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**Breaking path-dependency and catch-up strategies. Opportunities for transformative innovation in the Cordoba Region, Colombia**

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The dominant narrative in innovation policy for “periphery”, “less developed”, “developing” countries has been focused on their need to “catch up” with the most developed and industrialised ones, through a whole set of strategies that vary from strengthening the research and development investment, to better coordinate actors to produce economic growth centred innovation (Velasco, 2015). The existing and now permanent environmental and social planetary crises are feedback from a concatenation of recurring shocks that have the potential to imprint or create a permanent change produced by the traumatic events, with new pathways in the socio ecological and technical systems (Johnstone and Schot forthcoming). Given the current affairs, the innovation policy frames focused mainly on the economic dimension have been contested and perceived as not fit for purpose. In this context, the transformative innovation policy frame advocates for an innovation focused on systems change through just transitions (Schot & Steinmueller, 2018). Such a frame is particularly relevant for the Global South (GS), which has contributed the least to the current situation but is disproportionately affected by its effects. We argue that the GS has the advantage to break the path-dependency and lock-in of unsustainable and unfair pathways given the less embedded infrastructure, organisations, and institutions invested. Then, instead of catching up, the GS countries have the opportunity to lead the way and expand their experimentation capacity, which has been prominent in alternative practices given the lack of many structural conditions that push communities to innovate.

We showcase our argument by presenting the case of the Cordoba region, in Colombia. Cordoba is a predominantly agricultural and animal breeding territory which has been impacted by the strong armed conflict. However, a process to renew the science, technology and innovation regional plan has opened the possibility to involve a broad constellation of actors including small farmers, small companies, producers’ associations, chambers of commerce, universities and public research centres, local and regional governments, regulation organisations, to build a participatory and inclusive plan based on transformative innovation policies (Velasco et al. forthcoming). This contribution exposes the conflicting goals and complex negotiation processes towards desirable futures based on just transitions. We present the results of participatory methods to characterise the Cordoba agrifood regime, the landscape pressures, and the first identification of niches to be nurtured and empowered through collective action, where policy plays an important but insufficient role. We argue that Cordoba has the potential to become a seedbed of prototypes and demonstrators of agroecological and regenerative livestock.

## References

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