The Analysis of Regional Differences in Philanthropy: Evidence from the European Social Survey, the Eurobarometer and the Giving in the Netherlands Panel Survey

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This paper explores regional differences in philanthropy, narrowly defined here as the contribution of money to nonprofit organizations.[1] Evidence from various surveys suggests that the practices and traditions in philanthropy differ strongly between countries, not only in the size and nature of philanthropy, but also in the methods used to contribute to nonprofit organizations. The ESS 2002 included a module asking questions about engagement in philanthropy. The data reveal low levels of engagement in Hungary (6%), Greece (9%) and Italy (11%). The highest proportions of the population engaging in philanthropy are found in Sweden, the UK, and the Netherlands (39%, 44% and 45%, respectively).

Unfortunately, however, the proportion of the population reporting engagement in philanthropy varies considerably for specific countries between the three datasets. The figures for Finland are 65% in the Eurobarometer but only 50% in the Gallup World Poll. The figures for the United Kingdom show an opposite difference: 79% in the Gallup data and 58% in the Eurobarometer. While the proportions are markedly different for some countries, the correlations between the proportions from the three datasets are strongly positive: the EB-ESS correlation is .74; the ESS-Gallup correlation is .81 and the EB-Gallup correlation is .80. The fact that these correlations are so high underscores that there are reliable cross-country differences in philanthropy.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Data from an extensive Eurobarometer survey from 2004 on civic engagement that will be discussed in more detail below show that the proportion of the population reporting donations to

[1] Philanthropy broadly defined is 'voluntary action for the public good' (Payton), which also includes contributions of time (volunteering), blood and organ donation, and direct contributions to causes and recipients without interference of nonprofit organizations. It is likely that regional differences in informal philanthropy and volunteering are due to similar processes as regional differences in philanthropy. While the focus of this chapter is on monetary donations, insights from the literature on other forms of volunteering also contribute to this chapter.

at least one out of 14 categories of nonprofit organizations varies from 20% in Spain to almost 80% in the Netherlands. Recent evidence from the Gallup World Poll (CAF, 2011) shows that the proportion of the population reporting donations to charity in the course of a calendar year varies from 7% in Greece to 79% in the UK. The figures for Spain and the Netherlands, the lowest and highest scoring countries in the Eurobarometer survey, are 24% and 75%, respectively.

From a theoretical point of view, differences between countries in philanthropy can be explained by a plethora of different theories and hypotheses, identifying legal, economic, and political conditions; religious traditions and social values unique to the region; social structure and the local need for charitable contributions, and even geophysical and meteorological characteristics such as the climate (Van de Vliert, Huang & Levine, 2004).

In this paper I examine methodological problems involved in testing hypotheses on regional differences in philanthropy. It would be desirable if we get to similar answers when we answer the question "Which characteristics of countries are correlated with these differences, and why?" using different datasets. I will demonstrate that the wisdom 'Methodology is Destiny' holds not only for individual level correlates of philanthropy, but also for country level correlates.

Hypotheses

The extensive body of research correlating engagement in philanthropy with social and economic characteristics of respondents provides a fairly clear and consistent picture of the evidence (Bekkers & Wiepking 2007, 2011; Wiepking & Bekkers 2012). As the current paper is chiefly concerned with the empirics of these relations, the various arguments behind them will not be

discussed elaborately. Instead, we list the characteristics of respondents that typically go along with higher levels of engagement in philanthropy.

Individual level correlates

Key socio-demographic characteristics commonly studied as correlates of engagement in philanthropy are age, education, rural residence, religious affiliation, political left-right self-placement, trust, and engagement in volunteering (Bekkers and Wiepking 2007). These characteristics are also measured in the European Social Survey. Religious involvement is one of the strongest correlates of charitable behavior by households and individuals (Bekkers and Wiepking 2011b). The stronger people's religious involvement, the more actively they follow their group's (positive) norms on altruistic behavior (Bekkers and Schuyt 2008; Wuthnow 1991).

Country level correlates

Economic indicators. Gesthuizen, van der Meer & Scheepers (2008b) analyze data on charitable giving of money from the EB in a multilevel model and find that donations are lower in countries with more highly educated citizens, taking individual level education into account.[2] Citizens in countries with a more stable economy can be expected to feel more financially secure. The level of financial security is likely to be lower in countries with higher levels of income inequality, especially among lower educated citizens. Higher GDP, national wealth, and lower levels of income inequality are likely to be associated with higher levels of philanthropy, in part through a higher sense of financial security. The World Giving Index 2010 (CAF) shows a positive

[2] Philanthropy is profiting less from national levels of education than other forms of involvement in voluntary associations. The number of memberships at the individual level shows a clear increase with the average level of education in a country, but 'activity' in voluntary associations does not. Rotolo & Wilson (2011) find no relationship between the proportion of university graduates in a state and the individual likelihood of volunteering, taking individual level education into account.

