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A Contextual Analysis of Electoral Participation Sequences

Lausanne Conference on Sequence Analyis (LaCOSA)
6th-8th June, 2012

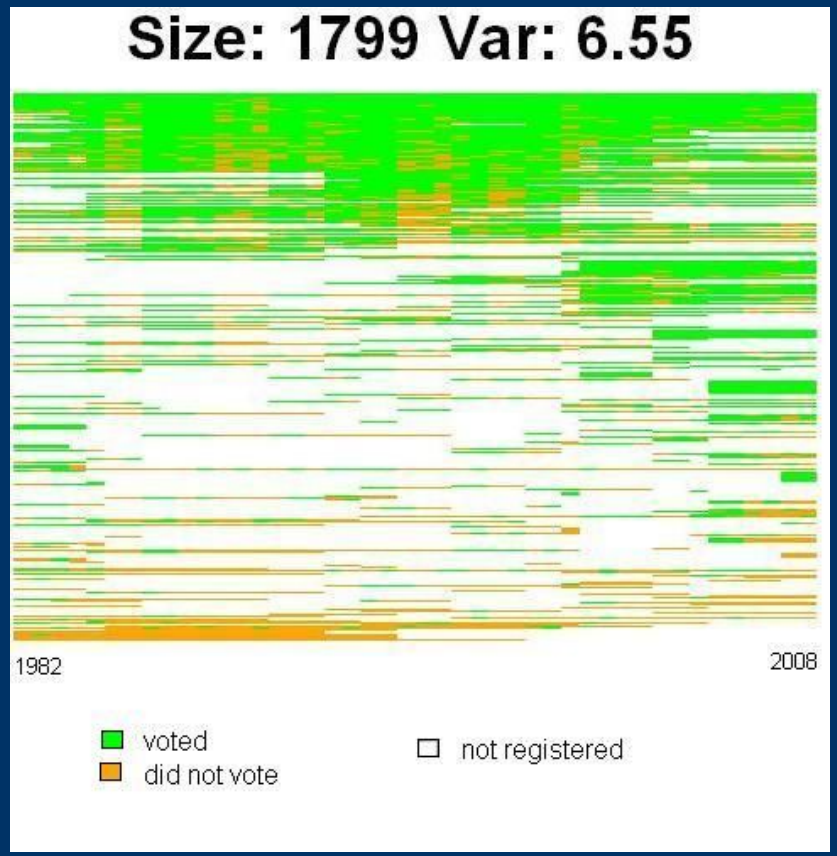
- A contextual study of turnout
  in a French town,
  based on signature lists of 1982-2008
- Main result:
  the correlation of participation behavior
  inside households
- Complementary/exploratory results:
  how does the position in the household
  influence participation?

General aims and questions (1)

- Studying turnout from signature lists, not surveys:
  - More reliable data on turnout
  - Not so bad covariates
  - Very long sequences (44 ballots): contextualization in time
- A case study of one polling station (500-800 simult. voters, 1799 sequences, ca. 30,000 obs.):
  - The methodology can be generalized
  - We do not claim that all the results are general
  - We are also interested in the specific local context

