

# Regional Innovation Policy Revisited

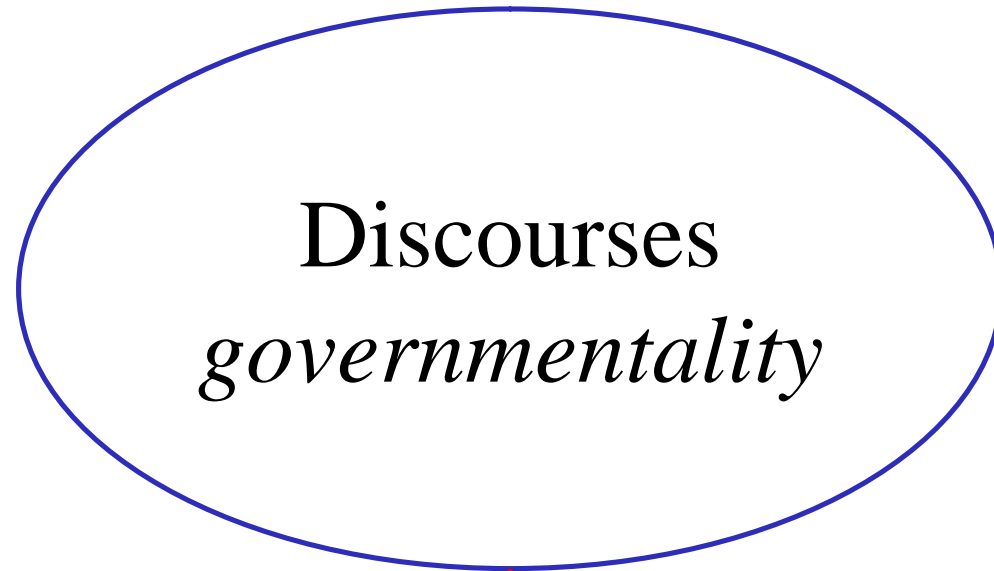
Arnoud Lagendijk,  
Radboud University Nijmegen  
Norsa, 2010

# Regional Innovation Policy

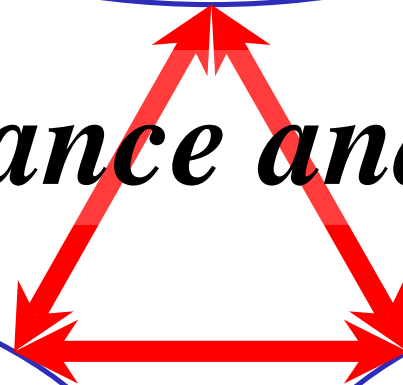
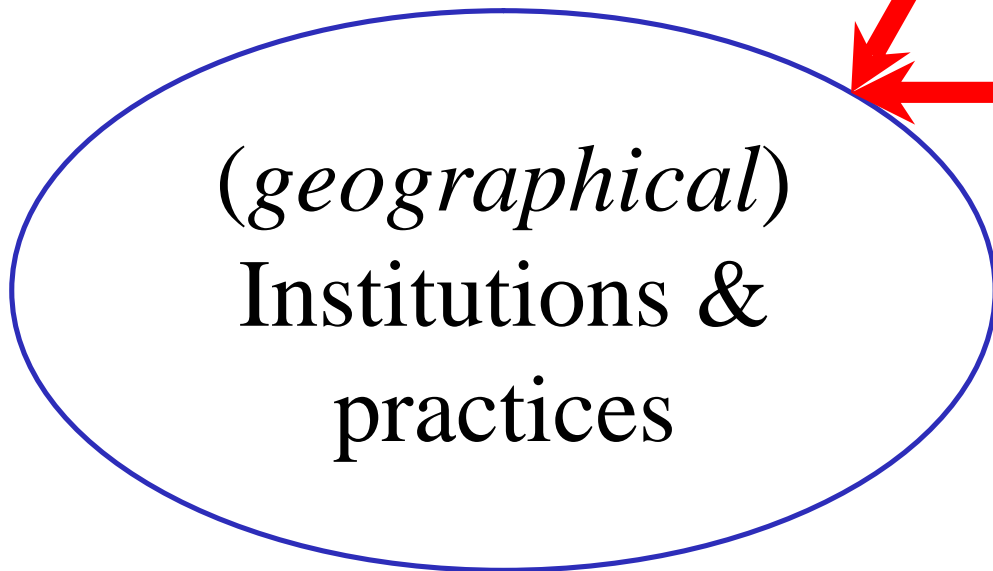
- Milestones (the empirical setting)
- Analytical framework
- Dilemma 1: Fighting the previous war
- Dilemma 2: Adopting a selective spatial-economic logic
- Dilemma 3: Giving away the secrets of success
- Dilemma 4: KBE vs. Knowledge Society