association between the proportion of the population in a country reporting donations to charity and GDP. This analysis, however, did not take individual level characteristics into account. Data from the Eurobarometer show a negative relationship between income inequality and donations, controlling for many individual level characteristics of households (Gesthuizen, Van der Meer, and Scheepers, 2008a). A study of donations in Indonesia also shows a negative relationship between income inequality and giving (Okten & Osili, 2004). A sophisticated analysis of data from the US however shows no relationship between income inequality at the county level and household giving (Borgonovi, 2008). The same paper also shows a surprisingly negative relationship between mean county income and secular household giving. A previous analysis at the aggregate level of giving in metropolitan areas in the US does reveal a positive relationship between median income and amounts donated (Wolpert, 1988). A historical geography of almshouses in the UK shows a positive relationship between accumulated wealth of regions and the number of almshouses (Bryson, McGuiness, & Ford, 2002). Olson and Caddell (1994) find that individuals contribute less to their congregation when the average income of fellow congregation members increases. This is most likely the result of "free riding": a lower perceived need for contributions.

The economy may also affect engagement in philanthropy in other ways: citizens in countries with a more extensive social security system feel more secure. In a recent analysis of data from the European and World Values Surveys, Stadelmann-Steffen (2011) shows that respondents from lower income households are more likely to volunteer in countries with more social welfare spending. Using data from the ESS, Van Ingen & Van der Meer (2011) find additional evidence for reduction of inequalities in volunteer participation with respect to education and gender.

Religion. In the literature on volunteering it has been argued that the presence of religious groups creates a positive social norm with respect to volunteering (Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006). This argument can be generalized to all forms of prosocial behavior, including kindness to strangers (such as in the parable of the Good Samaritan; Wuthnow, 1991) and organized philanthropy. The level of compliance with the norm depends on the level of cohesion within the group: the higher the level of cohesion, the higher the level of compliance (Bekkers & Schuyt, 2008). This hypothesis has been labeled the 'community explanation' for the differences in levels of philanthropy between religious groups (Wuthnow, 1991; Bekkers & Schuyt, 2008).

From this perspective it is not merely an individual's religiosity that encourages philanthropy, but also the religious context in which individuals decide on donations.[3] A testable hypothesis is that regions with a higher level of religiosity have higher levels of philanthropy, net of individual level religiosity.[4]

Gitell & Tebaldi (2006) find that average the charitable contribution per tax filer in US states decreases with the proportion of the population that is Catholic, and increases with the proportion that is protestant or has another religion. A similar finding is reported for 453 municipalities in the Netherlands (Bekkers & Veldhuizen, 2008). Rotolo & Wilson (2011) find the highest level of volunteering in the Mormon state of Utah. They find a clearly positive relationship between the number of congregations and levels of religious volunteering (though not secular volunteering). It should be noted, however, that these studies did not include religious affiliation at the individual level. A study on charitable donations in 23 European countries shows that not only individual religious values affect donations, but also the religious context in which people live (Wiepking and Bekkers 2008). In her article on differences in giving and

[3] Note that religion is also important for charitable activity through the mechanisms of solicitation and reputation discussed above.
[4] Ruiter & De Graaf (2006) find support for this hypothesis in a multilevel analysis of volunteering.

volunteering across US counties, Borgonovi (2008) find that religious giving and volunteering increased with the county level of devoutness, controlling for individual levels of religiosity. In addition, religious giving is lower in counties dominated by Catholics.

Population density. Assuming that communities in less densely populated areas are more close-knit one would expect negative relationships between population density and engagement in philanthropy. Indeed lower population density has been associated with acts of helpfulness shown by local residents to strangers in field experiments (Levine, Martinez, Brase, & Sorenson, 1994; Levine, Reysen & Ganz, 2008). Borgonovi (2008) found religious household giving to be higher in less densely populated counties. While these findings are surprising from an economies of scale hypothesis (Booth, Higgins & Cornelius, 1989), they fit the 'community explanation' of giving and volunteering.

Political values are also important factors in philanthropy, though the relationship at the individual level is complicated because of conflicting influences of cultural conservatism and prosocial value orientation (Malka, Soto, Cohen & Miller, 2011). In a book primarily about the US, Brooks (2006) argues that the extent to which people believe in state-induced income redistribution is negatively related to philanthropy. In Europe, however, persons with a left wing political orientation are found to be more active participants in voluntary associations (Van Oorschot, Arts, and Gelissen 2006). A study on philanthropy in the Netherlands found that persons with a left-wing political orientation are more likely to give to charitable organizations (Bekkers and Wiepking 2006). Hughes and Luksetich (1999) find that total private contributions to art museums are higher in states with a higher proportion of the population voting Republican in presidential elections. In contrast, Bielefeld, Rooney & Steinberg (2005) find no support for a link

between political color of a state and individual giving. Positive relationships between democratic history and donations are found in two studies (Gesthuizen, van der Meer & Scheepers, 2008a, 2008b).

Trust. Investigating donations to 'activist organizations' (humanitarian and to environmental, peace, and animal organizations), Evers & Gesthuizen (2011) found that the national level of trust is positively related to engagement in philanthropy in a regression analysis including individual level trust as well.

2. Data and Methods

Thorough empirical tests of hypotheses on regional differences in philanthropy are not easily accomplished. They rely on valid and reliable data and apply stringent statistical tests. Both the data and the tests pose problems, some of which I discuss in the current section.

