

INNOVATION AND SCP: THE ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTIONS

**OCTOBER
28, 2022**

14:00-16:00 (Bangkok Time)

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic deeply disrupted global economic and social systems, imposing heavy burdens on many in the Asian region. Global supply chains were fractured and, in some cases, broken, with significant impacts on livelihoods. As countries develop and implement post-pandemic recovery strategies and seek to create buffers against future crises, including those derived from the triple crisis of climate, pollution, and biodiversity loss, as well as economic and political shocks, the promotion of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns must be a central pillar of government and corporate policies, as well as civic action. Similarly, the development of sustainable and secure systems of local resiliency must become a priority, recognising that pandemics are by no means the only crises faced by communities in the Asian region on a regular basis.

The prolonged experience of the pandemic revealed and deepened many disparities in secure access to vital products and services, especially for geographically disadvantaged nations, the economically poor, minorities, marginalised groups, and women and children. These impacts deeply impeded the ability of individuals, families, and communities to move toward realizing sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods. Reconsideration of resource and waste flows thus became a necessary exercise for many during the pandemic.

These experiences emphasise the reality that post-pandemic recovery and long-term sustainable development strategies must account for and reverse these inequities, particularly for issues such as food, waste, health, employment and other livelihood opportunities,

and local resilience. These are all essential solution spaces for both human flourishing and environmental and economic sustainability and resilience. To close the access and security gaps for all and create the enabling conditions for sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods, it is therefore necessary to reconsider standard approaches to sustainable local resilience, including reliance on local, sustainably produced and managed resources. It is further necessary to reframe our thinking about crisis resilience and response to align our plans and actions with the reality that pandemics like COVID-19 are not the only crises we face. Indeed, the triple crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss are a growing threat, as well as the recurrent economic and political shocks that cause insecurity and instability.

Knowledge Institutions (KI) are key players that supply the information, analysis, and knowledge co-creation that supports the transformation to SCP systems across sectors and lifestyles. They are central actors in any preparation for or response to emerging crises. They are also often the starting point for innovative adaptations to the ways in which we think and talk as societies about present and future crises and how we can better ensure that our planning and responses leave no one behind.

KIs come in many forms, from research institutes, universities, and reference libraries to government units, private research and development divisions, and third sector think (and do) tanks. Their work ranges across scales from hyper-local and local studies and pilot projects, to national policy analyses and capacity building, and global systems and policy analyses. Their outputs encompass products

from the academic sphere (e.g., theory and research papers) to the analytical (e.g., case studies, market and policy analyses) and practical (pilot projects, resources for capacity building and communication).

Knowledge institutions boast a wide range of connections to the constellation of actors working on SCP. Indeed, KIs are often arranged as part of national and global networks of learning and knowledge transmission. These networks share knowledge across actors and scales, helping to ensure that information and analysis (as well as capacity support) flows to those practitioners who can implement it effectively. Broadly speaking, networks can be categorised into three types, each acting to support a different array of practitioners in the SCP sphere. First are the networks consisting of academic institutions, departments, think tanks, and individual researchers. Second are the networks of upscalers, operating closer to the ground and comprising innovators and entrepreneurs, think and do tanks, and a wide range of actors embedded in business schools, incubators, and civil society organisations. Finally, there are networks of governments, ministries, bureaucratic units, international organisations, and policy-focused think tanks.

In normal times, KIs participate in and coordinate many of these formal and informal networks of actors from across the SCP and resilience landscapes, working with local and national partners on the development of new business and finance models, product offerings, sustainable services, and policy instruments. They often operate in the experimental mode, working with stakeholders to stretch and grow the SCP space, helping to de-risk pilot projects and ventures for business and community service groups. Knowledge institutions also think alongside governments to identify new and effective ways to develop and implement policies, often providing critical research, data, and analysis into the policy formulation process.

This role was seen clearly through the rapid and innovative ways in which KIs stepped forward in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, historically, KIs have been key players in resilience and recovery from

DISCUSSION POINTS

In the context of knowledge institutions and their role as innovation hubs that supports the transition to sustainable consumption and products across sectors and scales, the Webinar will seek to examine the innovation ecosystem from several perspectives. Some potential points of discussion may include, but are not limited to:

Generation

- The role of academia as investigator-driven sources of innovation and knowledge generation;
- Collective innovation across knowledge institutions, constituencies, and scales;
- Partnering with business communities to develop new models and help de-risk innovation.

many other disasters, shocks, and crises, and play a crucial role in efforts toward climate mitigation and resilience by driving innovation. As communities and countries begin to shape their emerging 'new normal', KIs have been able to activate their existing networks of collaboration and support, for example, leveraging the resources and flexibility of university systems to respond creatively and quickly to on the ground conditions. In many ways, KIs and their networks have been able to fill the gaps where government is too slow or constrained, and business is too risk averse or lacks the broader perspective necessary to identify critical systemic gaps.

Similarly, the knowledge and knowledge products generated by KIs have played a strong role in supporting smart government and market actions that helped to mitigate the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises in recent history. The speed with which KIs were able to produce rigorous and impactful analysis on, for example, the differential impact of the pandemic's economic fallout on women and children allowed governments around the world to implement targeted policies to ease these harmful effects. This KIs have been the substantive force behind the formulation and implementation of science / data-driven policy making. Such policies are essential for global efforts to create an enabling policy environment in which systems of sustainable consumption and production and circularity can emerge and flourish.

With these factors in mind, there is a need to convene experts and sustainability practitioners from knowledge institutions across governments, businesses, educational institutions, and civil society to discuss both the role of KIs in driving the shift toward SCP, and the opportunity space presented by the post-pandemic recovery to build sustainable local resilience. This discussion must consider how KIs can serve as experimental spaces, work with governments, businesses and civil society to co-create the knowledge necessary to accelerate the SCP transformation.

Upscaling

- Information exchange and learning through networks;
- Capacity building and Communication tools for diverse constituencies;
- Business engagement, support, and co-experimentation;

Policy Landscape

- Innovations feeding into the global policy landscape, shaping global agreements and agendas;
- Regional policy alignments that facilitate the uptake of innovations across productive clusters and in developing country contexts;
- Supporting the development and expansion of local innovation ecosystems

AGENDA

14:00 Welcome EU SWITCH-Asia Programme

14:05 Keynote Address

14:15 Introductions

14:20 Theme 1: Knowledge Generation

14:50 Theme 2: Upscaling SCP Innovations

15:20 Theme 3: Supporting SCP Policy Formation

15:50 Reflections and Closing
