



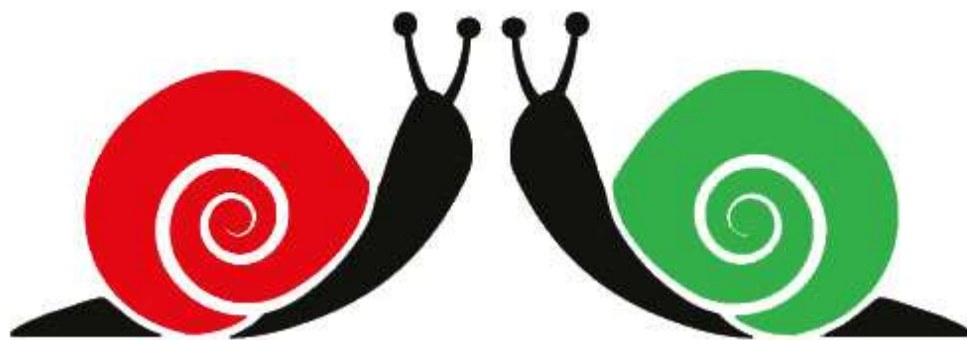
INSTITUTE FOR  
POLITICAL ECOLOGY

# *Why won't they see the need for a change?*

Degrowth and productivist optimism in the  
European semiperiphery

Mladen Domazet

DEGROWTH  
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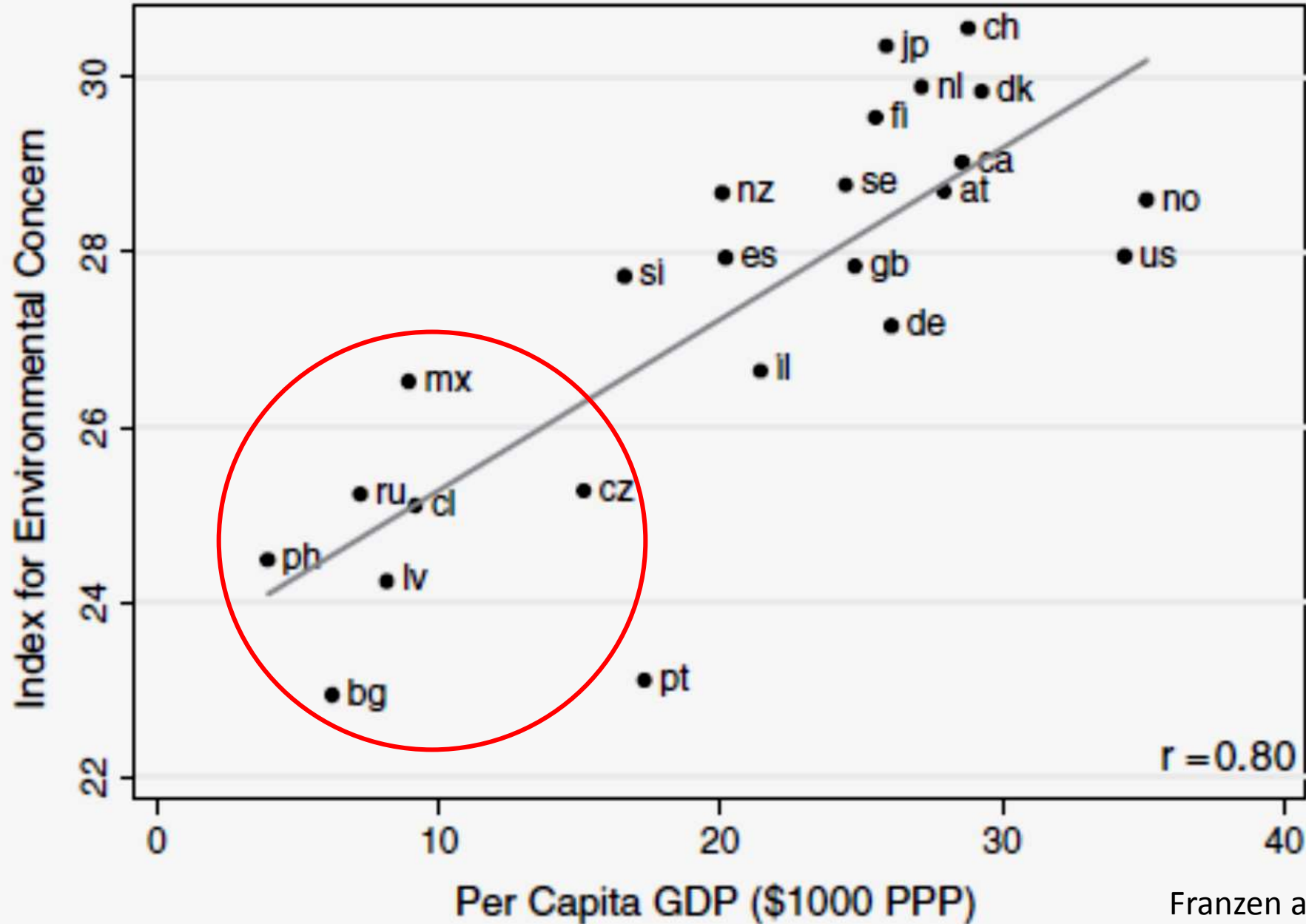
# Sustainability and progress require a **fundamental change, not a greener quotidian**

