

# *CULTURE AND POLITICS IN THE AGE OF EGOISM*

*5th Research and Policy Days*

*Kalevi Sorsa Foundation/FEPS*

*Helsinki, 4 & 5 November 2010*

# ***Social-democratic blues***

## **How to overcome the crisis of trust and social cohesion?**

Drs. René Cuperus

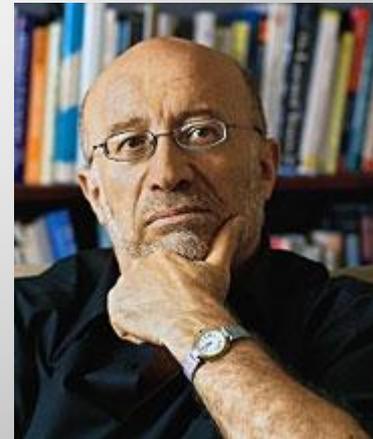
Wiardi Beckman Foundation,  
thinktank Dutch Labour Party/PvdA,  
The Hague, The Netherlands

*'We have entered an age of insecurity – economic insecurity, physical insecurity, political insecurity.*

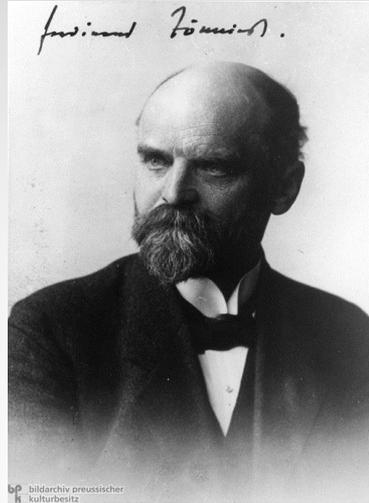
*Insecurity born of fear of losing control of the circumstances and routines of our daily life, and, above all, that it is not just we who can no longer shape our lives but that those in authority have also lost control, to forces beyond their reach.*

*And fear – fear of change, fear of decline, fear of strangers and an unfamiliar world – is corroding the trust and interdependence on which civil societies rest'*

Tony Judt



## Ferdinand Tönnies



From *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* (1887)

From *Gesellschaft* to “global, multicultural” *Gesellschaft* (2010)?

# ***CULTURE AND POLITICS IN THE AGE OF EGOISM***

## *Trends and countertrends*

- 1. The dialectics of globalisation
- 2. A crisis of trust and social cohesion
- 3. The end of the left/right-divide, opening up space for the new populist cleavage
- 4. Polarisation between higher educated 'future optimists' and lower educated 'future pessimists'

# *CULTURE AND POLITICS IN THE AGE OF EGOISM*

## *Trends and countertrends*

- 5. A culture war between academic professionals and non-academics**
- 6. A populist revolt against globalisation**
- 7. A media/entertainment/Internet/social networks revolution producing a symbolic world of perceptions, images, emotions**
- 8. A crisis of public morality: hedonistic lifestyles and the neoliberal winner/loser-society**