Data

Data sources that allow for comparative research on regional differences are scarce. In addition to datasets on specific countries such as the Giving in the Netherlands Panel Survey (Bekkers & Boonstoppel, 2010), there are three major multi-nation surveys that include data on philanthropy: the European Social Survey (ESS), the Eurobarometer (EB), and the Gallup World Poll (GWP).

The ESS is a biennial general household survey conducted among at least 1,000 citizens above the age of 15 through face-to-face interviews throughout the European Union.

The Eurobarometer surveys are a series of opinion polls commissioned by the European Commission. EB62.2, conducted among at least 1,000 citizens above the age of 15 through personal interviews by TNS Opinion & Social in November-December 2004.

The World Gallup Poll is an omnibus survey on a broad variety of topics. Data are collected among at least 1,000 citizens per country above the age of 15 primarily through telephone interviews (in countries with at least 80% telephone coverage; otherwise face-to-face interviews).

Ideally, of course, the three data sources would generate the same values or at least the same ranking of countries, but this is not the case. A detailed examination of the methodology used in the three data sets may show why the values and rankings differ. The different methodologies in the three surveys with respect to sampling procedures, fieldwork mode, and questions asked give rise to different sources of bias. First I will discuss sampling bias as a result of the sampling procedures; then I discuss social desirability bias; and finally I discuss recall bias.

Sampling bias. The ESS design team has invested significant resources in the design of quality standards for the sampling procedure and the fieldwork. The ESS website provides numerous documents about sampling issues.[5] The strict procedures generate samples that are of high quality in terms of representation of the target population. Response rates vary between countries from 33% (Switzerland) and 80% (Greece). The sampling strategy of the EB and the GWP are described in general terms and are therefore hard to assess; response rates for these surveys are unknown. The lack of transparency however is not encouraging.

Social desirability bias. The data collection mode may give rise to social desirability bias. Generally speaking, people are more likely to report in socially desirable ways in public settings,

[5] http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/

and report honestly in more anonymous settings (Stocké & Hunkler, 2007). Respondents in an online survey (such as in the GINPS) are not confronted with an interviewer and are therefore more anonymous than in a personal interview (such as in the ESS and EB). The telephone survey (such as in the GWP) is an intermediate case, because a real interviewer is asking the questions, though not in a face-to-face situation.

Recall bias. The level of recall bias depends on the number of questions on donations and their formulation. Research on the methodology of surveys on giving shows that 'Methodology is Destiny' (Rooney, Steinberg & Schervish, 2004). The basic finding in this literature is that "the longer the module and the more detailed its prompts, the more likely a household was to recall making any charitable contribution and the higher the average level of its giving" (Rooney, Steinberg & Schervish, 2001). The 'Gold Standard' in research on giving and volunteering is a 'Method – Area' module. Respondents first get a large number of prompts that help them recall donations that they have made in the past year using various methods (e.g., through bank transfers, in a door-to-door campaign, in town), followed by questions about donations in specific sectors. This strategy is used in the GINPS (Bekkers & Boonstoppel, 2010). Without 'method' prompts the level of giving is underestimated by the respondents as a result of incomplete recall bias (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2006; Rooney, Mesch, Chin & Steinberg, 2005; Rooney, Steinberg & Schervish, 2001, 2004). Neither the ESS, nor the EB and GWP include method prompts.

A detailed comparison of the response categories in the ESS, EB and GINPS is presented in table 1. The GWP questionnaire includes three questions on helping behavior, of which the question on philanthropy is: "In the past month have you done any of the following, Donated

money to a charity?"[6] This question assumes that respondents are familiar with the word 'charity' (or the specific word used in the language in which the survey was completed). Differences between respondents in knowledge of the meaning of the word and differences in the interpretation will lead to errors in the respondents' reports. Rooney, Mesch & Steinberg (2005) argue that the 'framing' of survey questions lead to different recall and reporting patterns.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The questionnaire of the first ESS wave included a question on donations, as part of a module on social participation. The module (E1-12) was introduced as follows: "For each of the voluntary organisations I will now mention, please use this card to tell me whether any of these things apply to you now or in the last 12 months, and, if so, which." The respondents then received a card listing 12 different sectors and could report more than one form of participation ('None', 'Member', 'Participated', 'Donated money', 'Volunteered'). The ESS questionnaire avoids the word 'charity' but instead uses 'voluntary organisations'. In itself this concept may cause differences in reporting, but the card with categories helps respondents understand the meaning of the concept.

The EB62.2 includes a module on social capital with questions on memberships in organizations (QD9a: "Now, I would like you to look carefully at the following list of organisations and activities. Please, say in which, if any, you are a member.") and a follow up

[6] The other two questions are: "Volunteered your time to an organisation?" and "Helped a stranger, or someone you didn't know who needed help?"

question (QD9b) on donations: “And to which, if any, do you donate money? (We do not talk about any membership fees)”.[7]

Recall bias is likely to be a problem in the ESS, which asks about donations in the past 12 months. The danger of a recall bias is minimized in the GWP data because the target period (‘the past month’) is short and recent. The problem with a question about the past month, however, is that monthly fluctuations in giving behavior influence the survey estimates. If the survey is conducted at the end of the year, the level of giving as reported by respondents is likely to be higher than in other parts of the year (Cowley, McKenzie, Pharoah & Smith, 2011). Fieldwork dates of the GWP are unknown because they are not published. The end-of-year effect is likely to be a problem in the EB, which asks about donations in the present tense in a survey conducted in November and December.

