

Imagining Canada's Future Roundtable

FINAL REPORT

*Prepared for
The Canadian Association for Graduate Studies*

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Convener: Dr. Luca Caminati, Associate Dean of Recruitment and Graduate Awards, School of Graduate Studies, Concordia University

Chair: Dr. Juan Carlos Castro, Assistant Professor, Department of Art Education, Concordia University

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Preface

The Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) believe that graduate students hold the answers to the role graduate research plays in building Canada's future. CAGS selected Concordia University to participate in SSHRC's *Imagining Canada's Future* and to contemplate one of six broad questions. Dr. Luca Caminati, Associate Dean of Recruitment and Graduate Awards from the School of Graduate Studies convened a roundtable with 13 graduate students, the majority of which are SSHRC, NSERC or CIHR award holders. Dr. Juan Carlos Castro, Assistant Professor of Art Education, led the discussion. Kathryn Jezer-Morton, a master's student in the Individualized Program, acted as a *rapporteur* and wrote the report.

The question selected for the roundtable was:

What knowledge will Canada need to thrive in an interconnected, evolving global landscape?

From an economic, social and cultural standpoint, the global landscape has shifted considerably. We live in a world where Brazil, Russia, India and China have clearly emerged - from an economic, political and cultural standpoint - and where other parts of the world, such as the CIVETS (Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa) and sub-Saharan Africa are experiencing skyrocketing economic growth rates. Expatriate communities from throughout these regions are dispersed across Canada. In order for Canada to thrive in the 21st century, we require deep understanding of our own population, including about communities' integration within Canadian society, and of the languages, cultures, histories, economic impacts, and integration of our own and global populations.

Sub-questions:

1. How might global events play out in local spaces, and how might they affect Canada's position in a rapidly evolving and shifting world?
2. How might changes in global trade patterns and international relations affect Canada's position?
3. How might increased understanding about interconnected dispersed communities affect Canada economically, socially and culturally?
4. What deep, systemic knowledge of the world's emerging regions might help Canada respond to emerging opportunities and risks?
5. What does Canada need in order to build resilience and safeguard stability, peace, and public security in the face of global shocks such as natural disasters and emerging conflicts?
6. How might increased understanding of Canada's model of a diverse civil society contribute to insights and understanding in every society impacted by migration in the 21st century?

Report: Imagining Canada's Future Roundtable

Held at the Concordia University School of Graduate Studies

Rapporteur: Kathryn Jezer-Morton

Report submitted May 7, 2015

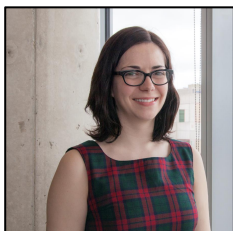
On April 23 2015, Concordia University's School of Graduate Studies hosted a SSHRC-sponsored *Imagining Canada's Future* roundtable discussion that addressed the question of "what knowledge Canada will need to thrive in an interconnected, evolving global landscape". Thirteen graduate researchers were joined by moderator Dr. Juan Carlos Castro, Assistant Professor, Department of Art Education and Dr. Luca Caminati, Associate Dean, Recruitment and Awards, School of Graduate Studies. Topics discussed ranged from how one's definition of "Canada" shapes one's approach to this question, to how to develop and deploy knowledge in the spirit of inclusiveness across Canada's diverse populations.

Brief biographical details about the participants follow:



Fernanda Areias de Oliveira recently arrived at Concordia as a visiting PhD researcher from her home institution of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, where she is a PhD candidate in Computer Science in Education. Her research is focused on art education and new methodologies for media art.

James Bambara is a recipient of the NSERC Alexander Graham Bell scholarship, with which he is studying the integration of anaerobic digestion and greenhouse agriculture as a PhD student in Building Engineering at Concordia. He is currently working with partners to start a farm near Montreal, where Concordia will demonstrate how closed-loop local food production is possible through organic waste recycling.

