

9<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Finland Futures Research Centre  
and Finland Futures Academy 6.-8.6.2007 Turku, Finland  
– *”Culture as Innovation – The Search for Creative Power  
in Economies and Societies”*

**Workshop 2. Diversifying culture 7.6.2007**

**Creativity as Repositioning: Sustainability  
Agency in Municipal Services**

*Minna Mikkola*  
*University of Helsinki, Ruralia Institute*



# The outline of the presentation

- The aim is to identify and analyse creativity for sustainability in municipal services
- The frame theories supporting the analysis are **Luhmann's** theory of social systems, **Harré's and Gillett's** theory of discursive mind and **Victor's and Boynton's** concept of co-configuration
- The method is case study (mainly DA) of 5 European municipalities and their catering services
- The results point out the importance of connections with food chain actors and customers, leading to repositioning of services and increased sustainability



# Creativity in municipal services?

- Municipal services are strongly regulated by hierarchic organisations restricting individual decision making power
- Additionally strong regulation in positions, tasks, salaries and by budgets and future planning
- Additional regulation by national and EU law in e.g. procurement, compensation, occupational safety, sector based programs and recommendations
- Typically centralised organisation leaves degrees of freedom in practical organisation of work ("freedom in details")
- Typically work is 'heavy duty' as labour or responsibility
- Does this harsh environment offer opportunities for creativity?



# Theoretical background of the study 1

- **Luhmann** (1989): society depends on environment for its existence, but cannot however know anything about it directly but only via perception, concepts, models and surveillance
- Society has two environments, 'the environment' and individuals
- Society is divided into subsystems governed by their codes and programmes, connected with each other by (developing) language; policy, economy, law, science and religion create resonance between each other when communicating
- The aim of communication is to adapt to environment
- Environmental communication offers the possibility to increase sustainability



## Theoretical background of the study 2

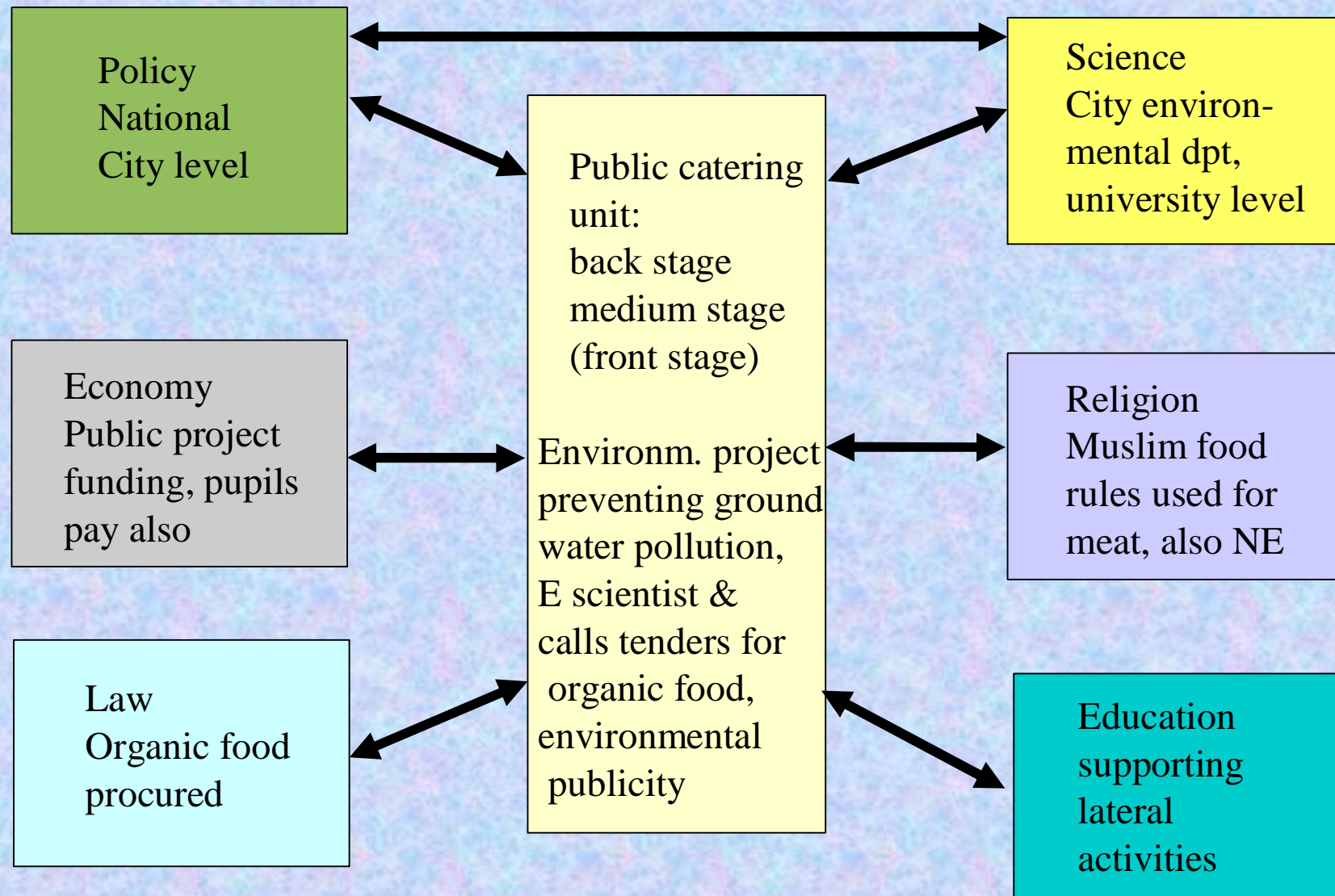
- **Harré and Gillett (1994)**: Perception is not independent of conceptualisation (language) but supported and focused by it
- Consciousness includes the object of perception (environment, talk), awareness of perception and awareness of others' awareness of one self > and their acceptance and modification of own behaviour
- Co-operation is a 'typically human phenomenon', but not self-evident and includes lots of social skilfulness (**Argyle 1991**)
- Co-configuration (**Victor and Boynton**) is the creative way of developing new ideas and practices in the closest co-operation
- Creativity for sustainability needs environmental concepts and discourse, co-operation and co-configuration with other actors in the food system in the midst of every-day work



