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amsterdam social science

# Amsterdam Social Science

7.1

volume 7 issue 1

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# Preface

## Ina Rüber

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The familiar reader of *Amsterdam Social Science* would know that in each issue we seek to encourage interdisciplinarity and provide a stage for young and devoted researchers. In this issue, we invite our old and new curious readers to join in and follow us on a journey through four articles investigating questions all connected to a concept which has become indispensable in today's society: globalization. Notwithstanding the heated discussions about the term, its contested novelty, and the disputed extent to which it is a self-enforcing process, in this issue, globalization will be emphasized because of its popularity and the myriad approaches of studying it.

Regardless of the type of social context – be it a social gathering or an academic exchange – it is likely to find oneself conversing about matters such as cultural convergence, migration, or the ease of communication over remarkable distances. Somewhere in-between viewing these phenomena as threats or opportunities, agreement would probably rest on the overarching feature of a globalizing process: an apparent interconnectedness between countries, institutions, and individuals. In this context, the

World Wide Web is rapidly improving and vibrantly changing and extending in terms of content. The article *Participative Web, social utility and ICT adoption: An issue of alignment* picks up the opportunities hidden behind the Web as a global means of communication to examine how it can facilitate a local project. The author is less interested in technical facts but seeks to identify the processes through which people can become more amiable towards using web-based tools, particularly for the goal of promoting self-sustainable projects. The action-research conducted on one particular project –through its elaborate description of the struggles of the participants in this project– reiterates the importance of interaction.

Migration, with its corporeal and political constituents, is also part and parcel of globalization. Moving from one country to another has become easier in light of advanced transportation systems, a process simultaneously impeded by formal policy restrictions and political public backlashes. In *Unpacking the experiences and perspectives of Mexican immigrant women and their Dutch partners*, the writer explores the incentives behind transnational marriages, in the particular case between Mexican women and Dutch men. Through an in-depth study of the history and initial course of a few marriages, individuals opened up in front of the researcher and talked about how love has shaped their lives.

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Another critical article dealing with migration also found its way in this issue. *How do Racialized Migrants Cope with Challenges of Labor Market Integrations and Resettlement?* presents the position of migrants on the Canadian labor market. The interviews reveal migrants' struggles with labor market discrimination, leading to under- and unemployment, de-skilling and re-training as well as their strategies to cope with these.

Finally, our fourth article, *Holocaust Memory and the Horizon of National Identity*, implicitly points the reader's

attention to processes of *glocalization*. Critically examining the Holocaust as a global “symbolic signifier”, the author argues that the Holocaust has been adapted to take local, particularly national identity-formation meanings in Canada, through the construction of Canada’s National Holocaust Monument.

As you read through these articles, we encourage you to think about how global processes have shaped academia itself. During the past year, student protesters in the Netherlands have attempted to emphasize the salience of, among others, the issue of decolonizing academia, both in its institutional and knowledge-producing character. Perhaps this is a challenging topic for you to engage with by studying it, joining our masterclasses, or writing a blog for our website.

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We would like to thank the following persons who acted as peer reviewers for manuscripts submitted for publication in volume 6 of this journal.

Clemens de Olde  
Dijana Erkoivic  
Francisca Grommé  
Josip Kesic  
Wouter Kruithof  
Tobias Lenz  
Sander Merkus  
Anna Plyushteva  
Fabienne Zwagemakers

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# Holocaust memory and the horizon of national identity: Canada's National Holocaust Monument (NHM) as a means for shaping Canadian identity

Jason Chalmers\*

## Introduction

While the ostensible purpose of Holocaust commemoration is to honour the millions of lives exterminated under the Third Reich, a community's decision to remember the Holocaust is often compelled by a variety of interests. This is because the Holocaust has in recent decades become a free-floating symbolic signifier that can be applied to a variety of subjects regardless of their (dis)similarity to the Nazi persecution of European Jewry; that is, the Holocaust is a symbolic vessel through which various issues, interests, and agendas can be transmitted (Poole, 2010). Different social, political, and cultural contexts will therefore have a significant impact on the way that the Holocaust is remembered and how that memory is used (Young, 1993). When the federal government announced in 2011 that

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\* Jason is a doctoral student in Sociology at the University of Alberta, and holds an MA in Religious Studies from the University of Ottawa and a BAH in Psychology and Religious Studies from Queen's University at Kingston.

His current research examines how the interaction between indigenous and immigrant narratives is producing a uniquely Canadian discourse on genocide.

Canada would become home to its own national memorial to the Holocaust, one could anticipate that this decision was motivated by something more than a desire to remember the dead. The process of establishing national memorials to the Holocaust is instrumental in the ‘nationalization’ of the Holocaust – the process in which Holocaust memory is shaped by the socio-cultural dynamics of a particular nation-state – so that one might expect the creation of Canada’s National Holocaust Monument (NHM) to address some particularly Canadian concerns (Linenthal, 1995; Carrier, 2005).

In the present study, I attempt to identify some of the primary motivations underlying the NHM – which will be completed in late 2015 – by examining the discourse produced by the policy makers and influencers involved in the memorial’s creation. Through an analysis of the discourse produced in parliamentary debate, during public ceremonies, and in online and print media, I identify sev-

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“The Holocaust is a symbolic vessel through which various issues, interests, and agendas can be transmitted”

eral dominant themes that reveal some of the main reasons for establishing the memorial. After establishing a theoretical and methodological framework for the study of Holocaust memorials, I discuss two major themes that have emerged from the discourse surrounding the NHM: the ethical and the global. In both cases the monument is framed as the embodiment of certain ‘Canadian’ values, although each theme reveals that these values are being communicated to different audiences.

In one instance, the NHM acts as a mirror that reflects Canadian values back towards Canadians, thereby reinforcing their centrality to the national identity. In the other, the NHM becomes a beacon that projects these values to the international community in an attempt to legitimise Canada as an actor in global society. Based on these related functions, I argue that Holocaust memory and the NHM are being used to broadcast Canadian values in two directions – inwards to Canadian society and outwards to the global community – in an attempt to shape the nation’s domestic and international identities.

## Holocaust Monuments in National and Global Perspective

The majority of academic research on Holocaust monuments considers them a product of the nation-state in which they were conceived and constructed. By developing Maurice Halbwachs’ work on collective memory, James Young pioneered the study of Holocaust monuments as products of their national milieus in his 1993 study *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Young’s analysis works from the premise that monuments are not just static artistic objects but also public memorials; they are collective creations made meaningful through the multitude of competing interpretations that society projects upon them (Young, 1993, p. vii-xiii, p. 1-15). Because the nation-state has been one of the most dominant social structures since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he argues that national context often has such a strong impact on monuments that they become “indigenous, even geological outcroppings in a national landscape” which are “invested with national soul and memory” (Young, 1993, p. 2). Most studies follow Young’s lead by taking a nation-oriented approach to monuments, with most major research addressing memorials in Germany, Israel, and the United States (Engelhardt, 2002).

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In recent years, some scholars have begun to insist that, rather than looking at memory exclusively from a national perspective, it must also be examined as a product of global society. Like Young's work, this research is based on the premise that memory is fundamentally linked to identity and that, for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the nation-state has been integral in identity formation. However, this newer research also acknowledges the significance of global society, suggesting that the growing pace of globalisation is eroding the integrity of the nation-state and giving way to transnational communities. Some believe that the concept of memory itself must be reworked in light of globalisation, and Aleida Assmann argues that, while the Holocaust might not become a global 'memory' in the traditional sense, it "has spread to become a universal symbol with global resonance" (Assmann, 2010, p. 114).

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In their major study on Holocaust memory in global society, Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider argue that, rather than 'totalizing' memorial culture, "national and ethnic memories are transformed in the age of globalization rather than erased" (Levy & Sznaider, 2006, p. 3). Because "shared memories of the Holocaust...provide the foundations for a new cosmopolitan memory," Holocaust memory is a significant force in the process of globalisation (Levy & Sznaider, 2006, p. 4). The globalising impulse of memory is transferred to monuments and memorials. In his study of Holocaust memorials as an emerging artistic genre, Harold Marcuse not only attempts to define the 'Holocaust memorial' by conducting an international survey of prominent monuments, but concludes that a defining feature of these memorials is that "they are addressed to transnational audiences" (Marcuse, 2010, p. 54).

While these perspectives differ in regards to which contexts are most significant in the production of collective memory, they agree that monuments – and the memories they embody – are the dynamic products of social interactions. In his analysis of the United States Holocaust Memorial

Museum (USHMM), Edward Linenthal argues that the ‘Americanization’ of the Holocaust was a consequence of the debates comprising the planning and negotiation of this national memorial, many of which played out before ground-breaking for the physical structure (Linenthal, 1995). Peter Carrier takes a similar, albeit more refined, methodological approach in which he offers the “definition of a monument as a social process” (Carrier, 2005,

## “Monuments – and the memories they embody – are the dynamic products of social interactions”

p. 22). He explains that “people do not identify directly with a monument, for its significance is contingent upon meanings acquired by its interactions with and translation via secondary media of speeches, rituals, reports, forums, conferences, exhibitions and political statements. Monuments are rather catalysts of complex social and political communication” (Carrier, 2005, p. 219). Thus, Carrier emphasises the ‘rhetorical negotiation’ of monuments – the debates, disputes, and controversies surrounding their creation – because it is this discourse that generates a coherent social memory.

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In line with this approach, I conducted a discourse analysis of the debates surrounding Canada’s NHM, treating the memorial as a rhetorical device that has stimulated national discussion on the Holocaust. The data for this analysis came from the discourse produced in the parliamentary debates surrounding the National Holocaust Monument Act (NHMA) and its predecessor bill C-442, public ceremonies marking milestones in the memorial’s development, online and print media, and interviews conducted with individuals responsible for the monument.

This data was coded to identify dominant and recurring themes within it – those ideas that seem most embedded in the national conception of the Holocaust. By distilling this discourse into a set of themes and sub-themes, it was possible to understand the constellation of ideas that have formed around ‘the Holocaust,’ and thereby understand what Holocaust memory means in a Canadian context.

This sort of analysis entails certain freedoms and limitations, in particular that all concepts and definitions are tentative and subject to change. Discourse analysis demands that, rather than impose specific definitions on one’s subject, definitions must emerge from the data. So instead of adhering to strictly delimited ideas of such concepts as the Holocaust, memory, and globalisation (all of which are hotly contested), I began with very broad understandings and allowed more refined (and contextually specific) concepts develop in the discourse. The specific constellation of ideas in which a concept is located may vary between sources and even contradict one another, although my general goal is to identify general trends that can be observed within Canadian Holocaust memory.

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## Canada’s Ethical Relationship to Holocaust Memory

By integrating the Holocaust into a binary framework, Canadian discourse on the NHM has allowed Holocaust memory to emerge as part of a larger ethical system. At its simplest, a binary system contains two opposing elements that are fundamentally at odds and cannot be reconciled with one another. Adding more elements into such a framework produces an increasingly complex relationship system in which every element is either congruent with or oppositional to every other element within it. Because such a system allows a set of basic assumptions to transform into a complex worldview, binary oppositions can be useful ideological tools.

As I will discuss, the discourse surrounding the NHM has produced a binary system based on two sets of values: one associated with hatred, and the other with rights. At one end of the opposition, the historical event now referred to as the Holocaust is considered to be the embodiment of hate-based values. By presenting these values as distinctly

## “The Holocaust is framed as an antithesis to the Canadian values system”

non-Canadian, the Holocaust is framed as an antithesis to the Canadian values system. At the other end of the opposition, Holocaust memory is seen as something that promotes values based on rights. By framing these as core Canadian values, Canada is linked to the Holocaust vis-a-vis these shared values. The effect is to produce two clusters of ideas that appear to stand in opposition to one another: at one pole is the Holocaust, hate-based values, and the non-Canadian; at the other end is Holocaust memory, rights-based values, and the Canadian. As I will demonstrate, this dichotomy functions to define what is and is not Canadian, and in doing so is used by politicians and public officials to demarcate the parameters of the Canadian identity.

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At one end of the binary is the Holocaust itself, which Canadians can understand only in its capacity as a completely foreign other. This sort of framing is not unique to Canadian memory, and Tim Cole (2004) has argued that the USHMM in Washington presents the Holocaust as “the very antithesis of American values” (p. 134); it is something that Americans can relate to and understand only as a point of extreme contrast. In Canada, the Holocaust is similarly framed as the ‘antithesis’ of contemporary Canadian values, which can be known only by virtue of the

fact that it is so un-Canadian. Tim Uppal, the Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) who introduced bill C-442, An Act to establish a National Holocaust Monument, in Parliament and who has continued to be involved with the monument's development, reflects on the 'foreignness' of the Holocaust as it pertains both to himself and other Canadians:

As a student growing up in Edmonton...those events [of the Holocaust] seemed distant and dated. They happened before I was born, to people I didn't know much about, in countries on the other side of the world... For our young people today it is even more remote. For people privileged to live in a country like Canada, the Holocaust can seem wholly foreign, something that people have difficulty understanding because they cannot relate to its atrocities and horrors... In today's Canada, those who are honoured to call it home would have tremendous difficulty identifying with the deep horrors of the Holocaust. (Parliament, 2010a, p. 3)

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The Holocaust appears distant and foreign not just because of its temporal and physical proximity, but also because Canada is a 'privileged' country where the 'atrocities and horrors' of state-mandated hatred do not occur. Its otherness is due in part to the fact that such horrors are inconceivable to Canadians; however, its foreignness is also firmly rooted in the value system, which is purported to have inspired those atrocities and allowed them to occur. This otherness arises from the way in which the Holocaust is presented as the embodiment of intolerant, hate-based values that stand in opposition to those possessed by Canadians. The Nazi worldview from which the Holocaust emerged was a product of what MP Glenn Thibeault refers to as 'hate-inspired ideologies' (House of Commons Debates, 2010a, p. 5454). This hate-based outlook produced intolerance towards those who deviated from the social norm, leading to the widespread acceptance of bigotry, racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, sexism, and

ultimately resulting in violence and genocide (House of Commons, 2009, p. 7815, p. 7818; House of Commons Debates, 2010a, p. 5454).