- „Another development model is needed [...] fundamental and not only gradual changes in our interaction with natural systems are necessary for human survival” (Haberl et al. 2011) – environmentalism for the 21st cent. – **external constraints on societies, environmentalist imperative for societal reorganisation**
- Sustainable society must be a non-growing society; in the absence of growth more equal income distribution is essential
  - Change the basic social institutions, technologies and human behaviour for a ‘prosperous way down’ (Klitgaard 2013)
  - „technology is a matter of money” (Hornborg 1998; 2016) – energy appropriation and global imbalances of power

# Did socialism kill 'ecology' and transition finished the 'political'?

- Environmentalist motivations for growth critique
- European semiperiphery (and especially Eastern Europe) presented as an obstinate laggard stuck in the selfish unrealised growth hopes and unsacrificial individualistic distrust with respect to ecological transformation
- change the perspective through which we frame the degrowth-compliant social attitudes – *environmentalism of the (slightly) poorer*
  - Address the perceived lack of environmentalism as evident from comparative international surveys (ISSP)
- Argue against prosperity and modernisation theses
- Compare European populations from the perspective of 'degrowth-environmentalism' – indications of trends

# ISSP 1993 and 2000: multilevel analysis



Consumption and financial sacrifice

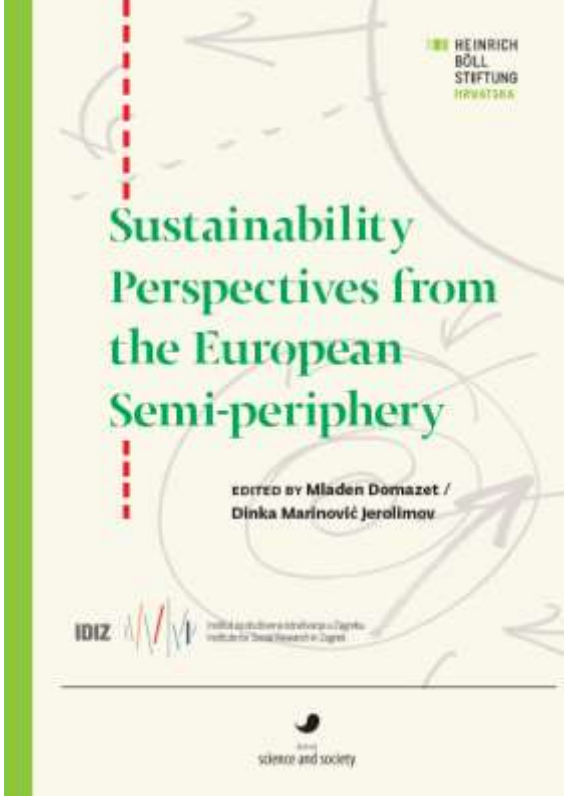
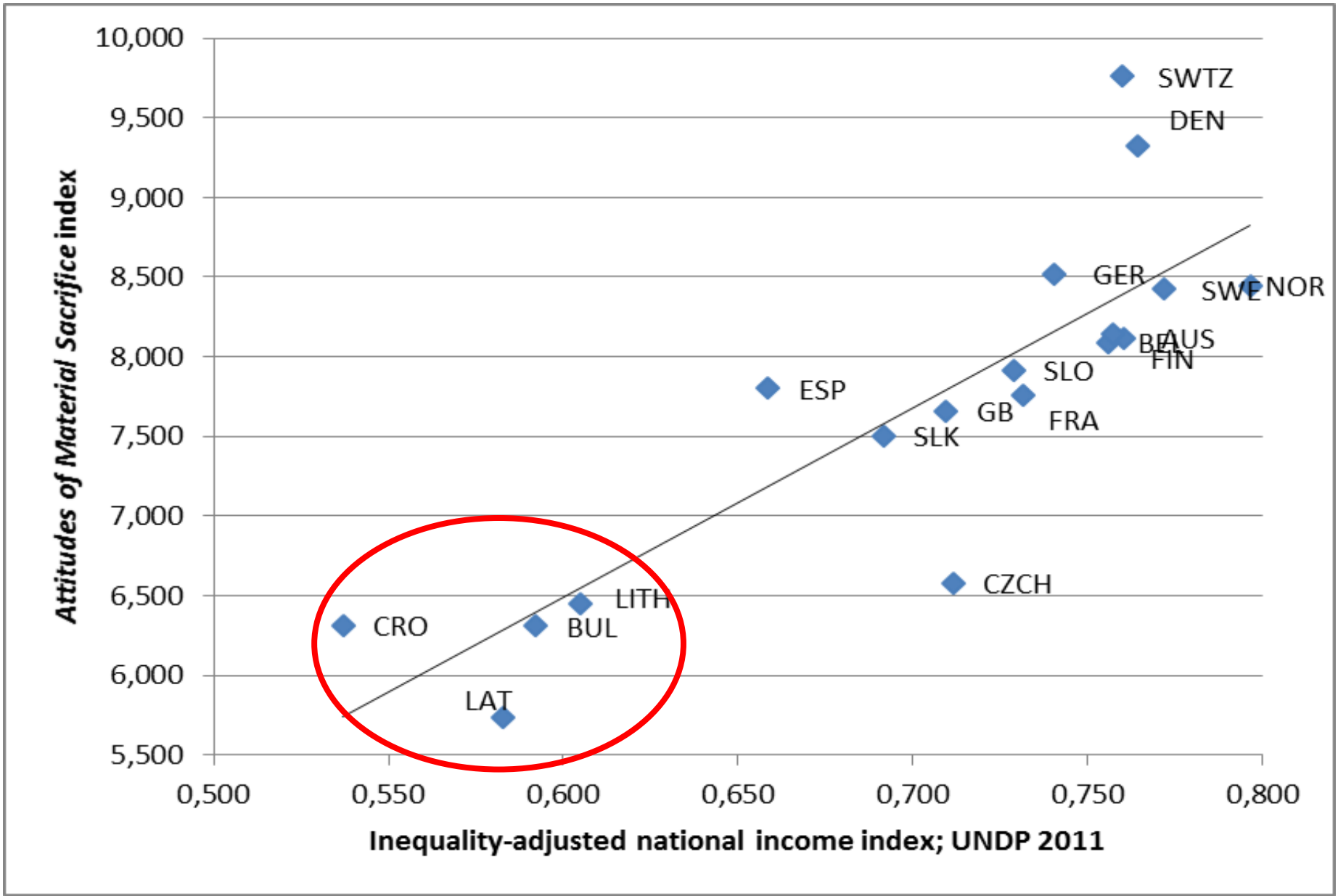
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I do what is right for the environment, even when it costs more money or takes more time. (% very and fairly willing)

Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of living. (% strong and fairly strong disagreement)

