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# FROM POLITICAL STRATEGY TO IMPLEMENTATION

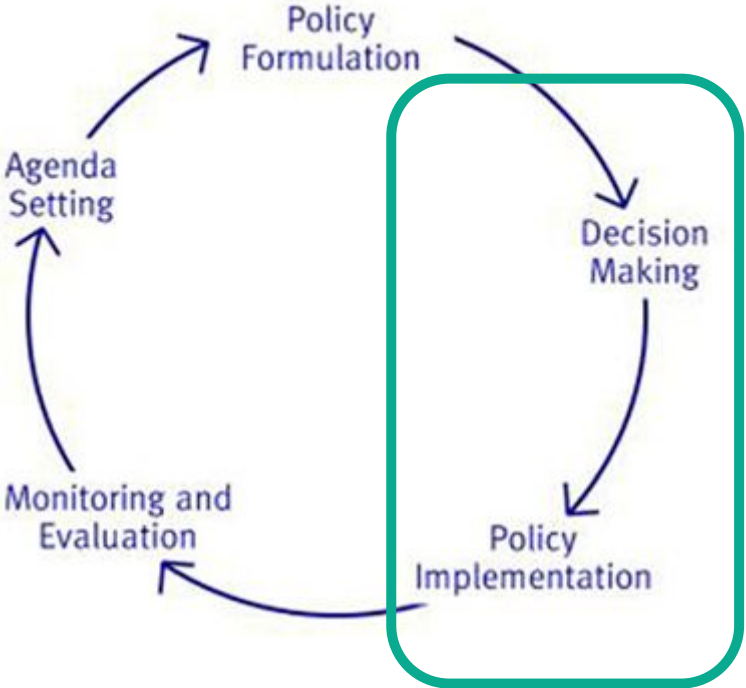
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# Focus of the Study

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# Proposition 1:

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- There is a difference between agreeing on an objective/strategy and on actually putting in place measures that effect change

Typical assumptions:

- the issue may be a clearly defined one (banning substances)
- locus of decision making +/- locus of execution (ministry x)

However, at a time of

- increasingly challenge-driven policies  
**framework / initial outlines require further interpretation**
- multi-level, multi-actor governance  
**actors that decide frameworks hardly decide (all) implementation**

