Overcoming the structuralist/individualist dichotomy

Inequality beliefs from a new network and comparative perspective

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Introduction

- **Inequality beliefs**
  - A socially bounded process; "a special case of causal inference, where people make sense of (observed) unequal outcomes by inferring the (unobserved) social forces that brought these about" (Mijs, 2018; p. 64).
- **Research question:**
  - How are inequality beliefs [IB] structured across contemporary societies?

Theory

- IB are generally studied with the **structuralist - individualist dichotomy** (Kluegel & Smith, 2017; Mijs, 2018).
- This distinction is derived from **factor analytic techniques**, which were found to systematically underestimate the number of latent factors, especially when highly correlated, with low N and with few indicators per factor (Ruscio and Roche, 2012; Keith et al., 2016; Crawford et al., 2010; Green et al., 2016).
- Exploratory Graph Analysis [**EGA**] (Golino & Epskamp, 2017) rejects the framework of latent variables positing that the number of factors is equal to the number of clusters (Golino et al., 2020) of a Gaussian Graphical Model [**GGM**] (Epskamp et al., 2018).
- To relax GGM's assumption of normality, the second hypothesis will be tested trough a Mixed Graphical Model [**mgm**] (Haslbeck & Waldorp, 2015).
- Our work builds on recent studies conceptualizing **attitudes as networks** of causally interacting evaluative reactions (Dalege et al., 2016).

Methods

- **Data:** ISSP 2019 - Social Inequality Module, 27 countries (N=35242).
- **Research design:** the following procedure was applied to each country:
  1. Fit EGA
  2. Fit CFA
  3. Measures of fit
  4. Fit mgm
  5. Calculate centrality metrics

Methods

- **Methods:** Network measures

$$s_i = C_{\mathrm{D}}^{w}(i) = \sum_{j}^{N} w_{ij}$$

Figure: Strength centrality

Methods

- **Variables:** Inequality beliefs battery

Q1. Please tick one box for each of these to show how important you think it is for getting ahead in life… *(Please tick one box on each line)*

		Essential	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not important at all	Can't choose
a.	<AHEAD1: ABCDE> …how important is coming from a wealthy family?	1	2	3	4	5	8
b.	<AHEAD2: ABDE>… how important is having well-educated parents?	1	2	3	4	5	8
c.	<AHEAD3: ABDE>… how important is having a good education yourself?	1	2	3	4	5	8
d.	<AHEAD6: ABDE>… how important is hard work?	1	2	3	4	5	8
e.	<AHEAD7: ABCDE>… how important is knowing the right people?	1	2	3	4	5	8
f.	<AHEAD8: ABDE>… how important is having political connections?	1	2	3	4	5	8
g.	<AHEAD17: DE>…how important is giving bribes?	1	2	3	4	5	8
h.	<AHEAD9: ABDE>… how important is a person's race?	1	2	3	4	5	8
i.	<AHEAD10: ABDE>… how important is a person's religion?	1	2	3	4	5	8
j.	<AHEAD12: ABDE>… how important is being born a man or a woman?	1	2	3	4	5	8

Methods

- **Hypotheses:**
  - **H1:** The inequality beliefs battery will show **more than two dimensions** in the majority of the ISSP countries.
  - **H2:** The items composing the individualist beliefs dimension will be more **central** in the attitude networks of countries characterized by high GINI.

