



## Measuring Cohesion: New Instruments for Regional Monitoring

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# 1. Research Institute Social Cohesion



Independent research institute financed by the German Federal Republic since 2019, 11 branches, first research period 2020-2024.

Three major monitoring instruments planned:

1 New household panel

2 Social media observatory

3 New regional panel (12 municipalities selected by size (large and medium-sized towns, villages) and region (east, west, north, south), high number of participants to allow analysis of districts, mixed postal/web-survey)



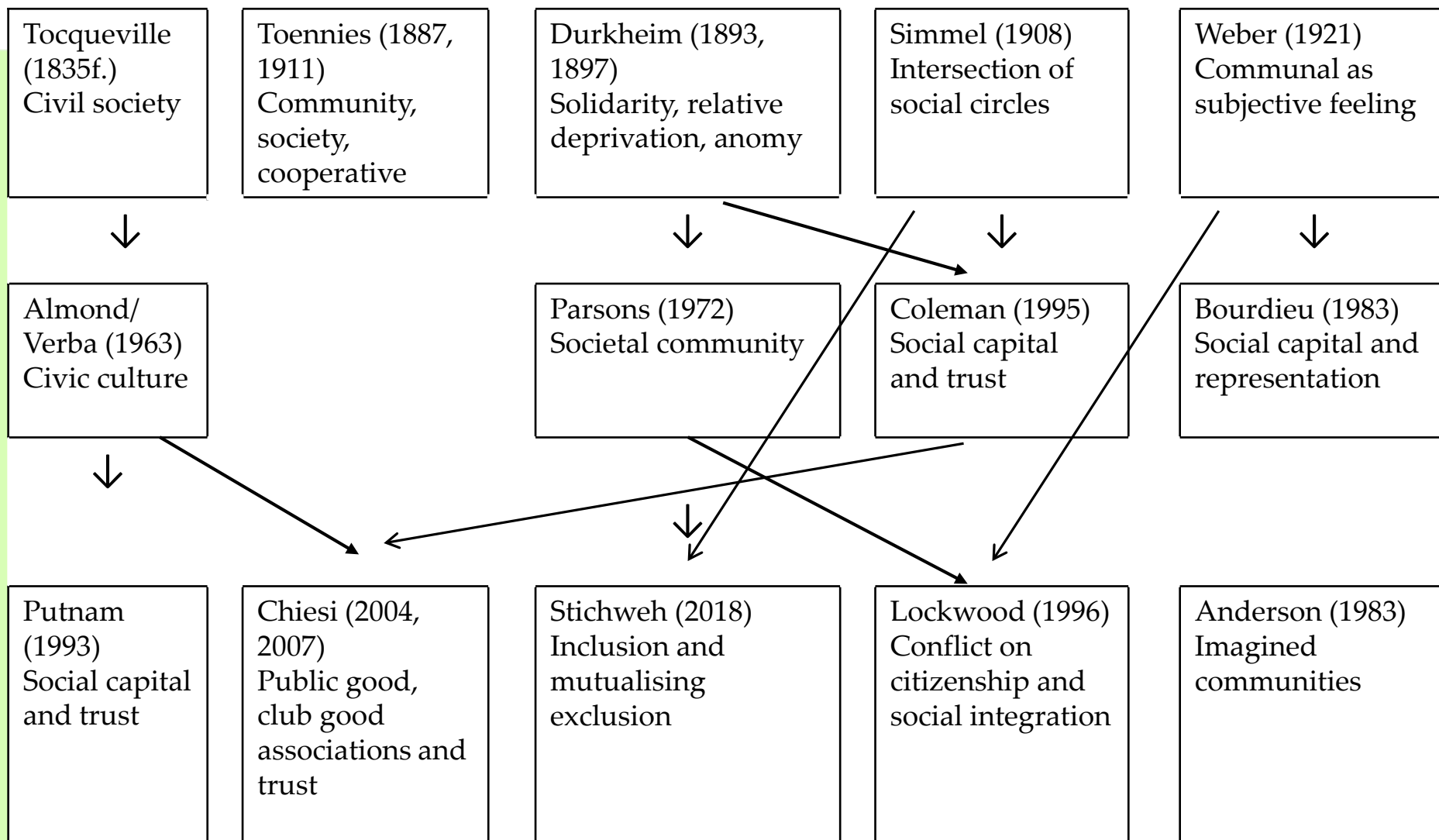
# 1. Research Institute Social Cohesion



How can we measure social cohesion of local societies as a dependent variable in a postal survey, using not more than 2-3 DIN-A5 pages?



## 2. Theoretical Traditions on Social Cohesion





### 3. Prior Operationalisation

Since 1995 (after neoliberalism, Jenson 2010) different governments, supra- and international organisations and NGOs increasingly attempted to measure “cohesion”.

