

The 2016 Annual Conference of the EU-SPRI Forum
Exploring New Avenues for Innovation and Research Policies

Call for Abstracts, Deadline March 8, 2016

<http://www.euspri-circle2016.org>

Track Theme

(RE)SEARCHING THE CRITICAL 'MESO' LEVEL: LEARNING INNOVATION AGENCIES AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS

Jose Manuel Leceta* - Chair of Panel Session

Totti Könnölä* – Chair of Scientific Session

Dan Breznitz – keynote, panelist

Göran Marklund – panelist (tbc)

Jakob Edler – panelist

Albert Bravo-Biosca – panelist

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Description of the Track Theme

<http://if-institute.org/agencies-and-ecosystems>

Relevance, theoretical premises and key concepts

The proposal contributes in particular to the conference topic: the role of the public element in Private-Public Partnerships. Innovation studies have a long tradition. But as the academic community approaches its first 50 years, more focus is needed to bridge the gap from knowledge to action. Clearly, decisive normative efforts are urgently needed in order to encompass policy action commensurate with the challenges of our time. The above is explained by an apparent dichotomy in the literature, focusing either on the macro level policy setting

(Government and Governance) and the micro level performance (firms and entrepreneurs). As the need for policy experimentation gains increasing momentum, the 'meso level' efforts of learning innovation agencies (Breznitz & Ornston 2013; Chesbrough 2012) are to play a very different role: from 'funding and coordinating' (Lepori 2011) to 'facilitation and orchestration' (Clarysse et al. 2015; Chesbrough 2012) are some of the key words in this new era of entrepreneurial ecosystems (Mason & Brown 2014; Isenberg 2011) and global clusters of innovation (Engel & del-Palacio 2009). An emerging wave of entrepreneurs, technological advancements and venture capital investments is providing evidence on radically new innovation models and a testing bed for new business-like vehicles for policy delivery in shaping entrepreneurial ecosystems. Also firms are reverting more and more to open innovation schemes like IP licensing, academic partnerships, open-source platforms, and venture capital investments. Corporate and university venturing are among the most fastest-growing strategies (Dushnitsky and Lenox 2005; Napp and Minshall 2011; Sahaym et al. 2010).

(Mason & Brown 2014) stress that policies focused on creating the boundary conditions on the one hand and creating start ups on the other are not enough to foster future growth: the 'meso-level' of ecosystems becomes critical and hence the question to what extent agencies can shape and influence them (Isenberg 2011; Lerner, 2009). The track would be a practical response on how to operationalise the 'Entrepreneurial State' (Mazzucato, 2013) and to what extent Agencies can actually embrace and shape holistic innovation policies in practice (Edquist, 2011). Herein, the research may improve the understanding on the new roles of 'Schumpeterian' agencies compared to developmental agencies (Breznitz, 2007), thus fostering next generation policies in practice to facilitate and orchestrate innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems:

- By examining the evidence on the factors of success and failure in such experimentation until to date across the world
- By developing the conceptual models for further experimentation
- By engaging in (action-)research in the on-going experimentation linking innovation agencies and entrepreneurial ecosystems
- By studying the (cor)relations between agencies and ecosystems.

Empirical methodologies and materials

Mapping agencies of Taftie (the European network of National Innovation Agencies) and learning from and benchmarking with agencies in other parts of the world could help form a corpus of practices. Operationalizing the role of the State has been prevalent in the US through mission-oriented federal agencies (DARPA, E-ARPA, etc see - Mazzucato, 2013; Leyden & Link 2015; Bonvillian 2014) but also in some extent in Europe, where agencies in Member States implement 'specific programs', often offering horizontal support to science, R&D and innovation projects through 'financial instruments'.

In an effort to encompass more 'holistic policies' innovation agencies in Europe are designing and implementing new ways to identify and foster 'enabling ecosystems' well beyond individual R&D projects: Catapults by Innovate UK, Strategic Partnerships by Vinnova, Tekes' Ecosystems, are just few examples. The research could cover innovation labs in cities, regional clusters of innovation, national sector entrepreneurship agencies (c.f. 'World of Labs' and 'How do Innovation Agencies Work' projects by NESTA), corporate venturing and corporate entrepreneurship (c.f. 'Innovation Growth Labs' and 'Wining Together' projects by NESTA).

The research of such a complex emerging phenomena can benefit from triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative methods; and case studies, including action-research in order to generate detailed knowledge on the success of failure in experimentation. Furthermore, empirically based theory building is of utmost importance to ensure the codification of findings that facilitate the further advances both in research and policy.

Outcomes

In the quest for the most effective schemes, learning is key not only to implement programs but to learn in making agencies' interventions even smarter in terms of efficiency and impact. The results will help governments evolve from 'managing current systems' to helping 'shape new ecosystems' with the increasing focus on knowledge dynamics and value generation. Policy experimentation helps operationalize more successful and holistic policies and to scale them up with social stakeholders. The mutual learning among agencies, policy makers and the research community is enhanced that provides good basis for further developments.

Organization of the track

The Track Theme will be organised in two sessions at the Conference of which one will be driven by the existing research agenda through the presentation of accepted papers and subsequent discussions - Scientific Session chaired by Totti Könnölä and with the keynote of Dan Breznitz.

The second session will be more about future needs by sharing views between the policy (practitioners) and science (researchers) - Panel Session chaired by Jose Manuel Leceta. The panellists will first present shortly their viewpoints, which will be followed by the structured discussion with an emphasis on policy learning and the identification of knowledge gaps and topics for future research.

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