

Welcome!

**Socio-ecological Research:
The Cases of Rural Development
and Agro-Biotechnology**

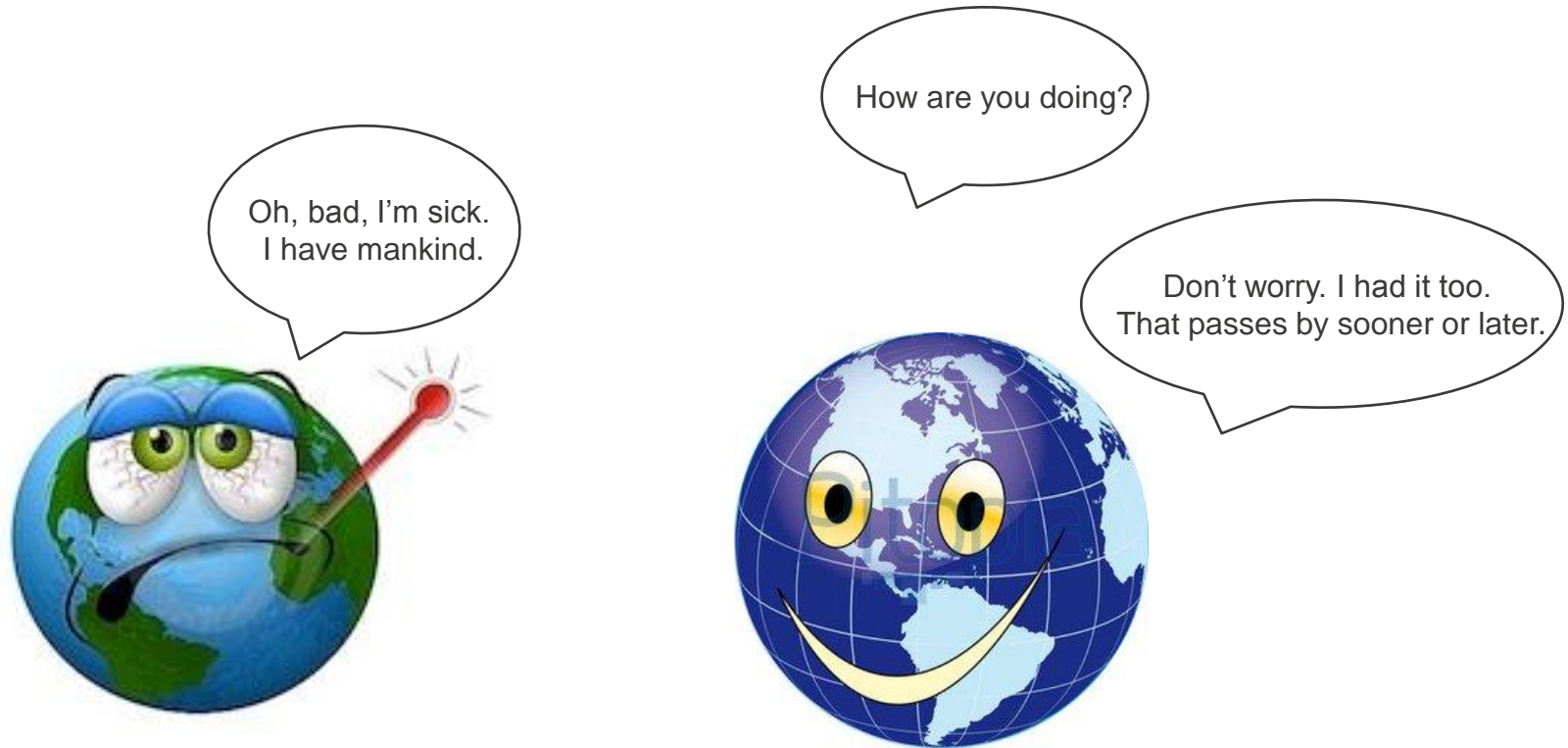
Daniela Gottschlich & Dr. Tanja Mölders

in cooperation with

Prof. Dr. Hanna Podedworna

Dr. Piotr Stankiewicz

Dr. Lutz Laschewski



Two planets meet.



Structure of our lecture

■ Socio Ecological Research:

- Institutional framework
- Social Ecology and the Concept of Societal Relations to Nature
- Social Ecology as an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach

■ Networking – first step

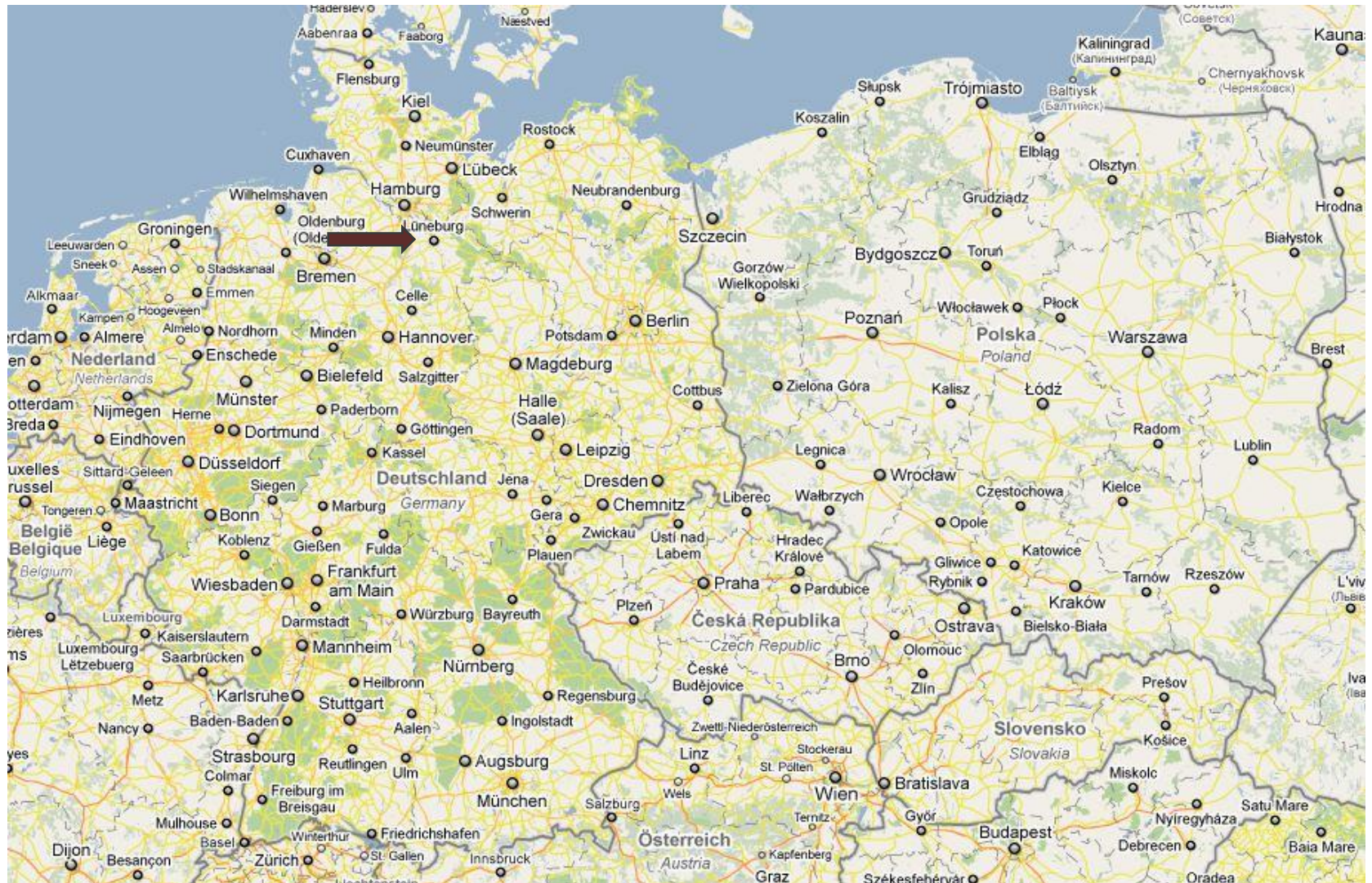
■ The PoNa Project and what it is all about:

PoNa – Politiken der Naturgestaltung (German)

Shaping Nature – Policy, Politics and Polity (English)

