

Emerging Challenges for Science Policy and Innovation Studies

Abstract

With the field of science policy and innovation studies now half a century old, the occasion has been marked by several studies looking back to identify the main advances made over its lifetime. Starting from a list of 20 advances over the field's history, this discussion paper sets out a number of challenges for coming decades. At a conference in 1900, David Hilbert put forward a list of 23 unsolved mathematical problems that were to have a profound influence on the work of mathematicians during the 20th Century. The intention here is to prompt a debate within the science policy and innovation studies community on what are, or should be, the key challenges for us to take up, and more generally on what sort of field we aspire to be. It is argued that the empirical focus of our studies has not kept pace with the fast changing world and economy, especially the shift from manufacturing to services and the growing need for sustainability. Moreover, the very way we conceptualise, define, operationalise and analyse 'innovation' seems rooted in the past, leaving us less able to grapple with other less visible or 'dark' forms of innovation.