

Agri-environmental cooperatives in The Netherlands and Germany

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Background



LandscapePartners project

“The contribution of multi-stakeholder partnerships to sustainable landscape management”

- June 2010- May 2012
- Funded through EU Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowship

Introduction

Landscape associations/ Agri-environmental collaboratives

- Claim to contribute to sustainable landscape management
- EU Rural Development Policy aims to “increase sustainable management of agricultural land”
- How is sustainability determined and measured? Qualitatively/ quantitative indicators
- Monitoring, recording, reporting of groups in Germany & The Netherlands



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Management activities

Examples: protect species and habitats (Natura 2000), marketing of local products, help implement regional plans, negotiate with landowners



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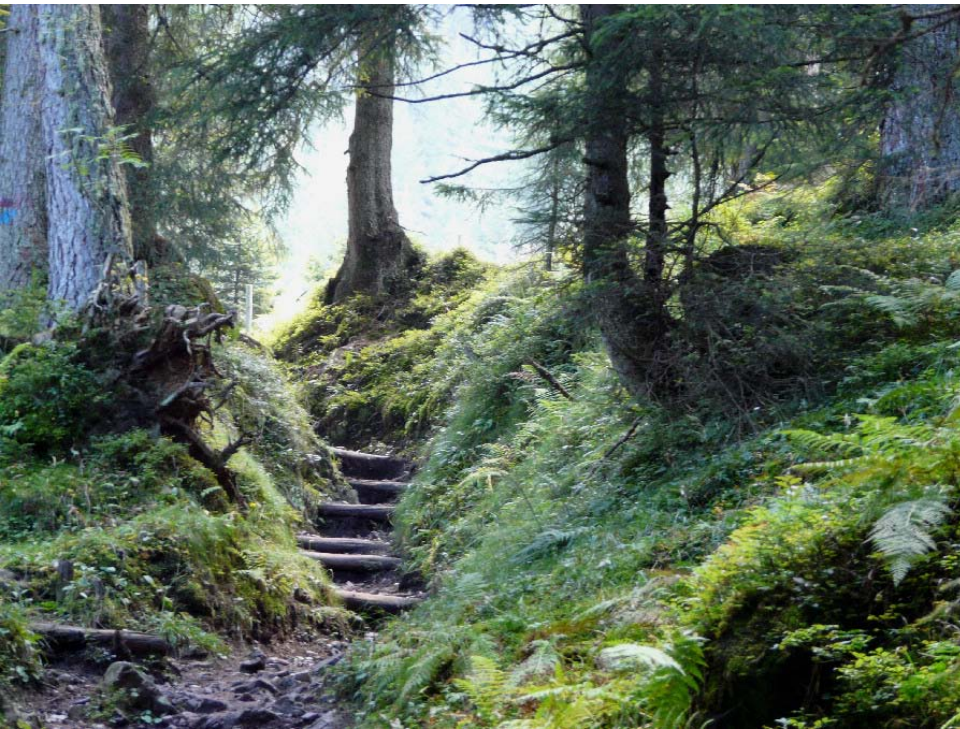


Management activities

- Establish and maintain landscape elements (trees, hedgerows, ponds), cycling and walking paths
- Support farmers in entering agri-environmental schemes and cross-boundary management