Scepticism about science and economy

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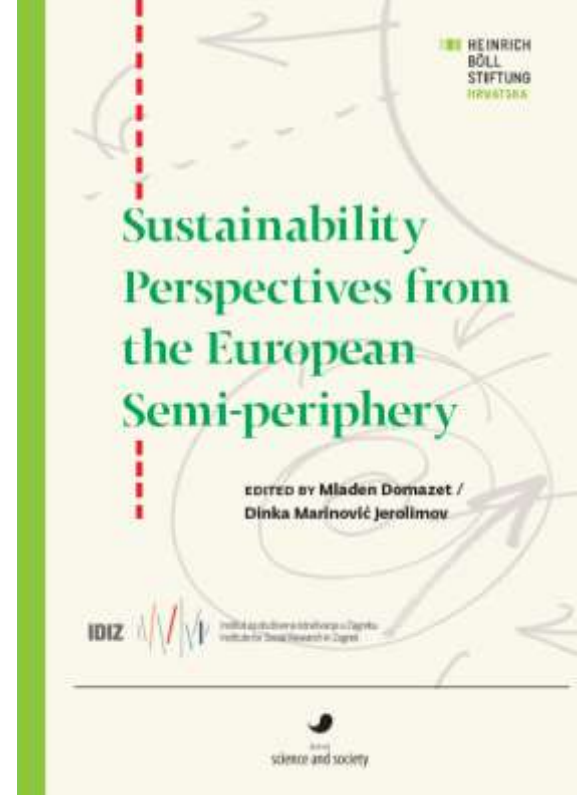
Domazet, Ančić and Brajdić Vuković 2014

# The problem

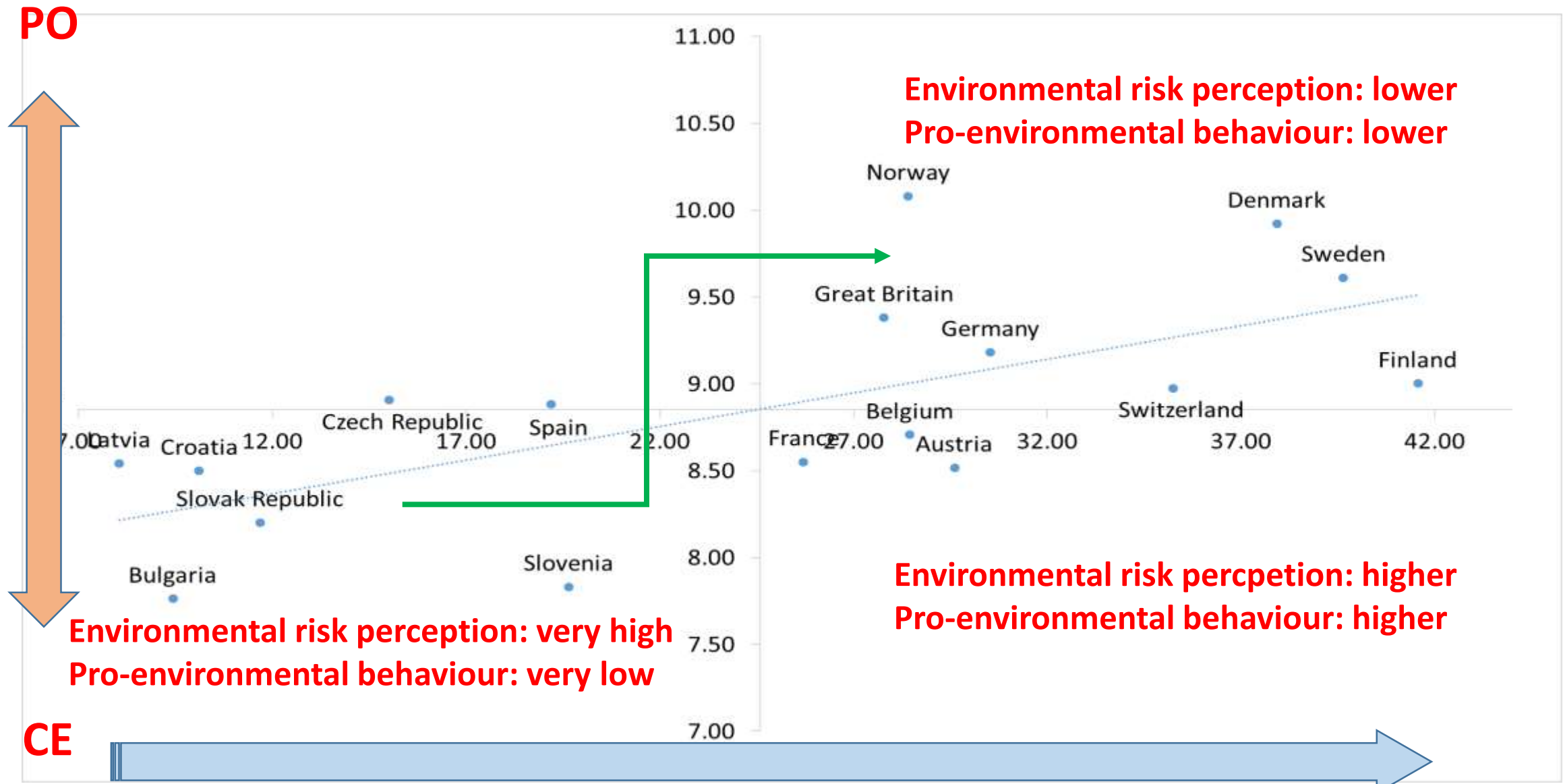
- A lot of social research and modelling of links between values, behaviours, identity, attitudes in Western European societies:
  - Most of it oriented on **'green' participation in the current economy**: WTP, recycling, 'green consumption'
  - „Green identity” primarily leads to green consumption (Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010)
  - „energy-saving identity” negatively influences meat-eating and private water consumption (Van der Werff et al. 2012)
- What if we wait for all Europeans to modernize and go green? – prosperity (affluence hypothesis)
  - Globally detrimental and unsustainable – **not respecting external constraints**

