

Happiness as a goal,  
if so, so what?

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# Agenda

- Happiness as a goal? Pro's & Con's.
- If so, so what?
- Conclusion

# Happiness as a goal?

## Pro's

- Relatively easy to assess/measure
- Happiness is good for many things!
- Democratic (by nature and as 'average')
- Added value compared to 'revealed preferences': less sensitive for income-inequality and 'external effects'

# Happiness as a goal?

## Con's

- Relation with actual conditions can be loose (happiness is a 'sum total')
- Complicated interaction of determinants, assessment of (long-term) effects of specific conditions or decisions is difficult.
- Happiness can be immoral!

# Happiness as a goal?



# Happiness as a goal?

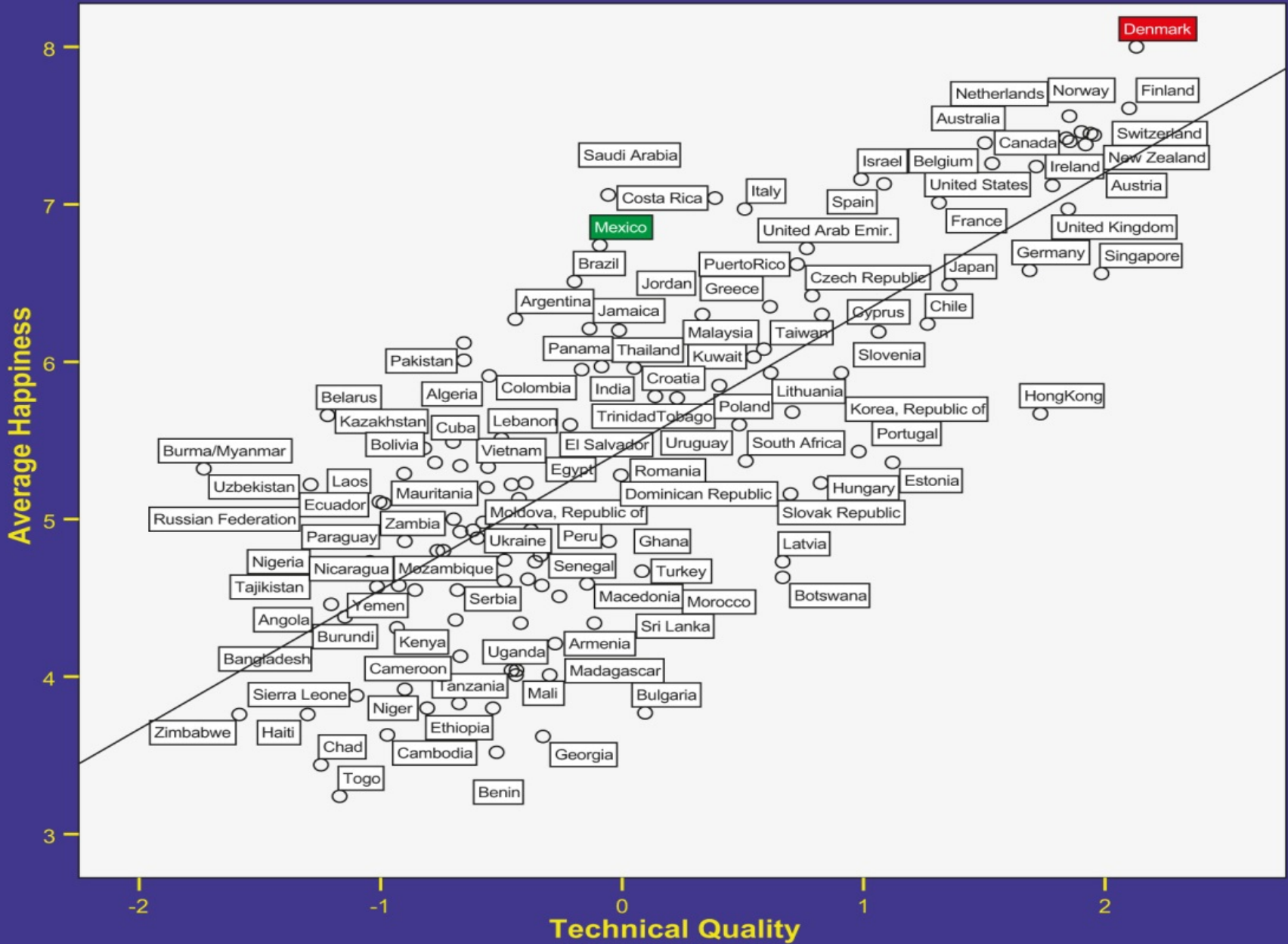
## If so, so what?

