



# The role of the institutional context on the implementation of farmer participatory research projects for sustainable agriculture:

A comparative analysis of the four country 'co-innovation' pilots in the EU PURE-project (WP13)

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# Outline

- General background
- Problem definition
- Objectives
- Theoretical lens
- Research design
- Results
- General conclusions



# General background (1)

- **The involvement of farmers** is widely seen as an essential aspect to enhance the success of research for sustainable agriculture



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Ika Darnhofer



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Achievements and challenges of innovation co-production support initiatives in the Australian and Dutch dairy sectors: A comparative study

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## ARTICLE INFO

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## ABSTRACT

Policymakers and innovation scholars share an increasing interest in how to operationalize innovation support given the increasing number and range of stakeholders engaged in co-producing innovation. Using comparative case study analysis, this article examines support initiatives for dairy sector innovation in The Netherlands and Australia, addressing common challenges such as environmental issues, cat-

## General background (2)

- This study focuses on such **'farmer participatory research'**, carried out in the context of IPM
- The responsiveness of **researchers' specific institutional contexts** however greatly matters to the room they have and able to take to 'do participation' and to make it work

# Problem definition

Although the importance of the role of the institutional research context on farmer participatory research is widely acknowledged,

still, surprisingly little research has actually looked into this context and its specific role in greater detail.



# Objectives

1. Unraveling PURE wp13's institutional context (identifying major dimensions?)
2. Identifying main institutional factors affecting the four country pilots' co-innovation practices

# Theoretical lens (1)

- Farmer participatory research as ‘**Co-innovation**’:
  - A joint learning and innovation process involving both researchers/advisers as farmers (e.g. Neef and Neubert, 2011)





# Theoretical lens (2)

- **Institutions** (hard/soft)
  - ‘Hard’ organisational structures...
  - The sets of ‘soft’ norms, rules, routines, shared expectations that govern the behaviour of actors (e.g. Hall et al., 2001)



# Theoretical lens (3)

- **Institutions?**



# Theoretical lens (4)

- Institutions?



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## Participatory Learning For Sustainable Agriculture

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**Summary.** — Emerging evidence for the success on farms of resource-conserving technologies and practices must not tempt agricultural professionals into making prescriptions about what constitutes sustainable agriculture. Sustainability is a complex and contested concept, and so precise definitions are impossible. The dominant scientific paradigm of positivism has served us well over three to four centuries, but it is not well suited to contexts where uncertainties are high, and problems are open to interpretation. Many methodological and philosophical alternatives to positivism have arisen from both the “hard” and



# Theoretical lens (5)

- **The institutional context:**
  - The context which is embodied by these ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ institutions and which governs the behaviour of actors who operate in it (Hall et al., 2001)

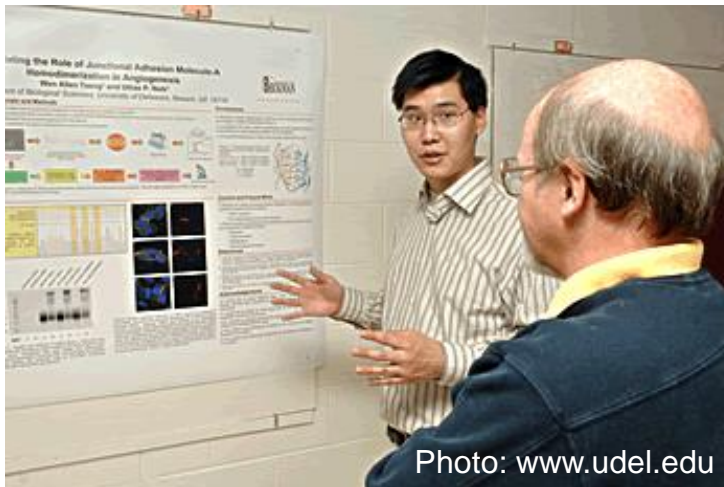


Photo: [www.udel.edu](http://www.udel.edu)



Photo: [www.westminstercollege.edu](http://www.westminstercollege.edu)

# Social structures and human agency (1)

- Are humans victims of the social structures they are operating in?



# Social structures and human agency (2)

- **Human agency:**
  - An individual's power to act independently (e.g. of one's institutional context) (e.g. Elder-Vass, 2010)



# Social structures and human agency (3)



# Research design

- Based on PURE-WP 13 'Co-innovation of IPM'
- Qualitative comparative analysis of the four country 'co-innovation experiments' (DK, FR, D, NL)
- Reconstruction of each pilot's key events, dynamics and contexts (project documents, online reflection meetings, the four joint pilot visits)
- Fieldwork summer '14:
  - Personal pilot visits
  - Additional in-depth interviews with the researchers/advisers

