

IS LOW FERTILITY INEVITABLE IN EUROPE?

(...with some special attention to Sweden)

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INTRODUCTION (I)

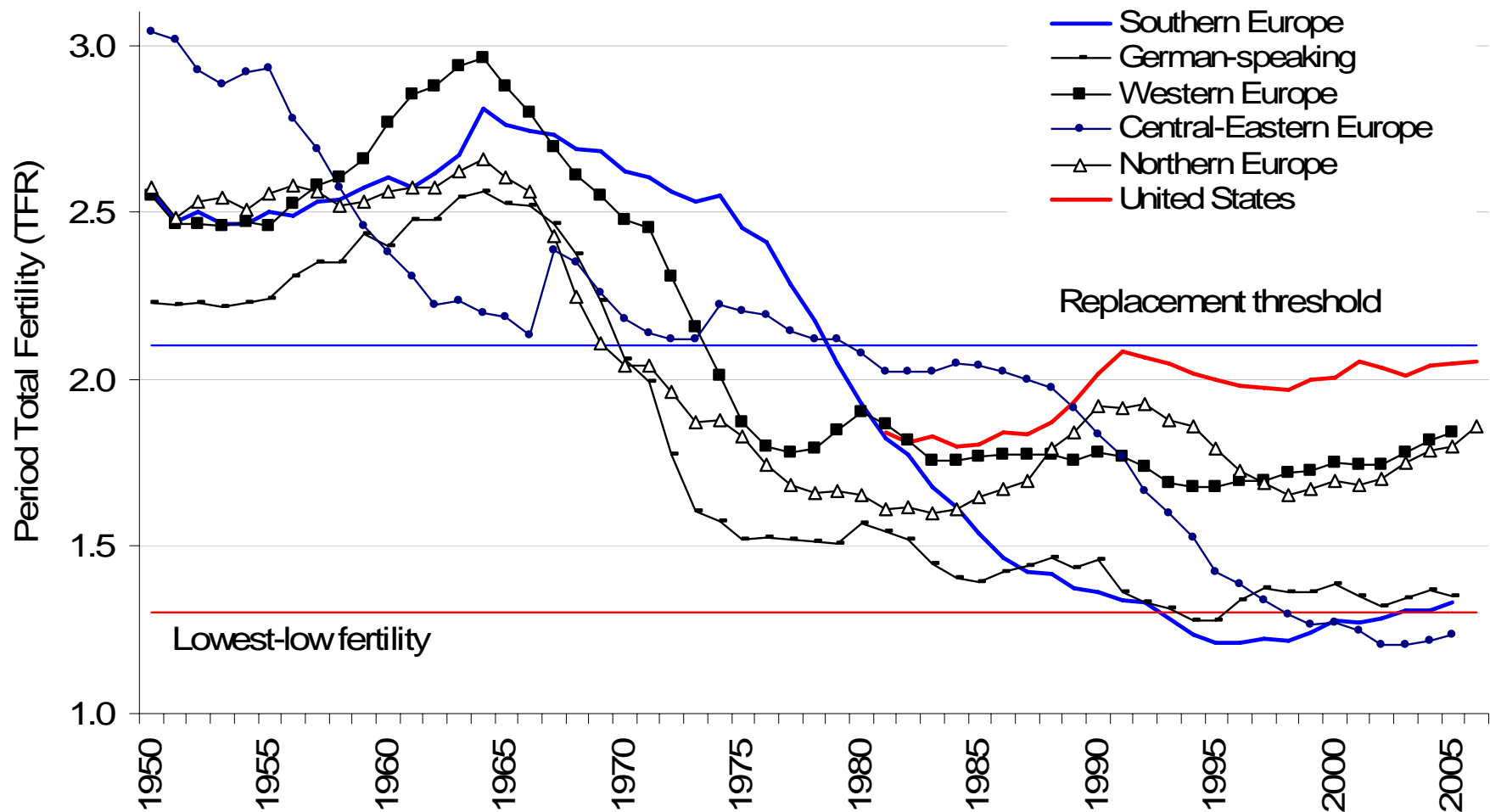
Phil Morgan (2005) on ,exceptionally high‘ fertility in the US: *„Is very low fertility inevitable in America?“*

- *„Are the forces of economic development and concomitant changes inevitably anti-natalist and do they portend low fertility in the American future?“*

This question equally relevant for Europe with its widespread low fertility

- *Does a combination of contemporary economic, cultural and institutional factors necessarily lead to long-term low fertility rates in Europe? Are European societies ,locked-up‘ in below-replacement fertility for the decades to come?*
- *What are the specific factors ,responsible‘ for low and very low fertility in Europe?*

Period total fertility rate (TFR) in major European regions and the US, 1950-2006



INTRODUCTION (II)

Renewed fears of “fertility implosion,” “baby deficit” and population decline

- 1920s and 1930s: spreading concerns about low birth rates and their consequences
- 1970s-?: renewed fears of declining fertility, rapid population ageing and declining population size
 - J. C. Chesnais (2001): population implosion in the 21st century may be particularly pronounced in Europe
 - Pope Benedict XVI (Christmas 2006): Europe “...seems no longer wants to have children” (...) and “seems to be wishing to take its leave of history”
- Increasing political concerns & pronatalism
 - The “Green Paper” (European Commission, 2005): low birth rate is a “challenge for the public authorities”; “return to demographic growth” is one out of “three essential priorities”

OUTLINE of this TALK

- 1) How permanent is very low fertility? (and why NOT to be *overly* concerned about it)
- 2) Is low fertility inevitable in Europe?
- 3) European higher-fertility belt
- 4) Paradoxes of European higher-fertility model
- 5) Second demographic transition and low fertility in Europe
- 6) Summary of major findings
- 7) Future outlook: Waiting for a (small) baby boom?

TERMINOLOGY

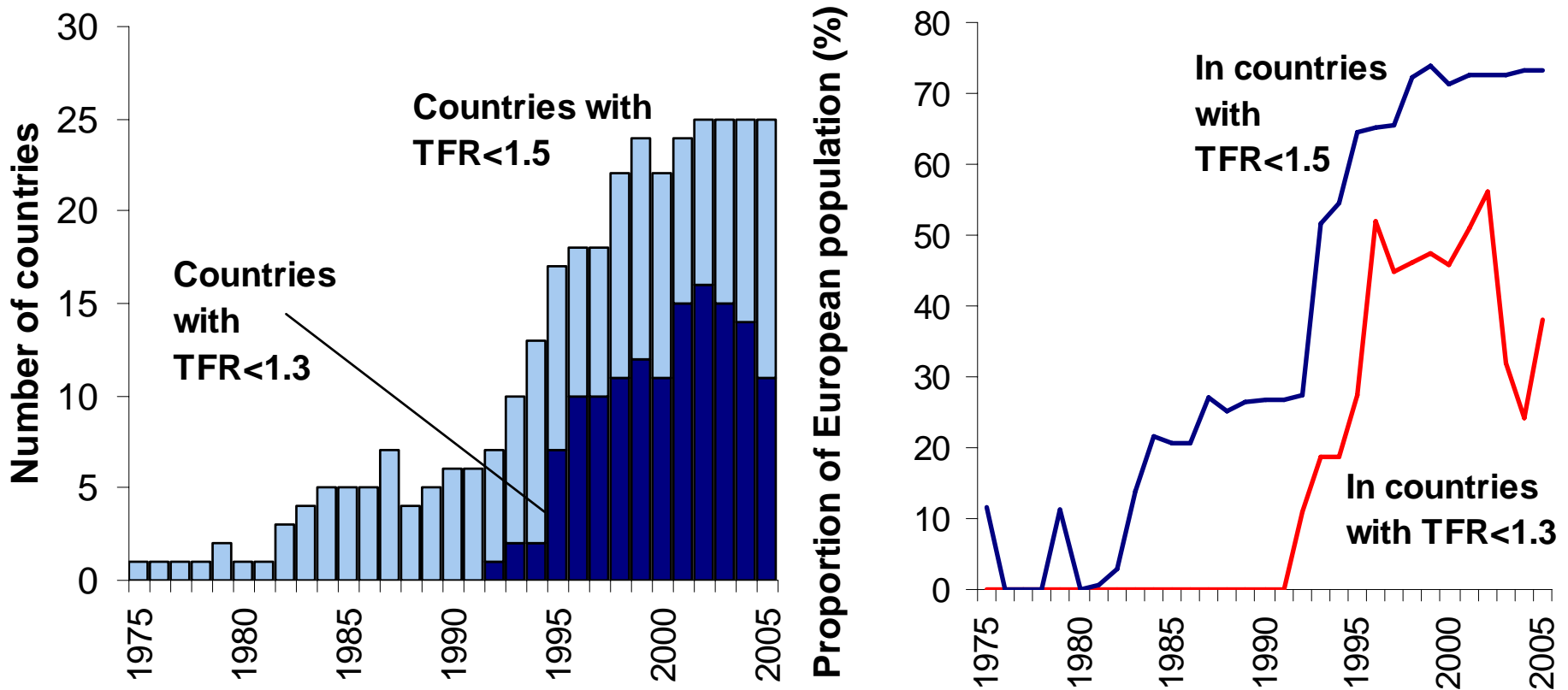
- o “(Relatively) high fertility:” Period/cohort fertility rate at or above 1.8
- o “Low fertility:” Period/cohort fertility rate below 1.8
- o “Very low fertility:” Period/cohort fertility rate below 1.5
- o “Extreme low” or “lowest-low” fertility: Period/cohort fertility rate below 1.3