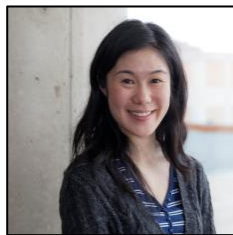


Kate Bevan-Baker is a recognized fiddler, classical violinist, and singer. A SSHRC doctoral scholar at Concordia University, Kate is currently pursuing a PhD through the School of Canadian Irish Studies, conducting research on the oral traditions and diaspora of traditional Irish music from Prince Edward Island and the Magdalen Islands.



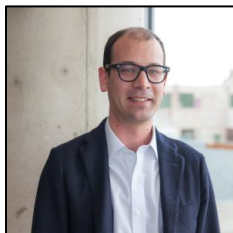
Rachel Burlock is pursuing a Master's in English literature at Concordia, focused on eco-criticism in postcolonial literature and the ways that representations of animality and Otherness intersect.

Martin Lalonde is a doctoral student and instructor in the Department of Art Education of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Concordia. His research focuses on academic motivation, social engagement of at-risk youth, participatory culture, visual culture, multimodal literacy, the development of mobile learning technologies and new media art curricula. He is looking at the phenomena of learning and teaching in the light of the mobility studies and the complex systems paradigm.



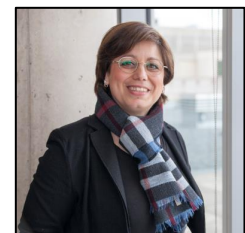
Denise Ma is a fourth year PhD candidate in clinical psychology at Concordia. She is also a psychology intern at the Jewish General Hospital providing short-term psychotherapy to adolescents with complex psychosocial issues. A previous SSHRC Master's award holder, she currently holds a CIHR doctoral award for research examining how children's anxiety symptoms affect their immunoendocrine systems to impact their health over time.

E. Meaghan Matheson is a PhD student in the Department of Religion at Concordia through the support of a SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship. Her dissertation project focuses on the connection between discourses of women's speech and the development of early Christian sexual ethics. Her broader research interests include women's religiosity, embodiment and religious bodies, ritual, sexuality and religion, and the role of gender as a point of analysis for religious frameworks.



Zach Melzer is a PhD student in Film and Moving Image Studies at Concordia. His SSHRC-funded research focuses on the integration of moving image media into urban landscapes, and aims to provide a comparative analysis of the social, economic, technical, and cultural factors that inform their regulations in key sites around the globe—New York City's Times Square, London's Piccadilly Circus, Toronto's Yonge-Dundas Square, and Montreal's Quartier des Spectacles.

Nadia Naffi is an instructional designer and a consultant in the development of online courses. She is also a PhD student in education (with a focus on educational technology) at Concordia. Through adopting the designed-based research methodology, her research focuses on the possibilities of informal and incidental learning occurring through interactions happening in transnational environments.





Magdalena Olszanowski is an artist and SSHRC and FQRSC-funded PhD student in Communication Studies at Concordia. Her primary research areas are feminist body art, censorship, self-imaging, mobile media, technology and electronic music. Her dissertation is focused on the feminist online media histories of the 1990s, which features an array of practicing artists still active today.

Cristina Plamadeala is pursuing an MA in Theological Studies at Concordia. She has worked in various roles for the United States government, Georgetown and Harvard Universities, University of Toronto and for several Canadian think tanks, conducting public policy research.



David Szanto is a researcher, artist, and teacher, taking an experimental approach to gastronomy through design, ecology, and performance. David is a Vice-President of the Canadian Association for Food Studies and an Associate Editor of its peer-reviewed journal, *Canadian Food Studies/La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation*. In March 2015, he successfully defended his PhD dissertation at Concordia, "Performing Gastronomy: An Ecosophic Engagement with the Liveliness of Food."

Jennifer Wicks is a PhD student in Art Education at Concordia. Her research takes a transnational look at community art education, with a focus on curriculum development, teaching approaches and the teaching environment as a means to enhance student learning and artistic development.



