



The Role of Universities in Innovation and Regional Development

The Role of Universities in Regional Innovation Policies and Practices

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European Policies Research Centre

17 November 2022



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 722295.

The RUNIN project



Presentation Structure



The role of universities



Knowledge, innovation and regional development



Universities in the innovation policy arena

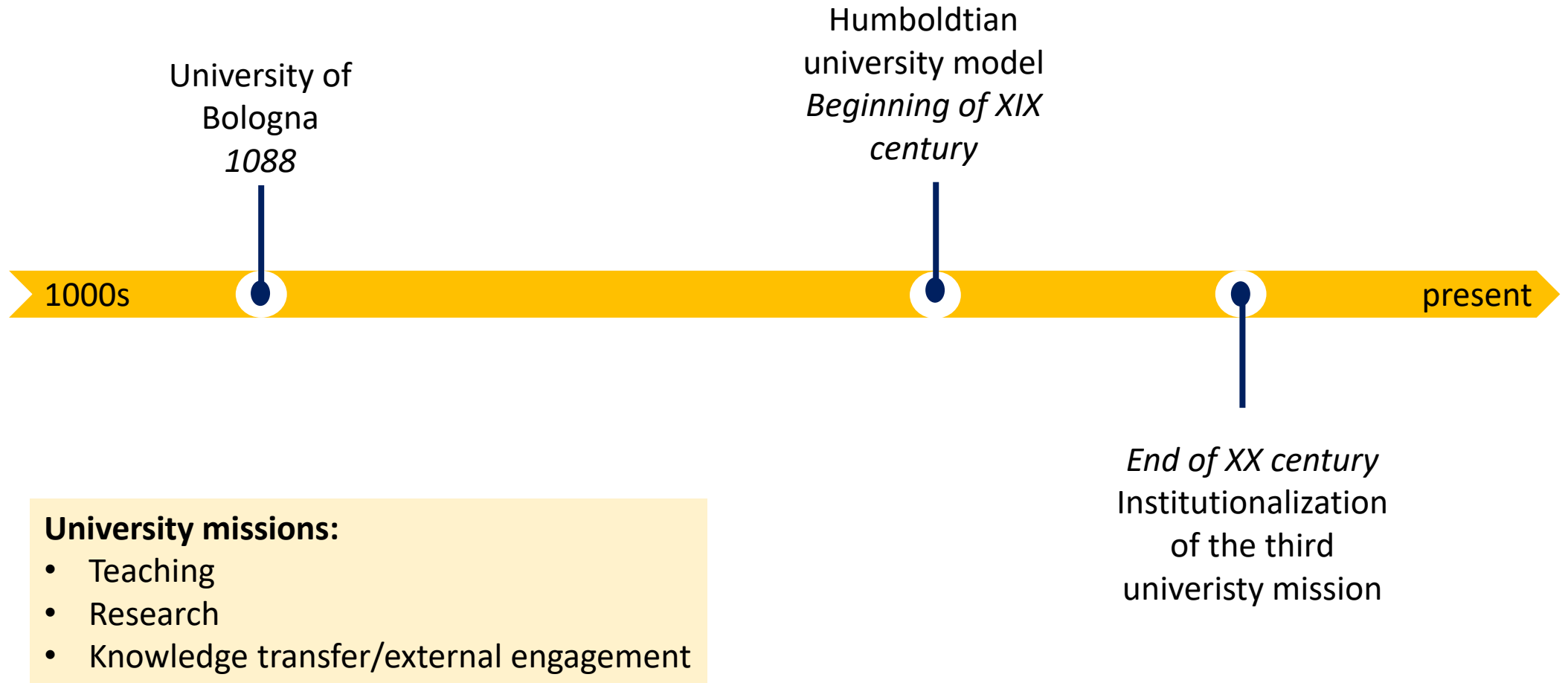


My research



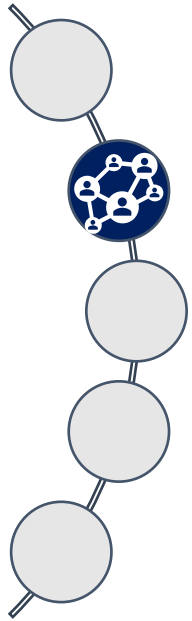
Contributions

The role of universities



Knowledge, innovation and regional development

- **Evolutionary Economic Geography (EEG)** as a starting point to understand the dynamics (eg.: historical, institutional, geographic, of interaction) that influence regional development processes;
- **Different types of regions** demonstrate different challenges and advantages that impact their potential/capacity for innovation and development
- **Knowledge** considered as endogenous to the economic evolutionary economic process → role of universities is emphasised;