In addition to identifying these values as central to the Nazi worldview, they are further defined as antithetical to those values that are esteemed by Canada and other democratic nations. Uppal explains that “the horrific events of the Holocaust are a stark testament to what can happen when humanity and fundamental basic rights are discarded” (Parliament, 2011, p. 7); this sentiment is echoed on the homepage of the NHM’s government website, which states that the Holocaust “was a crime that challenged the fundamental values all civilized peoples hold dear” (Foreign Affairs, 2013, Index). Because hate-based values and rights-based values (discussed below) are mutually exclusive categories, society can embrace only one set of values or the other; Canadian values and Nazi values are incompatible. The Holocaust is therefore presented as a consequence of two related actions: accepting hate-based values while, by definition, rejecting Canadian ones.

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The notion that the Holocaust stands in opposition to Canadian values does not mean that the event should be disregarded entirely; rather, it invites Canadians to remember it. Brian Jean, the Conservative MP who was parliamentary secretary on the committee responsible for the study of bill C-442, suggests that any event of such ‘magnitude’ should be remembered, noting that “Our government appreciates the importance of remembering and understanding all events throughout history, even those that are inconsistent with the values of Canadians” (House of Commons, 2009, p. 7820). The reason for remembering such non-Canadian values is clarified by Tim Uppal, who explains that the failure to remember them “invites a return to the terror of those dark years, and losing those very things which we hold most dear” (House of Commons, 2009, p. 7814). Canadians must remember the values that led to the Holocaust in order to recognise them and ensure

that they do not manifest again. The creation of a national monument is justified by the fact that the Holocaust was caused by the withdrawal of those values that modern democracies hold dear. It is only by remembering those values for which they do not stand that Canadians are able to remember those values for which they do.

The need to preserve Canadian values results in the other end of the binary that associates Holocaust memory with values based on human rights. In his presentation to the committee responsible for studying the bill, Tim Uppal indicates that “As Canadians we pride ourselves on a nation that values and demands respect towards other people, affords a personal dignity to all people, and provides an environment of tolerance and understanding” (Parliament,

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“The National Holocaust Monu-  
ment will serve as a symbol of  
Canadian value and diversity as  
much as it will be a memorial”  
– Tim Uppal

2010a, p. 3). In contrast to the hate-based worldview of the Nazis, Canadians are accepting of social difference and support such values as democracy, freedom, diversity, social justice, equality, and human dignity (House of Commons, 2009, p. 7820; Parliament, 2011, p. 21). These also happen to be the same values that are allegedly promoted by the memory of the Holocaust; a national monument will therefore become a physical embodiment of these values and help to maintain their presence in Canadian society.

Nowhere is this attitude expressed with more certainty than on the NHM’s government website (which is hosted

by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development). Directly under the banner on the website's homepage is an emphatic quotation from Tim Uppal which reads: "The National Holocaust Monument will serve as a symbol of Canadian value and diversity as much as it will be a memorial for the millions of victims and families destroyed" (Foreign Affairs, 2013, Index).<sup>i</sup> Further down the page in regular type, the 'fundamental values' to which this refers are identified as "freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law" (Foreign Affairs, 2013, Index). The monument will of course commemorate the millions of victims who died under the Nazi regime, as does any Holocaust memorial. But just as much as this, it will also function to enshrine Canadian values. Given the fact that this quotation is the most prominent feature of the webpage apart from the banner reading 'National Holocaust Monument' – in conjunction with the fact that this homepage is one of the top items listed in a Google search for 'holocaust monument Canada' – suggests that this function may be the most important aspect of the forthcoming monument (or at least the one that most people will have encountered). Indeed, statements along these lines appear too frequently to cite here. Reviewing almost any part of the discourse surrounding the NHM reveals that a central purpose of the monument is to instrumentalise Holocaust memory in the promotion of Canadian values.

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In effect, this binary system functions as a boundary marker that delimits the outer edge of the Canadian identity. The Holocaust is presented as the embodiment of non-Canadian values and thereby represents a value system that is outside the purview of today's Canadian society. Holocaust memory, however, is framed as something that

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<sup>i</sup> That this quotation indicates 'value' in the singular is presumably a typo. The speech from which this statement has been taken – Uppal's introduction of bill C-442 during its first reading in Parliament – refers to

'values' in the plural. Furthermore, it is clear from the quotation's context that it refers to 'values' such as 'freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.'

promotes Canadian values and thus represents a value system that is within that purview. Together – and as a binary they are always together – these two opposing sets of values project the horizon of the Canadian identity; they

“The NHM will become a physical articulation of these values and thereby a concrete manifestation of national identity”

create a clearly defined edge that separates those things Canadians extol from those they condemn. The NHM will become a physical articulation of these values and thereby a concrete manifestation of national identity. And so long as the monument is presented as an embodiment of those things prized by Canadians, it will also implicitly motion towards those things abhorred by them, and in doing so will reinforce Canadians’ self-perception. To put it another way, the creation of a national memorial is an act of world-view maintenance in which the Holocaust and its memory are used as symbols of Canadian values for the sole purpose reinforcing those values. In this way, the NHM does not function to memorialise the Holocaust and its victims, but is rather instrumentalised as a mirror with which the Canadian identity is reflected back towards Canadians.

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## Using Holocaust Memory to Encounter Global Society

A further function of the NHM and Holocaust memory in Canada stems from the country’s status as an actor within global society. There are a multitude of definitions of globalisation, each of which highlights a particular process and varies to different degrees of specificity. In line with

my methodological approach, I intend to use a broad, flexible definition. By globalisation, I mean the process by which people, goods, capital, information, and ideas (including cultural ideas) are transmitted quickly and easily across international borders and large geographical distances. By global community (or society), I mean the webs of communicative relationships that have emerged from this process.

In this era of modern globalisation, membership to the global community has an increasingly powerful influence on the nation-state, the individuals within it, and the ways in which they communicate, relate to one another, and conduct their affairs. As will be demonstrated, by actively citing the significance of the Holocaust and its memory to the global community, the discourse surrounding the NHM positions Canada within global society by constructing an international persona.

Canada has long used the Holocaust as a way to relate to the international community, for its immigration policies during the Second World War were in part a way for the country to develop a national identity within global society. According to historian Patrick Reed, Canada's movement of 446 mostly Jewish refugees from the Iberian Peninsula during the Second World War marks the country's entry into global society. Reed observes that, as a consequence of the 1931 *Statute of Westminster's declaration* that Canada was no longer a British colony, the country suffered an identity crisis in that it entered a "transitional stage between colony and nation" (Reed, 1996, p. 114).

The Second World War brought this crisis to light by revealing how dependent Canada was on British and American policy while also providing the country with opportunities to express its autonomy through policy-making; one such opportunity was manifest in Canada's Iberian Refugee Movement. In response to domestic and international pressure to act upon the refugee crisis that had developed

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in Europe, Canada announced it would accept 446 refugees from Spain and Portugal for the duration of the war.

Because this policy simultaneously responded to domestic and international demands, maintained a sense of national unity in spite of a divisive issue, and demonstrated the country's ability to act as an independent decision-maker, Reed concludes that the movement "represents a progressive step in Canada's halting transition from inward-looking isolationism to outward-looking internationalism; from, if you will, national adolescence to adulthood" (Reed, 1996, p. 18). That is, Canada's treatment of the Iberian refugee crisis represents an important developmental period in the nation's history, for it allowed the country to establish national unity while also carving out a niche in the global community. Even before the Holocaust had become a memory, Canada was responding to these events as an actor on the world stage.

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Recent trends in Canadian Holocaust commemoration reveal the extent to which memorial activities reach beyond the national realm and into the global. A noteworthy example of this is the *Wheel of Conscience*, a memorial to the 1939 voyage of the *MS St. Louis*, a ship carrying mostly Jewish refugees from Europe, which sought – and was systematically denied – entry to Cuba, the United States, and finally Canada. Since its unveiling in January 2011, this memorial has resided at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax – the historic site through which many immigrants entered the country during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This location not only recognises the *St. Louis* and the plight of European Jewry as a part of the Canadian narrative, but also acknowledges Canada's role as an actor in the global community.

Such precursors to the NHM suggest that, once completed, this monument will reach into global society and act as an interlocutor between Canada and the rest of the world. In fact, this dimension of the NHM can already be witnessed

in the discourse. In Tim Uppal's sponsorship speech during the second reading of bill C-442 in the House of Commons, he explains that "Canada is a nation of hope and opportunity, a beacon to those around the world seeking to find a new home and brighter future" (House of Commons, 2009, p. 7814) and that "This monument is a statement

## "The NHM is not meant only for Canadians, but also for non-Canadians"

made by Canadians to the world" (House of Commons, 2009, p. 7815). Canada is not just recognised internationally, but is in fact a point of reference (i.e. 'a beacon') that other members of global society use to measure 'hope and opportunity.' Acknowledging its important role in this community, Canada communicates with others nations and intends to use the NHM as part of this communication. The NHM is not meant only for Canadians, but also for *non*-Canadians.

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### Invoking Globalisation in Canadian Holocaust Discourse

Perhaps the most common way in which the NHM invokes global dialogue is by observing that Canada is the only Allied nation still without a national Holocaust memorial. This is an often-heard refrain in the discourse, and has been repeated multiple times in Parliament, during ceremonies, and in the media. The argument is generally presented like this:

Like many, I was surprised to learn that Canada remained the only allied nation without a Holocaust monument in its nation's capital... By placing the

monument in the nation's capital, at the seat of government, we accord an appropriate respect and acknowledge the gravity of this terrible event. Great Britain, the United States, France, all our allies have understood the importance of remembering the Holocaust and so should Canada. (House of Commons, 2009, p. 7815)

In similar statements, it is further observed that Canada is one of few Western nations without a monument, and that former Axis countries such as Germany and Austria have recognised the national significance of this event (House of Commons, 2010b, p. 6982; Debates of the Senate, 2011b,

“Despite her personal beliefs, Grosman framed the monument as something with global significance”

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p. 1858). This is a noteworthy way of framing the debate because it suggests that Holocaust memory does not have its own intrinsic value, but that its worth is determined by general consensus; the majority of Western nations already commemorate the Holocaust – including those responsible for the atrocities – and if they have recognised its importance at the national level, then ‘so should Canada.’ In this regard, Canada is not merely interested in building the NHM for the benefit of its own citizens, but to project a certain image to the international community.

Laura Grosman, the young woman who initially approached her MP with the idea for a national memorial, responded in the negative in conversation when asked whether she thought the monument has significance on the international scale, but makes reference to the impacts of globalisation:

It doesn't speak to keeping up and...ensuring that we're aligned with other countries. I think it speaks to our collective history and our memory as a country... It has nothing to do with the other countries. I mean, that's definitely a way to convince people. I'll admit that the easiest way to convince people was to say, 'Well, you really want Canada to fall behind? The other Allied nations have one'... I became political! So it did come in handy in that sense. (L. Grosman, personal communication, November 13, 2012)

Grosman was adamant that the monument serves a purely national function, but also admits that she promoted it by suggesting it does serve an international purpose. Despite her personal beliefs, she framed the monument as something with global significance. Judging by the popularity of this argument in parliamentary and other debate, this has become one of the predominating attitudes towards the NHM.

A further way in which global society has been invoked is by identifying anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial as international – rather than domestic – threats. This theme is significant because a distinctly Canadian discourse on the Holocaust first took shape in the 1980s with the domestic trials of Ernst Zündel, a German expatriate living in Toronto, and James Keegstra, a high-school teacher in Eckville, Alberta. In 1984, Zündel was charged for the publication and distribution of a tract that argued the Holocaust had never happened. The same year, Keegstra was charged for teaching a revisionist and anti-Semitic version of world history to his high school civics classes. Both cases were ultimately brought before the Supreme Court of Canada and, through their prominence in the media, stimulated national discourse on the Holocaust (Bercuson & Wertheimer, 1985, p. xii, p. 150-151; Davies, 1989, p. 77).

Despite the domestic origins, concern about denial and anti-Semitism has since acquired an international outlook.

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In several instances, the NHM is considered necessary because, “Worldwide, there has been an increase in the number of major violent manifestations that are anti-Semitic in nature. This increase is linked to Holocaust denial and

## “It is the shift from national to global concerns that represents the new face of Holocaust memory in Canada”

questioning the legitimacy of Israel. Similar events are being reported here in Canada” (House of Commons, 2010a, p. 5450). A national monument, so the reasoning goes, will increase awareness of the Holocaust at home and abroad, decrease denial, and thereby reduce anti-Semitism.

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Although Tim Uppal acknowledges that deniers and anti-Semites exist in Canada, he makes no explicit reference to either Zündel or Keegstra, referring instead to high profile deniers in the global community such as Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former President of Iran (Parliament, 2010a, p. 3). Although a distinctly Canadian memory of the Holocaust began to take shape in response to anti-Semitism and denial as domestic threats, it is their presence on the international stage that has continued to sculpt this memory. While continuing to maintain a Canadian perspective, it is the shift from national to global concerns that represents the new face of Holocaust memory in Canada.

### The NHM as a Catalyst for Global Dialogue

Some questions arise from this: Why has Canada invoked global society in the discussion of its own national Holocaust memorial? Why does it matter whether or not other

countries participate in Holocaust commemoration? The answer is that one of the monument's functions is to reach into the global sphere and actively engage Canada in the dialogue of globalisation. The Holocaust is remembered around the world, and while it may adopt a particular dynamic based on its national context, it also contains universal characteristics (Marcuse, 2010). Holocaust memory is observed globally, has considerable symbolic gravity, and easily captures people's attention. If a country wants to participate in dialogue with the global community, Holocaust memory can be an effective way to do so. To understand the relationship between Holocaust memory and global society, it might be more effective to replace the question 'Why does the NHM invoke global dialogue?' with 'Can the NHM be used to enter global dialogue?'. It is not that Canada needs to justify the NHM by invoking globalisation, but that Canada can engage in globalisation by invoking Holocaust memory.