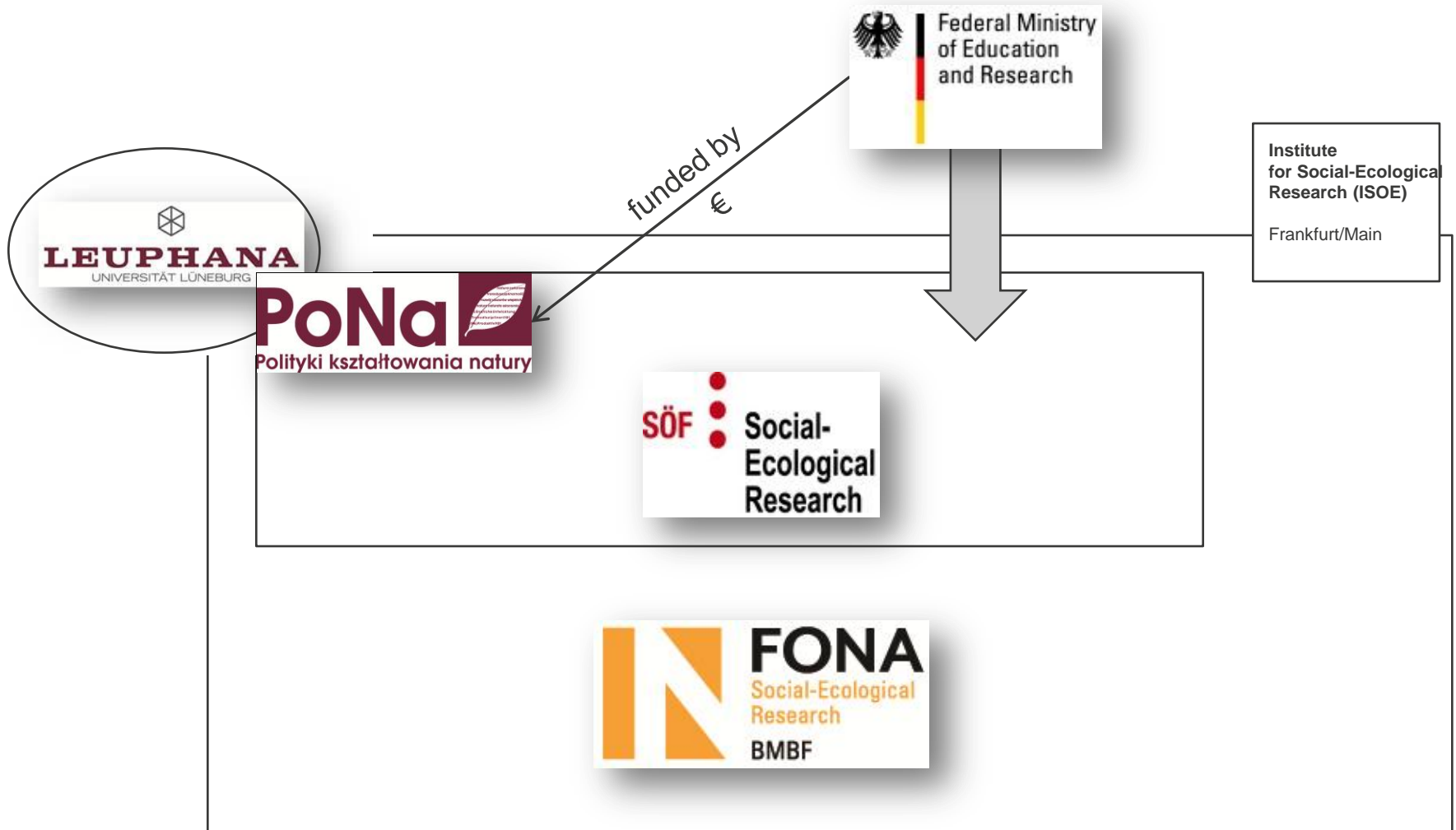
Polityki kształtowania natury (Polish)

- Central research question
- Project design
- Milestones
- Methods





Institutional framework: Social-ecological Research Funding Programme





Social-ecological Research: What is it all about?

”Social ecology is the science that studies the relationship between people and their natural and social environment.

Social-ecological research probes the existing forms of these relationships, and the possibility of transforming them, by means of a perspective that is not bound to any one discipline. The goal of this research is to generate knowledge that can serve as a resource for social actors, increasing their capacity to guarantee the reproduction and development of their society and the natural conditions of their lives.”

Institute for Social-Ecological Research (2000)

“Social-ecological Research is a new kind of practice- and problem-oriented research which focuses on sustainability issues at the interface between nature and society.”

German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF, www.sozial-oekologische-forschung.org/en/724.php)



Social Ecology and the Concept of Societal Relations to Nature

- Social ecology = as the science of societal relations to nature
- Societal relations to nature have to be regulated in every society to sustain the cross-generational continuation of societal processes necessary for life.
- The *material regulation* is linked to a multiplicity of cultural *symbolizations* and embedded thereby in societal structures and processes of communication.
- Societal relations to nature can be defined as “symbolically mediated material-energetic patterns of regulation.” (Becker/ Jahn 2005: 9)



Social Ecology and the Concept of Societal Relations to Nature

■ Why is this kind of research needed?

- The usual political and economic mechanisms has been failed to solve complex and hybrid problems
- Two of the leading challenges facing society today:
 - 1) to deal constructively with uncertainty
 - 2) a necessary openness to new approaches
- Rethinking current scientific concepts
Reformulation of the problem:
'environmental problems' → crisis of societal relations to nature



Methodological Guidelines of Social Ecology

- “Research should be both theoretical and empirical in character.
- Research should not be directed at the great scheme of things; rather it should concentrate on limitable social-ecological phenomena and problem-complexes.
- Social-ecological problem-complexes should be reworked in a methodologically transparent way into scientific problems.
- Research results should be made available to societally relevant practices, technologies or interpretations.”