# Two pointers to different European environmentalist

1. CO2 emissions **embedded in goods and services** account for over 50% of UK household CO2 (Druckman and Jackson 2009) – **how does behaviour reduce that?**
  2. Environmental **risks perception** in poorer European countries is **higher** than in richer countries (Haanpaa 2006; Dolenc, Domazet and Ančić 2014; Brajdić Vuković 2014)
- Dominant social paradigm (DSP) and environmental attitudes (Kilbourne et al. 2001):
    - If individuals **believe there are environmental problems**, they would be more **sceptical about the efficacy of prevailing institutions** in ameliorating them because those same institutions are what allowed them to develop.



# Optimism and caution in Europe (Brajdić Vuković 2014)





# What we measure is what we discuss

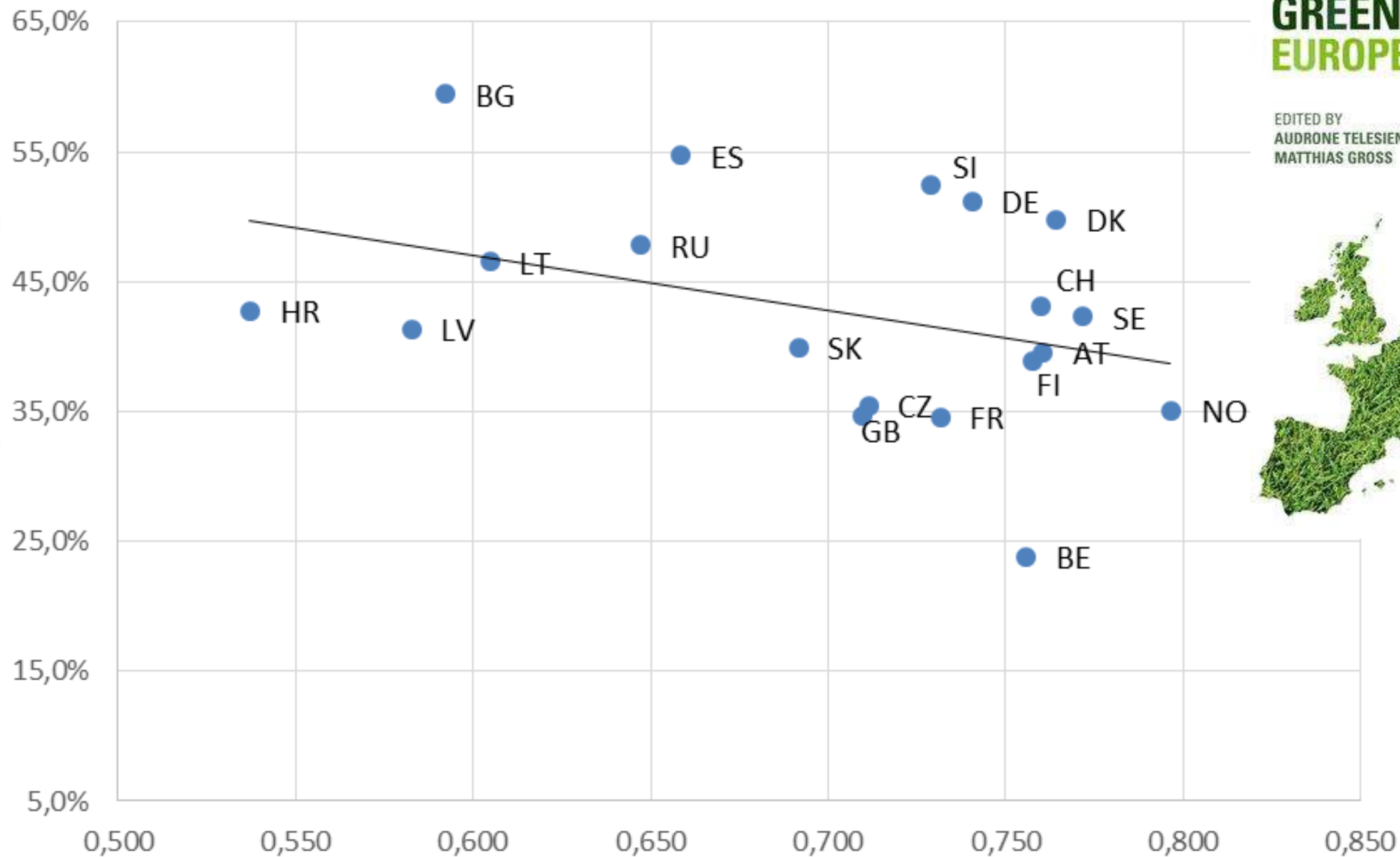
- Environmentalism and environmental concern expressed through WTP and consumption preferences strongly linked to wealth
  - Poorer Eastern European countries less environmentalist-minded
  - Waiting for them to become richer and more environmentalist is globally detrimental
- Individual environmentalism (PEB, WTP, sacrifice) insufficiently addresses systemic change
- Dominant social paradigm: higher productivist-optimism correlated with less risk perception and less pro-environmental behaviour
- Degrowth-compatible social attitudes: commitment to general societal development traits?

# GREEN EUROPEAN

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**Economic progress will slow down without environmental protection (% agree)**



**GREEN  
EUROPEAN**

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**Inequality-adjusted Income Index**

