



Special Session Proposal

Innovation catalysts, regional development and unintended consequences

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Abstract

There is long-established research focussed on analysing the links between innovation and its potential benefits on national, regional and local economies as well as individual or firm level outcomes. Time and again, considering different perspectives and methodologies and also different cases of study, researchers have found that innovation performance and/or activities contributing to it, such as investment in R&D, have a significant and positive effect on economic performance indicators like, for instance, income, productivity and labour market measures. In addition, innovation is hailed as one of the main tools in achieving the sustainable development goals, for instance, the net zero transitions, making it even more crucial aspect of regional development. That is why policymakers are paying more attention to the role of innovative activity understanding it as a key driver of social welfare and economic growth.

However, the mechanisms of the impacts of innovation over the economic domain still a matter of state-of-the-art research focussed on knowledge and other spillovers as well as the main drivers. Researchers have uncovered a range of nuances and complexities in the observed positive links between innovation and growth. For example, not all places have the absorptive capacity to benefit from innovation in their area due to their own socioeconomic conditions. In this context, smart specialization strategies play a crucial role allowing territories to use invested resources in a more efficient way by adapting to the territories own circumstances. The same happens at the firm's level. Not all firms have the absorptive capacity to benefit from innovation due to their own characteristics.

Additionally, researchers have observed that there is a great heterogeneity in terms of investment effort between countries, regions and also within regions. Specifically, most developed areas are ones that concentrate a greater investment effort and that is why current researchers proposes that this uneven spatial distribution of the investment in R&D can in fact broaden inequalities within and across regions and lead to the phenomena of unrest and discontent.

This special session aims to bring together cross-disciplinary research on the catalysts that affect the relationship between innovation and economic performance at the regional and individual/ firm level. Also, it is proposed to discuss the unintended consequences of innovation and the policy tools to manage it. Some of the topics of particular interest include:

- Innovative activities and firms' performance
- Geography of innovation and regional development
- The agents/factors of regional/firm absorptive capacity
- Smart specialization strategies and innovation policies
- Innovation and sustainability
- Innovation and labour market inequalities

The selection of papers will follow the procedures set by the ERSA Organizing Committee.