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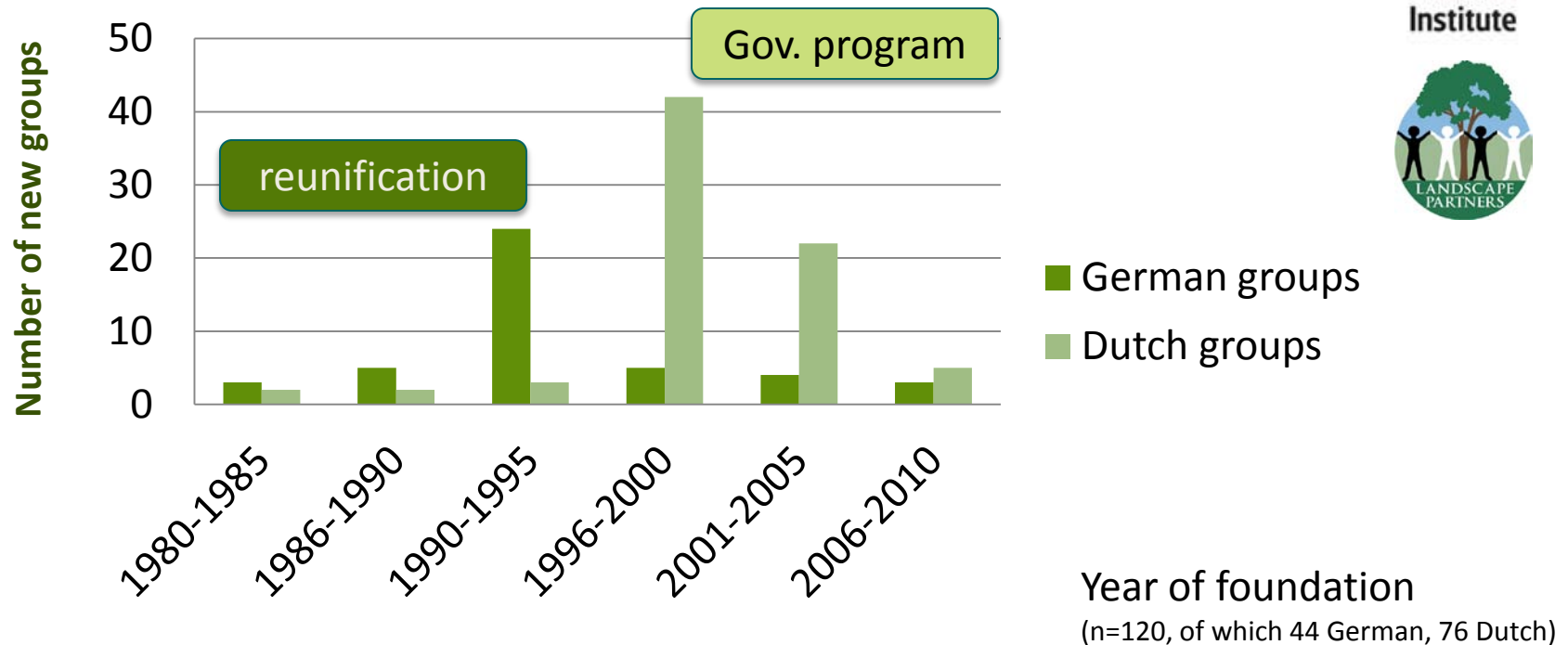




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Formation of associations



- DE – Led by farmers, conservationists, municipalities or district government, supported by a national umbrella organisation. Bottom-up approach but considerable state support in some states
- NL – Led by farmers, umbrella organisations. At a time also driven by high researcher interest in self-regulatory and collaborative approaches. Bonus payments available for adjacent farmers collaborating on meadow bird protection.

