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The sustainable agricultural social system

A social science framework to grasp the diversity of farming systems for sustainability assessment

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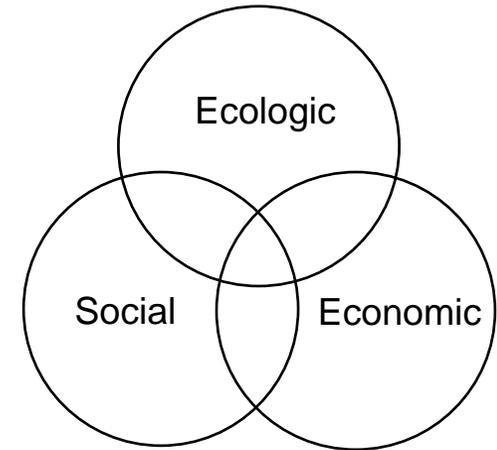


Background



Sustainability in agriculture

- Rising key words ‘sustainable agriculture’ & ‘agricultural sustainability’ (VELTEN et al. 2015, JANKER et al. 2018)
- Sustainability assessments evaluate what is perceived as ‘good’ or ‘sustainable agriculture’ (DE OLDE et al. 2016, JANKER & MANN 2018)
- Sustainability is mostly seen as multi-dimensional, with at least three dimensions (VELTEN et al. 2015, SLÄTMO et al. 2017, JANKER & MANN 2018)





Sustainability in agriculture

- Previous research: In sustainability assessments on farm level, there is no consensus of what the social dimension of sustainability should entail
 - Major discrepancies: (1) actors addressed,
(2) sustainability thresholds
 - Similarities only what is not sustainable, e.g. human rights & labour law violations (cf. JANKER & MANN 2018)
 - Potential explanation: diversity of production systems and social conditions worldwide



Sustainability in agriculture

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VS.





Research idea

- What is socially sustainable farming?
 - Need for a framework
 - flexible / general enough to depict individual actors and social conditions worldwide
 - precise enough to differentiate ‘sustainable agriculture’
e.g. from organic agriculture (often in the European context)
and from obviously unsustainable agriculture (often worldwide)

Research idea:

Identify

- adequate social setting
- sustainability measure, locally adaptable
- a „way to go“ instead of fixed indicators

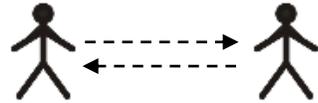


Conception



Step 1) 'Social'

- What does 'social' actually mean?

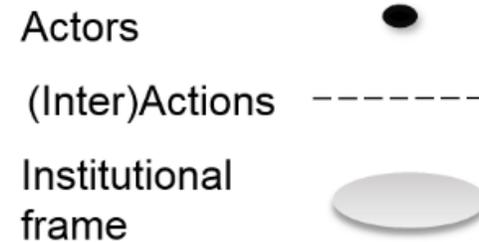
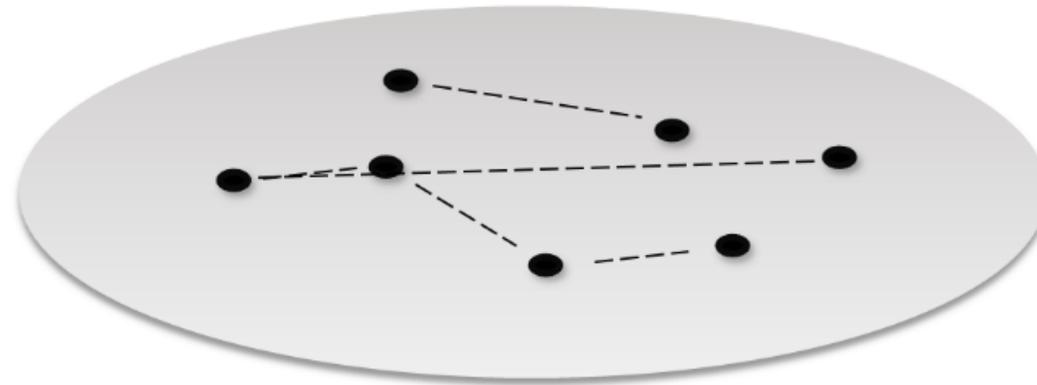


- social interaction, on individual level but also beyond
- How to grasp complex interactions in farming?
- system approach (close to the farming system, cf. PANNELL 1999)
- PARSONS' (1991) 'social system of change'



