Smart Spec

Governance and the entrepreneurial search process

The entrepreneurial discovery process that is central to smart specialisation (RIS3) strategies raises critical questions with respect to governance. The idea of entrepreneurial discovery implies that RIS3 strategies are 'alive' and in continual evolution. This in turn requires a shift from the fixed-term planning approaches often employed in regions to more open and flexible strategic decision-making processes.

Indeed, the governance challenges are significant because of two inherent characteristics of entrepreneurial discovery processes. Firstly they are sensitive, because they should result in choosing to prioritize some activities over others, which has implications for different agents in the territory. Secondly they are complex, given that in arriving at these choices they should bring together a wide range of agents from across the quadruple helix of business, government, research & civil society. This complexity is further heightened by the existence of multiple levels of territory (cities, provinces, regions, nations) and multiple layers of decision-making (political, administrative, operational).

The governance issue permeates all work packages in the smartspec project, and is a central feature of ongoing conceptual and empirical research. It is relevant not only for a better understanding of the entrepreneurial search process, but also for our analysis of the social innovation outcomes associated with RIS3 strategies, for the specific implications for regions with less developed research and innovation systems, and for the design, implementation and evaluation of policies to support RIS3. As such questions of governance are also at the core of the project's ongoing analysis of regional living labs, which is providing important evidence to enhance knowledge around governance in the aforementioned areas.

Announcement – Thematic Seminar
'Smart use of Peer Reviews and Transnational Policy Learning for Smart Specialization Strategies'
23 April 2015, Brussels, Wales House, Rond-Point Schuman 11

The aim of this seminar is to provide substance, guidance and support to decision-makers involved in implementing the concept of smart specialization at various levels.
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More information: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan/research/smartspec/news-events

Halfway through the learning journeys

The "**Learning Journeys**" have continued to provide an excellent forum for policy-makers and academics to share ideas about the design and future implementation of smart specialisation strategies (RIS3). At this stage six have been organized: in Murcia (Spain), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Lodzkie (Poland), Bremen (Germany), Belfast (Northern Ireland) and Navarra (Spain), with each covering a relevant topic of RIS3. Reports are available in the SmartSpec website (see box on the right).

A recurrent topic in these journeys has been the need and challenges associated with the governance of RIS3, including the processes of making investment choices, of coordinating multiple actors (public, private, third sector), and of achieving higher levels of efficacy and efficiency in the public sector. These and other topics will continue to be addressed in the next meeting in South Moravia (Czech Republic), in May 2015.

The OECD has been actively involved in promoting the concept of smart specialisation, since the publication of their report "Innovation-driven Growth in Regions: The Role of Smart Specialisation". More information can be found here: http://www.oecd.org/sti/inno/smartspecialisation.htm

Project website: www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan/research/smartspec