Possible consequences:

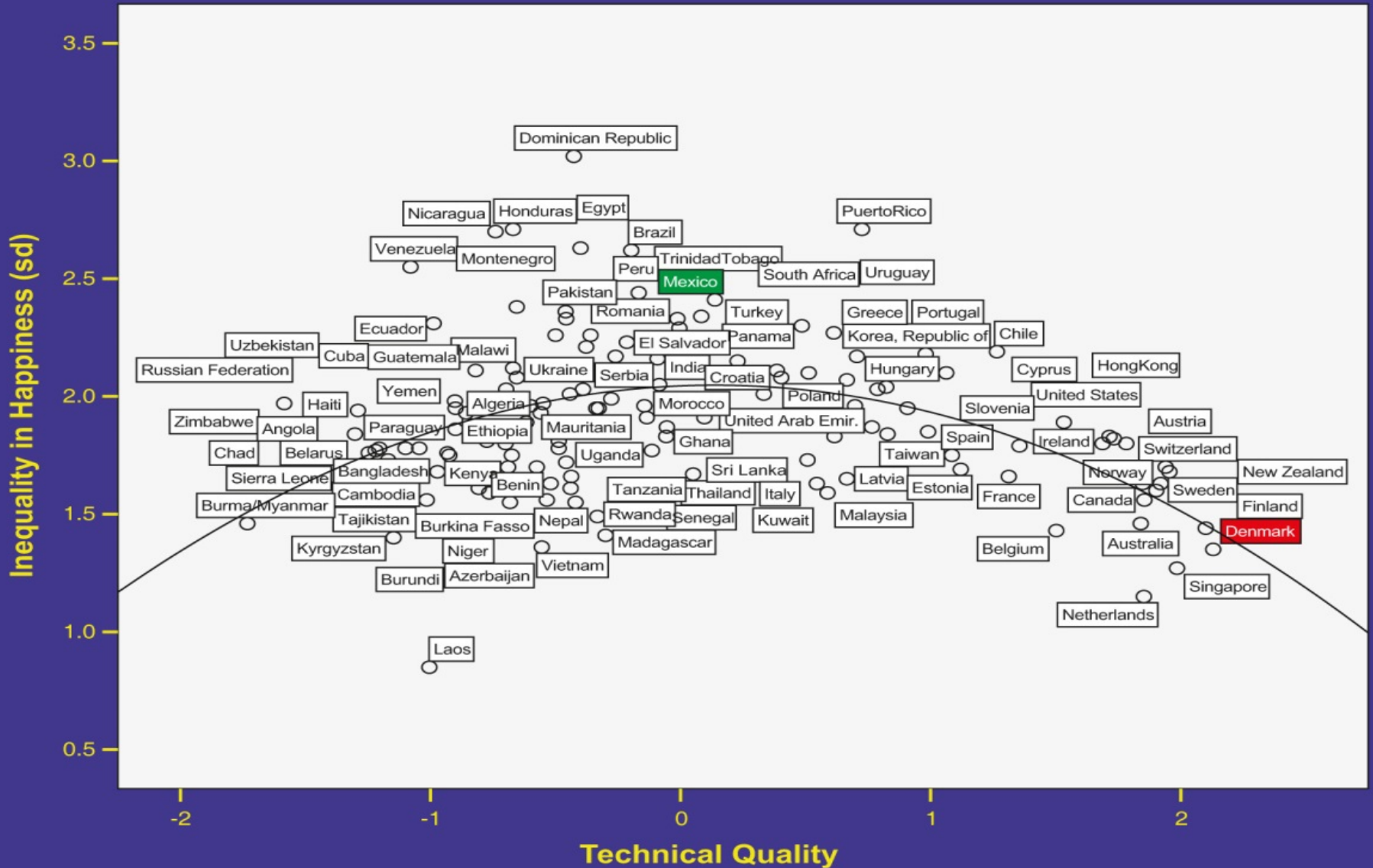
1. A better identification (& analysis) of problems and possibilities

Some examples: the possibilities of good governance in relation to average happiness and inequality of happiness and the problems with democracy.

