



Centro Italo-Tedesco per l'Eccellenza Europea
Deutsch-Italienisches Zentrum für Europäische Exzellenz

14th Conference “Social Monitoring and Reporting in Europe”

Weakening Social Cohesion in Europe? Indicators, Analysis and Policy Implications

Social cohesion in EU countries:

trends, cross-national differences, and vulnerable groups

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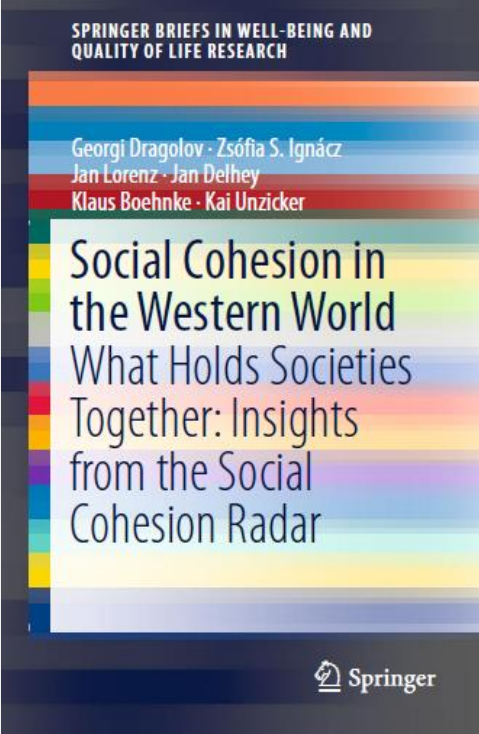
Why caring about social cohesion?



- End in itself...
 - ...and good for people's **subjective well-being** (Delhey & Dragolov 2016)
- ➔ *Key question: is cohesion indeed **getting weaker**?*