On the surface, Canada must commemorate the Holocaust because it has a formal international obligation to do so. In 2009, Canada became a member of the Taskforce for the International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research (ITF; now the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, or IHRA). Canada demonstrated further commitment to the organisation in 2013 when it assumed the IHRA chair, making the country host to the IHRA's activities for the year. The IHRA "is an intergovernmental body whose purpose is to place political and social leaders' support behind the need for Holocaust education, remembrance and research both nationally and internationally" (IHRA, 2014, About the IHRA), and currently has 31 member countries. Any 'democratic' nation can apply for membership, although acquisition of full membership occurs in stages based on adherence to educational and commemorative initiatives (IHRA, 2014, Membership Criteria).

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As a newer member of the IHRA, Canada has already demonstrated some form of commitment to education, remembrance, and research, but will need to show its continued devotion to these areas. The creation of a national monument is a definite step in that direction. Thus, the ITF/IHRA is referred to repeatedly during discussion of the NHM (House of Commons, 2010a, p. 5450; Debates of the Senate, 2011a, p. 1801; Debates of the Senate, 2011b, p. 1857-1858), and the monument is acknowledged as something that will “help Canada in its effort to fulfill this pledge” to the organisation (Debates of the Senate, 2011b, p. 1858). Canada has a commitment to the global community to remember the Holocaust, and the NHM will help to fulfill it.

However, this does not answer the question of why Canada seeks to enter global dialogue on the Holocaust. There was no obligation to join the IHRA, and the country received its membership freely and without coercion. Canada could have chosen to remember the Holocaust in its own way, without the need for an international organisation to dictate the terms of remembrance. So the question remains: Why would Canada willingly join an international organisation devoted to the memory of the Holocaust?

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One answer suggested by policy makers is that, by participating in Holocaust memory at the global level, Canada is able to validate itself to the international community. Based on the IHRA’s website, one of the universal features of Holocaust memory seems to be that it promotes values such as democracy, freedom, and human rights (IHRA, 2014, Stockholm Declaration). By demonstrating support for Holocaust memory, Canada simultaneously indicates its support for these values and thereby aligns itself with those nations that share them. In a sense, publicly broadcasting one’s commitment to Holocaust memory is a way of identifying who one’s allies are.

Rabbi Daniel Friedman, chair of the development council responsible for fundraising and supervising the monument’s

realisation, motions towards this purpose. When confronted with the same question posed to Grosman – whether the monument serves an international function – he responded affirmatively:

Yes, in as much as we are currently the only Allied nation without a monument in the capital. So that's a deficiency on our part – internationally. You know, when we talk about internationally we talk about international: the aim of the nation-state to gain legitimacy in the international society. This is a deficiency in the ability to be a legitimate holder of the values that we do hold dear. (D. Friedman, personal communication, December 6, 2012)

According to Friedman, rabbi at Beth Israel Synagogue in Edmonton and a doctoral candidate in International Relations, it is important for Canada to become a 'legitimate holder' of democratic values and that this can be at least partly achieved by demonstrating a commitment to Holocaust memory.

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The creation of a national monument will not only ally Canada with those countries that already have one, but will also create allies with any country that possesses democracy as a core value. Thus, by erecting the NHM, Canada will be validated as a 'legitimate' member of the global community (insofar as that community includes 'democratic' states) and can begin to build allies within it. Once an accepted member of this global network, it can begin to benefit from its new partnerships.

As a member of global society, Canada is able to engage not just in the trade of economic goods, but also ideological resources such as Canadian values and Holocaust memory. No one is more explicit about this than Brian Jean, who states directly during the debate of bill C-442 that "Democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law are the things we stand up for in Canada and the things we try

to spread around the world” (House of Commons, 2009, p. 7820). In conversation, Jean clarified how Holocaust memory fits into this process:

People look at Canada not only as the greatest economic power of this century, but also as people that will stand forward for those that are more vulnerable and less able to take care of themselves – whether it be sub-Sahara Africa – with some of our donations, etc. through CIDA [Canadian International Development Agency] or personally. But also from the standpoint of we are a small nation in people but we are large in resource and also determination. And I think this particular monument goes to state exactly that... When world powers stand up to dictators, I think it becomes a better world. When world powers succumb to dictators and choose fascist regimes over democracy – democracies such as Israel – something’s definitely wrong. (B. Jean, personal communication, November 21, 2012)

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“We are a small nation in people but we are large in resource and also determination. And I think this particular monument goes to state exactly that.” – Brian Jean

When asked to clarify if he meant that Canadians ‘stand up’ against dictators by offering military assistance he responded that, more importantly, the country provides economic protection:

I believe that not just militarily but also we have a tremendous economy. We are the richest country in the world by far, and we will be for the next fifty years

according to the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development]. I think that we should use that might to encourage peace and to leverage other countries to understand that that's what we will accept and not accept the opposite, which is what's going on in, for instance, China and other non-democracies. So, I think that, for instance, CNOOC [Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation], they want to invest 15.2 billion dollars in the oil sands – which is my riding. Well, that's nice and all, but I'm not really that attracted to a Chinese-state owned oil company owning a resource in northern Alberta, to be blunt. Am I happy with Israel owning it? Absolutely. Am I happy with the United States owning it? Yes. Am I happy with other investors that believe in democracy and capitalism? Absolutely. Anybody from any country as long as it's a democracy and believes in the rule of law. And I think that's how we can encourage people to move towards that position. (B. Jean, personal communication, November 21, 2012)

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In the same stream of thought, Jean refers both to material exports (oil) and ideological exports (Canadian values and Holocaust memory). That Canada has lots of resources (oil, in particular) makes it a great economic power and, according to Jean, the monument 'goes to state exactly that.' Therefore, the NHM embodies both Canada's values and its economic status. Because of the intimate relationship between these, the country must take its values into consideration when engaging in foreign trade. In particular, Canada must not trade with non-democratic nations because to do so would be to compromise its core ideological beliefs. For Jean, the threat of economic sanction from Canada becomes incentive for non-democratic states to adopt democratic values, and he hopes that these values will spread as a result. Holocaust memory can be a useful tool in this process because, by indicating which countries possess democratic beliefs, Canada can decide which nations are viable trading partners.

Foreign trade is one of several global dialogues that Canada enters via the NHM. The NHM also joins some of the more expected dialogues, such as those relating to defense (House of Commons, 2009, p. 7815), support for the State of Israel (House of Commons, 2009, p. 7819; Parliament, 2011, p. 26), and, of course, those on genocide, human rights, and crimes against humanity (House of Commons, 2010a, p. 5454; Debates of the Senate, 2011b, p. 1858). Through its association with Canada's resources and foreign trade, Holocaust memory becomes a foreign export in its own right.

The country has a definite interest in exporting its values to other states. To spread Holocaust memory is to spread democracy, thereby increasing the number of Canadian allies and increasing the amount of trading partners the country has. Admittedly, Holocaust memory is never explicitly referred to as a foreign export, although this is an implicit part of the discourse surrounding the NHM. For policy makers such as Jean, standing up for Canadian values is not a purely ideological practice but an economic one too, and in order to promote them it is necessary to take certain measures in the trade of material goods; because Holocaust memory can be used to facilitate this process, it is inseparable from international economic practice. Overall, the most important thing to recognise is that Canadian policy-makers are using Holocaust memory as an entry point to several global dialogues – commemorative, ideological, economic, etc. – and consequently have become active participants in certain global dialogues.

This global discourse suggests another way in which Holocaust memory is instrumentalised. In the previous section, I demonstrated how the NHM acts as a form of worldview maintenance by embodying Canadian values and then reflecting them back towards the country's own citizens. From the global discourse, it becomes clear that the NHM is also being used to maintain a public persona. A persona is the image one projects into their social environment, which

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does not necessarily reflect their psychological disposition; in this case, Canada's persona is the one it projects to the international community, which may differ from its domestic identity. While Canada's domestic and international identities do largely correspond when it comes to the NHM, more important is that policy makers are actively involved in manufacturing and promoting a particular identity to global society. Canada's international identity is not haphazard, but the product of calculated effort by public individuals who seek to proclaim who Canadians are and how they align themselves politically. As with the ethical discourse, the NHM embodies values and ideology, but in the global discourse it projects them outward into global society. In effect, the creation of the NHM is an attempt to regulate the national identity in a way that facilitates a particular type of interaction with global society.

“Holocaust memory becomes a  
foreign export in its own right”

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## Conclusion

Its ability to represent both everything and nothing – it has great symbolic power although its symbolic meaning is fluid – has allowed the Holocaust to be instrumentalised in the promotion of ideological agendas, a phenomenon that can be witnessed in the discourse surrounding Canada's National Holocaust Monument. This discourse has utilised the Holocaust's floating symbolic value to construct Holocaust memory as something that, to some degree, represents Canadian society. At least for the individuals responsible for it, the NHM has become (or will become, once erected) a physical embodiment of Canadian values that can be used to communicate those values to several different communities.

Since its conceptualisation, the NHM has become a part of Canada's manufactured image that is projected simultaneously in multiple directions: inwardly to Canadian society, and outwardly to global society. Domestically, the memorial consolidates those values prized by Canadians in order to remind the country's citizens that these values are central to the national identity, thereby reinforcing Canadians' self-perception. Internationally, the monument takes a similar set of values and presents them to global society to illustrate who Canadians are and what they stand for, thereby managing the country's public image. In a way, Canada's Holocaust memorial defines what it means to be Canadian – both as a sovereign state and as part of a larger global network.

“Canada’s Holocaust memorial defines what it means to be Canadian – both as a sovereign state and as part of a larger global network”

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Given its vivid life in public discourse even before the physical structure is complete, the NHM supports those views that consider public monuments to be dynamic social organisms that grow and transform as they interact with the communities around them. While its ostensible function is to present a memory of past events, on a deeper level the NHM embodies the interests and values of those surrounding it. Particularly significant about this monument is that it does not just reflect the concerns of its national context, but also of global society. Consistent with recent trends in the study of collective memory, the current analysis demonstrates that one cannot examine national memories without also addressing how those memories are transformed in the age of globalisation. Though a monument itself may appear to be a static stone figure that changes

little as time flows, the memory contained within it is as alive as the communities who surround it.

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# Participative Web, social utility and ICT adoption: An issue of alignment

Davide Dusi\*

## Introduction

This contribution is part of the debate on participative web. It attempts, without assuming any prior markedly pessimistic or optimistic positions, to investigate how to foster the adoption of collaborative web-based tools and how to promote sustainable projects. The term sustainable projects refers to those kind of initiatives in which the supervision of both the project and the single activities is gradually put in the hands of the users to foster their independence, so as to enable them to run the project autonomously.

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The research described in this paper refers to a collaborative storytelling project called S.C.A.R.ABEO (*infra*). The main aim of S.C.A.R.ABEO was to stimulate the use and the adoption of a participative web platform (Timu) (*infra*) in order to promote and help a voluntary association.

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\* Davide Dusi is a PhD student at the Center for Social Theory of Ghent University. He obtained his BA in Education Sciences at University of Verona in 2008, and his MA in Sociology at University of Trento in

2012. Presently, his research concerns productive paradigms in digital environments and related phenomena such as prosumer movement and user participation through social media.

One of the main goals of this research was to understand how to foster the adoption of participative web-platforms. Another goal was not only to comprehend whether this platform (Timu) could lead to the generation of a community around specific topics, but also to find out how to guarantee the sustainability of the project itself.

Therefore, in the first part of this paper I investigate the current approaches to the changes in the user-technology relation and to the emerging related phenomena. Furthermore, I describe an action-research on low-digital-literate members of a voluntary association engaged in the usage of a web platform to support a Paediatric Oncology Department. Particularly, I focus on the adopted methodology and the situated strategies applied to cope better with the contingent evolution of the analysed project.

In the second part of the paper I present and discuss the results of this research, trying to detect the criticism of the current approach to participative web and of the analysed project itself. Moreover, I try to individuate general strategies to promote the adoption of collaborative web-tools as well as to guarantee the sustainability of participative online projects. Finally, I give an account of the importance of alignment between users' skills, technological features of the adopted tools and the context in which projects like this are promoted.

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## User-technology relationship and new socio-technical arrangements

The ever-increasing diffusion and pervasiveness of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has brought about rapid and progressive changes with respect to the user-technology relationship, particularly with regard to the users' role and agency (Van Dijck, 2009). This relationship has been discussed extensively in the theoretical literature and has absorbed the attention of several

scholars in many different disciplines, from *innovation studies* to *cultural and media studies* (Oudshoorn & Pinch, 2008). Furthermore, the advancements of the ICT have facilitated the repositioning of the audience placing the emphasis not on the addressees of content, the mass or the individual, but on the processes through which the information itself is generated (Carpentier, Schröder, & Hallett, 2013).

“Always more frequently, users draw on web-based tools with the aim of helping each other”

In reality, technological improvements as well as the diffusion of the Internet on a global scale allow a growing number of individuals, users, to decide autonomously what and which kind of information to generate and to circulate (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Through diversified forms of Internet usage, the amount of user-generated content along with the development of online practices to share them have been considerably enlarged. Always more frequently, users draw on web-based tools with the aim of helping each other, finding solutions to their problems or reaching common goals (Raine & Wellman, 2012).

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The exploitation of the growth of the computers' computational power, the increasing possibilities to work online, and the greater access to tools which allow the organization of activities and participation, have led to new forms of online collaboration and to the generation of new concepts such as *commons-based peer production* (Benkler & Nissenbaum, 2006), *produsage* (Bruns, 2008), and *wikinomics* (Tapscott & Williams, 2006). These theorizations are only a few examples of several attempts to capture these new practices and new socio-technical arrangements.

