



WZB

Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin
für Sozialforschung

Is There a Crisis of Democracy?

Wolfgang Merkel

REACH:

Resilient cultural heritage and communities in Europe

Budapest 10-11 May

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin



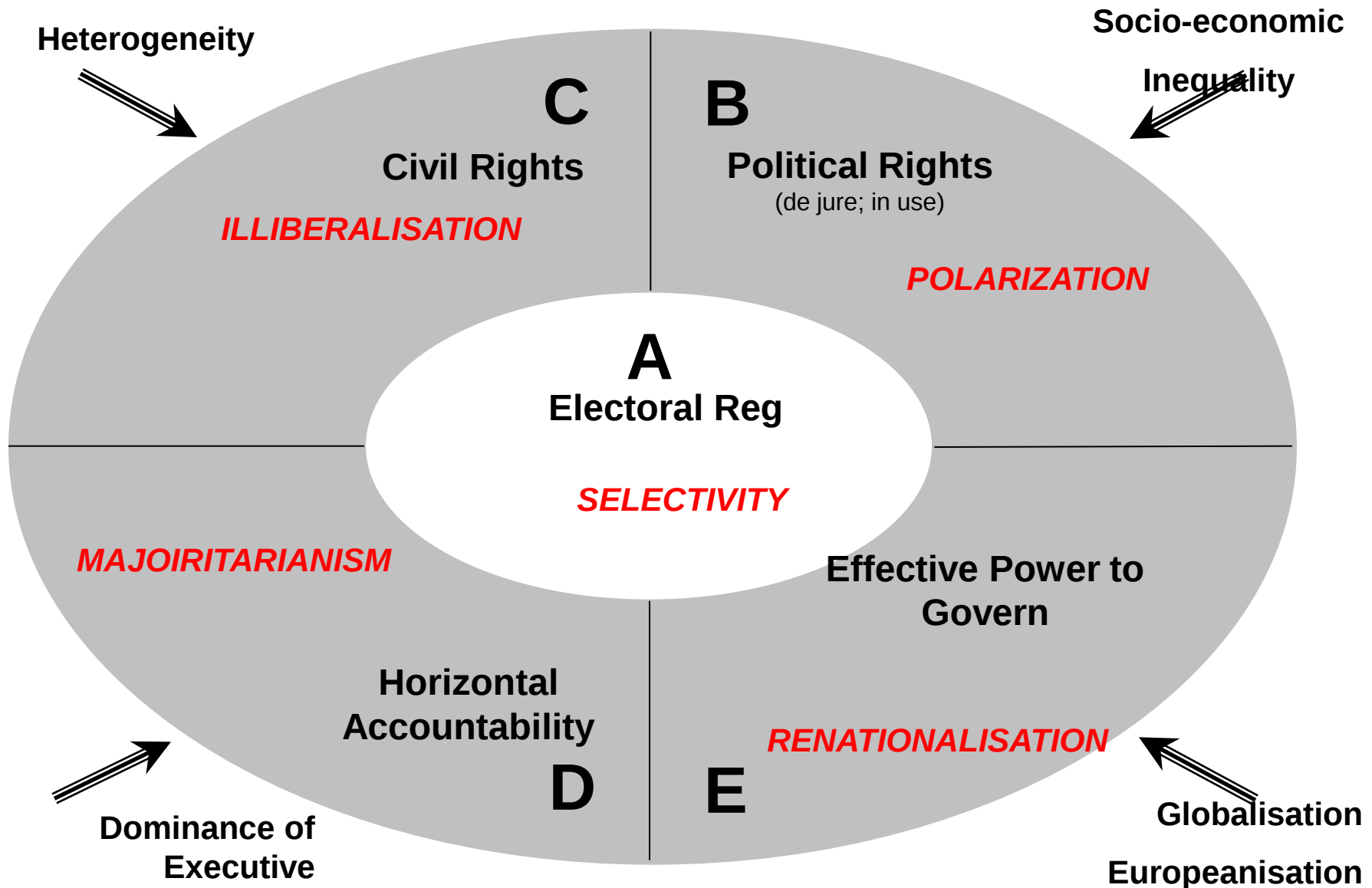
Structure: 6 Steps

- Concepts of Democracy
- Concepts of Crisis
- Inequality as unresolved challenge
- Diversity as unresolved challenge
- RWP as unresolved challenge
- Crisis? What crisis?

Three Concepts of Democracy

- **Minimalists:** Schumpeter, Downs (input)
- **Mid-Range:** Habermas, Bobbio, Urbinati, Merkel, (input and throughput)
- **Maximalists:** Heller, Meyer, Latin American democratic theorists (input, throughput, output)
 - **Hypothesis:** The more minimalist, the less crisis
 - **Minimalist concepts are analytically inappropriate for the crisis question**

„Embedded Democracy“ – internal and external challenges



Two Meanings of Crisis I

1. Acute crisis: Death or life?

- Crossroad
- Existential threat
- Fundamental decisions/medicine are required

❖ Examples:

❖ Italy 1920-1922

❖ Weimar 1930-1933

❖ Spain 1933-1936/9

❖ Greece 1965-67

❖ Chile 1970-1973

❖ Turkey and Venezuela at present?

Two Meanings of Crisis II

2. Latent crisis: Slow decline, erosion

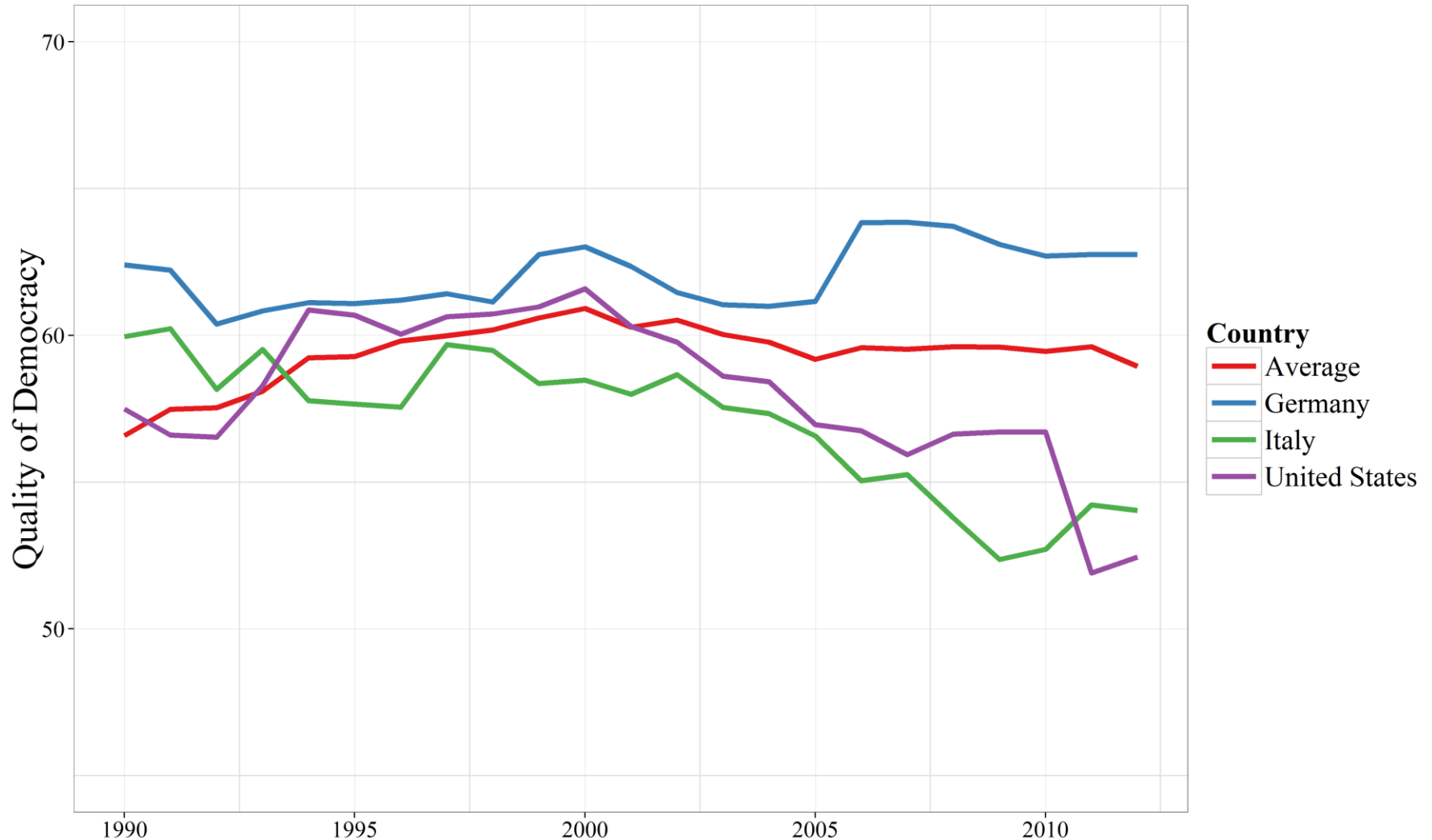
- Unfulfilled normative promises of democracy (min or max)
- Erosion: Worsening of quality, chronic diseases
- Diminished subtype: Defective, illiberal, exclusive democracies, but no collapse/regime transition
- Threshold question not resolved!