Our (previous) work on social cohesion

2016



2017



2018



International Journal of Psychology

2016

International Journal of Psychology, 2015
DOI: 10.1002/ijop.12149

Happier together. Social cohesion and subjective well-being in Europe

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BRILL

Delhey et al. 2018

Social Cohesion and Its Correlates:
A Comparison of Western and Asian Societies

What social cohesion is NOT! Misconceptions

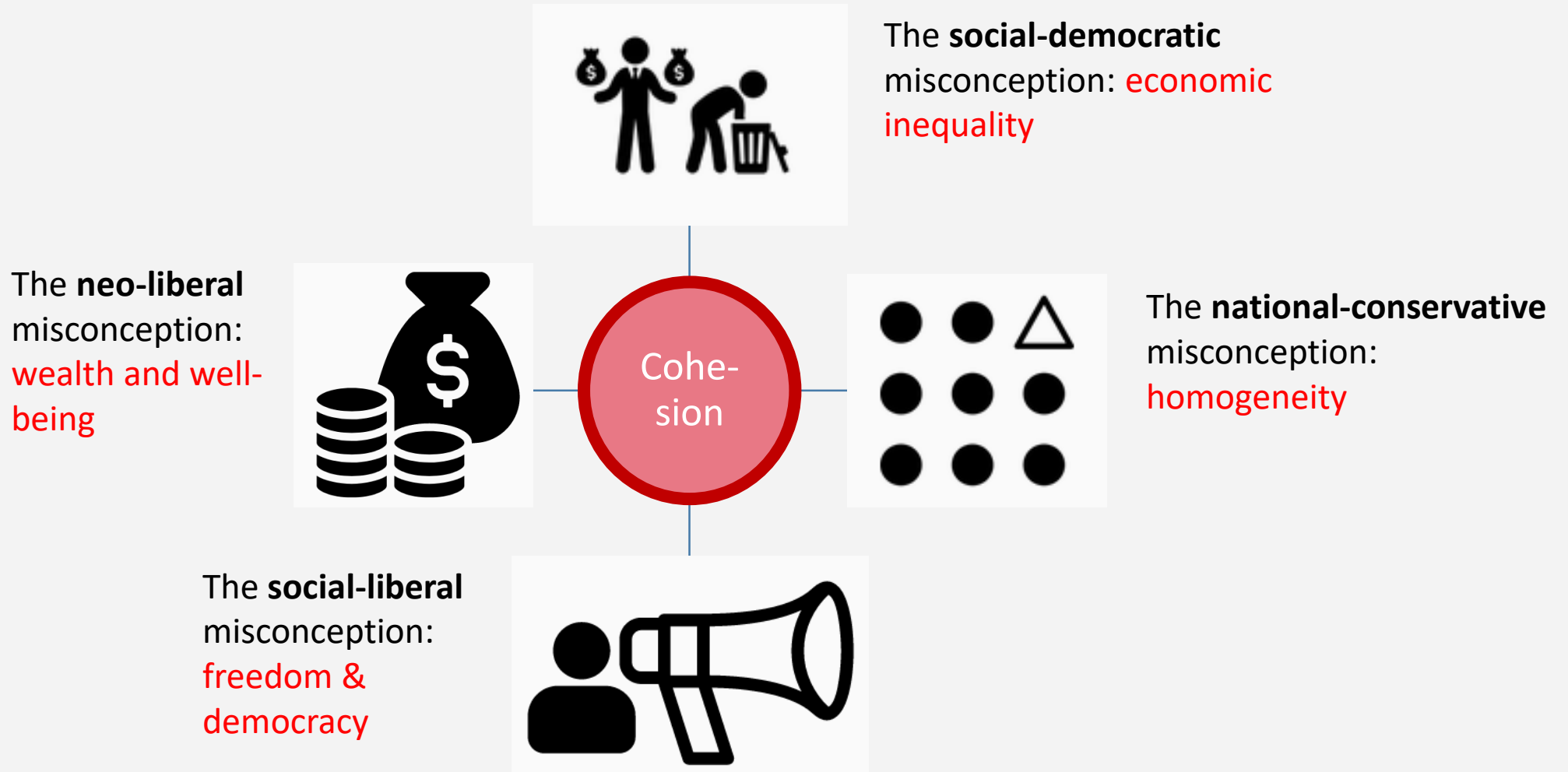





Table 1.1 Domains and dimensions of social cohesion

Domain	Dimension	Guideline
 1. Social relations create cohesion through a network of horizontal relationships between individuals and societal groups of all kinds, which is characterized by trust and allows for diversity.	1.1 Social networks	People have strong, resilient social networks.
	1.2 Trust in people	People have a high level of trust in others.
	1.3 Acceptance of diversity	People accept individuals with other values and lifestyles as equal members of society.
 2. Connectedness promotes cohesion through positive identification with the country, a high level of confidence in its institutions and a perception that social conditions are fair.	2.1 Identification	People feel strongly connected to their country and identify with it.
	2.2 Trust in institutions	People have a high level of confidence in social and political institutions.
	2.3 Perception of fairness	People believe that society's goods are fairly distributed and that they are being treated fairly.
 3. Focus on the common good promotes cohesion through actions and attitudes that help the weak, are in keeping with society's rules and allow for a collaborative approach to the organization of society.	3.1 Solidarity and helpfulness	People feel responsibility for others and are willing to help them.
	3.2 Respect for social rules	People abide by the fundamental rules of society.
	3.3 Civic participation	People participate in society and political life and enter into public discussions.

Cohesion as a **distinct** welfare concept

„Social cohesion is the **quality of social cooperation and togetherness of a collective**, defined in geopolitical terms, that is expressed in the attitudes and behaviors of its members“

Dragolov et al. (2016): 6

Focus today

More „organic“

Perceived social exclusion
Social trust
Civic engagement
Political participation
Socio-economic tensions

More „mechanic“

Ethno-cultural tensions
Local feeling of attachment
Local contacts

- 1 Levels and (short-term) trends
- 2 Cross-national differences & determinants
- 3 Vulnerable groups
- 4 Effects/association w/ SWB

Levels of social cohesion, 2016

<u>Dimension</u>	<u>EU-Average</u>
Perceived social exclusion (-)	28 %
Social trust	46 %
Civic engagement	17 %
Political participation	28 %
Economic tensions (-)	28 % („very strong“)

Ethno-cultural tensions (-)	37 % („very strong“)
Local feeling of attachment	66 %
Local contacts	65 %