(Becker/ Jahn 2005: 4)

■ Social ecology moves between two poles

- 1) policy-oriented research → solutions to practical societal problems
- 2) theoretical science → organizing of methodically produced knowledge



Social Ecology as an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach

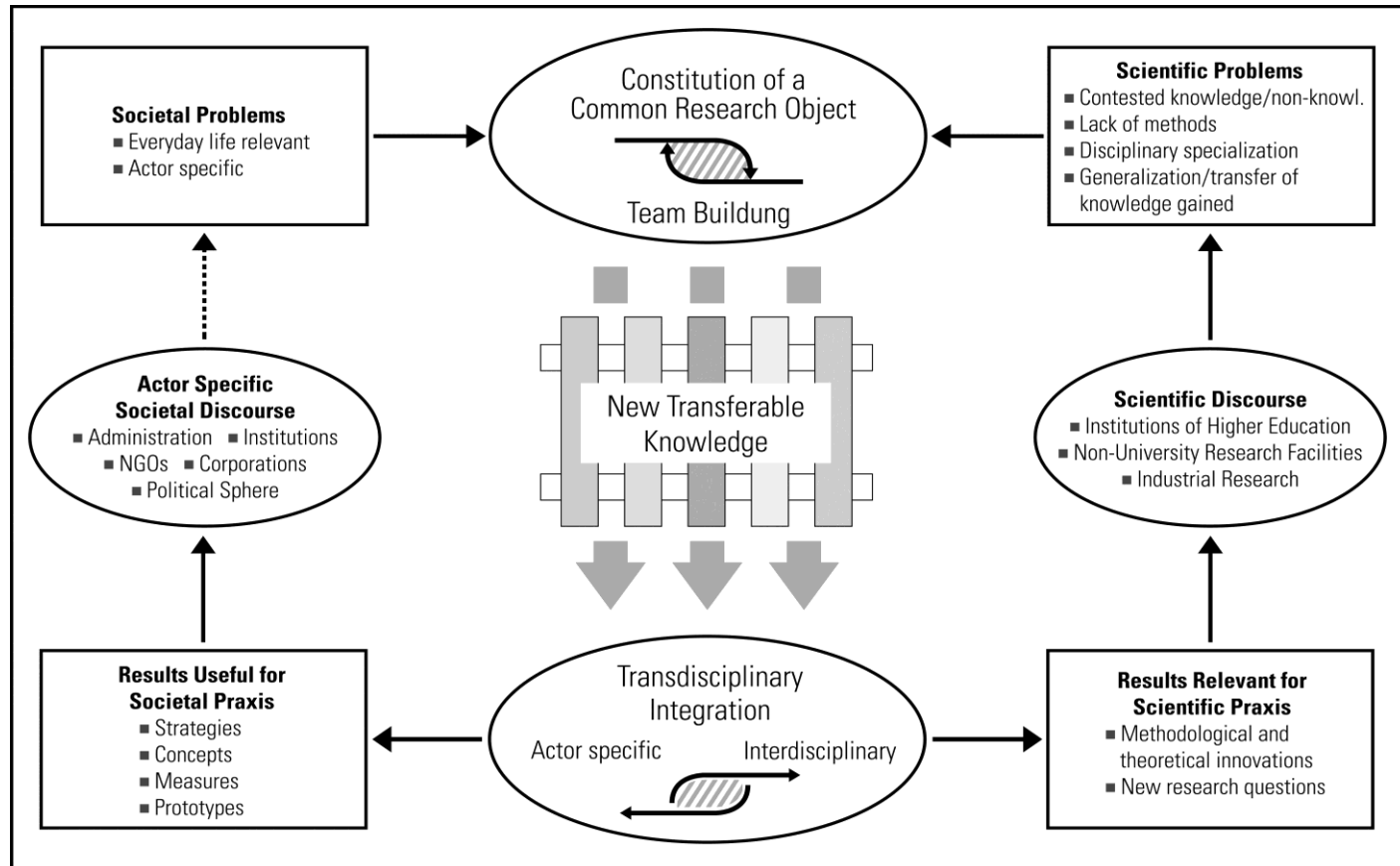
Involvement of very heterogeneous research partners

- Interdisciplinarity: Scientists from various disciplines
- Transdisciplinarity: Incorporation of insights from social practice

→ A transdisciplinary approach includes pertinent social players in the research process, collating their 'stake' on problems and their wealth of everyday practical knowledge with scientific problems and insights.



Social Ecology as an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach



Thomas Jahn (2008): Transdisziplinarität in der Forschungspraxis. In: Matthias Bergmann/Engelbert Schramm (Hrsg.): Transdisziplinäre Forschung. Integrative Forschungsprozesse verstehen und bewerten. Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, S. 21–37.



Networking – first step



http://static.wiwo.de/media/1/fotolia-netzwerke480-jpg_453055.jpg



The PoNa-Project – what is it all about?