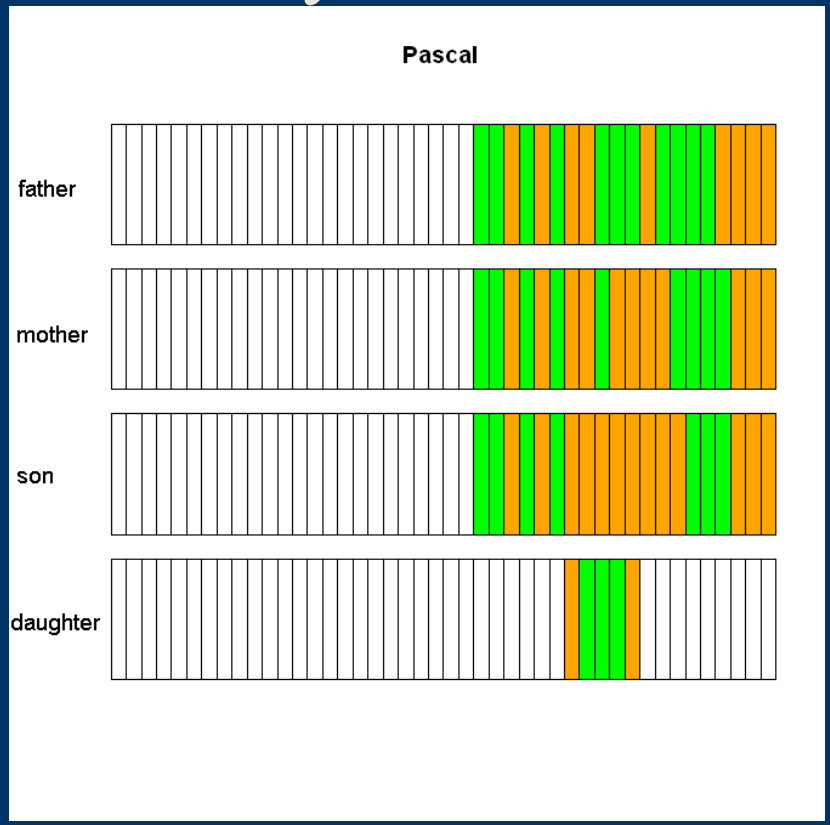
General aims and questions (2)

- Voting as a socially embedded behavior
  - Few constant participationists (15%, or constant abstentionists: 6%); nor a random behavior either → which correlations?



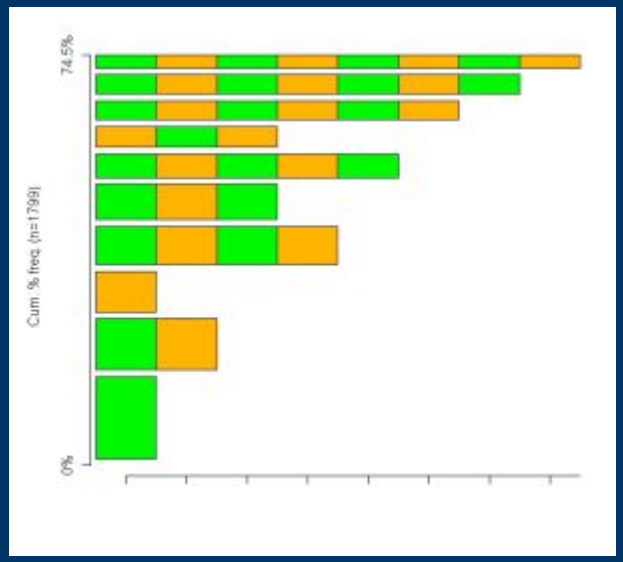
General aims and questions (3)

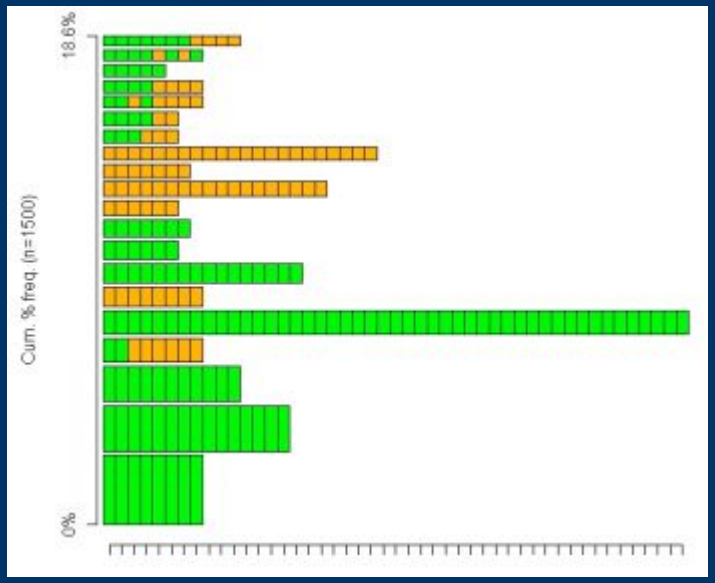
- Voting as a socially embedded behavior
  - Which correlations?
  - Electorate households: a multi-level view & still another way to contextualize



Digression: Visual representations of participation sequences

- Advantage: thinking about non-constant voters, "misregistration", etc.



