

SPRU Training Course: Innovation Policy in a Changing Global Context

18–22 June 2018

Day 5: Evaluation

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While evaluation is becoming an increasingly relevant policy component, its methods and practices are struggling to keep pace with the profound changes in the modes of knowledge production and use, and with the emergence of new approaches to science and innovation policy. The session will first review the challenges that these approaches are posing to evaluation practice. Current policies are evolving towards approaches that explicitly seek solutions to specific social and economic problems, and open up the research and innovation processes to wider stakeholder communities.

Yet, evaluation methods continue to be anchored in models that focus on the generation of research outputs and the assessment of the economic impact of innovation policies. These models are not concerned with how policy objectives are defined or with the ways in which knowledge and innovations are generated and diffused. Processes are a minor concern because, implicitly, the processes that lead to the generation and application of new knowledge are considered unproblematic.

We will then discuss which evaluation methods can be used to align evaluation with current concerns about wider participation in research and innovation and its contribution to the solution of social and economic problems. We will finish by debating whether and how these methods can respond to requirements for control and accountability that currently drive many evaluation efforts. We will engage the participants in an exchange of experiences to reflect on the degree to which political and managerial demands on evaluation allow for enough flexibility to implement new evaluation methods aligned with the evolving approaches to science and innovation policy that we have initially described.