Results

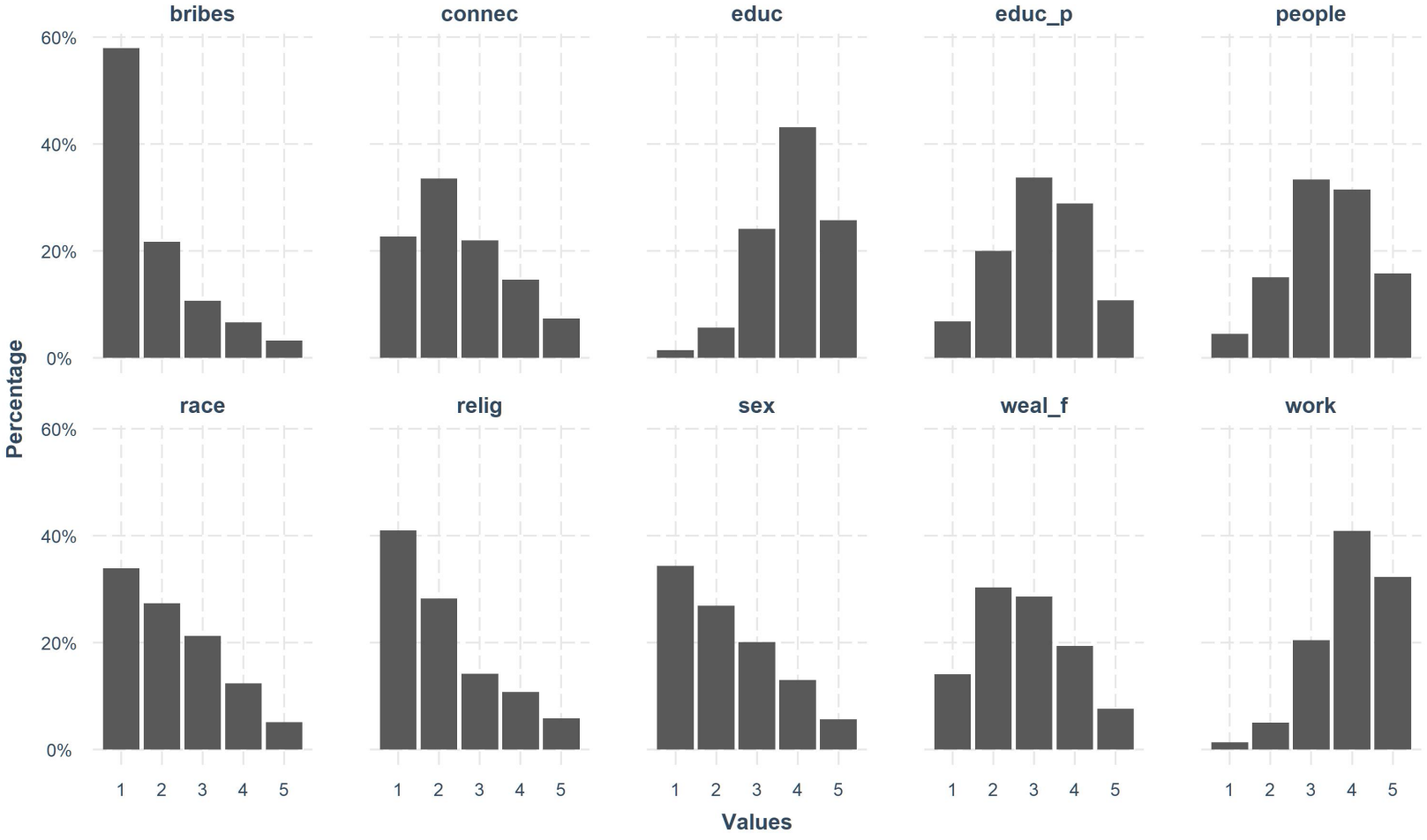


Figure: Inequality beliefs aggregate distribution

One country example: Italy

