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The research presented in this paper pursues two main goals. Empirically, it aims to explore sectoral futures at European level in a range of different sectors (automotive, construction, textile, KIBS, wholesale & retail), to identify cross-cutting patterns of sectoral change, and to highlight implications that these may raise for European innovation policy. In order to do this in a systematic manner, it also has a conceptual and methodological ambition, namely to devise a sectoral innovation foresight methodology that builds explicitly on concepts derived from sectoral innovation systems approaches. This theory-led methodology allows exploring and interpreting future developments at sectoral level in a coherent and comparable manner. Technologies and knowledge, actors and organisations, user needs and demand, as well as institutional and policy frameworks are taken into account; elements that need to co-evolve for any innovation system scenario to unfold. This conceptual framework is translated into a sector innovation foresight methodology that was used to guide a multi-sector foresight initiative. Based on a meta-analysis of insights from five different sectors, cross-sectoral patterns of future change as well as cross-cutting policy issues are pointed out. Three areas of cross-cutting changes have been identified: a) the shift from products to systems and services, b) blurring boundaries between sectors, and c) sectoral and cross-sectoral integration of sustainability demands, and the governance of interactions between sectors. Foresight projects at sectoral level have been conducted rarely as compared to technology-centered or societal-issue centered foresights or retrospective sectoral innovation system studies. By relying explicitly on a theoretical framework of sectoral innovation systems, this paper explores the potential of better linking innovation theory to policy- and strategy-oriented foresight.

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