An additional problem with the incomplete recall bias is that it is selective. Some respondents are more likely to forget donations that they have made than others. One study on survey reports on giving in the US finds that using a method module increases recall particularly among minority women (Rooney, Mesch, Chin & Steinberg, 2005). Another study on survey reports on giving in the Netherlands finds that a Method/Area module increases recall by females, the lower educated, respondents from higher income households, rural residents, religious respondents, and non-home owners (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2006). Another study from the Netherlands that compared correlates of self-reported donations to a health charity with donations registered by the organization found that smaller donations are more likely to be forgotten than larger ones (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011c).

[7] The following question (QD9c) is on volunteering: “And, for which, if any, do you currently participate actively or do voluntary work?”

In sum, sampling bias, recall bias, social desirability bias and effects of the formulation of questions are likely to lead to different results in analyses of survey questions on philanthropy. Indeed the data from the EB and the ESS lead to widely different conclusions. Figure 1 shows the differences in the proportion of the population reporting donations for specific countries. On average, the ESS yields lower levels of philanthropy than the EB and the GWP. Also the differences between countries in the ESS are smaller than in the other datasets. In the ESS the scores vary from 6% in Hungary to 45% in the Netherlands. In the EB the scores vary from 20% in Spain to 79% in the Netherlands; in the GWP they vary from 7% in Greece to 79% in the UK. Because both the research design of the ESS is more strongly standardized than that of the EB and the GWP, the larger differences in the latter two datasets may be inflated by error variance.

The EB and ESS also result in different estimates of correlates of philanthropy. This becomes clear from a comparison of logistic regression analyses of donations among respondents in the Netherlands as reported in the two surveys (see tables 2 and 3). The EB and ESS estimates can also be compared with those from the GINPS, using the 'Gold Standard' Method-Area module.[8] Included in the analyses are some of the 'standard' predictors of charitable giving that are available in all three datasets. Previous research on philanthropy has investigated numerous variables as potential correlates of the incidence of charitable giving by households and individuals (Bekkers and Wiepking, 2011a, 2011b; Wiepking and Bekkers, 2012). The most consistent predictors of engagement in philanthropy in survey research across nations, primarily the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, are age, education, income (all positive), level of urbanization (negative), marital status (married respondents reporting higher giving), and volunteering (volunteers reporting higher giving). Unfortunately, variables for

[8] Detailed explanations of the construction of variables in these analyses can be found in the appendix.

marital status and income were inconsistently measured between the three survey datasets and could not be included. Variables for religious affiliation were not available in the EB.

Two further variables included in the analyses are generalized trust (typically associated with higher giving), and political preference. There is no consensus on the relationship between political preference and giving. Some studies suggest higher giving by those on the left (e.g., Van Lange et al., 2012), while other studies report higher giving by those on the right of the political spectrum (Brooks, 2006). It just so happens that all three surveys included the same measure of political left-right self-placement, enabling a new test of the relationship between political preference and giving.

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

A comparison of the results in columns 1 and 2 of table 2 shows that the EB and ESS data lead to different conclusions on the relationship between engagement in philanthropy and age, education and political preference. In the EB data, respondents younger than 35 were significantly less likely to report donations than older respondents, while in the ESS only respondents aged 65 and above differed significantly from those younger than 35. Also the difference between 18-35 year olds and respondents 65 and above is less pronounced in the ESS than in the EB. The ESS show a linear increase of donations with the level of education. In the EB, in contrast, donations were not significantly more likely to be reported by respondents with a tertiary level of education than by respondents with primary levels of education. A preference for the political right shows a significantly positive relationship with engagement in philanthropy in the ESS, but not so in the EB. In contrast, the relationship is even in the other direction (though

not significant). Three variables do show similar relationships with engagement in philanthropy in the ESS and the EB: the level of urbanization, generalized trust, and engagement in volunteering. Respondents in rural areas are more likely to report donations than those in cities or suburban areas (though the city – rural contrast is somewhat stronger in the EB than in the ESS). Also respondents with higher levels of generalized trust and respondents who report volunteering for organizations are more likely to report donations.

A comparison of the results in columns 1 and 2 with those in column 3 shows how the estimates from the ESS and EB differ from those based on the GINPS. The GINPS shows no significant differences between age groups and levels of education; a somewhat stronger relationship between engagement in philanthropy and generalized trust, a more strongly positive relationship with political right self-placement, and a weaker relationship with engagement in volunteering. The final column of table 2 shows formal statistical tests of the differences with the GINPS data.

Table 3 also includes the religiosity variables from the ESS and the GINPS (the EB does not include data on religious affiliation and attendance). Catholics were significantly more likely to report donations in the GINPS than in the ESS. Respondents with an 'Other Christian' religious affiliation in contrast were more likely to report giving in the ESS than in the GINPS. The estimates for church attendance did not differ between the two datasets.