# Technical quality of government and average happiness in 2006

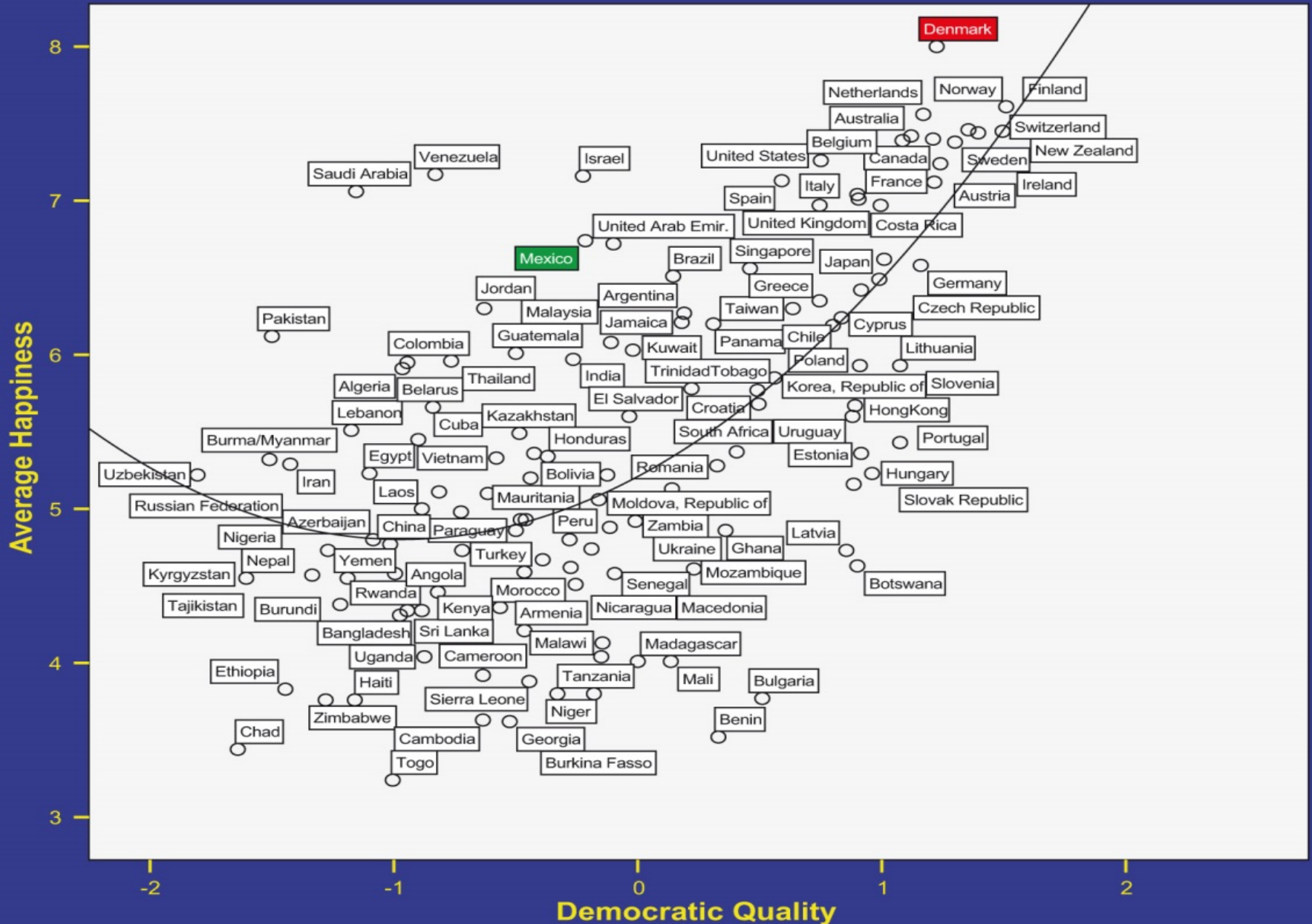


# Technical quality of government and inequality in happiness in 2006





# Democratic quality of government and average happiness in 2006



# Happiness as a goal?

## If so, so what?

Possible consequences:

1. A better identification (& analysis) of problems
2. More altruisme?
3. More priority for important factors: social contacts, individual autonomy, gender equality.
4. More paternalism?

# Conclusion

Happiness is acceptable as a public goal if paternalism can be avoided. How?

1. By using information about happiness as input for public and political discussion.
2. No policy-implementation without such discussion, and never without a mandate based on a democratic procedure (legislation)

Thank you for your attention!