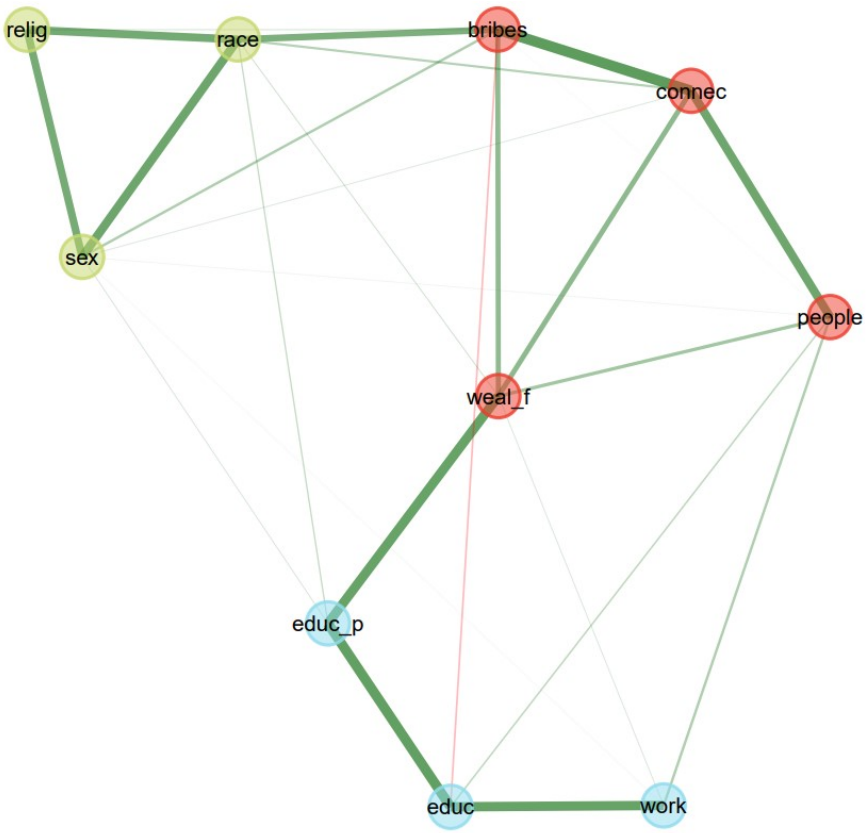


Figure: EGA

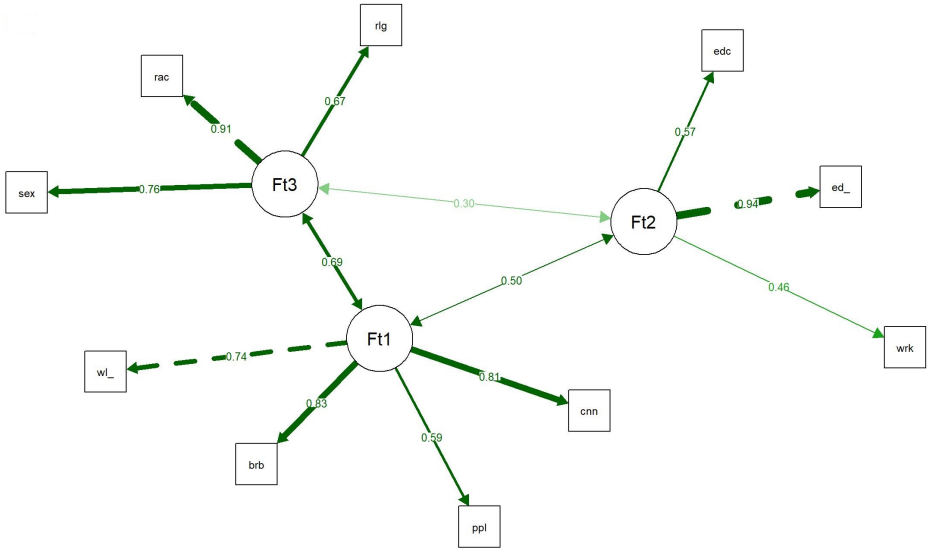
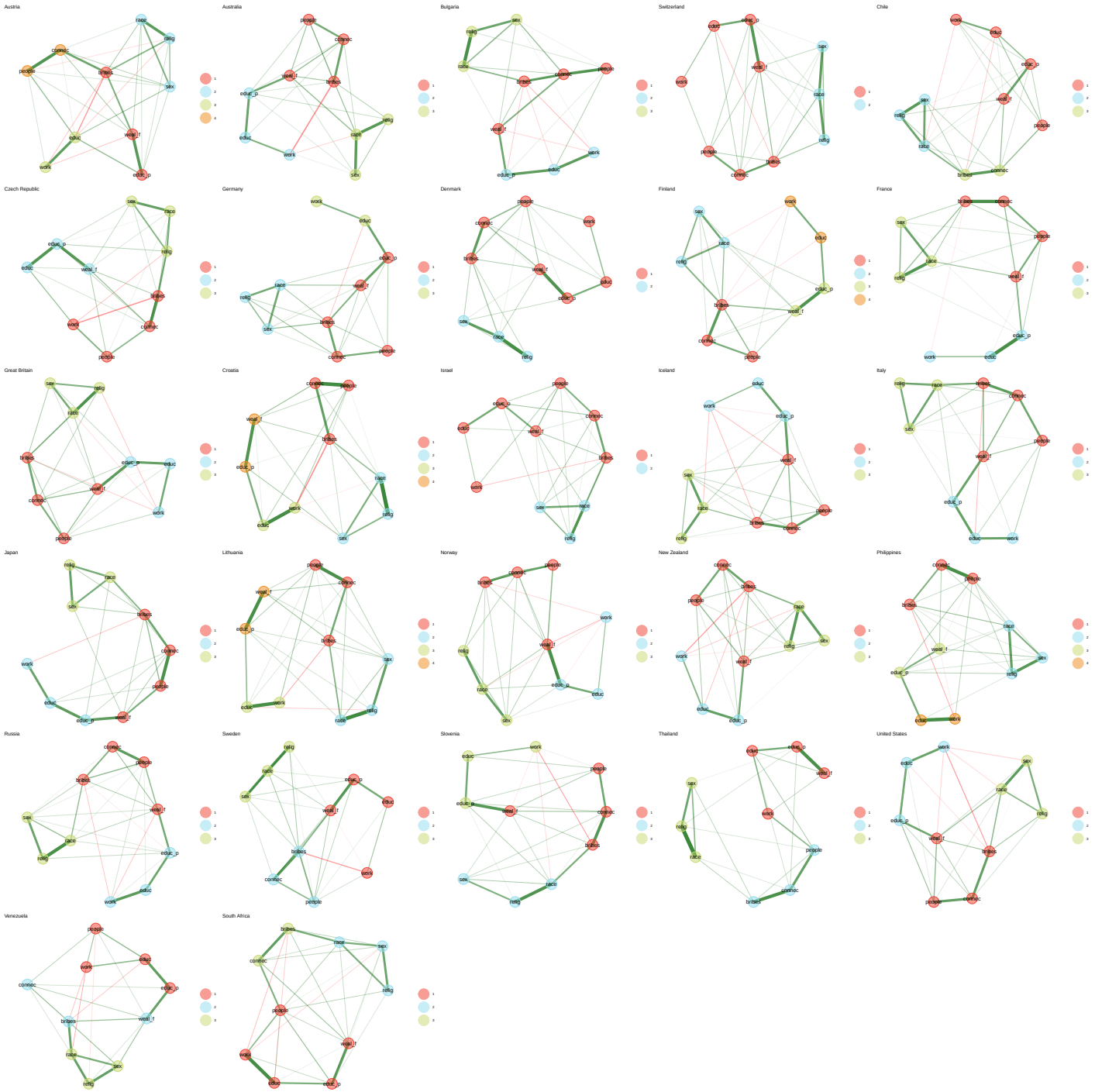