# milestones

- 70s French growth pole policy: from capital to technology
- 70s RIP also discussed in Germany and UK
- 1993 EC launches RTP/RIS/RITTS (DG-Regio & -Industry) targetting both 'cohesion' and 'competitiveness'
- EC supports the Innovating Regions in Europe (IRE) network and its Mutual Learning Platform
- 2000 Lisbon Strategy - integrating innovation in cohesion and research policies
- 00s Eastward expansion produces new map of inequality
- 2005 - 2008 last round of RIS; IRE closed;
- regional/spatial innovation enshrined in cohesion policies



***Governance and Places***



# **Capitalist growth & crisis**

Discursive formations  
(key signifiers and their relationships)

Geographical formations of policy practice  
(institutional arrangements, experts & policy networks)

RIP

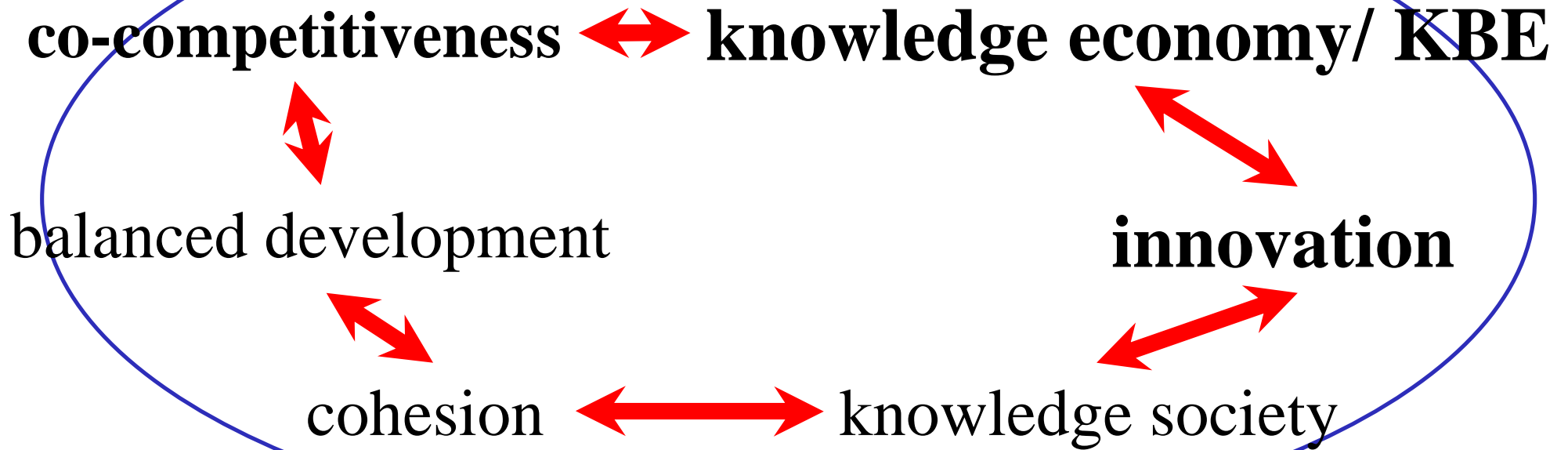
RIP

*Subject & strategy  
formation*

*Policy practice*

# **Space economy**

*Discursive formations (key signifiers and their relationships)*

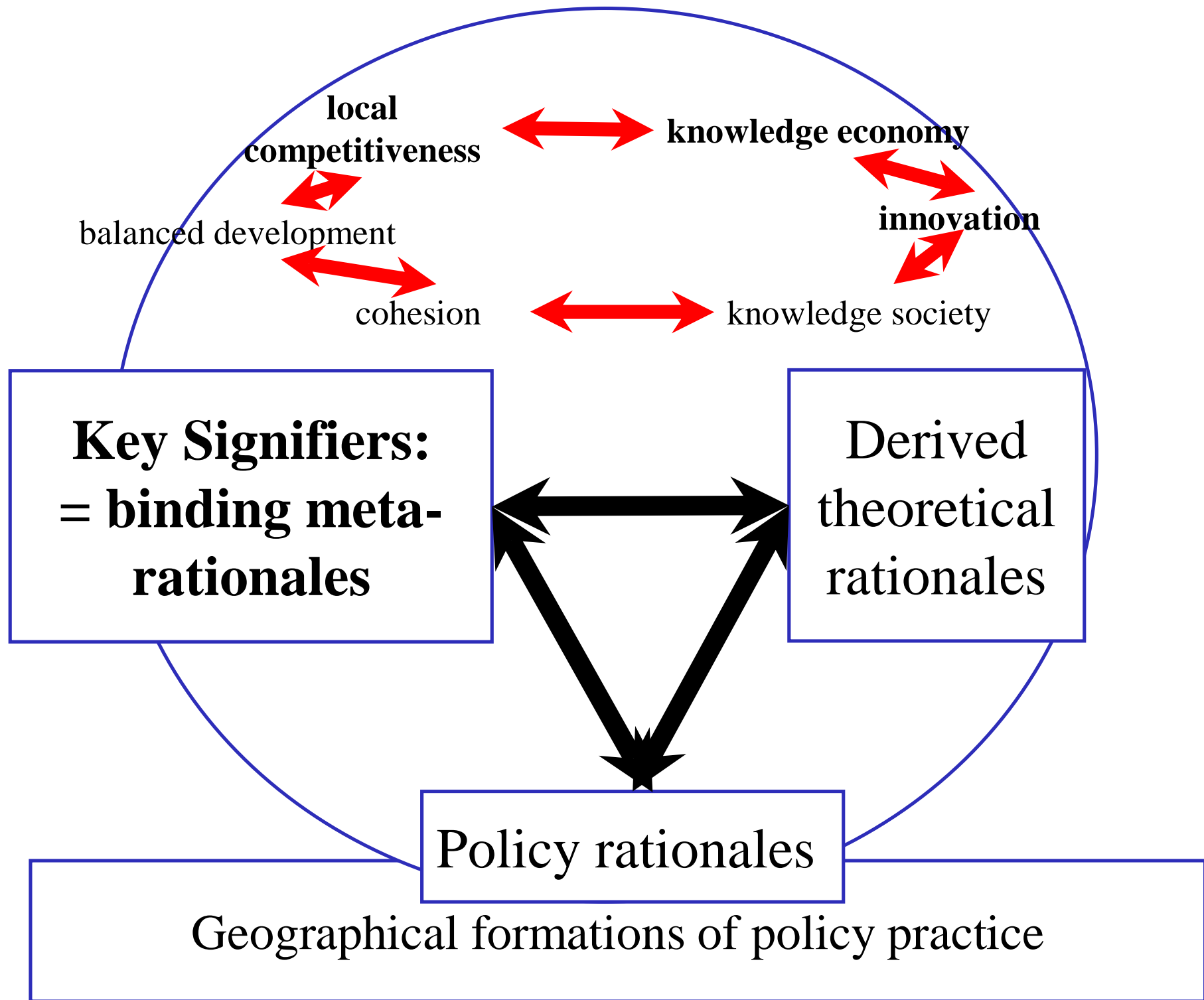


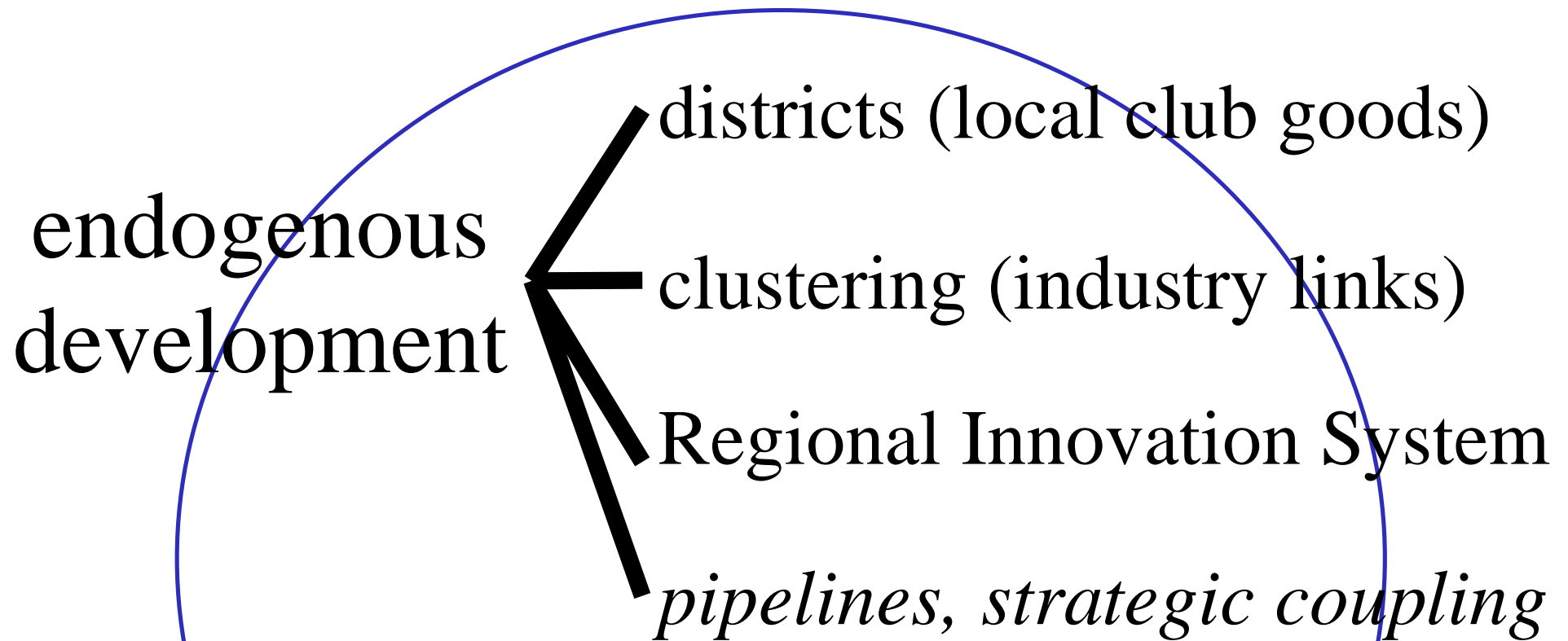
Geographical formations of policy practice  
(institutional arrangements, policy networks)

RIP

RIP

RIP

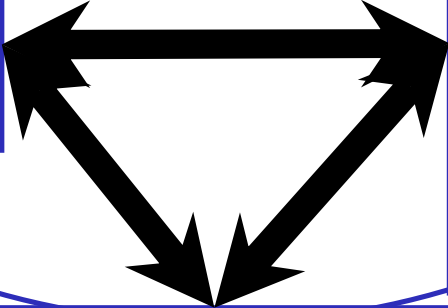




Signifiers: empty/ floating  
= binding meta-rationales

**Derived  
theoretical  
rationales**

Policy rationales



# *Revisiting RIP*

two reflections upon RIP's discursive  
formation

# 1. KBE-based RIP in light of 'capitalist growth & crisis'

- KBE/innovation promoted in response to the 70s supply-side crisis of capitalist growth in Western countries
- (like regional policy emerged as part of the Keynesian response to the 30s demand-led crisis)
- initially engendering a 'race to the top' (inducing 'catching up')
- but the current crisis is credit (demand) based

> KBE-based RIP: *fighting the previous war?*

- the current crisis requires a different response: consumption, new local-global articulations & resilience
- danger of a innovation-led 'race to the bottom' ?
- from KBE to *knowledge society*?