Short-term trends in social cohesion

EU averages, 2007-2016

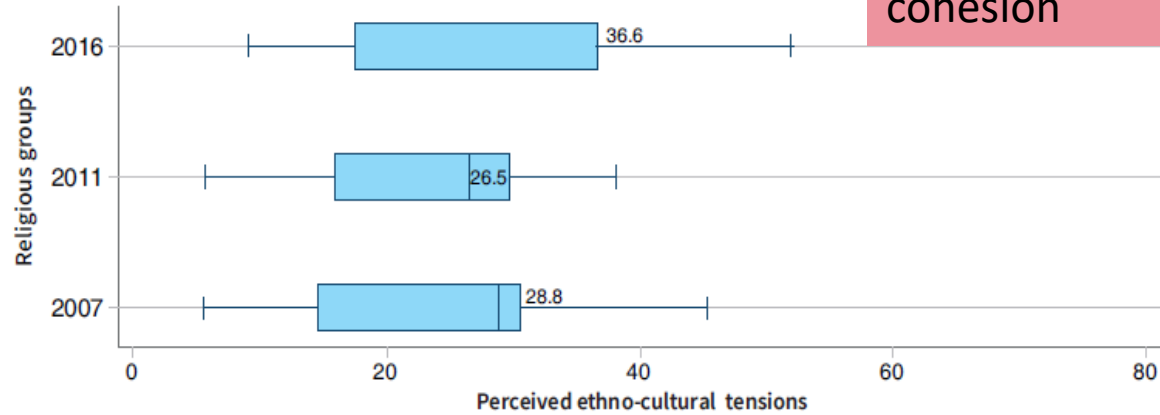
<u>Dimension</u>		<u>Trend</u>
Perceived social exclusion (-)	→	
Social trust		→
Civic engagement		→
Political participation	→	
Economic tensions (-)	↗ ↘	

Ethno-cultural tensions (-)		↗
Local feeling of attachment	(↘)	
Local contacts	(↗)	