Hypotheses:

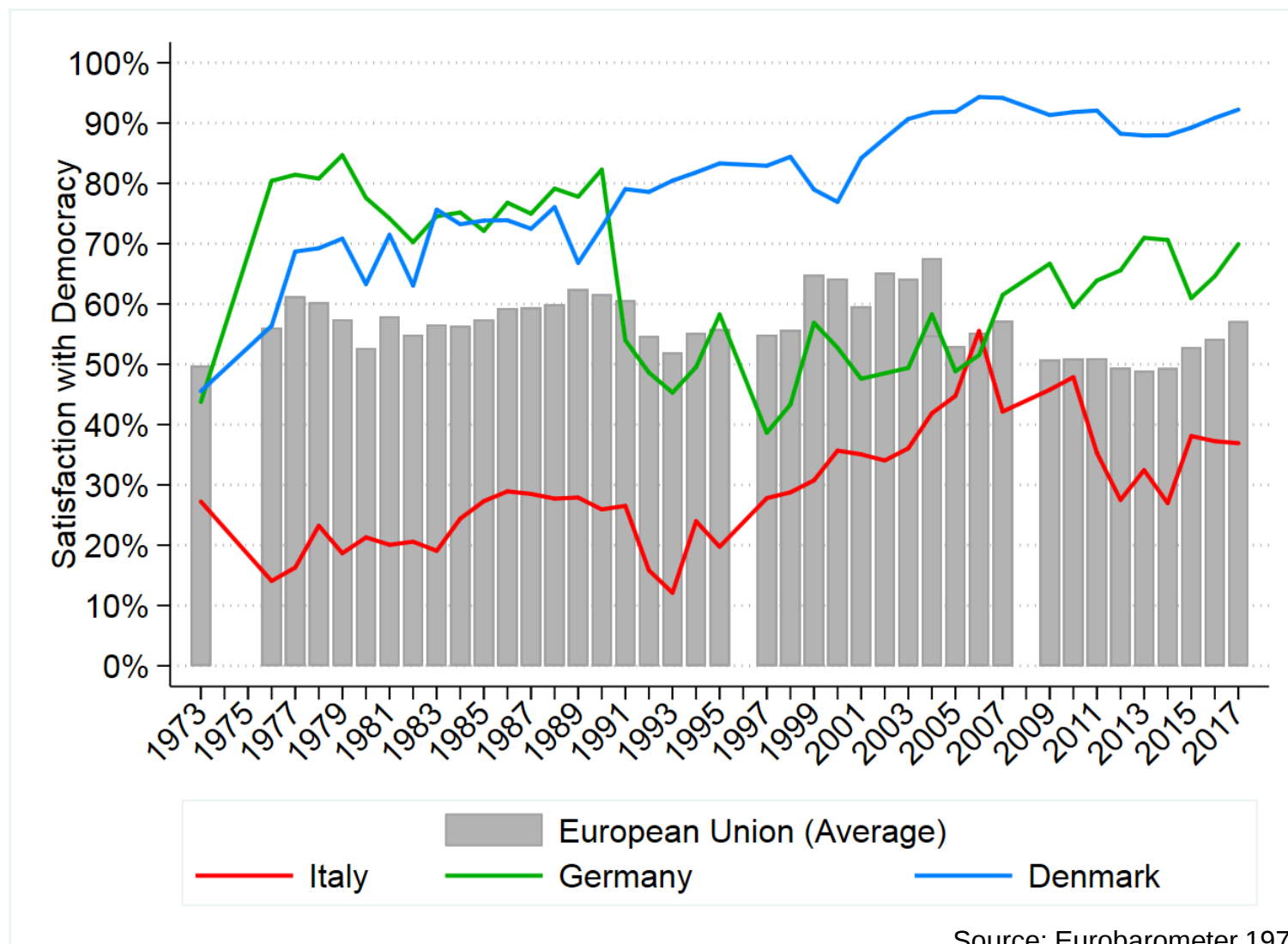
- ⇒ **If Type I, the smaller the crisis sample (clearer defined)**
- ⇒ **If Type II, the bigger the crisis sample (and less defined)**
- ⇒ **Diffuse term or clear concept**

Crisis? Experts and Demos

Democracy Barometer: Quality of Democracy-Index



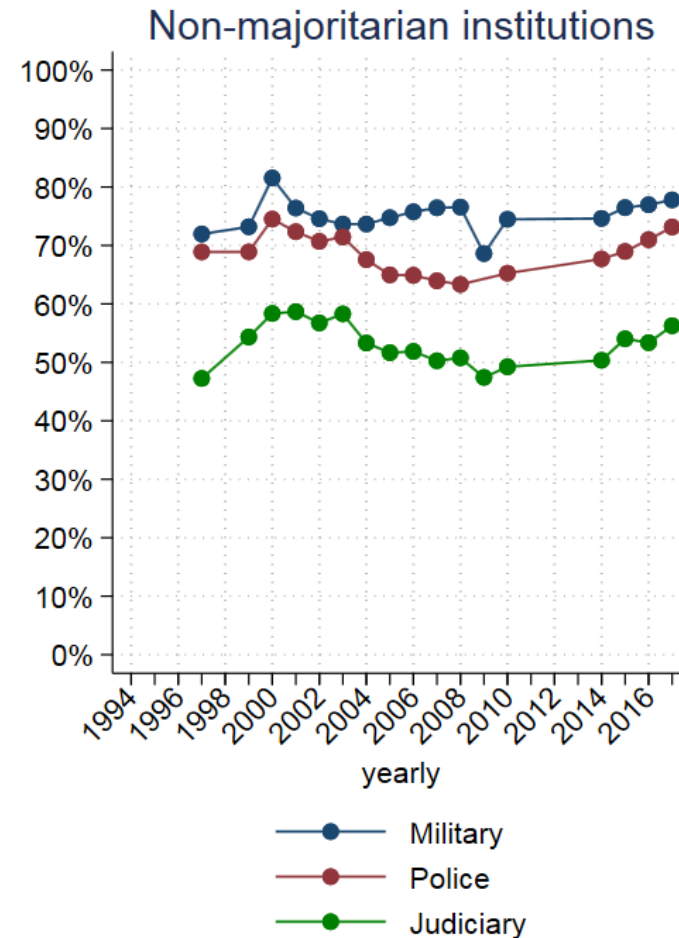
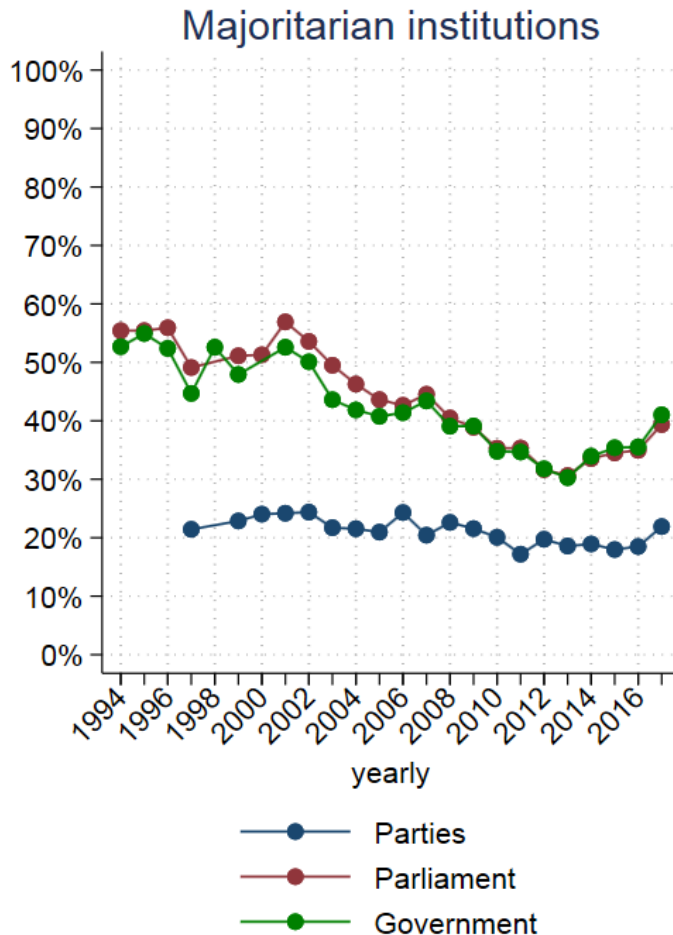
Satisfaction with Democracy in EU:1973-2017



Source: Eurobarometer 1973 – 2017.

