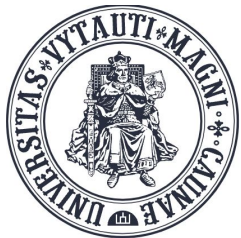


Similar and different: Resilience to online disinformation in Finland and Lithuania

Auksė Balčytienė, Minna Horowitz,
Gintaras Šumskas & Mervi Pantti



VYTAUTAS
MAGNUS
UNIVERSITY
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Resilience?

In the context of uncertainty, trust, and **mis- and disinformation:**

Societies' ability to **maintain their democratic structure** and to **resist and/or oppose misleading information** and anti-democratic influences.

- Frischlich & Humprecht 2021

A **structural** context in which disinformation does not reach a large number of citizens.

- Humprecht et al. 2020

“Similar and different.” Why FIN & LT?

Changing economic and social environments and changed health conditions;
The erosion of liberal democratic ideals and rise of populist discourses;
War in Ukraine and geopolitical risks re: Russia’s information war

Older vs. newer independent democracies;
Nordic vs. Baltic alliances;
Recent NATO applicant vs. NATO member;
High vs. low trust in government/parliament (Eurobarometer summer 2022)
Revisiting close history and political decisions vs.
Legacy of skepticism stemming from history...



**RQ: How do the two
countries fare in terms
of resilience against
online disinformation?**

- Humprecht et al. (2020)

Approach

Dimensions of resilience (Frischlich & Humprecht 2021)

- Macro - structures
- Meso - organizations
- Micro - individuals as citizen-consumer-users

Statistical indicators (Humprecht et al. 2020 +++)

- VDem/DSP, MPM, Eurobarometer/EBU media trust index

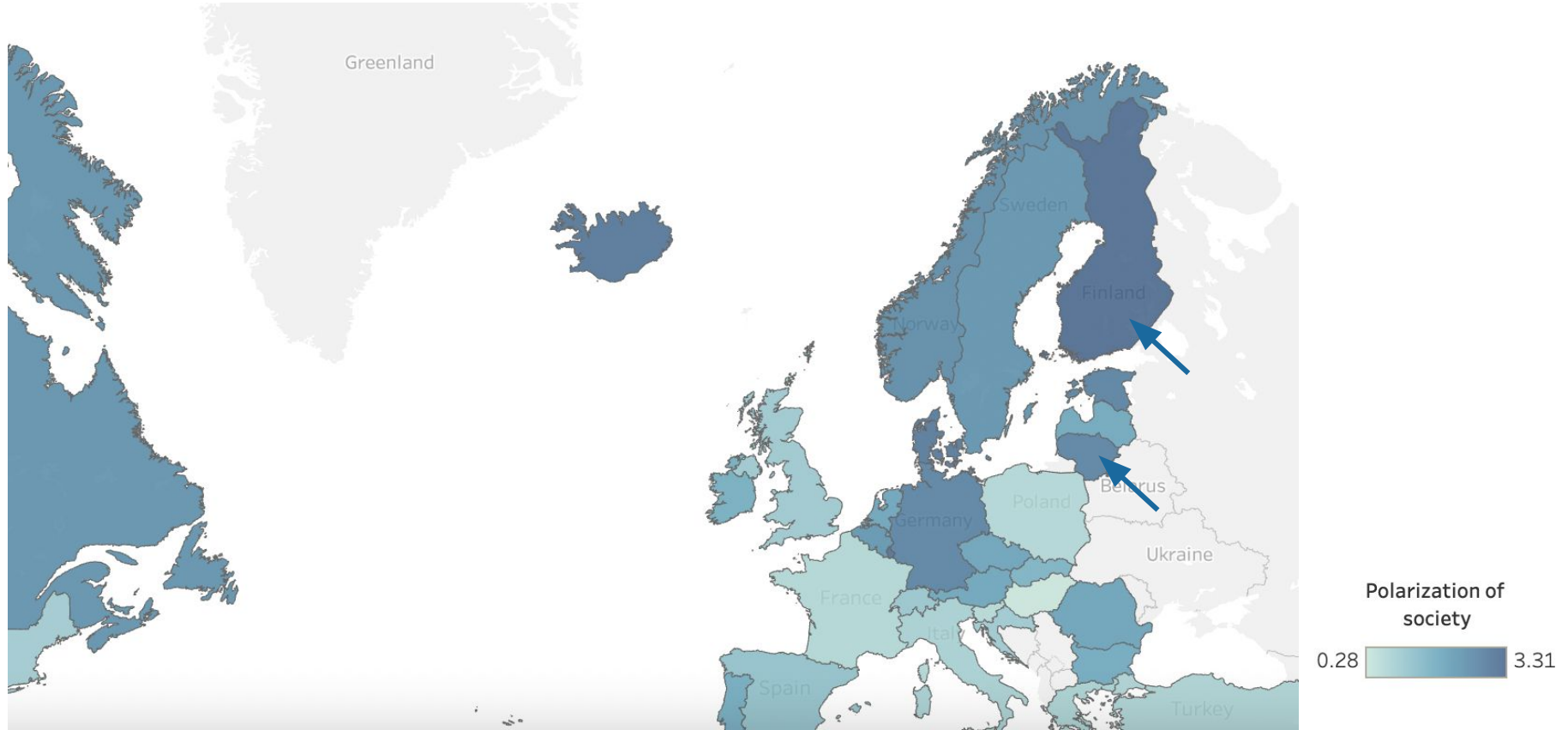
Reflections from expert interviews (2021-22, ongoing)

