

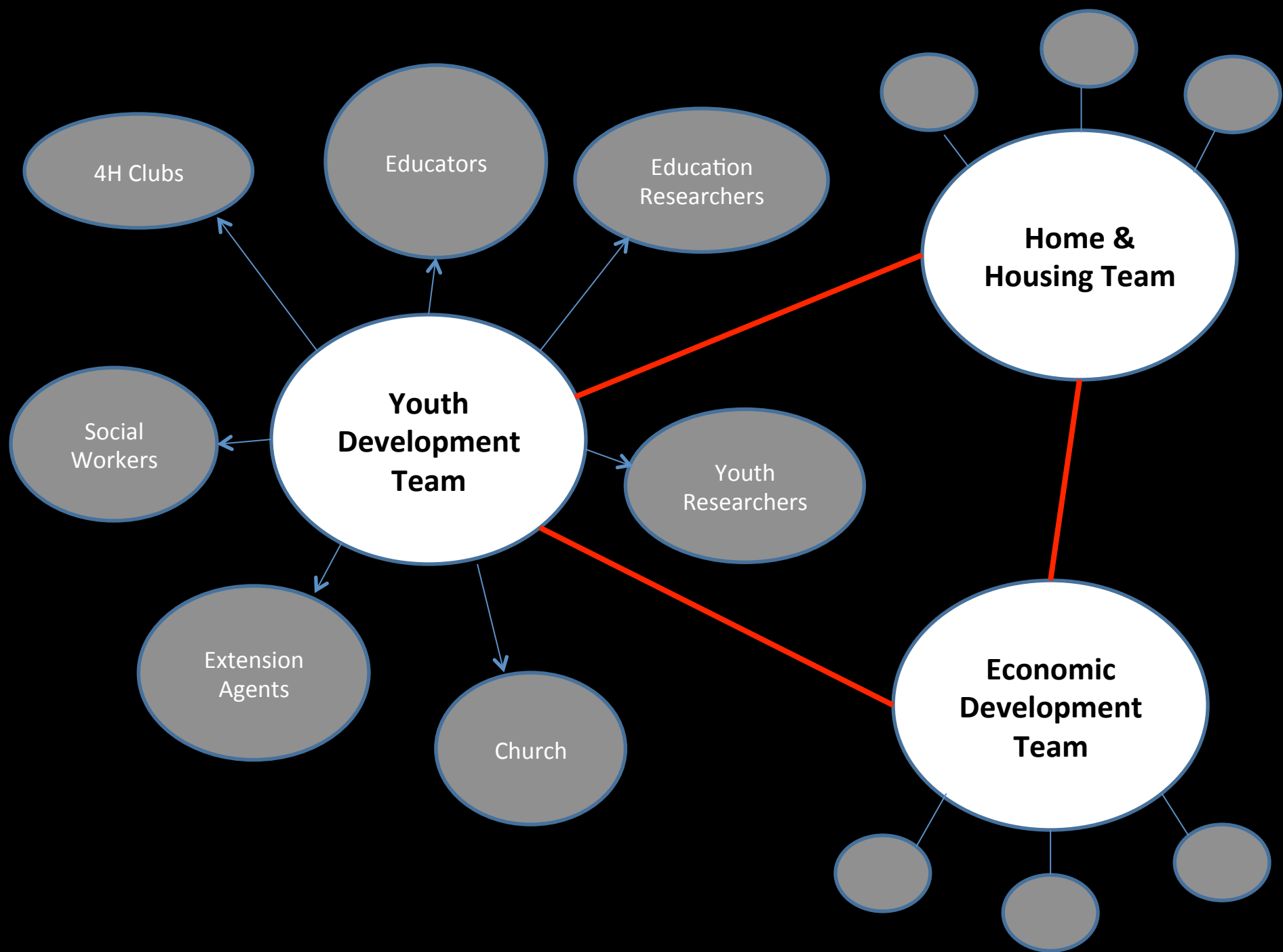
# Emergence & Evolution of Multi- Team System in High Ambiguity Settings