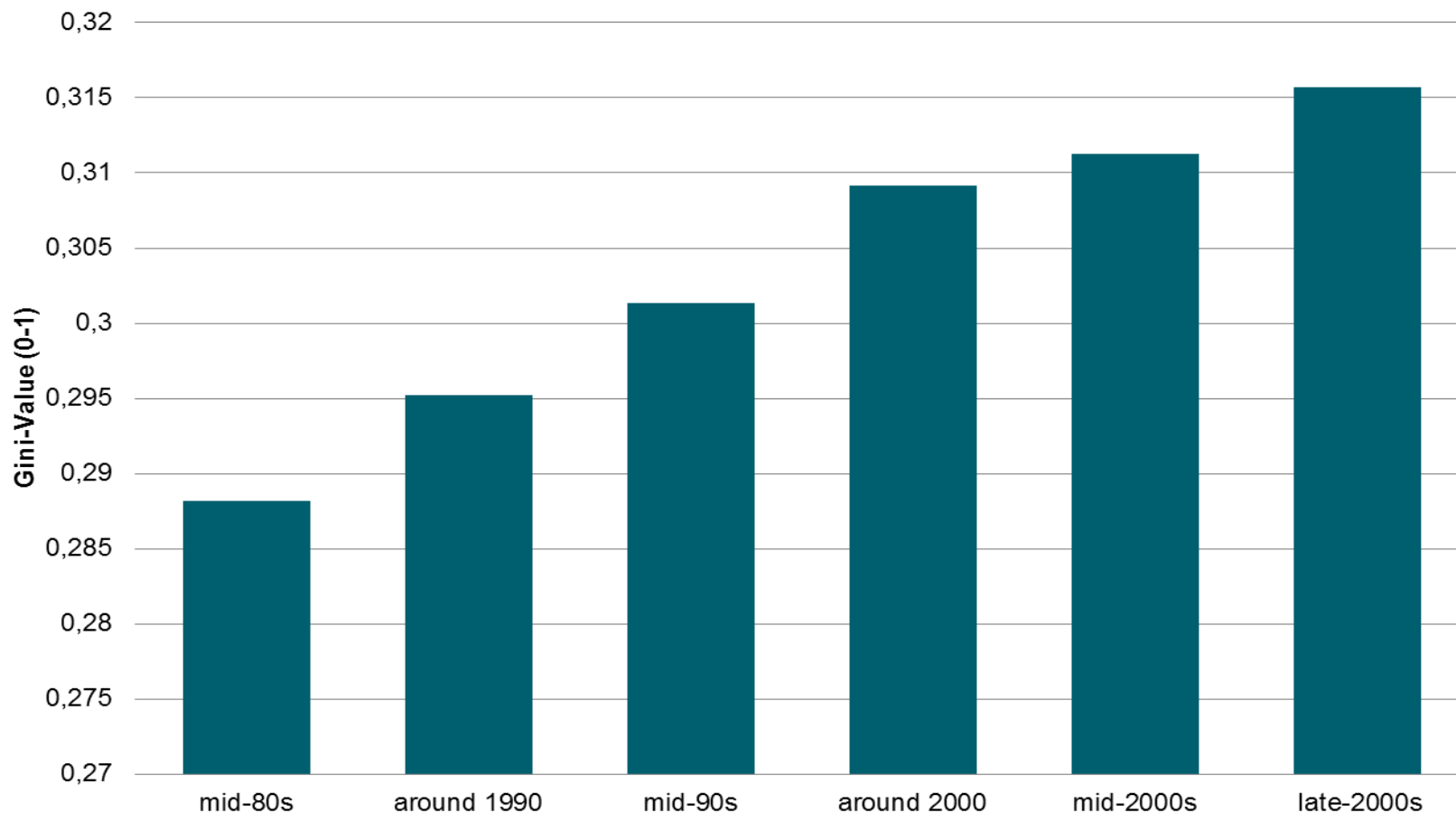
Note: EC/EU average according to historical composition.

Vertrauen in nationalstaatliche Institutionen in der EU



Socio-economic Inequality & Democracy

Durchschnittlicher Gini-Koeffizient in 12 ausgewählten OECD-Ländern, 1980-2015

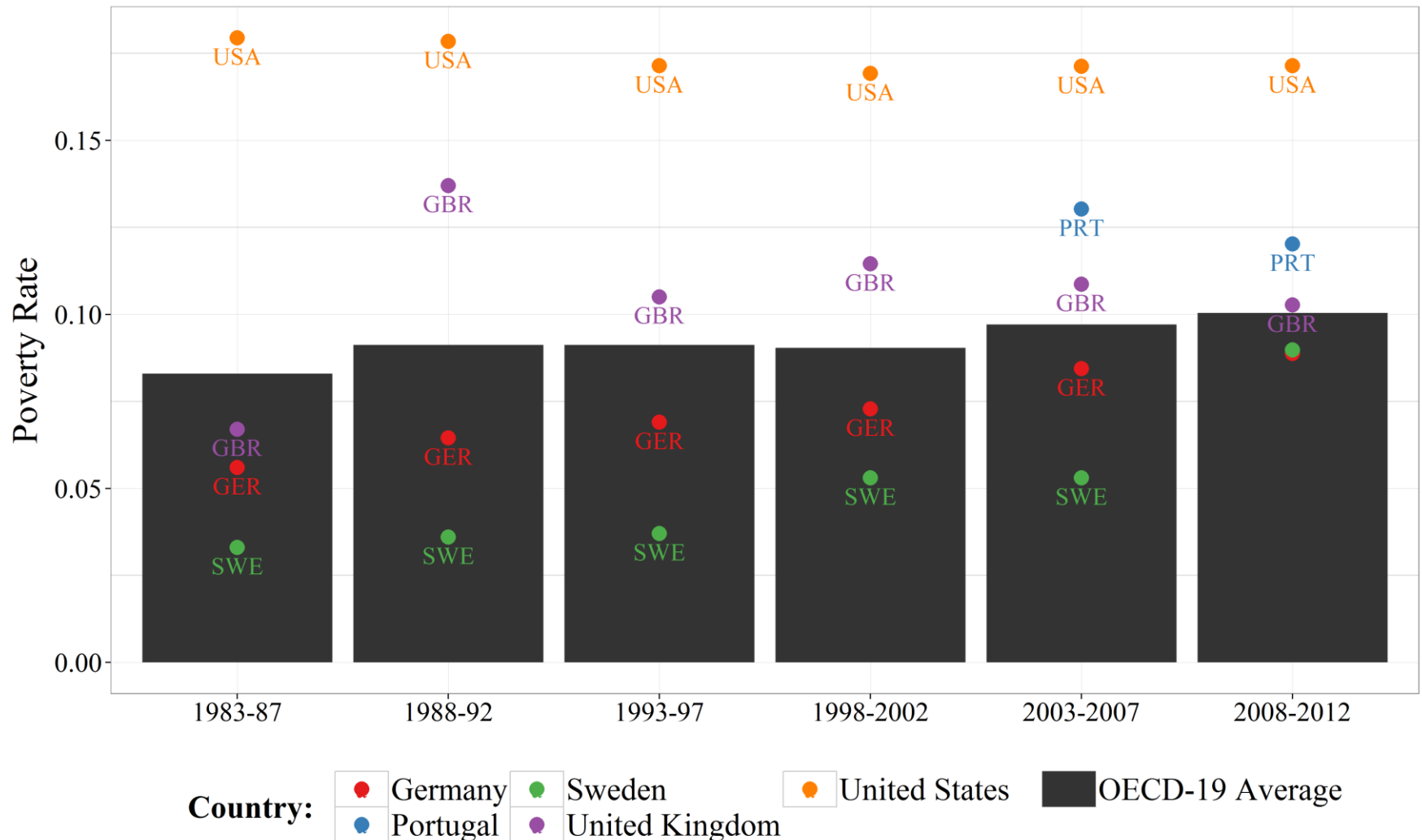


Note: Values relate to income distribution after taxes and transfers.

Countries selected: Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States

Source: OECD (2012), "Income Distribution: Income distribution: inequality", OECD Social Expenditure Statistics (Speaker's calculation).