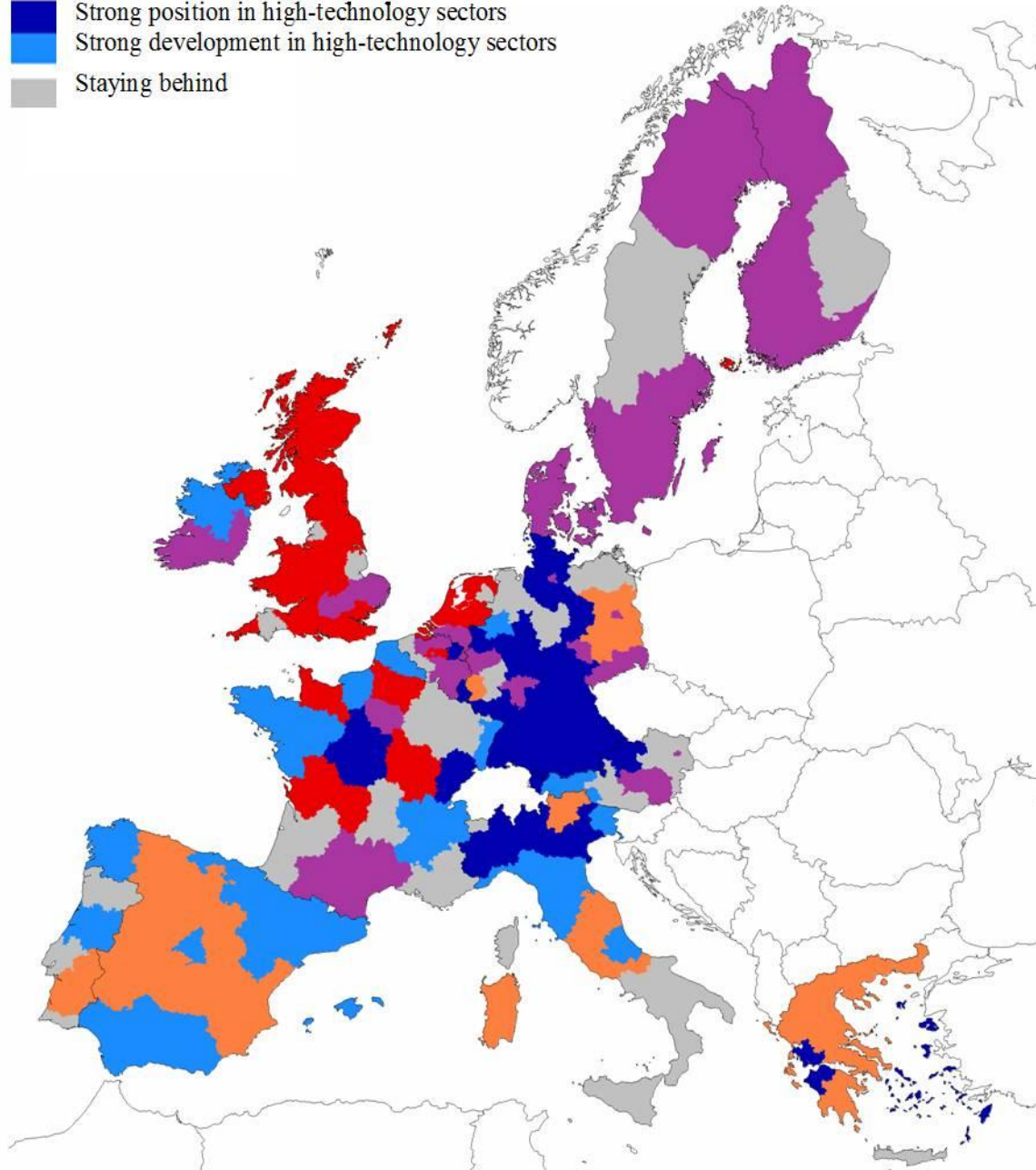
## 2. Endogenous development in light of the evolving space economy

- Endogenous development prompts a technology/knowledge driven growth model imagining the region as a unit (strategic subject) of competition
- Downplays processes of uneven development (agglomeration, urbanisation-based spill-over effects): spatial attribution problem
- Ignores the role of politics & institutions (state, firms, ....) in mediating the impact of knowledge development *across* space.