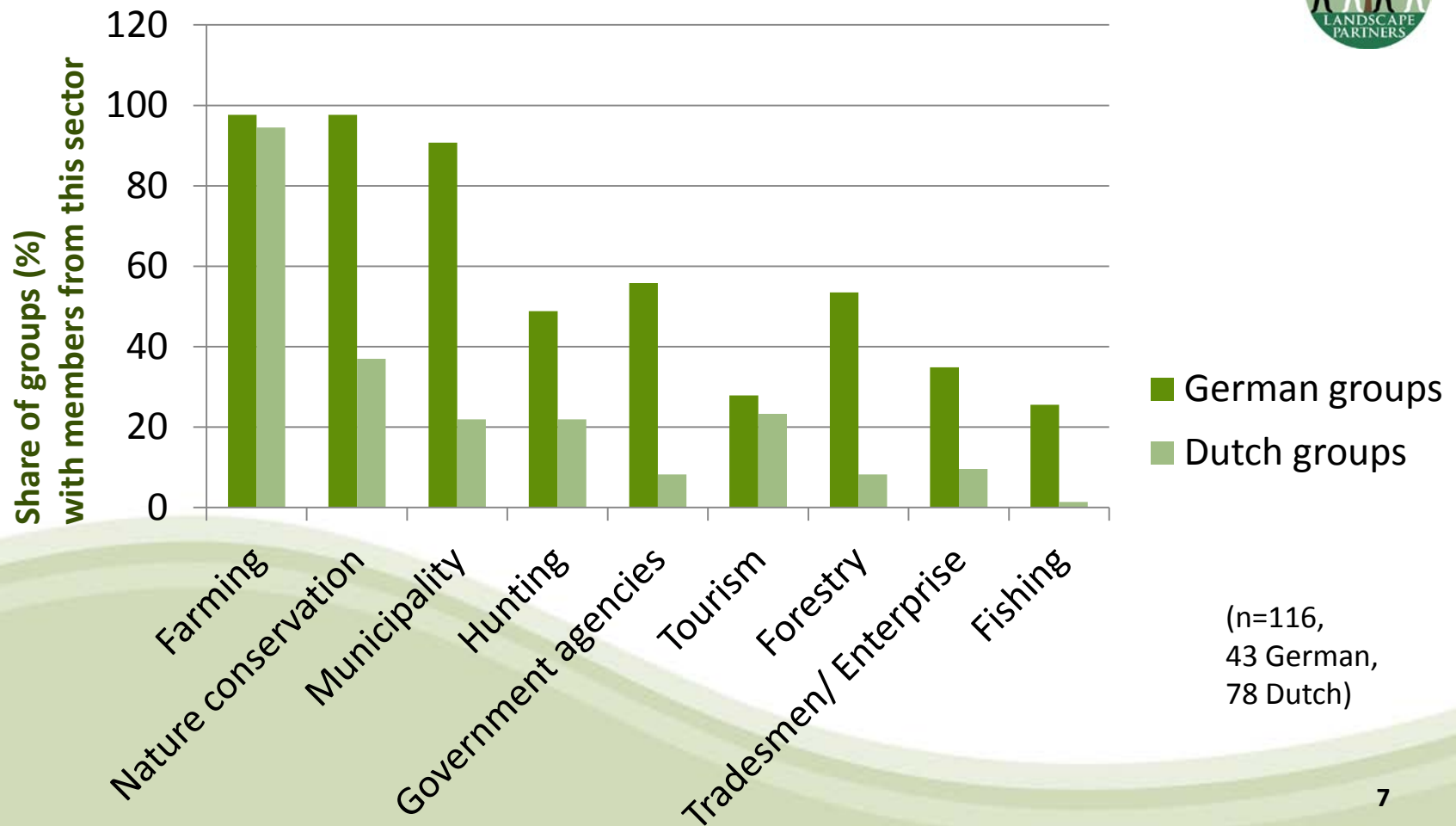


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