

***Special Session (SS20) on:  
The promise of transitions via  
innovation for sustainable  
regional development***



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**The purpose and scope of the special session**

Societies are facing major crises : massive and sometimes brutal urbanization, environmental degradation, social inequalities, the decline of regions outside economic centers, wars, pandemics. Far from being clear-cut, these challenges are complex and often confusing. They involve many interdependent players, fields and scales, often without a clear starting point. Resolving them requires in-depth reflection on transition paths based on fundamentally innovative ways of thinking, practicing and organizing.

From this point of view, analyzing the innovative approaches that can help make the prospects of transition to sustainability effective is a relevant and very useful question. Rather than focusing on sustainability as an objective, we focus on how the potential for transformation can be realized and reinforced. Fortunately, economic literature and public policy on innovation have moved away from a "slightly over-enthusiastic" focus on the technical dimension alone, and allow us to consider innovation as broadly as possible. Whether technological, organizational, institutional or social, innovation is the pillar and promise of transition. It enables us to initiate and drive change in the trajectory of our development patterns, and to deploy the transition in our modes of consumption, production and thought.

In this approach, local authorities are not the only ones seeking to achieve structural change towards sustainability. Business, citizens and non-governmental organizations are acting, innovating and contributing - sometimes indirectly - to "shaping the territory" and creating a sustainable future.

The aim of this special session is to reflect the diversity of these approaches and players in the way they are deploying the transition. Theoretical reflections and quantitative proposals may be included in this session.

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