

Science and innovation in small and medium cities

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The objective of this special session is to regroup various contributions focusing on the specificities of innovation and research practices inside small or medium cities. Of course, the definition of small and medium cities could diverge following the national context and we cannot propose a fixed definition. For example, in France medium cities are defined by a population of the urban area between 30 000 and 200 000 inhabitants and in USA from 100 000 to 500 000 inhabitants. Nevertheless, whatever the size of the cities, two types of contributions could enrich this session.

Firstly, we are interested in quantitative studies measuring innovative or research activities inside these small cities through the use of new indicators, specific to this particular territorial level. The use of new methodologies or measures of innovation could help to test the hypothesis, regularly proposed in the literature: that it exists a critical mass of urban size necessary to the development of innovative activities. Is this hypothesis always valid or could innovative activities emerge also in small territories?

Complementary to the quantitative measure of science and innovation in small and medium cities, we also seek to regroup more qualitative case studies, examining the specificities of research and innovating activities practices inside these small and medium cities. Concerning these specificities, we could cite, e.g. the role of territorial governance, the size and sectorial specificities of local firm (large firms and/or KIBS and/or innovative start-ups), the history of territories, the local natural resources or amenities, the national legal framework.

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