And...

Examples: 3 dimensions in DSP (2021)

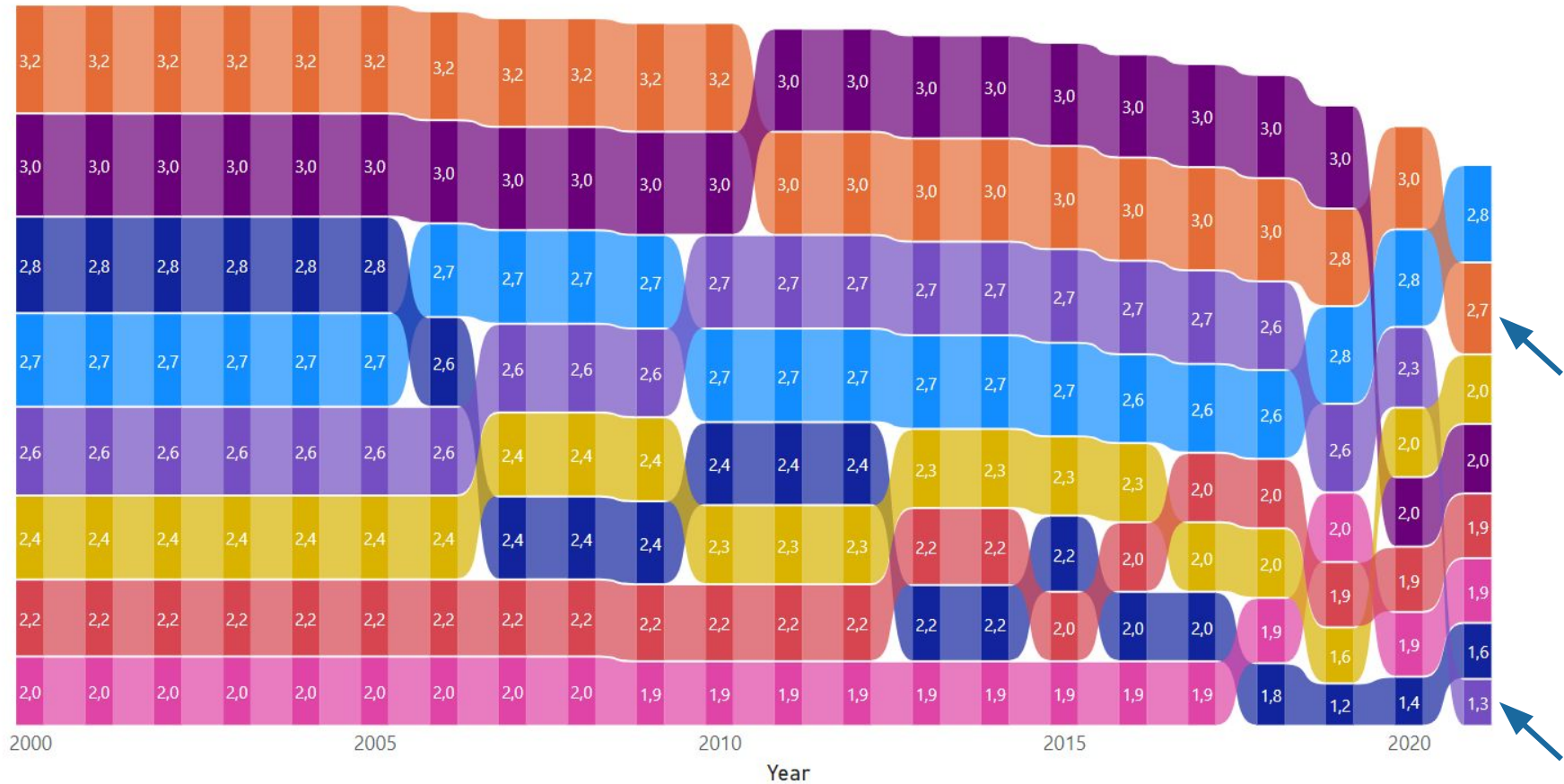
- Global expert questionnaire
 - online censorship
 - polarization and politicization of social media
 - disinformation campaigns
 - coordinated information operations
 - foreign influence in and monitoring of domestic politics
 - candidate social media presence
 - A total of 33 questions
 - At present, 180 countries