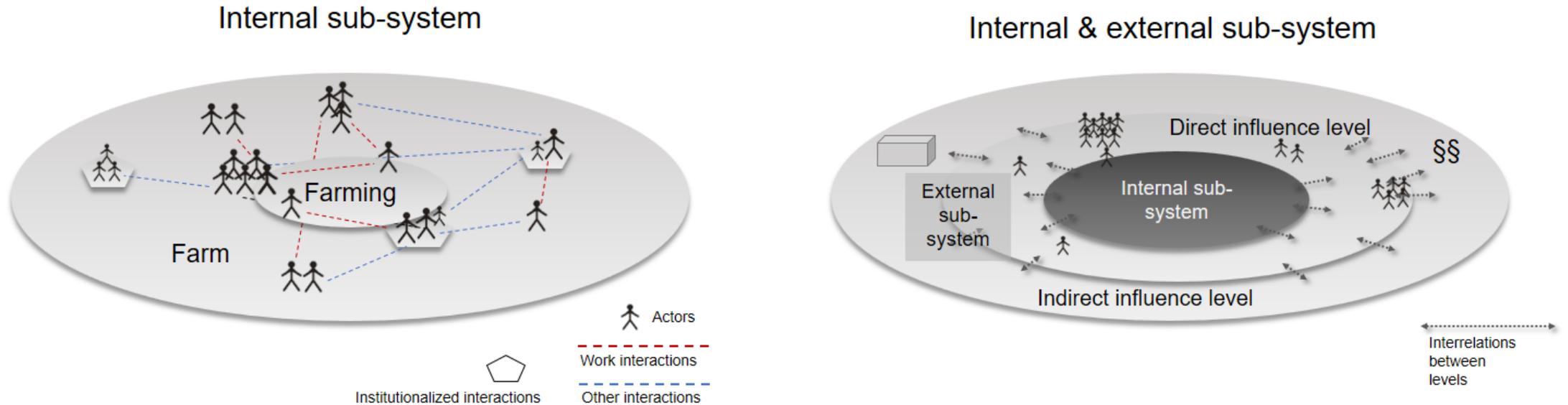
Step 2) Social system

Parsons' «social system of change» (PARSONS 1991)





Step 3) Agricultural social system

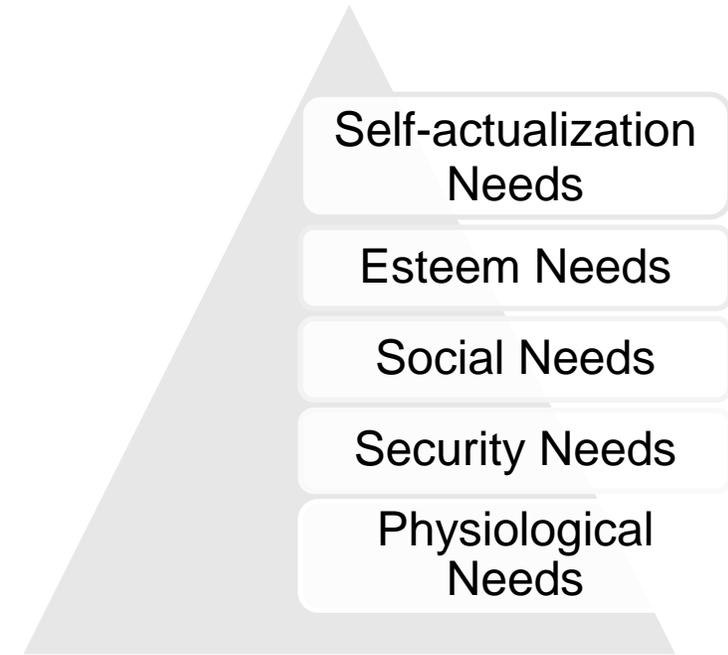


- Identify social actors and actors groups through social interactions
- Identify institutional embedding, e.g. laws, institutions etc.
- importance determined by direct and indirect forms of interactions



Step 4) Sustainable agricultural social system

- What does sustainability mean in this system?
- ‘Sustainable development’, according to the Brundtland report (WCED 1987) only term scientists agree upon (e.g. HOLDEN et al. 2016)
- Fulfil the ‘needs of present & future generations’ (WCED 1987)
- Needs concept according to MASLOW (1943)





Step 4) Sustainable agricultural social system

- What does sustainability mean in this system?
- ‘Sustainable development’, according to the Brundtland report (WCED 1987) only term scientists agree upon (e.g. HOLDEN et al. 2016)
 - Fulfil the ‘needs of present & future generations’ (WCED 1987)
- Needs concept according to MASLOW (1943)
 - «needs» subjectively & culturally influenced (e.g. TAY & DIENER 2011)
 - categories and needs fulfilment must be defined locally, according their importance for the stakeholders
- Rights as bottom threshold (UN 1948 & 1966a/b, SHUE 1996, GASPER 2007)



Summary & Outlook



Summary

- Novel framework to capture and comprehend ‘social’ and ‘sustainability’ on farms
- Benefits: Framework to capture social actors and their needs within an agricultural system
 - overcomes operationalization problems, such as actors ranges and sustainability thresholds
 - integrates already existing, validated social sciences approaches



Outlook

- Future steps / limitations:

- Framework needs practice tests, and refinement in local embedding
- Review comparability between different sociocultural systems
- Clarify role of conflicts and power asymmetries, e.g. future generations
- (Re-)Integrate with other sustainability dimensions

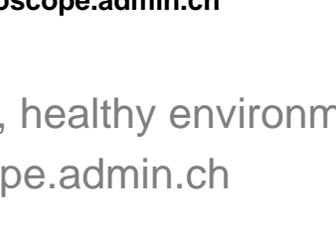
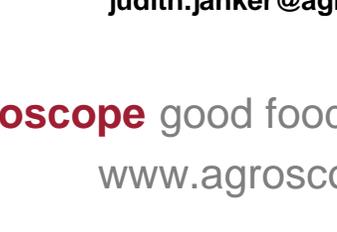
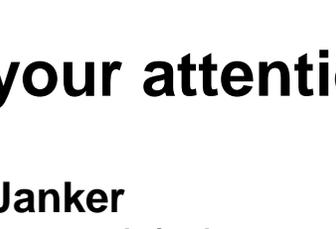
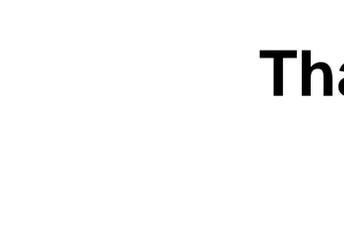
e.g. Rööös et al. 2019

e.g. JANKER, *under review*



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Thank you for your attention.

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