[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Methods

The crucial question about regional differences is where they come from. Are regional differences the result of conditions and mechanisms that influence people residing in that region, or are they merely the result of the composition of the population? The former type of influence is a contextual influence. The type of argument applying in this case can be phrased in terms of an external influence due to the residence in a certain region, regardless of one's personal preferences, resources or restrictions. An example is the argument about tax laws. Residence in a country or state with a charitable deduction in the income tax reduces the net costs of donating, regardless of one's personal preference or ability for engagement in philanthropy. The latter type of influence is not a causal influence but a result of compositional effects. Some regions may be more philanthropic simply because the population in that region includes more wealthy or more religious people. In this case it is not some condition or mechanism in the region that influences philanthropy, but the causality is the other way around: the type of people living in that region explains why there is a higher level of philanthropy in that region.

Theoretical explanations of regional differences often ignore the distinction between context and composition effects. Worse still, many empirical studies on regional differences also ignore this distinction. An analysis of correlations among variables aggregated at the regional level merely shows how levels of philanthropy are related to other variables, but do not tell us anything about the origins of regional differences. This type of analysis is the default in the empirical literature on philanthropy. However, it is not a suitable type of analysis in order to draw conclusions on the origins of regional differences.

In the 1990s, hierarchical or 'multilevel' regression models have been popularized as a statistical tool for the analysis of context influences (Snijders & Bosker (1999) provide a useful

introduction). Multilevel models can be used to test whether regional differences are due to compositional or contextual influences. The typical finding in multilevel analyses is that contextual influences are fairly small, usually explaining only 5 to 10 percent of the variance. This means that the strong correlations that are often found between regional characteristics are primarily due to the composition of the population. An example is the correlation of .77 between voter turnout and the proportion of blood donors in municipalities in the Netherlands (Bekkers & Veldhuizen, 2008). A subsequent multilevel analysis (Veldhuizen & Bekkers, 2011), however, showed that only 6.5% of the variance in blood donation at the individual level is due to the characteristics of the municipality; 93.5% was due to composition effects. Voter turnout was one of the significant municipality characteristics but it explained only 0.03% of the variance. Another example is the .58 correlation between GDP and the proportion of the population reporting engagement in philanthropy (CAF, 2010). In a multilevel model, Gesthuizen, Van der Meer and Scheepers (2008b) found the correlation between GDP and engagement in philanthropy at the individual level to be only .005.

[INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

A comparison of the data on engagement in philanthropy in the 17 countries that are covered by both the EB and ESS[9] shows that most of the country differences we saw in figure 1 are due to compositional differences. In the EB the intraclass coefficient is .0706, indicating that 7.1% of the variance in engagement in philanthropy is due to context effects. In the ESS the intraclass coefficient is .0811. In both datasets the intraclass coefficient declines to .0327 when

[9] These countries are the same as those in figure 1 except for the Czech Republic, for which data on volunteering was not available.

individual level variables for age, education, the level of urbanization, generalized trust, political right self-placement, and volunteering are included. This means that 54% to 60% of the country level variance is due to compositional effects of this limited set of characteristics alone. The parameter estimates for the predictor variables, however, are quite different for most variables. Age differences are stronger in the EB than in the ESS – though in the same (positive) direction. Parameter estimates for the level of education are positive for both datasets, but stronger in the ESS than in the EB. Also the relationship between engagement in philanthropy and the level of urbanization is different in the EB than in the ESS, but even takes opposite signs in the two datasets. Rural residents are more likely to report engagement in philanthropy in the EB than city dwellers and people living in suburban areas, while rural residents are *less* likely to report engagement in philanthropy than suburbanites in the ESS. Volunteering is much more strongly related to engagement in philanthropy in the ESS than in the EB. This is likely to be a result of the design of the questionnaire. The ESS respondents are given a card with categories of organizations, asking which types of contributions and activities they performed for each category. In the EB the questions on donating and volunteering were separate questions, reducing the correlation between reported donations and volunteering activities.

For illustration purposes, an additional analysis is reported adding two variables at the country level that have been analyzed in previous studies (e.g., Gesthuizen, Van der Meer & Scheepers, 2008b): the proportion of the population with tertiary education and the mean level of generalized trust. It turns out that these variables have substantially different relationships with engagement in philanthropy in the EB and the ESS: the relationship with the proportion of tertiary education graduates in a country is strongly (and significantly) positive in the ESS, but strongly (and significantly) negative in the EB. The relationship with the mean level of

generalized trust is significantly positive in the EB, but is not significant and quantitatively speaking meaningless in the ESS.