Total Fertility Rate	Intrinsic Rate of Population Change (%)
1.0	-2.4
1.3	-1.5
1.5	-1.0
1.8	-0.4
2.0	-0.1
2.1	0.1

(1) HOW PERMANENT IS VERY LOW FERTILITY?

The spread of the low and “lowest-low fertility” in Europe

EUROPEAN FERTILITY CRISIS?



Data sources: Council of Europe (2006), Eurostat (2006)

Are there common factors responsible for very low fertility rates?

- Fertility postponement taking place in all countries with the lowest-low period TFR

A mixture of other factors:

- Late home-leaving and union formation (South)
- Low gender equality within the family (South + East)
- Incompatibility of work and childbearing (Centre + South + East)
- Precarious economic situation of young adults, employment insecurity (South + East)
- Post-communist social & economic transformation (East + South-east)
- Rising voluntary childlessness (German-speaking countries) and/or the spread one-child family model (South + East)

But: none of these factors alone is sufficient to explain a shift very low fertility!

Why to be concerned about very low fertility?

Common ‘consensus‘:

- *Very low fertility undesirable and particularly harmful in the long run*

Reher (2005): Very low fertility entrenched in a social structure of developed countries – inevitable pop. decline will have serious consequences

McDonald (2005): The dividing threshold of 1.5

- Negative demographic spiral: Fertility below that level justifies government intervention (policies)
- No country experienced a recovery pushing the TFR back above 1.5
- Expected ‘recuperation‘ may not occur or may be weak

Lutz, Skirbekk and Testa (2005): Low fertility trap

- Shrinking population, negative momentum
- Decline in family size norms (socialisation effects)
- Higher and unfulfilled consumption aspirations leading to further fertility decline

Why NOT to be *overly* concerned about very low fertility?

1) Very low fertility as a measurement problem

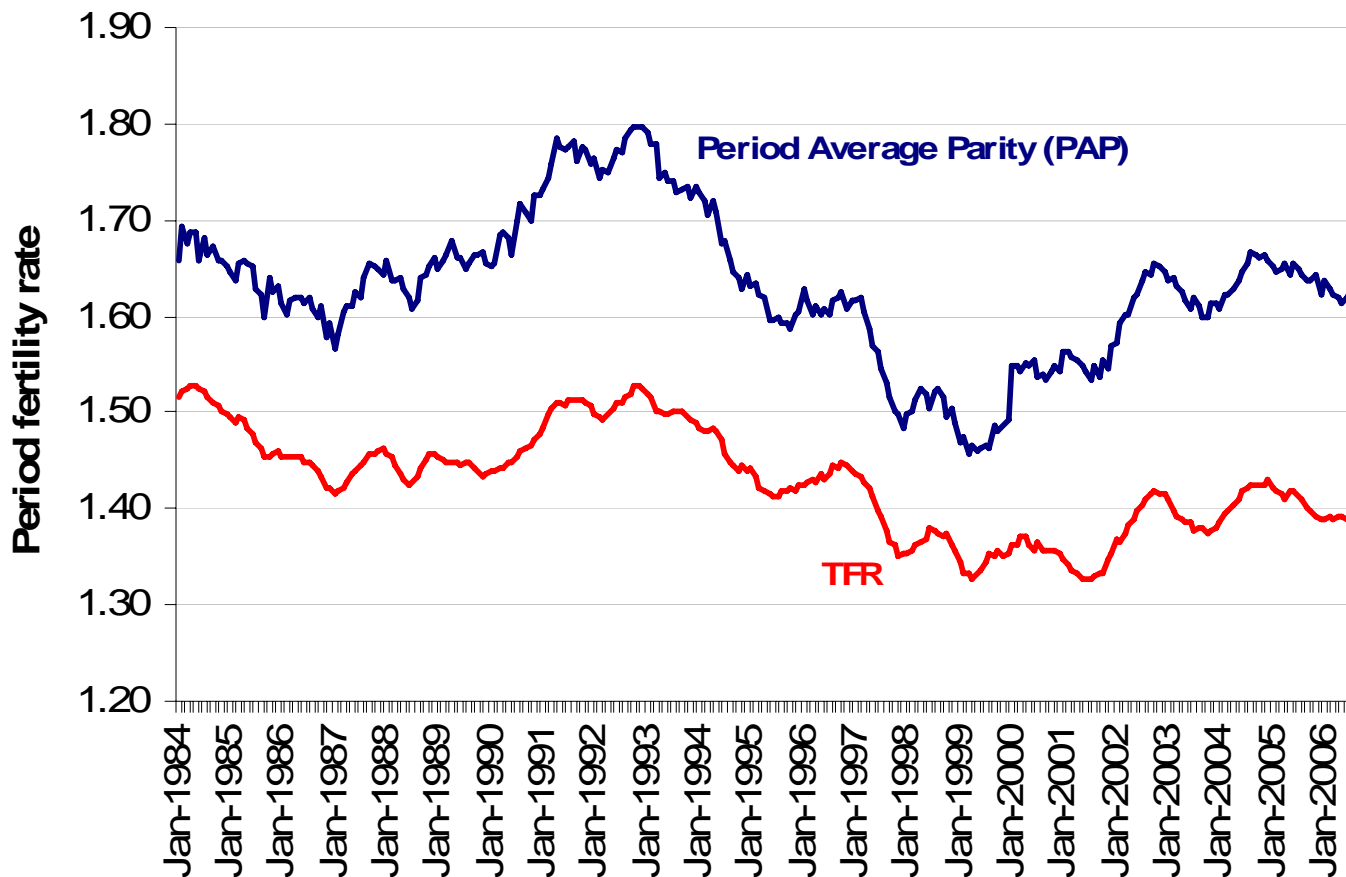
- Lowest-low total fertility rates are temporary by-product of fertility postponement
- Net of tempo effect, many lowest-low fertility countries retain period fertility rates above 1.5
- Very few countries have completed cohort TFR heading below 1.5 (Italy, Ukraine)
- Signs of a modest rise in period TFR in many lowest-low fertility countries

The use of the period TFR may lead to:

- Misinterpretations of trends and cross-country differences in the TFR
- Erroneous projections of future period & cohort fertility