Figure: CFA


Austria
Australia
Bulgaria
Switzerland
Chile
Czech Republic
Germany
Denmark
Finland
France
Great Britain
Croatia
Israel
Iceland
Italy
Japan
Lithuania
Norway
New Zealand
Philippines
Russia
Sweden
Slovenia
Thailand
United States
Venezuela
South Africa

H1: Dimensions

Table: Number of clusters by country

2 clusters

1	DK	Denmark
2	IL	Israel
3	CH	Switzerland

3 clusters

1	AU	Australia
2	BG	Bulgaria
3	CL	Chile
4	CZ	Czech Republic
5	FR	France
6	DE	Germany
7	GB	Great Britain
8	IS	Iceland
9	IT	Italy
10	JP	Japan
11	NZ	New Zealand
12	NO	Norway
13	RU	Russia
14	SI	Slovenia
15	ZA	South Africa
16	SE	Sweden
17	TH	Thailand
18	US	United States
19	VE	Venezuela

4 clusters

1	AT	Austria
2	HR	Croatia
3	FI	Finland
4	LT	Lithuania
5	PH	Philippines

H1: Dimensions

		CFA (EGA)		EFA (2-factors)	
	Country	CFI	RMSEA	CFI	RMSEA
1	Australia	0.97	0.09	0.80	0.18
2	Austria	0.95	0.12	0.76	0.19
3	Bulgaria	0.97	0.13	0.73	0.23
4	Chile	0.97	0.12	0.89	0.13
5	Croatia	0.98	0.14	0.72	0.27
6	Czech.Republic	0.97	0.13	0.83	0.18
7	Denmark	0.96	0.10	0.85	0.14
8	Finland	0.98	0.06	0.79	0.17
9	France	0.98	0.08	0.79	0.20
10	Germany	0.96	0.10	0.85	0.14
11	Great.Britain	0.96	0.11	0.84	0.16
12	Iceland	0.96	0.09	0.84	0.13
13	Israel	0.95	0.09	0.88	0.11
14	Italy	0.96	0.13	0.81	0.18
15	Japan	0.98	0.12	0.81	0.21
16	Lithuania	0.98	0.12	0.75	0.24
17	New.Zealand	0.96	0.10	0.81	0.16
18	Norway	0.96	0.10	0.81	0.16
19	Philippines	0.99	0.08	0.78	0.18
20	Russia	0.94	0.13	0.67	0.21
21	Slovenia	0.94	0.12	0.79	0.16
22	South.Africa	0.91	0.17	0.84	0.15
23	Sweden	0.98	0.08	0.84	0.17
24	Switzerland	0.95	0.09	0.84	0.13
25	Thailand	0.98	0.10	0.73	0.21
26	United.States	0.93	0.13	0.80	0.17
27	Venezuela	0.91	0.12	0.90	0.11

