neighbours	.32	.52	-.27	-.02
	No objection to homosexuals as neighbours	.59	.46	-.45	-.14
Social trust	Most people can be trusted	.81	.33	-.07	.12
Institutional trust	Trust in parliament	.05	-.61	-.49	.04
Common values	Consensus on gender equality	.62	-.53	.16	-.27
	Consensus on democracy as preferred system	.50	-.29	-.25	.27
	Consensus on traditional/secular values	-.86	-.28	-.15	.19
	Consensus on survival/selfexpression values	-.62	-.33	-.46	-.07
Shared sense of belonging	National pride	-.52	.68	-.07	-.35
	Geographic unit of identification	-.45	.11	-.39	.62
Social order	100 minus number of homicides	.58	.04	-.09	.28
Equality	1 minus Gini coefficient	.76	.28	-.35	.04
Explained variance		32%	20%	12%	7%

The relation between economic development and solidarity

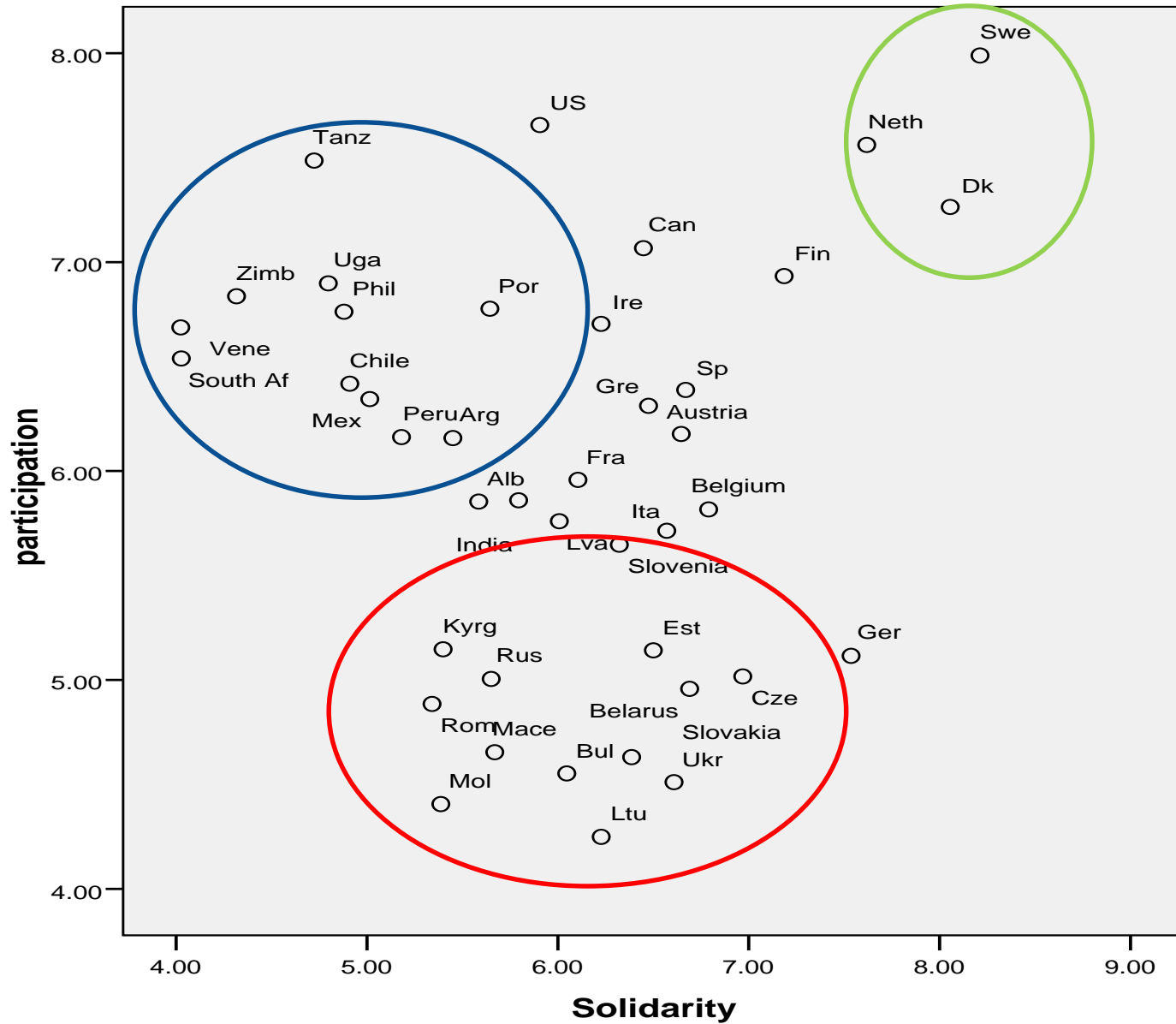


$r = .66$; $p = .000$; $R^2 = .43$

The relation between economic development and participation



$r = .42$; $p = .006$; $R^2 = .18$



How to assess the particularist perspective?