- PoNa – Politiken der Naturgestaltung (German)
- Shaping Nature – Policy, Politics and Polity (English)
- Polityki kształtowania natury (Polish)

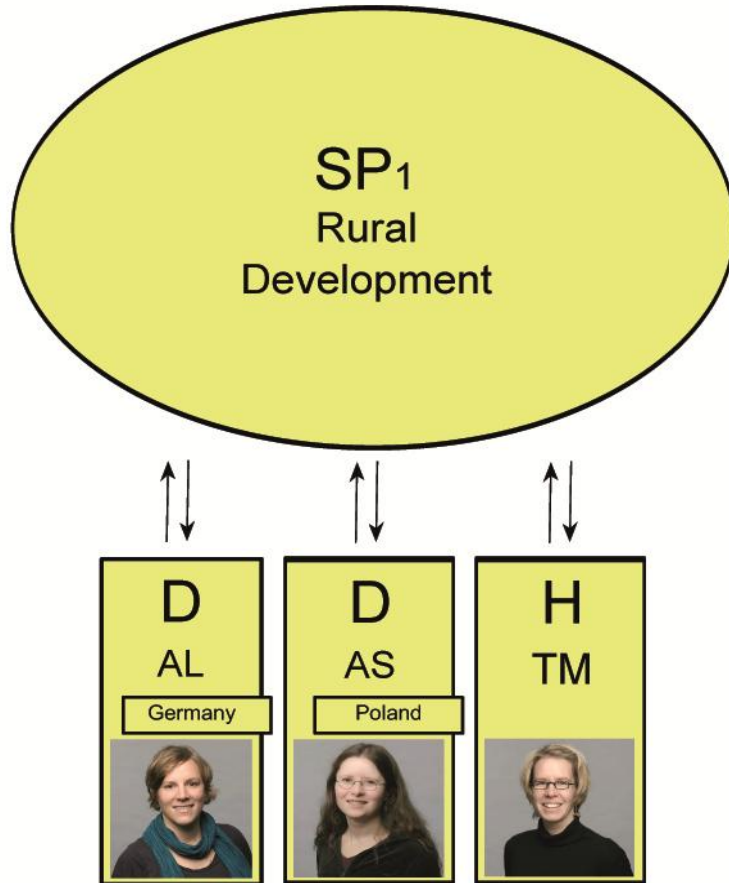
- **Research question:** How do policy, politics and polity shape the societal relations to nature?

- **Problem:** Even political “sustainability” strategies are to some extent part of the social-ecological crises

- **Recommendation:** Processes of rethinking
→ Procedures, structures, and contents