Several questions recurred as themes throughout the conversation. How do we live in disagreement? As Canadians, we often talk about diversity and the opportunities inherent therein, but how do we talk about the tension that accompanies that diversity? Given the importance of social media, how can we understand the power of the affective event in creating change? As we pay tribute to the multiplicity of new visualizations of Canada, how can we extend that tribute into collaboration and the sharing of knowledge creation? Are there indigenous ways of knowing? Are there ways of knowing from emerging economies, from established economies that we seek out?

Dr. Castro opened the session a by framing the debate as a rare opportunity for its participants. “So much of what we do in all of our disciplines is about focus, really in-depth effortful study. Every claim, every statement we make, has to be justified, has to be grounded in the literature, in the data, but here is a chance to play with ideas, to draw from your experience, and your research, and your expertise, and extend, and think about the future.”



After initial introductions, a show of hands revealed that the majority of discussants were Canadian citizens who also held citizenship from a different country of origin. Nadia Naffi remarked that although she had become a Canadian citizen in the past year, being in possession of a Canadian passport did not yet make her feel “Canadian.”



What does it mean to be in Canada in 2015? Dr. Castro remarked that our definition of Canada ultimately shapes our understanding of

space, global and local, and defines our values. These questions reverberated throughout the discussion and were central in shaping the direction of debate around the roundtable's first question: How might global events play out in local spaces, and how might they affect Canada's position in a rapidly evolving and shifting world?

Mediated Spaces and National Identity

Cristina Plamadeala remarked that a global event can affect a local community positively or negatively, depending on how people are sensitized to react. A viral video shared widely on social media about a Syrian young girls' year of living amid the civil war in her country helped Americans and Canadians identify more with the Syrian crisis and spurred calls for more humanitarian relief. "A global event can bring about us the best, or it can bring the worst. It can bring separation among ethnic groups that might be associated," said Plamadeala. Nadia Naffi continued on the topic of the affect of social media on local populations:

"We have 250,000 immigrants every year coming to Canada. Because of all the events that are propagated on social media – and because immigrants here have access to these tools – they are living in these transnational environments. We're living the events here, and we're living the events there. We're living in this world where everything that's happening globally is affecting our interactions with each other."

Denise Ma offered agreement: "From a clinical psychology understanding of crises, it really affects us. Any kind of threat to anyone's mortality – ultimately, on a more personal level, it makes us react in a way that's more conservative, more cautions about outsiders as well."

But when a population is living in a transnational environment, what constitutes a local event, and what constitutes a global event? Zach Melzer raised this point, adding that global events occur at different scales as well. “There’s no such thing as a global event,” said David Szanto. “All events are local. When reactions are taking place in different places, it’s a global event.”

Global events become local when they are discussed, framed and understood at a local level. Fernanda Areias de Oliveira noted that in rural Brazil, as in rural Canada, people take interest in global events and often frame their discussions around hypothetical imaginings of how such events would play out in their own communities. In framing events at the local level, Areias de Oliveira argued that small-town people become part of global events. Human actors become the communication infrastructure.

Meaghan Matheson brought up the politics of who decides what kinds of events are



framed as global.

“Why are we prioritizing one event over another event?” she asked.

Coming from Eastern Canada, she added, the military forms a powerful

narrative bridge between the local and the global. “When there was a conflict in Libya, a there was a mass exodus of sailors within 24 hours from Halifax harbour, and their families

were left for six to nine months. So if we're really going to talk about global events impacting local spaces and people, we seem to be talking very much about perception, and communication, and identity, and I'm curious about where this falls, pragmatically, within our own communities. In Montreal there are many more immigrant communities than a place like Halifax, Winnipeg, Edmonton." She raised the question of how we create connections between conversations in large metropolitan areas and smaller, less globally networked spaces, and offered the opinion that it comes down to the politics of framing something as an event of global importance. Many events and conversations don't fit the definition of global or local as they're normally understood, said Matheson.

Assessing The Risks of Discourses of Heterogeneity

The wording of the question – local or global – has a built-in directionality, as Denise Ma remarked. "You have the historic context of what shapes the individual, that then goes on to interact with their communities. On the level of local events—all local events are essentially microcosms of what will be on the global level," she said. "The question sets up this direction of a global event being dominant, but maybe it's just the evolution of all these local events, playing out."