The above ideas foster the users' usage of ICT in order to collaborate with each other, to satisfy their needs and to achieve common goals through the so-called *participative web*. This concept (*participative web*), as well as the theorization of the notion of *social software* (boyd, 2007) and the renowned term *social media* (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), represents a strong relational part of ICT that must be considered in addition to the technological one. Furthermore, as already stated, the continuous progress of ICT and its pervasiveness have fundamentally altered the capacity of individuals and social groups, making them active participants in the public sphere as opposed to being passive readers, listeners, or viewers (Benkler, 2006).

“Surely, utopian and dystopian attitudes towards ICT advance hand in hand with technological progress”

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Consequently, the current discourse on ICT and related emerging practices harbor a promise for social progress through technological development and power reconfiguration through participation (Lévy, 2002, 2005; Noveck, 2009; Schäfer, 2011). Optimistic visions on the usage of social media and web-based tools outline ICT not only as means of communication belonging to various socio-technical systems but also as a true and proper social ecology. They refer to successful social utility projects to demonstrate not only the potentialities of the emerging socio-technical arrangements (Lévy, 2002, 2005) and new productive paradigms, but also their positive influence on the current redefinition of social and economic systems (Tapscott & Williams, 2006; Noveck, 2009).

Notwithstanding the increasing importance of users' participation through ICT, some criticism has been raised. Examples include the attacks on user-generated content and user-driven practices, in particular those criticizing the absence of control of such content and initiatives as well as their reliability (Carr, 2007) and quality (Keen, 2007). Overall, a dystopic approach manifests itself as the dark side of the promise for social progress and of the potential social utility of information and communication technologies (Lanier, 2010; Carr, 2011; Schäfer, 2011). Surely, utopian and dystopian attitudes towards ICT advance hand in hand with technological progress, and the importance of certain web-based tools proves to be more and more evident in terms of social and economic reorganization. This is one of the reasons why some authors encourage guarding against the enthusiastic promises of the participative web, whereas some others urge to put ourselves in the hands of new ICT tools apparently able to conduct us towards the best among the possible futures.

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Nevertheless, whether we embrace optimistic or pessimistic positions, it would be naive to believe that the availability of digital networked technologies itself is capable of turning everyone into active participants (Van Dijck, 2009). Moreover, regarding participative online practices *a priori* as synonymous with low quality or short-term activities could be misleading in the attempt to deeply understand the emerging phenomena. However, at the same time, considering the usage of web-based tools for social purposes as simple, immediate or always spontaneous could affect our overall perception with regard to the adoption of ICT for socially relevant aims.

Therefore, the emergence of social media and of the participative web invites us to consider which practices of usage of digital media are able to generate not only other technological artefacts, but also new forms of participation. More specifically, one of the main goals of this research was to understand how to foster the adoption of a web-based

platform for online collaboration. Another important aim was not only to understand if this platform (Timu) could lead to the generation of a community around specific topics, but also to find out how to guarantee the sustainability of the project for which the web-platform itself was employed.

## Methodology

To find an answer to the above questions, an action-research on a digital storytelling project was conducted at ABEO (a non-profit organization). It is the only association that provides support to the Paediatric Oncology Department of the G.B. Rossi General Hospital in Verona, Italy. Its main aim is to sustain all initiatives for the benefit of child patients and their families forced to face the difficult situations and paths related to cancer, in terms of prevention, optimal treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration back into normal life.

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When this research began, in February 2012, the ABEO association was facing a lack of communicational strategies to promote its initiatives. In particular, the association's initiatives were promoted only through word of mouth, phone calls and an annual journal. Moreover, the majority of the members did not know each other and the journal itself was conducted by only one volunteer who had the task to put together members' contributions and testimonies. Again, at the beginning of this project the annual journal was nearing dismissal, due to the unavailability of the volunteer in charge of its publication. In addition, the association seemed unable to attract external members since its supporters were solely relatives and friends of patients or ex-patients of the Paediatric Oncology Department.

Research was initiated due to the request of some members of ABEO's management for my help in the transition towards new communicational strategies. All along this research I facilitated the collaboration between ABEO and

the [Foundation](#), a civic media centre that develops open projects and web-based tools with the aim of increasing online collaboration. My task was to analyse the adoption of Timu, a web platform developed by the [Foundation](#), by ABEO's members.

The name of the project that arose from this collaboration was S.C.A.R.ABEO, acronym for Support, Collaborate, Assist, Recount ABEO. Its main aim was to stimulate the use and the adoption of a participative web platform (Timu) that facilitates the collaborative production of information. The initial goal was to encourage ABEO's members, supporters and volunteers to share their experiences and testimonies with each other through the platform. The information posted on the platform was then easily shared with other people, for instance friends and acquaintances, by inviting them to join the platform itself and to share the information through other web-platforms or social media (e.g. Facebook).

The project aimed both to expand ABEO's visibility with regard to its launched initiatives and undertakings as well as to maintain a constant dialogue with its partners and supporters who made such initiatives possible, with the hope of making the association known to interested potential volunteers who would support it herein afterwards. As stated, this goal was forced due to the fact that the association's journal was dismissed for a period and it did not have enough reach to sufficiently spread and advertise all the undertaken initiatives. Moreover, one of the purposes of the S.C.A.R.ABEO project was to reach potential volunteers who were unable to communicate with the association due to their lack of direct contact details. S.C.A.R.ABEO also had the ambitious view of increasing its number of collaborators, in particular young people (18-30 years old), which the association lacked at the outset of the project. In fact, before this initiative, only 15 out of 100 volunteers were younger than 30 years old.

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To conduct the fieldwork, the method of an action-research was adopted because of its flexibility and dynamic combination of studying and analysing phases (Reason & Bradbury, 2006). This methodology is an articulated process that requires the analysis and evaluation of every undertaken action to reach a more effective planning of the consecutive one (Reason & Bradbury, 2006). It is a spiral of phases, each characterized by a cycle of planning, action, and recognition that investigates the results of the action itself (Lewin, 1946). Given its characteristics, this

“The adoption and use of this approach enabled, through practice, an assessment of the effectiveness and potential use of social media, and the development of some intervention strategies”

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methodology seems particularly suitable to investigate digital media and related phenomena (Hearn, Tacchi, Foth, & Lennie, 2009). Indeed, the adoption and use of this approach enabled, through practice, an assessment of the effectiveness and potential use of social media, and the development of some intervention strategies that further and favour paths of ICT adoption and online participation. Data was mainly collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation along with documental analysis of ABEO’s former journal articles and the conduction and analysis of video interviews.

Due to the choice of the action-research method, the researcher could work together with the organizational actors throughout the running of the project and with all those associated with ABEO (i.e. its stakeholders, members

and volunteers) who produced audio content, videos and paperwork to be published on the platform. As already stated, the action-research methodology was chosen for its efficacy in order to ease the analysis and evaluation of each adopted strategy, decision and path taken, and to decide consciously on the subsequent ones (Reason, 2006; Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). In reality, there were meetings on a regular basis in which representatives of the association, along with the researcher, evaluated the launched actions. After evaluating their results the next steps were planned according to the status of the situation obtained, the problems to face and the goals to reach. In so doing, the action-research at ABEO characterized itself as a flexible and reasoned spiral process. In fact, this methodology is a process that allows action, in this case the transition towards new communicational strategies, and research to be achieved at the same time (Dick, 2002).

One of the main tasks I was assigned by ABEO's management was to detect the drivers of users' participation in the S.C.A.R.ABEO project, their level of appreciation of the Timu platform as well as their degree of engagement. The aim of the management was to elaborate strategies to foster the adoption of the platform by the members of ABEO. For this purpose I carried out discursive interviews with participants in order to understand the reasons for their activity and further engagement in the usage of the platform as well as their inactivity, or their abandon of it. Consequently, these interviews regarded different categories of participants: those whom were most active, those whom limited themselves to reading or spreading content without generating anything, and those whom decided to delete their account or not to participate at all after the generation of some content. Importantly, this took into account that in every project users place themselves in different roles according to the level of involvement or to their familiarity with the web-tool; these levels vary from creators to spectators and inactive (Van Dijck, 2009). Furthermore, the goal of the abovementioned interviews was

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also to individuate the strengths and weaknesses of Timu and to report my findings both to ABEO's management and to the Foundation's developers. In so doing ABEO's management could think about strategies to foster the usage of Timu while the Foundation's developers could implement the platform according to the users' feedback. Therefore, the project was concentrating on the goal of making Timu user-friendly on one hand, and of making users Timu-friendly on the other hand.

Consequently, another main task of my research stay at ABEO was to facilitate and to analyse paths of informal mentorship to foster a better understanding of the potentialities of the platform and to develop users' skills with regard to its usage. This is because the association decided to encourage its most digital-literate members to share their knowledge about web-tools, and particularly about the functioning of Timu, with other members and neophytes of the platform. With regard to this task, I mainly made use of participant observation to investigate the situated strategies adopted to promote informal mentorship among ABEO's members and users of Timu.

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The action-research methodology led me to the analysis of every adopted strategy, to the evaluation of its results and to the participation in the planning of the next steps to take. Besides, it seemed to be particularly appropriate for continual change and unpredictable scenarios just as the S.C.A.R.ABEO project was.

## A collaborative digital storytelling project

The S.C.A.R.ABEO project started in February 2012 and has been online since the 24th of May 2012. Throughout the project at least a couple of content items (e.g. audio, video) were uploaded every week. Generally, video, photos and documents were uploaded by participants. Nevertheless, during the first week following the outset of the

project unforeseen behaviour of ABEO's members affected the launching of the project online, namely their unwillingness to register on the platform, including those who were willing to generate content. Indeed, thanks to the first interviews, I detected a prevailing skepticism towards web-based tools within the association. Therefore, one of the strategies adopted by the management of ABEO to counter this scepticism was to promote a positive image of

**“In every project users place themselves in different roles according to the level of involvement or to their familiarity with the web-tool”**

Timu and its potentialities among the members and volunteers. For this reason a persuasive narration of this web-tool was produced in order to make the platform seem as though it was the optimal choice to achieve ABEO's goals and to find a solution to the shortcomings of the historical annual journal. A persuasive narration of the proposed web-tools as the best available choice and its alignment with our interlocutors' goals represent the first strategy to foster the adoption of new technologies (Suchman, 2000). In the case of the S.C.A.R.ABEO project the adoption of a positive narration of Timu worked well and an increasing number of ABEO's members accepted to be involved in its usage to support the association.

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By the end of the project (March 2013), the majority of the associations' members showed a positive attitude towards the usage of Timu and its benefits. Moreover, the association registered an increased number of volunteers, of which 35 were younger than 30. This means that the usage of Timu proved to be a good choice even regarding the attempt to attract young people. Nevertheless, it is unrealistic to claim

that all the merit of the increased number of members was due to this web-platform because all content posted on Timu was also shared on other social networks such as Facebook.

Furthermore, the S.C.A.R.ABEO project was characterized by the adoption of paths of informal mentorship through which the most experienced and literate users shared their knowledge about web-based tools with the low-digital-literate ones as well as with the new members of the association and the neophytes of the platform. Consequently, the most experienced users were encouraged to teach some available and willing participants not only how to generate content but also how to use Timu properly in order to upload and to share documents, video, interviewing etc. This proved to be an effective strategy not only to foster the adoption of Timu but also for its ability to benefit the entire project; a strategy by which new kinds of relationships between the members of ABEO arose.

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“The adoption of paths of informal mentorship through which the most experienced and literate users shared their knowledge about web-based tools with the low-digital-literate ones”

One of the best examples of these paths of informal mentorship was related to the generation and uploading of articulated and complex content such as the video-interviews. Indeed, during the beginning of the project some members of the management along with the researcher and the [Foundation's](#) consultants detected a lack of expertise in generating video content among the participants of the project. Actually, at that time only two people

taking part in the S.C.A.R.ABEO project were able to edit and upload a video-interview, these being two participants involved as a result of their primary occupations in the media industry as editors of movies and commercials. In fact, the first video interviews were realized mainly with the help of these two participants and myself. However, I was only able to assist these participants in the generation of video-content after being taught how to make and edit a video properly. This is evidence that occasionally even the researcher must be enhanced when part of a larger apparatus.

Additionally, to correct the members' lack of expertise, it was decided that the 3 most active participants of the project on the Timu platform should be encouraged to take part in the video-interview generation process; at first as observers and later as assistants. As a researcher, and mostly as facilitator of ABEO's transition process towards new communicational strategies, I was responsible for supervising and conducting this phase of mentorship as well as teaching those less capable both how to write a track for an interview and how to conduct the interview itself in addition to editing a video with the help and suggestions of the two video editors. Over time, an increasing number of tasks were delegated to these participants, until they were given complete control of these activities. Finally, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, approximately three months after this process had begun, the first video-interview solely conducted, edited and uploaded by one of the trained users was carried out. As a researcher, I took part in this video-interview and the consequent editing. However, this was only in the capacity of an observer and no longer as a facilitator or an assistant. This interview represented a turning point in ABEO supporters' approach to media. This turning point peaked when the management decided not only to continue the S.C.A.R.ABEO project but also to secure the support of the national TV (Rai2 channel), making the association's activities and undertaken projects protagonists of the program "Storie. I racconti della settimana" broadcasted on the evening of Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> of November

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2012. Evidently, this choice indicated a very powerful and effective initiative both to promote ABEO's activities and to attract new supporters.

Certainly, the above described peer-to-peer practices had a positive influence on the increase of the amount of generated content. For instance, during the first six months of online operation (24 May 2012 - 22 November 2012), the S.C.A.R.ABEO project produced 50 content items. These included a corporate video, a music video, numerous articles and testimonies and 11 video interviews of the association's various departmental representatives. These video interviews involved the chair of the association, the vice-president of ABEO, 3 other members of the management, a psychologist, a pedagogue, a doctor of the oncology department, 2 volunteers and the parents of a child patient. Overall, the described project did not have a precise target group even though in the beginning the management proposed to focus on the involvement of young people as a consequence not only of the lack of volunteers younger than 30 but also of the fact that older ABEO-volunteers were either unfamiliar with social media or not equipped either with a personal computer or with an internet connection. Notwithstanding the management's assumption that younger generations were probably more familiar with ICT and in particular with social media, I observed the necessity to work on the design of the platform in order to make it similar to other web-based tools they were familiar with (e.g. Facebook). This resulted in the attempt of the Foundation's developers to align the platform's features with the participants' technological skills and expectations. Moreover, many of the young participants had to be taught how to use the platform, how it worked, but primarily what it was. On the contrary, in certain cases the high competences of a small number of young or high-digital-literate users did not guarantee their participation or their interest in the usage of the platform.