## Results (1)

# Institutional context dimensions

## **Institutional context dimensions WP13**

**1. Personal**

**2. Pilot team**

**3. Organisational**

**4. Pilot basis**

**5. WP13**

**6. The PURE-IPM-project**

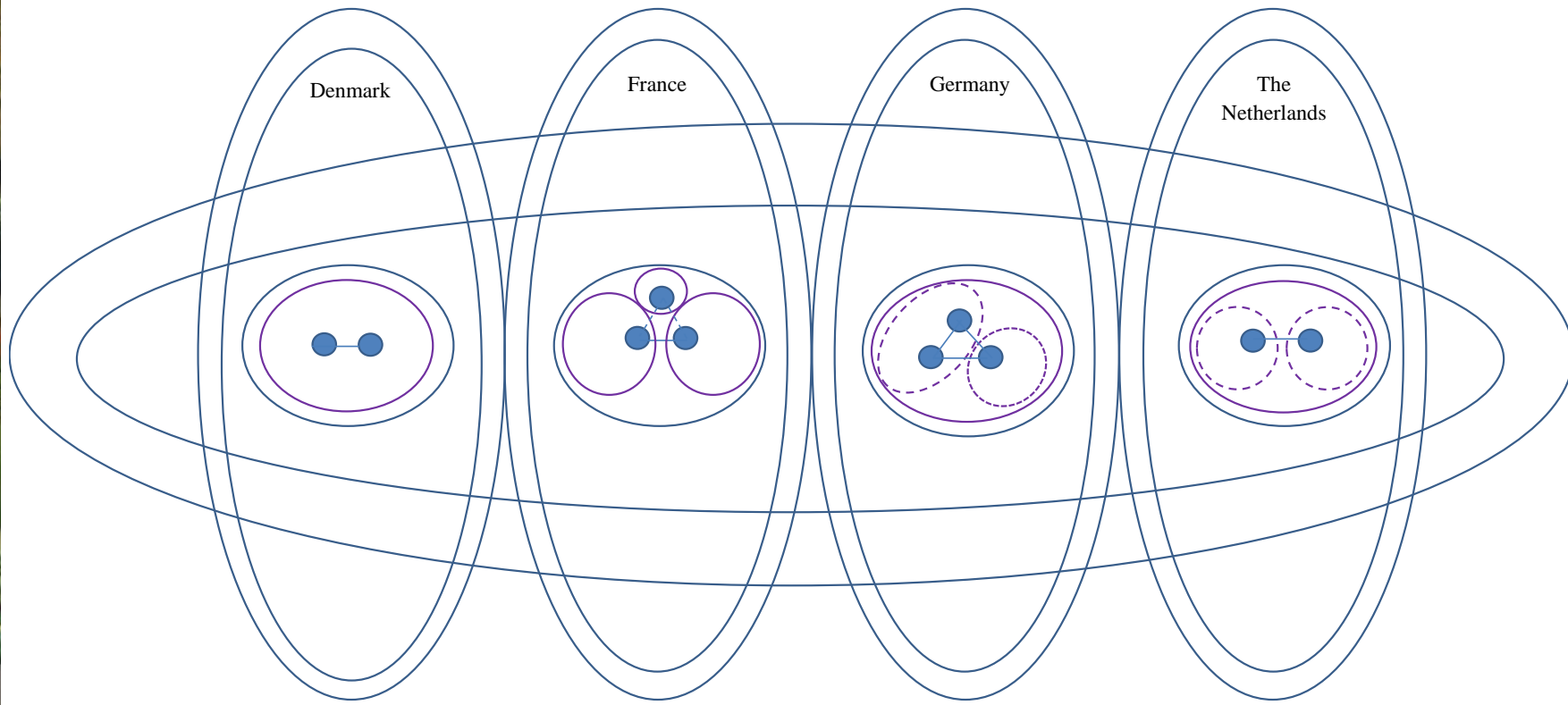
**7. Country AKIS**

**8. Country level**

## Results (2)

# Institutional dimensions in WP13

**Figure1:** The country pilot teams and the dimensions of the institutional context



# Results (3)

## Institutional factors

Inst. context dimensions	Key institutional factors
1. Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Fixed' professional identities, roles and routines</li> </ul>
2. Pilot team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composition of country-pilot teams</li> </ul>
3. Organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Fixed' institutional roles and objectives</li> </ul>
4. Pilot basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The specific projects on which the pilots are based</li> </ul>
5. WP13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions within the work package</li> </ul>
6. The PURE-IPM-project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutionalisation of co-innovation within the PURE-IPM-project</li> </ul>
7. Country AKIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The institutional landscape of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS)</li> </ul>
8. Country level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Country-specific cultural norms</li> </ul>



# General conclusions

- The institutional context greatly affects (+/-) the potential of co-innovation
- ‘New methods, old institutions’ (Hall & Nahdy, 1999)
- Human agency makes a difference!
- Implementing co-innovation ‘successfully’ requires careful consideration and construction (e.g. project architecture, key project leaders, composition of teams, institutional configurations etc.)

# Thank you for your attention!

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(PURE-WP13 on 'Co-innovation of IPM')



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