Though the statistical models are available, theoretical arguments on regional differences are very difficult to test in practice. This is not only due to a lack of data but also to a lack of degrees of freedom. There are simply too many variables at the regional level that may produce regional differences.[10] Because regions (nations, states, even neighborhoods) differ in so many ways it is difficult to find pairs that provide a meaningful comparison by being (nearly) identical in all respects except one. A large scale statistical comparison of a larger number of regions easily runs into the small n-problem: the number of variables that could be related to philanthropy on which the regions differ meaningfully is often larger than the number of observations at the regional level, which limits the power of joint statistical tests of significance (Snijders & Bosker, 1999). In comparative research it is often problematic to include controls at the country level due to multicollinearity between predictor variables. This is also the case in the analyses reported in table 4. Adding more country level variables yielded strong changes in the parameter estimates for the proportion of tertiary education graduates and the mean level of generalized trust. Potentially relevant country characteristics are often so strongly correlated that including them in one model yields mathematical problems with the identification of the statistical models (Gesthuizen, van der Meer & Scheepers, 2008a).

In the absence of a large number of countries the only viable option is to conduct separate analyses including some but not all of the variables and or countries. If the results are not robust with respect to exclusion of observations and variables they should not be trusted. The finding that a variable measuring the national level of generalized trust is positively related to donations

[10] Ragin's (1998) comment on Salamon & Anheier's 'social origins theory' that "Unfortunately, it is possible to find quantitative support for a variety of arguments using seven cases and crude indicators of the underlying theoretical concepts." applies to most of the empirical studies.

(Evers & Gesthuizen, 2011) is more valid because the analysis includes not only a variable for individual level trust, but also for GDP, which is positively correlated with trust (Knack & Keefer, 1997) and a variable for income inequality, which is negatively correlated with trust (Leigh, 2006). The absence in the analysis of variables measuring income and wealth at the individual level, however, is likely to lead to an overestimation of the relationships with GDP and trust. Multilevel analyses including 'social capital' variables at the context level as well as individual level controls for resources tend to find weaker relationships with social capital, if any (Veldhuizen & Bekkers, 2011; Mohan & Mohan, 2002; Mohan, Twigg, Barnard & Jones, 2005).

Conclusion

There seem to be strong regional differences in philanthropy. I have outlined some of the problems in the empirical analysis of regional differences. Progress in research on regional differences in philanthropy is hampered first of all by a lack of high quality data. Existing data sources all have their problems, including sampling bias, social desirability bias and recall bias. Analyses of the data sources show considerable differences not only in the level of philanthropy reported but also in the correlates of engagement in philanthropy. As a result, conclusions on correlates of philanthropy are not easily replicated using different datasets.

Also the three datasets that are available for cross-national comparative research do not include information about amounts donated. It is unclear how the amount donated is related to country characteristics. Higher levels of engagement – in terms of a larger proportion of the population making donations – do not necessarily mean higher amounts donated among donors.

Finally, researchers often fail to use adequate statistical models to test for the origins of regional differences. The current practice suggests regional differences to be due to context

effects, obscuring composition effects. If one views research as a balanced scale with theory on one side and empirics on the other, in the current state of research theoretical explanations for regional differences outweigh the data available and methodology used to test them.

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Figures and Tables

Figure 1. *Donations to nonprofit organizations reported in the European Social Survey 2002 (ESS), the Eurobarometer 2004 (EB), and the Gallup World Poll*

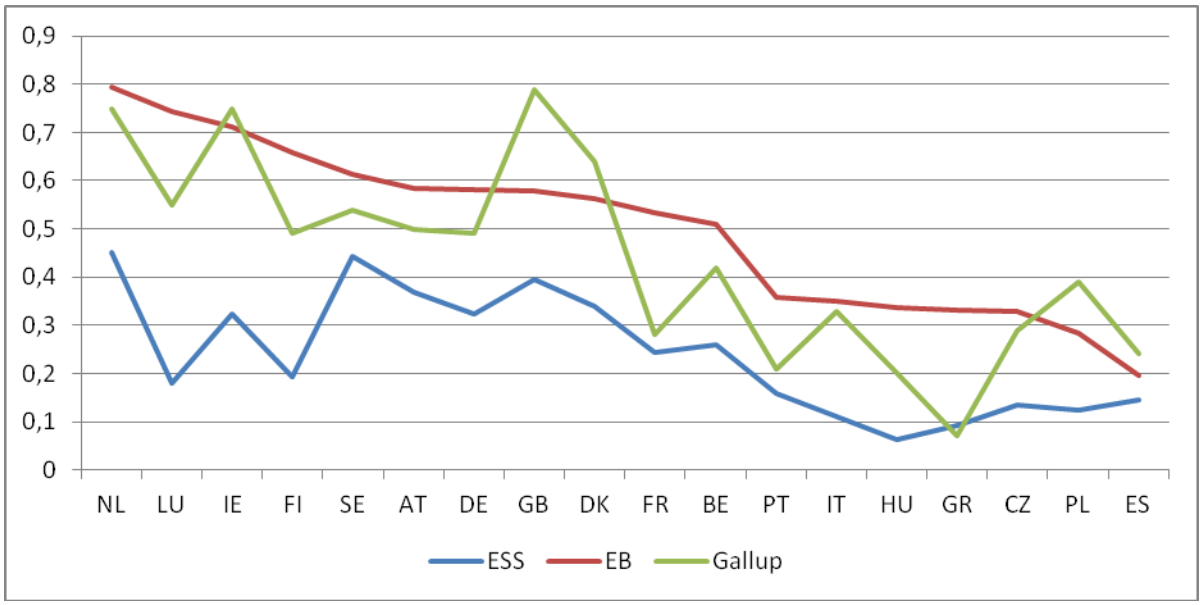

Table 1. Response categories in questions on philanthropy in the ESS, the EB and the GINPS