H2: Centrality - GINI

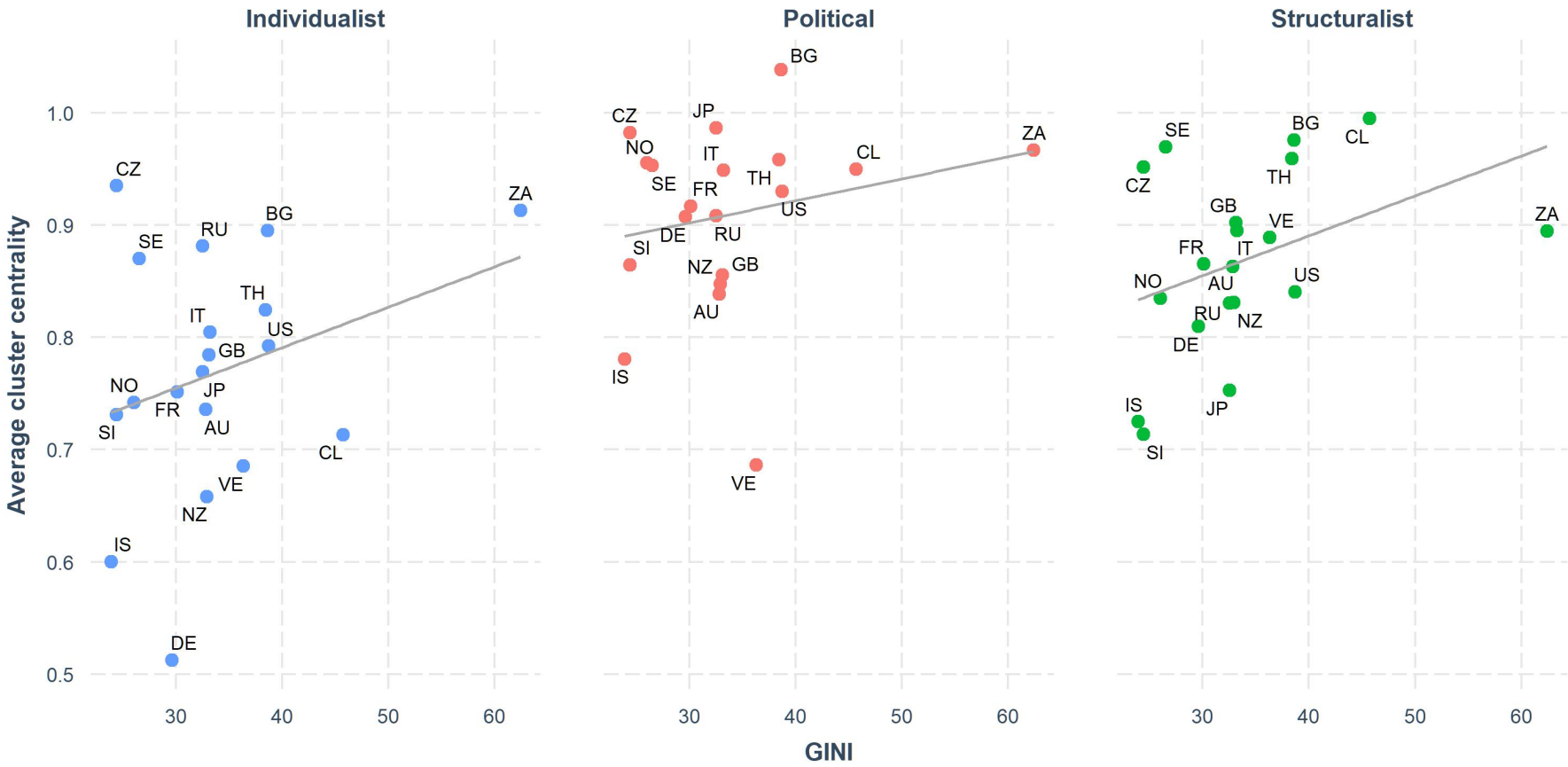


Figure: Average cluster centrality of inequality beliefs across contemporary societies (with 3 clusters), by GINI