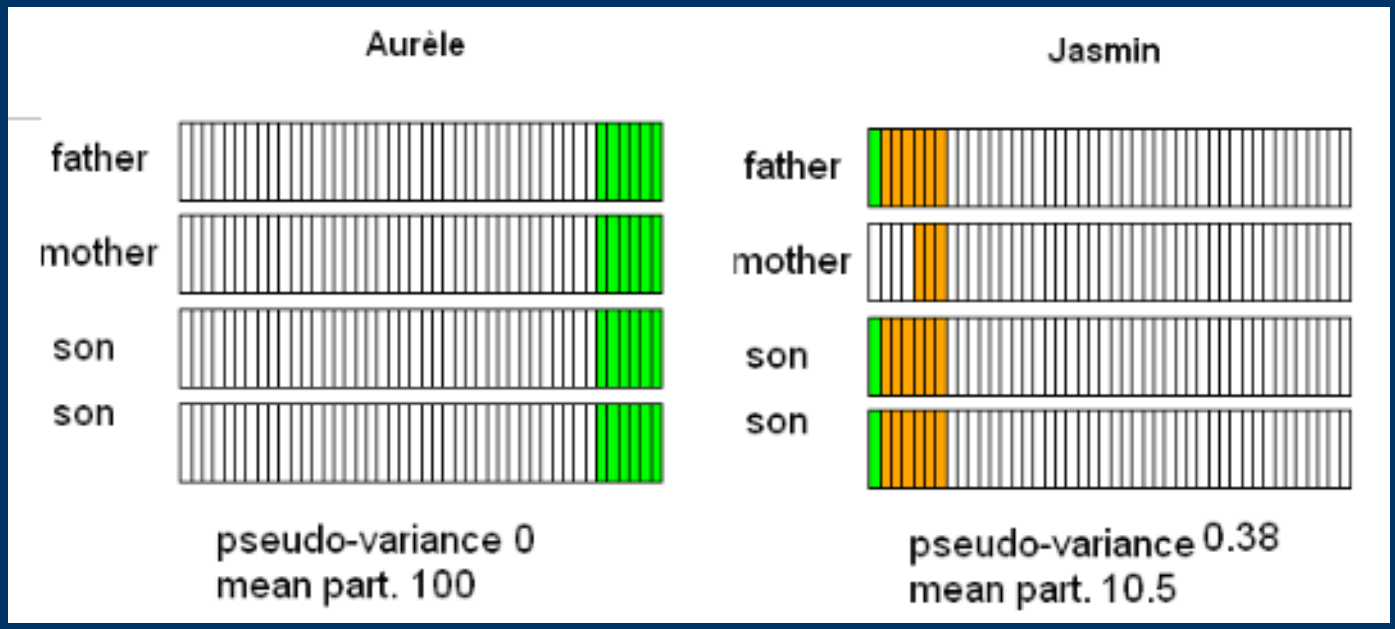


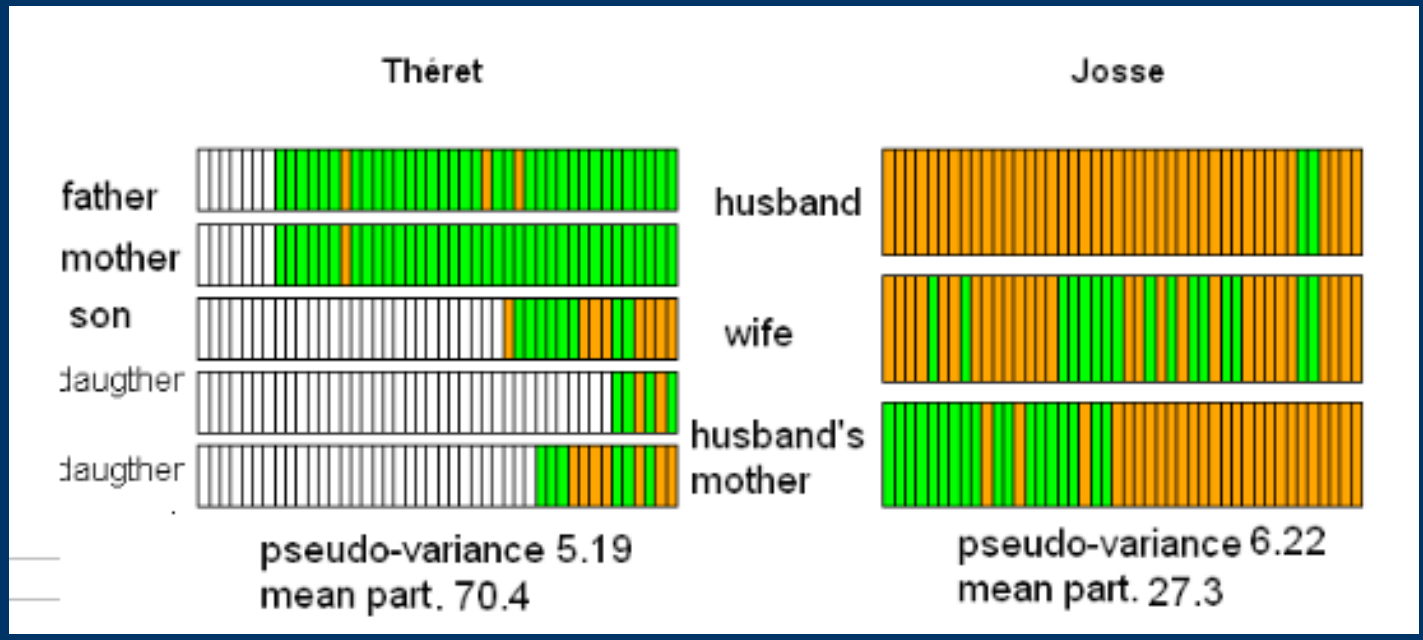
- Drawback: a misleading view of time?

or

Correlations inside households (1)

- How do we characterize individual sequences?
  - Mean (total) participation rate
  - Change of behavior index
- A 3rd definition of similarity across sequences: similarity in exact patterns of vote and abstention
  - Optimal matching distance with high icosts (no or few indels)
  - Not a simple count of exact matches, because of the "non-registered" state (dealt with via lower scosts)


Aurèle
father
mother
son
