

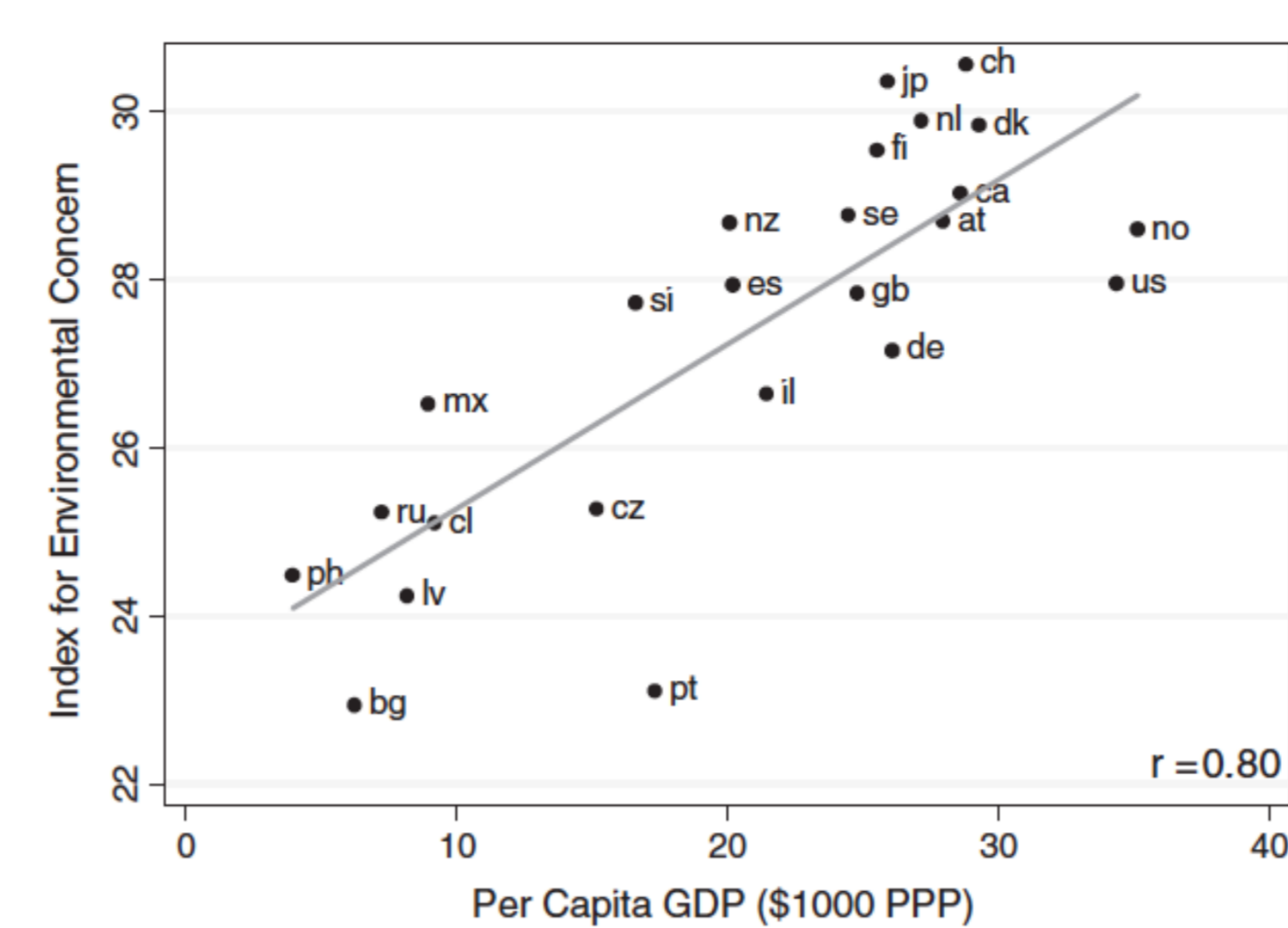
QUIET DEGROWTH

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Introduction

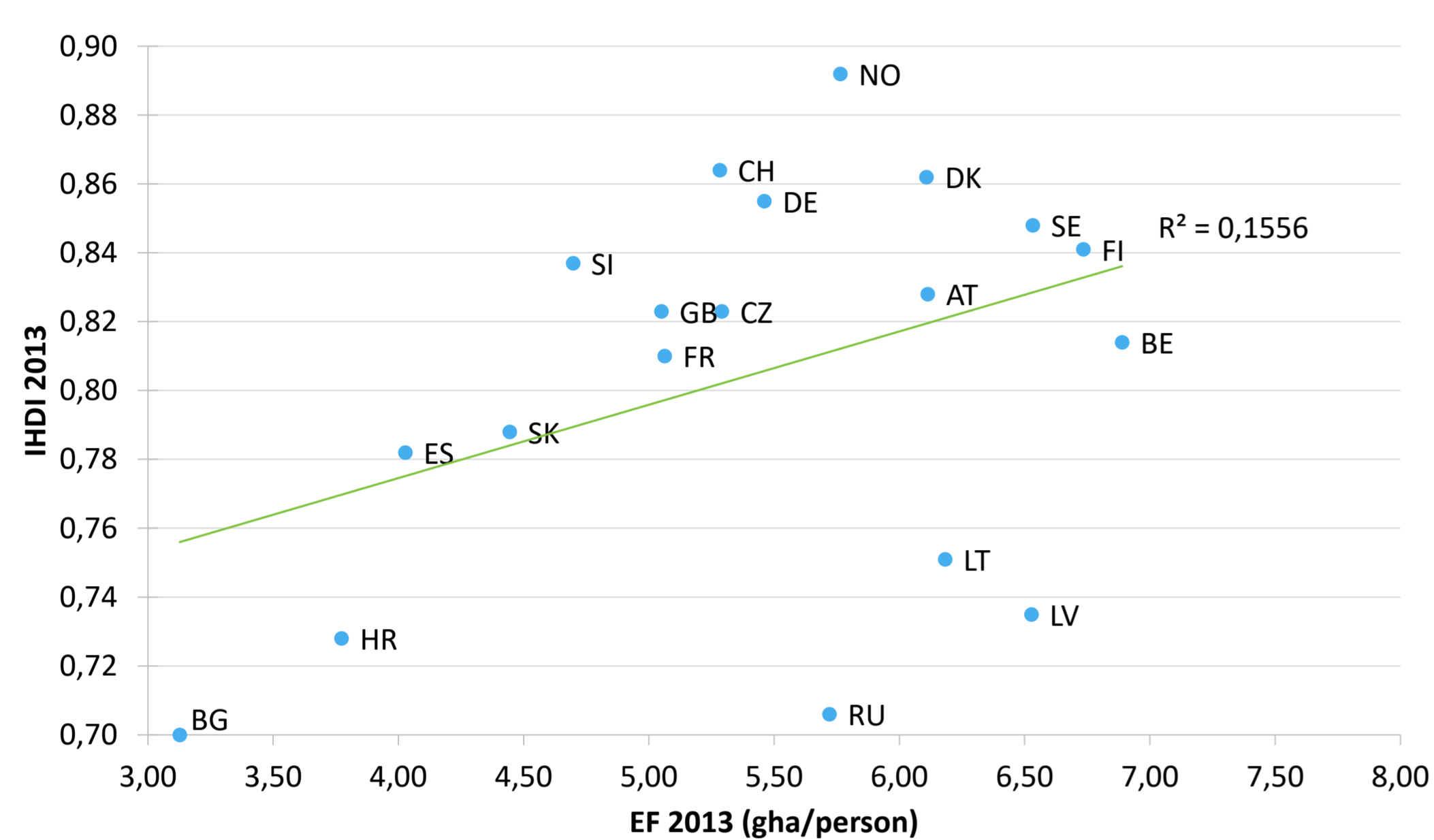
- The phenomenon of global environmental change calls for a rational and emotional response, primarily from societies of the developed world.
- Those people who claim to be committed to creating such a response are known as environmentalists, and within practically democratic societies their identity attracts different political and market responses.
- One of the dominant views in environmental sociology holds environmentalism to be a position more prevalent within the affluent societies.
- We aim to show that the research whose results connect environmentalism to average national affluence relies on an erroneous construal of what it means to be an environmentalist.
- We contrast the dominant "post-political" conception of environmentalism with "degrowth-oriented" environmentalism.
 - "Post-political": green consumption
 - "Degrowth-oriented": distributive justice

Figure 1. The correlation between environmental concern and wealth (Franzen and Meyer, 2010)



- Figure 1 displays the prosperity or affluence hypothesis (Franzen and Meyer, 2010)
- It seems to illustrate that wealth is positively correlated with environmental concern. Countries with high levels of per capita GDP also demonstrate higher levels of environmental concern such as Switzerland and Denmark. Countries with low levels of per capita GDP such as Bulgaria and Latvia exhibit low levels of environmental concern.
- The kernel of such environmentalism lies in the willingness to pay for the sake of the environment, which is hidden in this affluence hypothesis. Therefore, this research relies on politically impotent construal of what it means to be an environmentalist.
- We propose a tentative step to move conceptually to an environmentalism of a very different kind that is rooted in a movement known as degrowth.
 - The degrowth movement challenges the belief in the necessity, possibility, and desirability of economic growth.
 - It is concerned fundamentally with social justice and rejects the post-political response to environmental crisis that frames it as a problem that can be solved by relying on expertise