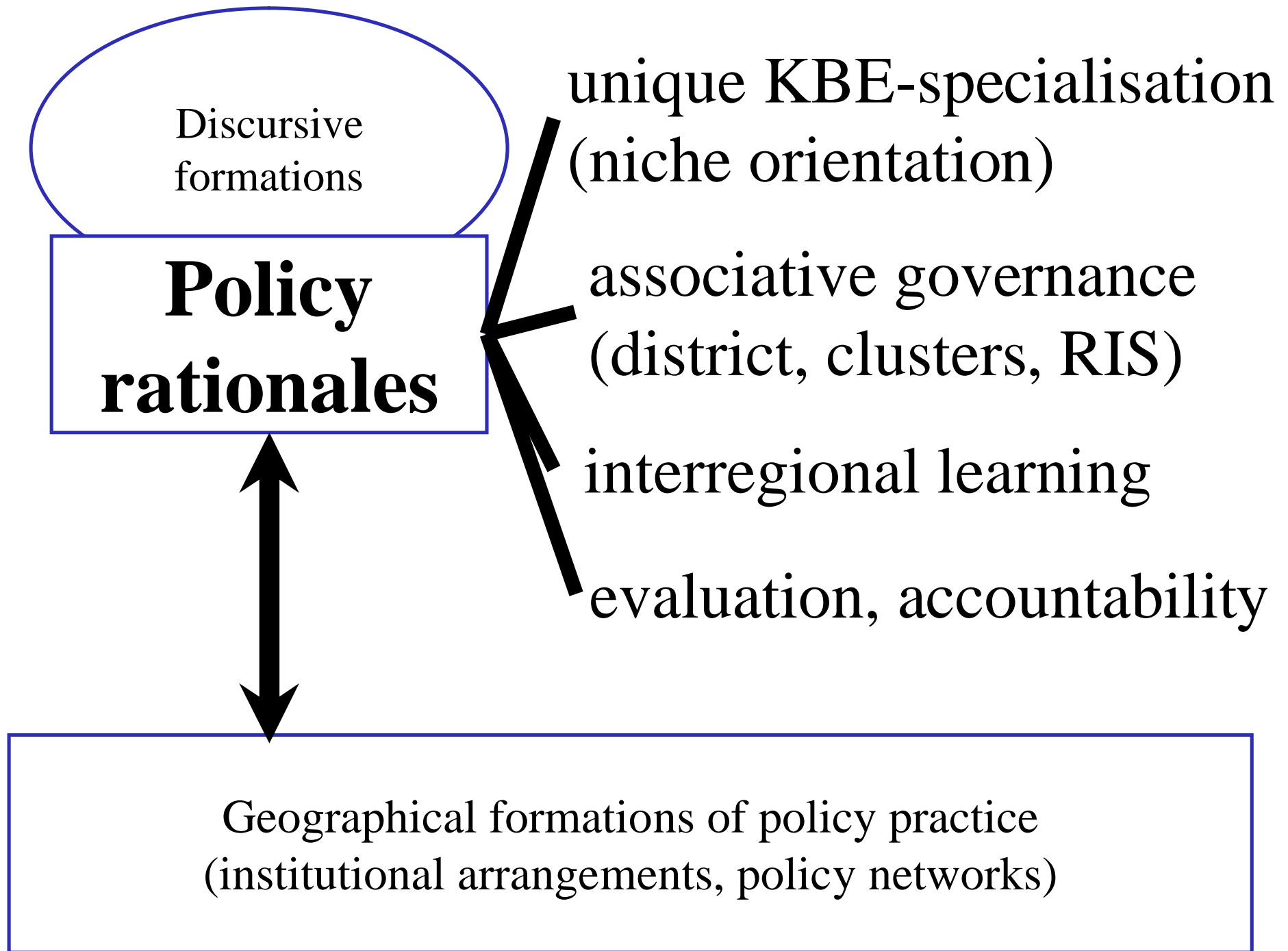
## > Need for a better understanding of creating 'regional wealth'

- More context-specific understanding of the role of knowledge (production, absorption), access to 'global' markets and the role of local economic circuits (including consumption)
- Taking full account of uneven development and spatial differentiation
- *Clashes with the way the current discursive KBE-cohesion marriage homogenises the region*

- Strong diversified position
- Strong position in knowledge intensive services
- Strong development in knowledge intensive services
- Strong position in high-technology sectors
- Strong development in high-technology sectors
- Staying behind



coping with  
difference  
(cf. De  
Bruijn  
2010)  
?