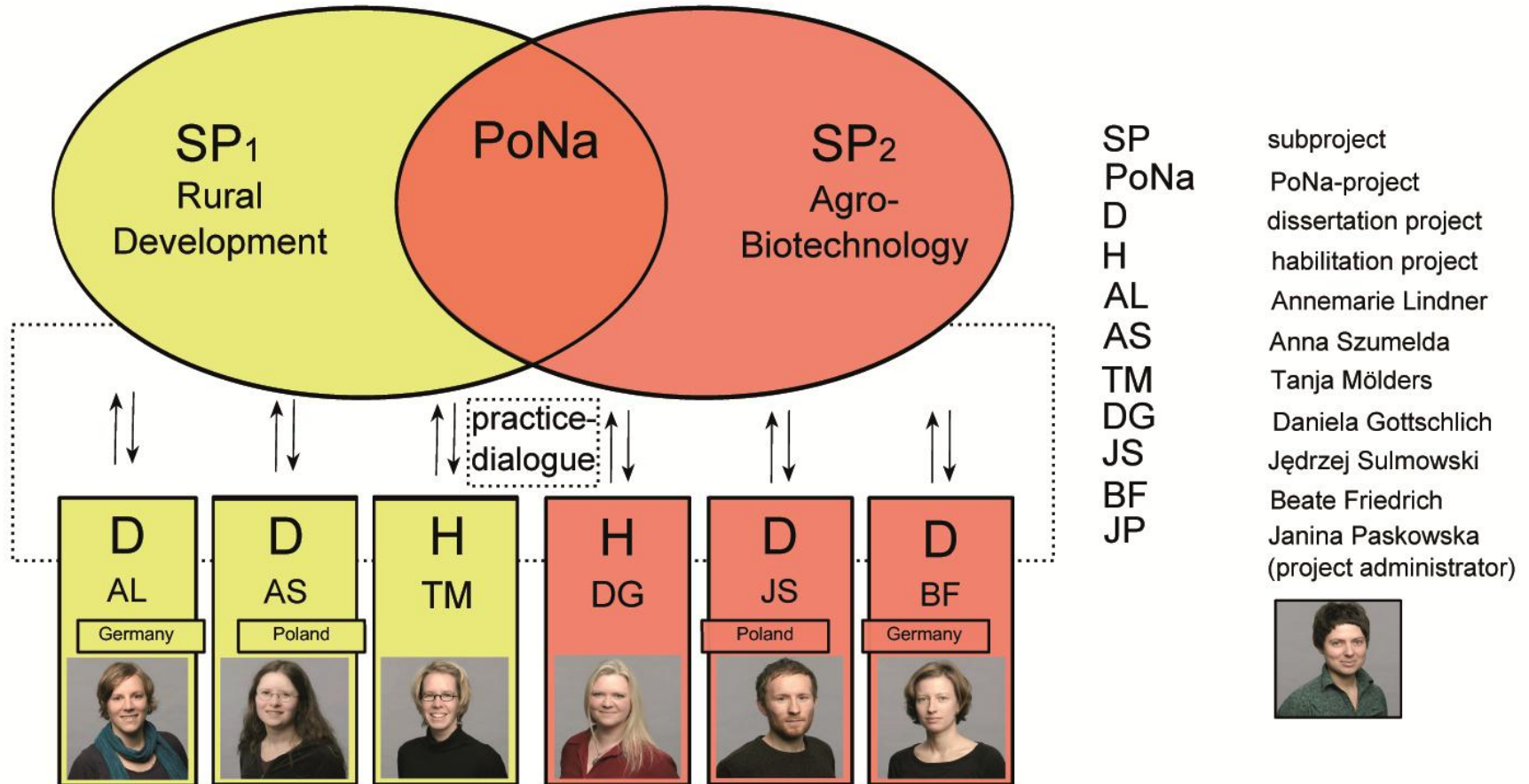


The PoNa-Project – design





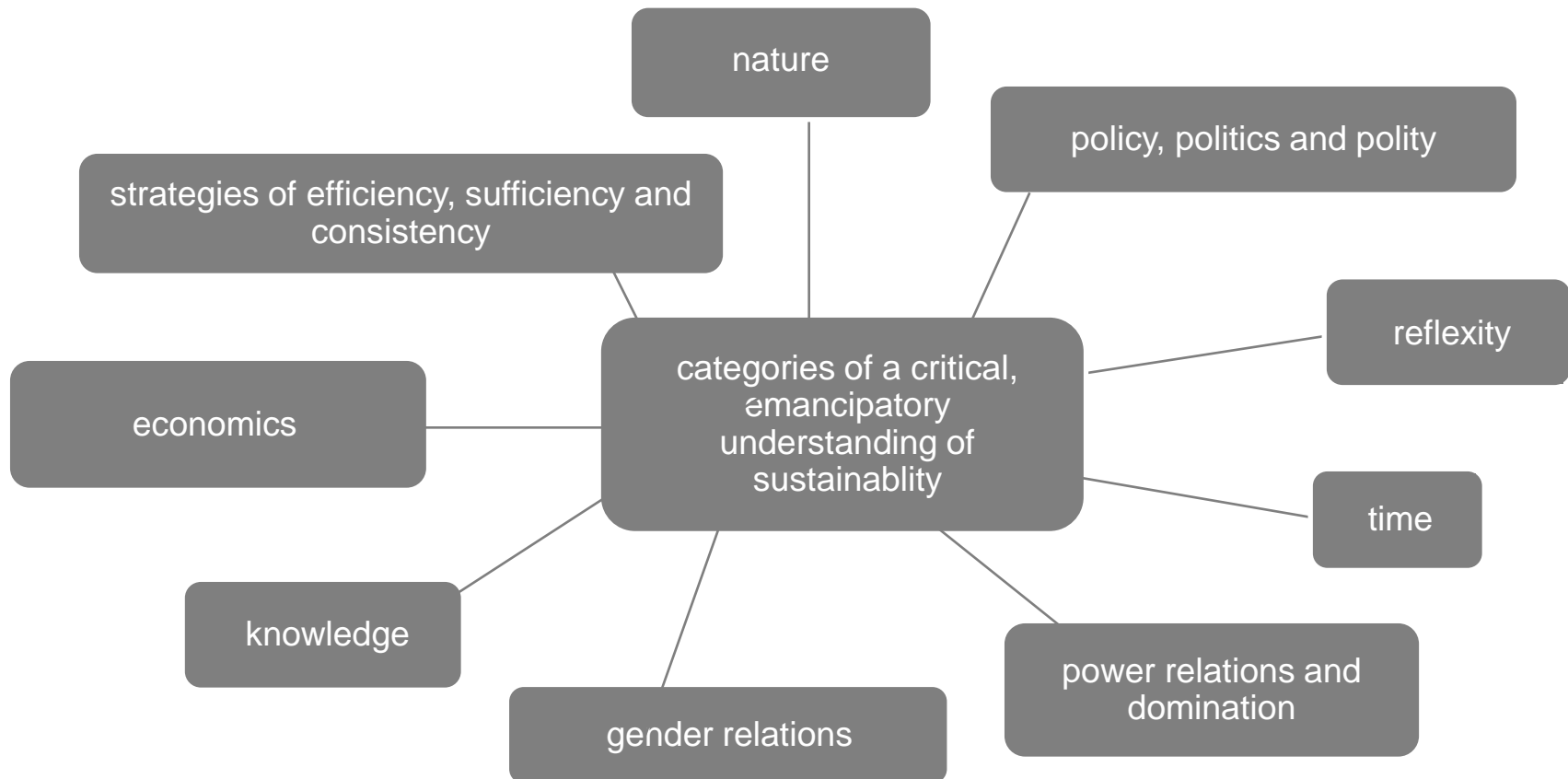
The PoNa-Project – design





The PoNa-project – milestones of research activities

- **2010:** Development of a critical, emancipatory, understanding of sustainability





The PoNa-project – Milestones of research activities

- **2011:** Descriptive and interpretative analysis of central political documents in the fields of rural development and biotechnology in agriculture
- **2012:** Identifying best practices
- **2013:** Future Scenarios