son
pseudo-variance 0
mean part. 100
Jasmin
father
mother
son
son
pseudo-variance 0.38
mean part. 10.5

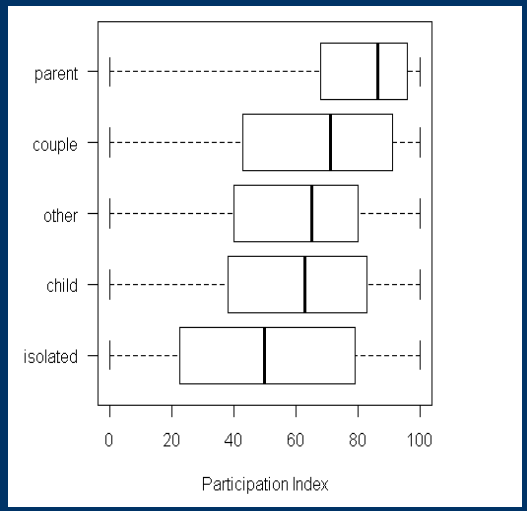

Théret
father
mother
son
daugther
daugther
pseudo-variance 5.19
mean part. 70.4
Josse
husband
wife
husband's mother
pseudo-variance 6.22
mean part. 27.3

Correlations inside households (2)

- A significant household effect for each of the three definitions of similarity
  (better results than the address effect)
  - ANOVA on participation rate
    and change of behavior index
  - Pseudo-ANOVA on exact patterns
    thanks to TraMineR!

