Measuring Social Cohesion: The Role of Normative Choices in Indicator Design

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Outline

I. Are choices underlying measurement design normative?

II. Normative choices: levels and desiderata.

III. Example of measurement of social cohesion at the ‘macro’ level: Social Sustainability Global Data Base.

IV. Example of measurement of social cohesion at the ‘micro’ level: Multidimensional Exclusion.
I. Are choices underlying measurement design normative?

• If data are constrained and exactly one variable exists, in what sense is its selection normative?

• Similarly, if an indicator is redundant or invalid according to statistical assessments, how is its deselection normative?

• And if experts judges that one indicator of social cohesion is more accurate than another, in what way is a choice in its favour normative?
II. Normative Choices Operate at Various Levels...

- At a **higher** meta-level, normative assessments draw upon different kinds of analyses: statistical, axiomatic, deliberative, practical, and policy-oriented, and include:

  - **Expert assessments of indicator accuracy**
    - Ex: Quality and legitimacy of a participatory process
  - **Empirical assessments**
    - Ex: Data quality, measurement error, statistical validity/reliability
  - **Theoretical assessments**
    - Ex: Standards on conventions on indicators
  - **Practicalities**
    - Ex: Constraints (political will, time, human resources)
  - **Policy relevance**
    - Ex: How a measure may support and monitor an intervention
…leading to a Plural Desiderata for a Measure.

- Alkire, et al (2015) building on the recommendations of the Mexican Commission for designing a ‘new’ poverty measure (Székely, 2005) propose the **following criteria** when designing social indicators:

  - Understandable: an easy to describe
  - Reflect ‘common-sense’ notions of social cohesion
  - Fit the purpose for which it is being developed
  - Technically solid
  - Operationally viable (data)
  - Easily replicable
III. ‘Social Sustainability Global Database and Dashboard’

**Associations**
- Poverty
- Inequality
- Growth

**Tableau: 3 types of analytics - unpacked**

- **Country profiles**
- **Benchmarking**
- **Age groups**
- **Gender**
- **IP**
- **Area U/R**

**Data**
- 131 countries
- 42 territories
- 7 bank regions covered
- 71 social sustainability indicators
- 19 developmental indicators
- 2016-2020 single period
- 11 different data sources
### III. Social Sustainability Global Database: Social Cohesion and Social Capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>OBSERVATIONS</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL COHESION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of population that feels in insecure in their neighborhood</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of population for which racist behavior is frequent in their neighborhood</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of population that participates in voluntary associations or community groups</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL CAPITAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of population that say that most people can be trusted</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of population that mention they would NOT like to have as neighbors: &quot;Homosexuals&quot;</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of population that say has confidence in the government</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of population that say has confidence in the police</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Multidimensional Exclusion: Efforts to ‘Harmonise’

- Applies a Counting Approach Methodology (Alkire and Foster 2011) to measure exclusion in **three dimensions**: economic inclusion, resilience and social cohesion, and empowerment voice and accountability. Uses microdata from Peru, and South Africa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Indicator(s)</th>
<th>Peru</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Possession of assets &amp; quality of housing</td>
<td>lives in a household that has inadequate floor/roof/walls, or is in the bottom third of the asset ownership distribution</td>
<td>lives in a household that has inadequate floor/roof/walls, or is in the bottom third of the asset ownership distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence on government institutions</td>
<td>lives in a household where at least one member has low confidence on government institutions</td>
<td>distrusts the national government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cohesion</td>
<td>Experience of discrimination</td>
<td>lives in a household where at least one member has been discriminated against</td>
<td>feels they are in a group that is discriminated against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victim of crime</td>
<td>lives in a household where at least one member has been victim of a crime</td>
<td>lives in a household where one person has experienced burglary or assault in the past 5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Drivers of Multidimensional Exclusion
Thanks.
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