The S.C.A.R.ABEO project was carried on until March 2013, when the users completely abandoned the Timu platform. This abandonment was due to the fact that in the first months of 2013 the association created a new website with the help of new high-digital-literate members and supporters. The new web-based tool clearly adverts to the Timu platform, both with regard to the structure of the website itself and the kind of content generated, uploaded and shared. Interestingly, what initially seemed to be the abandon of a proposed and promoted tool was in reality an expression of acquainted complete independence by the members of ABEO.

## Suggestions from the S.C.A.R.ABEO project

During this research I set myself not only to the task of facilitating the association's transition towards new communicational strategies but also to investigate strategies through which to foster the adoption of collaborative web-based tools and to promote sustainable projects. Moreover, another important aim of this research was to understand if this platform (Timu) could lead to the generation of a community around specific topics, in this case the issues related to a paediatric oncology department and its support.

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The results of the S.C.A.R.ABEO project suggest that the availability of the Timu platform by itself was not enough to generate a community around a specific topic. On the contrary, it needed to be integrated with specially situated strategies to foster its adoption by those who might need it to promote their activities or to reach their goals. What was described in this research leads to the realization that sometimes the translation of the theory in practice through actual and concrete projects is not easily achievable. Indeed, the translation of the theory in practice represented one of the main problems in the attempt to foster the adoption of Timu.

In reality, in the literature related to the participative web and to the reconfiguration of users' role there is a tendency to stress the potentialities of web-based tools by showing virtuous examples and successful projects (Tapscott & Williams, 2006; Raine & Wellman, 2012). Moreover, these projects are often proposed as best practices that should be followed (Noveck, 2009; Cottica, 2010). Nevertheless, if we investigate further the proposed best practices or virtuous examples we discover that those good results or impressive endeavours were achieved mainly by already digital-literate users. This contrasts with the context in which the S.C.A.R.ABEO project was developed, mainly characterized by the participation of beginners or neophytes of web-platforms rather than experts. Moreover, always in opposition with the virtuous examples proposed by several authors, not only were the participants of S.C.A.R.ABEO

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not able, in the early phases of the project, to use properly the tools at their disposal, but also they did not know what the potentialities of those tools were. Thus, they were unaware of what they could do with them or, more simply, of the reasons why those tools could be relevant for them and their association. Consequently, what emerges from this research is that in order to foster the adoption of collaborative web-based tools we need to stimulate first and foremost the interest of our interlocutors in certain tools and their awareness of pros and cons of ICT. Secondly, we need to foster the participants' acquisition of the essential skills to use the proposed tools in order to reach their goals.

The adoption of ICT to promote socially relevant initiatives does not seem as easy and spontaneous as proposed by the enthusiasts of the participative web. Instead, there seems to exist, at least in certain cases, a gap in the connection between the availability of ICT and their actual adoption and usage. For this reason, in the S.C.A.R.ABEO project the first step to foster the actual adoption of Timu was focusing on the narration of technologies rather than being solely suppliers of web-based tools. This suggests that it is preferable to make our interlocutors aware of the different possibilities at their disposal rather than merely providing them with tools of which they might not feel the need. It results in the necessity to align the narration of the proposed tools with the desiderata and expectations of our interlocutors (Suchman, 2000). This proved to be a key element in the analysed project. In fact, when this strategy did not work, even some digital-literate users or members of ABEO refused to participate and regarded the platform not suitable for their goals or not relevant for their needs.

As already stated, another key factor of the S.C.A.R.ABEO project was the development of users' skills. What the literature suggests is that, with regards to the adoption of ICT, people's level of access to information and communication technologies in terms of skills, interpretation and usage, is decisive (Potter, 2012; Rice & Haythornthwaite, 2006; Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010). Particularly, what makes the difference are the strategies through which the development of users' skills is fostered according to the context in which they are applied and to the tools we want to promote (Jenkins, 2009). In the case of S.C.A.R.ABEO the management opted for paths of informal mentorship to enhance users' digital skills. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that some strategies thought and designed to stimulate participation (e.g. informal mentorship paths) consist in complex, demanding, challenging and articulated processes, not only for the management and the researcher, but also for all the involved actors. Consequently, what is theoretically proposed as media education (Jenkins,

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2009) with the aim of promoting digital media literacy (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009) sometimes appears as a more complex and less linear process than the one described in the literature. This seems true especially with regard to projects that require a non-economical time (Adam, 2013), namely where the participants are volunteers who exploit their free time to participate (Shirky, 2010). In the case of ABEO the paths of informal mentorship were influenced by the participants' will to dedicate themselves to such a demanding task. As a consequence, the time they spent and invested in the project was strongly affected by their availability; an element of further complexity to guarantee the sustainability of the project itself.

“The best way for the continuity of the project would be to work on obtaining progressive user independence”

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What emerges from this project is that having both a good idea and a well-designed technological tool is not sufficient to reach our goals. Instead, the condition by which all the involved actors, humans and non-humans, collaborate with each other to reach a common aim is decisive. This is possible only by making organizational and socio-technical elements dialogue with each other (Strati, 2000) through a continuous and dynamic process of alignment (Suchman, 2000). The end-user is always decisive in the success or the failure of the project itself. Engaging the users with the goal of fostering and promoting the development and the evolution of the entire socio-technical apparatus means, primarily, helping them to enhance their skills and, in so doing, even their independence and agency. During the running of S.C.A.R.ABEO it became clear that the best way for the continuity of the project would be

to work on obtaining a progressive user independence, not only in the production of content, but also in the management of the project itself which would then gradually give the users full control. This implies a process of subjectification of the user base that builds on the understanding of their communication skills and their abilities of becoming media users.

## Conclusion

The idea proposed by this project was to align users' needs and their ICT skills to the technological artefact and its features by acting simultaneously on both aspects. Thus, while the technological infrastructure was being developed according to user requirements, the latter in turn was being enhanced through increased competences and knowledge, creating a truly enabling construct. Through the usage of Timu, ABEO was able to tell its story and that of its volunteers, members and benefactors who, notwithstanding their diversity share one common ethic, that of commitment and solidarity towards their initiatives. Timu represented a powerful instrument both for the constant updating of information and for the participation and involvement of those who wanted to get closer to the ABEO world.

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The criticism emerged from the promotion of the platform and its usage suggests the necessity to actualize an alignment between a persuasive narration of ICT capable to encourage their adoption, and paths designed to foster the development of users' skills. It is clear that the above process consisted of different steps that influenced each other mutually and that made S.C.A.R.ABEO a project of users' empowerment. As emerged from the duration of the project (February 2012 – March 2013) and the time spent from the beginning to reach the first moment of users' complete independence, represented by the video-interview mentioned above (5<sup>th</sup> of September 2012), it is easy to understand that this kind of initiatives require time, patience and flexibility in their conduction.

In addition, analysing different contributions a theme that associates even vastly different theoretical approaches and also characterized the S.C.A.R.ABEO project emerges, namely the commitment for users' skills. In fact, users' skills are almost always called into question, even if sometimes in an implicit way. Particularly, the users are urged to develop and become literate in digital skills to be aware (Potter, 2012) and able to act in a more effective way (Jenkins, 2009). In other words, and as showed by this research, the development of users' skills seems to be the *conditio sine qua non* to face the current shifts in ICT usage and to promote sustainable projects.

Consequently, the result of this project was the awareness that the advancement of any information and communication technology implemented or proposed to potential users, if it is to function at its best, must necessarily be matched to the advancement of technologies that it supports or complements (Kranzberg, 1986) as well as users' skills; therefore not only from a technological point of view but also from a relational and social one. In fact, the opportunities provided by mediated participatory practices are not sufficient in themselves to easily involve the users (Carpentier, 2009) or to guarantee the participation in or the sustainability of projects like the one described in this paper.

In the end, it is about the alignment of different elements that often assume conflicting roles and positions (Suchman, 2000). In this way not only the technology but also the entire project is characterized as an enabling construct capable of assisting the end-user not only to adopt the proposed tools but also to be autonomous during the phases of use of ICT. Media education, the name given to the attempt at helping the user to develop the necessary skills (Jenkins, 2009), seems to be the crucial factor not only to enhance the effectiveness of the technological object (Blank & Reisdorf, 2012) or in terms of the efficacy of individual activities and initiatives, but also with regards to their stability and sustainability. As a consequence, the

always more powerful web-based tools (e.g. collaborative platforms) must be integrated with users' online and of-line activities and skills. All this, taking into account the strong coexistence of creative, technological and relational elements that characterizes the usage of ICT (Jenkins, 2006; Carpentier et al., 2013).

“The development of users' skills seems to be the *conditio sine qua non* to face the current shifts in ICT usage and to promote sustainable projects”

Finally, the analysis of this project shows that the adoption of ICT and its usage in an effective and useful way is not simple and always spontaneous. It depends on different variables, namely the context in which the adoption takes place, the users' skills and the features of the proposed ICT themselves. The relation between the promises of the participative web and the adoption of ICT to pursue socially relevant aims is certainly a complex topic and cannot be reduced only to the value we assign to it nor to personal dispositions. Therefore, a holistic approach, capable to conduct to a large-scale effort comprehension is warmly suggested to those interested in this topic. Evidently, the researcher must always consider the consequences of dealing with non-neutral tools as well as the different approaches towards users' skills and dispositions.

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# Unpacking the experiences and perspectives of Mexican immigrant women and their Dutch partners: An exploratory study

Marlene Andrade Benítez\*

## Introduction

What do we know about women's migration and foremost, what do we need to know about the sentimental relationships between Dutch men and Mexican women?

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Despite the evident presence of women in migration, it is until very recently that the gender perspective and female migration has become a focus in migration studies. For example, little attention has been paid to the migration of Mexican women to any countries other than the United States, including the study of the purposes of such migration and whether these are triggered by mere economic reasons. This study recognizes that considering non-economic factors are especially important for analysing the migration of women (Kofman, 2000).

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\* Marlene Andrade Benítez is originally from Mexico, where she earned a BA in Law and Social Sciences. She holds a MA in Human Rights and Governance by the Autonomous University of Madrid and was trained in Gender, Peace and Security at the

European Security and Defence College. Last year she earned a MSc: Sociology, Migration and Ethnic Studies at the UvA. Marlene is the coordinator of the Gender and Migration Unit of the Mexican Talent Network in the Netherlands.

According to Montero-Sieburth and Cabrera Perez (2013), nearly 70% of Mexican immigrants in the Netherlands are women. Migration patterns and trajectories of the female Mexican-origin immigrant population in the Netherlands vastly differ from those of the Mexican diaspora in the United States. The data shows that one of characteristics of these migratory patterns is that the Mexican immigrant population in the Netherlands is composed mostly of highly-educated women who migrated due to romantic relationships and family formation purposes<sup>i</sup> (Montero-Sieburth & Cabrera Pérez, 2013).

“Little attention has been paid to the migration of Mexican women and whether this is triggered by mere economic reasons”

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Why is this case worth studying?

In the case of the romantic relationships between Dutch males and Mexican females, it is worth to raise the question of how gender influences the decision to migrate due to being engaged in a romantic relationship, and to consider the challenges of this type of relationship. Furthermore, it is important to take into account the social, economic and professional sacrifices that Mexican women who migrate to the Netherlands may face.

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<sup>i</sup> Such characteristics of Mexican immigrant women could fit in the description of “love migrants”, i.e., people who migrate for romantic purposes. The number of this type of migrants significantly multiplied in the 1990s as a result of new information

and communication technologies, making the existence of this type of migration - based on motivation that differs from the traditional economic one – more evident (Girona et al., 2012).

Although based on a small sample, this exploratory study is designed to serve as a starting point for examining how Mexican women and Dutch men engage in this type of romantic relationships, according to participants' reported experiences. Additionally, this exploratory study aims to start documenting the aspirations of Mexican immigrant women residing in the Netherlands, attempting to portray what they leave behind, what they might sacrifice, and what they are potentially expecting in the early stage of their migration process. These questions form the basis for deeper research on the topic, and may enable us to (hypothetically) unpack the migrants' suitcase and deeply study what is inside.

## Theoretical Framework

The present study is considered a gendered-approach study, because it explores the gender agency of both Dutch men and Mexican women constituting these couples. According to the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>ii</sup>, gender can be understood as the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. Pessar and Mahler (2003) highlight the fact that gender is one of the oldest forces shaping human life, and in migration research, this fact has been side-lined.

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At the moment of operationalizing gender, Pessar and Mahler (2003) recognize that it is much more complex than the biological differences between sexes, and involves the ways in which (which vary depending on culture) males and females perform different activities in a determinate space and time. Noticeably, "[...] major areas of life, including sexuality, family, education, economy, and the state, are organized according to gender principles" (Glenn, 1999, cited in Pessar & Mahler, 2003, p. 813).

<sup>ii</sup> World Health Organization. Gender, Women and Health. <http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/>

Accessed in May 2014.

Similarly, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) argues that “gender organizes and shapes our opportunities and life chances” (p.2). Furthermore, according to Castro (2009), gender can be understood as a construction, a process in which men and women negotiate and reaffirm their own identity, while institutions and society itself are important actors in this process.

