

EAPC blog

GENERAL

# The Public Administration and the Open Innovation and Science Paradigm: Challenges and Opportunities – Albert Castellanos

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Rapid technological advances have brought about a technological and, especially, cultural rupture. Internet, the digital networks and the widespread use of ICTs has caused a revolution in the way we gain access to information and services, and in the way that different social actors and governments interact with citizens. The great challenges that face us as a society, here and everywhere (unemployment, climate change, ageing of the

population and so on) require governments to implement new, more innovative and more effective responses.

In a rapidly changing environment, and in a society faced by increasingly complex problems, governments and the public sector as a whole can only become a driver of change towards a more sustainable and inclusive economic model if they can lead the development of these new responses to societal challenges. And what we must understand is that this leadership must spring from the conviction that we need to find the answers collectively: the idea of the public sector as the provider of magical solutions to all problems is becoming more and more obsolete!

This “cooperative leadership” can only be exercised through a multidisciplinary and multidepartmental approach and in cooperation with civil society, the research and innovation agents and companies in the territory. Combining and applying the knowledge and capabilities of the different stakeholders in the territory to resolve societal challenges generates new opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public policy, to increase the competitiveness of companies and the territory, and to enrich citizens’ quality of life.

Accordingly, it is urgent for governments to explore and promote new methodologies, tools and meeting spaces that can help to drive collaborative innovation processes and generate social value through the combination and application of the knowledge and capabilities of the different stakeholders in territory, within a global context. The European Commission describes a vision of Europe based on a new paradigm of open innovation and science, open to the world (*Open Innovation, Open Science, Open to the World – a Vision for Europe*).


Through the RIS3CAT strategy and the Catlabs programme and in cooperation with stakeholders in the territory, the Government of Catalonia explores and promotes new, open collaborative processes. These processes are aimed at creating social value based on the opportunities offered by ICTs and the new technologies and the knowledge and capacities of the various actors. In this context, spaces for experimentation and collaborative innovation, such as citizen laboratories, digital fabrication labs and co-working centres, are playing an increasingly important role. Such initiatives become meeting places for governments, companies, research and innovation centres and civil society.

This new paradigm, which represents major challenges and great opportunities for any ambitious government that is open to change, is studied in a paper published recently by the Catalan Government’s Ministry of the Vice-presidency and of the Economy and Finance: *The Public Administration and the Open Innovation and Science Paradigm: Challenges and Opportunities*, by Tatiana Fernández and Elvira González. The paper urges us to begin drafting public policy in a new way, a way that is not only more participatory, but also more efficient, capable of benefitting more fully from what we know as “collective intelligence”.

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