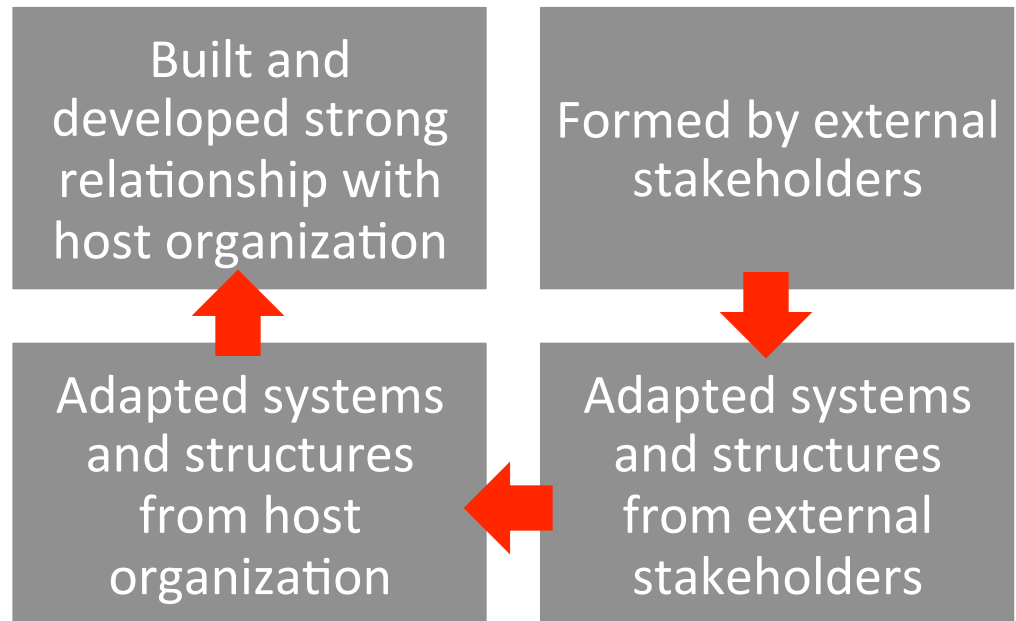
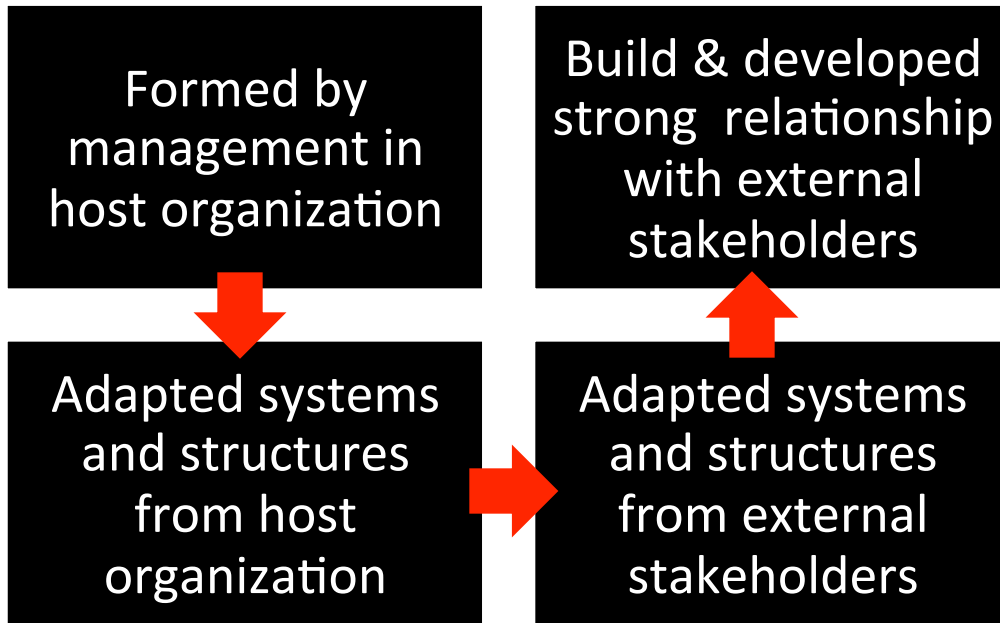
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Presented at the EAWOP Small Group Meeting, October 28-29, 2012