Given that the study of gender concerns men and women, it should be highlighted that in 2006, women constituted almost half of all international migrants worldwide: 95 million or 49.6 percent (Alcalá & Leidl, 2006). Of the 15-16 million third country nationals living in Europe in 2000, women constituted around forty-five percent (Kofman, 2000). Strikingly, however, the conceptualization of the

## “Women constitute almost half of all international migrants worldwide”

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migrant as a person pursuing economic gains has resulted into a loss of focus on women who voluntarily choose to become international migrants (Zlotnik, 1995). In fact, the overused scheme of an international migrant portrayed as a young, economically-motivated male, has become so dominant that it has overshadowed migration streams that are shaped by females (Houstoun et al., 1984). The number of female migrants in Europe has been increasing significantly in the last two decades (Zlotnik, 1995, cited in Kofman, 2000). In this context, Castles and Miller (1993), consider the feminization of international migration as one of the major tendencies of the past twenty years, family reunification being the major path of entry for women into Europe (Kofman, 2000). Nonetheless, immigration patterns that are female-dominated in the European context, such as family reunification and family formation

have received relatively little attention, an observation already acknowledged in the 90s by scholars such as Cohen (1995) and Zlotnik (1995).

“During the past twenty years,  
family reunification has been the  
major path of entry for women  
into Europe”

As stated by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (2011), “the goal in scholarship research is to make of gender an institutional part of immigration studies” (p.219). Similarly, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994, cited in Pessar & Mahler 2003) argued that “[g]ender is not simply a variable to be measured, but a set of social relations that organize immigration patterns [...] the task is to begin with an examination of how gender relations [which are exercised in relational and dynamic ways] facilitate or constrain both women’s and men’s immigration and settlement” (p.814). Finally, Kofman (2000) states that migration offers both women and men an opportunity to modify gender roles and the constraints allocated within them. This can represent a source of escape especially for women who have negatively experienced gendered lives in their communities. Some may consider migration as an opportunity to abandon the oppressive gender structures in which they have had to live their lives.

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## Methods

The qualitative research method is especially effective at obtaining culturally-specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular groups. Therefore, this type of research is the basis of this

study, which seeks to obtain an in-depth understanding of the given research problem from the perspective of the selected sample. Furthermore, this study embraces an interpretative approach where, human beings are understood not as objects, but as agents who actively collaborate to construct (and deconstruct) their culture and practices (Schwartz-Shea et al., 2012). In order to start unpacking the experiences and perspectives of the Mexican immigrant women and their Dutch partners, the qualitative tool of in-depth interview was found to be most suitable. In total, 16 in-depth interviews (with 8 couples) were conducted using an open-ended questionnaire for Dutch men and Mexican women accordingly.

“Participants were asked to describe their experiences of being married to someone from another culture”

#### The interview setting

Seven of the eight couples were interviewed face to face, six of them at their homes and one in a public cafeteria. The partners were interviewed separately in order to give them more freedom to answer honestly, without being affected by the presence of the other partner. The duration of each interview was from fifty minutes to almost two hours, depending on the answers of the individual participants. All the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed (verbatim<sup>iii</sup>) afterwards. The questionnaire was composed of several demographic questions and questions inquiring into participants' experiences of being partners/married to someone from another culture, the advantages and disadvantages of it, and, - particularly for the Mexican

<sup>iii</sup> Word by word.

women - their expectations and current professional status in the Netherlands.

The interviewees offered to have further interaction after the interview by inviting the ethnographer for food or coffee. This gave the researcher an opportunity to participate in the respondents' family life, thereby gaining more information on the family dynamics and non-verbal cues on the relationship.

### Sample

Access to the sample was obtained through snowballing, starting from one couple putting the researcher in contact with more couples. The researcher additionally invited participants through a Facebook ad. The requirements for participation were as follows:

- Mexican women aged between 20 and 38<sup>iv</sup> years old, living together with their Dutch partners in the Netherlands, for a period longer than a year. XA  
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- Their Dutch partners, no age limit.<sup>v</sup>

The requirement of having lived with the partner for more than a year is based on the presumption that in this period, the migrant women would have had sufficient time to settle in the Netherlands and spend time with their Dutch partners, experiences relevant for this study. The age limit is also relevant because younger women are more likely to have more familiarity with and command of new technologies such as the Internet, social media and dating websites. Presumably, they may also have a different mindset regarding topics such as couples, family relations and gender roles.

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<sup>iv</sup> Initially 35 years was the age limit for participation; due to the interest of women aged 38 to participate, the age limit was extended.

<sup>v</sup> Although the age of the Dutch partner

was not limited in the requirements, in most of the cases they appeared to be between 1 to 3 years younger than their Mexican partners.

**Table 1** Sample of Mexican immigrant women<sup>vi</sup>

Name <sup>vii</sup>	Age	Education	Current occupation in NL	Years in NL
Araceli	34	Masters	Bank employee	4
Linda	34	Masters	Mailwoman and Dutch language student	1.5
Carmen	25	Masters	Administrative employee	3
Ana	25	Bachelor	Accountancy employee	4
Marieruz	31	Masters	Housewife / Job seeker	2
Adela	37	Bachelor	Housewife	4.5
Esmeralda	27	Bachelor (incomplete)	Administrative employee	2
Malena	38	Bachelor	Housewife / Job seeker	3

**Table 2** Sample of Dutch partners

Name <sup>viii</sup>	Age	Education	Occupation
Bastiaan	32	Post Master	Controller at a bank
Johan	33	MBO: Dutch Vocational Training	Employee in the metal industry
Rutger	23	Bachelor	Account manager
Eduart	29	Bachelor	IT (Own buisiness)
Hendrik	33	Masters	Geography teacher
Gijs	34	Masters	Process engineer
Laurens	28	Bachelor	Sales employee
Dries	35	Bachelor	Administrative employee at a bank

Seven out of the eight couples live in the Randstad area, considered the economic centre of the Netherlands (Man-shanden & de Smidt, 1992) and home to its four biggest cities, including Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The following table shows the primary demographic information of the Dutch partners.

<sup>vi</sup> Notice that the order of participants in the table is such that each participant is matched to her partner in Table 2; Araceli and Bastiaan, for instance, are a couple.

<sup>vii</sup> The names used here are fictitious

in order to preserve the privacy of the interviewees.

<sup>viii</sup> The names used here are fictitious in order to respect the privacy of the interviewees.

## Limitations & Ethnographer's position

One of the main issues concerning the study is the small number of participants. Additionally, as was reported by some of the participants, the high level of the female migrants' education might have played a significant role in the perceptions about their lives in Europe and professional expectations. The same goes for the reported socio-economic background of all the Mexican women.

**“The personal struggle of being both insider and outsider is not only source of knowledge but also a source of self-criticism”**

Furthermore, it is also important to reflect on the position of the ethnographer in her effort to participate as an outsider. From the beginning, I positioned myself as a researcher, avoiding talking about my own personal experiences as a Mexican woman living in the Netherlands. On the other hand, the advantages of this were clear: familiarity with the stories and backgrounds of the Mexican women was useful, which for non-Mexican ethnographers could have been rather complicated. Moreover, my Spanish skills, knowledge of Mexican culture, slang, and popular sayings and expressions were of practical use. Hence, the position of the researcher regarding this study can be approached from the viewpoint of Westkott (1979), who states that “[t]he personal struggle of being both insider and outsider is not only source of knowledge and insight, but also a source of self-criticism” (p. 422). Despite of such limitations, I hope that the study contributes to the existent corpus of literature and provides answers to basic questions that will hopefully propel further research on the topic.

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## Analysis and Findings

The data gathered for this study comes primarily from in-depth and open-ended interviews with the 16 participants. Adding to this, the participants were asked to recall their experiences and some specific aspects of their stories, which were tape-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. However, it should be noted that regarding in-depth interview data analysis, there is a close relationship between

### “Perceptions play an important role in the context of today’s international migration”

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the dominant themes emerged and the type of questions that participants were asked. Utilizing a questionnaire as a method of data collection heavily influences the type of data and results gathered. Nevertheless, a substantial effort was made to encourage the participants to go further in their answers and to clearly exemplify their statements. This article will only embrace some of the most significant findings<sup>ix</sup>, using a number of categories, discussed in turn below.

Marrying a Dutch man, marrying a Mexican woman.

*Perceptions of European and/or Dutch men. Perceptions of Mexican vs. Dutch women.*

Perceptions play an important role in the context of today’s international migration (Carling, 2002; Timmerman et al., 2010). Facilitated by new information and communication technologies (ICTs), now more than ever, people

<sup>ix</sup> Due to word constraint and to avoid redundancy, only selected verbatim quotes were included to illustrate the main themes of this study. The

names of the respondents have been changed for confidentiality reasons, while the cited age of the respondents is the actual one.

from all over the globe can benefit from mass information that contribute to seeing the possibility of migration as easier, independently of the fact that this information can also be unreliable. Timmerman et al. (2010) have presented an interesting analytical framework based on a research project called EUMAGINE that aims to analyse the immigrants' perceptions of Europe, as well as the perceptions of Europe of those who have not (yet) decided to migrate. This framework is applicable to the present case: understanding the perceptions of the Mexican immigrants at both moments - before and after migrating - can help assess whether and how these have been modified against the reality of the post-migration or settlement process. Accordingly, the Mexican interviewees were asked to express what their perceptions (prior to migrating) were of European, or in this case, Dutch men. More than half of them had positive perceptions of European men, which in turn seemed to make them feel more attracted at the moment of choosing a partner. Maricruz (31), for instance, stated that she "had the feeling that they were less jealous and less possessive, more respectful and that the way of treatment of women was more egalitarian."

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Similarly, Carmen (25) explained that:

About Europe in general, I used to think that there were no problems since they did not seem to have financial problems and so, but now I see that they have another kind of problems (laughter)... Anyway, always in the past, I was attracted to foreigners, like Mexicans, there are some things about Mexican men that I dislike... moreover, after getting to know Dutch men I came to realize that before anything, there is a lot of equality between men and women and it is not like they see women as untouchable or unreachable, they are like the ones who take the first step and they know that you are capable to do exactly the same as them, that is what I like.

On the other hand, how do these Dutch men perceive the image of Mexican women? Interestingly for the gender approach of this study, all of them agreed on one characteristic: they perceived Mexican women as “more caring and warmer.” The following statement serves as an example:

Well at the beginning I didn't know anything about them, but now I know and I think they are really nice, I am personally more attracted to them than to Dutch girls, I don't like the blond hair girls and yeah, you know the Mexicans are really interested in the people and they want to care of you. And yeah, Esmeralda is like that, when I am sick or I am not feeling well she takes care of me, she is really like a mom, and she really has the mother role in her. (Laurens, 28)

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“I think Dutch women are very focused on their career in the first place. They are very independent, that's a big difference”

When it comes to perceptions about Dutch women, the existent image of Western women as sexually liberated, independent and emancipated (Lutz, 1991) was also conveyed in the interviews with the Dutch men. The following excerpts present this claim.

I think Dutch women are very focused on their career in the first place. They are very independent, that's a big difference. They are quite, how can I say...business related, yeah, I think that's a huge difference. I have the feeling that, from my experience, they are more focused on their own; they are more individualistic, maybe. (Hendrik, 33)

The thing is that, Dutch women are really occupied with their career, and they are always looking in front of that, and not seeing the day for example. It is like: how can I get a better career and is not like... Yeah, really. For them is just a social status to have a relationship. And with Latin American women you don't have that, they are more, yeah, more close, yeah, more warm, giving more to the person that you are in love with. (Johan, 33)

Compared to Mexicans, Dutch women are not real fighters and I like to have people who really fight for their things and they know what they want, and that they don't get it or take it for granted, you know? But well, that's how it is here in Holland you know? We have a very good life here, but I like people who are going outside of that comfort zone and not only yeah, you know, stay at the level there is here. (Bastiaan, 32)

To conclude this section, it can be highlighted that Dutch men seemed to perceive Mexican women's gender roles as more traditional or family oriented. On the other hand, Dutch women were perceived as more related to business culture and professional development, emotionally colder and more individualistic.

#### Advantages and disadvantages of this type of relationship

The following section is based on the Mexican interviewees reflecting on what they consider as advantages of having a relationship with a Dutch man. The feeling of being with the one they love was emphasized, as well as aspects related to gender balance in a relationship. Maricruz (31) expressed this by saying that "[t]he advantages are many, [that she] found someone who understands [her], supports [her], someone who isn't a macho, someone who is open and honest." Similarly, Adela (37) stated the following:

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Here I don't have the continuous power struggle between men and women like is the case in Mexico. Here, my partner supports me and listens to me; while in Mexico regularly the man always wins for the same issue of the machismo. In this aspect, my life is better now.

However, what is it specifically that attracts them the most about their Dutch partners? The answers of most of the Mexican interviewees were along the following lines:

He is someone very honest and sincere, everything that he tells me he is going to do he does it, he has never failed me while making promises, I can trust his word 100% that gives me a lot of stability and security. I know he does not lie to me and what he says is exactly what he does, that makes me feel really secure.

XA Esmeralda (27), similarly expressed that “[h]e understands [her] when [she] feels sad, he understands [her] XS perfectly and [they] both do everything, [they] both work, XS [they] both cook and so.”

It appears to be that Mexican women attributed positive values such as honesty, understanding and loyalty to their Dutch partners, and that these were part of the motivation to choose a Dutch partner.

What attracts me the most is that he is very honest, too honest, he tells me everything, and he cannot hide a thing (laughter). That is what attracts me the most because I never met someone who was as honest as him, not only towards me, but also with his friends and everybody around him. (Ana, 25)

Similarly, Malena (38) says: “What attracts me the most? Everything! I love him! He is very good, he is very charitable, he is very loyal he doesn't lie. He says yes or no and does not cheat.”