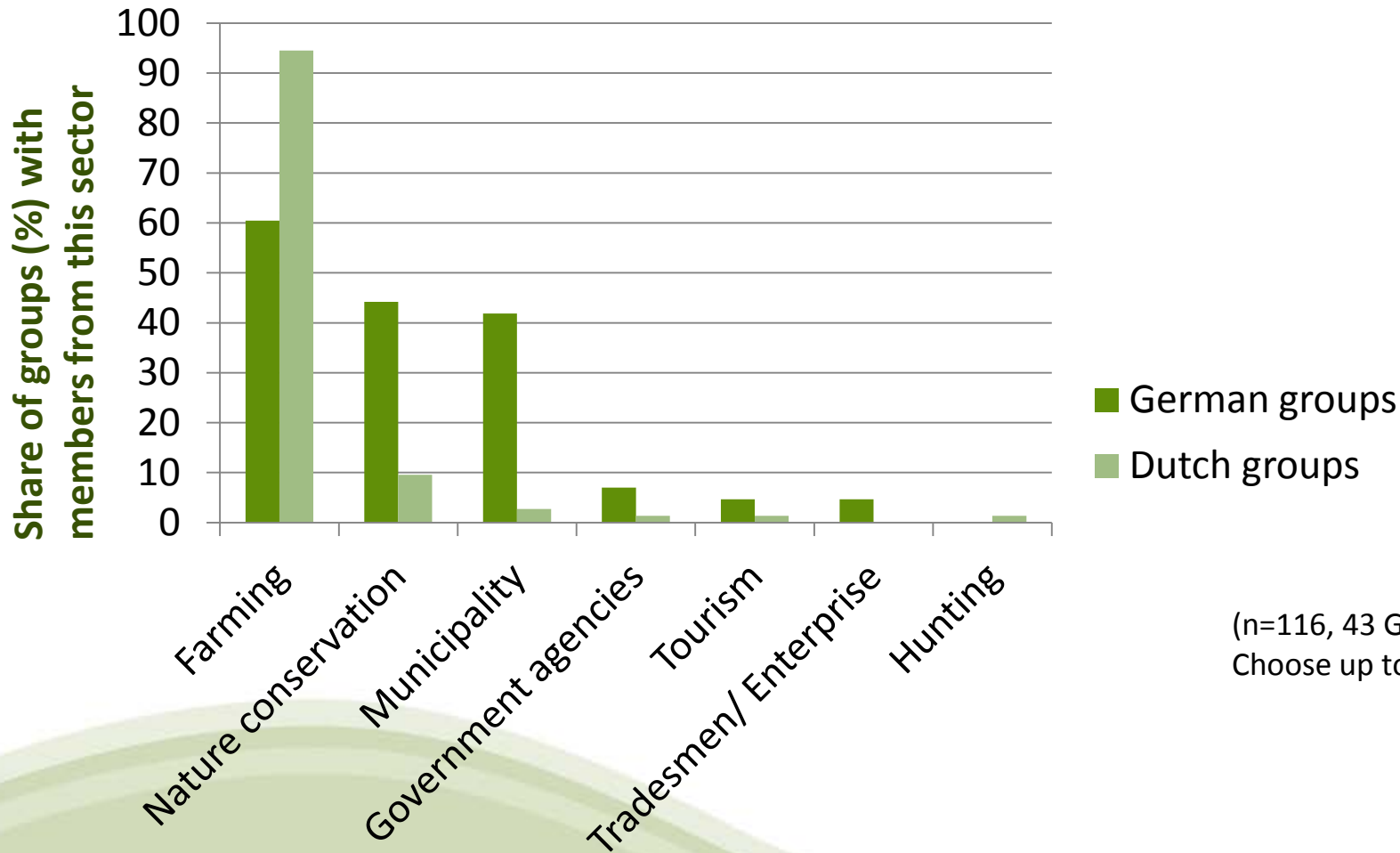


