

## **Call for Papers**

### **HISTORIES OF URBAN KNOWLEDGE: MONTRÉAL, QUEBEC, CANADA, AND BEYOND (19<sup>TH</sup>-20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES)**

**Université de Montréal  
27-28 September 2019**

In a 2013 text exploring some of the epistemological challenges facing the field of urban studies, the French historian Stéphane Van Damme asks if it is possible to write a history of urban knowledge. The question is a crucial one for historians of the city. Since the emergence of industrial modernity, historical actors and institutions have worked to understand urban centres, even as they grew, multiplied, and became increasingly--and, some feared, uncontrollably--complex. Over the last two centuries, knowing and interpreting the city has been of primary importance to a wide range of urban-dwellers and observers, from the first French hygienists to late nineteenth-century German sociologists, from the Chicago to the Los Angeles School, from transnational planning networks to neighbourhood activists.

As the organizers of this conference, we believe that a history of urban knowledge is possible, but must be written in the plural. We embrace the idea that, like the city itself, urban knowledge is a complex undertaking; at times chaotic and disorderly, difficult to classify or plan, it represents a rich and varied terrain for research. This conference, while grounded in the historical discipline, is open to interdisciplinary reflections and to other approaches that enrich our understanding of how urban knowledge is made and employed. The starting point for our reflections is the Canadian city, and in particular Montréal, but we welcome case studies and lines of questioning that move beyond or transcend that frame. Our definition of urban knowledge is open and flexible, encompassing not just expertise but a wide range of other possible ways of knowing the city and engaging with the urban question.

The conference organizers welcome paper or panel proposals that engage with this wider theme, including those addressing the following questions:

- What are the different ways of knowing the city and what can we productively include in the category of urban knowledge, from expert research to local, lived and sensory knowledge of the street or neighbourhood?
- Who are the actors who produce knowledge about the city, how and to what ends?

- How and by what pathways and networks does urban knowledge circulate throughout the city and beyond?
- How is urban knowledge mobilized and legitimized to shape the city and society, or to resist opposing programs of change? What happens when different ways of knowing enter into conflict, or when they are employed in unanticipated ways?
- At street level, how does the city-dweller discover the city, its neighbourhoods, functions, and codes, and the problems and possibilities of urban life?
- How should we understand the lack or wilful disregard of urban knowledge, and the ignorance that contributes to certain decisions by political and other urban actors?

Please send by December 15<sup>th</sup> a paper proposal including the name of the presenter(s), institutional affiliation, a one-page CV, paper title, and an abstract of 500 words or less. The proposals can be sent at the following address: [savoirs.urbains@gmail.com](mailto:savoirs.urbains@gmail.com)

Organizing committee :

- Harold Bérubé (Université de Sherbrooke)
- Michèle Dagenais (Université de Montréal)
- Valérie Poirier (Independent scholar)
- Jean-Christophe Racette (Université du Québec à Montréal)
- Daniel Ross (Université du Québec à Montréal)

This conference is organized with the collaboration of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Montreal (CRIEM/CIRM), the Centre interuniversitaire d'études québécoises (CIEQ), the Montreal History Group (MHG), the Laboratoire d'histoire et de patrimoine de Montréal (LHPM) and the Villes Régions Monde research network (VRM).

We are also delighted to announce that the conference will include a keynote talk by Tracy Neumann (Wayne State University), an urban historian specialized in global and transnational approaches to the North American city, and in particular the post-industrial transformations of the 20th century.

You can follow updates on the project at this address :

<https://savoirusurbains.wordpress.com>