Relative poverty in OECD (1983-2012)



Unresolved Challenges of Democracy:

Thesis 1: *Increasing socio-economic inequality leads to asymmetric political participation*

- Declining voter turn out comes with Increasing social selectivity
- Dropping out of the lower third of society
- Socially selective representation of preferences in parliament
- Non-electoral forms of participation are even more selective (e.g.: deliberative democracy)
- But also: direct democracy through referenda

*Thesis 2: In democracies elections are increasingly
unable to stop increasing socio-economic
inequalities*

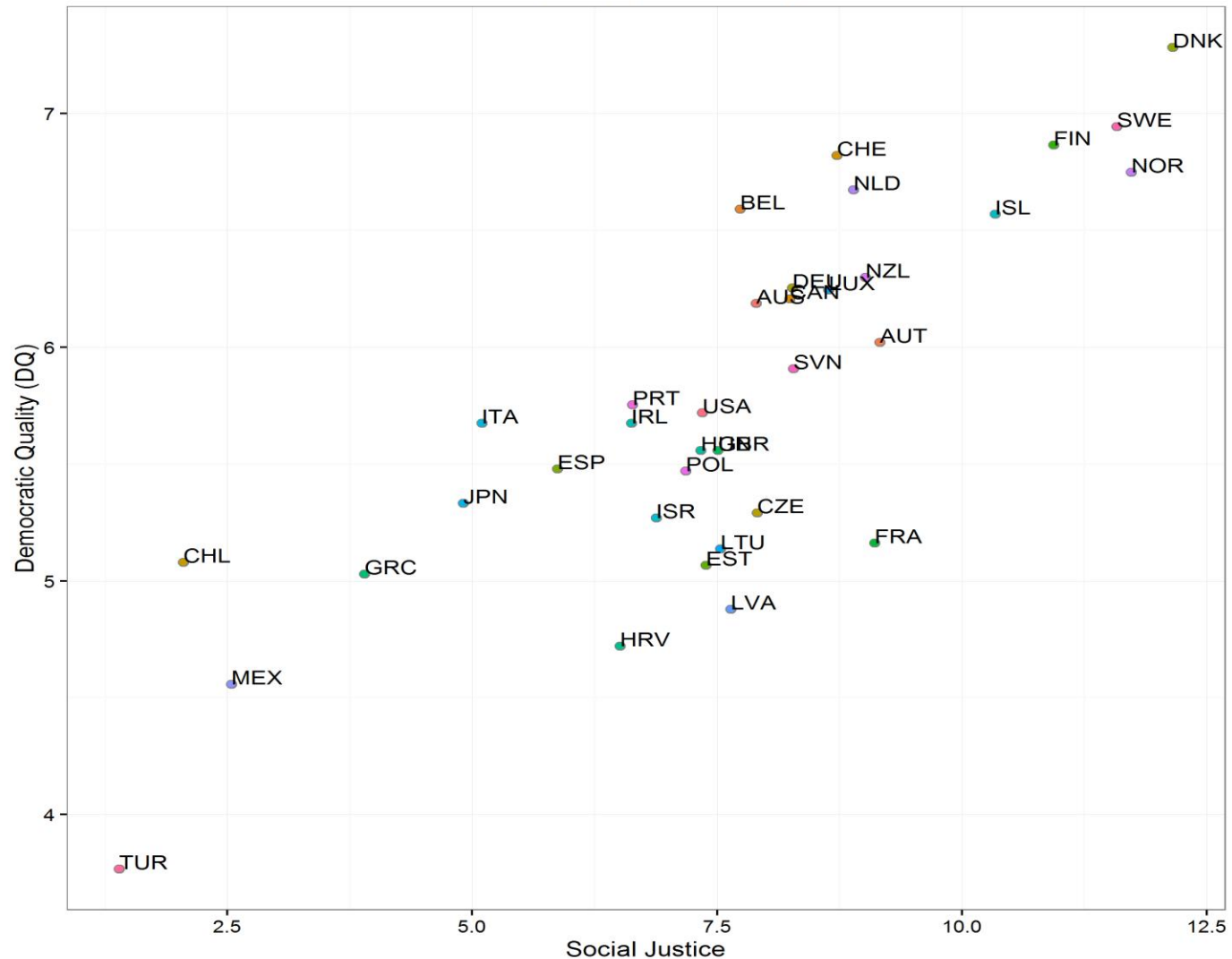
- Exit from (electoral) participation by the lower classes
- Lower classes vote more often against their preferences
- The Third Way of social democracy: path dependency
- Competition for the median voter
- Cross cutting cleavages (economic vs cultural)
- Decline of catch all parties
- „New“ parties: representing the higher (Greens) and lower segments (populism) of the middle classes

Thesis 3: The erosion of large collective organizations is leaving the lower classes without effective political means

- Decline of the industrial working class
- Decline of Trade Unions
- Higher service sector employees: difficult to organize
- Decline of worker and catch all parties
- Lower classes lost their collective interpreter of politics

Social Justice & Quality of Democracy (OECD: 1990-2014)

Overview (1990-2014)



Culture Matters

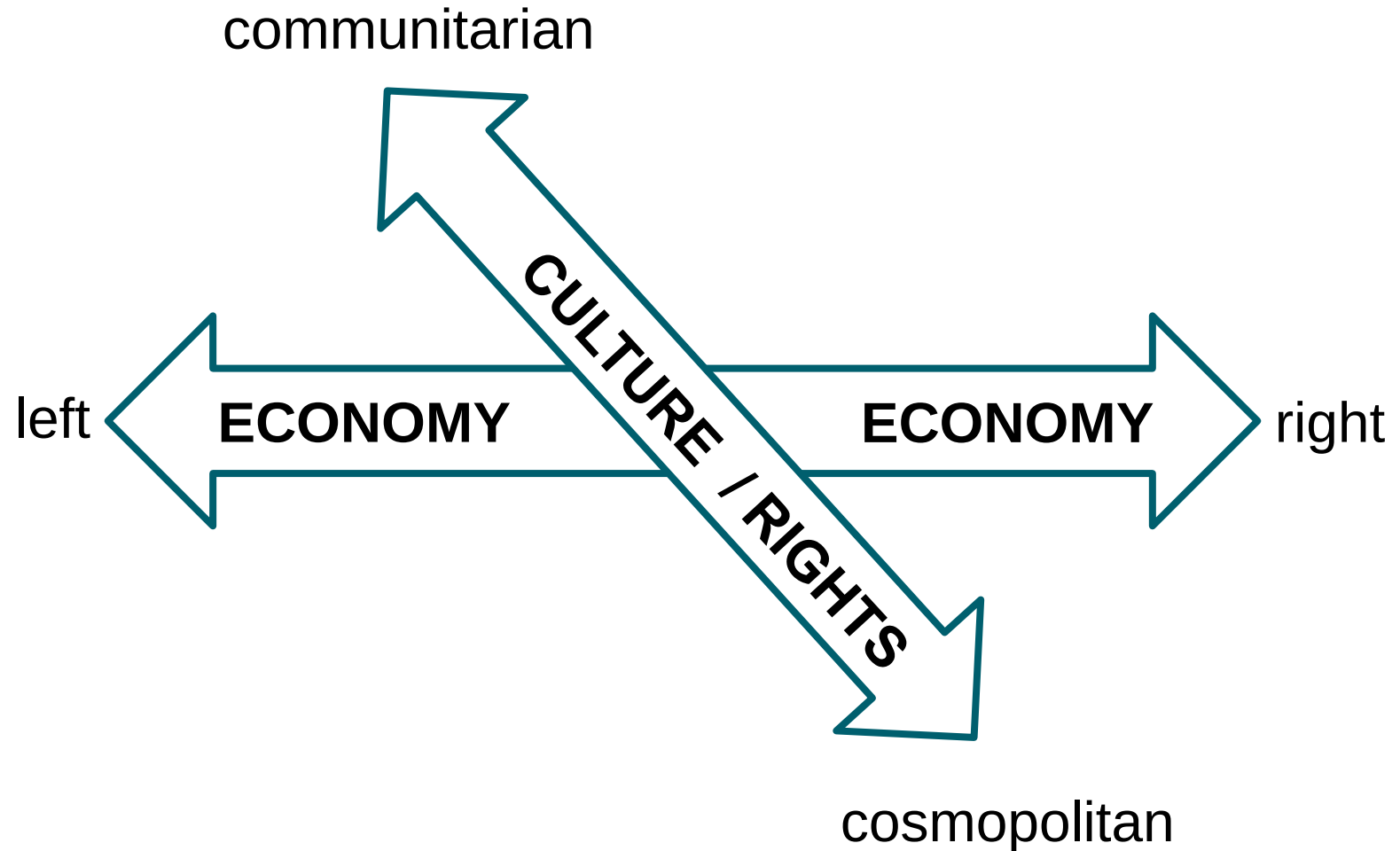
Cultural Cleavage:

Cosmopolitanism

versus

Communitarianism

A New Cleavage:



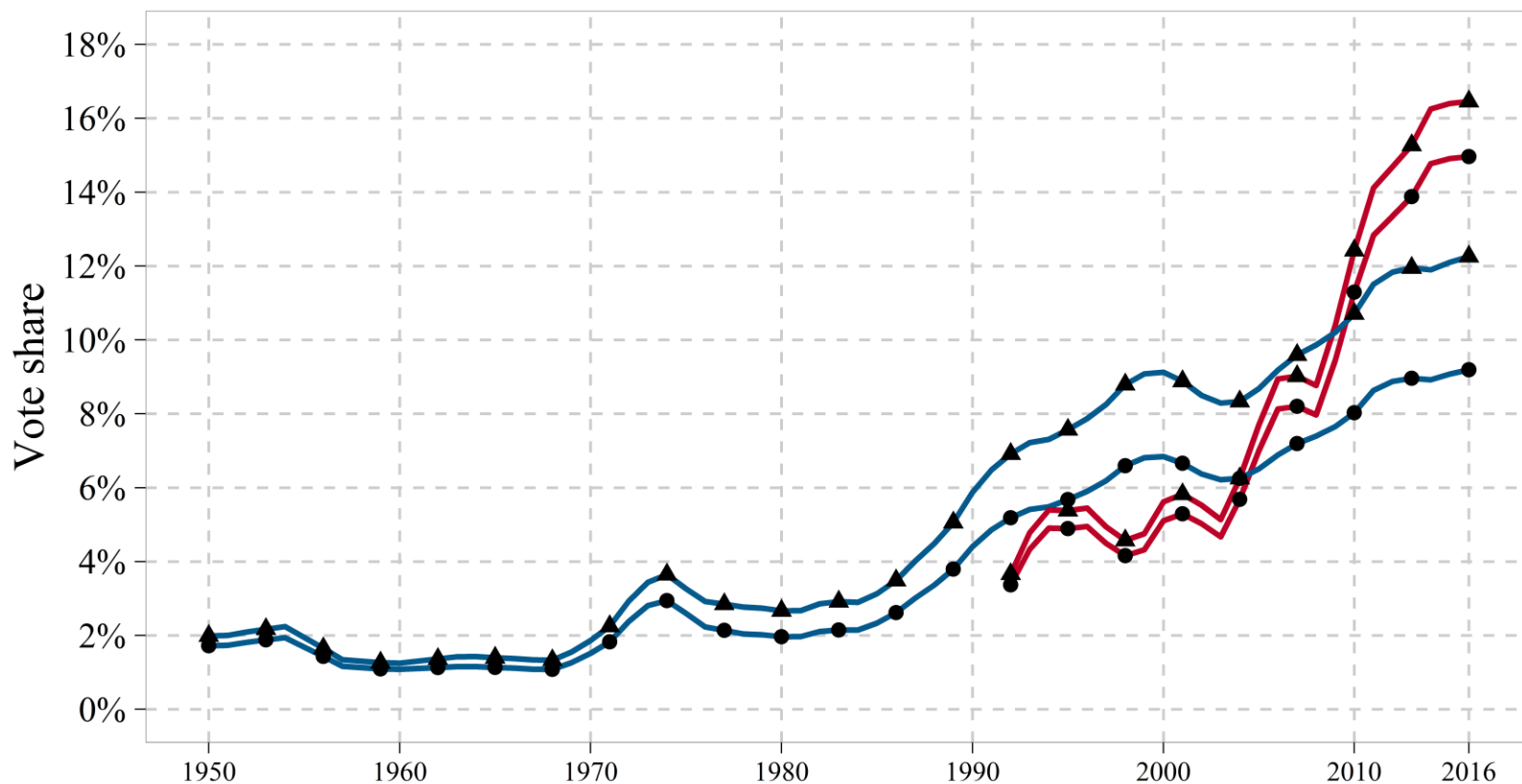
Cosmopolitans

- Winners of globalization
- Cult., pol., economic elites
- Urban middle classes
- For open borders: goods, services, capital, workers, refugees
- Transferring Sovereignty
- Deepening EU
- (Human) rights are universal; global citizens
- Multiculturalism & Pro-Immigration
- Calhoun: „Frequent Flyers“

Communitarianists

- Losers of globalization
- Lower educated people
- Pro-nation state
- Critical against EU
- Controlling borders
- „Leitkultur“
- Homogeneous communities
- Variety: Folkshemmet vs RWPs

Right-wing populist parties' vote share (1950-2016)



• All countries

▲ Countries with right-wing populist parties

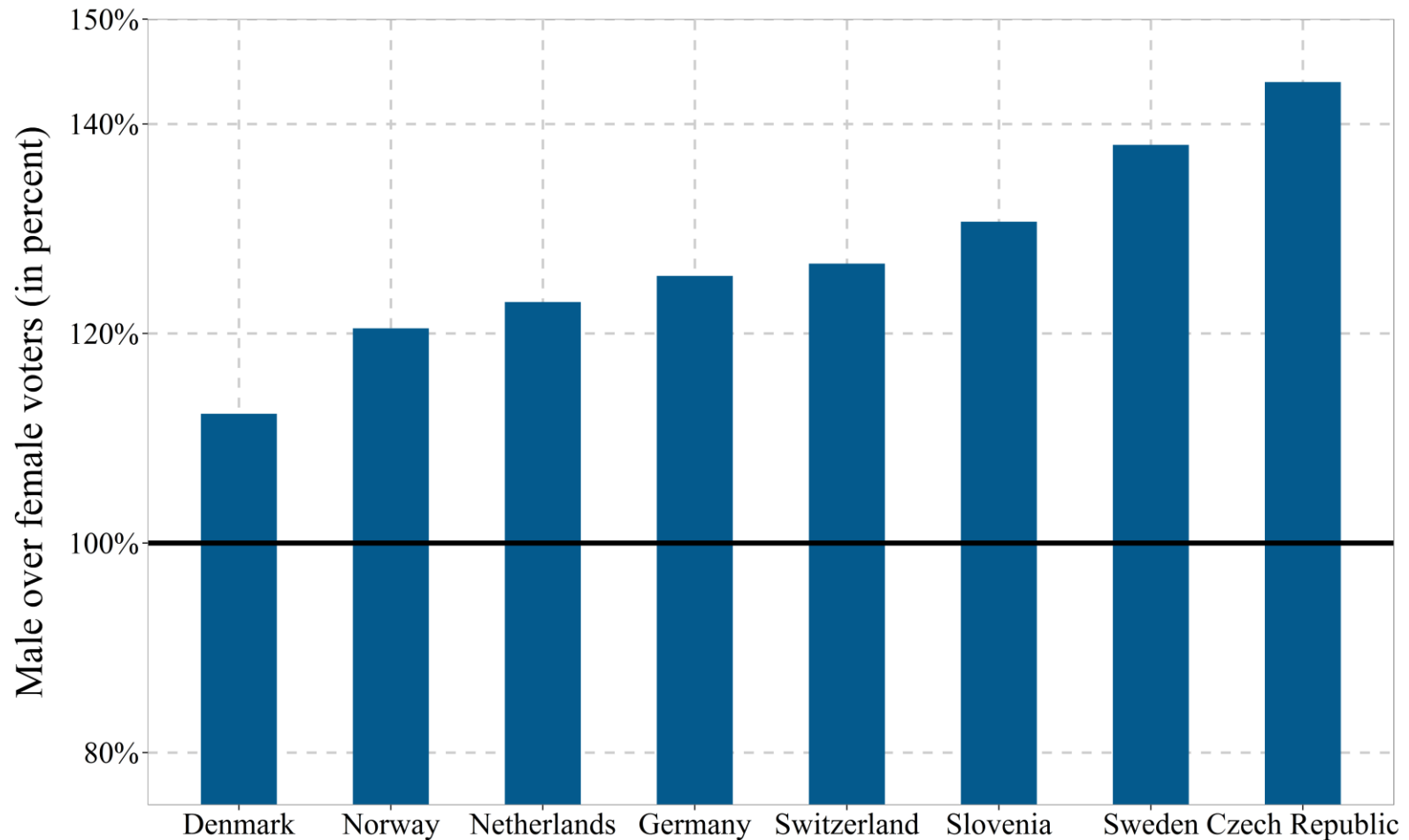
— Western Europe

— Eastern Europe

Annual averages, EU member states and Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland.