Period Average Parity (PAP), based on parity progression ratios

Period TFR and PAP in Austria, 1984-2006



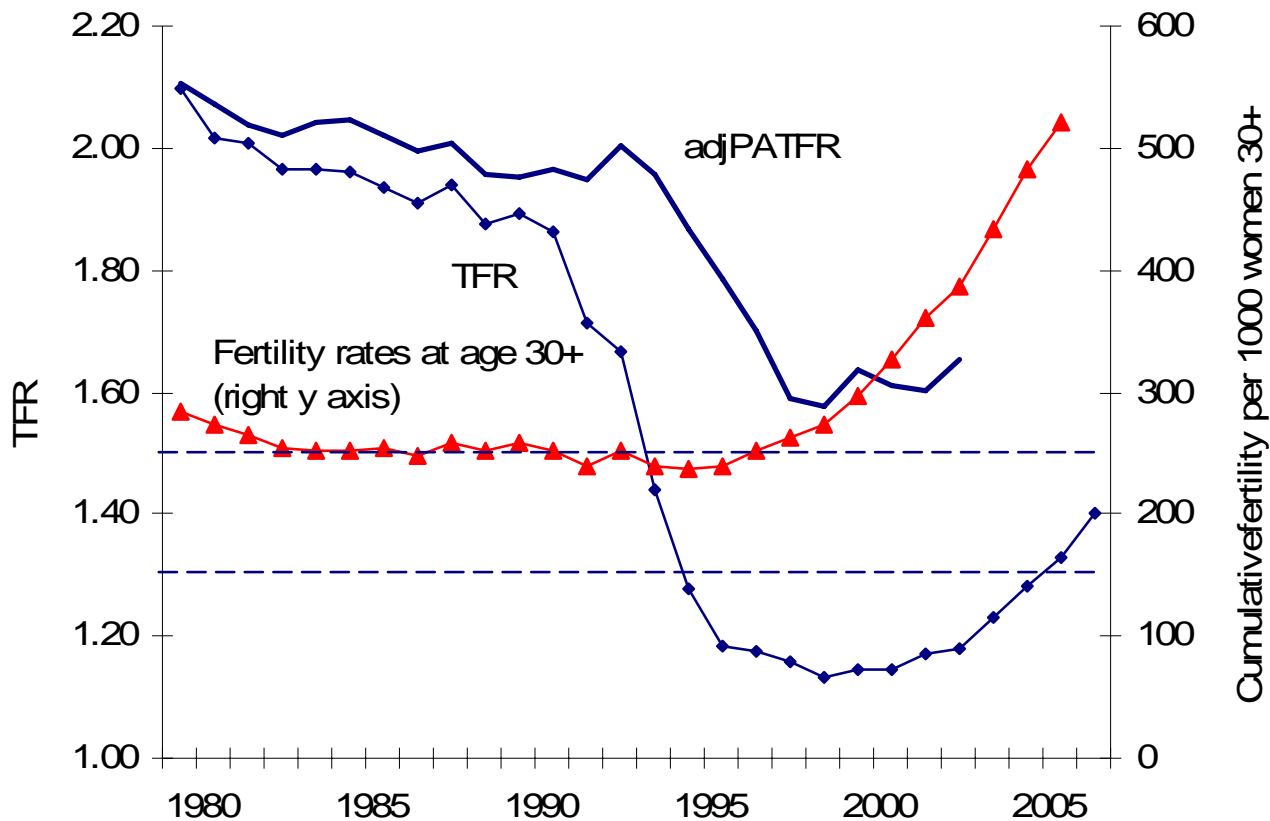
Mean values
1984-2006:

TFR: 1.429

PAP: 1.630

CTFR (cohort
1966): 1.68

Period fertility rates in the Czech Republic, 1980-2006



Modest increase
in the period
TFR also
observed in
many other
lowest-low
fertility
countries
(Bulgaria,
Estonia, Italy,
Slovenia, Spain)

➤ *There is no reason to consider the TFR of 1.5 as a threshold, below which countries fall into a 'low-fertility trap'*

Why NOT to be *overly* concerned about very low fertility?

2) Very low fertility as a regional problem

3) Very low fertility as a structural issue

- Many causes of very low fertility may also decrease in importance without government action with pronatalist intent

- Improved economic position of young adults
- Better employment conditions (flexiwork) and childcare arrangements
- Lagged cultural and legislative adaptation to the ‘second demographic transition’

4) Desired family size remains well above the low fertility threshold (Austria & Germany exceptions?)

Why NOT to be *overly* concerned about very low fertility?

- 5) Theories and hypotheses on very low fertility need to be more precisely formulated and rigorously tested
- Measurement: which measures, which thresholds and why?
 - More debate on social and economic effects of rapid population ageing and population decline (demography lagging behind economics)
 - Need to study fertility alongside migration
 - Cities and selected regions (Northern Italy) as laboratories: Even very low fertility levels may be sustainable
 - Mechanisms: Low fertility trap hypothesis
 - Relative cohort size can also have the opposite effect than envisioned (Kohler-Billari-Ortega 2002, Easterlin 1980)
 - (Thus far) no clear evidence of a strong decline in childbearing desires outside German-speaking countries

2) Is low fertility inevitable in Europe?

Very low fertility may be a transient phenomenon, but:

Is below-replacement fertility an inevitable feature of (post)modern societies?

Davis (1937): Modern society (*industry, mobility, urban life*) destructive to the family:

- Incogruity between our reproductive system and modern social organisation
- Social status shift: Greater authority and esteem are given to those who „refrain from reproduction“

Lesthaeghe, van de Kaa: Second Demographic Transition

...leads to structural long-term subreplacement fertility (Lesthaeghe and Neidert 2006)

- Cohort fertility expected to reach maximum „well below replacement“ (van de Kaa 2002)

2) Is low fertility inevitable in Europe?

An almost universal shift to below-replacement fertility:

- **Women born in 1965:** only a few countries retained completed TFR of 2.0 or higher (France, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Slovakia and some smaller countries)
- **In 2005:** only Iceland had period TFR above 2.0

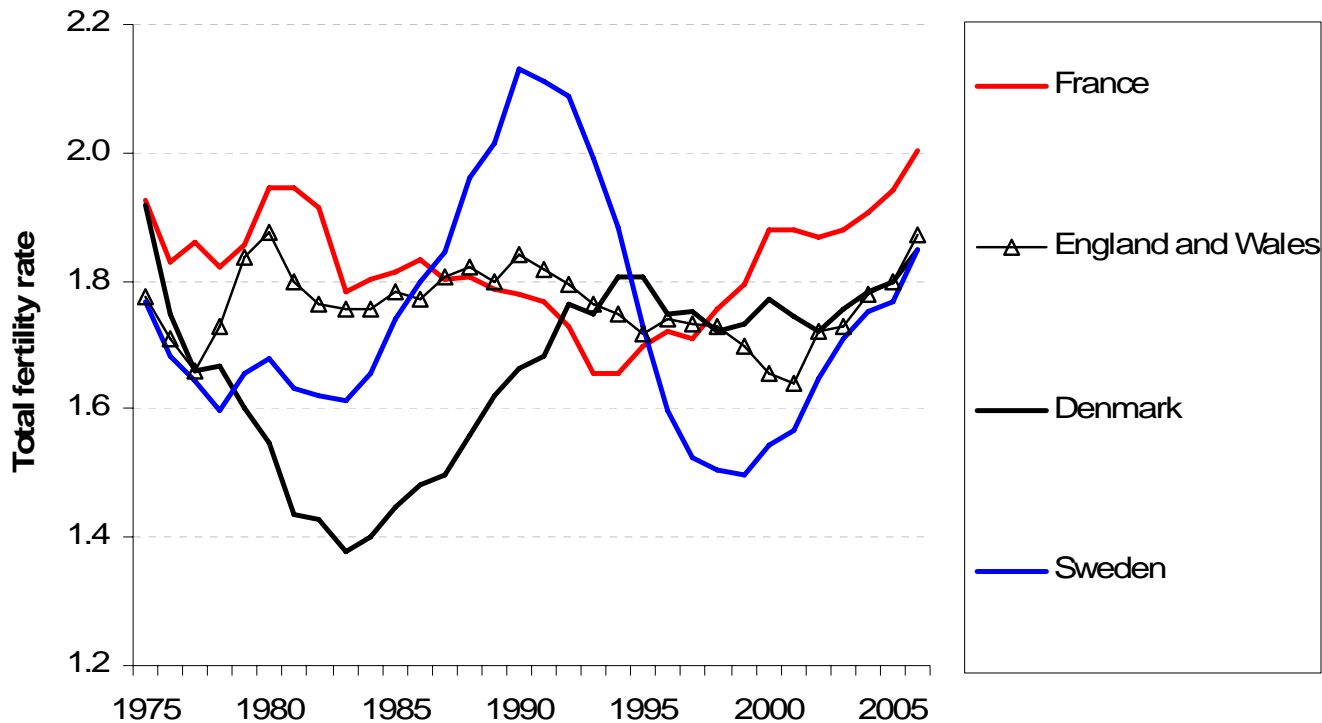
Many levels of explanations, many ,universal‘ factors proposed, often in line with **Second Dem. Transition** arguments

- Efficient contraception (the Pill) reduces an ,surplus‘ of unwanted fertility (an important factor in explaining higher fertility in the US)
- Women’s power: High educational attainment, career aspirations, universal employment
- A shift to a late childbearing pattern, other priorities earlier in life
- A shift to a two-child family model with a broad acceptance of one-child families and childlessness

2) Is low fertility inevitable in Europe?