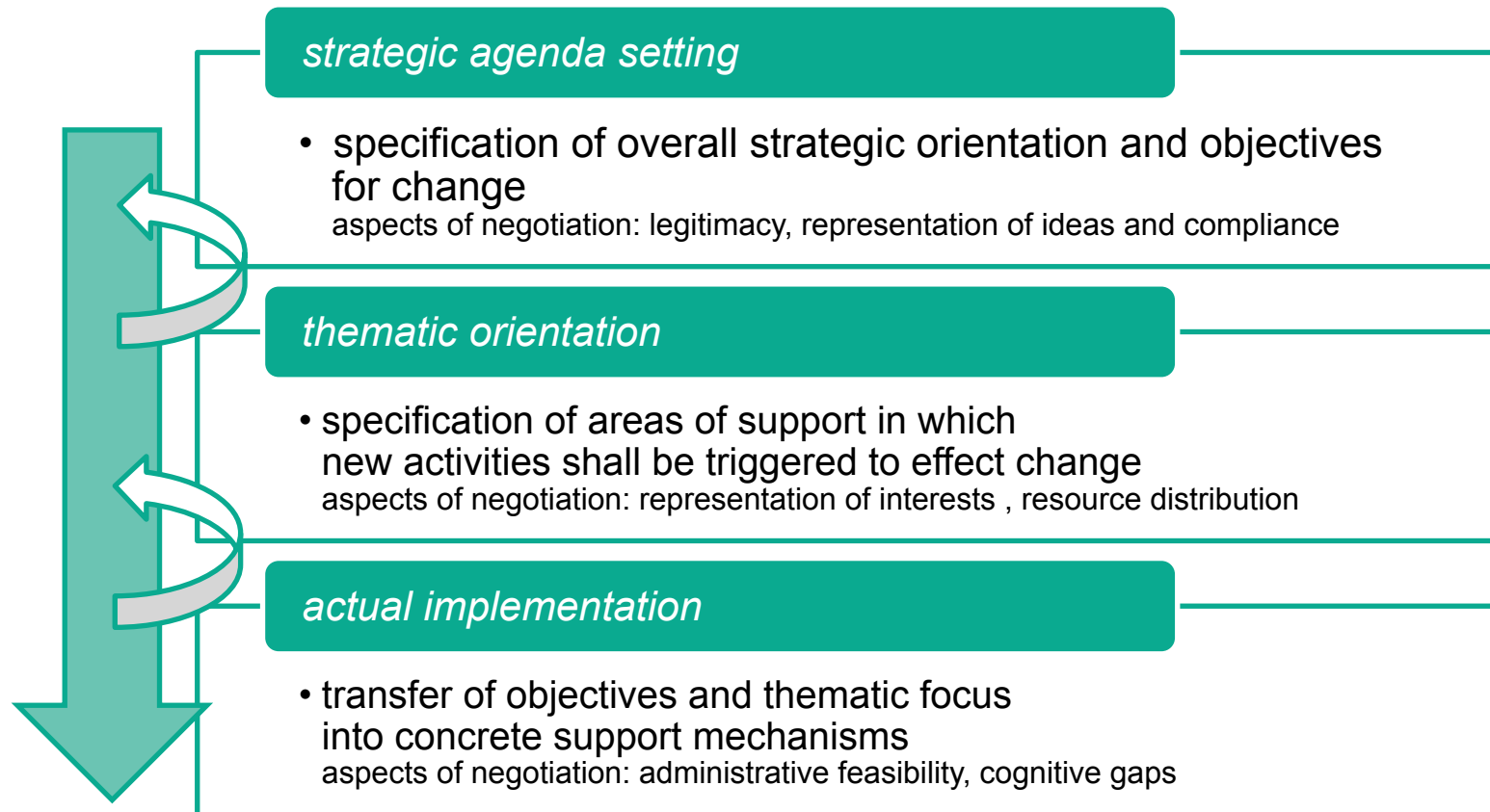
# Interactive and actor driven translation

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- policy implementation is a living process depending on people
- => **translation** (not implementation) **of political decisions**
- different **logics of negotiations** at different levels;  
different core stakeholder groups
- not necessarily a sequential cascade, but:  
at different levels, **different games are played by different rules**, requiring  
different approaches
- different formats (**arenas of negotiation**,) have – and are – being chosen to  
further negotiations at different levels