David Szanto brought up Doreen Massey's essay, "A Global Sense of Place," as a source of insight. "Her ultimate conclusion is, those events play out heterogeneously, with great



diversity. There is a hybrid of global and local... There is a series of ecological reactions to events that produce heterogeneity. There are some events that come into media discourses. In Toronto, half of the population is born outside of Canada. We've all got multiple personalities here. How does that affect Canada's position? It's important to be acknowledging that, not in an old-time multicultural way, but in an emergent way."

Magda Olszanowski responded that to employ the narrative of Canada as a nation of immigrants is to fail to acknowledge indigenous peoples' place here. The discourse around immigration, she remarked, is defined by this notion of rapid shifting, evolution, keeping up with a changing population. "But how are we dealing with the populations that are really struggling, that are not part of this economic rapidly shifting world? They are not framed as part of that," she said. David Szanto agreed, adding that indigenous experiences in Canada are enormously diverse as well. Meaghan Matheson added that by focusing these questions of Canada's future around multiplicity and diversity, perhaps the discourse is conveniently passing over issues like missing and murdered aboriginal women. She brought up the possibility that by focusing on the importance of defining subjects within a context that elevates diversity and heterogeneity, a possible flipside is the erasure of stories and issues that don't fit within that scheme.

"There's a need for an etymological exercise to understand the recurrent elements in the discussion," said Martin Lalonde. He noted that the discussion was seeking a working definition of Canada. "For me I would always refer in terms of defining space, defining concepts such as network." He referred to the Brazilian author Adriana De Souza, and her concept of hybrid space between mobilities and localities. "Today, because of the elements of information theory, people are forming space. Spaces are the connections and the

context between people,” said Lalonde. “In this sense, defining Canada by its physical border is not relevant anymore. It’s better to talk about... who is Canada, and what kind of interactions they have to define this entity that we relate to. I think the second other concept to question here is the notion of representation. When we try to define an event, it’s all about the communication that we have. The mediatic representation is the vector that stimulates human interaction that creates space.”

Denise Ma shifted the lens to a more individual-based perspective. “This idea of space and organizing Canada spatially asks the question of how individuals construe who they are. How do they relate to each other, to their space? Are they more of an interdependent, fluid-boundary-relating people, or are they more individualistic? From the self perspective, that touches more on a global spatial organization.”

Progress Without Imperialism?

How can networked populations, informed by both connections to their local communities and awareness of events unfolding at a great distance, mobilize to bring about change? James Bambara cited climate change as an example of the articulation of the global-local relationship, and identified Canada as a uniquely qualified political and demographic entity to take a leadership role in fighting climate change. He remarked our immigrant population provides valuable insight into the needs of countries that could use our help. “With respect to climate change, that’s what I see [Canada’s] strength being – being innovators, coming up with technologies. We can export this knowledge... We can be global leaders by showing we’re open to collaborating with everybody. That’s how a global event like climate change can play out locally.”

Zach Melzer brought up a concern about the imperialistic undertones in exporting technological innovation to nations that can't afford to develop them themselves. "What are the kinds of interactions that will play in, politically and industrially? What are the industrial relationships that will take place? Is this a kind of imperialism 2.0?" To Bambara, the urgency of climate change as a global issue supersedes the concerns about imperialism. "It all boils down to, how can we pay for all these solutions? Putting smokestacks on all these coal-powered plants costs money. We'd have to engage in a way that is different than today. But if the technology is there, in my perspective, the only solution is to produce funds with all the countries, together."

Magda Olszanowski remarked that as much as she appreciated the utopian vision offered by Bambara, many corporate entities responsible for tech and environmental innovation have an uneasy relationship with the public. "When you see huge accidents that are destroying the environment... It's difficult to not be really cynical when there's such a constant loss of trust in these organizations."

