THE ISRN POST-DOC EXPERIENCE

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BACKGROUND

• 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

• Networking
• The work
• Etc....
• But there are the non-obvious ....
STEP
(Science, Technology Socio-Economic Progress)

• 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

- 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....

- ISRN has the important advantages because of the opposite characteristics
Philosophies of Research

• 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 ...

- 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 ....

- 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.
• 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
• 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.
• 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

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