BUT: Sub-replacement fertility may not be permanent and universal

- An ongoing 'recovery' of delayed childbearing pushed the period TFR relatively close to 2 in a number of western & northern European countries

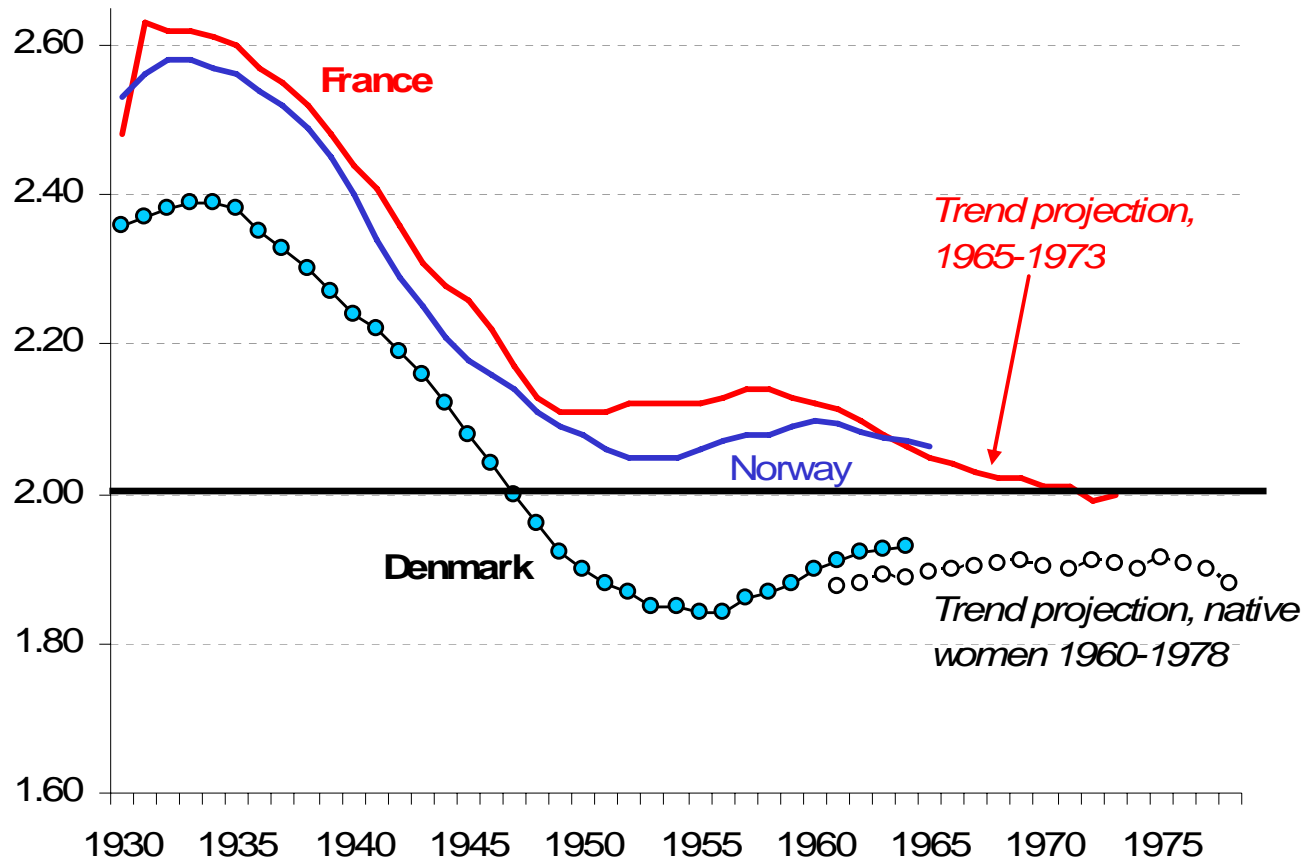


Suddenly, the old world looks younger

(The Economist June 16th 2007)

2) Is low fertility inevitable in Europe?

Completed fertility likely to stabilise around 2 in some countries



Data sources:

Council of Europe
2006,

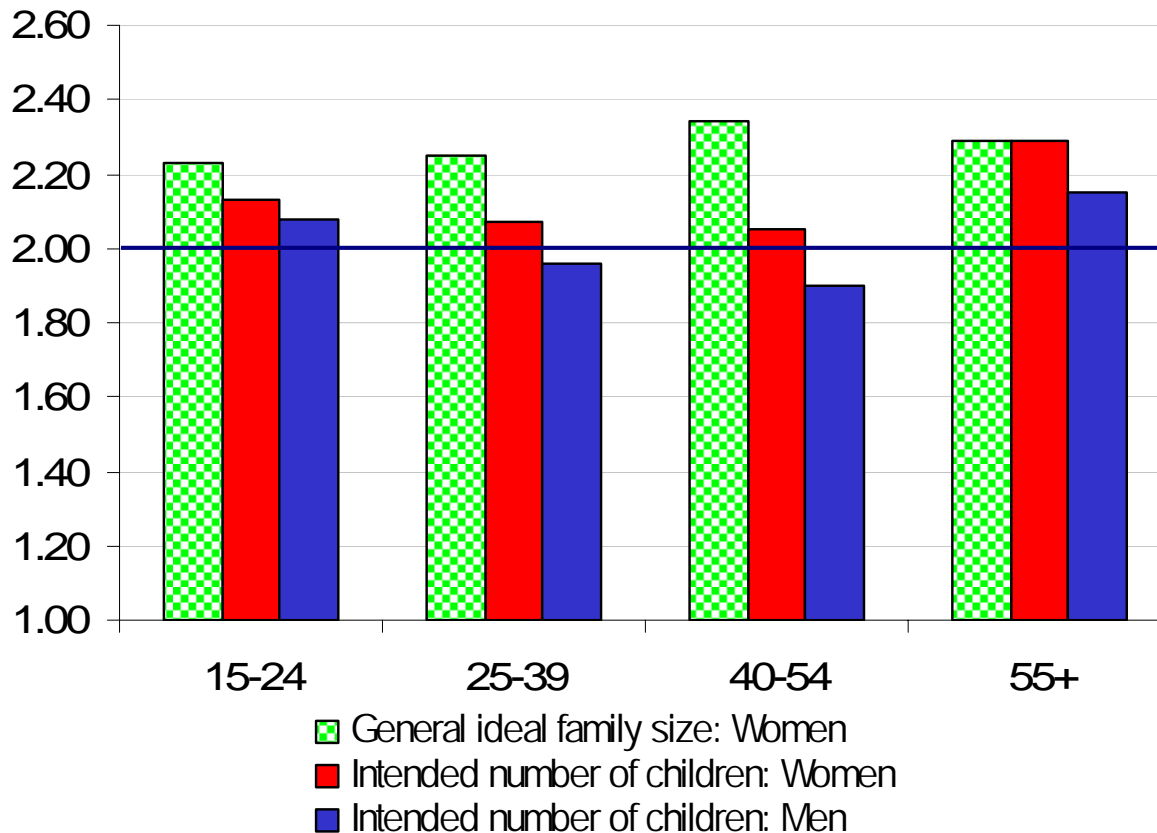
Statistics Denmark

Prioux 2006 (trend
projection for
France)

Sobotka et al.
2007 (trend
projection for
Denmark)

2) Is low fertility inevitable in Europe?

EUROBAROMETER 2006: Intended family size remains remarkably close to two in most parts of Europe (data for EU-25 adopted from Testa 2006)



Evidence on the pervasiveness of a desire for two children „when and if one can afford them and care for them“ (Morgan and Hagewen 2005)

3) 'Higher-fertility belt' in Europe

What are the higher-fertility countries of Europe?