*“ The less developed regions have few chances catching up with the prosperous regions if they do not perform RTDI strategies comparable to the prosperous regions. Basically, they are equally exposed to all challenges stemming from globalisation and competition. Therefore, they have to pursue genuine RTDI approaches if long-term perspectives are sought. Thus, a cohesion policy that does not manage less favoured regions progressing fast on this track will fail in the long run. Only by fully exploiting the synergies between cohesion and research policy this goal could be achieved” (CEC)*

Discursive  
formations

Policy rationales



Geographical  
formations of policy  
practice  
(institutional  
arrangements, policy  
networks)

EU SFs/ CIs  
(subsidiarity,  
additionality,  
programmatic,  
partnering)

RIS/ RITTs/  
Cohesion  
Policy

‘mainstreaming’

# MUTUAL LEARNING PLATFORM

Regional Innovation Report

BLUEPRINT FOR REGIONAL INNOVATION BENCHMARKING



EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Committee  
of the  
Regions



*“The **Mutual Learning Platform (MLP)** is a mechanism for interactive “learning” by regional authorities and interested public and private organisations in European regions.*

*Within this framework, a set of tools taking the form of guides have been developed.*

*The guides will help regional policy makers develop better activities to build their regions' competitiveness.*

*The **Blueprint** documents experiences and no-nonsense advice from practitioners for practitioners in a need-oriented way*

# Revisiting RIP (3) – the unique knowledge conundrum

- if regional agents discover that a certain practice proves to be effective, would they then not be tempted to protect and valorise this form of knowledge?
- how to draw a boundary between 'ubiquitous' public knowledge, which regions are expected to amicably share and jointly improve, and competitive knowledge, that regions should keep to themselves?
- Question significance of 'uniqueness'

Capitalist growth & crisis

Discursive formations  
(key signifiers and their relationships)

Geographical formations of policy practice  
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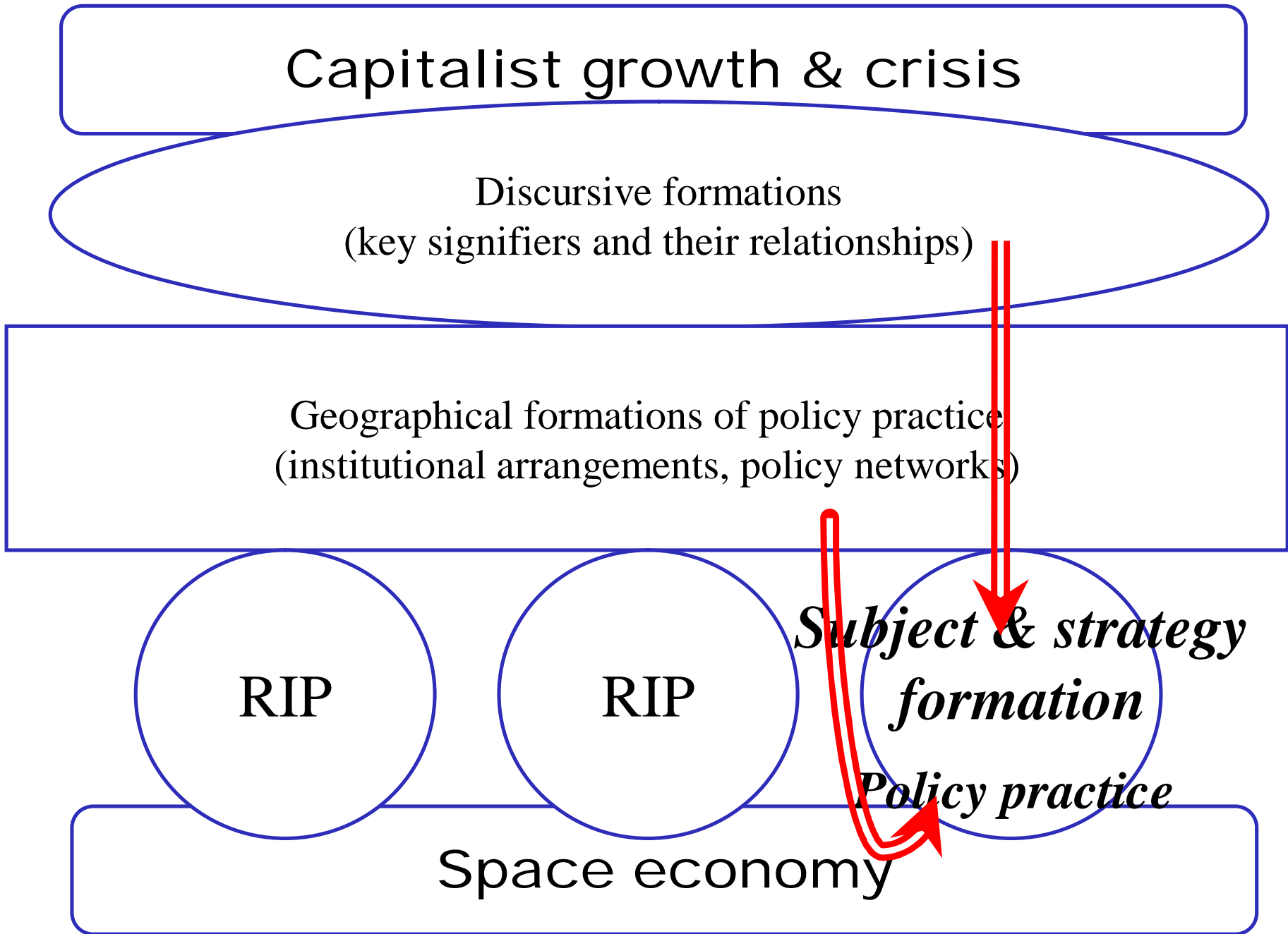
RIP