# Interactive and actor driven translation

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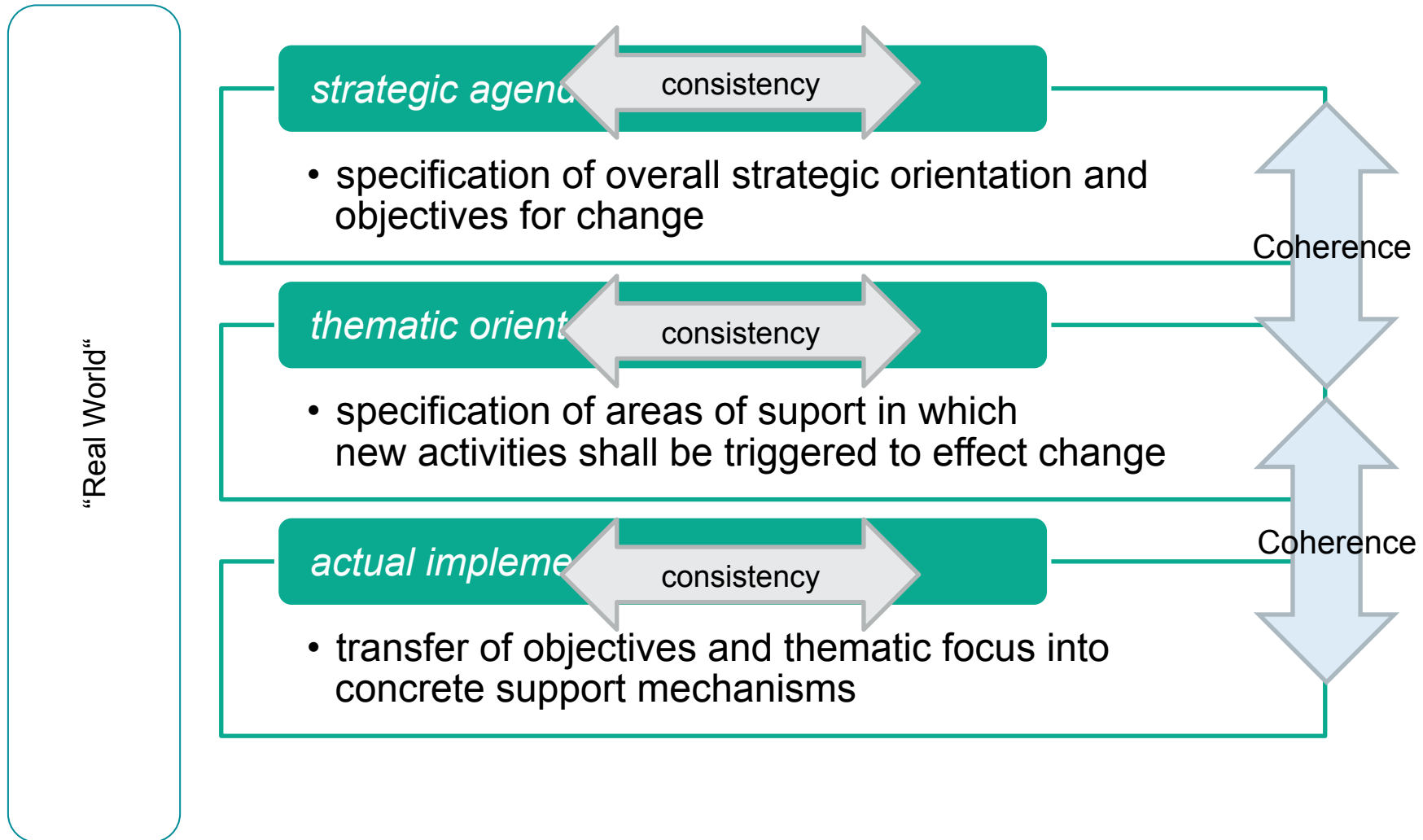


# Proposition 2:

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- large parts of the literature agree that as such ,policy mixes‘ are hard to objectively evaluate,
- in practice, strong pressure to evaluate strategies‘ leads to application of best available approaches
- common input output measures can detect policy failure but hardly its reasons – due to processual blindness
  - at what stage does policy failure occurs
  - whether policy failure is intrinsic to the policy process
- there is precedence in the literature suggesting **consistency / coherence** as possible internal criteria for assessment

