

**SURVIVING TOGETHER: SOCIAL  
COHESION AND COVID-19,  
A CROSS-COUNTRY ANALYSIS**

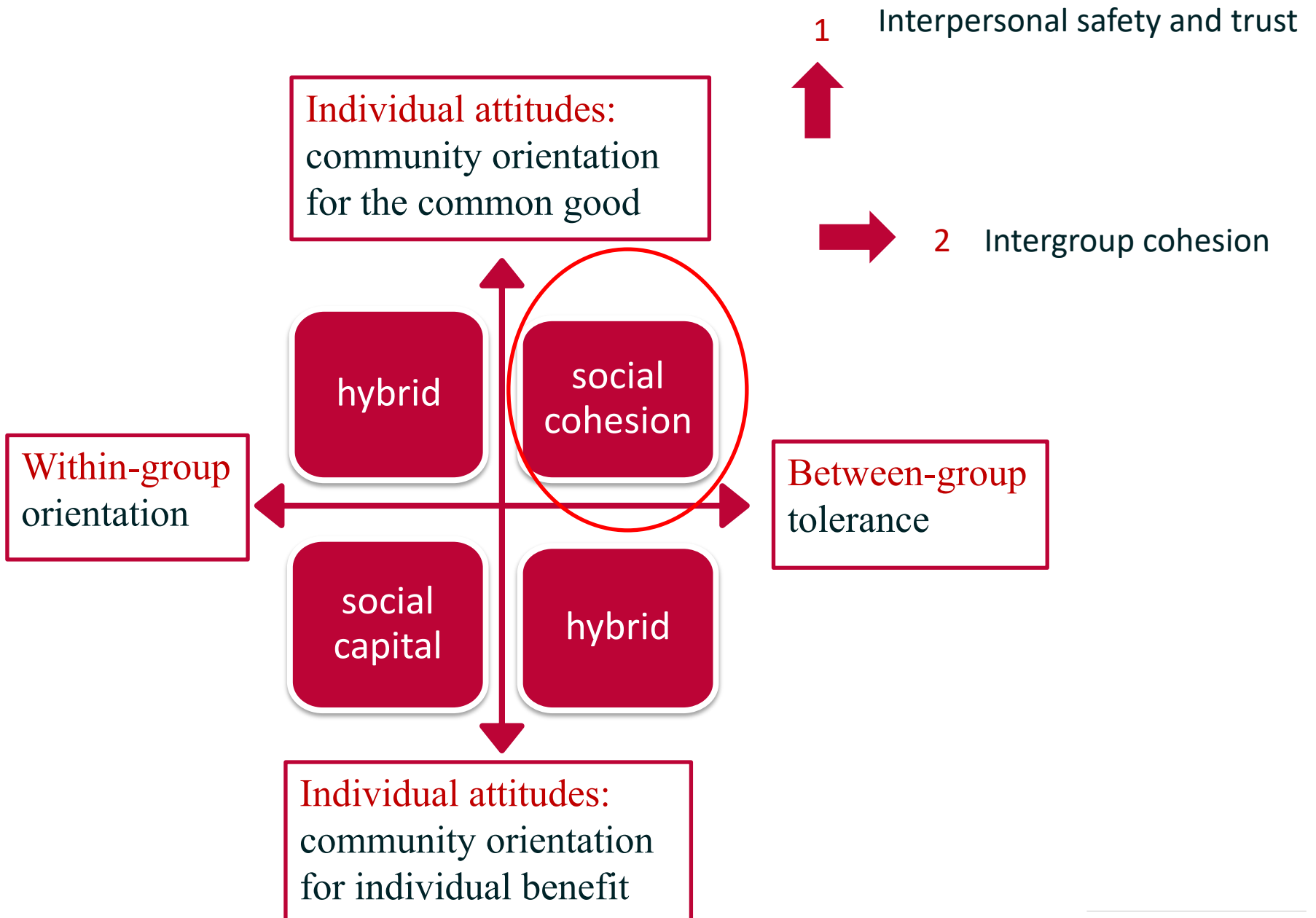
# COVID19 what explains its different spread?

Determinants of spread and fatality of COVID 19

- Quality of health care systems?
- Government type?
- Societal factors, trust or networks → city or local level

We analyze the role of social cohesion → beyond social capital at cross country level

More cohesive societies may be better equipped to reduce the impact of a pandemic



## SOCIAL COHESION

### Intergroup Cohesion

- Rating intergroup Grievances
- Riots
- Rating internal Conflict
- Rating deaths in Conflict
- Rating Terrorism Risk
- Guerrilla
- Rating law and order
- Political risk
- Terrorist attack



### Interpersonal Safety and trust

- % Kidnapping
- % Attacked
- Trust family
- Trust people you know personally
- Trust people you meet for the first time
- Rate car theft
- % Feel Safe at Night
- Freedom of choice in life satisfied
- Homicide Rate
- % Attacked
- % Most People can be Trusted
- % Murder
- Not go out
- Secure in neighborhood
- robberies in the neighborhood
- Alcohol consumed neighborhood
- Drug sale in street
- Sex exploitation
- % Items stolen home
- Theft
- Trust
- Violent Death Rate

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# Methods and data

$$\text{Covid19 cases, deaths} = \beta_1 SC_i + \beta_2 GDP + \beta_3 \mathbf{G} + \beta_4 \mathbf{H} + \beta_5 Vdemlib$$

- SC is the key explanatory variable:
  - Social Cohesion Index ( $SC_1$ )
  - Intergroup Cohesion Index ( $SC_2$ )
  - Interpersonal Safety & Trust Index ( $SC_3$ )
- GDP Gross Domestic product
- G → institutional capacity:
  - Quality of public services
  - Governance performance
  - Corruption index.
- H → health care capacity:
  - Governments health expenditures % GDP
  - Number of hospital beds
  - Percentage of the population over 65 years old.
- Vdemlib* Differences in political systems

# Results deaths

COVID_deaths_per_ten_thousand	(1)	(2)	(3)
Social_cohesion	-2.336** (-3.11)		
Intergroup_cohesion		-0.765* (-2.24)	
Interpersonal_safety_trust			-0.982+ (-1.93)
<i>N</i>	138	132	131
adj. <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.145	0.119	0.104

Note: Regressions 1, 2 and 3 include the following covariates: GDP per capita, Liberal democracy index, Corruption index, Governance performance, public services, hospital beds per ten thousands, percentage over 65 years old

+  $p < 0.15$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

There were 2.3 less deaths per ten thousand inhabitants (32 cases less) when countries have a one-point increase on the Social Cohesion Index.

United States ISD = Austria ISD → 2.3 less cases per ten thousand inhabitants (30,000 deaths less)



# Discussion

- Relationship between social cohesion and the impact of Covid-19 in a large cross-country analysis
- Social cohesion measured with a multiscalar (intergroup level and interpersonal level) and multidimensional (31 indicators) index
- Consistently negative relationships between social cohesion on the one hand and Covid-19 infections and deaths on the other hand.
- Tolerance and trust between social groups are more important to explain lower Covid-19 than: community attitudes and behaviours between individuals, health care capacity, economic context or government capacity

# Discussion

- Divisiveness between groups in society may be worse for the mortality rate of the virus than distrust and lack of cooperation between individuals.
- Increasing ideological polarization (US, Brazil, India and Hungary → also above average COVID19) has also a devastating public health effect, next to its detrimental impact on democracy.
- Future research on the possible pathways through which social cohesion may reduce Covid-19 infections and mortality rates.