H2: Centrality - GINI

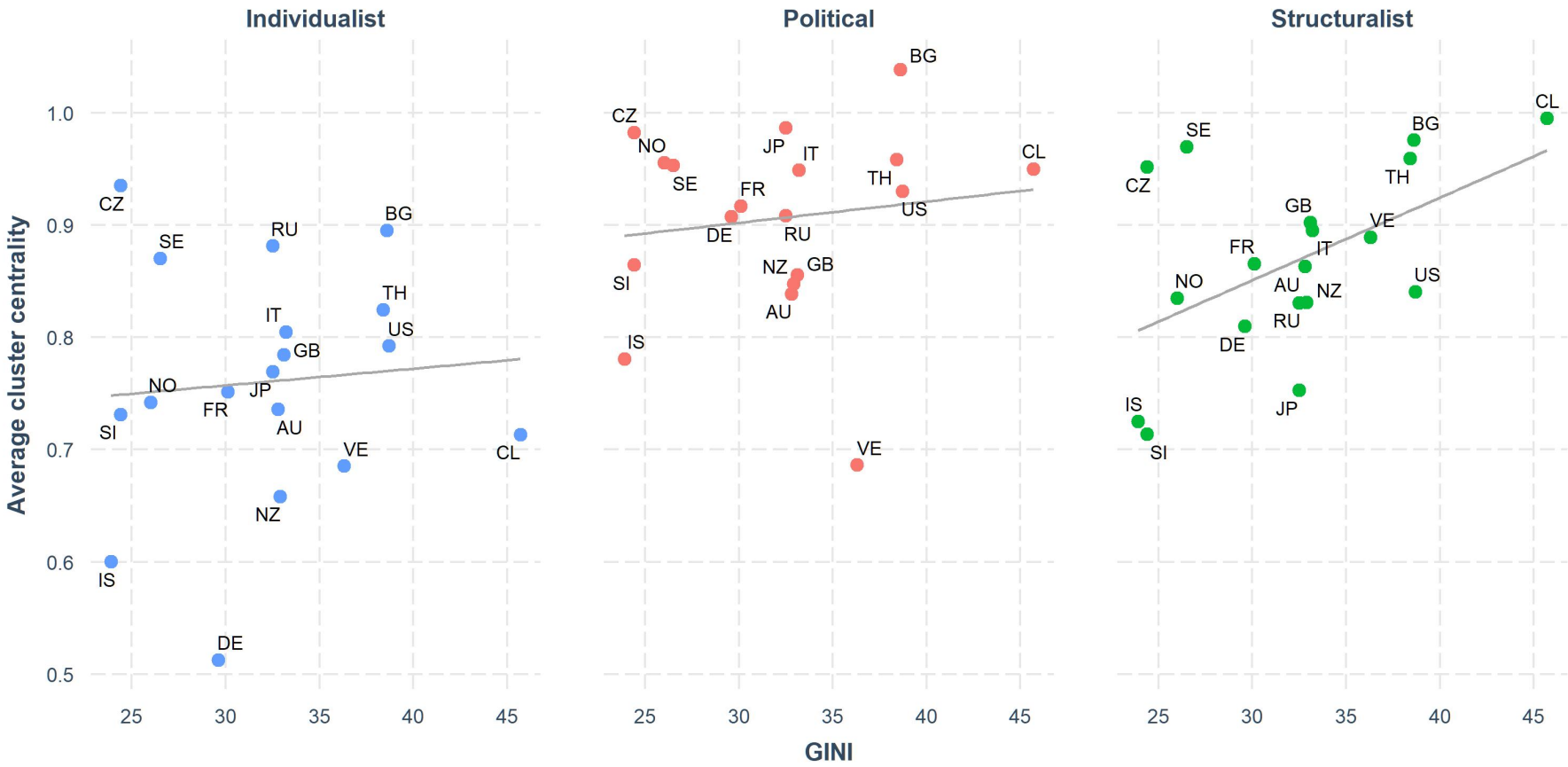


Figure: Average cluster centrality of inequality beliefs across contemporary societies (with 3 clusters), by GINI. Without ZA.

Conclusions

- Inequality beliefs are structured in **more than two clusters** in the vast majority of contemporary societies.
- Contrary to our expectations, the **average centrality of the individualist cluster was not significantly higher** in countries characterized by high GINI, as the structuralist one.
- Future studies can incorporate the **political cluster of inequality beliefs** in two directions:
  1. **Within societies**, to investigate which population segments are more likely to endorse it.
  2. **Between societies**, to understand its relative weights in different contemporary societies.

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