Nevertheless, when they were asked to make a comparison between the relationship they have with their Dutch partner and past relationships with Mexican partners, most of the Mexican interviewees reflected as shown in the following examples:

Here, is more like 50%, 50%. Here you share the expenses and you share everything in half, or many times whoever earns the most spends the most and like that ... Another thing, here for example, in my case, it is very expensive to get a maid. In Mexico, there would be a woman who would clean my house, she would do everything. Here, if they help us is once a week or every two weeks, but in the end you have to do it yourself, cleaning. In Mexico, it is something that the woman is in charge of (to clean) and the man will never do it, because it is something cultural; my Mexican male friends say I will never do this, and they just leave their stuff. Here, my partner cleans, he really does! And I can perfectly tell him: if you throw this, you have to clean it yourself! And he will do so. And the same goes for me, we divide the household tasks. (Araceli, 34)

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“Cleaning, In Mexico, it is something that the woman is in charge. Here, my Dutch partner cleans”

The great majority of the Mexican participants highlighted equality in the relationship, in decision making and in the household, as valuable characteristics that they lacked in past relationships in Mexico.

Yeah, it is very different, because here, everything is more egalitarian. Therefore, we both work then we

both pay everything 50% and 50%. We have a shared bank account where we both put money in and from there we pay our stuff. (Ana, 25)

Finally, Mexican interviewees generally referred to their romantic relationship with Dutch men as more egalitarian when they compared it to relationships with Mexican men. The Mexican women who had a job in the Netherlands said that they had to contribute to expenses just as much as their partners. On the other hand, unemployed Mexican women in the Netherlands expressed that they felt equal as they had support from their partners not only economically, but also in household tasks if necessary. The great majority of Mexican participants qualified these characteristics as positive in this type of relationship, and hence a good reason to engage in a relationship with Dutch men.

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XS Most of the Dutch interviewees perceived that this type of relationship has several advantages. They believed that it changed their personality and their taste for other cultures. Rutger (23), for instance says the following: “I think there are many advantages, you both get to learn another culture which enriches you in so many ways you wouldn’t imagine before.”

Noticeable changes in the personality of many of the Dutch men were expressed as positive factors brought by the relationship with their Mexican partners.

I am more than 6 years together with Adela, and there are many things I have learnt from Adela... Now in all my food I put chili (laughter). But also Adela likes dancing a lot and does little crazy things here at home with the children and now, yeah I also do it like dancing together with the kids and so. I am sure all these things I learned them from Adela. (Gijs, 34)

Furthermore, one important characteristic that was mentioned by all Dutch participants was the amount of time and responsibility that they dedicate to their Mexican partner, which seemed to be way more compared to that in prior relationships with Dutch partners. This was considered a challenge for many; however, it was a change that they seemed to be willing to cope with.

Finally, Dutch partners identified many disadvantages to their relationship with Mexican women. Some of these factors were a greater economic and time investment on their Mexican partners, the distance of their Mexican partners to their families back in Mexico, the fastidious immigration procedures established by the Dutch State, and Dutch language as a barrier for their partners' integration.

“Dutch partners identified many disadvantages in this type of relationship such as greater economic investment and the fastidious immigration procedures”

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### *Cultural Differences*

The partners were asked to reflect on the characteristics of their relationship. One of them was the daily struggle with what they perceive as cultural differences, and how they cope with these. All participants agreed on several differences that could be linked to each other's culture. Moreover, for most<sup>s</sup> of the Dutch men, cultural differences were considered a disadvantage of this kind of relationship.

Some of the participants perceived that the gender differences were maximized due the differences in cultures.

Rutger (23) for examples said that: “Mexican women can be very much a drama queen sometimes! What it really always stays in my mind is that they can express their feelings very well.” Carmen (25) stated the following: “I talk about the feelings and Dutch men don’t talk about it; it is not easy for them to express themselves, which is the difficulty.”

## “What I would not like my children to learn from the Mexican culture is the machismo”

Within the theme of cultural differences, after expressing what they disliked about each other’s culture, the participants were asked to reflect on the things that they would like their children (in the future if they did not have them yet) to adopt from both cultures.

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Most Mexican women predominantly expressed values such as family union, Mexican traditions, and food and religion, as the things that they want their children to learn from Mexican culture. The Dutch men expressed the things that they would *not* like their children to adopt from Mexican culture. For many of them this was the Mexican culture of unpunctuality. Noticeably, when it was women’s turn to reflect upon what they perceive as negative values of the Mexican culture that they would not like their children to adopt, the great majority highlighted the topic of *machismo*<sup>xi</sup> as one of the existing social problems in Mexican culture; as Maricruz (31) expressed this as follows:

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<sup>x</sup> In the findings section, the terms “Most” and “The majority” are used to signify almost every person in the studied sample, either Mexican women or Dutch men (depending on the given context), with the excep-

tion of maybe one or two. “Many” or “Several” is used to mean approximately half of the group, while “A few” or “Some” refers to roughly 2 or 3 out of each group of 8.

What I would not like them (to take) from the Mexican culture is to become machos, I would like them to learn that women are the same and have the same rights as a man, that (they) have the same advantages and disadvantages etc. That is what I would not like them to learn, the machismo from Mexico.

Furthermore, when the female participants were asked to reflect on what they perceive as Dutch culture, the answers were unified. These women identified rules of behaviour and discipline, values such as honesty and integrity as the important things to be adopted by their children from Dutch culture. For the great majority, there was nothing significant to be excluded or avoided from Dutch culture.

Imagined Europe and reality. Living outcomes for Mexican women: Are they better off living in the Netherlands?

What did these women perceive as the best aspect of living in the Netherlands? Equality was the most common indicator. Most of the Mexican women seemed to admire and enjoy the egalitarian system in the Netherlands, equality in the work place, and equality in the familiar sphere.

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Another indicator was safety. Safety made Mexican women enjoy their freedom of movement in the Netherlands. Many referred to the current situation in Mexico, and emphasized how valuable is to be in a safe country such as the Netherlands, identifying this as one of the best things about living in the Netherlands.

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<sup>xi</sup> The definition of machismo as given by Castañeda (2007): "The set of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that lay upon two basic ideas: on one side, the polarization of the sexes, namely a counterposition of the masculine and the feminine which, according to it they are not only different but mutually exclusive. On the other hand,

the superiority of the masculine in the areas considered as important for the men. From this standpoint, the machismo involves a series of definitions on the meaning of what a man and a woman ought to be, as well as an entire life style based on that" (p.26).

Among the good things that I can see in Holland, there is the security that, well yet things may happen but never like in Mexico! Therefore, the security that the children can go out and ride a bike or walk alone without something bad happening to them gives you peace. (Adela, 37)

With respect to what the female interviewees saw as the worst aspect of living in the Netherlands, this seemed to be the weather. Due to weather conditions, some of them affirmed to have changed their lifestyles, which, according to them, makes adapting to the Netherlands even more difficult. Esmeralda (27), for instance, expresses this in the following manner: “The worst thing is the weather! In Mexico my life was more outside and here I am most of the times at home, yeah, I miss things.”

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“When Dutch men were asked whether they believe that their Mexican partners are better off in the Netherlands, the answer from all of them was no”

Others expressed difficulties with integrating.

Integration, people are not as open as they are in other countries. They keep stigmatizing you as ‘the foreigner’ and they will never end up integrating you. Also the fact of not being able to find a job, I didn’t expect that. (Malena, 38)

Language was also found to be a major disadvantage for all Mexican women. It was the main obstacle in increasing their Dutch networks and socializing with Dutch people. These findings are in line with Choi et al.’s (2012) argument

that female marriage migrants are more vulnerable to social isolation compared to local women.

When Dutch men were asked to reflect on the living situation of their Mexican partners, and whether they believed that their partners were better off in the Netherlands, strikingly, all of them answered with no.

At this moment not. You have to understand, my partner is a professor, and she is doing here the post. Bah! That is one thing that I can see it is not good. But the thing is that, in her occupation she needs to learn the Dutch language and in the moment that she is having that, yeah, there are more possibilities, that's the thing. (Johan, 33)

At this moment...not. Because she is definitely gone backwards in her development as a professional. She is a psychologist and she is now in the initial stages, she is starting, because it is very complicated here with the health system that we have here in the NL. So, that's a huge challenge, definitely. So, in terms of work no, it is a step backwards. (Hendrik, 33)

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Undoubtedly, the lack of professional development and possibilities to enter the Dutch labour market was an important factor to reflect upon regarding the situation of their Mexican partners.

*The position of Mexican women in the Dutch labour market*

Mexican women's participation in the Dutch labour market was pointed out by the participants as one of the most problematic aspects of their relationship. All of the participants had attended university, some of them had a master's degree, and the majority had considerably good jobs in Mexico. However, for many the latter changed after migrating to the Netherlands. This concern was expressed several times during the interviews.

I do not work. I have never worked here. And now, with my small children it's really difficult. I wanted to work in a school as a teacher but in order to do that first there is a series of requirements such as validating your degree from Mexico and, again now while rearing the kids I have no time nor energy... and well, to be honest Dutch men would rather keep you at home because once you decide to go out, he has to pay for a nanny or a kindergarten. There are transportation costs when you go to work bah! That is very expensive! (Adela, 37)

According to Kofman (2000), the migration of women has also been accompanied by “de-skilling”<sup>xii</sup>; issues such as racial discrimination in the foreign labour market that may lead to badly-paid and low-skilled positions, or even unemployment. As a result, some immigrant women have opted for setting up their own businesses (Phizaclea & Ram, 1996; in Kofman, 2000). This possibility seemed appealing to Maricruz (31), who stated that she is “very desperate about not having a job and about not finding suitable vacancies [...] the next step is [maybe] to do everything by myself, start with my own practice, out of the Dutch system.”

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One of the final questions of the interview read as follows: if you could, which aspect of your life in the Netherlands would you like to change or improve? The majority replied that this was their professional life, confirming that this is one of the most problematic areas faced by the Mexican love migrants living in the Netherlands.

### *What keeps these women in the Netherlands?*

The final question asked to the female respondents was what keeps them in the Netherlands. For many, one word

<sup>xii</sup> De-Skilling a worker is the imbalanced situation between the educational level of a worker (high) and the type of work (s)he is doing (very

low or where educational capital isn't necessary). See also Mojab (1999) who refers specifically to the issue of de-skilling immigrant women.

sufficed to give an answer: love. Esmeralda's (27) answer, for instance, was the following: "[m]y partner, definitely. Or else I would have probably left already."

## "I am very desperate about not having a job"

However, some of them contemplated aspects of their lives in the Netherlands other than only love; these include the previously mentioned security, stability, employment benefits of their partners, and opportunity to travel.

In this regard, it appears that a combination of the love – that they explicitly claim to feel for their Dutch partners – and other factors such as stability and security, affects the decision to stay in the Netherlands. Noticeably, only one out of eight women said that she would remain in the Netherlands with or without her partner.

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### Perspectives on this type of relationship

Finally, both the Mexican women and their Dutch partners were asked to reflect generally on their relationship. Bastiaan's statement is exemplary of how some of the Dutch men felt about their relationships:

I think for the Mexican women living in Mexico it is yeah, sometimes hard to be with a Mexican guy, they have a different style of living than Dutch guys and Dutch guys are very plain, what you see is what you get; yeah, they are structured and they give you your freedom let's say. (Bastiaan, 32)

The Mexican women were particularly asked about what they consider important in their relationships. Some of

them emphasized their professional development as an important factor for success in their relationship and not losing independence.

I would say that it is not easy. There are two aspects, one aspect is, you are with the one you love and that is what gives you strength every day. That is what I came for, and that is what motivates me. But the other aspect is rather complicated. (Araceli, 34)

The majority of them acknowledged that they had to make a big sacrifice for the success of their relationship, the migration process being part of this sacrifice.

## Discussion and Final Remarks

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The present qualitative study aimed to explore the motivations of Mexican women and Dutch men to engage in a relationship that leads to Mexican women migrating to the Netherlands, as well as to identify the main themes behind their experiences, based to their own perceptions. It especially focused on studying Mexican women, and what they see as challenges, advantages and disadvantages of this type of migration. A more in-depth study involving a larger sample and multiple ethnographic techniques over a longer period of time is necessary to understand whether (or why) the number of this kind of couples is increasing. Furthermore, it is necessary to deepen the study to include the various aspects concerning the initial settlement of these Mexican women in the Netherlands. Therefore, it is important to highlight that these final remarks refer exclusively to a selected sample of 8 couples. That is to say, the conclusions drawn are not necessarily applicable to all Mexican women living in the Netherlands with Dutch partners, neither to all Dutch men currently living with a Mexican partner.

In studying the relation between gender and the decision to migrate, Pedraza (1991), talks about the links and in-

tersections between the micro and macro spheres at the moment of migration. The Mexican author Correa Castro (2009) points to educational background, gender inequalities and machismo as factors that influence Mexican women's experience, and their decision to migrate.

**“In Mexico, women still earn significantly less than men do and they are still subject to segregation, sex discrimination and harassment”**

Nowadays in Mexico, despite increased levels of employment of women, the patriarchal structure is being challenged, since, women “still earn significantly less than men do and they are still subject to segregation and sex discrimination and harassment” (Hondañeu-Sotelo, 1994, p. 12). Sexual infidelity is another indicator of patriarchal gender relations; it may be tolerated and even normalized when done by Mexican men but not by Mexican women (Hondañeu-Sotelo, 1994).

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It is worth to raise the question, however, of whether Dutch men are seen as machistas<sup>xiii</sup> by their Mexican partners. The Mexican respondents attributed certain characteristics to Dutch partners that can generally be considered contrary to machismo, such as loyalty, tolerance, emotional stability and egalitarian values. However, the reports by the Dutch men indicate a sort of contradiction with respect to the lack of machismo attributed to them. Some of them appreciated having a Mexican partner whom they perceive as more caring, less individualistic and somehow less independent than Dutch women: a care giver family-oriented woman.

They do give the Dutch women credit for being so liberated, but at the same time many of them expressed to not feel very attracted to that characteristic of individualism Dutch women seem to possess.