	TFR (2006 or 2005)	adjTFR (2002)	Cohort TFR (1965)
France	2.00	2.02	2.03
Anglo-saxon			
England and Wales	1.87	1.85	1.90
Ireland	1.86	2.22	2.19
Benelux			
Belgium	1.72	1.77	1.80
Luxembourg	1.70	1.83	1.83
The Netherlands	1.72	1.82	1.78
Nordic countries			
Denmark	1.85	2.00	1.92
Finland	1.84	1.88	1.92
Norway	1.90	2.07	2.07
Sweden	1.85	1.91	1.99
Iceland	2.05	2.33	2.37
Mean value (ex. ICE, LUX)	1.85	1.95	1.96
EU-25	1.53	1.66	1.75
<i>difference</i>	<i>0.32</i>	<i>0.29</i>	<i>0.21</i>

*Kosovo,
Turkey and
Albania
excluded*

*Sources:
VID 2006;
EUROSTAT;
National
Statistical
Offices;
Council of
Europe 2005*

3) 'Higher-fertility belt' in Europe

	Mean age first birth (2005)	% nonmarital births (2005)	Total divorce rate (2003)
France	28.5	48.4	0.42
Anglo-saxon			
England and Wales	27.3	42.8	0.47
Ireland	28.6	32.0	xxx
Benelux			
Belgium	n.a.	31	n.a.
Luxembourg	28.7	27.2	0.48
The Netherlands	29.0	34.8	0.36
Nordic countries			
Denmark	28.5	45.7	0.47
Finland	28	40.4	0.51
Norway	27.6	51.8	0.48
Sweden	28.7	55.4	0.54
Iceland	26.4	63.7	0.37
Mean value (ex. ICE, LUX)	28.3	42.5	0.46
EU-25	ca. 27.5	33.3	
US	25.7	35	

*Kosovo,
Turkey and
Albania
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*Sources:
VID 2006;
EUROSTAT;
National
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Europe 2005*

3) 'Higher-fertility belt' in Europe

What are the common features shared by higher-fertility countries:

DEMOGRAPHIC

- ✓ Late age at first birth (less in the UK)
- ✓ Substantial fertility ,recuperation' after age 30
- ✓ High progression rate to second birth
- ✓ High proportion of births to immigrant mothers (up to 24%)
- ✓ Low unwanted fertility and very low teenage fert. (ex. UK)
- ✓ Rather low social status differences in fertility and parity progression (ex. IRE, UK)
- ✓ Family instability (except IRE, NL), widespread cohabitation (except BE?), extra-marital births very common
- ✓ Early home leaving pattern, single living common (ex. BE?)

3) 'Higher-fertility belt' in Europe

What are the common features shared by higher-fertility countries:

ECONOMIC

- ✓ The richest & most affluent countries of Europe
- ✓ High labour force participation of women (ex IRE?)
- ✓ High residential mobility

SOCIAL, CULTURAL

- ✓ High level of secularisation (ex. IRE)
- ✓ Low level of familism (ex. IRE?)
- ✓ No explicit pronatalism (ex. FR), family-related policies motivated by welfare, gender equality or other considerations

3) 'Higher-fertility belt' in Europe

Selected DIFFERENCES between higher-fertility countries:

- ✓ Different levels of youth unemployment (high in FR, low in DK, NL, NOR, IRE)
- ✓ Different levels of welfare support
- ✓ Different availability of rental housing

European ,high' fertility qualitatively different from the US model:

- Missing teenage excess fertility and much lower unwanted / mistimed fertility
- Ethnic pattern (Hispanics in the US) less prominent
- Religion less prominent (Frejka-Westoff 2007)
- Social status disparities less pronounced (except UK)

3) 'Higher-fertility belt' in Europe

(At least) two different welfare regimes compatible with higher fertility (see also Esping-Andersen 1999, Ulrich Mayer 2001)

Scandinavian welfare model: gender equality, extensive welfare, low poverty, low income differences, high compatibility of family life and work career (especially in public employment)

Liberal welfare regime (UK, IRE): higher social status differences (both economic and in demographic & fertility patterns), lower work-family compatibility, low welfare support, high employment mobility, higher teenage fertility

The Netherlands and Belgium seem to share a mixture of both systems (BE also of continental conservative regime)

France constitutes a specific category by itself: High support for the families with children, official pronatalism

4) Paradoxes of European higher fertility settings

Macro-level associations often seemingly counter-intuitive

- Countries with the highest fertility in Europe share
 - o Late first birth pattern
 - o Highest use of contraception & lowest teenage fertility
 - o Highest female employment rate
 - o High divorce and partnership dissolution rates, low marriage rates, high prevalence of cohabitation and high frequency of extramarital childbearing

Selected features: reversal of the more ,expected‘ previous patterns in the 1990s (Billari and Kohler 2004)

- o Divorce rates and non-marital ratio became positively associated with the TFR

4) Paradoxes of European higher-fertility model

Macro-level associations do not say anything about causality or trends over time

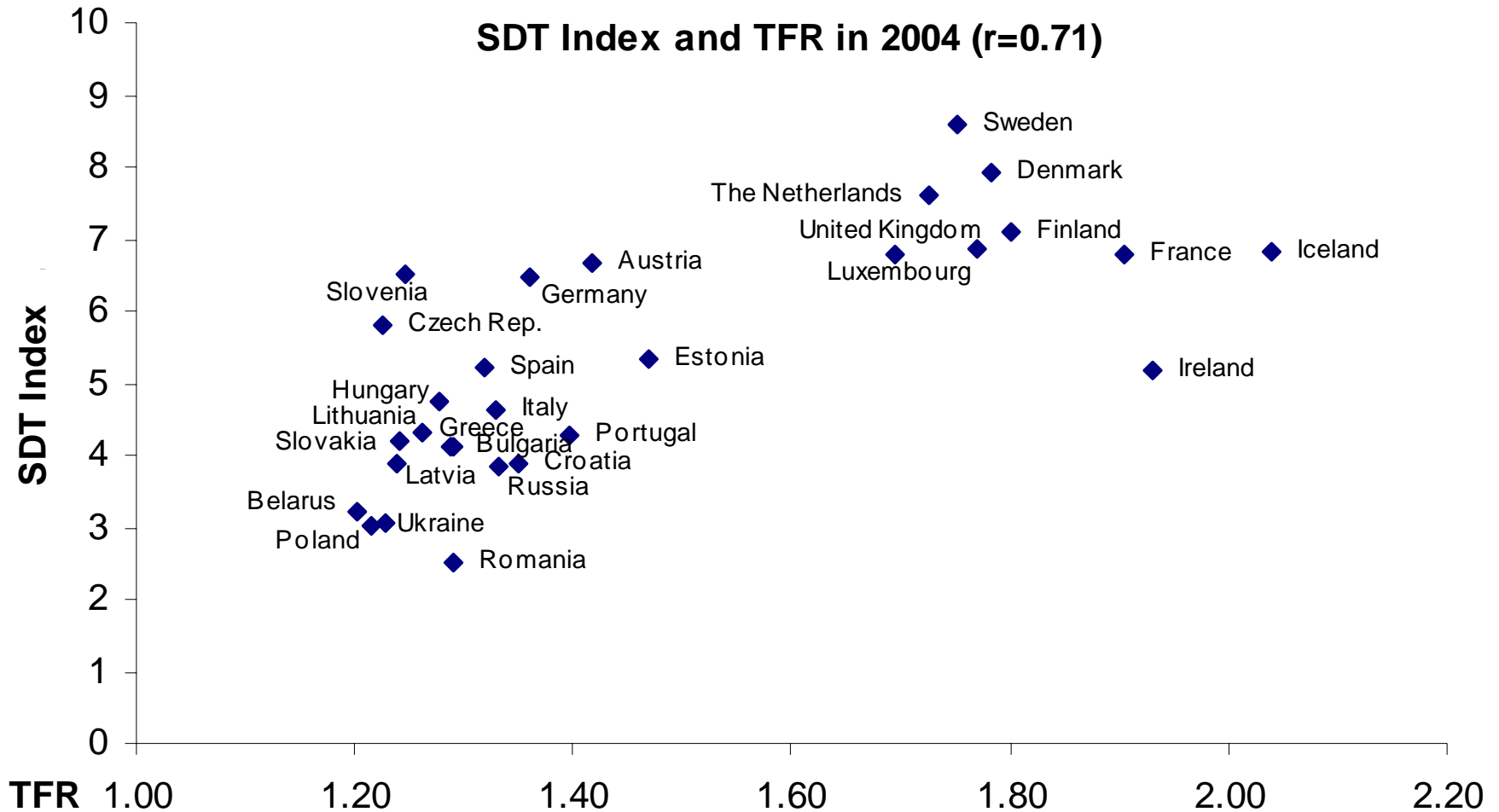
- BUT: these findings make clear that the (post)-modern value shift, destandardised life courses and delayed family formation do not necessarily lead to sub-replacement fertility
- o Van de Kaa (2001, individual-level data): in 1992, postmaterialism and subjective well-being did not show any association with fertility intentions
 - o Liefbroer-Fokkema (2008) and contributions in Frejka et al. (2008): parenthood and family life continue to be almost universally valued across Europe
 - o Coleman (2004: 18): surprisingly, “Second Demographic Transition has nothing to do with low fertility on a cross-national basis today“

