

Forging new socio-technical imaginaries to shape innovation policy for development in Africa

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Dominant socio-technical imaginaries centred on modernization and catch up are unable to shape policies towards the desired inclusive and sustainable social change in African countries, with a long history of neo/colonialism, unequal extractive insertion into global systems, and resource poor settings for the majority of citizens.

Commitment to the SDGs and STISA represents an important shift towards a new socio-technical imaginary, but how knowledge and innovation policy frameworks and strategies could build local capabilities for social change processes remains under-specified. Five critical dimensions for a new socio-technical imaginary are proposed for discussion:

1. Framing innovation policy within a decolonisation narrative, informed by a political economy lens on the conditions and contexts of heterogeneous countries.
2. Aligning STI, industrial and trade policies in ways that build local capabilities towards technological upgrading that can facilitate local, regional, and continental systems building, before insertion into global value chains.
3. Building new sectoral innovation and production systems that exploit the opportunities inherent in new and old technologies for meeting human needs for shelter, food, energy, water and health.
4. Building local innovation and production capabilities and systems that enable interaction with and inclusion of, the large proportion of informal enterprises necessary for livelihoods and resilience.
5. Utilise the creativity of local languages, local knowledges and local cultures for solutions relevant and belonging to African agents.