The PoNa-project – Methods of research

- Analysis of central political documents: discourse analysis
- Dissertation and habilitation projects: various interview techniques
- Bringing together perspectives from different disciplines as well as perspectives from practitioners: interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methods of integration (e. g. scenario workshops)

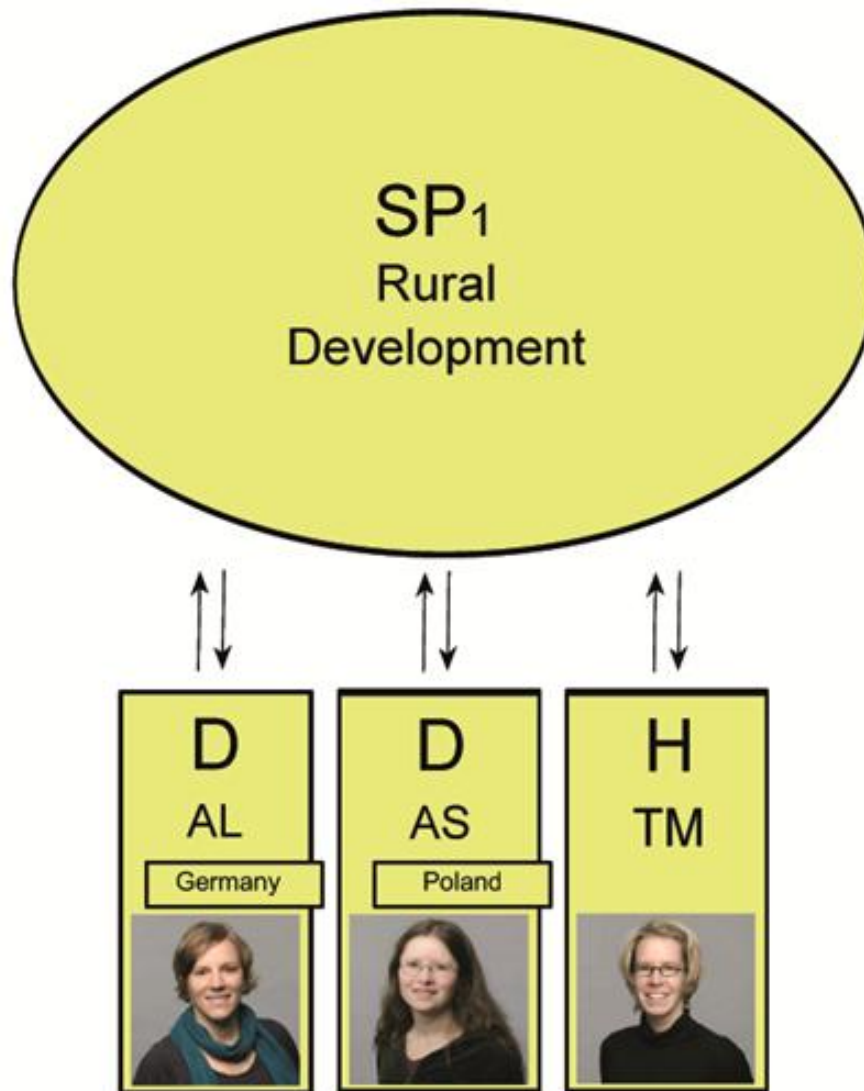


The PoNa-project – Subproject 1: Rural development

- How do rural policies, especially European agricultural policy and its national implementations in Germany and Poland, shape societal relations to nature?
 - Examination of the various understandings of nature and the ways, in which these understandings form different strategies, programmes, measures, and practices
 - Criticism of an understanding of sustainability which is primarily competition-oriented.
 - Identification of forms of economy which enable a sustainable shaping of nature
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1. Analysis of central political documents in the field of rural development
 2. Analysis of the concept of multifunctionality



The PoNa-project – Subproject 1: Rural development





Doctoral thesis Anna Szumelda

- Small-scale-farming
- Local economies
- Debates on the concept of “Degrowth”
- Regional differences of rural areas



Doctoral thesis Annemarie Lindner

- Societal relations to nature and agrobiodiversity
- Dualism between protection and use of agrobiodiversity
- Rural development as framework



Habilitation thesis Tanja Mölders

- Socio-ecological understanding of rurality
- Overcome the dichotomic pattern between an either material or symbolic understanding of what is rural
- Societal relations to nature as relations to nature and gender
- Empirical studies:
 - Small-scale-farming in Poland (reference to Anna)
 - Agrobiodiversity in Germany (reference to Annemarie)



The PoNa-project – Subproject 2: Biotechnology in Agriculture

- Since mid-1990s: use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture one of the most hotly debated issues
 - Analysis of political processes in the multilevel system accompanying the introduction or the rejection of GMOs as food and feed in the EU, Germany and Poland: How do they change the relations between societies and nature?
 - Identification of sustainable and unsustainable elements of these processes
 - Recommendations for shaping societal relations to nature in the field of agricultural biotechnology in a sustainable way
1. Analysis of central political documents in the field of agricultural biotechnology
 2. Research on conflicts resulting from the coexistence regulations