Universities in innovation policy arenas

- **Emergence of political experiences** based on scientific knowledge that seek to strengthen interaction models between regional stakeholders for innovation and development (e.g. smart specialisation);
- Emphasis of the role of universities in regional innovation strategy processes;
- Need to analyse the (potential) contribution of universities in their interaction with regional/sub-regional government in the policy process and their governance roles.



Universities in innovation policy arenas



Potential

Identify needs/gaps and supply information and analyses to support decisionmaking

Provoke reflection, interactive learning and problem resolution

Network facilitator within and between different geographic and administrative levels, and neutral mediator

Limitation

Context, policies, and institutional

Institutional capacities, interaction models and path dependence

Complexity of political arena and variation in the innovation strategy process

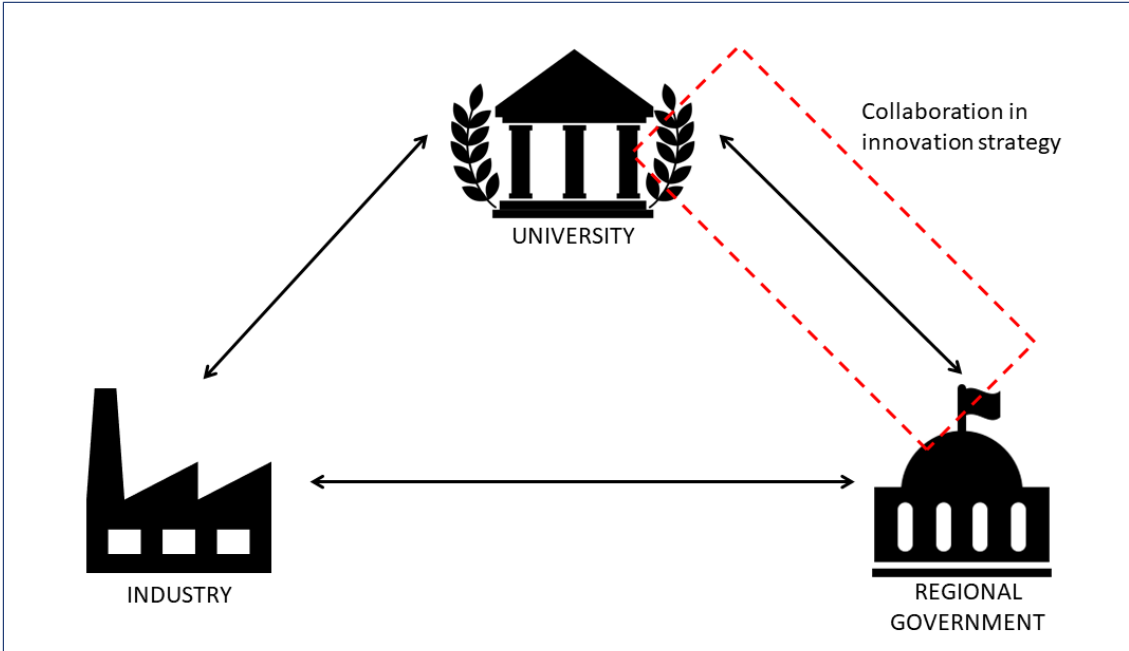
My research

Objective:

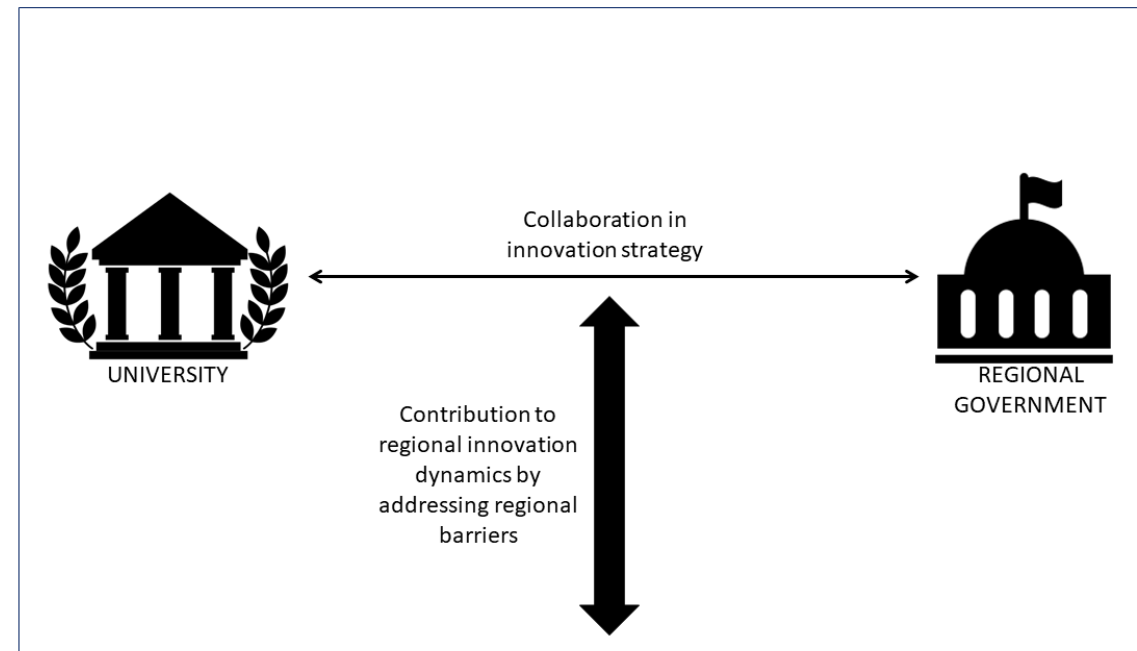
To explore universities' contribution to strengthen regional innovation dynamics through the analysis of interaction between universities and regional government in the innovation strategy process.

How and under which conditions can university engagement in regional innovation policy processes address regional development barriers?

REGIONAL CONTEXT



REGIONAL CONTEXT



My research

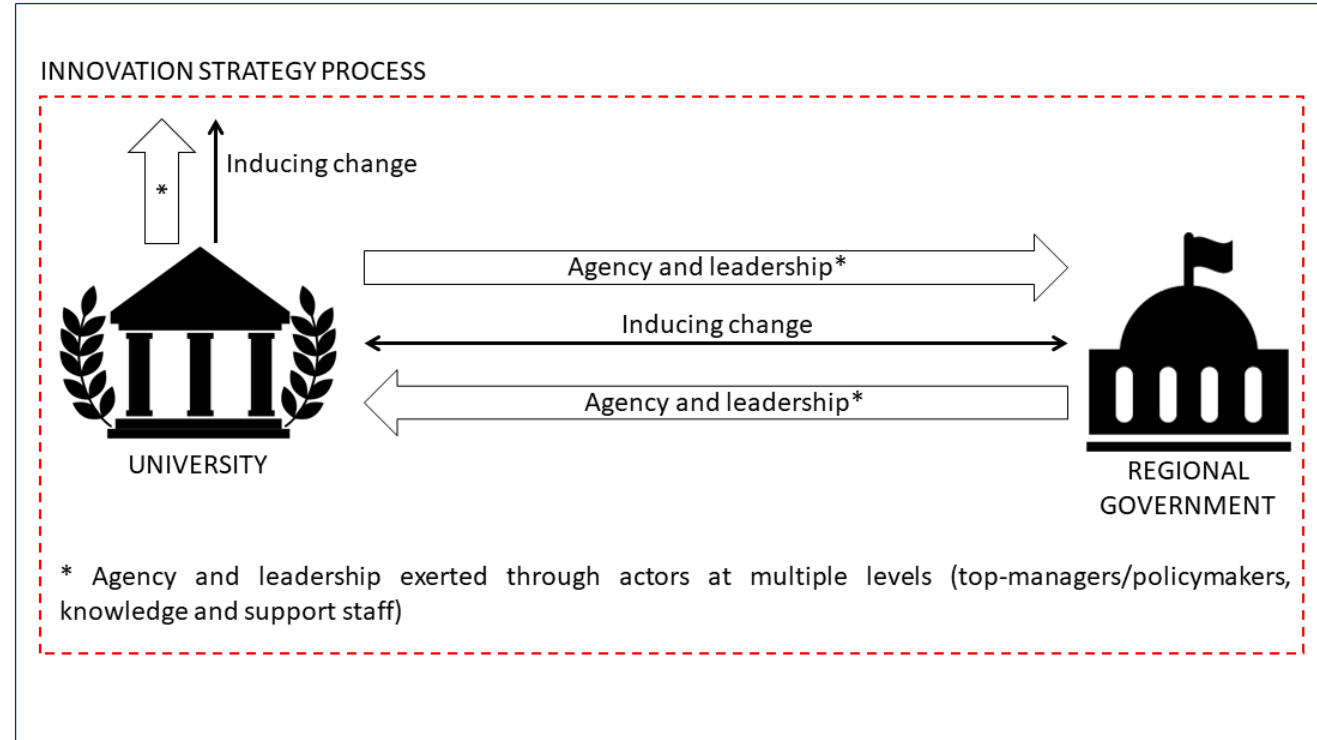
Need to analyse the micro-processes, including mechanisms of:

- Agency & Leadership (*place leadership*);
- Alignment & Legitimacy
- Change

Main case studies:

- University of Aveiro
- Autonomous University of Barcelona
- University of Twente

REGIONAL CONTEXT



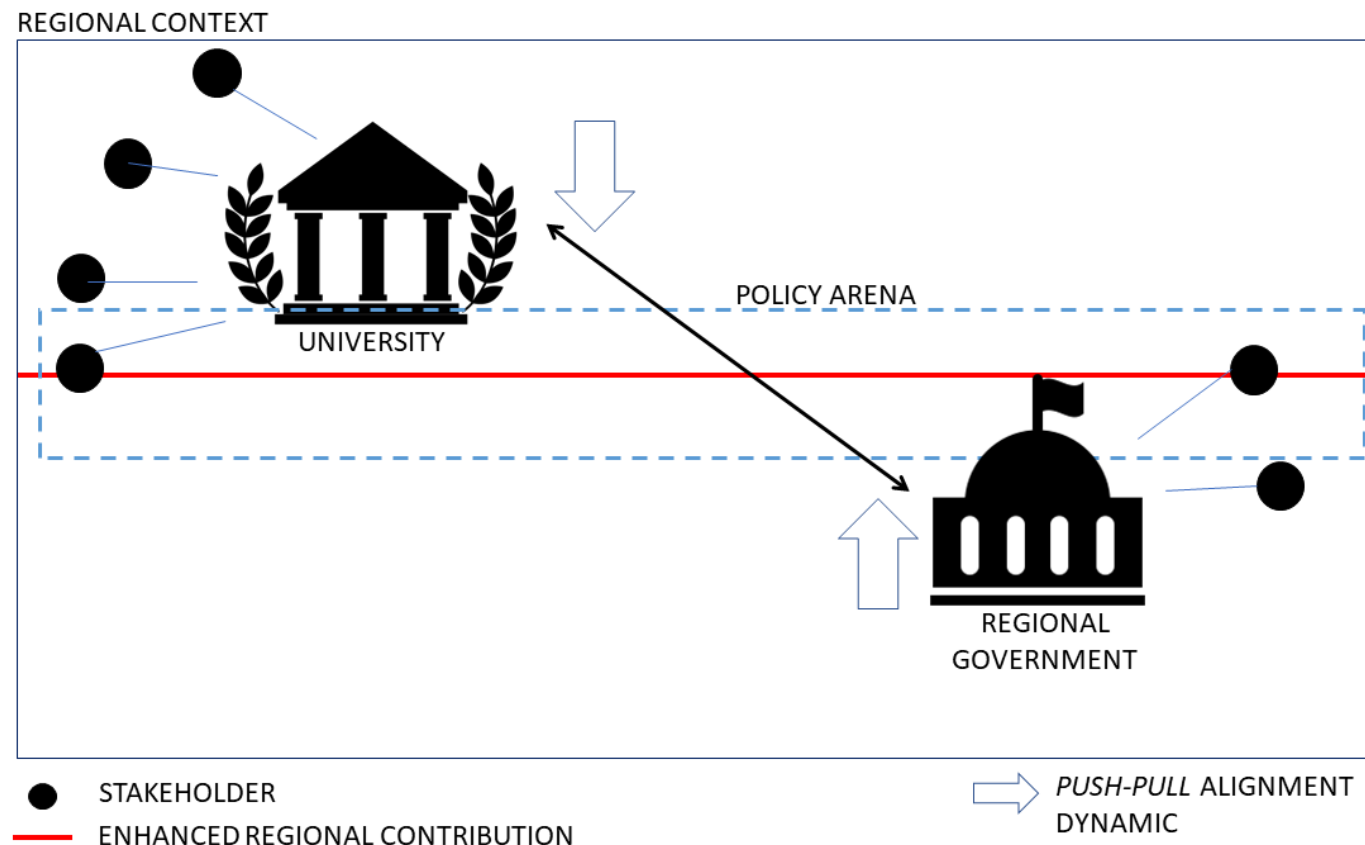
Total of **88 interviews**

Total of **7 publications** as book chapters and scientific articles

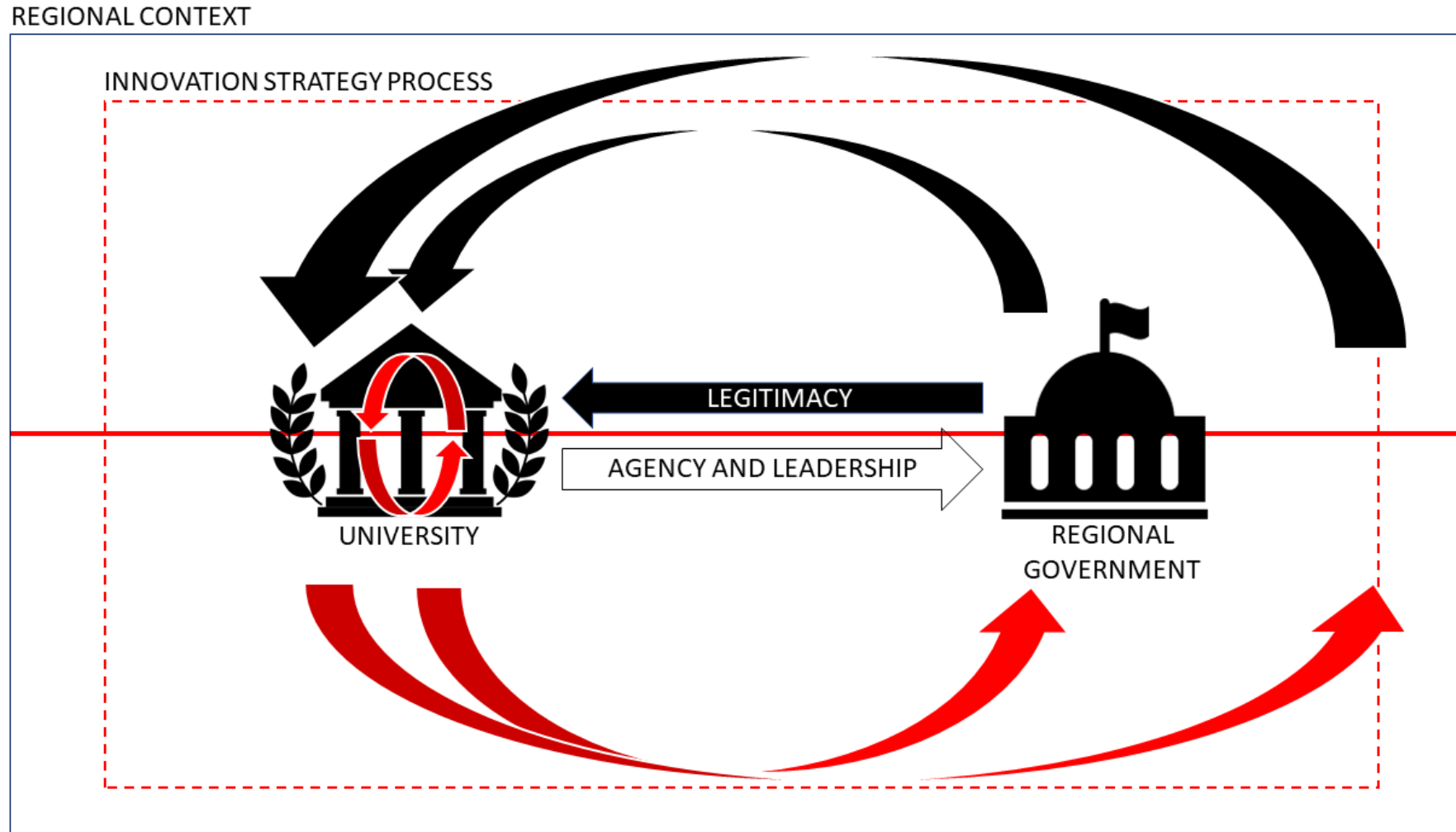
Highlighted mechanisms:

- Alignment
- Legitimacy
- Agency and leadership
- Change

An alignment heuristic:

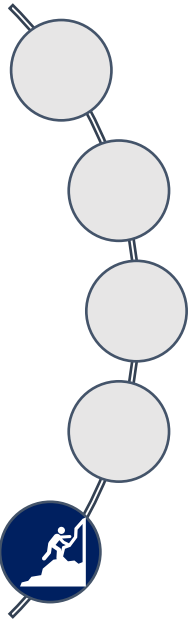


My research: proposed final model



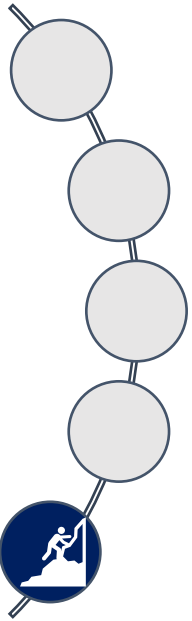
Contributions: main findings

- **Mechanisms of alignment, legitimacy, agency and leadership** can contribute to strengthening the role of universities in their interaction in innovation policies and practices;
- **Analysis of micro-processes** is useful to estimate the capacity of different contexts and institutions.
- **Activation of internal and external change** processes from this kind of interaction;
- **Contribution to innovation** and regional development dynamics, including...



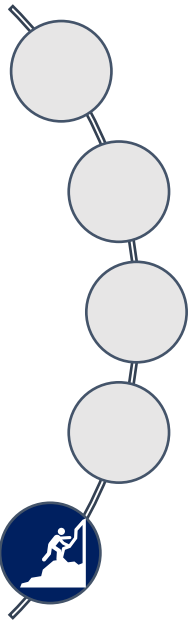
Contributions: main findings

	UA	UT	UAB
Engagement type	Entrepreneurial and argued move to civic	Entrepreneurial	Entrepreneurial
Region type	Less-developed, peripheral	Old industrial and peripheral region	Metropolitan region
Engagement in innovation policy process	Strong strategic alignment with regional policies and performance of governance roles and support to regional government	Strong involvement in regional innovation coalitions and in sub-regional innovation strategy making	Limited and indirect engagement in regional innovation policymaking, but increased involvement at local level
Examples of estimated regional impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-institutional capacity-building; • Regional problem-solving; • Industry support infrastructure; • Network enabler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry support infrastructure; • Network enabler; • Creation of collaborative dialogue spaces; • Anchoring of international competences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong network building at local levels; • Anchoring of international competences in the region; • Inter-institutional capacity building.

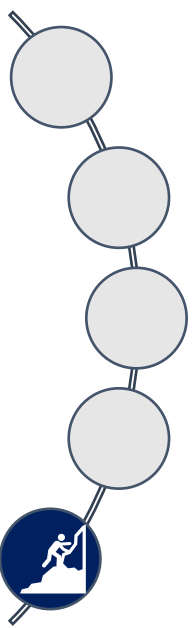


Contributions: main findings

- Involvement with regional government and alignment with the innovation policy process stimulates a **rethinking of university institutional and organizational structures**.
- Opportunities and challenges in the analysed interaction **depend on the geographic context and institutional capacity**, with more positive potential when considering the mechanisms of alignment, legitimacy, agency and leadership.



Recommendations



Challenge	Recommendation
Promoting regional academic engagement with policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to consider benefits (tangible and intangible) of local and regional engagement • Training in regional engagement, and pedagogical and developmental approaches in collaboration • Reflect this in career evaluation
Creating and enabling a policy framework or strategy process that can facilitate the matching of university assets and capacities to regional needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A policy framework linking research and innovation to regional needs (e.g. smart specialisation) to promote university-region collaboration and maximise resources and networks • A strategic focus on areas of regional economic relevance • Inclusion of collaborative methodologies in regional engagement repertoires
Activating universities' regional engagement and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of bottom-up leadership within the university to enable internal discursive cohesion and externally directed action
Enabling university engagement in regional innovation strategy processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify universities' needed input in regional strategy processes



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Thank you!

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