	European Social Survey	Eurobarometer	Giving in the Netherlands Panel Survey
Sports	A sports club or club for outdoor activities [1]	A sports club or club for outdoor activities (recreation organization) [1]	Sports and recreation (but not fees for clubs of which you are a member) [9]
Culture	An organisation for cultural or hobby activities [2]	Education, arts, music, or cultural association [2]	Culture, for example donations to theatre, musical and dance groups, museums, concert halls, and cultural foundations such as the Prince Bernhard Foundation [8]
Trade union	A trade union [3]	A trade union [3]	
Professional	A business, professional, or farmers' organization [4]	A business or professional organization [4]	
Consumer	A consumer or automobile organization	A consumer organization [5]	

	[5]		
International	An organisation for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities, or immigrants [6]	An international organisation such as development aid organization or human rights organization [6]	International relief and development assistance, human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Doctors without Borders, Oxfam Novib, Unicef, Plan Netherlands, Terre des Hommes [3]
Environment / Animals	An organisation for environmental protection, peace or animal rights [7]	An organisation for the environmental protection, animal rights, etc. [7]	Environmental protection, for example donations to Greenpeace, Defence of the Earth, Nature and Environment Foundation, and 12 Provincial Environmental Federations; [4] Nature protection, for example donations to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Monuments of Nature, the Wetlands Foundation and the 12 Provincial Landscape Foundations; [5]; Animal protection, for example donations to Animal Protection Netherlands, World Society for the

			protection of Animals [6]
Religion	A religious or church organisation [8]	Religious or church organisation [11]	Church and religion (including contributions to the Humanistic Association), for example contributions to maintenance of the church or mosque, staff costs of personnel, activities of the church, mosque or humanistic association) [1]
Politics	A political party [9]	Political party or organisation [12]	
Education / Science	An organisation for science, education, or teachers and parents [10]		Education and research, for example donations to schools, universities and scientific institutes (but not school fees) [7]
Social	A social club, club for the young, the retired/ elderly, women, or friendly societies [11]	A leisure organization for the elderly [9]	Public and societal goals in the Netherlands, for example donations to the Salvation Army, the National Child Assistance Foundation, Cliniclowns

Other	Any other voluntary organisation such as the ones I've just mentioned [12]		Other causes
Charity		A charity organization or social aid organization [8]	
Elderly		An organisation for the defence of elderly rights [10]	
Health		Organisation defending the interest of patients and/or disabled [13]	Health, donations to medical research, such as donations to the Dutch Heart Association, Stomach Liver Intestines Foundation, Kidney Foundation, donations to hospitals, medical programmes (cancer research etc. is also included in this category)

Interest groups		Other interest groups for specific causes such as women, people with specific sexual orientation or local issues [14]	
None		None of these [spontaneous]	
DK		Don’t know	

Table 2. Logistic regression of donating money in the Netherlands (Source: GINPS, ESS, EB)

	1. ESS	2. EB	3. GINPS	4. All	5. Differences with GINPS
Aged between 35 and 65	1.186	2.406**	1.132	1.350**	1.132
	(0.126)	(0.481)	(0.170)	(0.105)	(0.170)
Aged over 65	1.817**	2.660**	0.798	1.514**	0.798
	(0.261)	(0.793)	(0.157)	(0.162)	(0.157)
Secundary education	1.597**	1.846*	1.050	1.243*	1.050
	(0.257)	(0.476)	(0.149)	(0.117)	(0.149)
Tertairy education	3.503**	1.560	1.301	2.006**	1.301
	(0.628)	(0.447)	(0.276)	(0.229)	(0.276)
City	0.887	0.601*	0.546**	0.716**	0.546**
	(0.107)	(0.134)	(0.102)	(0.066)	(0.102)
Suburb	0.786+	0.777	0.754+	0.792*	0.754+
	(0.111)	(0.159)	(0.120)	(0.072)	(0.120)
Generalized trust	1.200**	1.209**	1.342**	1.221**	1.342**
	(0.064)	(0.056)	(0.101)	(0.038)	(0.101)
Political right self placement	1.245*	0.866	1.500**	1.233**	1.500**
	(0.123)	(0.176)	(0.218)	(0.092)	(0.218)
Volunteering	3.332**	3.325**	1.757**	2.814**	1.757**
	(0.331)	(0.627)	(0.261)	(0.213)	(0.261)
ESS: European Social Survey				0.156**	0.104**
				(0.013)	(0.038)