Figure 2. EF (2013 data) – IHD (2013 data) spread for 19 European countries



Definitions

- The **Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHD)** is a composite measure of life expectancy, literacy, education, and standards of living in countries worldwide that discounts each element's average value according to its level of inequality, accounting for how each of those components are distributed among a country's population. It is part of the spectrum of indices that provide a background of distinctions between development trends and benefits in the core and semi-peripheral European societies. European countries are ranked in the top group of inequality adjusted human development index and are considered to have high or very high human development.
- Ecological footprint (EF)** is conceptualised as a measure of the land and water required to sustain the material standard of living of a given population, given the reliance on contemporaneously dominant technology. It is a measure of the human demand for extraction from Earth's ecosystems, that is of the human utilisation of the natural capital contrasted with the planet's ecological capacity to regenerate. Globally, the situation is not bright as the average global citizen has an eco-footprint of about 2.8gha, whilst the top sustainable limit is 1.8gha. In other words, the global population has (without including the threat of irreversible catastrophic climate change) overshoot the global biocapacity by 50% and now lives unsustainably by depleting the previously accumulated stocks of natural capital.
- The **Inequality-adjusted Income Index (III)** is the HDI income index, as measured by the GNI per capita, adjusted for inequality in income distribution based on data from household surveys listed in "Surveys used for estimation of 2013 IHD." This measure was used as a proxy for national affluence in the scatter plots below instead of per capita GDP as seen in the affluence hypothesis (Franzen and Meyer, 2010) because it accounts for inequality within national populations. All European countries included are ranked in the top 30% of all countries based on the inequality-adjusted income index.

Methodology

We use the data for 19 countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Russia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom) from ISSP Environmental module and EVS (2016), which was fielded during 2009, 2010, and 2011 and 2008, 2009, and 2010 respectively, together with the existing measures constructed in order to enable longitudinal and cross-sectional comparison, focusing on designing measurements of sustainability-ready populations in terms of values, expectations, attitudes and commitments (ISSP Research Group 2012).

Table 1: Instruments

INDEXES	ITEMS	
ISSP Environmental Module Indicators (ISSP, 2012)		
Active Degrowth indicators	Q10a	"And how much do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?" "We worry too much about the future of the environment and not enough about prices and job today"
	Q11a	"How much do you agree or disagree with:" "Our country needs economic growth in order to protect the environment"
Passive Degrowth indicators	Q11b	"How much do you agree or disagree with:" "Economic growth always harms the environment"
	Q19c	"How much do you agree or disagree with:" "Economic progress in [COUNTRY] will slow down unless we look after the environment better"
	Q62a	"Here are changes in our way of life that might take place in the near future. Please tell me if it were to happen whether you think it would be a good thing, a bad thing, or don't you mind?" Less emphasis on money and material possessions
European Values Study Indicators (EVS, 2008)	Q85g	"How much do you agree or disagree with:" "If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe."

^a Measured on Likert scale: 1 = "strongly agree"; 2="agree"; 3="neither agree nor disagree"; 4="disagree"; 5 = "strongly disagree"
^b Measured on Likert scale: 1 = "strongly agree"; 2="agree"; 3="disagree"; 4 = "strongly disagree"