Membership composition

- The broader the membership → more representative of community



Membership composition – main sector



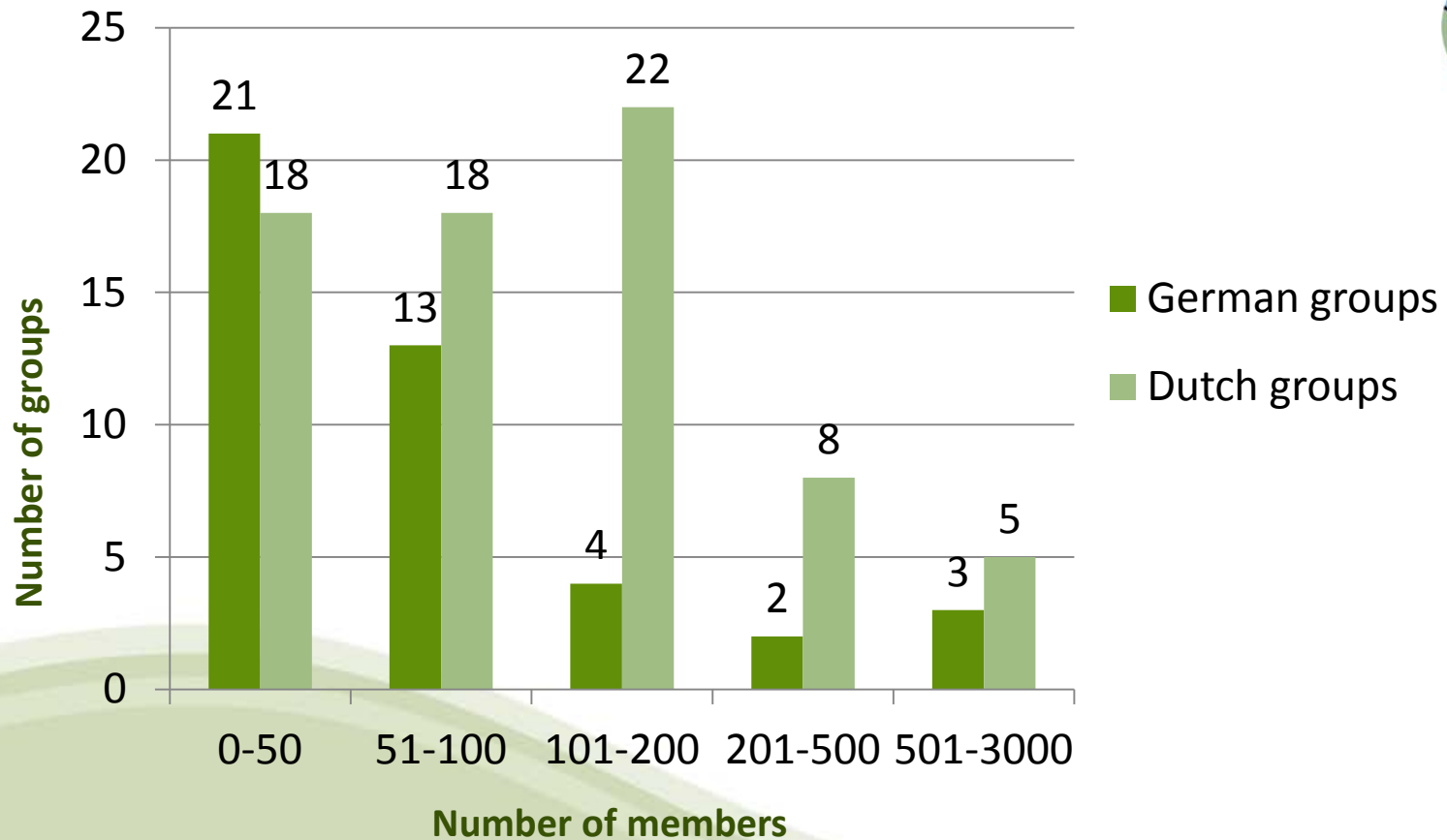
(n=116, 43 German, 78 Dutch)
Choose up to two sectors

Who is involved?

- Commitment of municipalities and the district government
- Support from the province/state government in recognising groups as competent partners and providing small but continuous institutional funding stream
- Link to community residents (e.g. ‘expert pensioners’, other local groups) important for broader social impact
- Agency representatives are only marginally involved –kept in the loop but don’t dominate decision making in a group (important for ‘bottom up’ perception)
- Cooperation with researchers, conservation NGOs (e.g. bird watchers), farmer interest groups, local businesses

Membership size

- Between 7 and 2000 members, averaging 150, median 50



Geographical scale – working area

Germany (n=38)

- ▶ typically districts (Landkreis)
- ▶ with recent municipal reforms some go bigger than they think is good for the approach to work, others cover only a small area (risk of parochialism)
- ▶ 970 km² on average (901 km² median)