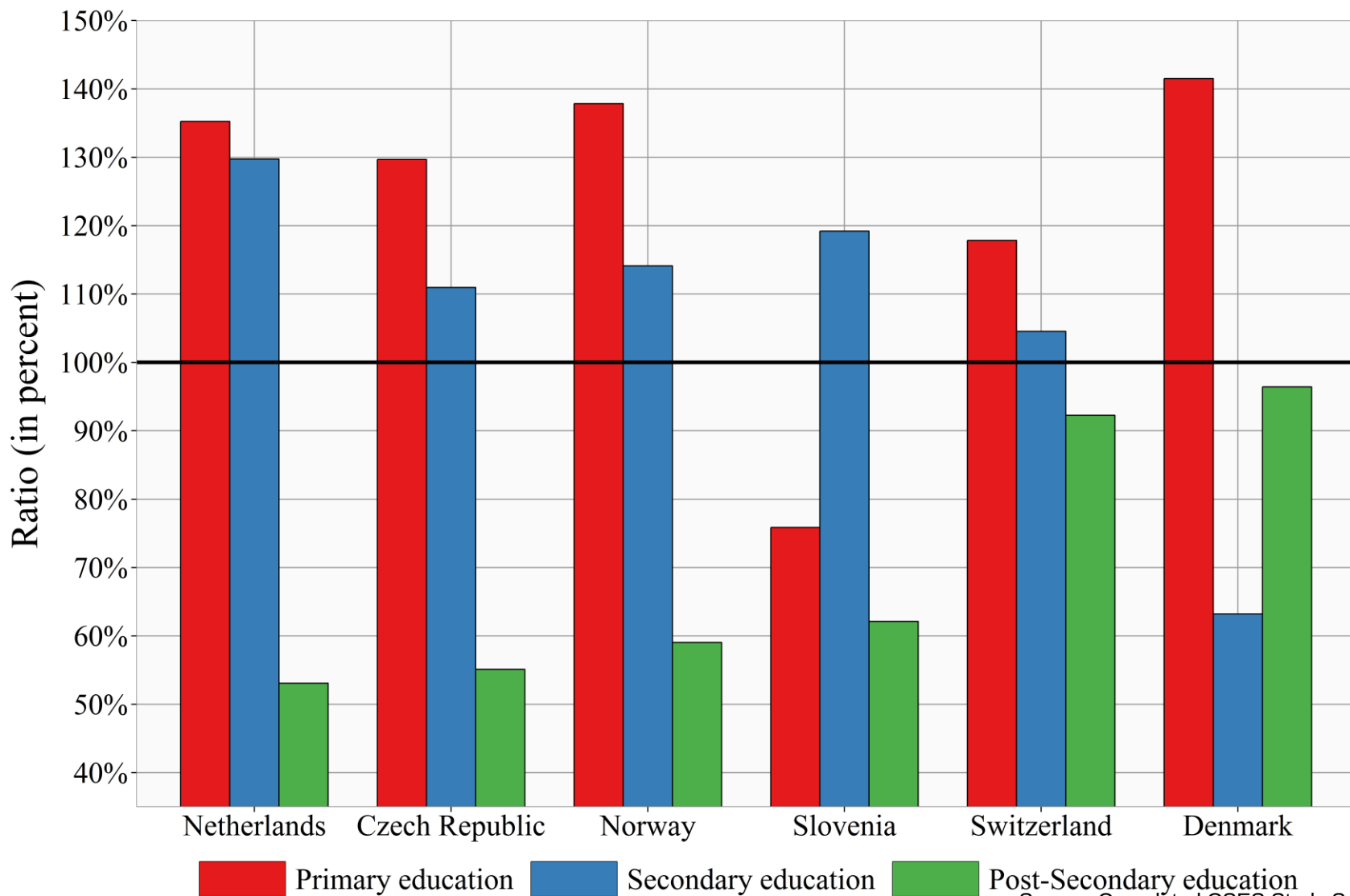
Source: WZB Database "Elections, Parties, Governments".

Ratio of male over female right-wing voters (1996-2010)



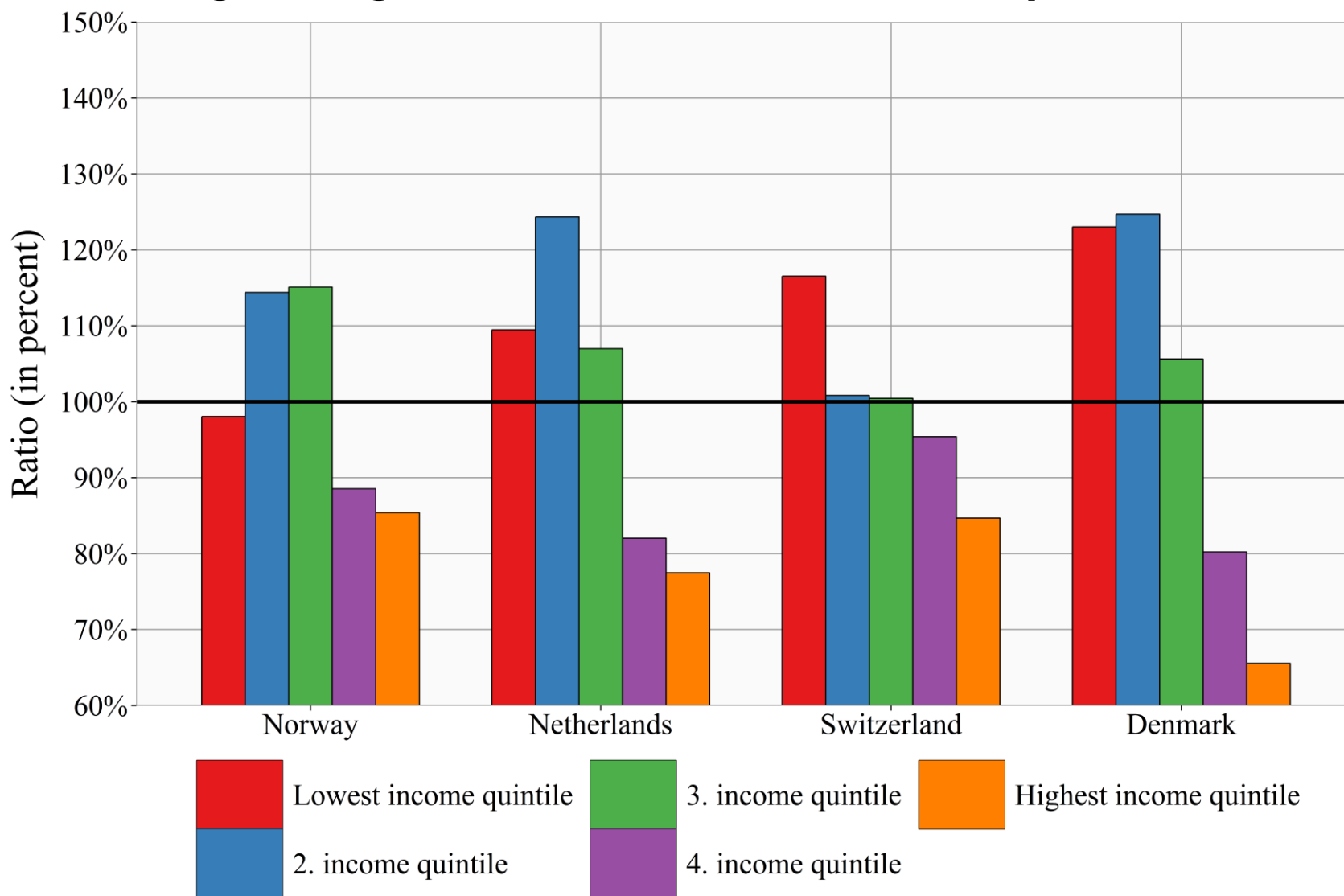
Source: Cumulated CSES Study Series 1-3.

Ratio of right-wing voters' education/population (1996-2010)



Source: Cumulated CSES Study Series 1-3.

Ratio of right-wing voters' household income and public (1997-2010)



Source: Cumulated CSES Study Series 1-3.

Is right-wing populism a threat?

- Distinction between Populism in opposition & in gov't
- Stable & unstable democracies
- ***Normatively***. problematic programs (texts & subtexts)
- Socioeconomically: Rebellion of losers?
- Culturally: Cosmos (higher classes) & Comus (lower classes)
- ***Functionally***
 - Polarizing/ mobiliz. society: only negative? (Mouffe/ Laclau)
 - Filling a representational gap?
 - Bringing the lower class back in?
 - Repolitization & Return of the Political: which form

Conclusion: How to deal with RWP?

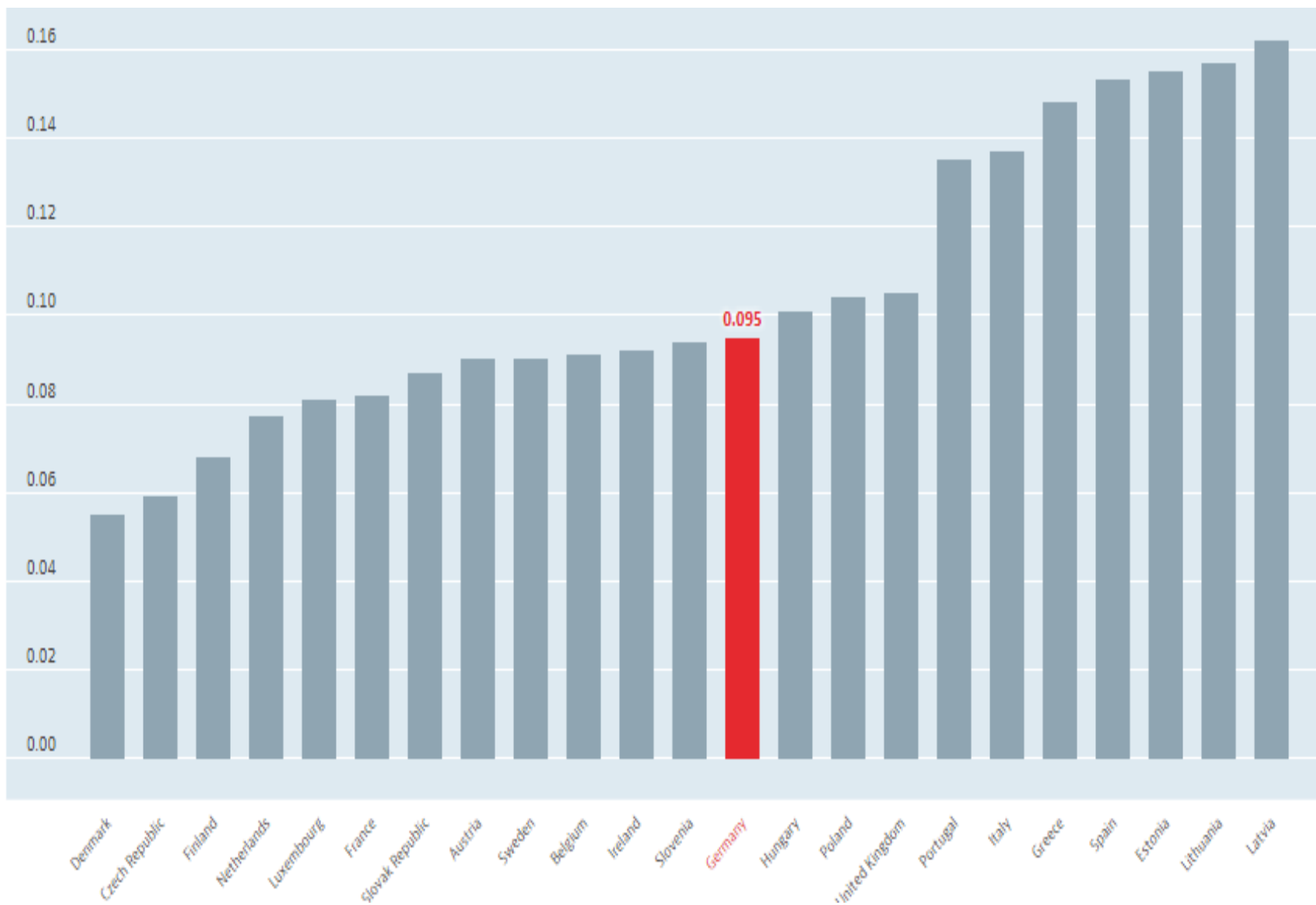
- To negate?
- To fight it with normative arguments?
- To exclude?
- To embrace, coopt, and coalize?
- To debate without cosmopolitan hubris, to stand to democratic values, to fill the representation gap, not to overstress cosmopolitan identity politics and call everyone outside the cosmopolitan discourse as racist, sexist, and chauvinist!
- But: not to coalize!