# Case study of European public catering units

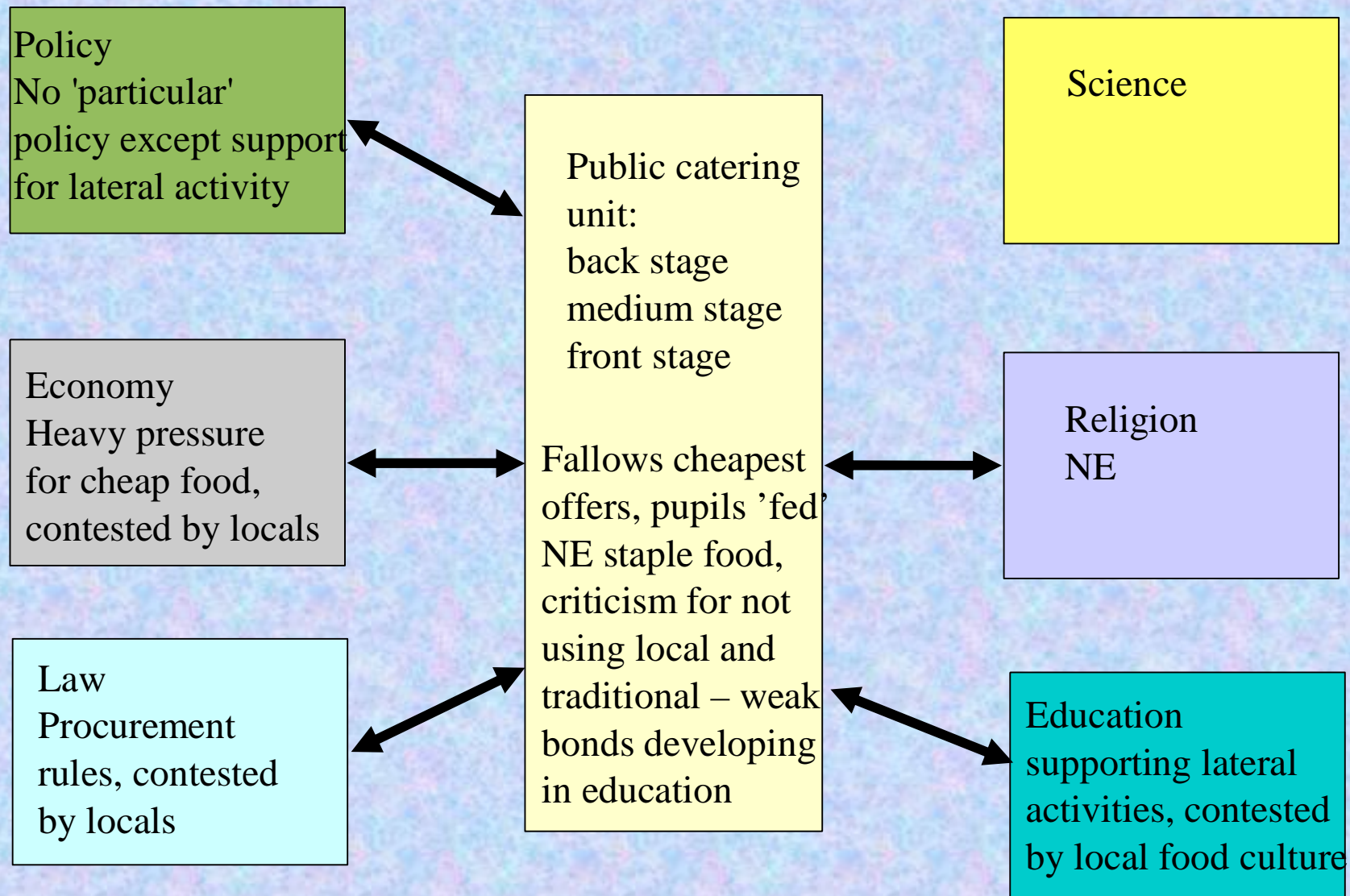
- Danish, English, Finnish, Italian and Swedish cases as representations of *different connections* by caterers with *Luhmannian societal subsystems*
- Cases studied on the basis of conference presentations and reports
- Discourse analysis as a method, following the topic of discourse and the source (subsystem) of it
- Ending up with *network patterns* making visible the topical connections, co-configuration and positional changes of catering units - 'political definitions'