Outlook # 1: Societal polarization (macro)

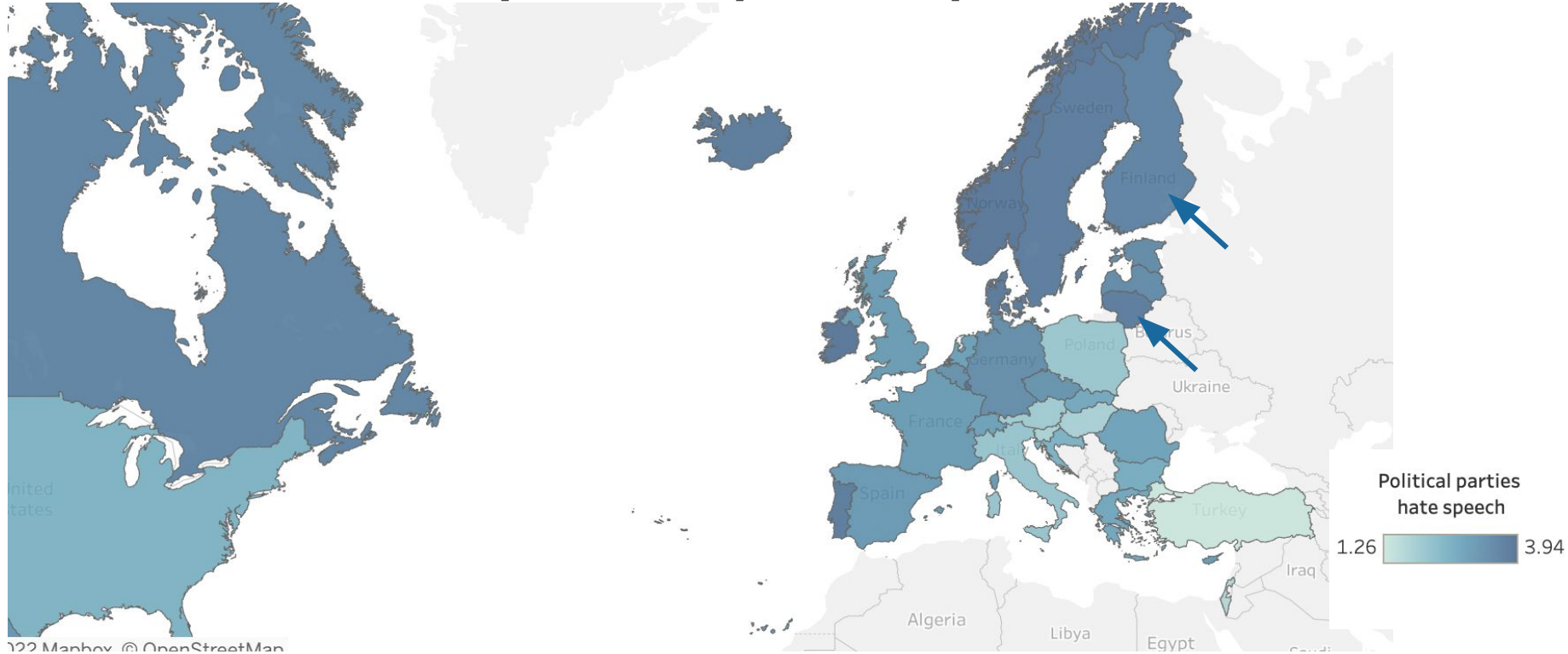


Polarization of society

