

Benoît Godin (1958- 2021)

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It is with sadness that I must write that Benoît Godin passed away on January 5, 2021. He was a prolific and internationally renowned researcher, known for his original work on the history of measurement statistics in science, technology and innovation; on the history of science and research concepts and models; and on cultures of quantification and metrics. In the last fifteen years of his career, he had turned his attention to the intellectual history of innovation (the idea of innovation and its theology), scrutinizing how the term innovation was used and by which actors, from Greek Antiquity to the present day. In the context of this colossal work, he showed, among other things, that the positive ("superlative", he said) connotation of the term is very contemporary, whereas it had rather been used as an anathema throughout history until the late 1960s or early 1970s.

After a master's degree in political science at Laval University in Canada, followed by a doctoral thesis at the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU) of the University of Sussex in Great Britain, defended in 1994, Godin began his career as a Professor at INRS (Institut national de la recherche scientifique, center Urbanisation Culture Société, in Montreal, Canada) in 1993.

A creative and prodigious scholar, he was entirely devoted to research - his only declared hobbies were listening to baroque music and taking long walks with his dogs - and pursued that research with the greatest intellectual rigor and honesty. He leaves an impressive contribution to the study of the history of science and innovation, including the history of the perception of science and innovation in economic theory and society. Perhaps out of modesty, he did not consider himself a historian in his own right, although he made landmark contributions to the history of ideas. He has authored numerous publications, including frequent articles in leading STS journals, as well as important monographs. To name a few: *Innovation Contested: The Idea of Innovation Over the Centuries* (Routledge, 2015); *Models of Innovation: The History of an Idea* (MIT Press, 2017); *Critical Studies of Innovation: Alternative Approaches to the Pro-Innovation Bias* (which we co-edited and which was published by Edward Elgar in 2017); *The Invention of Technological Innovation. Languages, Discourses and Ideology in Historical Perspective* (Edward Elgar, 2019); and his latest book: *The Idea of Technological Innovation: A Brief Alternative History* (Edward Elgar, 2020). Godin was also heavily involved in the editorial work of a dozen journals. In particular, he was for many years a member of the editorial board of the journal *Innovations, Journal of Innovation Economics & Management*. He was one of the most committed and active members of *Minerva's* editorial board.

Benoît Godin loved to bring together researchers from different backgrounds to embark on intellectual adventures that often aimed to shake up what he considered to be the mainstream of research. An unclassifiable researcher, he was very critical of the field of innovation studies. Moreover, he was relatively distant from STS, even though he published articles in journals in this field, such as his remarkable article on the genesis and structuring of the "linear model" of innovation in 2006 in *Science, Technology & Human Values*. As a convener, he had the gift of catalyzing the researchers he mobilized to address fundamental questions. In 2014, he launched CASTI (Conceptual Approaches to Science, Technology and

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Innovation, an Interdisciplinary Research Network - www.casti.org). One of his latest initiatives was to launch with several colleagues the journal *NOvation: Critical Studies of Innovation* (<http://www.novation.inrs.ca/index.php/novation>). Its aim was to create a critical space for dealing with innovation, in particular by unravelling trendy themes and filling in blind spots in research.

Benoît Godin leaves us with unfinished projects as well. Indeed, *NOvation* is not yet sufficiently established and his advice would have been valuable, although his wish was to leave the magazine to the younger generations. Moreover, Benoît Godin, Gérald Gaglio and I had just deposited the manuscript of a *Handbook of Alternative Theories of Innovation* with the publisher Edward Elgar.

Under a sometimes gruff air and claiming to be very misanthropic himself, Benoît was in fact a deeply kind and generous person, not only in exchanges of views and intellectual discussions, but also as a guest or host. Many remember fiery conversations shared with him, controversial but stimulating discussions in which he did not avoid disagreements. He was not only a true researcher but also an inspiring friend, from whom we learned a lot and always with pleasure. He also had a sense of humor and self-mockery - one of his assistants called him "Popeye". The conversations I had with him since the mid-1990s in Grenoble, France, at conferences such as EASST 2010 in Trento, and especially our editorial collaborations, always touched on the essential. Although respectful of our differences, especially my interests in empirical research and field investigation, he was the bearer of his own intellectual project and knew how to stick to it. He was passionate about the use of words at various times, the transformation of their meaning, their circulation, their reappropriation and the political significance they could have.