

**Social Capital and Social Cohesion in Italy  
(with some lessons from recent  
employment policy reforms)**

**“Addressing Social Cohesion and Effects’ of Migrants’  
Integration in Asia and Europe”**

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# Outline

- Conceptual and Country Background
- Social Capital: Key Components
- Social Capital and Social Cohesion
- Social Cohesion and Employment Policy
- Social Capital and Employment Policy
- Policy Implications

# Background

- The study of social capital and Italy have been very closely related since the path-breaking work by Putnam (1993)
- Why Italy? Very strong and clear differentiation between regions with **high (bridging) social capital** in *Centre-North regions* and **low (bridging) social capital** in *Southern regions*
- In the Italian case, **bridging social capital** has a *positive impact on economic growth* whereas **bonding social capital** has a *negative impact on economic growth*

# Social Capital: Key Components

- Political participation (elections, party politics, etc.)
- Social participation (voluntary organizations, civil society organizations, etc.)
- Trust

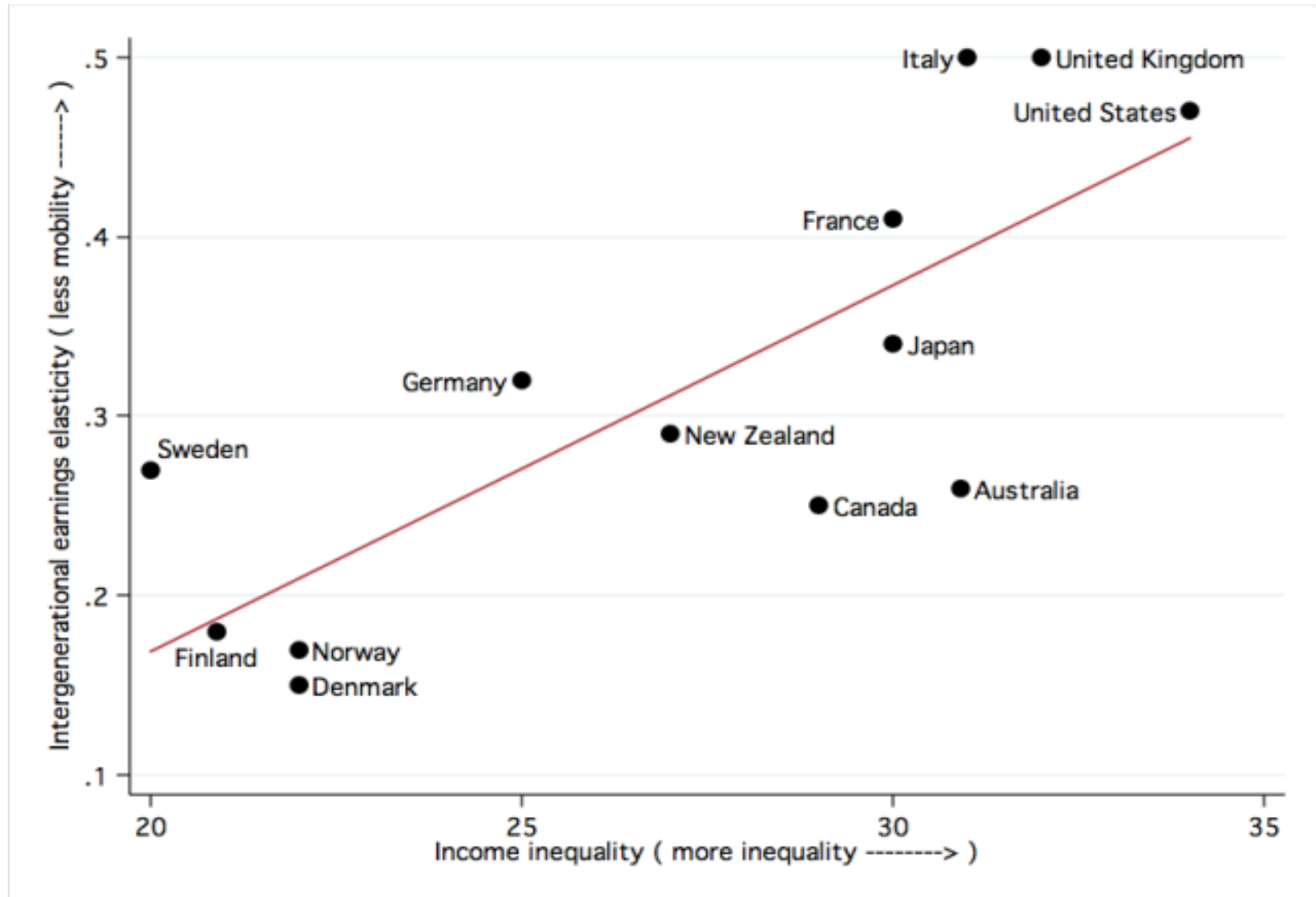
*Social trust as the main component of social and political participation*

# Social Capital and Social Cohesion

- What does research tell us?
  - Italy as a case of '**social capital dualism**': (bridging) social capital strongly linked to economic development and institutional performance (Putnam, 1993; Cartocci, 2007; Felice, 2013)
  - Italy as a case of **low social cohesion** (see figure), but again with specific regional traits and differentiations (Catalano, Graziano and Bassoli, forthcoming)

# (Low) Social Cohesion in Italy

Source: Corak (2013, 82)



# Social Cohesion and Employment Policy

- “formal employment is associated with a range of social outcomes and behaviors that are typically associated with higher levels of social cohesion” – Wietzke, 2014, 1
- Therefore, a functioning employment policy which facilitates *formal employment* enhances social cohesion in a given political community
- The Italian case: over 15 years of employment policy reforms primarily aimed at *activation*.

# Social Capital and Employment Policy

- Overall employment outcomes of the reforms: **flexibilisation** of working conditions (decreased EPL: 85% of new employees are on temporary contracts – source: Italian Minister of Employment and Social Affairs)
- Overall social capital outcomes of the reforms: **reduction of social and institutional trust** – finding a job is seen as a ‘zero sum game’ basically in the hands of ‘bonding social capital’ relations with public employment services which furthermore are not ‘filling the territorial gaps’ in terms of job offers
- Furthermore, recent research conducted shows also how precarious workers tend to participate less both socially and politically (Bassoli and Monticelli, 2014) which means **reduction of social and political participation**



# Policy Implications

- Employment (and social) policies may **reduce social capital**
- Employment (and social) policies need to be drafted carefully thinking also at their medium term effects with respect to **building trust**
- More in general, social policies need to consider very carefully territorial specifications and be designed and implemented accordingly
- Finally, social policies need to be **embedded in an overall policy menu** which is also addressing more specifically social cohesion concerns (ex. activation AND basic/minimum income) in order to be framed as part of a **social pact** which would enhance – and not reduce – social capital