# Can we generalize cultural experiences?

## Finland

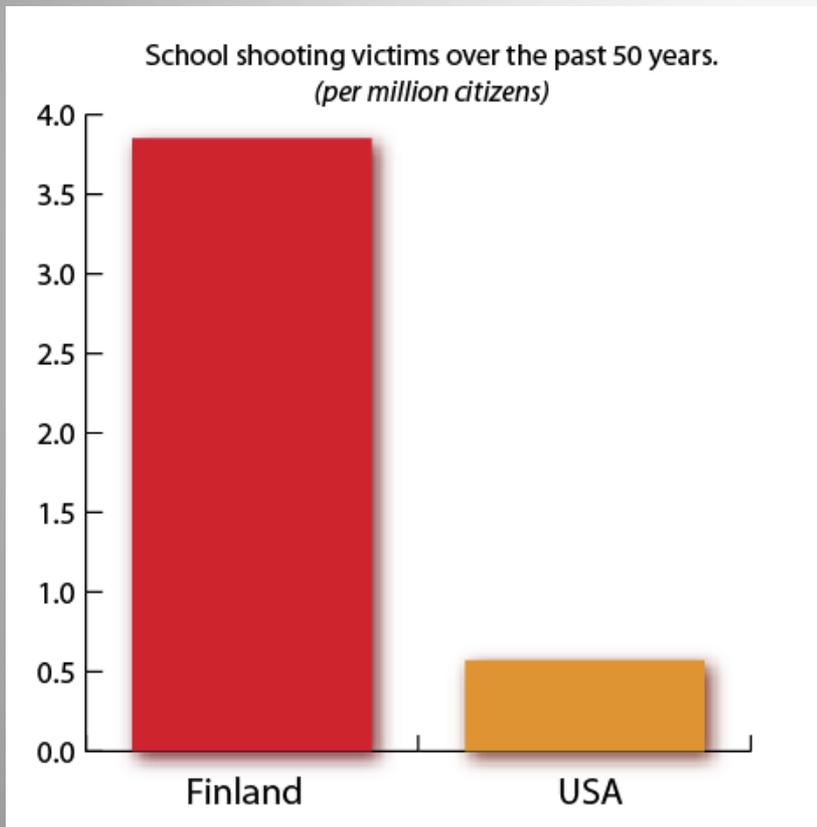


## The Netherlands



# Can we generalize cultural experiences?

## Finland

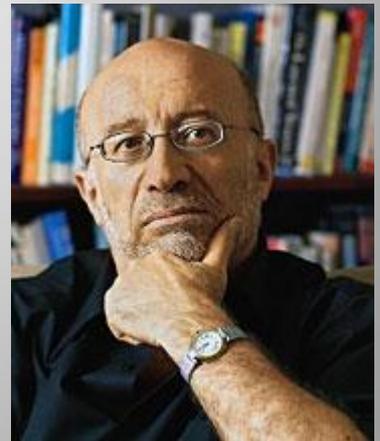


## The Netherlands



“Something is profoundly wrong with the way we live today.(...)

In a new age of fear and insecurity, we are abandoning the labors of a century and betraying those who came before us.”



**The computer is a metaphor for our ambiguous world wide connections**



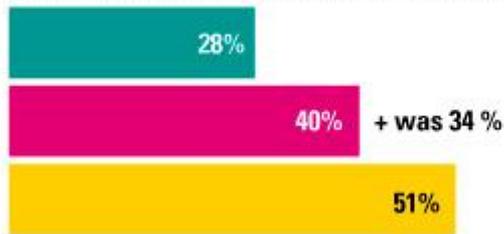
**Kerkrade: Dutch town with minimal social life**



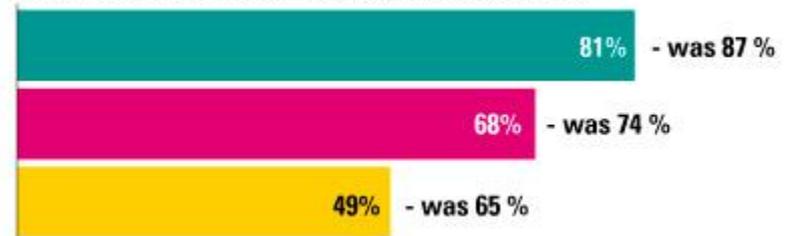
## The Limitless Generation

Selfish, hedonistic and greedy:  
survey paints bleak picture of Dutch youth

I am mostly happy when I am able to spend money

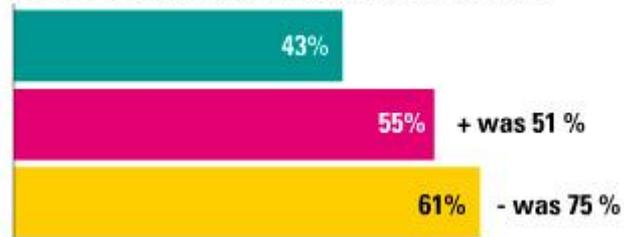


I feel very involved with what's going on in society



■ >38 years  
■ 24-38 years  
■ 15-23 years

I consider climbing the social ladder important

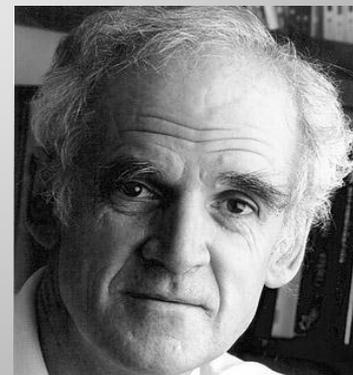


“It is no accident, that Europe’s most successful welfare states were created in ethnically homogeneous Scandinavia. People in those countries had the sense that they could understand their neighbors and fellow citizens, and that they shared a close link with them.

The challenge nowadays is to maintain that sense of intense solidarity amid diversifying populations.

Solidarity is essential to democratic societies; otherwise, they fall apart. They cannot function beyond a certain level of mutual distrust.”

Charles Taylor, *Solidarity in a Pluralist Age*



Thank you for your attention