

SEMINAR "NEW HORIZONS FOR INNOVATION POLICY"

Madrid, 27 March 2019.

Charles Edquist and Philippe Laredo on the new horizons for innovation policy



The first Visiting Fellow of the UAM-Accenture Chair, Prof. Charles Edquist and Prof. Philippe Laredo (University of Manchester) had an interesting dialogue on the design and application of a new innovation policy.

The seminar titled "New Horizons for innovation policy" was moderated by the head of the Chair Paloma Sánchez and involved a variety of specialists including master's and doctorate students. This was Professor Edquist's final event as Visiting Fellow of the Chair after a month-long stay in which he shared his knowledge and research agenda on innovation with students, professors, and academia alike. The seminar took place in the Faculty of Economics of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

The head of the Chair, Paloma Sánchez took advantage of the opportunity to announce the publication of Professor Edquist's latest book, 'Holistic Innovation Policy' which is available for purchase.

According to Professor Edquist, innovation policies must be comprehensive in order to be effective. He described how the Swedish National Innovation Council is an attractive strategy to develop this comprehensive policy. He insisted that public procurement could be an important way to impulse innovation if instead of demanding specific products the state demanded solution to social challenges to be solved through innovation. Lastly, he was very critical about the way the EU has created indexes to measure innovation. Despite the usefulness of some intermediate tools, their final aggregation can generate misleading or sometimes downright incorrect conclusions.

He paid particular attention to the case study of Spain and among his points highlighted the idea of creating a National Innovation Council, centered on innovation as a comprehensive path in which the head of state is the standard-bearer. He asked if the committee of the Centre for Technological and Industrial Development (CDTI) needs to be transformed in this way, and recommended observing what neighboring countries have done with regard to innovation. He pointed out that money and budgets are not always the solution to problems involving policy, rather regulation could instead prove more effective and significantly less costly. He concluded his presentation by stating that all of the proposals should be properly evaluated, quite a big challenge in itself.

Professor Laredo began his talk by looking back to the past to the first efforts put forth by the OECD in placing research and development as a central focus of the debate in the 1960s. He pointed out that in a democracy ideas should convince rather than be imposed, and that is where the interest lies in persuading citizens and the politicians who represent them on the importance of having policies on innovation.

He clarified that the National Innovation Council may be viable in Sweden but other countries may need different tools such as, for example, the committees on innovation in the French Congress. He claimed that in some countries tools used to advise on innovation fall under the executive branch while in others it may be more effective if they were under the legislative. This is due to the fact that structures for implementing policies are absolutely fundamental for their success, independently of how the policies themselves are designed.

Lastly, he highlighted that no matter how great a innovation policy may be, it might not top politicians' list of priorities. However, academia must continue pushing these policies so they are turned into reality.

The seminar ended with a round of questions and answers and Head of the UAM-Accenture Chair Paloma Sánchez asking the audience for a farewell applause for the first Visiting Fellow, Charles Edquist.