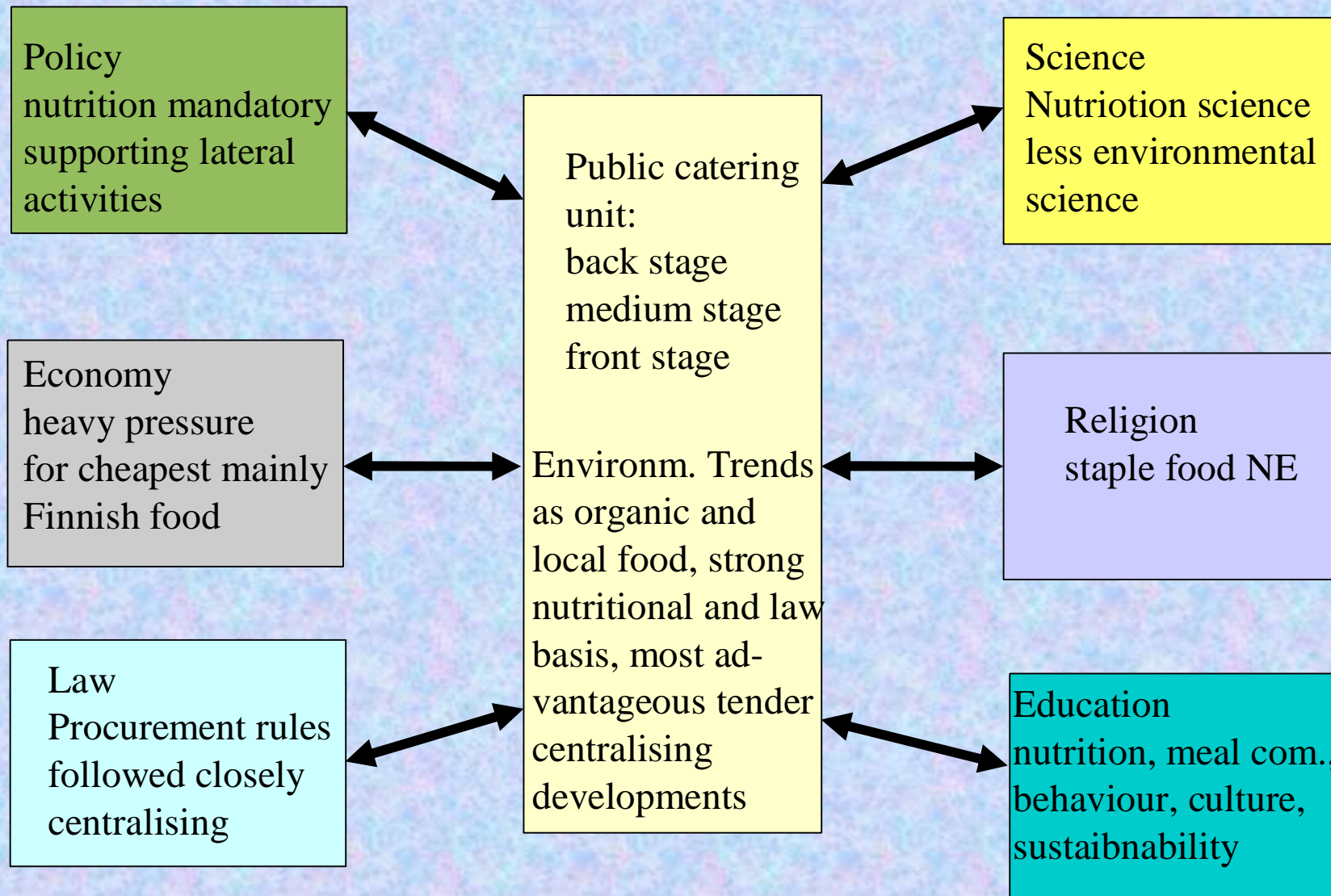
Danish public catering case, a major city