Crisis of Democracy?

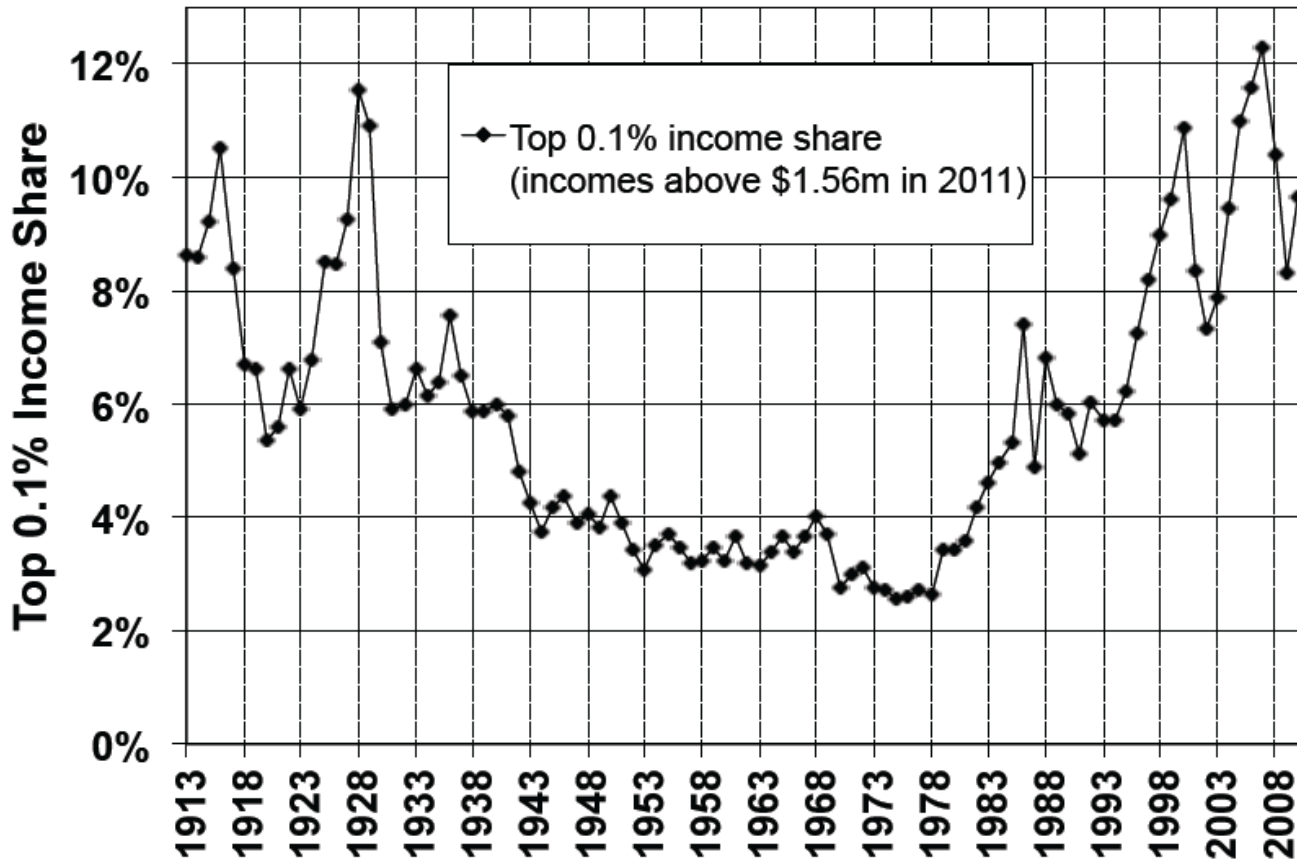
- Variety of democracies
- Postdemocracy?
- Dissimultaneity of (un)democratic developments
- Limited compatibility of disembedded capitalism with embedded democracy
- The populist attack on the liberal dimension
- Rise of illiberal democracy?