Aspects of cohesion with changing levels

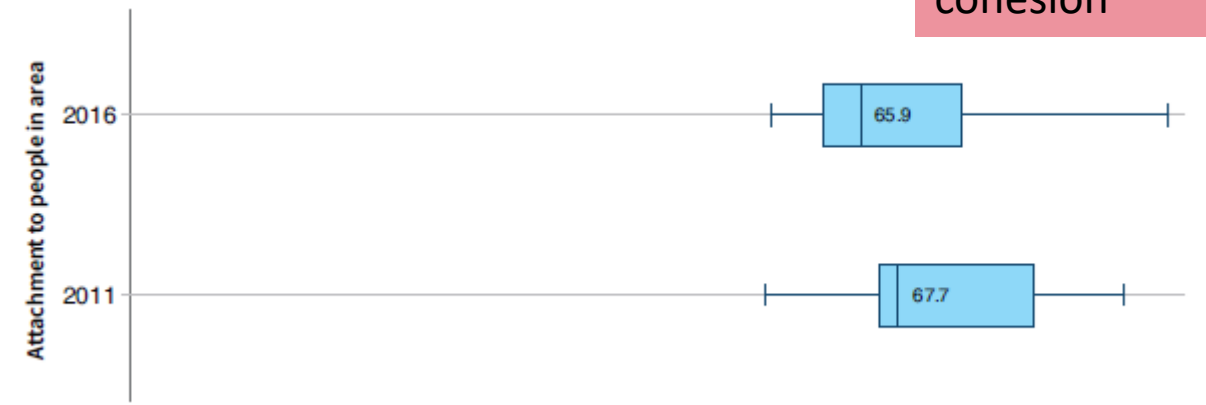
Ethno-cultural tensions

Decrease in cohesion



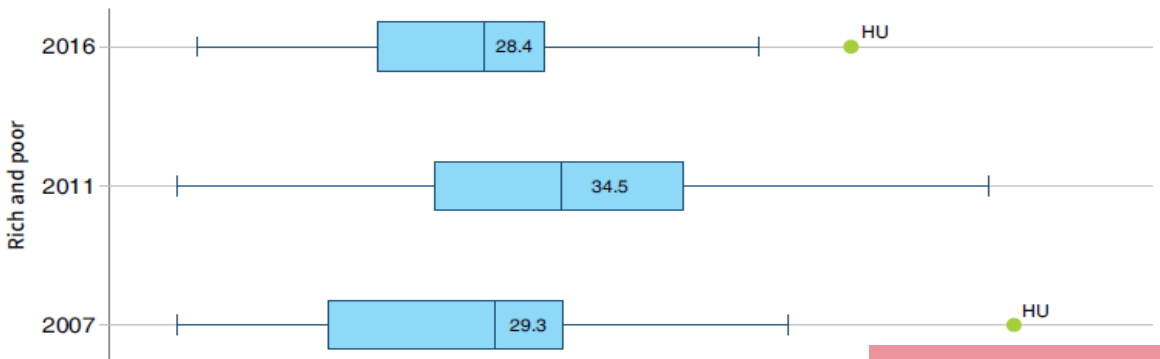
Local feeling of attachment

Decrease in cohesion



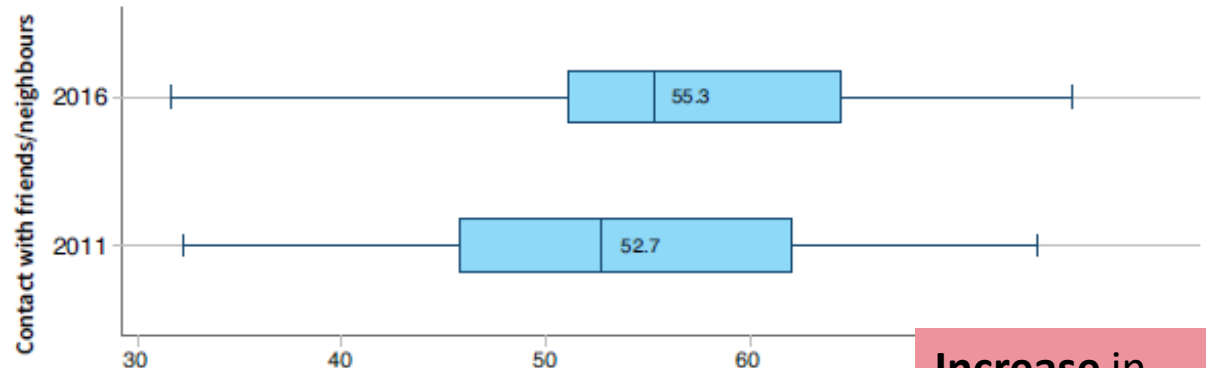
Socio-economic tensions

Fluctuating



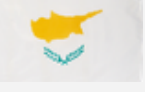
















Frequency of local contacts