Analysis of the SDT-fertility link

Two indexes capturing different dimensions of the SDT:

- **Index SDT1** (demographic factors in 2004):
 - mean age at first birth, first marriage, teenage fertility, non-marital ratio, total divorce rates, total first marriage rate, prevalence of cohabiting unions; 34 countries
- **Index SDT2** (ideational & value factors around 2000); based on the European Values Study in 29 countries
 - 8 questions: Family values, non-conformism, permissiveness, secularism
- Both indexes and their components can range from 0 (= no SDT) to 10 (=max. score on SDT factors)
- SDT1 and SDT2 indexes closely correlated ($r=0.84$)
- A combination of the mean values of the SDT1 and SDT2:
SDT index

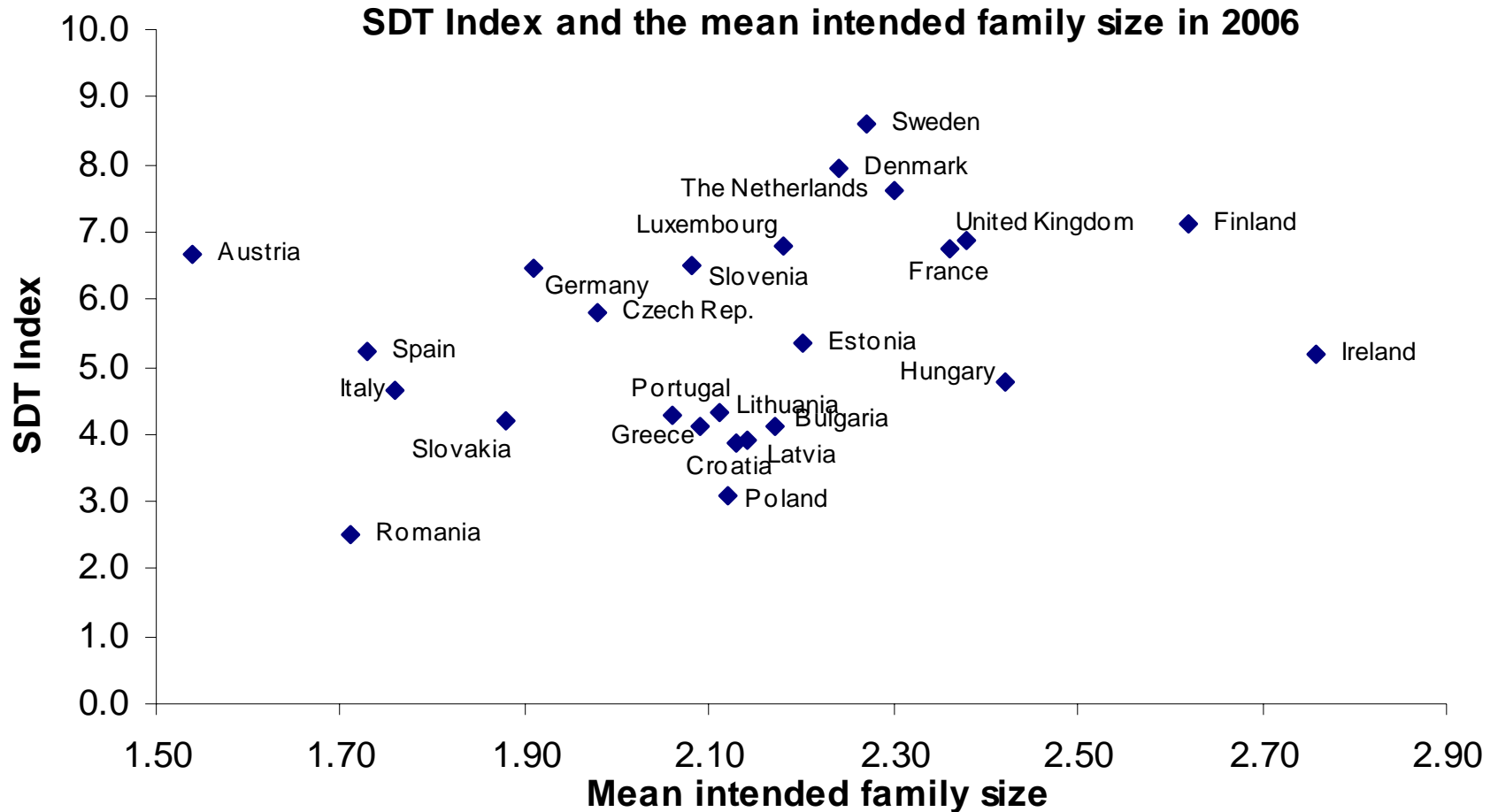
David Coleman was not entirely right: Second Demographic Transition is closely associated with (low) fertility, but in the opposite direction than envisioned!



5) Second demographic transition and fertility in Europe

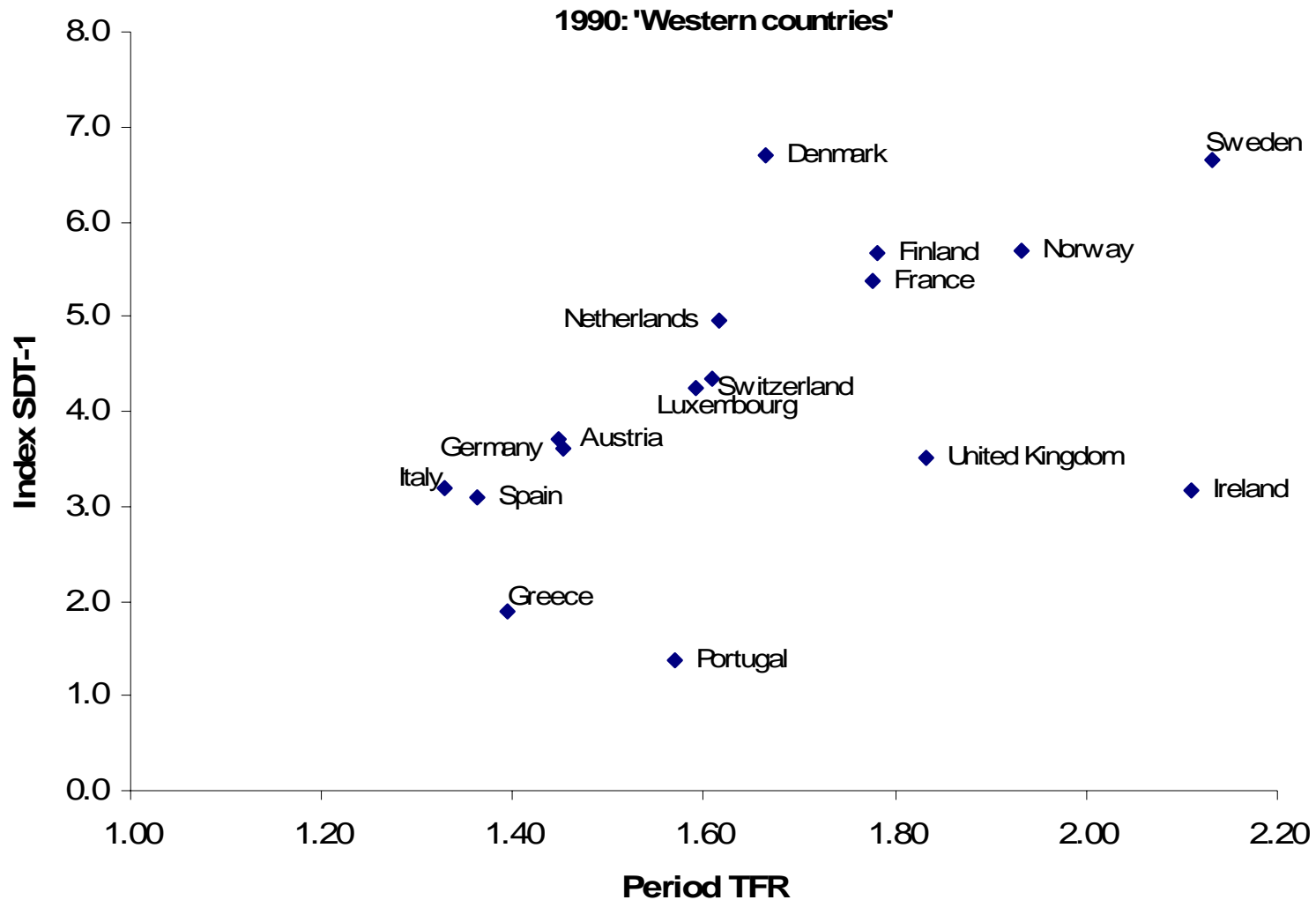
- The SDT-TFR association holds when each SDT index correlated with the TFR separately
- The association also holds when the SDT correlated with the adjusted TFR, intended family size (weaker), SDT-1 index in 1990, and SDT-1 index for non-socialist countries in 1990 and 2004