# COHERENCE & CONSISTENCY



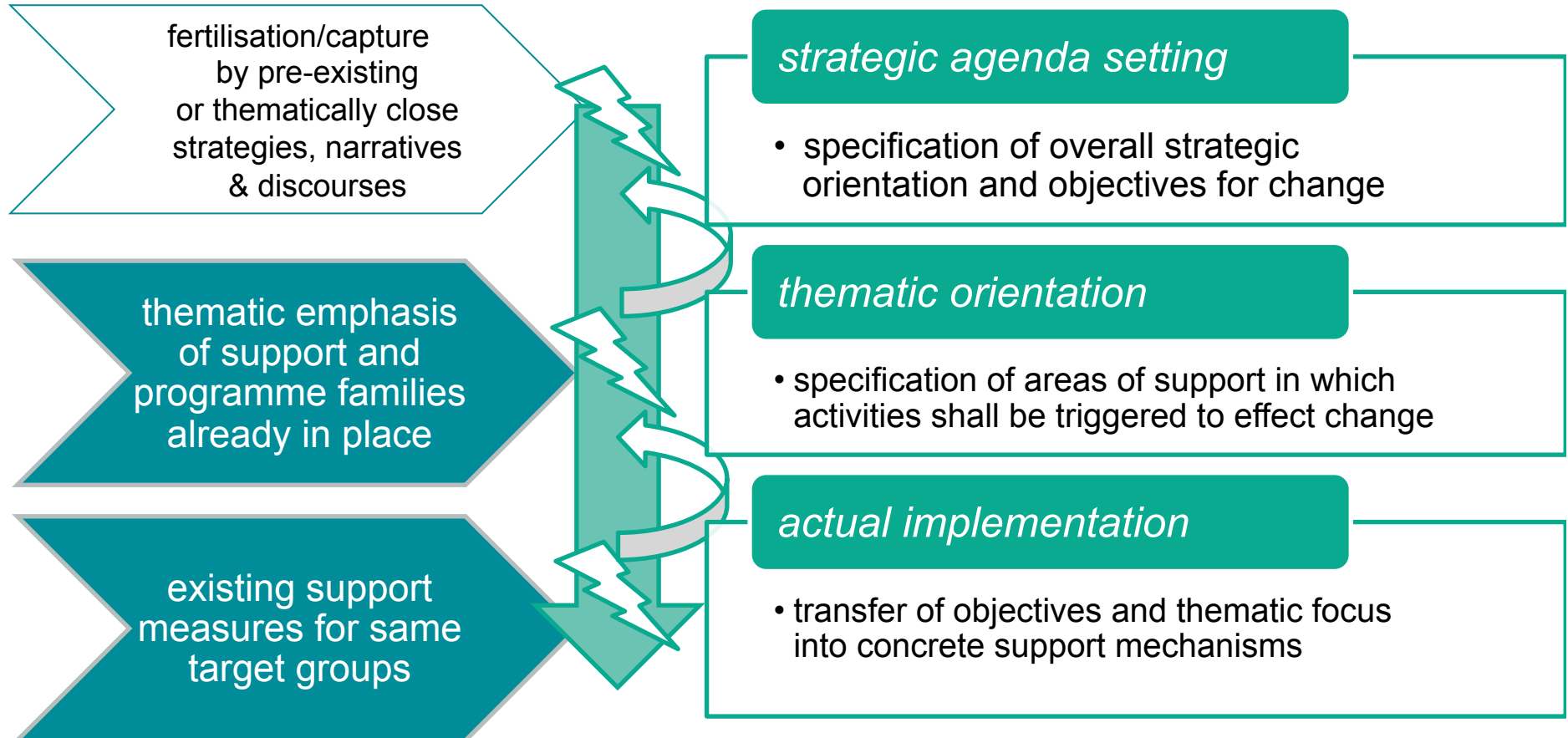
# *Intervening Factors*

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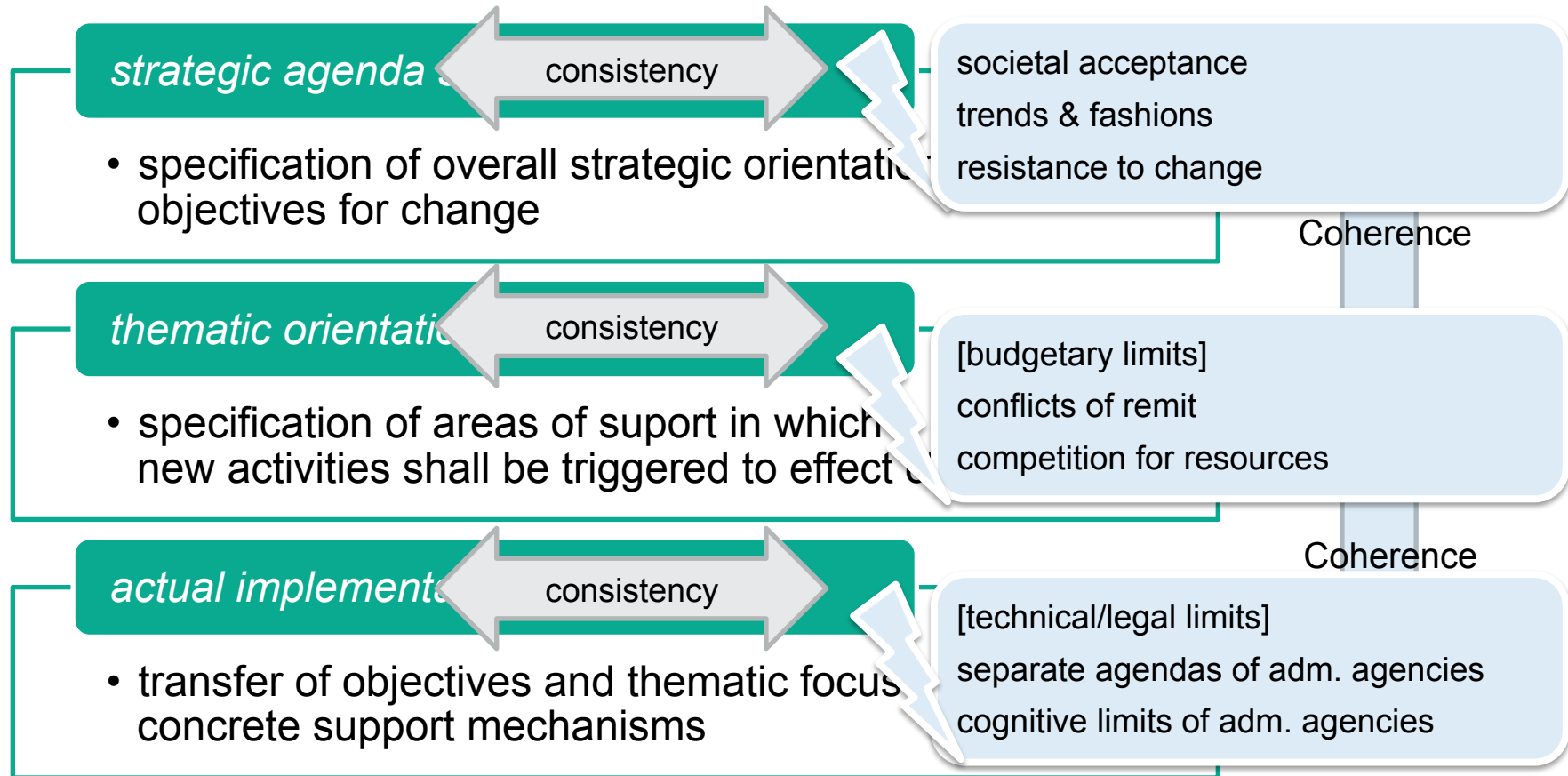
- in practice, consistency and coherence are often impaired – precisely because the process is NOT mechanistic
- the translation of (initially vague) narratives into practice is characterised by piecemeal solutions, capture and ‚policy patching‘
  - partially this is based on **path dependencies**
  - partially it is based on **translation failure**
- in that respect there are two main cases
  - functional challenges resulting from arena of negotiation (contest for best ideas, competition for resources, conflicts of remit...)
  - actor-based challenges (resistance to change, overt self-display, cognitive limits, ...)
- only functional challenges can be suitably assigned to levels



# PATH DEPENDENCIES



# TRANSLATION FAILURE



# Case Study: Smart Specialisation in Thuringia

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- "smart specialisation strategies for regional economic transformation"
  - 'reorganise innovation policy so as to better build on local capacities and to better address local challenges, involve local stakeholders'
  
- legal requirement by European Commission since 2013
  - relevant for substantial budgets (often several € 100m p.a.)
  - highly underdeveloped as a narrative at the outset
  - met with political and administrative structures unprepared to "host" the required processes of negotiation
  - often failed at the first instance of developing a suitable narrative, if not, regularly failed at the level of thematic orientation, however: some revamped policy all the way to implementation

