

# Through a glass, darkly: national innovation policy and academia

Bisrat Agegnehu, Beniamino Callegari and Olga Mikhailova

*BI Norwegian Business School*

# Introduction

- ‘Innovation’ is attracting more and more attention from both academia and policy makers
- Are they talking about the same thing? Are they interacting?
- Is there a common understanding among policy makers about how an innovation policy should look like and what it should focus on?

# Related literature

Two main theories reviewed:

- The Innovation System approach
- The role of the Developmental State (Listian literature and theory of the Innovative Enterprise)

# Data sources

- Policy documents of 12 OECD countries
- Three main groups
  - ✓ Anglo-Saxon countries (USA, UK, Australia, Canada)
  - ✓ European Union peripheral countries (Spain, Greece, Slovenia, Ireland)
  - ✓ Countries fully integrated in the so-called European Union “core” (Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Austria)
- 5 volumes of ‘Research Policy’ journal, 10 issues each, 548 articles in total (2005-2009)

# Policy classification

- *Institutional* - aimed at mobilizing existing private resources through the modification of the existing institutional framework and economic incentive structure
- *Developmental* - aimed at producing or collecting resources through direct State intervention
- *Mixed* –a combination of the two

# Findings: defining Innovation

- Of the 12 countries, 9 used an internally developed definition of innovation, 3 documents do not provide any definition
- Three countries used internal definition + Oslo manual
- Spread from policy documents to third parties & academia

# Findings: placing Innovation

- Where it is placed influences how it is understood
- ‘Innovation’ is integrated with pre-existing ministry in half of the countries
- Specific innovation agencies involved in two countries – Finland and Canada
- Australia and US – subsumed under ministry of economy or industry

# Findings: the role of EU and OECD

- EU countries frequently make references to rules and goals set by the EU
- UK – focused on how to attract more EU funds
- OECD – used as a data and information source
- Policy suggestions by OECD – mentioned only on 3 occasions
- USA and Canada – least evidence of external influence

# IS and national innovation policy

- Extensive exposure to the concept of ‘innovation system’, always as National Innovation System
- RIS referred only on a single circumstance in the Spanish document
- No single reference to SIS or other specifications
- No evidence of exposure to academic development of the concept

# Academia and policy recommendations

- Of the 548 reviewed articles, 39% exhibited explicit policy considerations

Not concerned	Policy considerations	Policy recommendations	Total
334	151	63	548
61%	28%	11%	100%

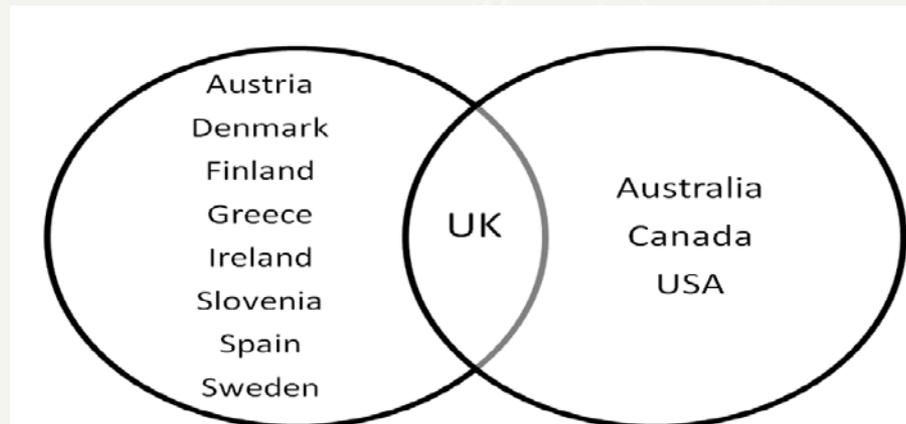
- Policy recommendations were mixed – both institutional and developmental
- Contradictory recommendations are common

# Matching Academia and Policy

- Not possible to find perfect matches
- Exceptions - increase overall R&D expenditures
- Similar interests but different developments

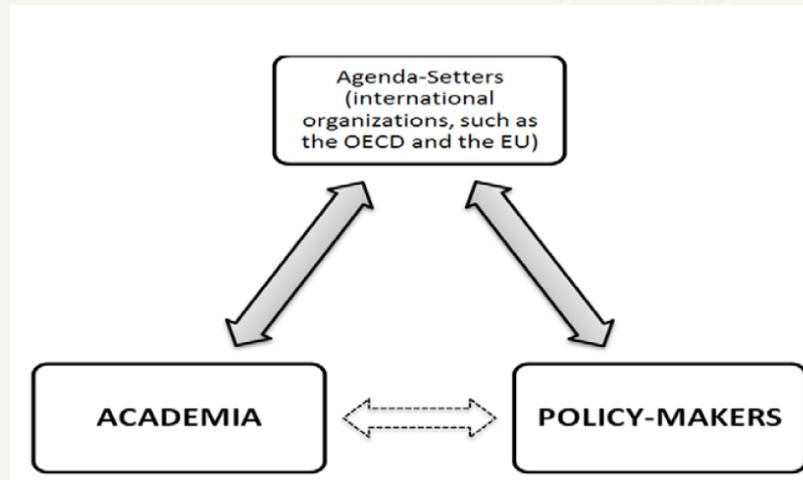
# National comparisons

- ‘Institutional’ vs ‘developmental’
- Anglo Saxon vs European (no difference between core and periphery in this respect)



# Academia vs Policy?

- Evidence of international organizations as agenda-setters



- Academia and policy showing signs of parallel co-evolution, little exchange

# Conclusions & future research

- Innovation policies fall in two different groups - institutional change (EU) vs developmental State
- Not much direct interaction among policy makers and academia – whenever there is it is through OECD or EU
- Need to expand data sources to cover non-EU, non-Anglo-Saxon countries and to extend academic literature review