EB: Eurobarometer	0.745**	0.447+
	(0.083)	(0.197)
ESS * Aged between 35 and 65		1.048
		(0.193)
ESS * Aged over 65		2.275**
		(0.555)
ESS * Secundary education		1.521+
		(0.327)
ESS * Tertairy education		2.694**
		(0.748)
ESS * City		1.623*
		(0.361)
ESS * Suburb		1.043
		(0.222)
ESS * Generalized trust		0.894
		(0.083)
ESS * Political right		0.830
		(0.146)
ESS * Volunteering		1.896**
		(0.339)
EB * Aged between 35 and 65		2.125**
		(0.532)
EB * Aged over 65		3.332**

					-1.190
EB * Secundary education					1.759+
					(0.518)
EB * Tertairy education					1.199
					(0.428)
EB * City					1.101
					(0.320)
EB * Suburb					1.030
					(0.267)
EB * Generalized trust					0.901
					(0.080)
EB * Political right					0.577*
					(0.144)
EB * Volunteering					1.892**
					(0.454)
Observations	2345	1016	1699	5060	5060
Pseudo R Square	.0936	.1202	.0378	.1731	.1862

*** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10

Entries are odds ratios.

Table 3. Logistic regression of donating money in the Netherlands (Source: GINPS, ESS; including religiosity variables)

	1. GINPS	2. ESS	3. Both	4. Differences with GINPS
Aged between 35 and 65	1.086	1.162	1.153+	1.086
	(0.165)	(0.125)	(0.099)	(0.165)
Aged over 65	0.640*	1.590**	1.133	0.640*
	(0.130)	(0.236)	(0.135)	(0.130)
Secundary education	1.070	1.707**	1.200+	1.070
	(0.154)	(0.280)	(0.123)	(0.154)
Tertairy education	1.349	3.841**	2.453**	1.349
	(0.290)	(0.703)	(0.314)	(0.290)
City	0.564**	0.973	0.815*	0.564**
	(0.106)	(0.120)	(0.085)	(0.106)
Suburb	0.796	0.842	0.834+	0.796
	(0.129)	(0.121)	(0.088)	(0.129)
Catholic	2.183**	1.198	1.385**	2.183**
	(0.482)	(0.147)	(0.143)	(0.482)
Protestant	2.267**	2.100**	2.091**	2.267**
	(0.655)	(0.306)	(0.268)	(0.655)
Other Christian	0.461+	1.278	1.073	0.461+
	(0.212)	(0.292)	(0.226)	(0.212)

Other religion	4.658	0.902	1.043	4.658
	-4.909	(0.263)	(0.270)	-4.909
Church attendance	1.008	1.006*	1.006*	1.008
	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.005)
Generalized trust	1.327**	1.192**	1.221**	1.327**
	(0.101)	(0.064)	(0.053)	(0.101)
Political right self placement	1.402*	1.122	1.204*	1.402*
	(0.207)	(0.114)	(0.099)	(0.207)
Volunteering	1.549**	3.147**	2.540**	1.549**
	(0.236)	(0.319)	(0.216)	(0.236)
ESS			0.142**	0.094**
			(0.013)	(0.035)
ESS * Catholic				0.549*
				(0.139)
ESS * Protestant				0.927
				(0.300)
ESS * Other Christian				2.771*
				-1.422
ESS * Other religion				0.194
				(0.212)
ESS * Church attendance				0.998
				(0.006)
ESS * Aged between 35 and				1.070

65				
				(0.199)
ESS * Aged over 65				2.484**
				(0.624)
ESS * Secundary education				1.595*
				(0.349)
ESS * Tertairy education				2.847**
				(0.803)
ESS * City				1.727*
				(0.389)
ESS * Suburb				1.057
				(0.229)
ESS * Generalized trust				0.898
				(0.084)
ESS * Political right self placement				0.801
				(0.143)
ESS * Volunteering				2.031**
				(0.372)
Observations	1699	2345	4044	4044
Pseudo R Square	.0628	.1096	.1795	.1912

*** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10

Entries are odds ratios.

Table 4. Conditional fixed effects logistic regression of donating money in Europe (Source: EB, ESS)

	EB		ESS	
Aged between 35 and 65	1.978**	1.977**	1.564	1.618**
	(0.089)	(0.088)	(0.000)	(0.113)
Aged over 65	2.291**	2.290**	1.484	1.533**
	(0.143)	(0.137)	(0.000)	(0.150)
Secondary education	1.321**	1.305**	1.491	1.555**
	(0.061)	(0.060)	(0.000)	(0.117)
Tertiary education	1.492**	1.486**	2.637**	2.735**
	(0.086)	(0.085)	(0.267)	(0.258)
City	0.904*	0.900*	1.069	1.071
	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.000)	(0.079)
Suburb	0.975	0.991	1.240+	1.226*
	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.157)	(0.122)
Generalized trust	1.075**	1.075**	1.109	1.120**
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.000)	(0.037)
Political right self-placement	1.193**	1.186**	1.330**	1.340**
	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.131)	(0.098)
Volunteer	4.807**	4.822**	12.731**	12.829**
	(0.200)	(0.199)	(1.269)	(1.017)
% Secondary education		0.031**		25.744*

		(0.008)		(34.442)
Mean generalized trust		2.096**		1.098
		(0.087)		(0.165)
Observations	16729	16729	32905	32905
Number of countries	17	17	17	17
Intraclass coefficient	.0327	.0545	.0327	.0997