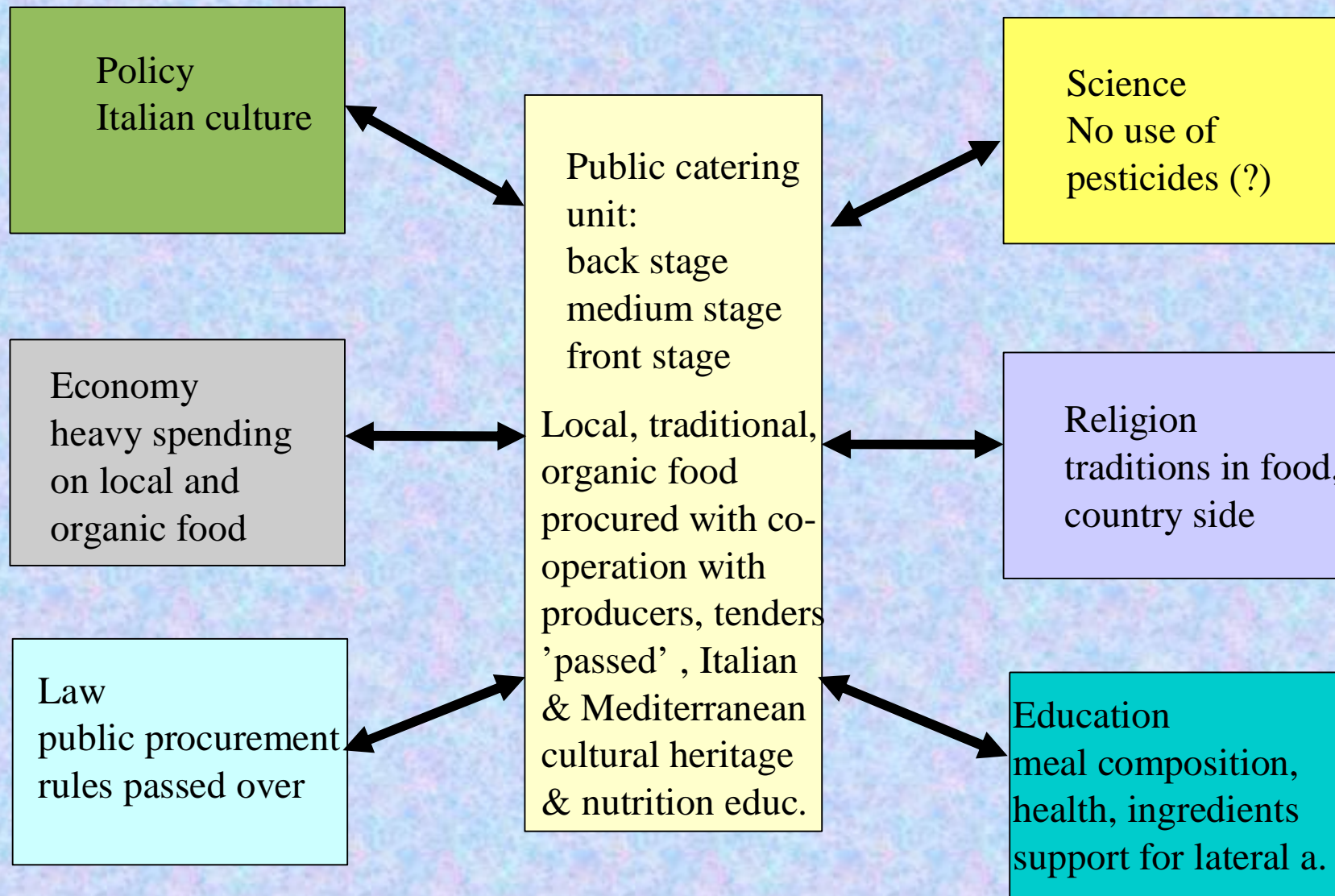
English public catering case, a minor municipality





