

The Integrative Paradigm of Economic Geography as an Answer to Current Regional Challenges

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Guardian 2017: "A map of [Trump's] support may coordinate with racist Google searches, but it coordinates even better with deindustrialization and despair, with the zones of economic misery that 30 years of Washington's free-market consensus have brought the rest of America".

Economist 2016: "That resentment can motivate votes against the institutions of globalisation. Just as America's Midwest helped carry Mr Trump to power, Brexit triumphed thanks to support from deindustrialising places like Middlesbrough and Wolverhampton. The liberal-minded are learning that they ignore regional disparities at their peril".

Die Zeit 2017: "Die Globalisierung hat im Ruhrgebiet nicht so gnadenlos zugeschlagen wie anderswo. Das zeigt sich auch im Wahlverhalten. Die Zustimmung zur AfD ist geringer als die zum Front National ... Die Subventionen haben aber auch Strukturen und Arbeitsverhältnisse zementiert, die Vergangenheit war im Blick, nicht die Zukunft."

Free exchange

Place-based economic policies as a response to populism

Orthodox economics is distressingly unhelpful in solving the problem of regional inequality

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1. Introduction
2. Paradigms in economic geography: towards an integrative paradigm
3. Illustrative case-studies
4. Conclusions

Human geography

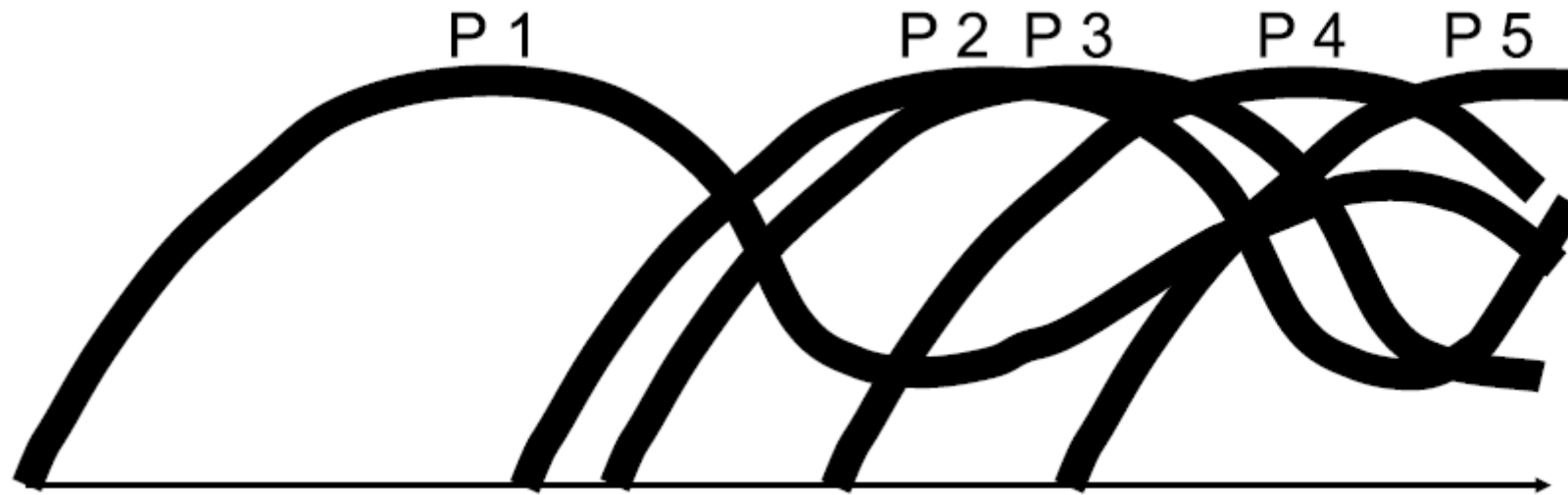
Sociology



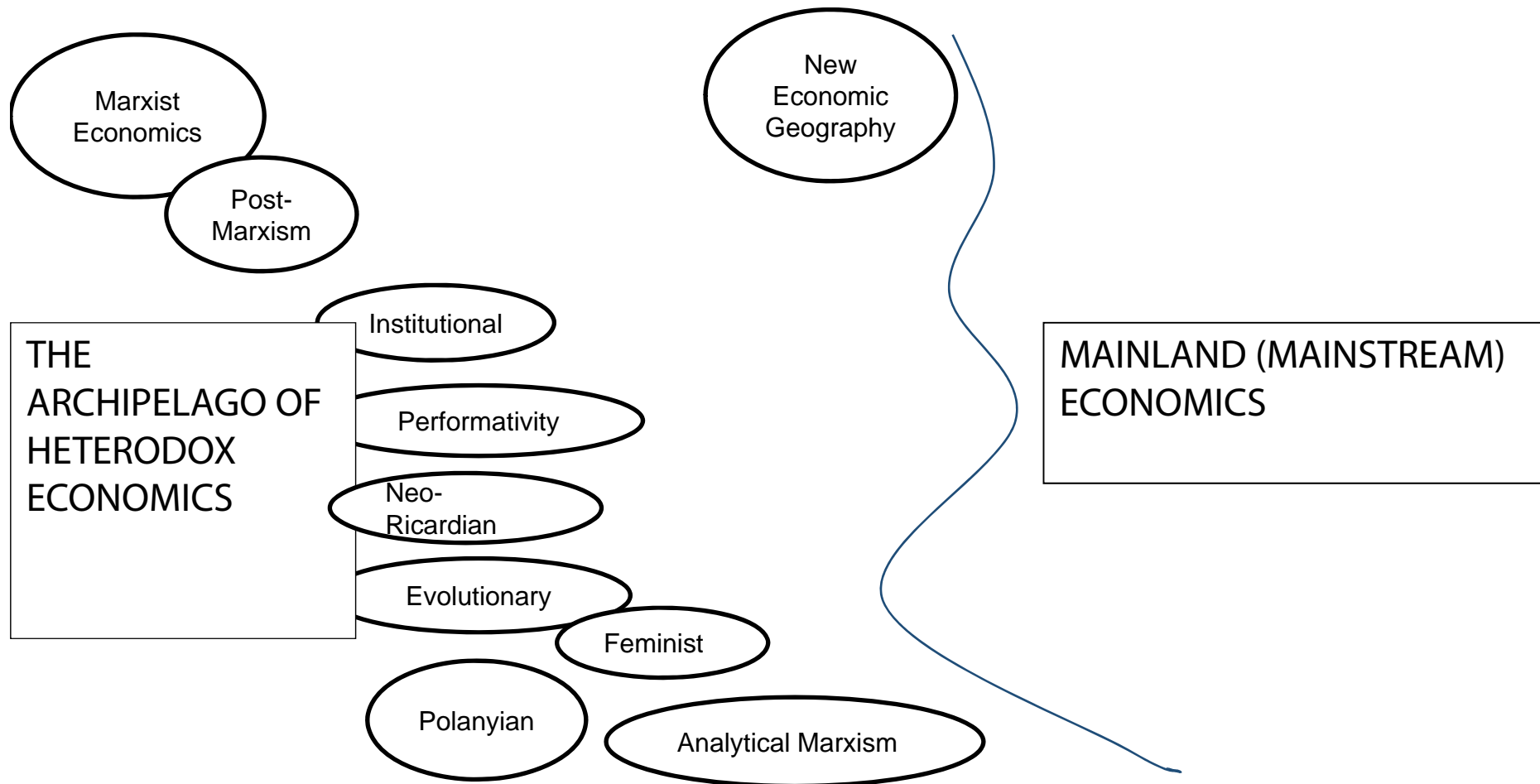
Economic geography



Economics/ Regional economics



Source: Weichhart 2012, 56



Barnes & Sheppard (2010, 193): “economic geography has become increasingly fragmented into a series of intellectual solitudes that has created isolation, producing monologues rather than conversation ...”

David Rigby (2015) Call for papers Global Conference on Economic Geography, Oxford: “There are no central questions, canonical methods or privileged ways of knowing. This is economic geography!”

Muellerleile et al. (2014, 11) “... methodological and theoretical diversity, local contextualization, and relational analysis ... make it difficult to isolate a disciplinary core”

To some extent differences stem from where scholars come from
(Varieties of Capitalism) (problem of *positionality*):

EEG: Continental Europe

GPE: UK-USA

So are the paradigms useful as explanatory framework
everywhere in the world to the same extent and for each and
every question?

