

Science and democracy: the missing nexus

Rieu, A-M.

The science and democracy debate has a long history and many different versions. The most influential version is the field of Science-technology-society at the source of Science and technology studies, an interdisciplinary field of research and teaching institutionalized in many different American, Japanese and West-European universities. It associates sociology of science and technology (a field in itself), historical economics, political science and philosophy of science. The search for a nexus between science and democracy is the explicit and tacit core of the science-democracy debate and the STS inter-discipline. The problem in both cases is the absence of an effective nexus between two separate fields, science as a highly specific field of activities and democracy as a type of political regime. This missing nexus explains why the vital question of the relations between science and democracy remains until today an open but endless debate. The objective of this proposal is to introduce a nexus between science and society, which has been introduced by the social sciences, which have focused since the 1980s on the interactions between science and technology and economic progress and social change. Whatever their political presuppositions or ideals, their approach is broader than the science and democracy debate, with a strong political and even policy impact. This field of research and training is based on two conceptual nexuses: the concept of National Innovation System and the Triple Helix concept. Both concepts have strong political implications. The objective is to follow an internal debate of the Triple Helix concept in order to explore how recent research is building a powerful nexus between research, democracy and society. A conclusion will explain why the present geopolitical conjuncture requires a theoretical and political solution and further research.