

IST 2020 – Agro-food dialogue session

Organized by *Boelie Elzen and Marc Barbier, 18 Aug 2020*

Part 2: elements of a research agenda and Thematic Group

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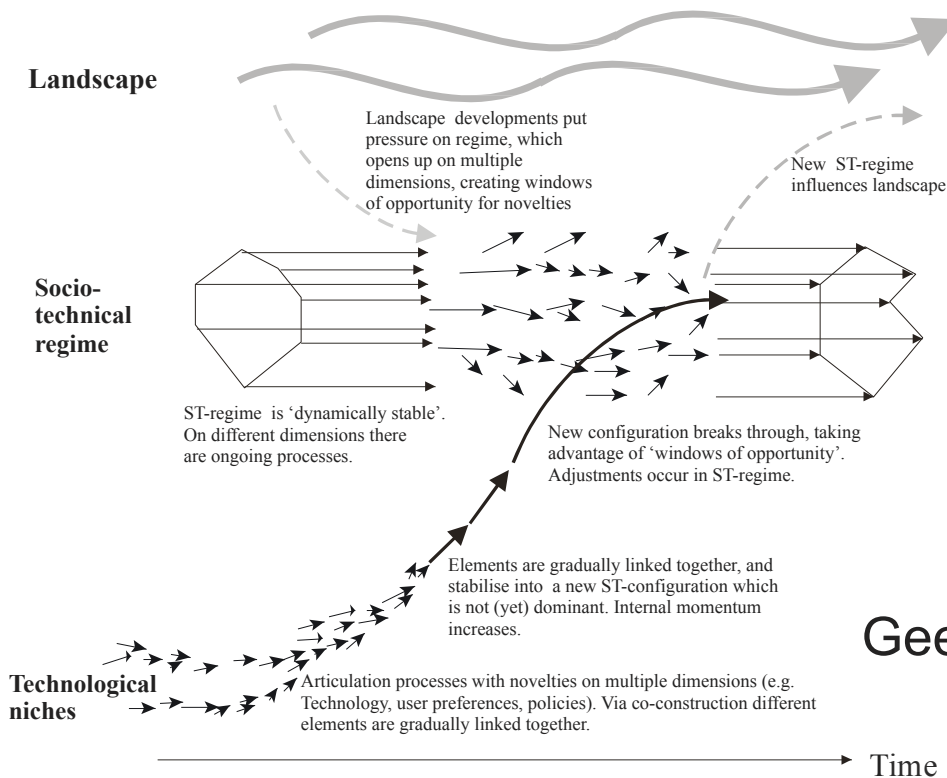
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1. SISA legacy

- Theorizing and empirically affording discontinuity, changes and learning in Agro-Food Socio-Technical Regime
- Questioning the operationalization of changes at various level of System Innovation and local
- Entering dialogues with practitioners, issue leaders and policy makers during the Research Process



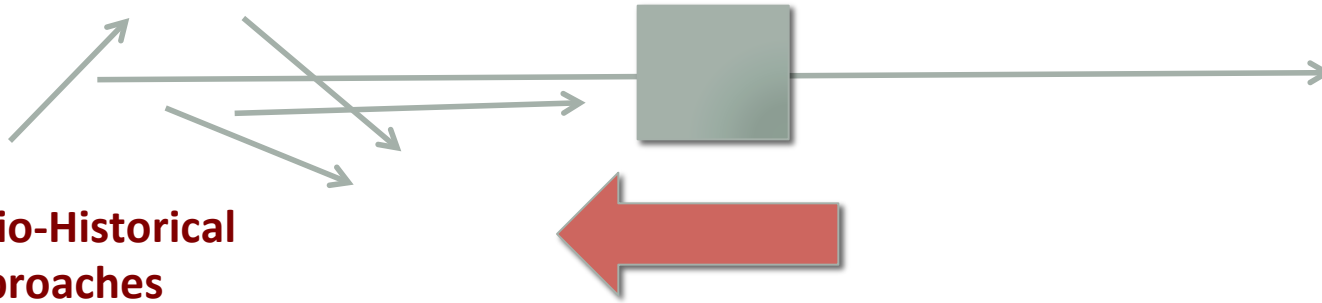
Geels, 2005



2. Specificity of Agrifood ST-Regime Studies for STRN companioning

- *Thinking Backward and Forward: epistemic challenge*
- *Thinking in the middle of Two extreme types of envisioned transition pathways*
- *Characteristic and Specificity of Agrifood ST-Regime Studies*
- *Collective Claim to be defined*