RIP

*Subject & strategy  
formation*

*Policy practice*

Space economy



# Regions subjected to RIP discourse and networks & practices

- Regions as learning laboratories for the community at large
- Regions as ‘catching up’ entities to serve the cohesion aim (cf. cohesion reports)
- *Clashes with the socio-economic ‘lifeworlds’ of firms, inhabitants and practitioners*
- *Lack of solidarity ethos*
- *Towards a more inclusive, less selfish, less scripted regional ‘knowledge society’? (=4)*

Knowledge (Based)  
Economy

*Knowledge society Knowledge society Knowledge society*

# Knowledge society focus

- Knowledge more than innovation > broader interpretative frameworks/ discourses
  - normative, value based, strategic
- Business and civic engagement in debates on valorisation and positioning, exploring local-global articulations *in full*
  - value-based positioning in global value chains
  - ‘globalising’ local circuits of value creation
- Paying due attention to personal and social development and creativity
- Other roles of regions in addressing disparities

# Conclusion

- Dilemma 1: Fighting the previous war > from innovation to valorisation
- Dilemma 2: Adopting a selective spatial-economic logic > address uneven development
- Dilemma 3: Giving away the secrets of success > from scripts to engagement
- Dilemma 4: from KBE to Knowledge Society

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# What is innovation:

## *new to the world or to the region*

- 'unique': new to the **world** (new products, new technologies, new business practices) -
  - high-tech/ knowledge intensive services
  - (enriched) linear model of innovation from invention to innovation - technology focus
- absorption: new to the **region** -
  - knowledge used to tailor products/services to external markets and to increase productivity
  - system approach to knowledge scanning, selecting, absorption, application - more institutional focus
- strong, partly undue, bias towards 'new to the world'

# Meta-rationales of RIP

'Competitiveness is at the heart of economic and cohesion policy'

- core regions need to focus on (niches of) knowledge-based activities (as chain leaders)
- non-core regions to pursue innovative 'followers' strategies
- 'balanced development' (sustainable, inclusive etc)
  
- proximity matters in increasingly globalised world

what niche exactly? what specialisation?

magic bullet of 'smart specialisation'

# EU interest

- meeting an enlightened neo-liberal meta-rationale of endogenous development
- pursuing competitiveness and cohesion aims ('balanced development')
- market conform enterprise support: assisting place-based SMEs/clusters *not* single firms
- nurturing local state capacity
- collaboration between regional, industrial and innovation policy

# Studying policy: levels of rationales

meta-rationales (eg neoliberal thinking)

derived theoretical rationales

Policy rationales = cogent and endurable ideas on policy goals, organisation, processes and instruments - and evaluation

constituting policy narratives and actions	case of RIP
meta-rationales	enlightened neoliberal thinking - balancing out competition and cohesion
derived theoretical rationales	endogenous development
Policy rationales = policy goals, organisation, processes and instruments	regional innovation strategies

# policy rationales (policy making)

- programmes and project frame
- evaluation cycle: wavering between accountability (objective indicators, process-orientation) and more learning oriented (serving 'informed users', more on substance and governance)
- wavering between reducing complexity and comprehending/