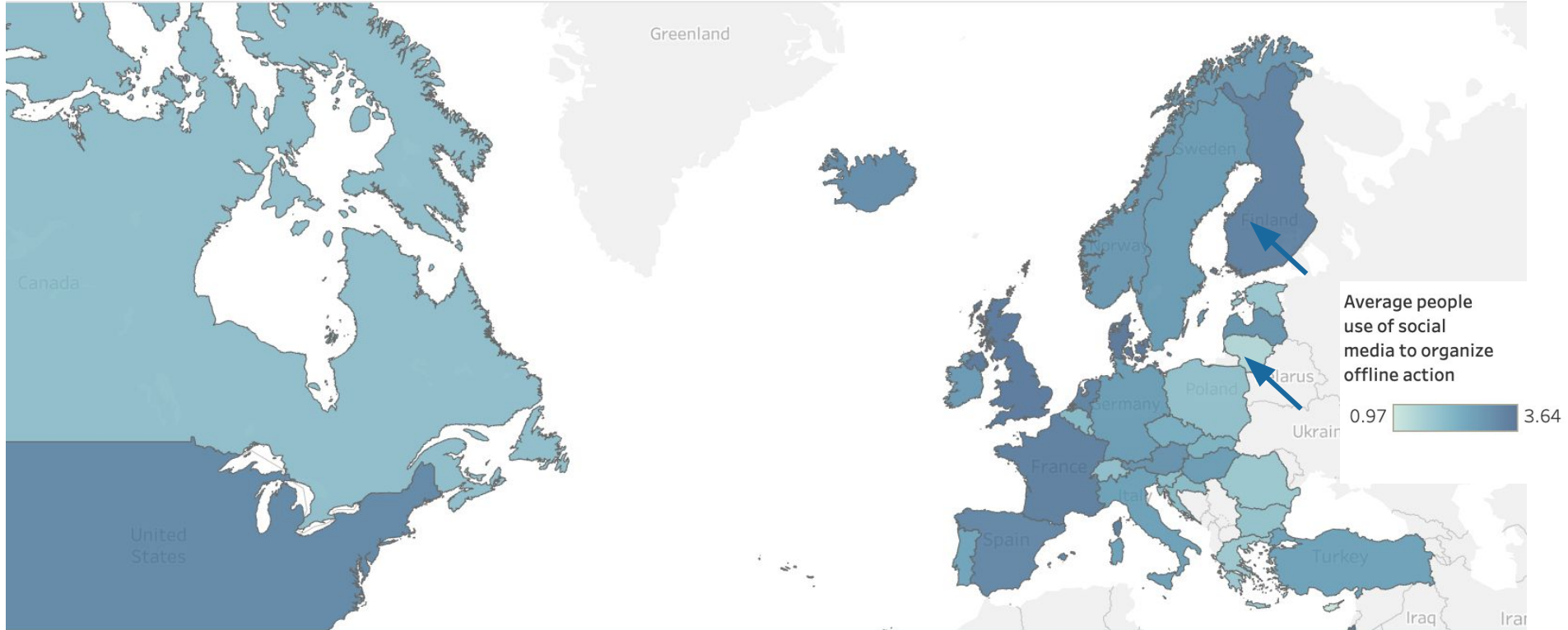
Country ● DENMARK ● ESTONIA ● FINLAND ● ICELAND ● LATVIA ● LITHUANIA ● NORWAY ● SWEDEN