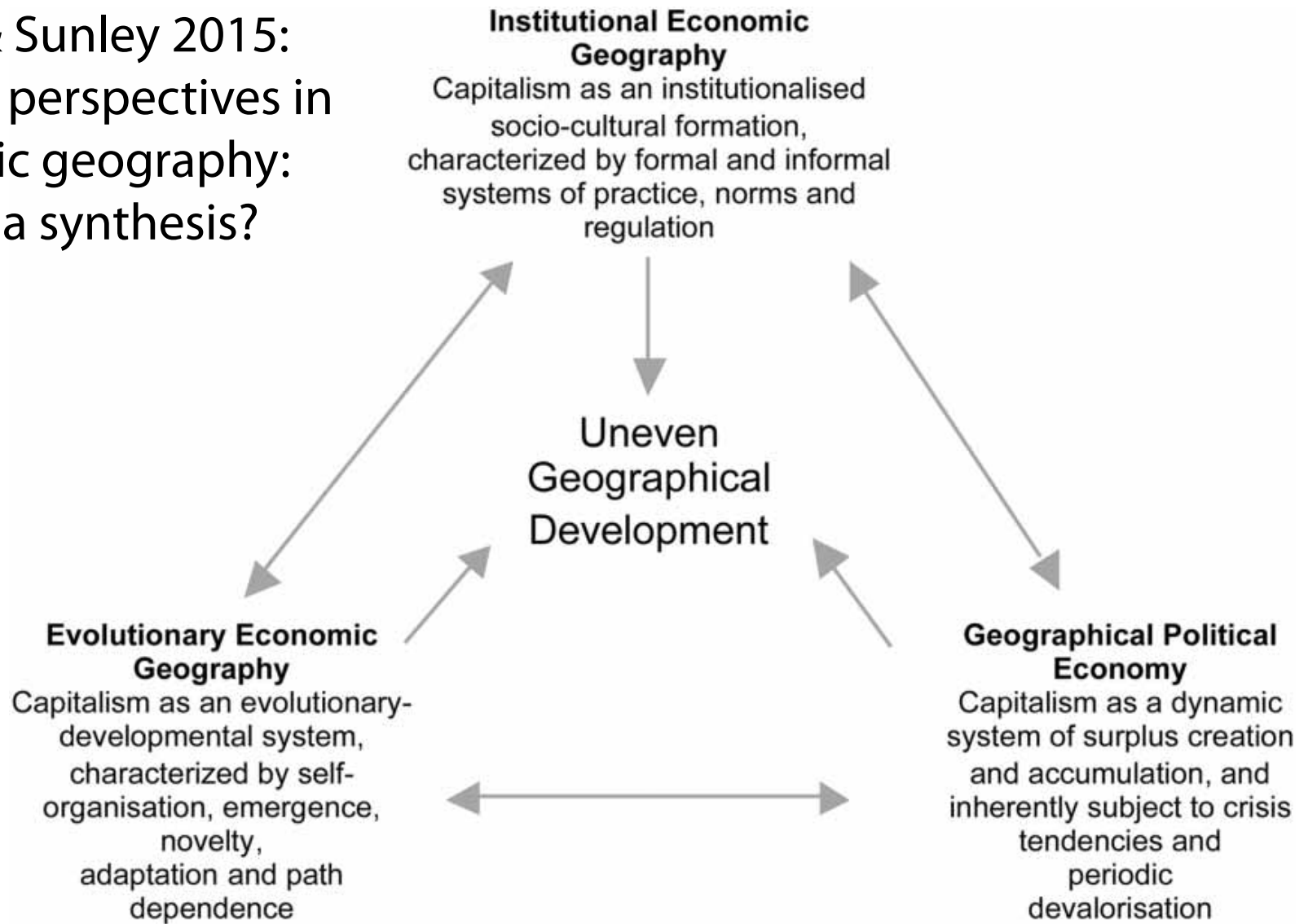
Potential solutions for problem of fragmented pluralism

Striving for *engaged pluralism* (Barnes & Sheppard 2010; Hassink et al. 2014; Clare & Siemiatycki 2014; Muellerleile et al. 2014; Martin & Sunley 2015; Pike et al. 2016)

One existing paradigm starts to dominate: f.e. *geographical political economy* (Peck 2015; Sheppard 2017; Barnes & Christophers 2017)