Testing Green and Janmaat's regimes of social cohesion

- Do the data reflect the postulated regimes in substantive terms?
- Do the data reflect the postulated regimes in terms of country membership?
- How stable are the substantive profiles and country clusters?

Data: WVS waves 1 (1981), 2 (1990) and 4 (2000) (sample restricted to OECD states)

The substance of social cohesion regimes (group means on indicators)

Components	Indicators	Liberal Anglophone			Conservative European			Social-democratic Scandinavian			Confucian East-Asian			Overall mean		
		1981	1990	1999	1981	1990	1999	1981	1990	1999	1981	1990	1999	1981	1990	1999
Civic participation	Passive (belonging to)	<i>1.03</i>	<i>.95</i>	<i>1.14</i>	.60	.75	.82	1.18	1.40	1.98	-	.61	.77	.89	.94	1.13
	Active (doing voluntary work)	.40	.47	.72	.30	.33	.30	.32	.32	.47	.08	.07	.25	.33	.35	.46
Trust	Most people can be trusted	44.7	48.7	34.9	31.2	35.9	36.4	52.6	58.1	59.8	39.4	38.0	34.3	40.7	44.9	41.6
	Trust in parliament	47.4	45.0	36.5	45.4	44.2	41.6	56.0	50.6	60.2	53.6	<i>31.5</i>	<i>16.3</i>	49.6	44.4	41.8
Tolerance	Immigrants as neighbours	91.9	91.9	89.5	89.3	86.1	88.4	93.7	89.0	93.5	94.7	<i>65.0</i>	<i>68.3</i>	91.7	85.6	87.4
Cultural pluralism	Postmaterialism scale (SDs)	<i>.61</i>	<i>.63</i>	<i>.58</i>	<i>.66</i>	<i>.67</i>	<i>.64</i>	<i>.62</i>	<i>.58</i>	<i>.52</i>	.60	.64	<i>.57</i>	.63	.63	.59
Social hierarchy	Respect for parents	70.9	72.3	73.0	69.9	71.1	64.6	<i>50.4</i>	<i>51.0</i>	<i>48.2</i>	80.3	86.0	82.0	66.6	68.3	64.8
Inequality	Gini's on income inequality	37.3	35.3	37.0	31.9	30.3	31.9	<i>33.2</i>	<i>25.0</i>	<i>27.2</i>	34.2	30.0	<i>27.4</i>	33.9	30.5	31.7
Disorder	Homicide per 100k	3.52	3.38	2.45	<i>1.22</i>	<i>1.23</i>	<i>1.38</i>	1.13	1.20	1.08	1.00	.60	<i>1.55</i>	1.84	1.79	1.59
	N (countries)	4	4	4	6	6	6	4	4	4	2	2	2	16	16	16

Note:

Italics = Low scores more than one standard deviation (SD) from the overall mean

Normal = Low scores less than one SD from the overall mean

Bold = High scores less than one SD from the overall mean

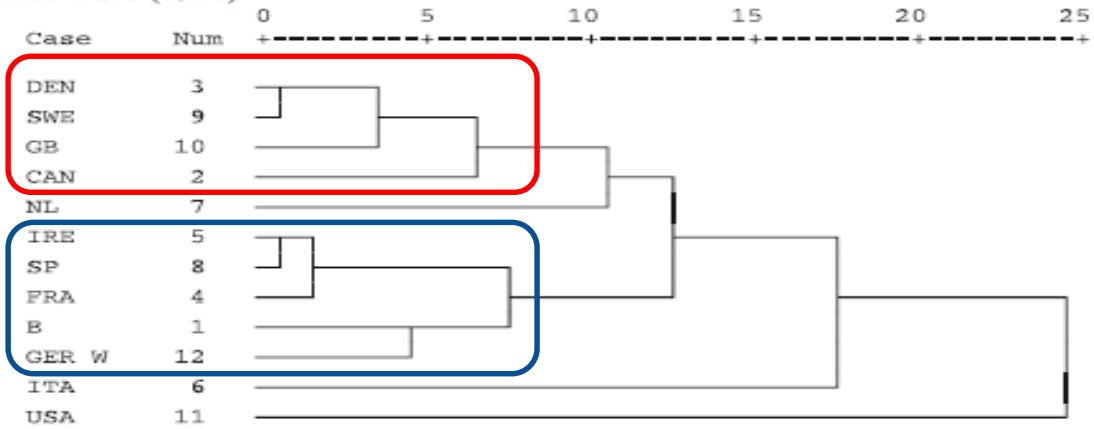
Bold and Italics = High scores more than one SD from the overall mean.