# Level 1 Consistency

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*“[the region will bundle its] strengths while focusing on [its] biggest competence: close, networked collaboration among [...] scientific institutions, [...] business community, and [...] policymakers [...] to quickly turn promising ideas into the reality of innovative products and services”*

*=> all-encompassing and vague*

*with the aim to “by 2020 further improve the region’s position within the group of European leaders”  
of which it is arguably not really a part*

*=> questionable due to debatable premise*

*“strengthen the involvement of SMEs into the innovation process at large”*

*=> concrete but does not hurt anyone*

## **Deviation:**

vague & diffuse, narrative lacks strength and directionality

## **Likely Cause:**

response to ‚trend‘ with limited ownership, need for acceptance, limited time

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# Level 2 Consistency

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Industrial production and systems +



Sustainable and smart mobility & logistics +



Healthy living and the healthcare sector +



Sustainable energy supply and resource management +



ICT, innovative and production-related services +

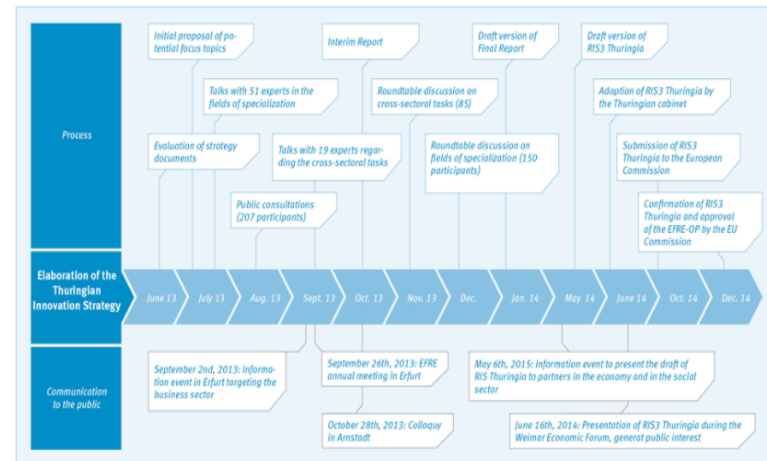
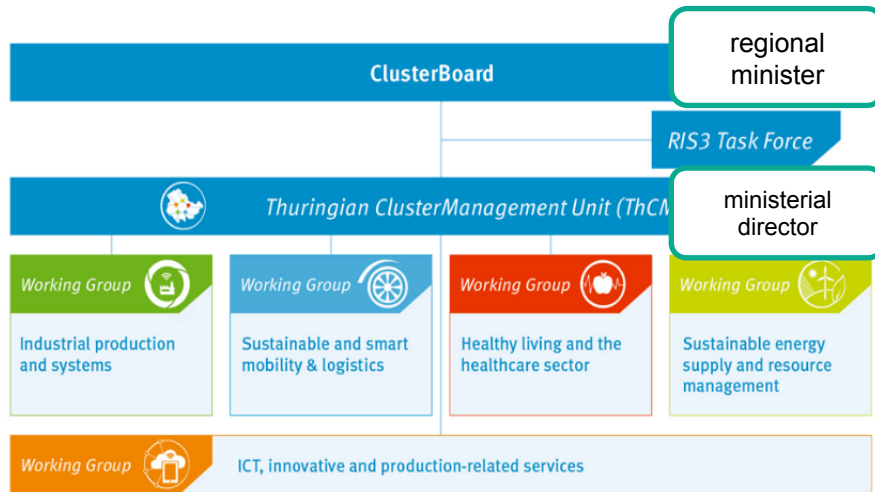
## Deviation:

- very encompassing
- less than optimally structured, fields are
  - not defined at the same level (cross-cutting versus vertical)
  - of very different breath and scope (production at large vs. healthcare)
  - part capacity, part challenge oriented

## Likely Cause:

- involvement of stakeholders required so various issues of remit and interests had to be accommodated, centrifugal forces
- specification of topics also required, 'accommodation by distortion'