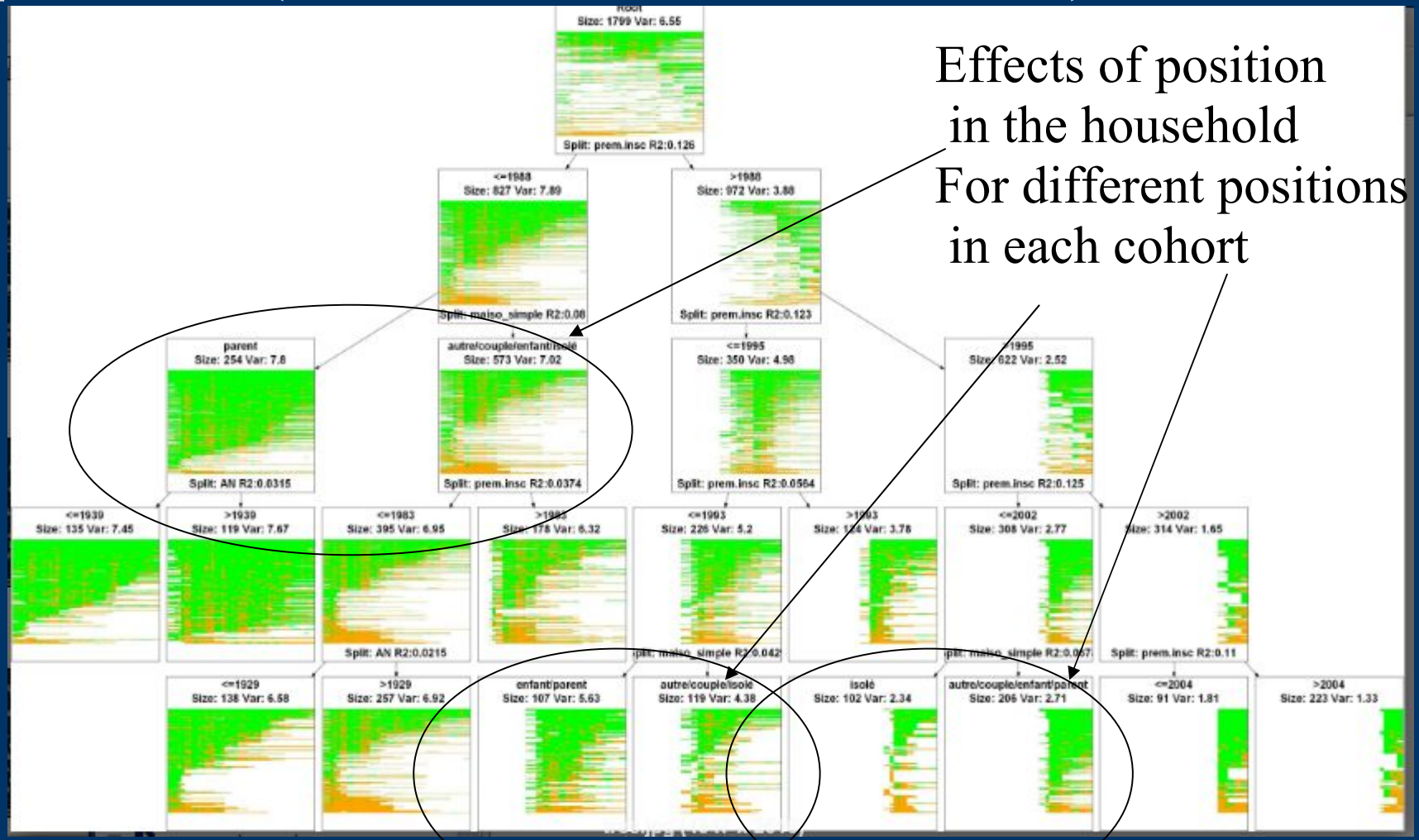
Correlations inside households (3)

- Multi-level multiple regression, participation rate:
  - A very important household effect
  - Effects of age and registration date reflecting local history
  - Significance of the position in the household



Going further (1)

- A multivariate view of similarities in exact patterns? (but not a multi-level view...)



Going further (2)

