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# MANCHESTER INSTITUTE OF INNOVATION RESEARCH



**Elvira Uyarra**

## **Innovation for Societal Grand Challenges**

*Horizon Europe and innovation for Societal Grand Challenges: Agri-food, Health, and Water.*

*Online Thematic Workshop, Wednesday 8 September 2021*

# Context

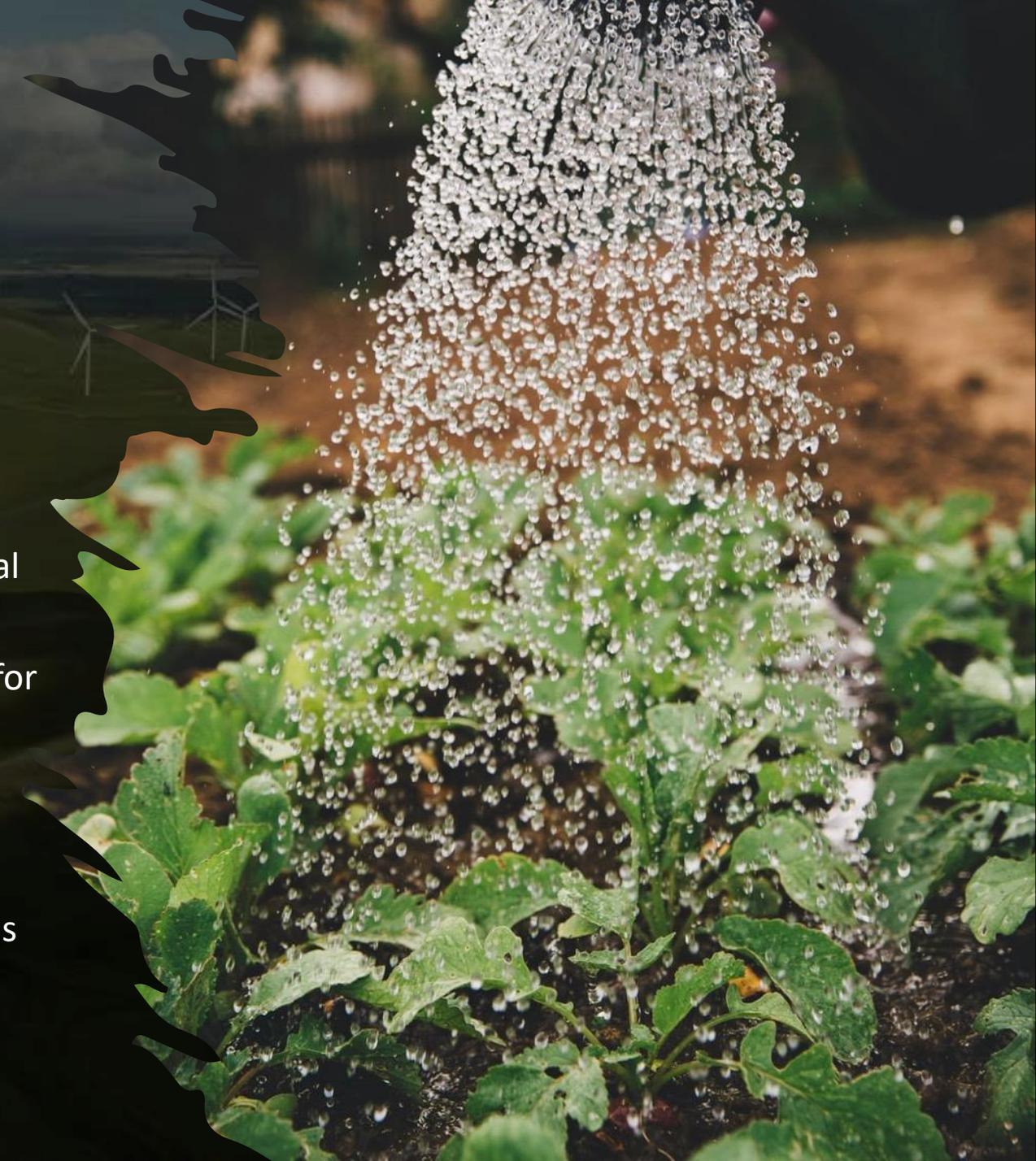
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- Innovation policy debates increasingly recognise societal challenges as drivers for innovation policy.
- This has led to renewed interest in ‘directional’ policies and the *quality* (not just the quantity) of innovation
- The focus is (or should be) on (‘wicked’) societal problems and needs (rather than technologies).
- The state here plays a more proactive role, ‘shaping’ rather than ‘fixing’ markets (Mazzucato, 2013)



# Thinking about societal challenges in regional innovation policies

- Can help give a *direction* to the strategy
  - And *align actors* around a common 'vision'
  - Increase potential for *radical innovation* and structural change
  - Through missions, regions can become *lead markets* for innovative solutions to societal challenges
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- The challenge is how to turn regional needs, problems and values into innovation and market opportunities.



# Example: Civil UAVs Initiative in Galicia (SP)

Use of local needs and challenges to build legitimacy for new technologies and proactively shape a potential lead market

- ***Market creation***
- ***Influencing national regulations***
- ***Infrastructures***
- ***Capacity and ecosystem building***



# Final thoughts...



- Selecting missions is not a matter of picking from a pre-determined menu of high-level societal challenges or ‘wicked problems’
- It is also not (or shouldn’t be) just about supply-side possibilities but should involve a broader repertoire or mixes of policy approaches and interventions. More research is needed into how problems are articulated into demand, forming markets.
- Mission oriented policies require place-based leadership and institutional capacity. And need to consider multiple roles of the State, as purchaser, regulator, convenor, etc.

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# Further reading

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- Uyarra, E., Zabala-Iturriagagoitia, J. M., Flanagan, K., & Magro, E. (2020). Public procurement, innovation and industrial policy: Rationales, roles, capabilities and implementation. *Research Policy*, 49(1), 103844.
- Flanagan, K., Uyarra, E., & Wanzenböck, I. (2021). Towards a problem-oriented regional industrial policy: possibilities for public intervention in framing, valuation and market creation. CIMR Research Working Paper Series, WP. 52s. <http://www7.bbk.ac.uk/cimr/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CIMR-Working-Paper-Seriesnumber52.pdf>
- Uyarra, E. and Flanagan (2021) Going beyond the line of sight – institutional entrepreneurship and system agency in regional path creation. *Regional Studies*. (in press)
- Uyarra, E. (2021) The role of the state in constructing markets for new path development. *Regional Studies E-zine*. <https://regions.regionalstudies.org/ezone/article/new-path-development/>