How best should researchers and experts in Canada leverage capital – whether financial, in the form of social activism, or research or otherwise – and bring it to bear in contexts foreign to our local environments? This is how the original question posed to the roundtable had been gradually recast. "We have all this information and our desire is to offer it up," said Meaghan Matheson. "I think we have to remember the history these [developing world] communities have with the 'white giver' – the apprehension and not necessarily the want to be given things. How do we offer and help without imposing the 'we know best' mentality? It's a really interesting tension that this panel is trying to speak to," said Matheson.

What Knowledge Will Canada Need to Thrive?

On this note, the roundtable proceeded to the program's second question. Rachel Burlock opened the discussion by opining that "knowledge" as ultimate commodity represents a limited viewpoint. "We need to recognize that there is a certain opacity that can't be transcended.

We're never going to be in a position of complete knowledge. I think we need to know how to disagree better. A lot of problems are about not being able to



agree, and that's going to always happen. Recognizing that opacity is an important kind of knowledge." Burlock's insight was one that was returned to as the discussion progressed.

Martin Lalonde brought up Bruno Latour's actor-network theory as a point of reference around which he was approaching the question of what knowledge Canada will need to thrive. "Since we're evolving in a networked society, where the associations create the space, to create knowledge we need to describe the associations that we see between the actors – not just people but the functions that bring people together. It is this knowledge about associations that we need to develop," he said.

“That’s what I’m trying to do with how moving image tech is integrated into cities,” noted Zach Melzer. “[My research] has to do with political and economic conditions in cities, and which players are at play when they are establishing these kinds of spaces?... What has to be displaced in order for these screens to be put in place? That’s a very local example. But how can we translate that kind of knowledge into larger, global understanding of all these other things that are going on? There are limits to the knowledge that can be created using actor-network theory. It’s talking about things somewhat in isolation. It tries to ahistoricize everything else, in a way.”

Lalonde clarified by explaining that actor-network theory can be a way of getting a more granular understanding of what is going on when we talk about the “social.” “By



‘social’ we mean the connection,” he said, “but we don’t go further than that. But on the contrary, we should go into the detail of the situation to

know specifically what knowledge is created.”

“Nothing is pre-given,” added David Szanto. “It all emerges in the interactions of things. And in those interactions, that is when reality is produced. Your point of looking at

specific moments of interactions, attending to who and what is participating in those interactions, the specific becomes very important.”

Lalonde concluded that it’s attention to very specific local interactions could be a fruitful way to accessing essential knowledge. “My take would be to diversify. To give interest to local and very specific and particular events, and enriching them through funding, through applied research projects,” he said.

Auto-ethnography and New Modes of Knowledge Creation

“What I’ve been trying to teach my students all semester is... to try to make sense of how they arrive at knowledge,” said Magda Olszanowski. “It’s a really interesting exercise for all of us – to think about their own embodied perspective, and where they’re coming from. Why do they think this way, and that way? They told me it was very painful at times. It makes you realize certain things you’ve picked up, or the way you synthesize certain ideas. How do we get at knowledge? What are the steps to recognize our positions, and how does knowledge come to life?”

Nadia Naffi agreed, adding the exercise of auto-ethnography is particularly generative and important for immigrant youth. “They are something new,” she said. “They are not their parents.” But for academics, encouraging subjects to engage in auto-ethnography comes with risks. Jennifer Wicks said that using a collaborative ethnography methodology in her research in community art education had presented challenges: “[The method] attempts to invite those people to the table. Which is difficult in academia, because it means sharing your research, and sharing your name. It means inviting others to be part of your thesis as authors, which is not necessarily accepted by the university. It also means

letting go of your research question. You walk into a community and say, “this is what I’m interested in” and then let that go to see how your collaborators envision your topic.”

“It means putting down your power,” agreed David Szanto. “What would happen if we let go of this [discussion] question, and let other people answer it? What words would get dropped?”

Engaging with knowledge creation outside of established academic pathways still represents a risk to many academics, and Denise Ma argued that funding agencies such as the SSHRC could play an innovative role. “It’s super important for funding agencies to develop methods of appropriate knowledge translation, and to give equal funding opportunities to different methods of analysis. If we can let go of statistics as the gold standard of evidence and our way to knowledge, we might be able to get past some of that opacity.”