Appendix

relative Armutsquote in der EU

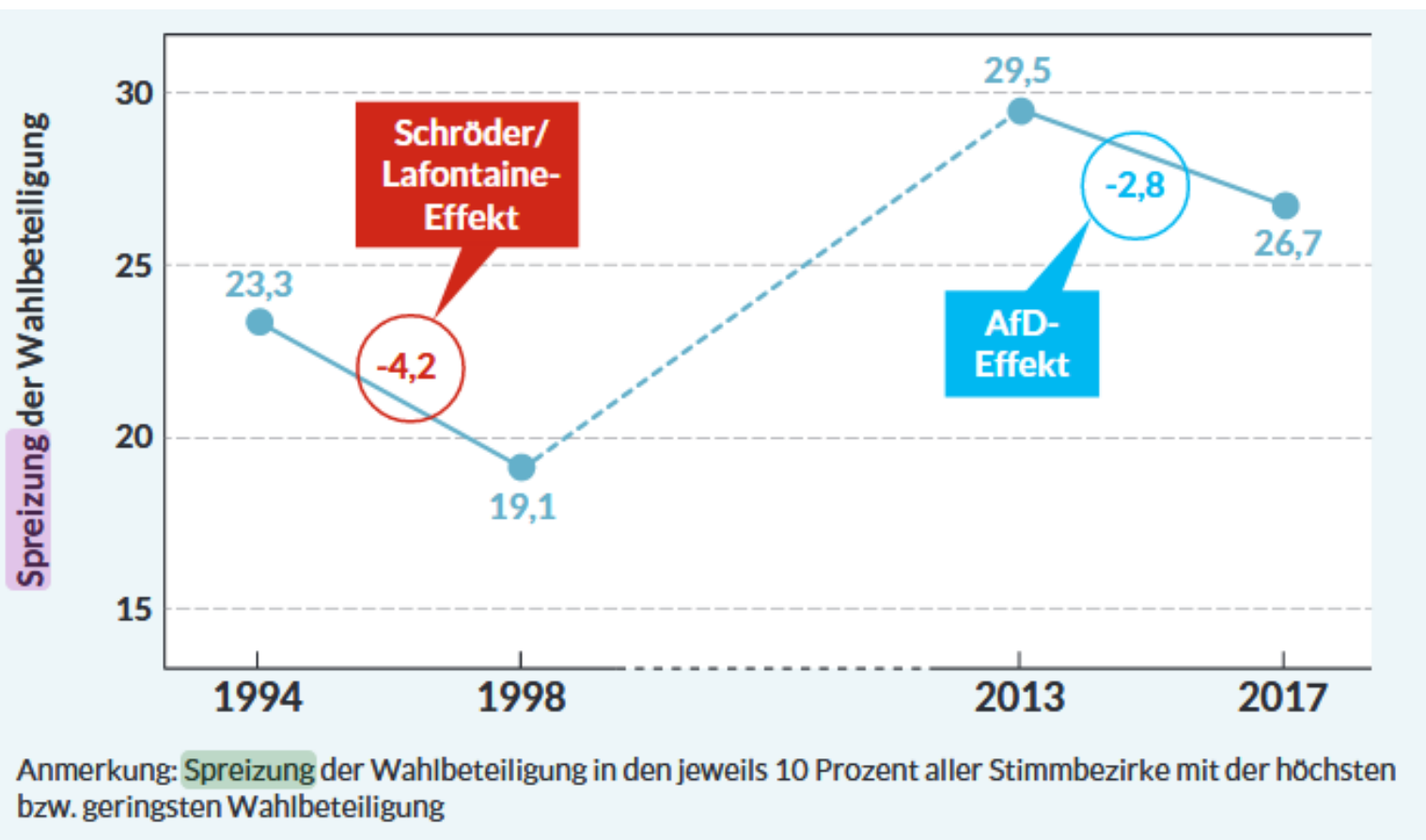


Top 0,1% des vorsteuerlichen Anteils des Einkommens in den USA, 1913-2011

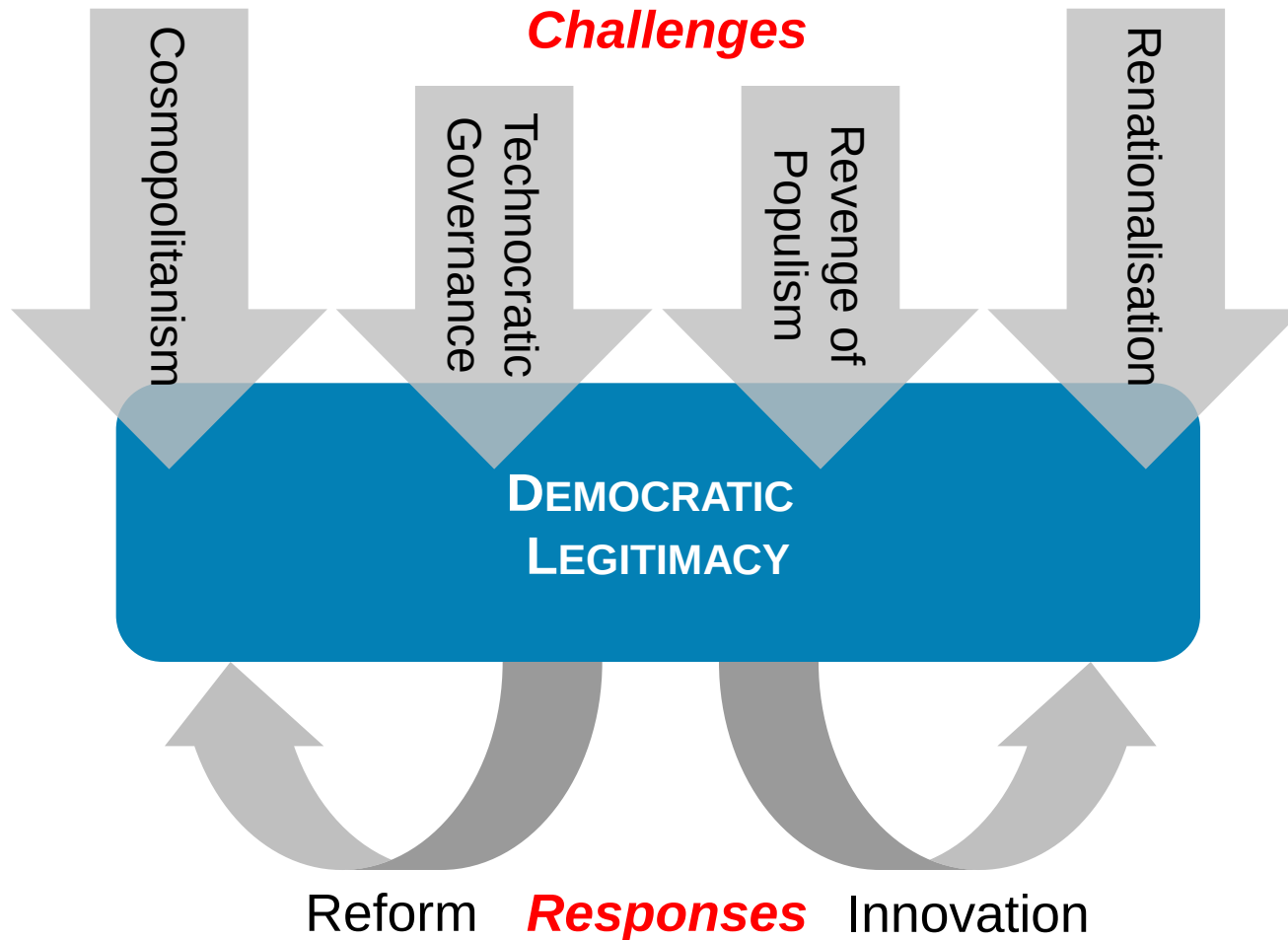


Source: Piketty and Saez, 2003 updated to 2011. Series based on pre-tax cash market income including or excluding realized capital gains, and always excluding government transfers.

Abnehmende Inklusionskraft der Demokratie



Shifting Axes of Democratic Legitimacy



Country	Total	Total(w.)	Rank	Rank(w.)	Poverty	Education	Employment	WelfareState	Income	Generation	Gender
Denmark	8,53	25,66	1	1	1,18	2,31	0,75	1,98	1,32	0,34	0,65
Norway	7,47	21,81	2	2	0,68	1,63	1,53	1,35	1,13	0,55	0,62
Sweden	7,26	19,67	3	3	0,78	1,06	0,8	2,03	1,35	0,33	0,91
Iceland	5,67	18,16	5	4	0,99	1,16	1,93	-0,69	1,34	0,24	0,71
Finland	6,19	18,06	4	5	1,04	0,93	0,41	1,33	1,09	0,42	0,96
New Zealand	1,64	8,08	9	6	-0,09	1,01	1,07	-0,6	-0,87	0,82	0,3
France	2,54	7,03	6	7	0,68	0,16	-0,41	1,95	0,08	-0,23	0,31
Austria	2,48	5,87	7	8	0,32	0,16	0,47	1,5	0,43	-0,22	-0,17
Netherlands	1,66	3,86	8	9	0,71	-0,27	0,12	0,73	0,77	-0,02	-0,38
Slovenia	1,37	3,32	10	10	0,37	0,15	-0,62	-1,13	1,4	0,74	0,46
Latvia	0,08	2,84	15	11	N/A	0,04	-0,58	-1,1	-0,73	1,02	1,42
Switzerland	1,1	2,5	11	12	0,08	-0,28	0,65	0,55	0,07	0	0,04
Lithuania	-0,42	1,5	18	13	N/A	-0,11	-0,69	-1,09	-0,89	0,88	1,48
Canada	0,05	0,79	16	14	-0,41	0,33	1,16	-0,49	-0,33	-0,67	0,45
Czech Republic	0,17	0,7	14	15	1,18	-1,14	-0,34	-1,33	1,19	0,84	-0,24
Luxembourg	0,86	-0,21	12	16	0,63	-1,64	0,23	1,14	0,63	1,3	-1,44
Germany	0,43	-0,31	13	17	0,55	-0,71	-0,61	1,3	0,35	-0,23	-0,21
Estonia	-1,19	-0,67	21	18	-0,7	0,26	-0,54	-2,03	-1	1,45	1,37
Hungary	-1,1	-1,66	20	19	0,63	-0,11	-0,86	-0,79	0,15	-0,23	0,12
United Kingdom	-1,42	-2,36	22	20	-0,24	-0,34	0,26	-0,23	-1,24	0,19	0,18
Australia	-0,87	-3,16	19	21	-0,91	-0,27	0,6	-0,71	-0,42	1,12	-0,28
Belgium	-0,29	-3,38	17	22	0,15	0,21	-1,11	1,28	0,87	-1,21	-0,49
Poland	-1,8	-5,64	23	23	-0,52	-0,28	-0,57	-0,85	-0,12	0,3	0,23
Slovak Republic	-1,92	-6,06	24	24	0,63	-1,18	-1,29	-1,68	1,03	0,46	0,1
Portugal	-3,04	-7,76	26	25	-0,7	-0,31	-0,34	-0,64	-1,22	-0,29	0,45
United States	-2,33	-7,99	25	26	-1,96	-0,11	1,16	0,38	-1,71	-0,39	0,3
Ireland	-3,3	-8,84	28	27	-0,05	-0,42	-0,59	-0,54	-0,52	0,14	-1,33
Croatia	-3,28	-9,84	27	28	N/A	-1,12	-1,55	-0,99	-0,06	0,48	-0,03
Israel	-3,93	-11,93	29	29	-2,41	0,78	0,74	-1,45	-1,23	-0,57	0,21
Serbia	-4,73	-13,04	30	30	N/A	-0,66	-2,61	-1,07	-0,37	0,3	-0,33
Spain	-5,36	-17,44	31	31	-1,22	-0,9	-0,81	-0,07	-0,96	0,05	-1,45
Italy	-6,64	-20,86	32	32	-0,67	-0,8	-1,41	0,56	-0,88	-1,51	-1,94
Japan	-7,39	-26,14	33	33	-1,45	-1,55	0,49	-0,66	0,09	-3,12	-1,19
Greece	-9,08	-28,63	34	34	-1	-1,89	-1,18	-0,51	-1	-1,67	-1,82

Democracy and Social Justice, 2000-2015