“Agriculture is the 900 lb gorilla of the campus.... They dictate what is going to happen with the college...so because the [team] has been deemed necessary and valuable in Agriculture, they try to impose the team’s way of doing things on the entire Cooperative Extension System.”

# Research Question

Through what processes do MTS emerge and evolve over time in high ambiguity settings?

- **Design**
  - MTS instituted by organizations / managers to solve a complex problem or complete a critical task
  - Emphasizes the role of formal structure
- **Organic emergence**
  - MTS emerges to cope with crisis requiring multiple sources of expertise
  - Emphasizes the role of informal networks

Task structure & task demands are critical to emergence of MTS

# Research Setting & Data Collection

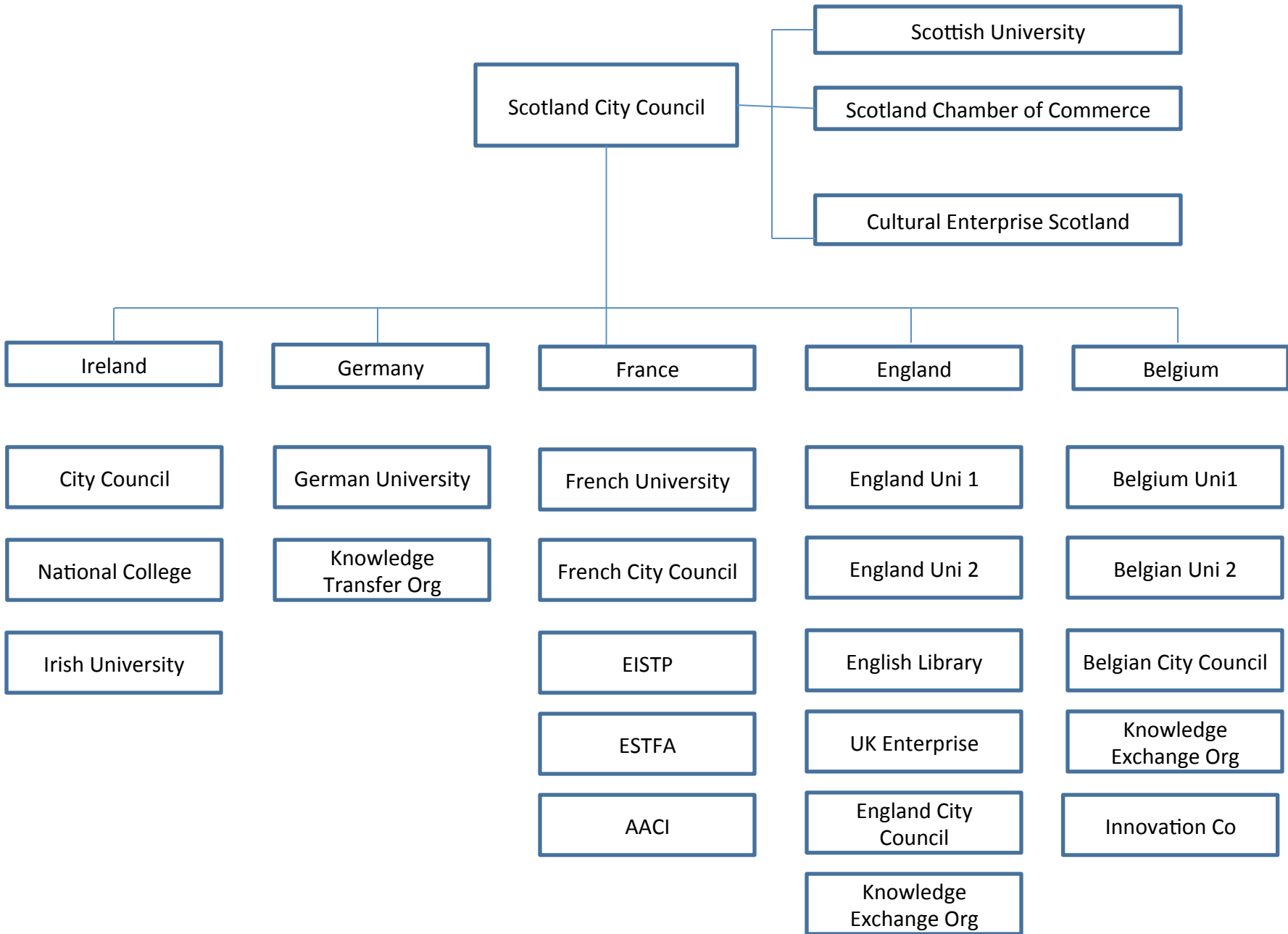
## EUCOL

- Facilitate collaboration across universities, small businesses, entrepreneurs, & community members across Northern Europe
- 50+ members of the project came from 24 member organizations including university faculty members, city councils, libraries, local chambers of commerce among other organizations

Studied from inception of project for first year and half (ongoing) of project life

- 23 interviews
- 10 meetings; average meeting length 3 hours
- 4 conference meetings of 2.5 days
- 307 logged online conversations
- Project documentation (e.g. progress reports, activities, collaboration)

Task environment was high in ambiguity, but low in initial complexity, need for specialization, and turbulence



# Steering Committee

## WP1 : Promoting Open Innovation in the Community

Lemonade Days

Entrepreneur Boot Camps

Open Innovation Challenge

Open Innovation Showcase

Pre-Incubator Scheme

## WP2 : Capacity Building for SMEs

SME Training

Innovation Mentoring

User Platforms

Best Practices Workshops

Academic / Business Interface

## WP3 : Open Innovation for Universities

Skills Building

Virtual Incubator & Support

Innovation Platform Development Challenge

Principles into Practice



# Research Approach

Identify & examine the “micro-episodes” (Paletz, Shun, & Kim, 2011) through which new project structure emerged...