SDT index and the mean intended family size of women aged 25-39



Mean intended family size computed from Eurobarometer 2006 data (Testa 2006)

SDT-1 index and the TFR in ,Western‘ (non-socialist) countries of Europe, around 1990



5) Second demographic transition and (low) fertility in Europe: An interpretation

- The prominent role of various ‘constraints’ (economic, institutional, cultural) in explaining very low fertility in Europe
- The Second Demographic Transition may play a role, but its effects are filtered through institutional effects:
 - In countries well-adapted to (post)modern living arrangements, family diversity and work-childbearing combination, SDT does not lead to very low fertility
 - In countries where institutional or cultural adaptation to the new family diversity and reproductive patterns is slow, SDT may lead to a long-term very low fertility
 - With the rising acceptance of childlessness and one-child families, the role of facilities that enable work-family balance rises in importance (Liefbroer-Fokkema 2008)

6) Summary of major findings

- **Sub-replacement fertility in Europe is NOT inevitable!**
- Both major components of the Second Dem. Transition (family transformation and value change) compatible with relatively high fertility level
- Countries forming a ‚higher-fertility belt‘ likely to retain period and cohort TFR close to the replacement threshold
- Very low fertility is probably a temporary phenomenon in most countries
 - Related to welfare state regime; resulting from a combination of:
 - 1) An intensive fertility postponement
 - 2) Various institutional, economic, and cultural constraints, and
 - 3) In some cases, a decline in the intended family size and a rise in voluntary childlessness (German-speaking countries)

7) Future outlook: Waiting for a (small) baby boom?

It is likely that the period TFR in Europe reached a trough around 2000 and that the recent upward trend will continue

- Slowing-down or ending of fertility postponement
- Reduction in the negative effect of higher education
 - Kravdal and Rindfuss 2007: diminishing impact of education on cohort second and third birth rates in Norway
- Increasing size of higher-fertility groups, especially immigrant women (Sobotka forthcoming)
- Declining economic uncertainty in young adulthood
 - Declining unemployment due to labour market reforms and smaller cohort size of young adults
- Wider access to assisted reproduction

7) Future outlook: Waiting for a (small) baby boom?

- Institutional adaptations and changes
 - Better childcare facilities
 - More part-time & flexi-work
 - Legislation better reflecting unstable family and partnerships
 - Cultural adaptation to the new family patterns (cohabitation, extramarital births) in more socially conservative settings
 - Pronatalism and family allowances, monetary incentives for childbearing
- *Regional contrasts in European fertility likely to prevail: no equilibrium situation envisioned!*
- *Most countries will retain sub-replacement fertility (whatever way it is measured)*
- *MULTISPEED EUROPE: Needs to analyse fertility alongside migration: wide divergence in future population trends*

7) Future outlook: Waiting for a (small) baby boom?

- o *Regional contrasts in European fertility likely to prevail: no equilibrium situation envisioned!*
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7) Future outlook: Waiting for a (small) baby boom?

Final speculation: Long-term rise of the ‚female power‘ and its consequences

How will further increase in women's autonomy and their socio-economic position affect economy, society and childbearing trends?

- Women progressively more educated than men
- Women often more mobile and more flexible (e.g., emigration from East Germany)
- Women will be increasingly reshaping economy and society, especially in the South and in the East of Europe

Further decline in male's authority within and outside the family?

Will men become less useful for reproduction?

A strong push for more family-friendly and child-friendly societies?

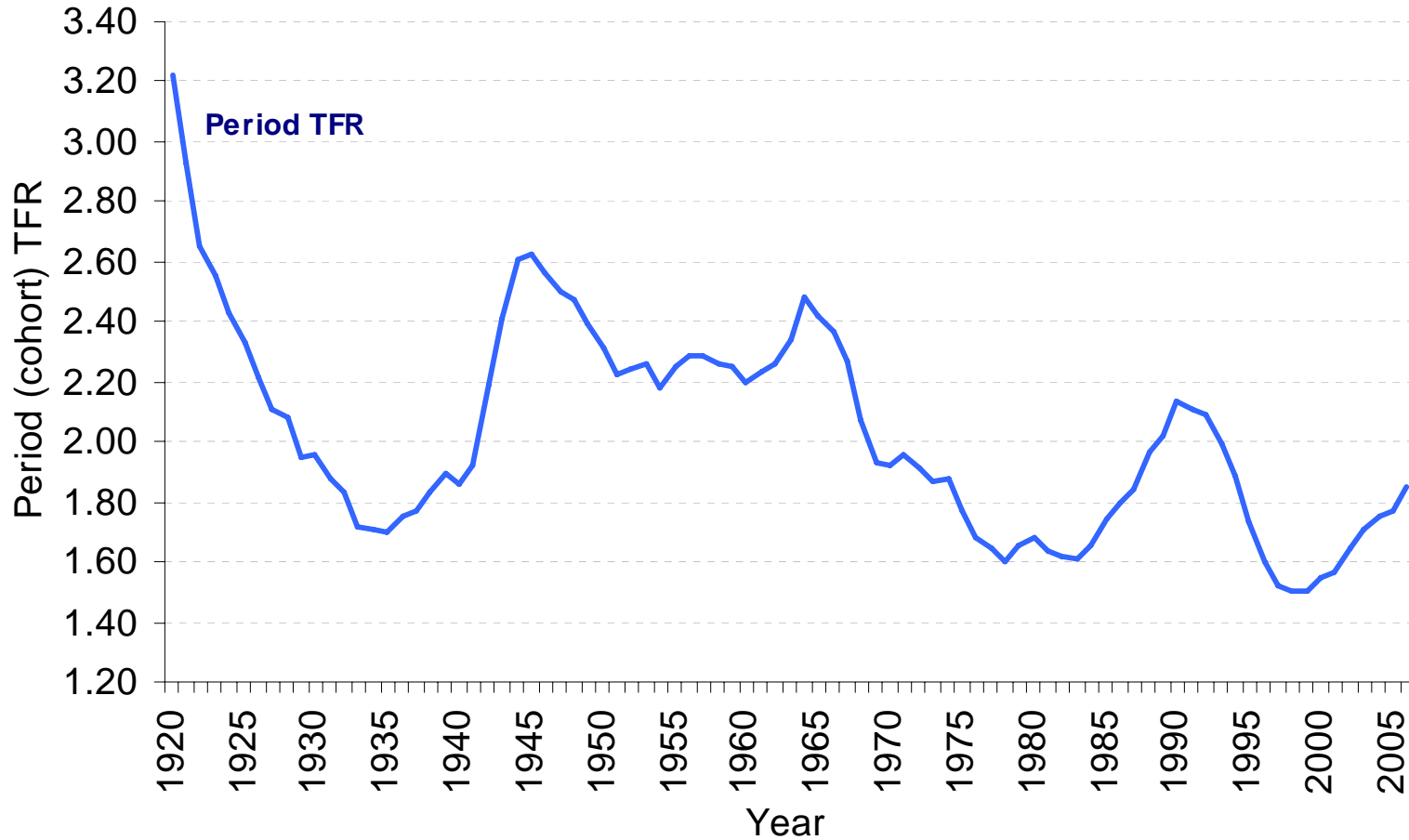
Future higher fertility?