Outlook # 2: Hate speech by political parties

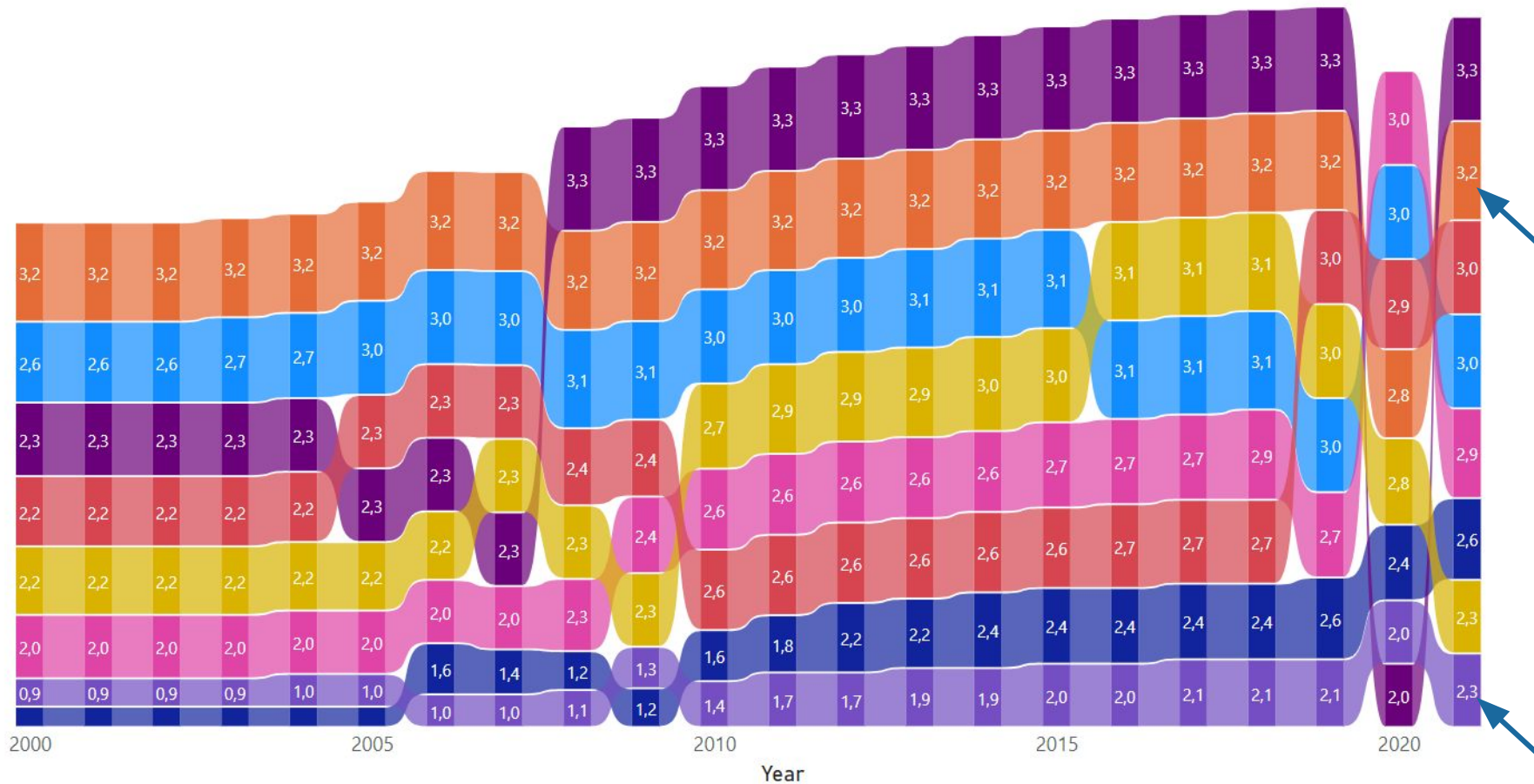


Outlook # 3: Citizens' use of social media to organize



Average people's use of social media to organize offline action

Country ● DENMARK ● ESTONIA ● FINLAND ● ICELAND ● LATVIA ● LITHUANIA ● NORWAY ● SWEDEN



Other indicators:

- EBU/Eurobarometer trust index 2022:
 - High trust in media: one fifth in both
 - Low or no trust: almost 20% in **FIN**, almost 50% in **LT**
 - FIN significantly more trust in legacy media, not trusting social media
- Media Pluralism Monitor
 - **FIN**: High(er) risks in ownership transparency and news media concentration, protection against harmful speech, independence of PSM, access to community media...
 - **LT**: High(er) risks in ownership transparency and news media concentration, editorial independence, media literacy

Expert commentary (first observations):

- **LT experts: education**, education, education – not only media and information literacy but access to education more broadly; languages, lifelong learning.

...Why disinformation in general is being spread successfully is the lack of education...

- **FIN experts:** transparent, impactful, diverse **journalistic content** that addresses also those in the margins and counters polarization; we are leaders of media literacy but need to upgrade with the digital developments **vs. increased concerns of security and polarization** leading to diminishing trust:

...We are already differentiated from each other so that we cannot communicate with each other, and that is why misinformation is circulating, also deliberately disseminated misinformation...

Conclusions: Beyond online resilience

- FIN or LT - which one is more resilient?
- Legacy of strategic security considerations (macro) vs. legacy of quality journalism (meso), literacy (micro)
- Humprecht et al. 2020.: Societal polarization; polarization in media use, polarization in...?
- Limits of indicators
 - Indicators may suggest structural elements of resilience; yet...
 - Little research on the actors working on resilience; how they view resilience = **the human factor**
 - More research needed on how to build societal trust and trust in knowledge institutions in differing (historical, economic, societal) contexts = **the cultural factor**
- Back to the beginning: **HOW TO UNDERSTAND RESILIENCE?**

Next steps

Updated data
(2022 – major differences?)

DIGIRES/NORDIS policy brief on
indicators of resilience

Interviews cont'd
– the human factor

Content analysis
– the cultural factor

Ačiū, kiitos,
thank you!
