

Discussion: Towards the Next Generation of Smart Specialisation

Smart Specialisation for Sustainable Development Goals - E-talks Webinar Series

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Towards S4: General Comments

- **Time for S4**
 - urgency of sustainability challenges
 - **moving from S3 to S4 is demanding:** building on and breaking with S3
 - **moving from S3 to S4 is an “opportunity rich” endeavour:** e.g. EGD, and even COVID-19: current crisis as an opportunity to progress and bounce forward towards a more sustainable pathway (*Giovannini et al. 2020, Büscher et al. 2021, Martin 2021*)

 - **S4** reflects an **alternative agenda for regional innovation and economic development,**
 - ... one that is less oriented towards short term growth and ...
 - ... more focussed on environmental sustainability and more inclusive development
 - building up long-term transformative resilience (*Davoudi et al. 2013, Evenhuis 2017*), adopting an challenge-oriented regional innovation (systems) policy approach (*Tödtling, Trippel, Desch 2021*)
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Towards S4: General Comments

- **How to move from S3 to S4 (Miedzinski et al. 2021)?**
 - reflecting on the **strengths and limitations of the current S3 framework**
 - rethinking the **theoretical underpinning of smart specialisation**
 - revisiting and extending the **conceptual and methodological framework** of smart specialisation to promote innovation and systemic change in line with the SDGs
 - suggesting **guidelines** and a **self-assessment tool** for regions to design and implement smart specialisation strategies for sustainable transformation

 - **Barriers to sustainability transitions:** what does the literature tell us?
 - progress on the SDGs remains uneven and is not moving fast enough (*Sachs et al. 2019*)
 - do we target the wrong leverage points (*Abson et al. 2017*)?
 - implications for S4?
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Critical Questions about S4

- **S4 and its applicability / relevance to all regions ... focussing on LDRs:**
 - **Q1-1:** is S4 **more suitable** for LDRs, given its broader/alternative understanding of (the purpose of) innovation and its explicit **“challenges first” approach**?
 - **Q1-2:** is S4 **too demanding**, considering enduring horizontal and vertical government coordination challenges, stakeholder inclusion challenges, prioritisation challenges, etc. which still prevail in spite of improvements due to S3? (*Perianez Forte 2021*)

 - **Broad, inclusive and continuous participation of heterogeneous stakeholders**
 - **Q2-1:** what can we expect from **“new” innovation agents and hitherto neglected actors** in S4 processes; does S4 require **established innovation actors to take on new roles**?
 - **Q2-2:** do we underestimate the **“thorny road” to consensus building** between heterogeneous actors with different power, motivations, interests, knowledge and interpretations of sustainability?
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Critical Questions about S4

- **Relative importance of / relation between sustainability-oriented goals & specialisation areas and other goals and areas**
 - **Q3: how to ensure that economic concerns do not continue to trump environmental and social issues?**
- **Potential negative impacts of sustainability-oriented specialisation areas on the wider region and elsewhere:**
 - **Q4: what kind of regional development (and for whom, where) is generated, considering inter-path and inter-regional relations and variegated outcomes of policy prioritisation processes**

Critical Questions about S4

- **Path destabilisation/exnovation as the flipside of sustainability transitions and the geography of discontent** (*Turnheim & Geels 2012, Kivimaa & Kern 2016, Rodriguez-Pose 2018, McCann 2019, Martins 2021*)
 - **Q5-1:** path destabilisation/exnovation: a neglected issue in S4, **a case for S4?**
 - **Q5-2:** How could S4 address the economic, social and political challenges in “**phase-out**” regions (coal, oil ...)

- **Sustainability-oriented specialisation areas / policies and the challenge orientation of innovation systems**
 - **Q6-1: S4 activities:** a **niche** in still dominating **traditionally oriented innovation systems?**
 - **Q6-2:** S4 and the **reorientation** of (regional) innovation policies: how to deal with **ignorance** and/or **resistance** to reorientation?