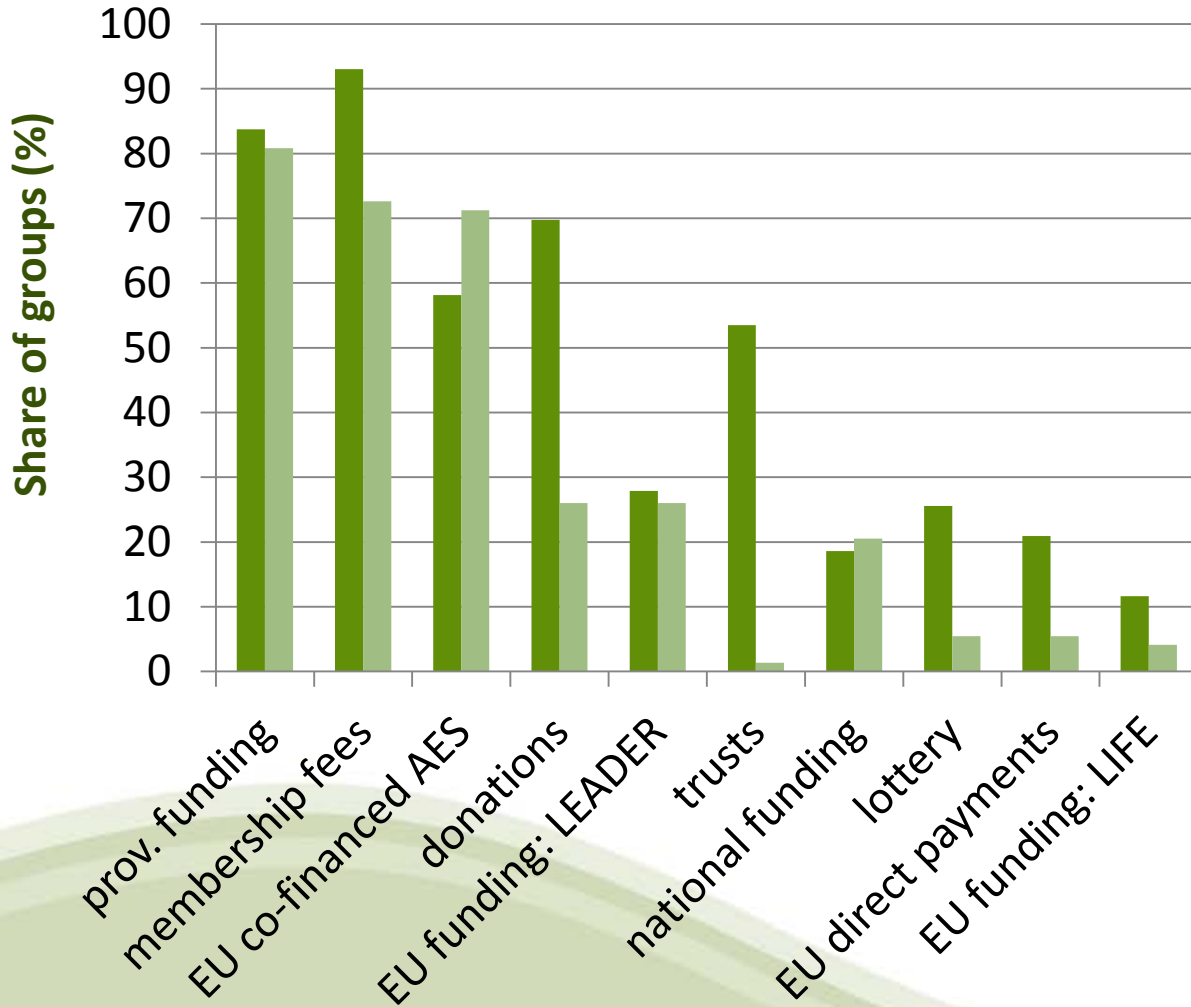
Netherlands (n=67)