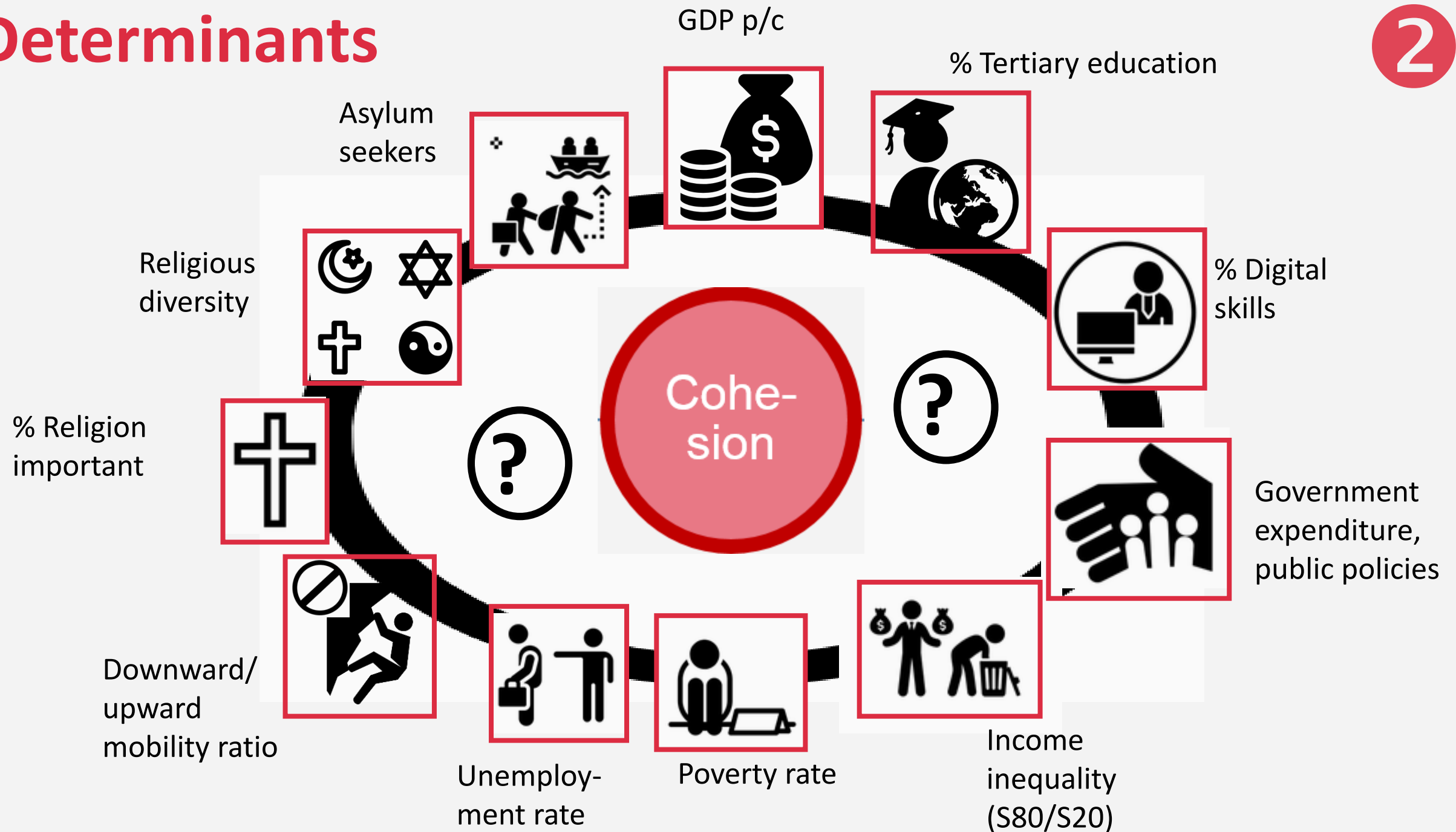
Increase in cohesion



Cross-national differences, 2016

Dimension	Average	Worst	Best
Perceived social exclusion (-)	28 %	 42	 15
Social trust	46 %	 23	 71
Civic engagement	17 %	  5	 36
Political participation	28 %	 8	 54
Economic tensions (-)	28 %	 57	 6
<hr/>			
Ethno-cultural tensions (-)	37 %	 52	 9
Local feeling of attachment	66 %	 61	 81
Local contacts	65 %	 32	 76