# Level 1-2 Coherence and Process



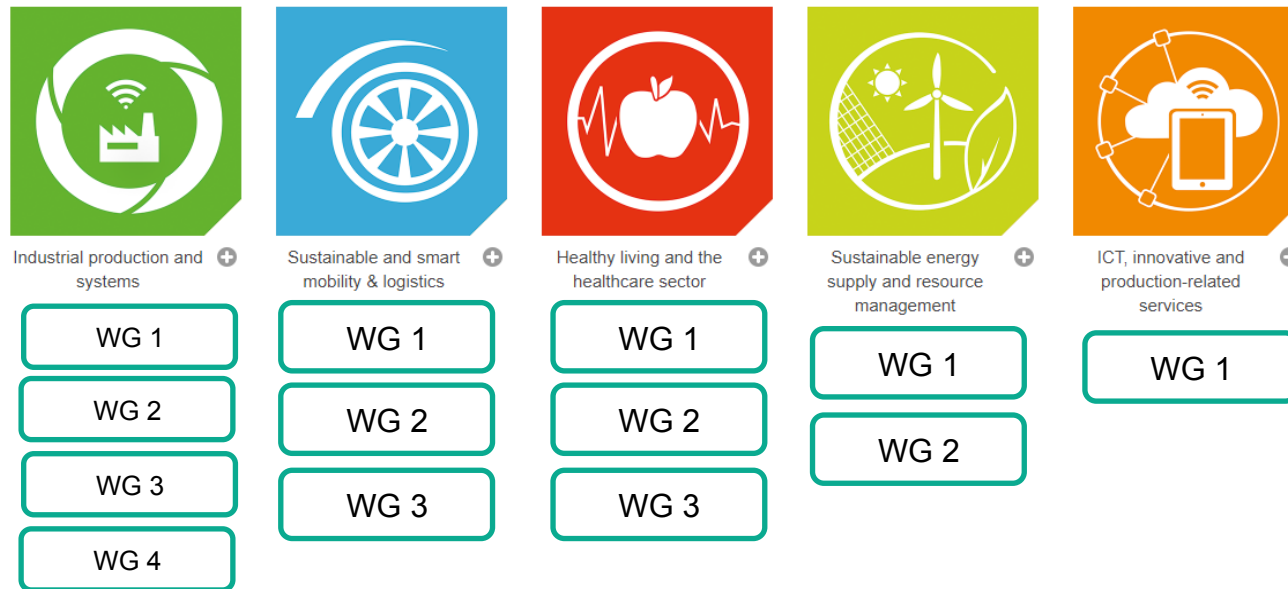
## Deviation:

- **limited**, vague narrative was rendered concrete and filled with life in a step-wise, professionally managed consultative process, now more compelling
- integrative umbrella for in themselves convincing, composite parts

## Likely Cause:

- shadow of hierarchy wanting to see a concrete, conveyable story developed
- robust governance structure, qualified actors to frame distributive discourses
- sufficient time

# Level 2-3 Coherence and Process



## Deviation:

- **limited**, dedicated competitive programmes launched in all thematic areas,
- specialised working groups set up in all areas, in which future beneficiaries, can frame and kick-start applications for projects funded by **diverse sources**

## Likely Cause:

- acknowledgment of cognitive limits: projects & calls developed among peers,
- permission to merge policy streams pragmatically at project level,
- non-peer oversight on eventual funding decisions maintained

# Conclusions

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- Undisputable evidence of „implementation as translation“
- the full directionality and potential for impact of many strategies emerges a good time after their first approval
- Stratified analysis of the process can help to
  - locate deficiencies and their causes
  - identify *absence of* deficiencies and its causes
- In summary, it suggests that consistency is less relevant than coherence,
  - coherence determines a strategy's credibility later and subsequent binding power as boundary object,
  - consistency is a largely academic criterion less relevant for the sustainability of a political narrative
- „this strategy may be inconsistent, but the process underlying its development is capable of translating new, relevant strategic impulses“



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Thank you !