Very diverging approaches:

- Only objective: e.g. EU-indicators “cohesion” = low income, employment rate, educational level, life expectancy, immigrants
- Nearly just subjective: e.g. Bertelsmann foundation “cohesion” = willingness to help, trust, diversity tolerance, identification with collective, trust in institutions, feeling of just treatment, feeling of solidarity, compliance, participation



# 4. Concept and Definition Cohesion



Influential review articles on measuring „cohesion“: Chan et al. (2006) and Schiefer/ van der Noll (2017).

Major argument: Narrow concept of „cohesion“ as a multi-dimensional attribute of a collective. As a dependent variable it is influenced by many variables.

Definition Sackmann/Winkler: Social cohesion will be called a subjective feeling of an interactively produced society as characterized by the degree of its level of trust, sense of belonging and expectations of collective efficacy.

## 4. Concept and Definition of Cohesion

	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3
Chan et al.	Trust	Sense of belonging	Willingness to participate and help
Schiefer et al.	Close social relations	Emotional connectedness to the social entity	Strong orientation towards the common good
<i>Comparison</i>	Trust vs. social capital	Identification	Participation/help vs. common good orientation
Sackmann/ Winkler	Trust	Identification	Collective Efficacy





# 5. Measuring Cohesion

Tests of measurement concepts on „cohesion“ were done by cross sectional analysis, e.g. with kinds of factor analysis, for correlations in and between dimensions.

(Dimensions: **Trust**, **identification**, **efficacy**, **participation**, **other**). Results:

- One dimensional (**I like neighbourhood** (Laurence et al. 2015), subjectively integrated (Grundert et al. 2015), **leave keys with neighbours** (Budnik et al. 2018))
- Two dimensional (**correlates highly with trust**, **less with participation** (Dickes et al. 2010), **correlates highly with trust**, **less with participation** with somewhat **more weight by inclusion of informal help** (Beuningen et al. 2013), **correlates highly with collective efficacy** (Sampson et al. 1997))
- Three dimensional (**Trust highly correlated with** cooperation, **less with participation** (Schiefer et al. 2017), **cohesion highly correlated with sense of belonging**, **less with neighbour annoyance** (Muhuri et al. 2018), **highly correlated with identification** and **informal help**, **less with participation** (Fromm et al. 2019))
- Seven dimensional (**sum highly correlated with trust in institutions** / legitimacy/ openness, **medium correlation with participation**, **less with support**, relations; **participation high variance between countries** (Bottoni 2018))





# 5. Measuring Cohesion

## Key dimensions of social cohesion (affective and pragmatic)

Trust (general, institutions, neighbourhood)

Identification (municipality, political units)

Collective efficacy (expectation of influence and protest, persistence)



## 5. Examples of items measuring social cohesion, dimension collective efficacy

Collective efficacy				
Expectation of efficacy	Efficacy of social movements	Civil society reactions to restrictions	Actions	Persistence
<p>Suppose a law were being considered by the Bundestag in Berlin that you considered to be unjust or harmful. What do you think, you could do?            A) I couldn't do anything. B) I could do something. C) Don't know.</p>	<p>The collective action of people in Germany has a huge influence on public affairs.</p>	<p>Would you say it is very likely, likely, neither likely nor unlikely, unlikely, or very much unlikely that your neighbours could be counted on to intervene in various ways if the primary school closest to their home was threatened with budget cuts.</p>	<p>Have you ever done anything to try to influence a local decision?             Have you ever done anything to try to influence a law being passed by national parliament?</p>	<p>I am convinced that we can improve the quality of life in Germany, even when resources are limited or become scarce.</p>
<p>Similar Gabriel (1987: 205) following Almond/Verba (1963:141)</p>	<p>Similar Lee (2005: 304)</p>	<p>Similar Sampson/Raudenbush/Earls (1997: 919p.)</p>	<p>Similar Almond/Verba (1968: 30)</p>	<p>Similar Kavanaugh et al. (2005: 18)</p>

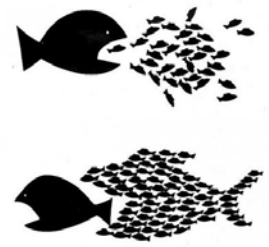


## 6. Analytical dimensions



Causes (Structure)		Causes (action)	Key dimensions (affective and pragmatic)
Inequality		Participation	Trust (general, institutions, neighbourhood)
Security			
Inclusion		Informal help	Identification (municipality, political units)
Citizenship			
...			Collective efficacy (expectation of influence and protest, persistence)
Education		Annoyance	

# 7. Result



How can we measure social cohesion of local societies as a dependent variable in a postal survey, using not more than 2–3 DIN–A5 pages?

- Local societies (village, medium sized town, quarter): **They are local societies with some sort of political unity.**
- Dependent variable: **Three dimensional key variable (Trust, identification and collective efficacy).**
- Causes: **Opportunities (inequality, security, inclusion...) constructing structural elements for actions (Participation, informal help, annoyance).**

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