According to a OEDC document a definition for RIS3 (Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategy) can be stated as "integrated, place-based economic transformation strategies that:

1) concentrate public resources on innovation and knowledge-based development priorities, challenges and needs,
2) outline measures to stimulate private RTD investment
3) build on capabilities, competences, competitive advantages and potential for excellence within European and global value chains,
4) foster comprehensive stakeholder involvement and encourage governance innovation and experimentation,
5) are evidence-based and include sound monitoring and evaluation systems"

In another document, this time from the European Commision (RIS3 Guide at http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/s3pguide) cites the decision of the Commision to require the implementation of smart apecialisation strategies to member states and regions as an ex-ante condition to have access to some of the cohesion funds.

Two of the 11 ERDF thematic objectives of fund will not be at the reach of members and regions that did not implemented S3, these lines are : "Stengthening reseach, technological development and innovation" and "enhancing access and use of quality Information and Communication Technologies".

Even the Agricultural funds (EAFRD European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development) have included this condition to have access to one of the objective lines: "Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas".

The reason for it is both, simple and strong: to make the most of these public funds in terms of economic and employment growth, we must know what are we good at in this particular region, to begin with, and then find out innovative initiatives precisely in those fields, utilizing our financial resources to make them succeed. This is especially important when public resources are going to be scarce. That is, if you have to conserve your scarce water and you have three plants in the middle of nowhere, you pour it on to the plants, not over three promising stones, despite the wonders that other regions of the planet have reported to have gotten out of the stones.

Thus, trying to copycat what San Francisco did on Silicon Valley, assigning huge amount of resources to your regional software sector, given that your region never portrayed an outstanding profile in this field over the surrounding territory, is a common mistake of the public administrations. The other mistake is establishing your regional thematic priorities by reading them out off the Nature or Science issues, you have to look into your own regional scientific and industrial tissue.

Yet another commonplace mistake in regional development policy is folding down under the pressure of local lobbies: a prominent university department, a professional association tightly connected to the Administration, any mistakenly

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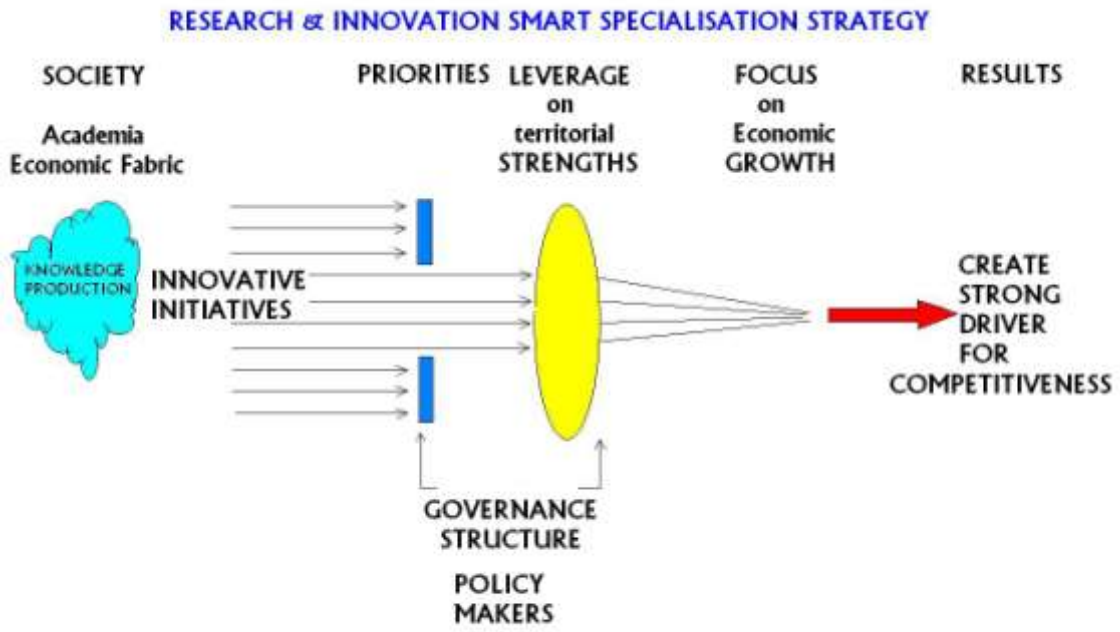
launched institution by the Administration whose original objective has been long replaced by the merely "survive" one. All these stakeholders can put the unfolding or implementation of an S3 strategy in jeopardy, born with a birth defect that is referred to in this jargon as a "picking winners" mistake.