Jane: We talked about the project **thesaurus** didn't we?

Sam: I was just thinking – Fiona, **from science festival, write something interesting on that**. She is wondering how does Chesbrough's (OI) definition work if you are working with a smaller company.

Ally: Which is quite big deal for things like **lemonade day**.

Jane: Exactly.

Tom: I think that's where a shared definition really applies and where we have – where one group thinks we should do this, it's either to come up with a common definition, or just to acknowledge that there are differences, and you know let everyone get on with it (Jane agreeing at the background). That may be very technical, but it doesn't stop us in doing anything.

# Research Approach

Supported by interviewees reflections...

*“And the social aspect, you know, the positive relationship, the face-to-face. Until you have the opportunities to establish those relationships, it’s very difficult.”*

*“...there is a tendency that people who is involved in the content of the project...because they don’t want to be involved in the finance – it is very boring, and I am an academic, it is administrative.”*

Analysed with inductive qualitative methods

# Preliminary Observations

While initial organization was based on project structure, component teams emerged around interests

Interest-based component teams developed based on

- Overlapping goals
- Overlapping expertise
- Positive affective reaction (excitement, interest)

Where the project attempted to institute component teams without these elements, they tended to fail to cohere

# Discussion & Implications

Different processes may govern the emergence of MTS depending on the nature of the task environment

- Ideas as organizing mechanism when the task itself is designed by the team (e.g. innovation activities)

Suggests shifts in focus of research questions about MTS within these kinds of context

- Focus less on promoting motivation and ownership; more on coordination between units with different interests

Evolution of one interest / idea based component team may alienate other component teams or potential team members