- ▶ very flexible and great variation in area covered: 130 km² average (40 km² median)
- ▶ react to funding requirements by merging (former groups tend to continue existing as subgroups or working groups)

Funding sources



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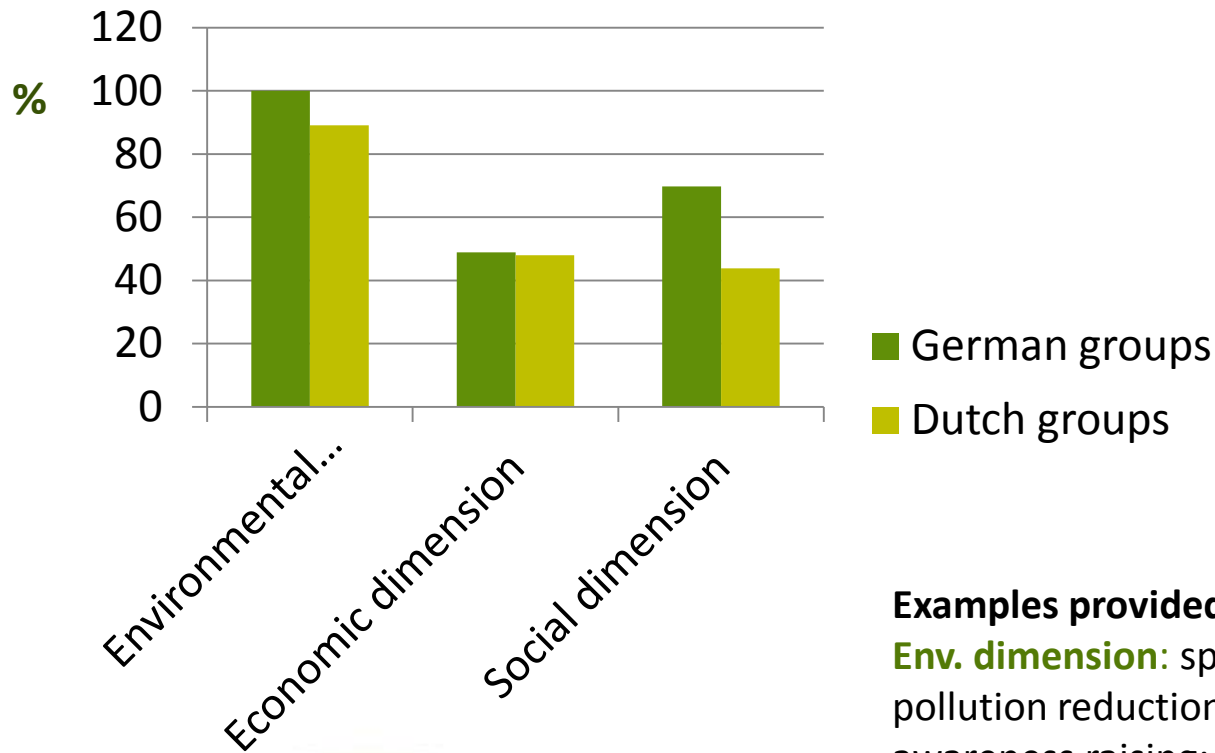
■ German groups
■ Dutch groups

(n=116, 43 German, 78 Dutch)

Contribution to the three dimensions of sustainable landscape management



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(n=116, 43 German, 78 Dutch)

Examples provided in the questionnaire:

Env. dimension: species and habitat protection, pollution reduction, influencing consumption, awareness raising;