It goes like, although your region has nothing worthy to be mentioned on nanotechnology, space or quantum computing, they are introduced as regional tech priorities, leaving behind perhaps environmental tech (waste and water treatments), chemical technologies, Energy, Tourism or Advanced Agriculture where the region might already have a long experience and a solid position within the European value chain.

By copying what was done in Silicon Valley you only reinforce their leadership by handing over another "follower region", while the resources are drained from other innovative initiatives in those fields where your region excels, turning them weaker.




Smart specialisation theory revolves around a key concept, that of Entrepreneurial Discovery Process. Rather than a soundy statement for definition I prefer to give an example.

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Let us assume like in the attached figure, that one of the Andalusian S3 priorities was Aeronautics, and that after a duly regional analysis, one of our regional strengths was Agriculture. Now if a company or person has been pursuing an innovative initiative for years to utilize unmanned aerial vehicles for spraying over the fields, or to provide information services, "enhanced pictures", to farmers by using multispectral cameras over plantations; this would be one initiative that perfectly fits within the "optics fixture" of the S3. Attention should be paid to this, make a market assessment and accept it or reject it to be supported with public fund.

The underline idea of strengthening these Entrepreneurial Discovery is that maybe one of them could "make it", starting a new subsector or even completely turn an existing mature sector into a brand new one. These Entrepreneurial Discovery Processes convey to a regional economy the dynamics and competitiveness necessary for it to work as the job creation engine that is meant to be.

As the reader may think, aside from the already mentioned "picking winners", to put this S3 methodology into practice one may find another problem: ¿ Who would read this project of our entrepreneur about UAVs for agriculture and decides that has S3 potentials?

When it comes to assessing a Project, the sort of knowledge needed to integrate a solid criterion is not just technical knowledge: one has to know the market, prices and services, main entrepreneurs, etc. As well as act as "boundary spanner" building bridges among different knowledge fields. Only a business man or entrepreneur (a corporation, a tech center or a professor) have had the time to mature his(her) ideas up to integrate all the relevant knowledge to assess the project relative to its potentials.
Following our example, a technology center may find technical solutions but has no contacts with the Irrigation Assoc., do not know the competitors already spraying the fields, nor the farmers and the costs they have to cope with, all these are important ingredients to assess the potentiality of our project of UAVs for spraying or enhanced pictures. Integrating all this information for a particular initiative is by no means trivial and it is what characterizes the entrepreneur in this Entrepreneurial Discovery Process.

This is one of the points where clusters may play an important role for Smart Specialisation as one of the stakeholders that represents and gathers the knowledge, contacts and strategic vision necessary to assess on some of the projects that needs "criterion".

The Administration, apart from starting by the above mentioned assessment of our strengths, must put in place an Innovative Governance Structure, where many stakeholders must participate, multi-sectoral and with elements of the quadruple helix for innovation: companies, achademia, administration and consumers. To

gather all those elements within a virtual organization, provide it with its own procedures, get a consensus on a unified vision about the future of the region, set the objectives and tracking indicators.

To get all this successfully done is not an easy task for the Innovation responsible in the Administration, from the Aeronautic sector we offer our collaboration, not to mention we wouldn't be regarded as one of the "picked winners".

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