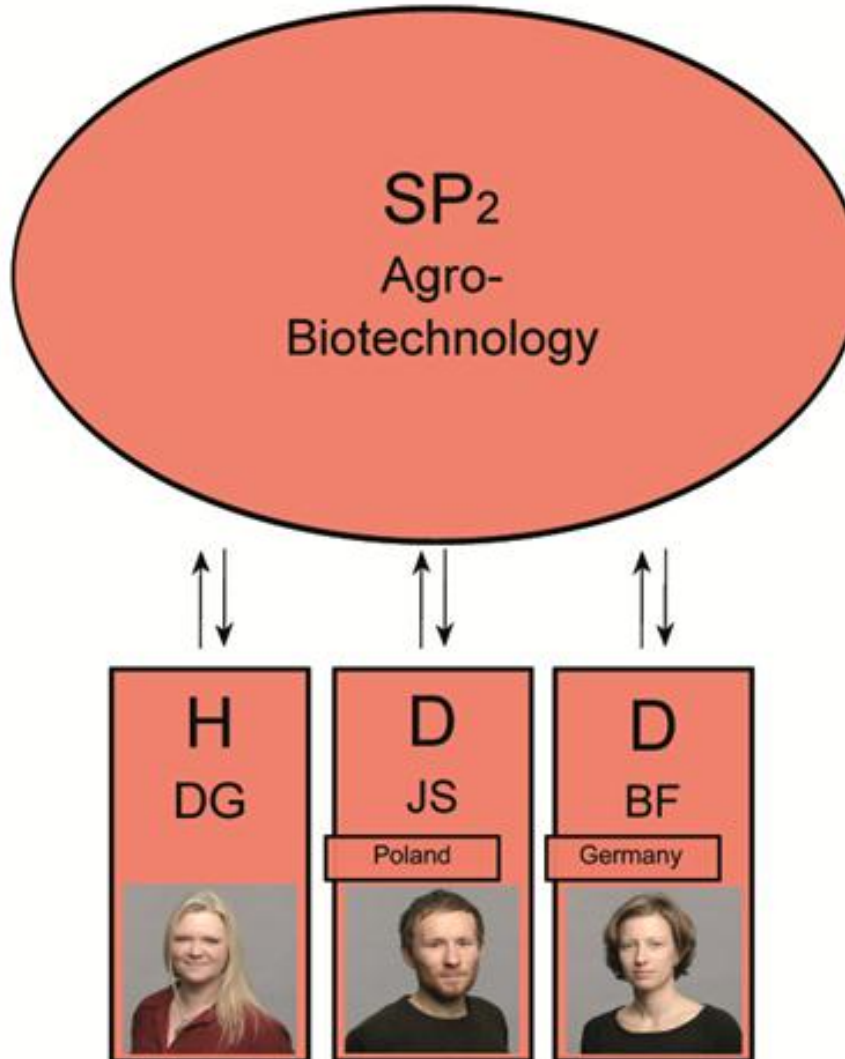
The PoNa-project – Subproject 2: Biotechnology in Agriculture

3. Analysis of images used in campaigns about GMOs: A picture-discourse-analysis





The PoNa-project – Subproject 2: Biotechnology in Agriculture





Doctoral thesis Jędrzej Sulmowski

- Use of expert knowledge in the discourse about the new GMO law in Poland
- Sound science – “objective” and “neutral”?
- Democratization of expertise
- Reflexive knowledge governance



Doctoral thesis Beate Friedrich

- Local conflicts on agricultural biotechnology
- Societal relations to nature
- Conflict sociology



Habilitation thesis Daniela Gottschlich

- Agro-biotechnology as a test of democratic accountability for societal choices

- How, by whom and where in the multi-level political are new forms of societal relations to nature negotiated?

- Relationship between democracy, sustainable development, and the governance of conflicts over the use and the implementation of biotechnology
 - processes of (de)politicization
 - knowledge policies
 - (transnational) anti-GMO-Movement = new political actor



References

- Becker, Egon/ Jahn, Thomas (2005): Societal Relations to Nature. Outline of a Critical Theory in the ecological crisis. Published in German in: Böhme, Gernot/ Manzei, Alexandra (Ed.) (2003): Kritische Theorie der Technik und der Natur. München, S. 91-112, (http://www.isoe.de/ftp/darmstadttext_engl.pdf).
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- Institute for Social-Ecological Research (2000): Social-Ecological Research – Conceptual Framework for a New Funding Policy. Synopsis of the Report for the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, written by ISOE (Egon Becker, Thomas Jahn, Engelbert Schramm, Diana Hummel, Immanuel Stiess). Translated by Ronald D. Faust. Frankfurt a. M., (<http://www.isoe.de/ftp/soceco.pdf>).
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Thank you for your attention!

Questions and open discussion