2.1. Thinking Backward and Forward: epistemic challenge



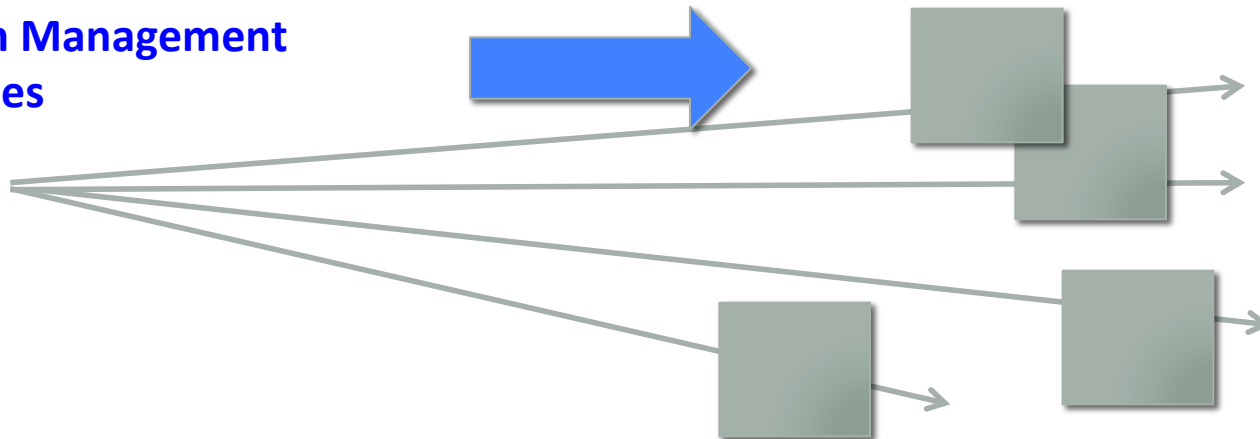
**Socio-Historical
Approaches**

A retrospective account of black-boxing hybridity
in innovation and the selection of pathways

Epistemic divide (?)

A prospective account of possible/desirable
futures and pathways to achieve changes

**Transition Management
Approaches**



2.2. Thinking in the middle of Two extreme types of envisioned transition pathways

Sociotechnical regime in agri-food systems (Barbier et Elzen 2012; Levidow et al., 2013; Levidow 2015; Lamine, 2015)

(i) an **optimization pathway**, relying on an improvement in the efficiency of inputs and maintaining an objective of increasing production for food security reasons, which could be aligned with the current organization of the greening of industrial agro-food regime,

vs.

(ii) a **deeper transformation pathway**, aiming at reducing the dependence on inputs and leading to more radical and systemic changes based on sustainable criteria and societal values of reconnection.

2.3. Characteristic and Specificity of Agrifood ST-Regime Studies (1)

- Agricultural production represents the physiocratic idea of nourishing Nations and to be considered as a distributed Industry to be managed by sectorial policy and agrochain profitability to “nourish the world”; this Sociotechnical regime is having historicity
 - ***Field of Collective Enquiry: Variety of country or regional profiles towards the critique and the reconsidering of this fallacy***
- Agricultural production shows more atomised socio-economic structures and policy-making levels (small/big farmers, cooperative, vertical/horizontal organization at food chain level) than a classical industrial sector; it is rather a highly complex sociotechnical regime
 - ***Field of Collective Enquiry: : variety of profile towards farming and foodchain structures and it represents a laboratory of sociotechnical transitions***
- A mix of formal and Informal institutions at the level of farms, rural space, food provision systems and of existing in site-specific contexts (idiosyncratic) to face political, economical and societal pressures
 - ***Field of Collective Enquiry: an assemblage of cultural norms, values, beliefs and of technical knowledge about agro-climatic conditions and contribution to climatic change.***

2.3. Characteristic and Specificity of Agrifood ST-Regime Studies (2)

- Agricultural production is classically muddled through many innovation processes (high of low tech) and technological rationalization pathways that are expressed in niches, in specific areas or in agrochain, and more and more invested by the digital turn and knowledge infrastructures
 - ***Field of Collective Enquiry: an assemblage of cultural norms, values, beliefs and of technical knowledge about agro-climatic conditions and contribution to climatic change, how does it work?***
- Agricultural production represents a nexus of many sustainability challenges and a common vector of sociotechnical controversies (environmental crisis, food scares, biodiversity loss, climatic) with a stake of phasing-out agro-industrial lockin
 - ***Field of Collective Enquiry: how transitions are operated as complex question to be managed (or not) in policy, in dispositives and social movements?***
- Agricultural production represents a nexus of tensions, solutions and problems for the manufacture of futures and the design of new system innovation
 - ***Field of Collective Enquiry: how futures agroecological knowledge, policy mix, intermediation, shortening food provision can be designed together and operate changes in the governance of changes?***

2.4. Claim to be discussed

- If novelty, innovation and breakthroughs are profoundly positively attached to the promises that ground transitions, the critique of **existing sociotechnical regime is usually understood as coming from the “outside” of the regime** (from political landscape regulation or innovative niches).
 - Our interpretation is that **politics of the futures** that are back-casted in the present **induce policies of the present**,
 - But these policies have to go through a **critique** if not a **de-structuration** of the **pillars of “agri-food modernity of the past”**
 - Hence for actors inside the regime to **re-open the black boxes of previous rationalisation processes outcomes**, supposes many subpolitics at play **inside a given sociotechnical regime**

Our objective is to enlighten a constructive critique of past-modernity and to favour the governance of agrifood transitions

3. Suggestions for a thematic group in STRN

- **Function:** being a laboratory for Transition studies in the making because of the characteristic of the ST Regime
- **Themes:** choosing the perimeter and the lines of collective enquiries to be favoured
- **Activities:**
 - Be actively engaged in dialogues with other STRN CoT (Community of Thinking) and proposing sessions in Conferences
 - Congregating researchers and practitioners/policy makers/issue holders in SISA-like workshops
 - Opening an editorial activity to afford Agro-Transitions for both academic and practitioners audience