Kate Bevan-Baker added that experiential knowledge – “seeing is believing” – is an under-valued form of knowledge creation in many fields. She added that taking a more ambitious global view often causes local problems to be overlooked. “Accessibility – there are places where there is no access to the Internet,” she said. “You can’t get an abortion on PEI. There are so many problems within Canada that we need to address before we move onto bigger global problems elsewhere.”

How Changes In Funding Can Spur Progress In Knowledge Creation

With the roundtable’s time limit approaching, Dr. Castro called for a final round of comments synthesizing the conversation so far. Zach Melzer brought up the growing role of private companies’ role within educational funding, and the risks associated with this new

funding model – noting that disciplines themselves, not just industry and government institutions, were moving this trend forward. “[Disciplines] are looking to disseminate knowledge in unconventional ways. We need to be able to make sense of that as well if we’re going to think about the dissemination of knowledge being created [outside of traditional academic environments].”

Magda Olszanowski brought up the rhetorical challenges inherent in trying to secure funding while seeking to work in areas outside of traditional academic inquiry – in particular in studying the Internet. “We’ve been talking about social media a lot,” she said. “What I’m curious about is... the building of certain methods for studying the Internet. There’s so much opacity around that. I know SSHRC wants to fund things about infrastructure and the Internet, with certain industries. But going back to the question of knowledge, how do younger students figure out methods and what kind of knowledge they need to pull from that?” She noted that students can take jobs within the tech industry to gain insight, but approaching the tech sector as an academic is an area without institutional resources. “I would love to have more access to learning about the nuances of what’s going on with the Internet, and policy,” she concluded.

James Bambara noted that in the sciences, in particular in areas that are studying climate change mitigation, long-term investment is needed



without the expectation of immediate returns. “What I’m researching, you need to invest. There is a return on investment, but it takes 20 years. What knowledge do we need? Maybe we should be asking, what imagination?”

Denise Ma elaborated, from a clinical perspective: “When we look at interventions, problem-solving strategies, we’re asking what works for whom? So in terms of SSHRC, we really need to tap into that question. Using the knowledge that we have, what is working, and what isn’t working? In terms of research directions, it’s got to be multidisciplinary. It’s got to be looking at the complexity of policy from different levels of analysis.”

Conclusion: Towards Disagreement as Source of Knowledge

Zach Melzer returned to Rachel Burlock’s earlier question: “How do we develop knowledge on how to disagree better? Is it creating more ethnographic studies, more data, better assessment of data?”

Denise Ma offered that perhaps a new perspective on conflicting clinical results would be a way to allow disagreement to happen without overt conflict: “In my field, if [your study] has found no relationship between certain variables, you can’t publish that. When really, non-significance, and non-results are actually very telling. So one way to learn how to disagree is for journals who are disseminating knowledge to allow non-significant results to happen alongside these phenomenal results that are found.”

Nadia Naffi’s experience as the designer and instructor in an online learning environment informs her belief that using the Internet as a space for learning as opposed to simply a tool or a subject of study can be very rewarding. “I’ve been teaching a communications technology course online, with a problems-based learning approach --

which means I teach without content. I come with a problem, and the students have to research and solve this problem.”

Students use any social media platforms of their choosing to seek out solutions. “I had so many disagreements happening on these platforms, and the ideas that are evolving... This is a small example. But I really believe that this could be happening on a bigger scale. You have so many ideas within these diff communities of practice,” she concluded.

Expectations are structural elements in academic work and funding, and Meghan Matheson argued that perhaps it’s at the level of expectation that progress towards better disagreement can be made. “Maybe instead of changing how we talk, we should change our expectations. In that when talk about countries, categories, things, we should recognize that contradiction is inherent in all of these categories. In religious studies, we teach that there’s good and there’s bad, and there’s everything in between. All of that is part of the discourse and all of that needs to be understood. That pedagogical move helps students come up with different ways to ask questions. They’re not coming out of it with a definition. So rather than seeing disagreement as a failure, we could be seeing it as productive. Or something that creates. It is part of the performance.”