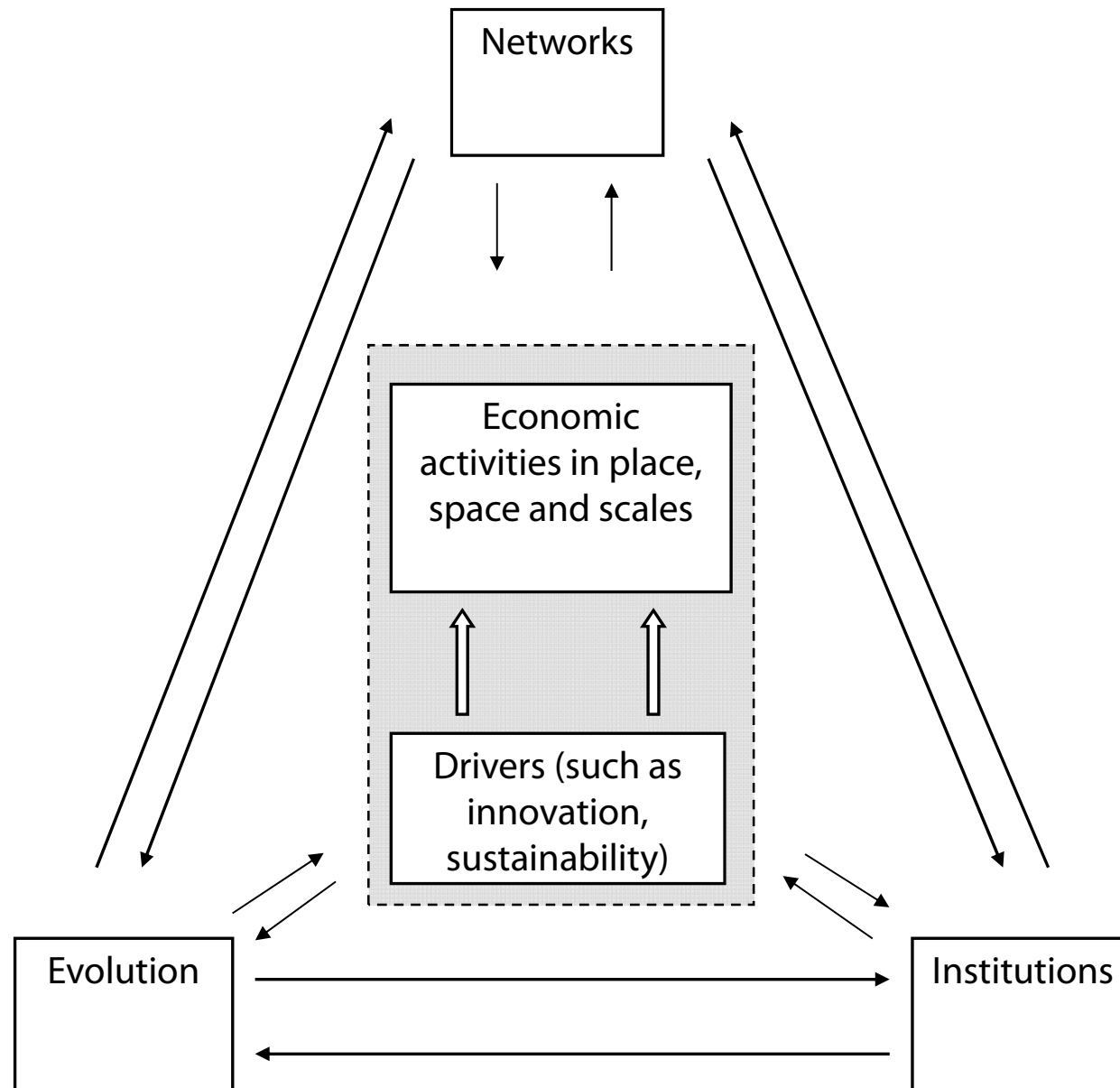
Integrative paradigm of economic geography (Hassink & Gong 2017)

Martin & Sunley 2015: Multiple perspectives in economic geography: towards a synthesis?



Integrative paradigm of economic geography (Hassink & Gong 2017):

aims at analyzing and explaining the location of *economic activities* and their *drivers* both in *space* and *places* and at different *scales*, as well as their *evolutionary* processes and *networks* in their *institutional* context.



Illustrative case-studies



Source: Hu 2015

Hu (2015, 184):

“EEG approach may, to a large extent, fail to explain the evolution of China’s OIAs ... EEG may have strong explanatory power to address why old industries/paths continue to stay, but may fail to explain why and how new paths emerge and evolve.”

