

# Introduction to special section: Keynotes from STI 2017

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For many years, the conference on Science and Technology Indicators (STI) has wrestled with adapting to the changing research and innovation enterprise. Recent years have witnessed the appearance of new types of knowledge, new means of communication, new methodologies, and an increasing emphasis on visualization. Alongside this, we have witnessed the increasing role that large firms play in the production of indicators for policy use. In addition, complex configurations of policy interests have emerged from a wide range of social actors seeking to modify the demands placed on indicators. Most of these challenges relate to profound changes in the way science, technology, and innovation relate to society, and to remain relevant, indicators research must reflect these changes and better take into account the needs and strategies of all stakeholders. The need to transition to more comprehensive, broader, and socially oriented indicators is well recognized. The STI conference offers an international platform for the community to come together to share and discuss responses to this imperative.

In 2017, the STI conference was hosted by Institut Francilien Recherche Innovation Société and ESIEE in Paris. Rémi Barré and Ismael Ràfols provided keynote addresses. The editors of *Research Evaluation* invited both to publish papers based on their keynote addresses, both kindly agreed to write such papers. The result is this special section.

In his paper, *Les indicateurs sont morts—vive les indicateurs! Towards a political economy of S&T indicators: a critical overview*

*of the past 35 years*, Rémi Barré reflects on the history of indicator development over the past few decades to make sense of how we have arrived where we are. He argues that today indicators largely contribute to increasing ignorance, rather than increasing knowledge; that indicator development has fallen to large commercial interests; and that the academic indicator community has as a result retreated from mainstream indicator production. He calls for reengagement of the research community to thwart further drift in this direction.

Barré's call to action is taken up by Ràfols in his paper: *S&T indicators 'in the wild': contextualisation and participation for responsible metrics*. Ràfols acknowledges the perception that use of indicators in research policy and evaluation is problematic. He proposes an agenda to transform the role of indicators in policy by moving scientometrics away from an overly technical focus toward a more holistic approach which is less isolated from values and contexts of use. This can be achieved by continuing multiplication of data sources, methods and visualizations, along with expanding the group of stakeholders involved. In addition, it will be necessary to more closely interrogate policy framings governing measurement and to work to reveal more balanced perspectives on options. Overall, the papers offer a call to maintain multiple approaches and to renew our commitment to the values that originally governed our work.