Figure 3: III 2011 – Q10a Active Degrowth

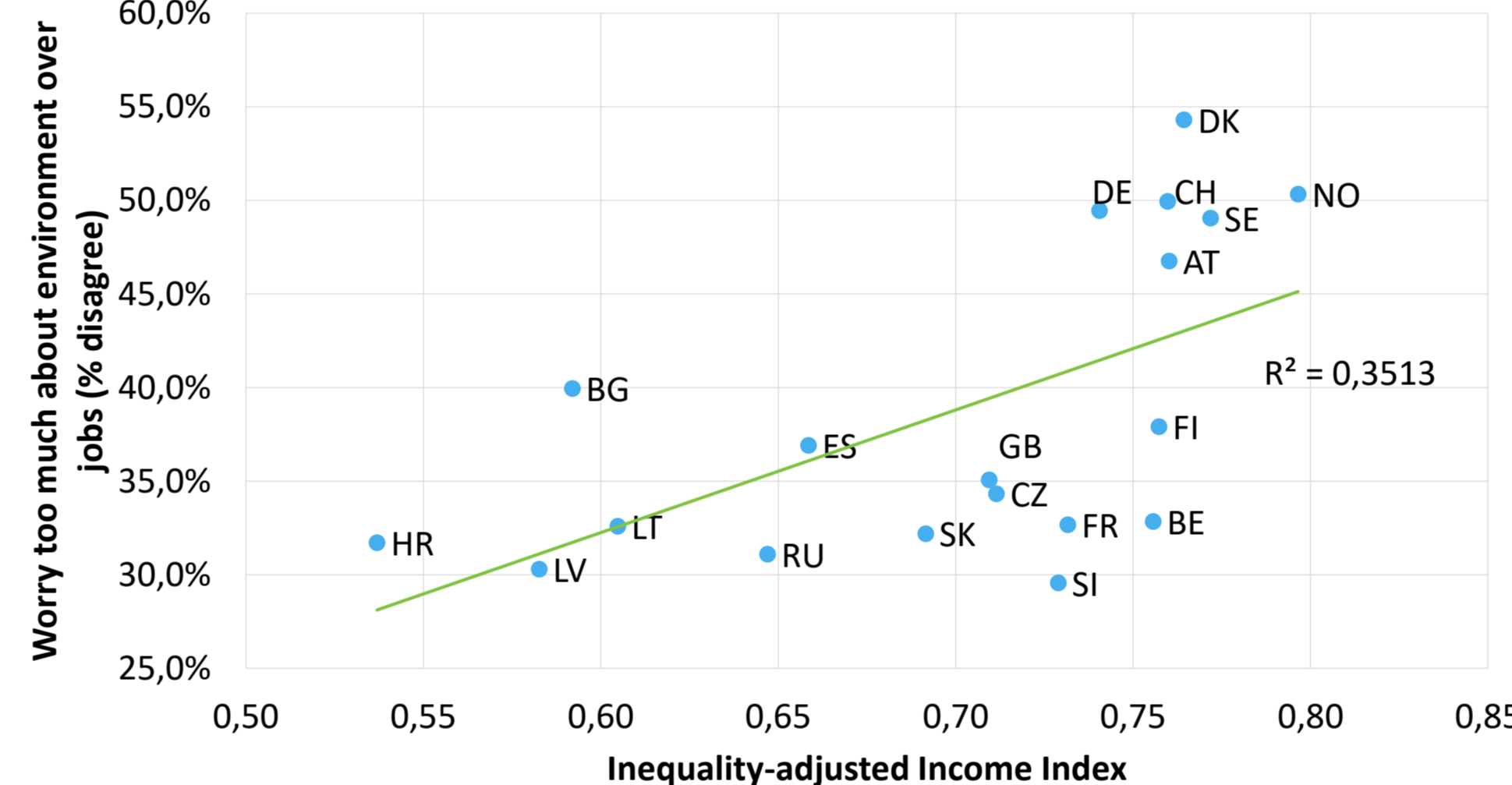


Figure 4: III 2011 – Q11a Active Degrowth

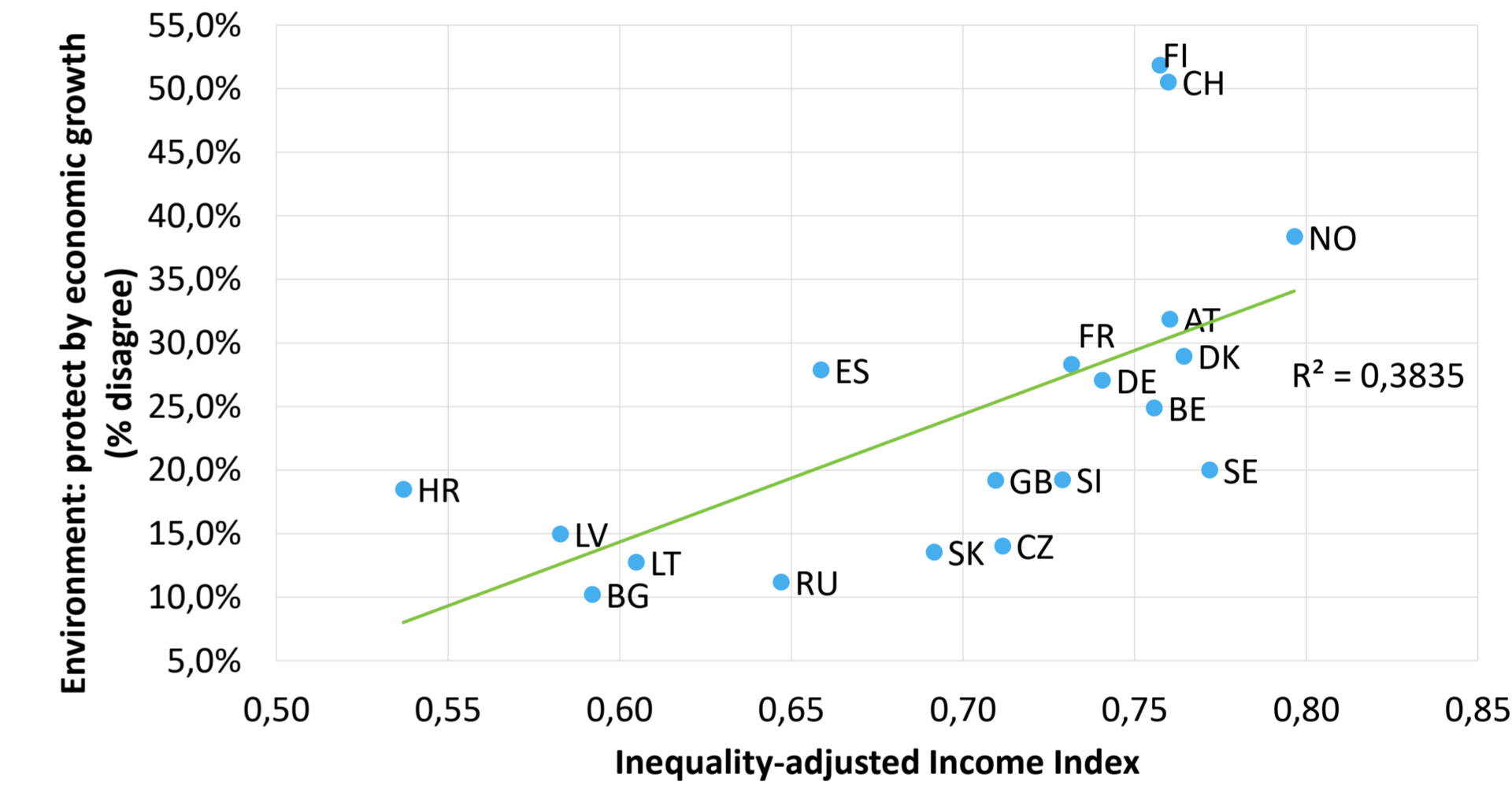


Figure 5: III 2011 – Q11b Passive Degrowth

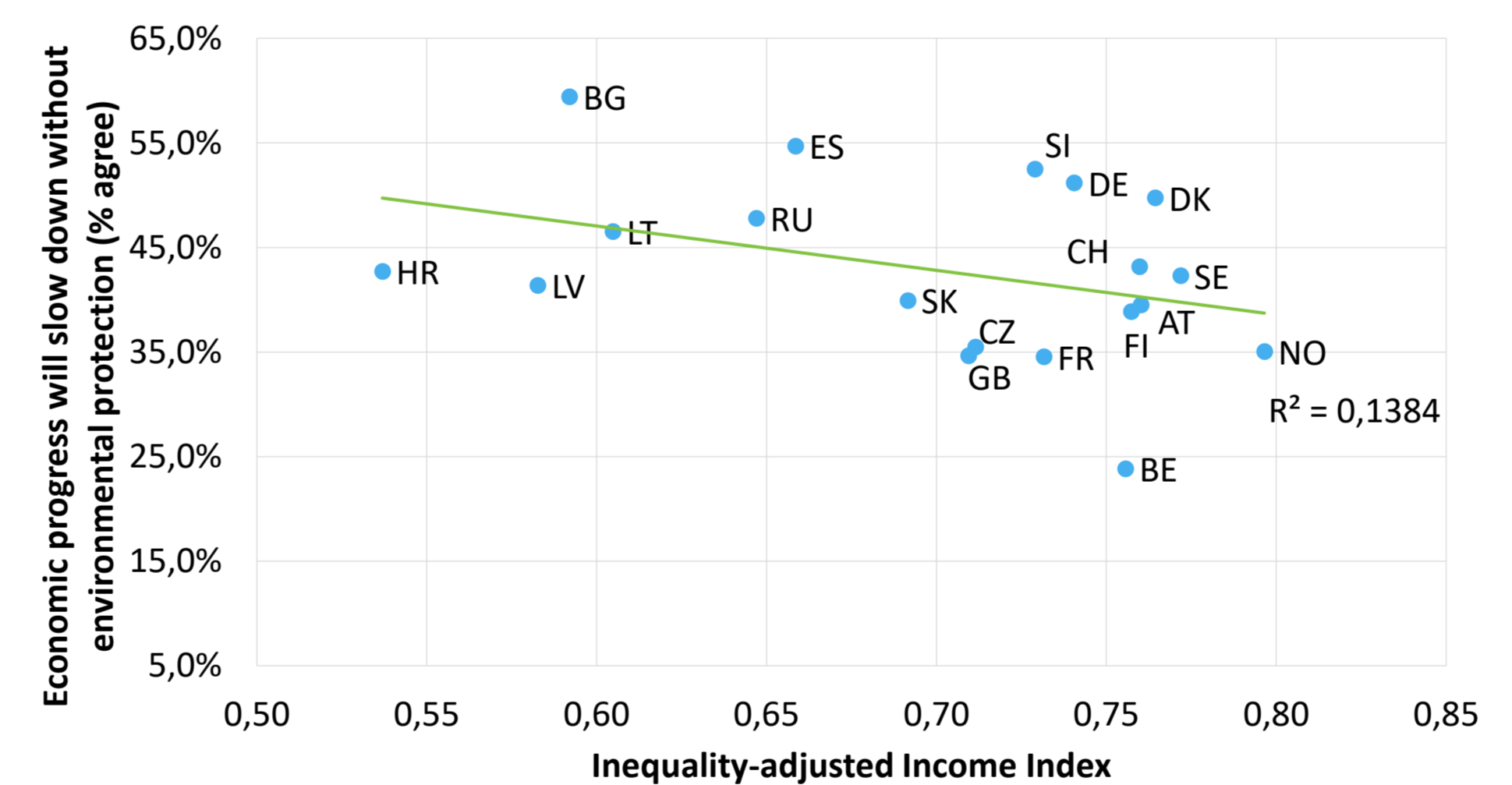


Figure 6: III 2011 – Q19c Passive Degrowth

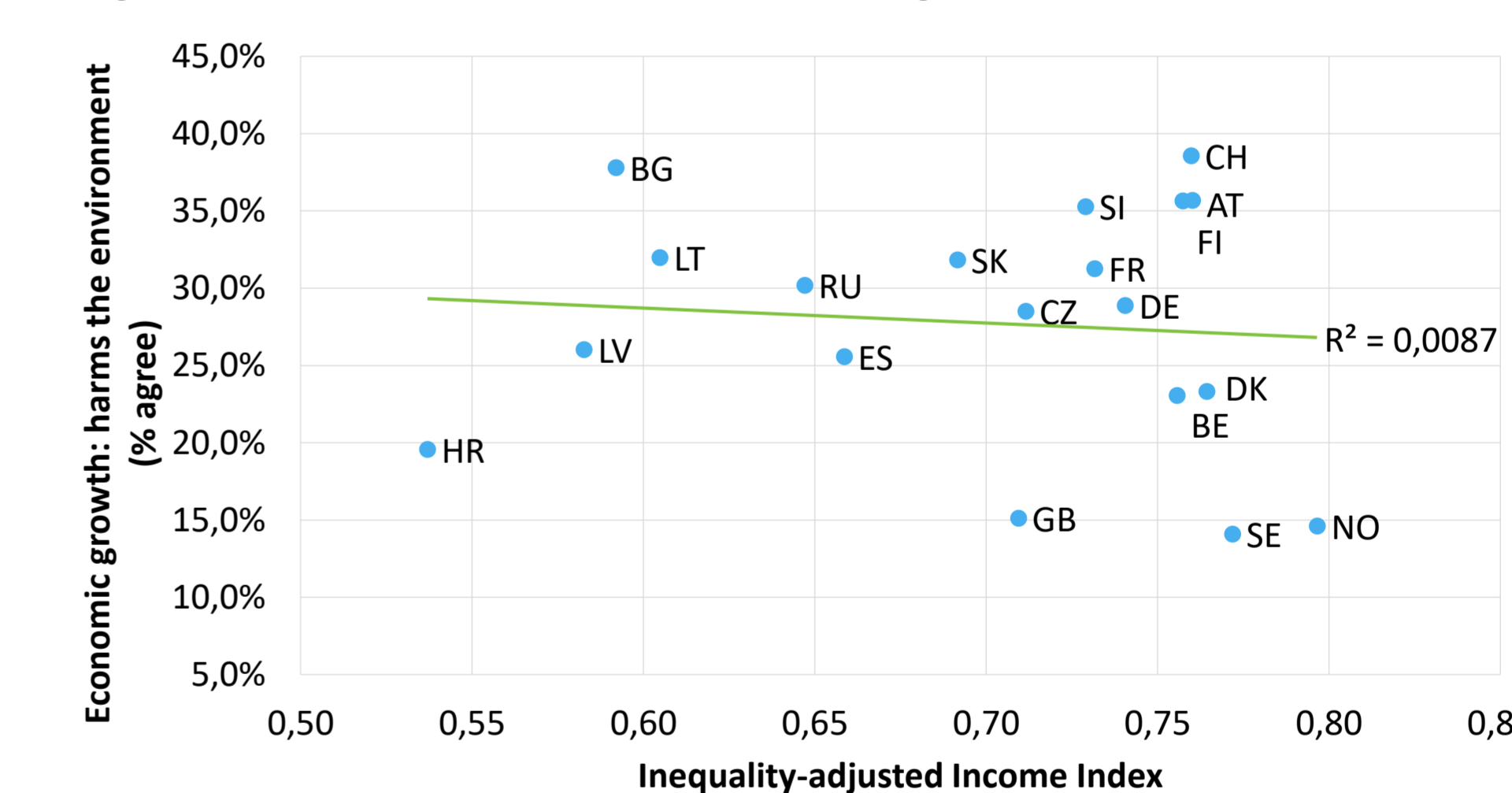