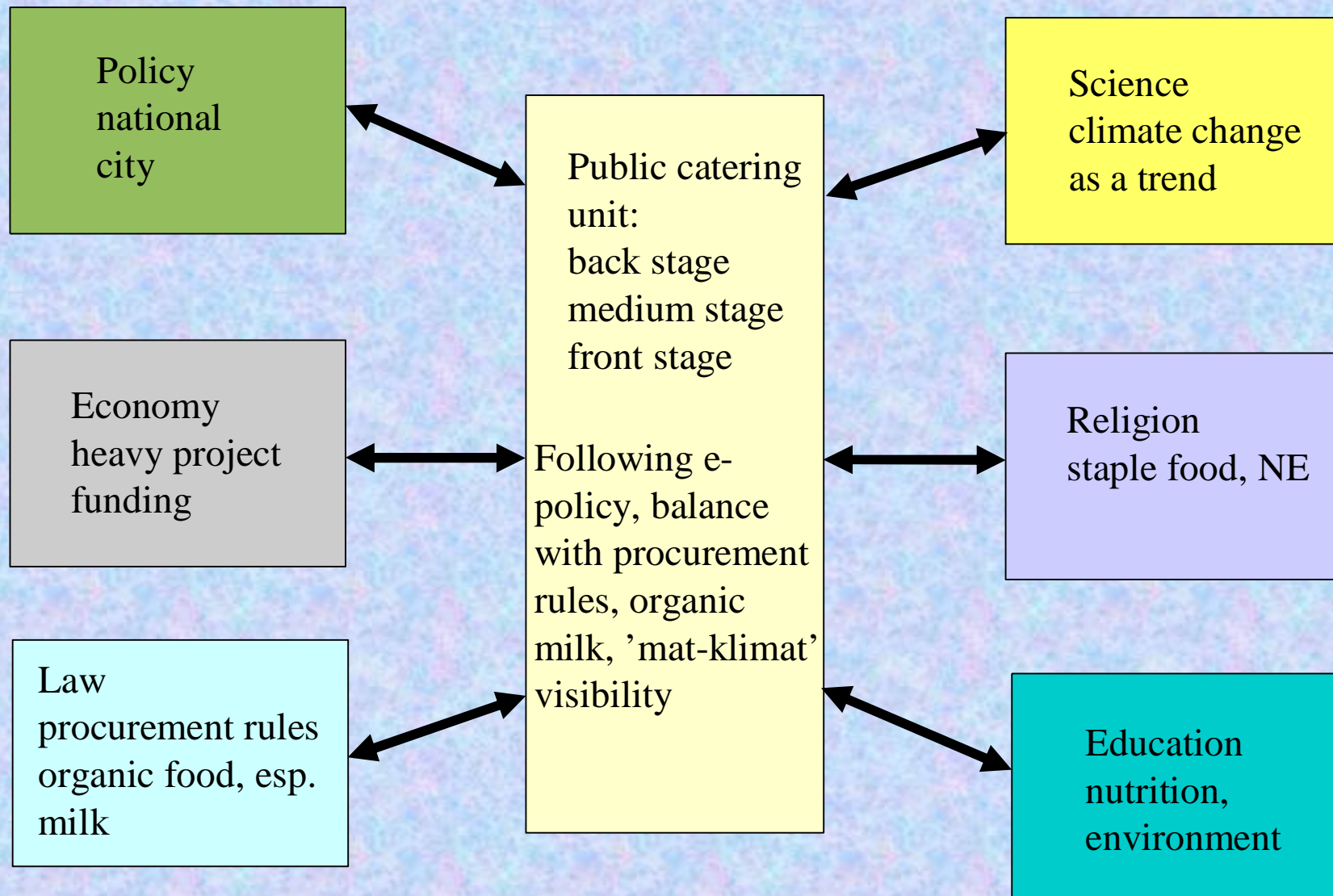
Finnish public catering case, a medium city





Italian public catering case, a major city





Swedish public catering unit, a major city



# Repositionings

- Traditional ways of doing like in Italy – without intensive farming change – fit today's ecological discourse; awareness of particularity! Actually **lack of repositioning**
- Organic food, groundwater protection and muslim meat habits, awareness of environmental and cultural changes, **strong new repositioning**
- Mat-klimat - environment as basis for **fashionable repositioning**
- Local traditional food, basis for **local repositioning**
- Traditionally strong nutrition scientific, organisational and pragmatic approach with heavy law dependency - lack of awareness of applications of environmental science - **difficulties in repositioning**