Report 1: Laura Sariego, Session E. Sustainability, Technology & Just Transitions

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Sustainability, Technology, and Just Transitions

This is a report about one of the parallel sessions on Sustainability, Technology, and Just Transitions at the Regional Studies Association's 2024 annual conference. Encompassing various spatial scales (transnational, national, regional, urban, suburban, and local), the research presented included countries such as Belgium, Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, the United States (US), and Poland. With the help of AI (Google's Gemini), I've

organized all the papers into three main themes. I've included the authors (in the conference programme, you can find their details), and whenever possible, the research methods used, which in these sessions were mostly quantitative. The key themes included:

Regional Economic Transitions, diversity, and innovation (quantitative studies): the diversification of regional economies into green and digital sectors (twin transitions in the UK) (Cicerone et al.); the role of green networks in fostering green innovation capabilities in European regions (Fiorelli et al.); the geography of green innovation in Italy (Pinate et al.); research found the positive relationship between the diversity of migrant inventors and the likelihood of producing green breakthrough innovations (Cornejo Costas). Studies also examined the practices of installers of energy devices and infrastructures in urban energy transitions (van Tuijl et al.), highlighting the influence of digitalization and city-specific factors; finally, research on the eco-efficiency of sustainable human development and social progress, highlighting the role of European regions eco-innovation capabilities (Biggeri et al.).

Regional Development and Spatial Dynamics: includes a quantitative study focused on understanding regional development pathways, challenging the urban-rural dichotomy in perceptions of the agriculturally shaped environment in Germany (Maruschke & Schiller); another on how different types of regional innovation systems shape distinct development trajectories for regional specializations by comparing regional responses to twin transitions in Italy and Norway (Wiig & Plechero). Model one for the socioeconomic impacts of transitioning to renewable energy sources for 2025-2050 was proposed based on Connecticut, US (Graziano et al.), and another as a process model for future-oriented green, inclusive, and just path development (Jolly).

Sustainable Urban Development and Planning: a longitudinal case study in Amsterdam, the researchers propose an upscaling canvas to analyze the readiness of critical dimensions to scale up innovations in cities and support decision-making processes for urban transformation, where inter-organizational collaboration is the basis (Van den Buuse & van Winden); a systematic analysis on how actors in the city of Cologne implement and promote sustainability skills -sustainability competencies in greening cities- (Fuchs); challenges and opportunities of just transition in post-industrial cities (Wałbrzych, Poland), focusing on citizen engagement and institutional arrangements in a context of the

co-creation of just energy policy (Wiktorska-Swiecka). Additionally, research examined how notions of place and social justice are considered in urban environmental transformations (Nottingham, UK) (Keddie); finally, a study examined the use of technology in urban development, analyzing the effects of smart city planning on urban residents' lives and urban spaces in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area (Watanabe).

These sessions were an excellent opportunity to dive deeper into sustainability transitions, green growth and just transitions, as valuable research to inform policy was presented, coupled with promising theoretical advances, such as Jolly's process model. Noticeably, the global south was not present, and most of the research is based on the premise of development by fostering economic growth. Perhaps it is time that we all begin to question whether there is another way to foster and understand development. I want to take the opportunity to call for introducing this concern in the research that we produce, that is, to question the need to foster economic growth.