Figure 7: III 2011 – Q62a Less Money Emphasis

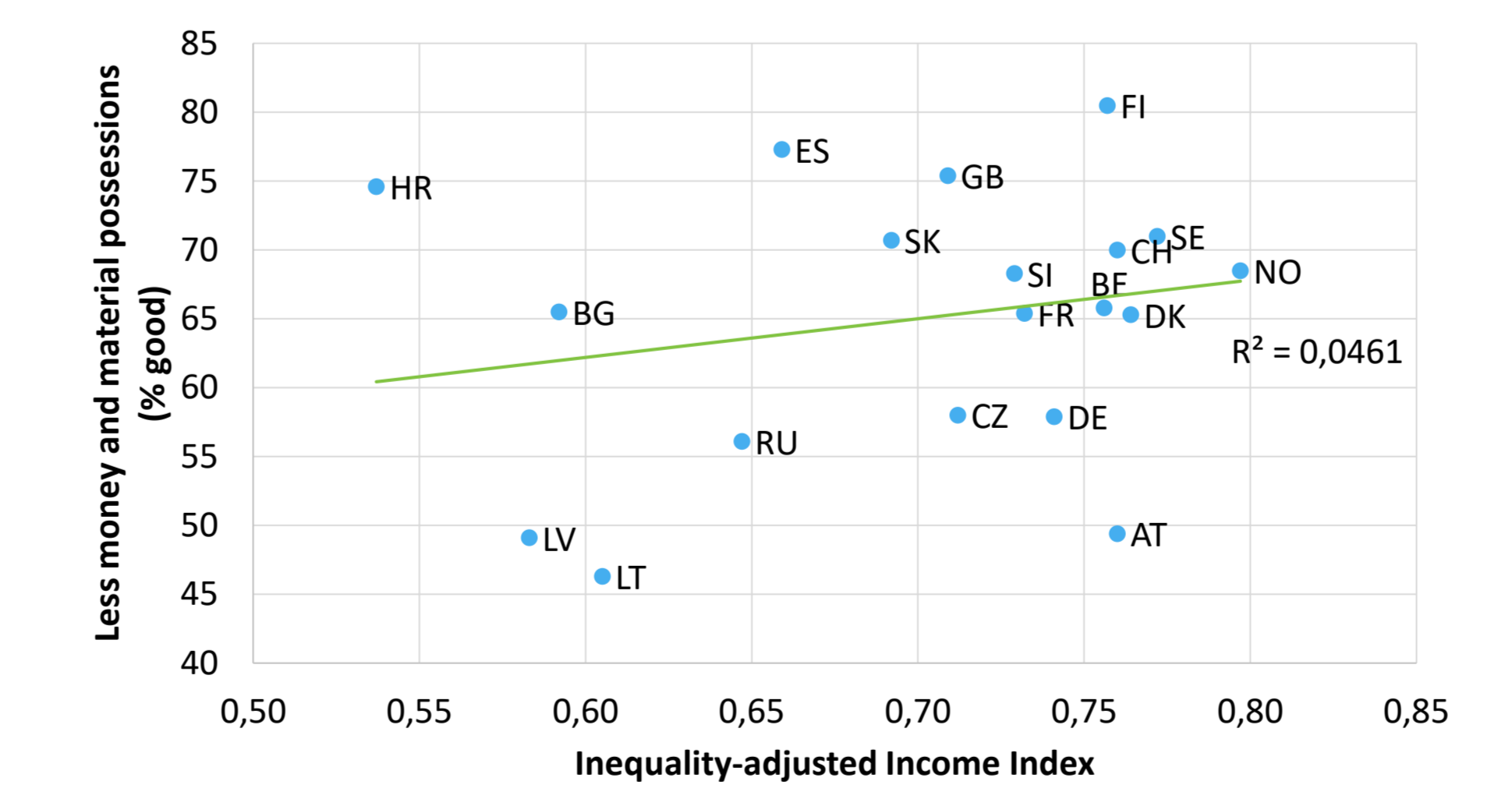
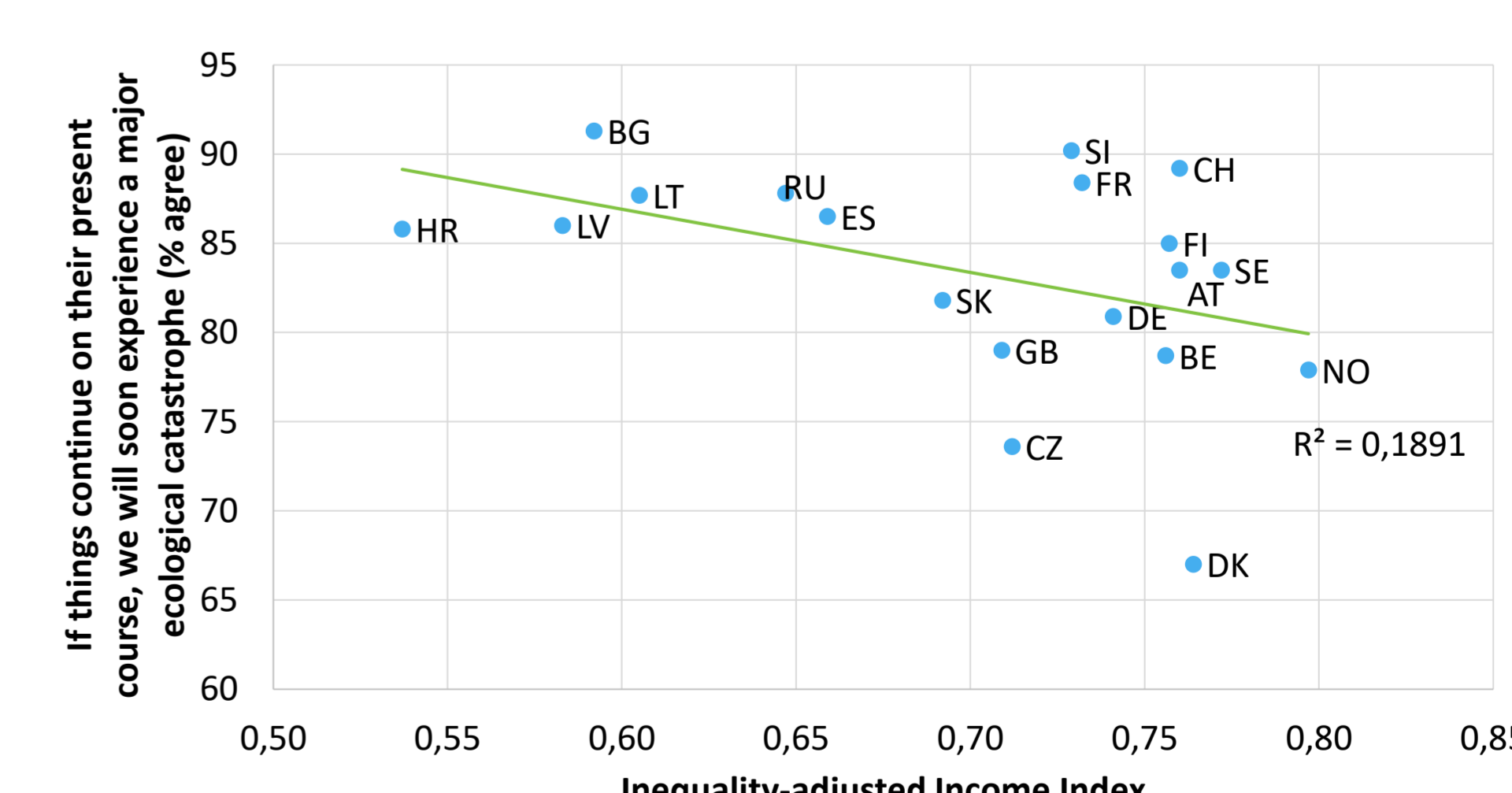


Figure 8: III 2011 – Q85g Ecological Catastrophe



Concluding Remarks

- This research shows how defining environmental value orientations more in line with those of degrowth lets a very different map of environmentalism in Europe appear.
- An affluence thesis trend can still be detected in correlations between individual national affluence and Active Degrowth measures (Figures 3 and 4)
- On the Passive Degrowth orientation greater national affluence in Europe is, overall, weakly inversely correlated to the proportion of the population supportive of its measures (Figures 5 and 6).
- From the EVS indicators, affluence is weakly positively correlated to believing that less money and material possessions would be a good thing but negatively correlated to believing that we will experience a major ecological catastrophe if things continue on their present course.
- While the European degrowth-compliant population is not of negligent size and standing (Ančić and Domazet, 2015), immediate income priorities are still related to overall national affluence; but assent to longer term growth-environment trade-off is not.
- Values of redistribution, community cohesion, and metabolic localization rooted in social trust could characterize a pan-European environmentalism.

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