



A 'People, Places, Engagement and Change' Research Cluster Lecture

9 November 2011, 4-6pm, Room 101, Sir Charles Wilson Building, Kelvin Way

The Economic Impact of Higher Education in Devolved Administrations: The case of Catalonia

Marti Parellada Sabata

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The Spanish Constitution of 1978 defined Spain as a regional state composed of autonomous communities. As a result of this, and the later establishment of the autonomous communities' parliaments and governments, the responsibilities supporting their existence were transferred to the communities. The responsibility for universities was transferred to Catalonia in 1985. After almost three decades of Catalan public universities being managed by the Catalan Government, universities in Catalonia – and in Spain as a whole – have evolved in ways that, in some respects, could be considered very positive. However, the transfer of responsibility for universities is limited, as the Central Government reserves the right to decide on certain issues that are very important as far as university management is concerned, such as: university governance, public fees and grants policies, academic staff – the Central Government sets the conditions upon which permanent university professors join the university and develop an academic career, as well as their salaries – and other aspects of academic policies. These determining factors undoubtedly restrict universities' capability of contributing to the improvement of the competitiveness of the Catalan economy and the well-being of its citizens.

With this objective in mind, a considerable number of European countries have faced significant changes on their university models over recent years, whereas meanwhile, in Spain, legal reforms have focused on issues that can hardly be considered relevant. As several studies on the subject have proven, the unquestionable impact that the university system has had on the Catalan economy and society could be further increased if some of the constraints it faces could be removed – as observed by a recent OECD study on the contribution of Catalan universities to regional development.

About the speaker: Marti Parellada Sabata is a former Pro-Vice Chancellor and current Professor of Applied Economics at the University of Barcelona. He was also a Visiting Professor at the Johns Hopkins University of Baltimore (US). He has been Director of the Centre of Continuing Education of the University of Barcelona and CEO of Virtual Barcelona University, Virtual Business School and Virtual Health School. He is the Director of the Barcelona Institute of Economics (University of Barcelona) and the *Revista Econòmica de Catalunya* (the journal published by the Economics Association of Catalonia). He is also a board member of the General Assembly of the Strategic Metropolitan Plan of Barcelona, and general coordinator of the CYD Foundation.

He has been President of the Spanish Regional Science Association and the Catalan Association of University Continuing Education, as well as a member of the Steering Committee of the European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN), a member of the University Continuing Education Association (UCEA), a member of the Steering Committee of the Network of Continuing Education Universities of Latin America (RECLA), and a member of the Steering Committee of the European Regional Science Association Council. He has served as an advisor for the Columbus Programme concerning the current and future situation of Continuing Education in Latin America.

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