Determinants



Determinants of social cohesion, 2016

Dimension

Significant determinants

Perceived social exclusion (-) ↓

Social trust

Civic engagement

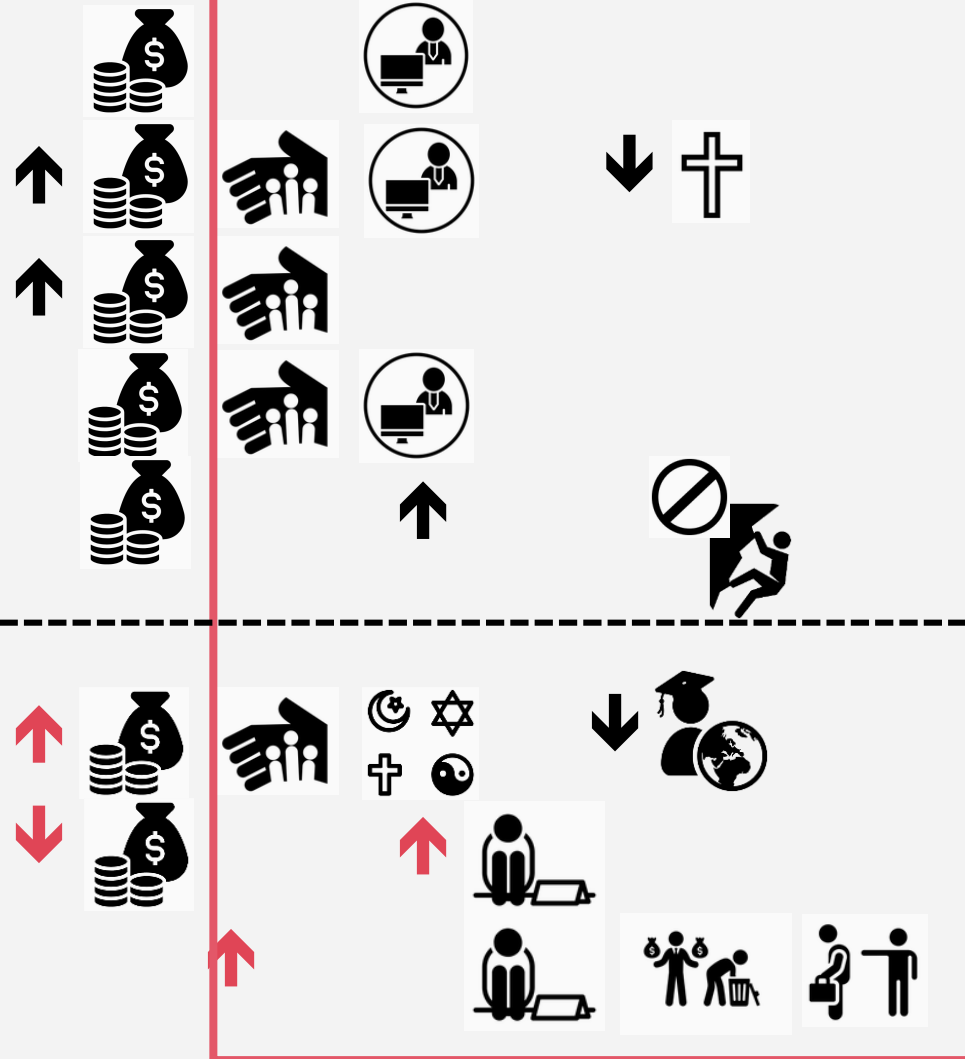
Political participation ↑

Economic tensions (-) ↓

Ethno-cultural tensions (-)

Local feeling of attachment ↓

Local contacts ↑



Significant partial correlations (controlled for GDP p.c.)

Vulnerable groups

Black = vertical parameter
Red = horizontal parameter

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Dimension

Lowest values for

Perceived social exclusion (-)	unemployed; low income; low education; chronically ill
Social trust	unemployed; low income; low education; chronically ill
Civic engegament	low education; unemployed; low income
Political participation	low education; elderly/retired ; unemployed; low income
Economic tensions (-)	unemployed; low education; chronically ill

Ethno-cultural tensions (-)	chronically ill; countryside; young
Local feeling of attachment	young ; unemployed; city
Local contacts	[very small social gradients]



Effects on SWB (population averages)

Dimension	Correlation with population-average SWB	
Perceived social exclusion (-)	strong, ☹️	-.66***
Social trust	strong, 😊	.80***
Civic engagement	strong, 😊	.83***
Political participation	strong, 😊	.79***
Economic tensions (-)	moderate, ☹️	-.40**

Ethno-cultural tensions (-)	weak, 😊	.32 n.s.
Local feeling of attachment	moderate, ☹️	-.43*
Local contacts	weak ☹️,	-.20 n.s.

Summary: what do we learn?

- Social cohesion is studied best as a **distinct welfare concept**
- Social cohesion in Europe is **better than many think!** No social malaise!
- But societies **in different shape**: Typically, Southeast European societies least cohesive, Nordic and Germanic societies most cohesive
- Generally: Politicians should focus on the **syndrome of social exclusion, low social capital, and economic tensions**
 - ➔ similar macro-level **drivers** (wealth, government exp., digital skills)
 - ➔ similar **vulnerable** groups (socio-economically disadvantaged)
 - ➔ highly relevant for **SWB**
- Rich-western Europe: additionally address the **immigration/diversity issue** (luxury problem, but still not easy to solve)