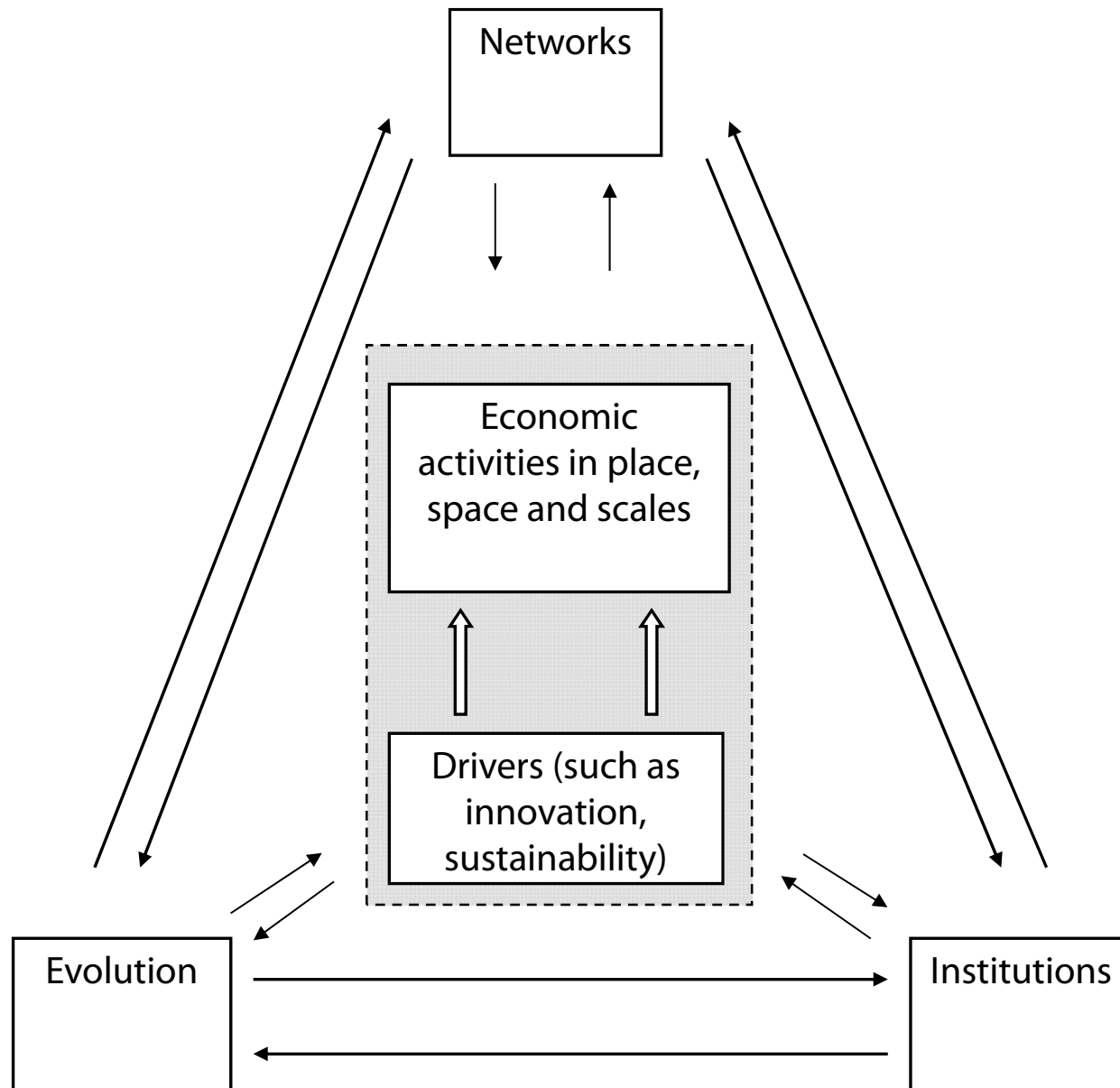
“In order to better understand the question of geographically uneven regional economic evolution, we need to carefully choose appropriate concepts in EEG according to specific contexts, and integrate them with IEG, REG and GPE ideas, being theoretically ‘pluralist’”

Steen (2016, i)

His thesis “questions some of EEGs theoretical underpinnings and provides both supplementary and alternative perspectives that are of particular relevance to understanding path creation processes, especially within sectors such as energy.”

“I believe this thesis substantiates the need for engaged pluralism (Barnes and Sheppard 2010) and theoretical trading zones (Hassink, Klaerding, and Marques 2014) in economic geography” (Steen 2016, 59)

Evenhuis (2016, 288): „This project represents a further step in developing a more holistic approach, which fruitfully combines Evolutionary Perspectives with relevant concepts and practices from a Geographical Political Economy approach ... This study is one of the first attempts to ... operationalise such a holistic approach ...”



Conclusions

As such, economic geography has a lot to offer as an answer to current regional challenges/ supporting place-based policies

However, it suffers from fragmented pluralism and *positionality* of some of its leading scholars

Integrative Paradigm is needed to analyze and explain current regional challenges in different regions, countries and contexts

Neither the crisis of neoliberal globalization, nor the rising populism and problems in old industrial areas occur everywhere at the same time to the same extent

Many thanks for your attention!

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