Final remark: Sweden as a fascinating case for studying fertility

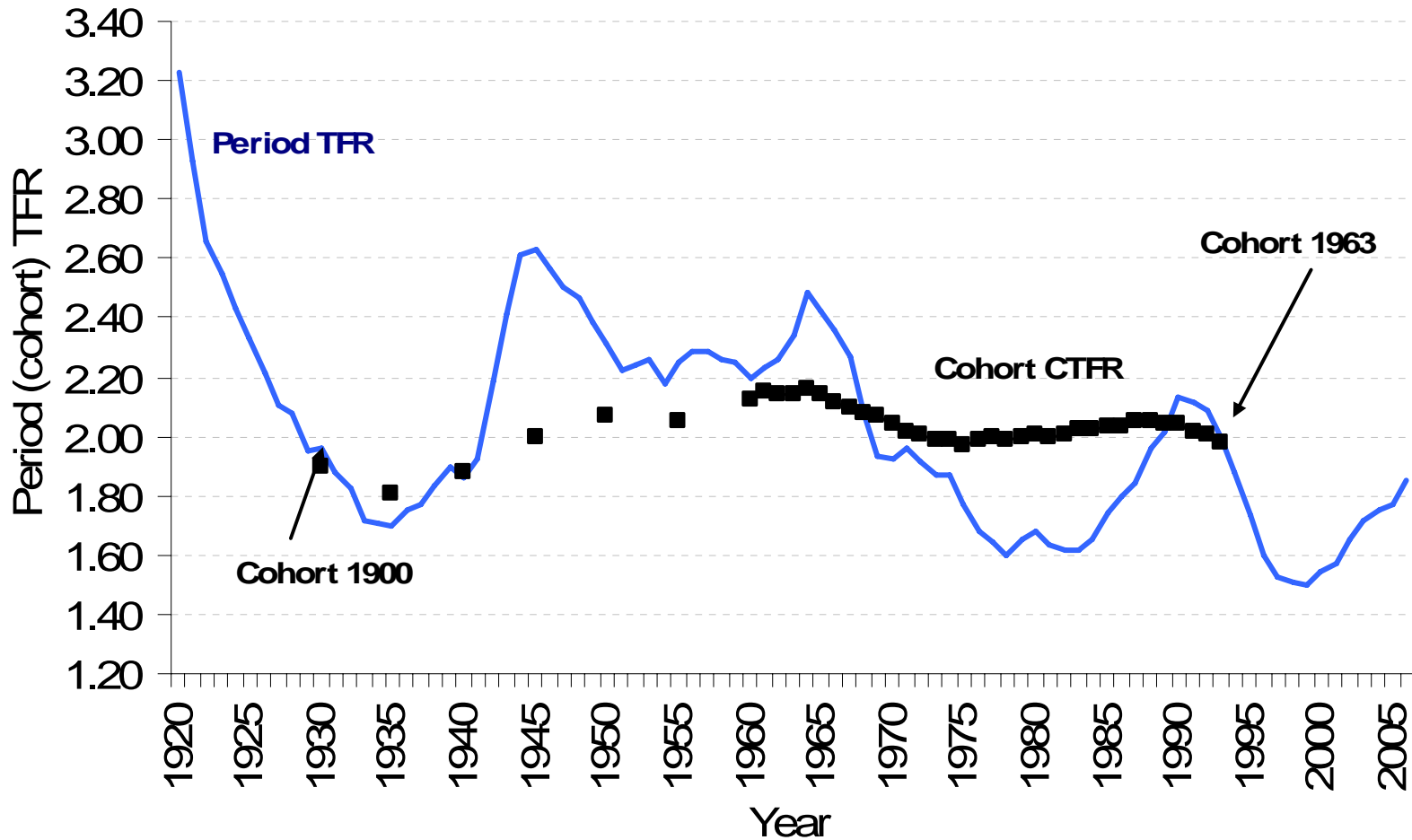
SWEDEN

- has been a forerunner in fertility decline and (post)modern family transformation
- has nevertheless retained relatively high fertility rates
- has seen rapid changes in family policies leading to shifts in fertility rates
- has therefore....

....seen sudden ups and downs in period fertility....



...accompanied by perhaps the most stable level of cohort fertility in Europe



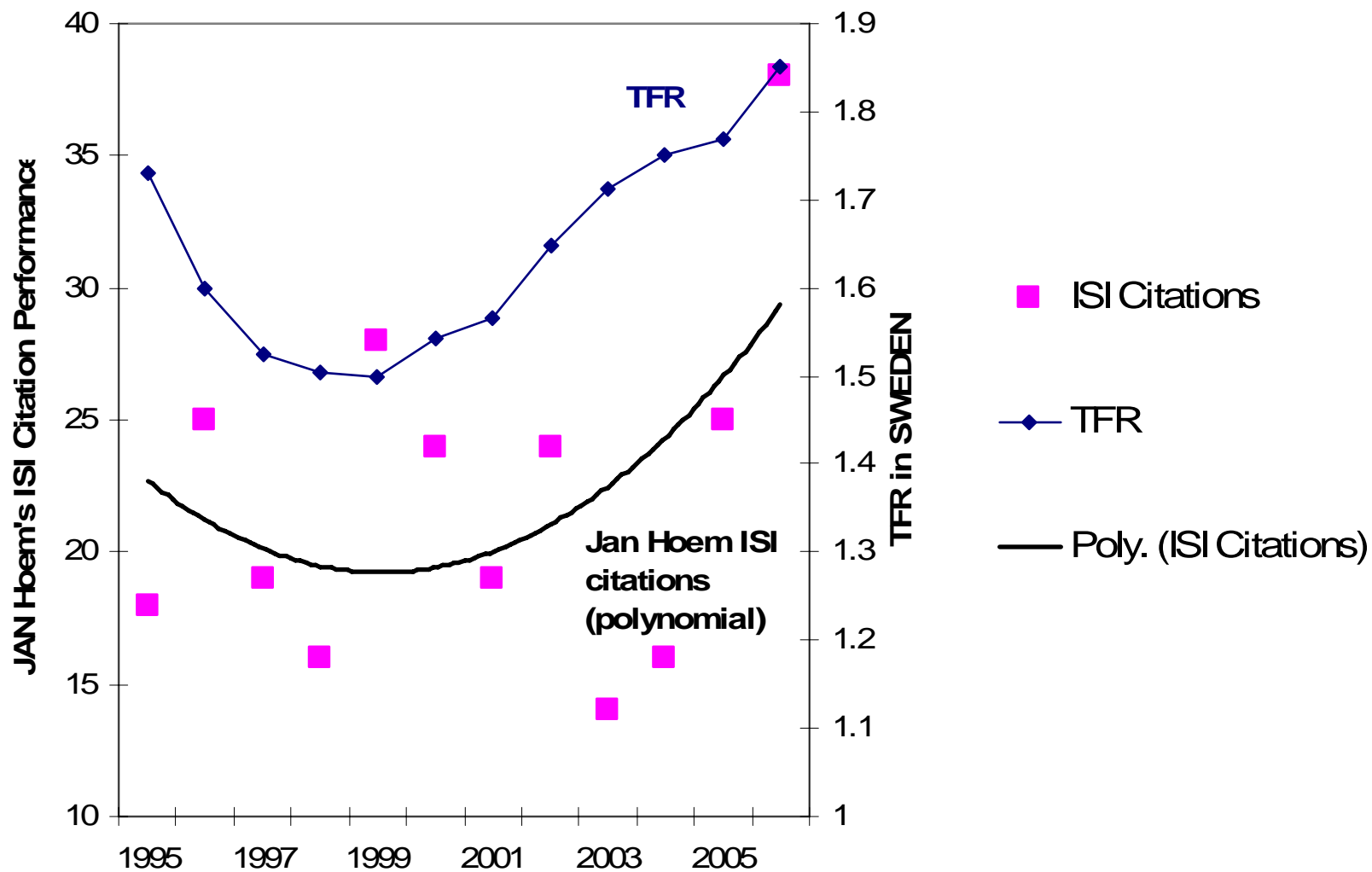
THANKS, JAN!

➤ For enthusiastically bringing our attention to this fascinating country and its first, second, and third births!

For enriching demographic language with terms like ,speed premium‘ effects

Thanks to Jan and his collaborators (Gunnar, Gerda, and others), Sweden has become a sort of ,golden standard‘ for studying fertility trends and developments in Europe and discussing the reasons for cross-country differences in fertility

Sweden's fertility and Jan's professional future: Bright trends ahead



THANKS, JAN!

- For enthusiastically bringing our attention to this fascinating country, its families and its first, second, and third births!
- For contributing to demographic dictionary with terms like ‚speed premium‘ effects

Thanks to Jan and his collaborators (Gunnar, Gerda, and others), Sweden has become a sort of ‚golden standard‘ for studying fertility trends and developments in Europe and discussing the reasons for cross-country differences in fertility (e.g. Hoem 2005 on Germany)