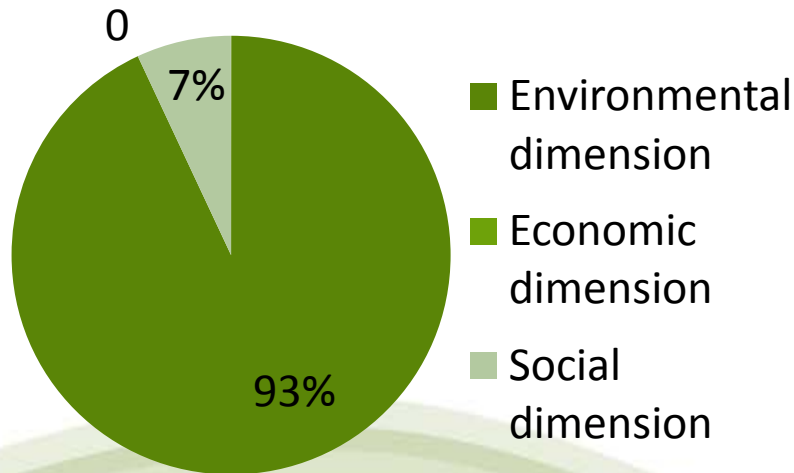
Economic dimension: efficient use of resources, employment, diversification of income;

Social dimension: cultural heritage, regional identity, social cohesion, accountable governance, education.

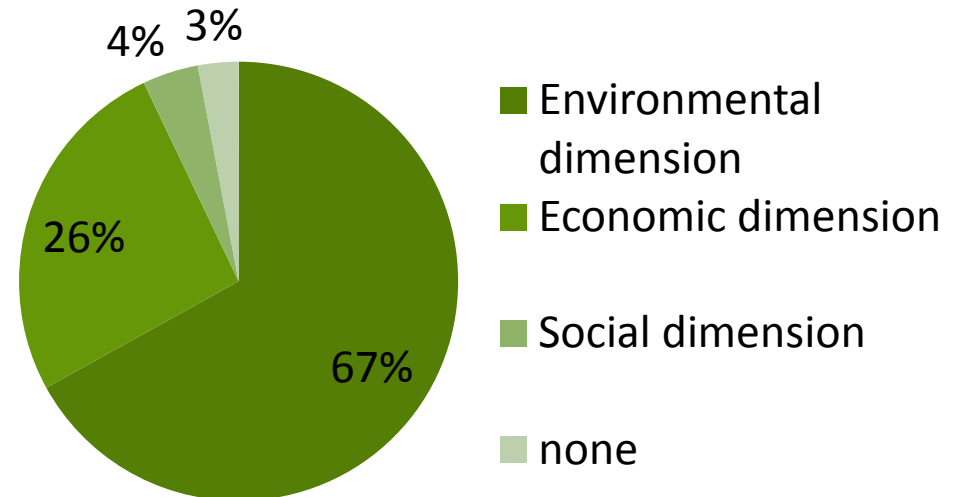
Contribution to sustainable landscape management – Main focus

“Does your group have a main focus on one dimension of sustainable landscape management?”

German groups



Dutch groups



40 % of German groups and 27% of Dutch groups said they contribute to all three dimensions.

Facilitator and leadership

- Facilitator/ project coordinator is a big asset
- Functions as the contact point and knowledge broker between various organisations and partners
- Compile indicators on progress, PR, website etc.
- Groups cease operating or reduce level of activity without a facilitator, or they manage to find the skill and capacity within (risk of burnout)
- Short-term contracts, high turnover detrimental to group efficiency



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Risks

- Lack of capacity, burn-out
- No institutional funding and inability to cover the preparation work needed to generate project funding
- Aging members, lack of new members
- Strongly diverging interests within the group
- Other groups with a similar role tend make them redundant
- Municipalities face budget cuts and withdraw support
- Moving target



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Conclusions

- Group-based approach has worked for several decades in NL and DE; strong umbrella groups
- Commitment from agencies and local authority makes a big difference
- Strong basis in plans for land use and landscape, habitat and species protection programmes
- Policies are influential: e.g. Landscape Management Directive, main partner in implementing Natura 2000; co-financed AES sometimes too restrictive
- Balance to be struck in devolving budget responsibility to groups (authority) and bottom up, trustful relations



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Many thanks for your attention!

LandscapePartners project

www.macaulay.ac.uk/LandscapePartners



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