

# THE ISRN POST-DOC EXPERIENCE

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**Brian Wixted**

# BACKGROUND

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- **Worked for Federal Government on S&T issues for 10 years.**
  - **There were perhaps 20 core staff across the ministries that focussed on S&T. We all knew each other and would meet everytime there was any inter-ministry meeting.**
- **Worked at an Australian research centre on innovation matters for 5 years before moving to Canada.**

# ISRN: The obvious

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- **Networking**
- **The work**
- **Etc....**
- **But there are the non-obvious ....**

# STEP

## (Science, Technology Socio-Economic Progress)

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- Without an integrated project the best you can hope for is to gather the doctoral students who are working on science / technology / innovation related stuff once a year.
- In Australia there is STEP which has been running for 25 years or so.
- We would talk about our research questions and methodologies and for some findings.
- Profs and invited post docs would provide feedback.

# Limitations

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- **Better than nothing**
- **But lacks coherence and the debates are limited**
  - **Each candidate would be working on completely unrelated topics**
  - **Using unrelated methodologies ....**

# On the other hand....

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- **ISRN has the important advantages because of the opposite characteristics**

# Philosophies of Research

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- You can read academic literatures at 3 levels:
- 1. What gem of insight helps me understand my research question.
- 2. What was the writer's motivating objective – not just their research question but their research project.
- 3. What is the writer's underlying research worldview
  - What do they think are legitimate methodologies and issues within a domain of study.
  - This is last layer can be the hardest to read into the literature but it is just as important.

# Personally ...

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- **Methodologically I am a happy to be quite heterogeneous.**
  - **I can use input-output modelling**
  - **Stats collections**
  - **Qualitative interviews or**
  - **Theory building**
  - **For me it all depends on the scale and the type of question I am trying to address.**
- **But that isn't true for everyone.**



# If you listen carefully ....

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- You can't learn this stuff from the papers usually, you can only learn it from the people themselves.
- What I have enjoyed about ISRN is listening to the research questions behind the individual projects even though it is all one mega project
- That isn't being pejorative.

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- **Everyone's background's is different....**
  - **Sociology, economics, geography, politics, chemistry, engineering.....**
  - **But listen and learn because even though we have one project with 3 themes but every PI actually comes to their city from a unique perspective.**
    - **That is unavoidable.**
  - **Mine are clear enough**
    - **How do we understand the political borders and physical boundaries which create porous 'regions'**

# An unexpected Bonus

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- **I study science and technology program governance – System measurement, performance and policy.**
  - **So for example I do consulting on the value of research**
  - **Within this it turns out that research networks really hard to evaluate.**

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- **However, along with other research, the experience of working within a research network has been a key ingredient for my work on the performance of networks – particularly research networks.**
  - **Adam and I received a SSHRC research grant**
  - **We have applied for a SSHRC research grant on non-profit organisations and we will be applying for a large grant to understand research networks.**

# CHEERS BRIAN

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**PS. What's the next MCRI for the next group of doctoral students and post docs in science, technology and innovation?**