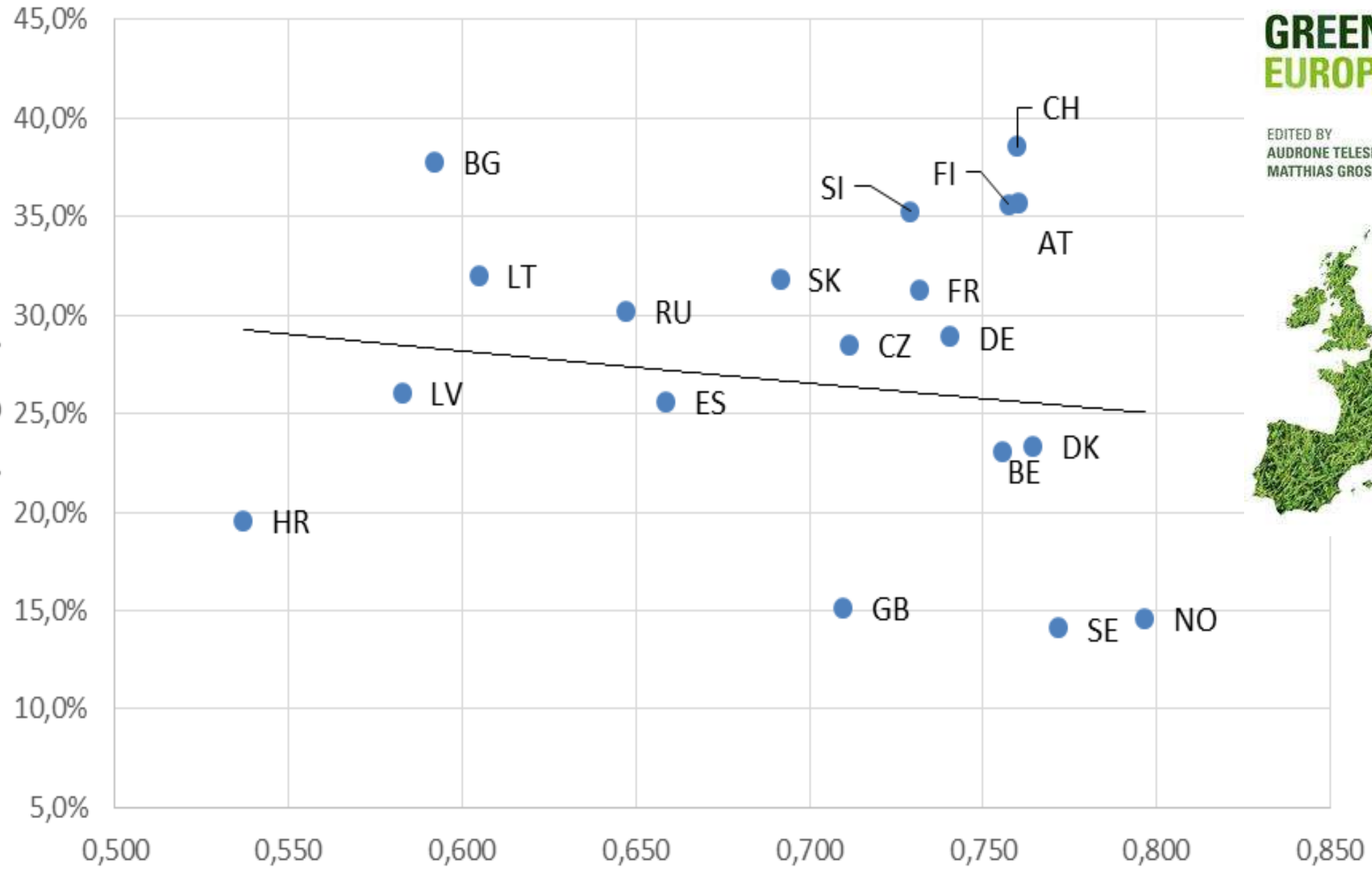
Domazet and Ančić (2017)

# GREEN EUROPEAN

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**Economic growth: harms the environment**  
(% agree)



**Inequality-adjusted Income Index**

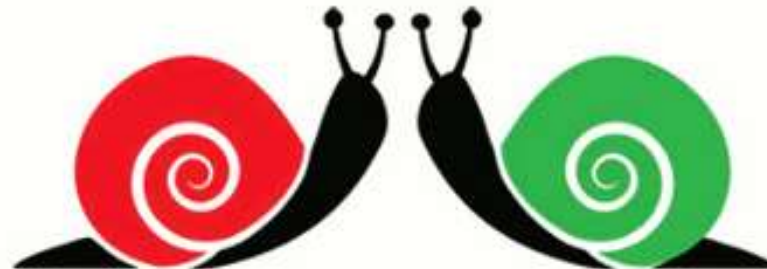
Domazet and Ančić (2017)

# A pan-European environmentalist

- Individual environmentalism (PEB, WTP, sacrifice) insufficiently addresses systemic change – **good will resting on higher consumption, waste and CO2 emissions**
- DSP: higher productivist-optimism correlated with less risk perception and less pro-environmental behaviour
- DSP of the affluent West spreading across the European continent, but the degrowth-attitudes even across Europe (cf. Ančić and Domazet 2015)

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