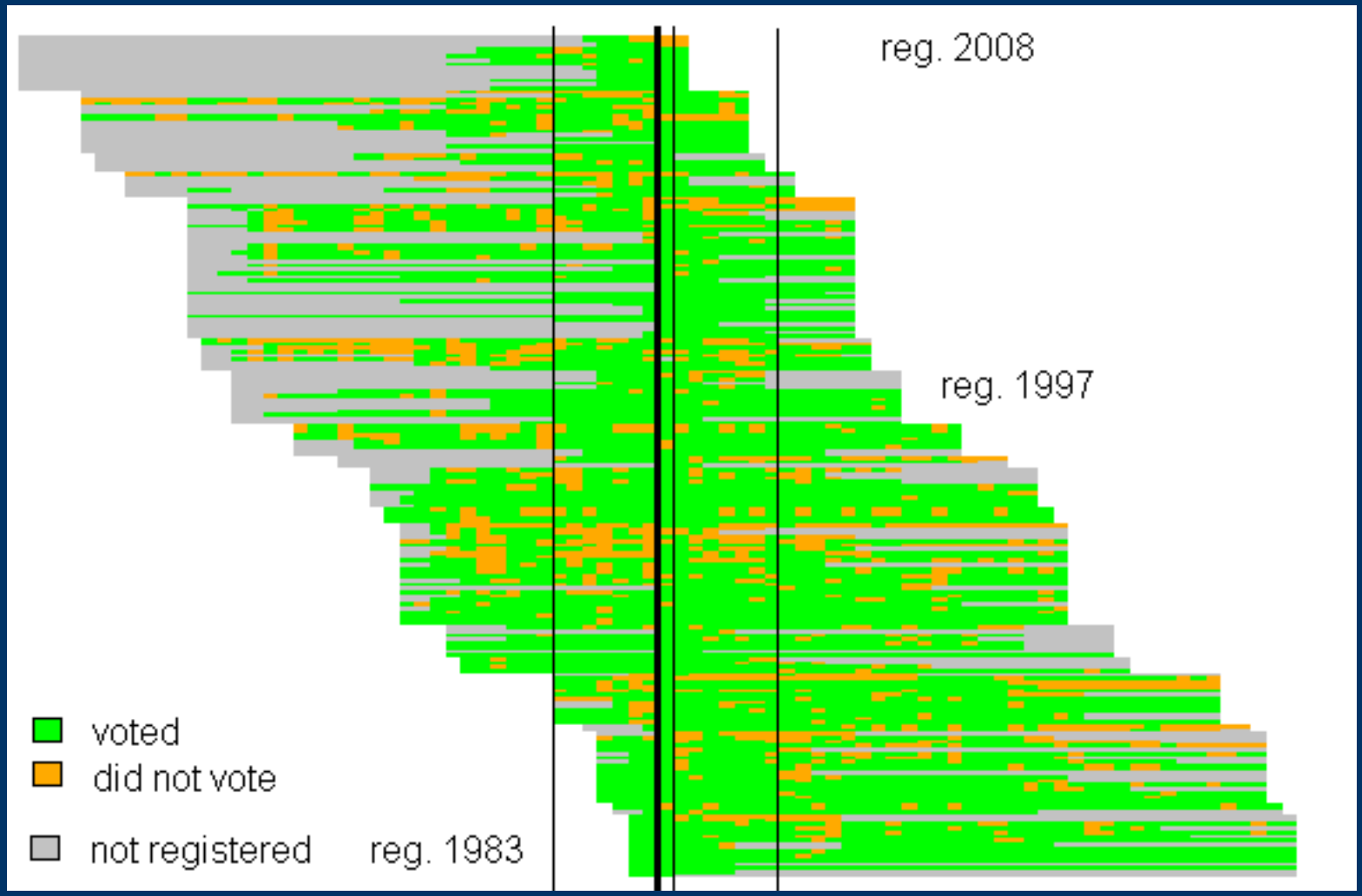
- Getting more sequential

"Parents" participate more than "couples" in aggregate. But how does it work?

What happens when couples of potential voters become parents of potential voters?