Green = in accordance with postulated regime

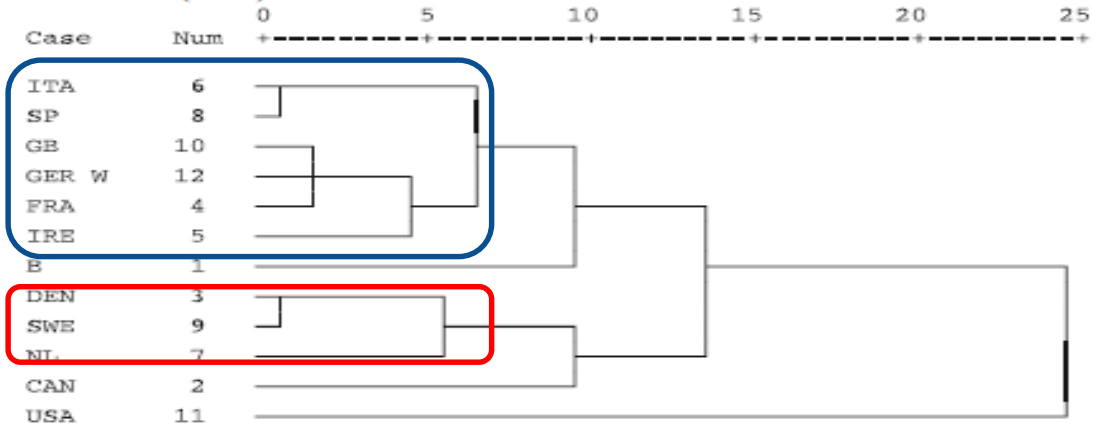
Red = not in accordance with postulated regime

Country membership of social cohesion regimes (cluster analysis)

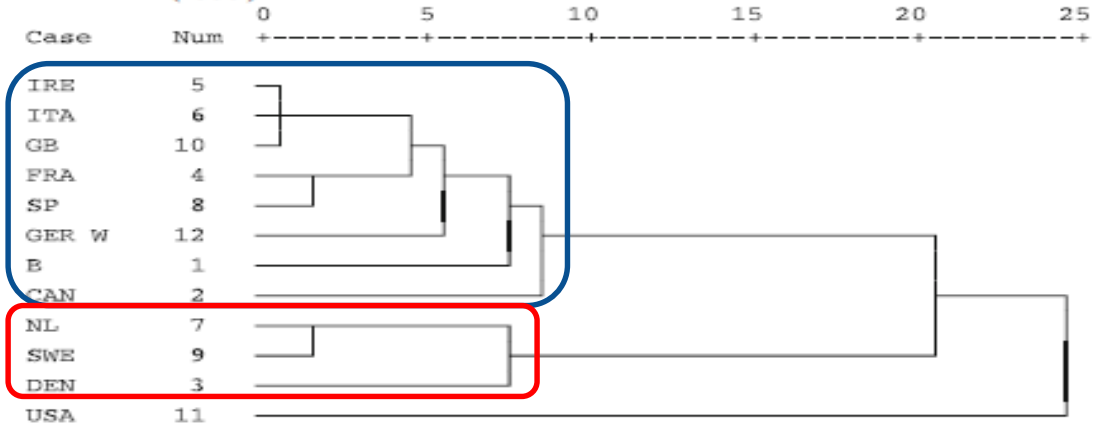
First Wave (1981)



Second wave (1990)



Fourth wave (1999)



Findings of over time analysis

- A distinctive and stable Scandinavian cluster emerged combining high trust, equality and low crime rates;
- A more blurred unstable continental European cluster emerged combining surprisingly low levels of social hierarchy, and high levels of value pluralism and ethnic tolerance
- No distinctive Liberal cluster emerged because of the unique position of the US
- Some countries change clusters (NL, Britain, Canada, Italy)

Conclusions

- There seem to be two main dimensions of social cohesion (solidarity and participation), both of which are related to socio-economic development. This partly confirms the universalist perspective;
- But there is also evidence of enduring and qualitatively different “regimes” of social cohesion (notably a Scandinavian one);
- Social cohesion is thus a reflection of both socio-economic development and unique cultural traditions;
- High values on solidarity and participation are likely to reflect unique, non-emulable forms of social cohesion

Questions for discussion

- Should we aim for an internally consistent model of social cohesion or a multidimensional one? (cf. Welzel and Inglehart 2016 in *Comparative Political Studies*)
- Are multidimensional conceptions of social cohesion useful in policy terms?
- How can we improve on the analysis of different regimes of social cohesion?