Building ISTR Bridges – A Mentor’s Reflection

Benjamin Disraeli once said, “The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own.”

The opportunity to become one of ISTR’s inaugural mentors was too good an opportunity to miss when the first call went out in early 2016. I have benefitted greatly from wonderful mentors – male and female – in my own career to date and the opportunity to give something back, to be someone’s cheer-leader was too good to turn down. Anyone who has successfully come through the perils of the PhD writing process and emerged the other side; or has struggled with that blank page of paper when writing your first (or more recent) grant application or your first (or third or fourth) conference abstract; or has grappled with “revise and resubmit” requests (or, worse still, rejections) from journals and yet lived to see publication; or has survived their first few years of teaching and examining in one piece . . . has what it takes to be a mentor. Empathy for another’s plight – the “I’ve been there and survived and here’s how” story is something that we can all share.

The wonderful upside of mentorship, which is not promoted enough, is the unexpected payback. You are paired with an enthusiastic young researcher (Domenico Carolei, PhD student at the University of Aberdeen School of Law in my case) who is not alone full of interesting questions but is ready to sally forth in the quest for interesting answers. You are given this amazing opportunity to witness and to be part of their journey from aspiring conference attendee to successful conference presenter and published author and, if you are very lucky, as I was, they will allow you to enter their world of research and research colleagues (my thanks to Domenico and all his colleagues at the Centre for Citizenship, Civil Society and Rule of Law (CISRUL) at the University of Aberdeen) so that bridges between non-profit disciplines can be built and collaborative networks shaped with the hope that as we go our separate ways our paths will cross again at future ISTR International Conferences. So, if you are a mid-career or senior scholar or a professional from outside the academy and have not yet signed up as an ISTR Mentor, make it your resolution to sign up before the deadline!

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