→ subsample of 120 children → 215 parents

Alignment on an "external event":
first ballot with a registered child

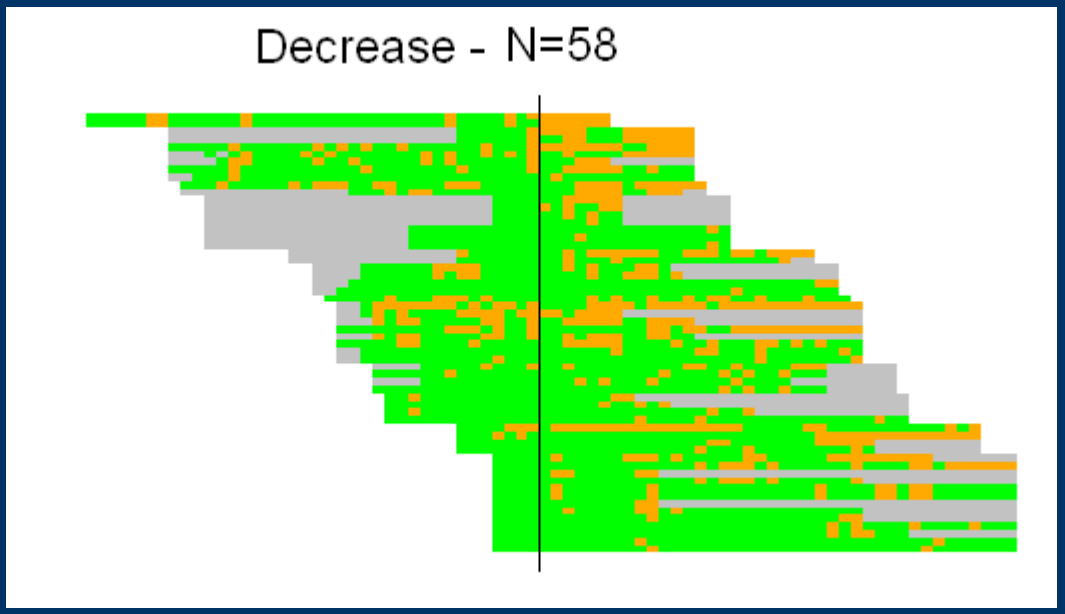


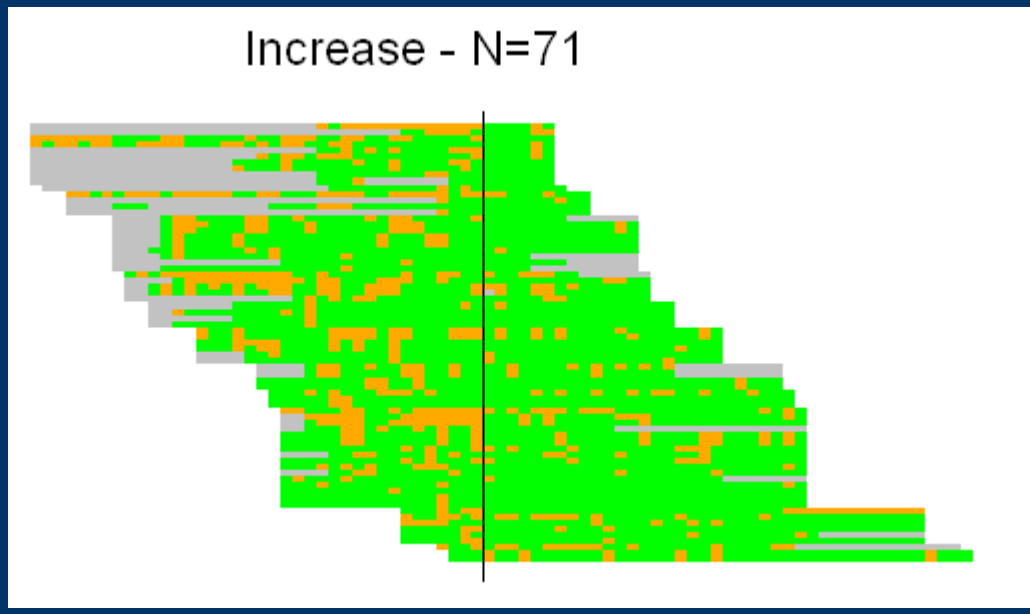
Strong effect on one ballot (the first for the child)

non reg. → 100% vote; vote → 94% vote; abst. → 71% vote

Going further (3)

- An event, not a turning point:
  no long-standing, significant, general effect
  of becoming parents of voters
  (on 7+7 polls / on the whole trajectory)
- Then why would parents vote more?
  - Children not (really) leaving the place?
  - Exploring differences between cases
    with increasing/decreasing participation
    Nothing obvious/visual exploration





Decrease when the event occurs early and/or the parents leave afterwards (not because of age)

+ (seemingly) decrease in less wealthy neighborhoods

→ a turning point, unless you leave ("misregistration") and/or different social groups/relationships to the place

To be continued...