One of the most important findings drawn from this study – in contrast to popular opinion and past inferences in the literature – is that in the case of this specific sample of Mexican women, economic gain did not seem to apply. One explanation is that these women all had access to university education at home, which, only people with middle class status can afford in Mexico. The great majority had been in Europe before on vacation, lived in urban areas, reported to come from a family where at least one of the parents had a good job and income, and, in most cases,

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“Despite their educational credentials, and prior professional experience many Mexican women remain unemployed in the Netherlands”

had good jobs themselves in Mexico. Reflecting upon their current living situation in the Netherlands, none of the Mexican women affirmed to have improved her social or economic status. On the contrary, many of the couples lived with only one salary, that of the Dutch partner; this seemed to be a big disadvantage for the Mexican women who were used to working and earning their own money in Mexico. Some of them affirmed they would have left if they were no longer with their partners, or that they had

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<sup>xiii</sup> Machistas are persons who believe and exercise male superiority in daily life. For example: “I do not cry because I am a man”, or “Men do not

cook, that is not masculine, women should do that.” are examples of sentences typically used by machistas.

the hope to go back to Mexico in the future for this reason. All of them except for one expressed that love – and not economic gains – was the main reason to stay.

Additionally, this study has showed that many of the Mexican participants share a common problematic: the lack of a professional life in the Netherlands. Requirements such as being able to speak Dutch and having to legalize their degrees, or their incompatibility (for example having a degree in teaching Mexican history), among others, have caused difficulties with accessing the Dutch labour market. In this context, it should be emphasized that the participants in the study were all highly educated women. For those who are unemployed, this has also contributed to experiencing social isolation in their homes. This aspect comes to problematize the question of whether traditional Mexican ways of patriarchy vanish in the Netherlands, or continue to be reproduced by couples of Dutch men and Mexican women, due to economic dependency of some Mexican women on their Dutch partners.

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Moreover, Dutch partners reported to have been just as involved as their partners in the process of immigration and integration of their partners. Besides the economic investments to make the partnership possible (such as buying a house), Dutch partners admitted that there is a bigger investment of time and attention to their Mexican partners, compared to the Dutch partners they had before. They reported to be aware of the fact that they need to be extra supportive for their partners, in order to help them settle down and start their lives in the Netherlands.

Finally, in the case of the couples presently studied, it seems that the Mexican migrant women had to give up many things in order to be with the partner they love. According to what the participants reported, the parties that seemed to carry the major burden of sacrifice are the Mexican women.

In my case if everything I am living now is the high price that I have to pay in order to be with my husband, I would do it over again, I am deeply in love with my husband. (Linda, 34)

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# How do racialized migrants cope with challenges of labor market integrations and resettlement?

Kon K. Madut\*

## Introduction

The process of integrating into the Canadian labor force and finding employment has been one of the challenging transitions shared by the majority of racialized minority immigrant communities in Canada. I had an opportunity as a member of this group myself, and as an employment counselor for years, to listen to the stories of those who were experiencing the effects of unemployment and underemployment. The stories of these migrants could add new insights into the field of employment development and immigration-related policies that can support and facilitate the progress of ethnic minority immigrants in Canadian society. The findings of this research are that their stories and emotional enormity were deep-rooted in their experiences. Many studies do not normally discuss

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\* Kon K. Madut works for the City of Ottawa, municipal government, Employment and Community Programs. He completed his PhD in Social Science in 2012 at Tilburg University, the Netherlands. His research

interests revolve around national and international migration and socio-cultural issues, and the interplay between them as they affect the course and pace of social relations.

experiences of visible minority job seekers from their own perspective, as their emphasis is mainly placed on a quantitative approach to understanding the barriers to employment i.e. percentages of unemployed, employed and under-employed. Minimum attention is placed on how these ethnic minorities feel about what is going on in their own lives, through their own experiences (i.e. lack of access to economic opportunities, and how this lack of access, or embedded feelings of social exclusion, has affected them socially and economically).

To conceptualize the challenges of labor market integration among racialized minority migrants in Canada, employment programs, funders in government, regulatory bodies, and employers have continued to attribute the high unemployment rate and difficulties of securing jobs to migrants' lack of knowledge and limited understanding of the local labor market's requirements (Jedwab, 2006).

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**“The screening of prospective employees is not limited to skills, qualifications, and abilities”**

For decades, these interpretations of racialized minority migrants' experiences with unemployment and difficulties in finding jobs in their fields have been less than helpful in the process of integrating these migrants into the local workforce. Nonetheless, all levels of governments (municipal, provincial, and federal) continue to set up multi-million dollar employment programs based upon these perceptions (Jedwab, 2006). However, employers have control over the hiring requirements for jobs they advertise and the screening of prospective employees is not limited to skills, qualifications, and abilities, but extended to the candidate's knowledge of prevailing social norms and workplace culture (Green, 2003). To make things even

more difficult, employment programs and services do not focus on helping these targeted groups better understand employers' expectations, the requirements of regulatory bodies, licensing and credentialing, or structures around union affiliations (Goldberg, 2000). In the current practice, employment programs and services helped participants gain knowledge and use a tool focused on how to search for jobs. However, it was the individual job seeker's responsibility to deal with regulatory bodies, workplace cultures, and union affiliation requirements. This includes the unstated requirements of cultural awareness and what is known as becoming more Canadian such as speaking English without an accent, obtaining a Canadian education, understanding Canadian social norms and having some sort of work experience in Canada. The requirements often hinder job seekers from obtaining or holding jobs, or advancing in their careers.

**“It was the individual job seeker’s responsibility to deal with regulatory bodies, workplace cultures, and unions”**

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Baklid (2004) suggested that one of the main barriers involves an applicant's fit with a position or an organization. Research has shown that personality and person-organization fit are powerful predictors of job performance. However, many racialized minorities believe that this is an area where systemic discrimination hides. Indeed, the criterion of personal suitability, which can exist for positions at all levels of an organization, appears to be a determining factor for management roles. For example, executive search firms looking to staff a senior position focus on whether a candidate's personality meshes with the overall organizational culture. The issue, from the point of view

of several racialized minorities, is that fit or suitability often comes down to chemistry between the hiring manager and the candidate. Racialized visible minority candidates who had been unable to create a rapport with hiring managers due to different backgrounds and ethnicity, left the interviews feeling that prejudice may have been to blame (Baklid, 2004, p. 3). All participants were identified as racialized visible minority migrants using the definition of the Employment Equity Act of 1986.<sup>1</sup>

“Canadians do not believe that they practice racism, but they have limited interaction with members of various other ethnic groups”

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In this context, Satzewich Vic (1998) suggests that racism and racial bias, among other factors, have been of concern to many migrants in Canada. According to Reitz & Banerjee (2006), most Canadians do not believe that they practice racism, but they have limited interaction with members of various other ethnic groups in neighborhoods and workplaces. Within the racialized migrants' communities,

<sup>1</sup> The racialized migrant is defined in the Employment Equity Act of 1986, adopted by the Public Services Commission of Canada to refer to the people who fall within the following criteria: [S]omeone (other than an Aboriginal person as defined above) who is non-white in color/race, regardless of birthplace. The visible minority group includes: Black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asian-East Indian (including Indian from India, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, East Indian from Guyana,

Trinidad, East Africa, etc.), Southeast Asian (including Burmese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, Vietnamese, etc.), non-white West Asian, North African or Arab (including Egyptian, Libyan, Lebanese, etc.), non-white Latin American (including indigenous persons from Central and South America, etc.), persons of mixed origin (with one parent in one of the visible minority groups listed above), other visible minority groups (Public Services Commission, 2009).

the perceptions of the existence of racial discrimination in employment are relatively extensive. The Minority Survey conducted in 1992 in the City of Toronto indicated that 78% of Black people in Toronto believed that their group was the target of employment discrimination (Dion & Kawakami, 1996). These have created systemic and bureaucratic barriers to employability and integration of racialized migrants into the local labor force. The numerous requirements appear complicated and difficult to manage.

“Within the migrants’ communities, the perceptions of the existence of racial discrimination in employment are relatively extensive”

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In addition to being unfamiliar with the workplace culture and Canadian social norms, many of these migrant job seekers had never worked in a unionized environment, nor were they expecting to be eliminated from professional jobs due to the routine undervaluation and discredit of the credentials that they had achieved in their home countries. Additionally, these factors combine to make it more difficult for these migrants to understand the employment system and successfully navigate through the necessary processes in obtaining and keeping jobs. For these reasons, the percentage of unemployed and underemployed racialized migrants remains high in Canada. According to the 2006 Census, the unemployment rate among racialized migrants stands at 18% among recent immigrants aged 15 to 24, and 13% among new immigrants aged 25 and up (Statistics Canada, 2006).

To further illustrate the current demographic profile of racialized migrants in Canada, Reitz Jeffrey (2001) cited

the 1996 census, which indicated that most recent immigrants of employable age possessed more than a high school education, while nearly a third had college degrees. Even so, these qualifications and years of experience did nothing to improve the economic conditions of these highly skilled migrants. Consequently, the 1991 census indicated that for some of these racialized groups, the poverty rate remained high (Kazemipur & Halli, 2000). Thus, the fair question to be asked is how these migrants managed to navigate through all these socio-cultural and economic challenges during the course of integration into the local labor market.

## Method of Inquiry

Data was gathered through intensive interviews (which lasted between one and two hours) with six visible minority migrants and one focus group interview with four participants. A total of 10 participants took part in the interviews. Each one-on-one interview was followed by a group interview with four other participants for about three and a half hours, in which the same questions were asked. The purpose of the group interviews was to give participants the opportunity to cross-reference their stories and to provide additional information if other participants felt that they could add more data on a given situation or had a different experience with the same incident. This research discusses the following:

- Racialized minority migrants' insights into how they navigate access to employment and re-training for meaningful employment, and successful integration into the local labor force;
- The alternative measures adopted to overcome the complicated employment requirements, regulatory assessments and ways to deal with effects of socio-cultural barriers on their economic attainments and social well-being.

Participants have met the following screening criteria to participate in the study: (1) self-identified as a member of the groups targeted by the Employment Equity Act under the cluster of visible minority migrant, (2) was unemployed or underemployed, and (3) had been living in Ottawa for the last three years. The screening was done through a personal information questionnaire that included name, date of birth, age group, profession, employment status, country of origin, number of years in Ottawa, and first city of residency in Canada.

The techniques used in the process of data collection incorporated open-ended interviews and focus groups. Interviews included written field notes, observations and one-on-one conversations with the participants. This process also included recordings and field notes, as discussed by Creswell (2003). The information collected was written up afterwards, and subsequently classified, coded, and interpreted in conjunction with grounded theory method. This study uses the qualitative design of a grounded theory, which was historically developed and successfully used in sociology by Glaser and Strauss. Grounded theory is defined as an inductive reasoning process emanating from a corpus of information that facilitates development of theory (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin, 2007).

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Using this method, the interview materials were labeled, and categories began to emerge and develop, along with their properties and dimensions. The second phase was the axial coding, in which connections were made between categories to identify conditions that led to the development of these categories and the circumstances under which they appear. The third phase of the analysis involved selective coding, in which the main category to be used was identified. The process of identifying this main category involved the development of the theory through an analytical description of a potential main category. The main category was then compared and related to the other categories and used to validate the story line

against the data. Ultimately, a series of memos form the story line. Any gap in the story is rewritten by returning to the participants for additional information.

## Results

A first limitation of this study is that this discourse did not also include the voices of employers and employment professionals. A second limitation is that generalizations cannot be made due to the size of the sample (10 participants). Regardless, it was found that the research revealed important outcomes.

Participants in this study were four females and six males, with an age range of 30 to 55 years old. Six out of the ten interviewees spoke and wrote both Canadian official languages: French and English. As far as their country of origin was concerned, they represented Mexico, Peru, Somalia, Sudan, China, Burma, Egypt, and Ethiopia. See Table 1 below for participant profiles.

The following quotes from the participants stories clarifies what participants have done to navigate through both systemic and bureaucratic barriers that they have encountered during the course of labor market integration. These quotes are subsequently coded in eight themes: (1) re-training in a different field, (2) seeking a Canadian education, (3) volunteering, (4) finding survival/labor jobs, (5)

**Table 1** Participant profiles

Number of Participants	10 (100%)
Gender	4 Female 4 and 6 Male
Age-group	30–55 years old
Countries of origin	Mexico, Peru, Somalia, Sudan, China, Burma, Egypt, and Ethiopia.
Regions	Africa, Asia and South America
Languages	English (40%) English and French (60%)
Education	BA, MA, and PhD

accepting jobs in a different field, (6) seeking job opportunities in other provinces, (7) seeking job opportunities overseas, and (8) returning to their home of origin.

Participants agreed that the labor market requirements in Canada were neither well defined nor clearly understood by the racialized migrants. They therefore concluded that taking up further training or volunteering in Canadian institutions could resolve the dilemma and help reduce the Canadian workplace skills gap. Even here, there was confusion about how to go about selecting training as some institutions evaluated foreign degrees as equal to degrees obtained from Canada, yet the same foreign degree could not serve as a substitute for a local degree when applying for a position. In other words, one could not take the degree at a Canadian college because the college considered it redundant, yet the degree was not considered equal when applying for a job. In evaluating foreign credentials, it is evident that there is a disconnect between the institutions and the employers.

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Robert stated:

I have volunteered with the following agencies: United Nations Association in Canada for six months, Catholic Immigration Center, and Overbrook Forbes Community and Resource Centre simultaneously for four years. I am currently working for not-for-profit sectors in which there is no room for promotion unless a higher position becomes vacant. However, there were opportunities to develop new projects; also a promotion may be available through creation of new projects. We have lots of independence within individual job description, opportunity to excel and to do more and better programs. Moreover, there is no seniority consideration in job assignment, as well as respect for diversity at workplace.

Angela added:

[...] I started asking my friends where to go and look for jobs having a BA in Psychology and previous work experience as therapist. My friend said to me, forget it; for us immigrants we have to work in factories only [...] it is a quick way to finding employment [...] When I finally gave up and went to the factory to look for a job to support myself, a person in the building saw me and said in French go away, there are no jobs, in a very rude manner... I was shocked to find myself being demoted and treated like that.

Abdul commented:

[...] when we cannot access employment opportunity in our field due to certification and skill set requirement, we tend to look for survival jobs due to family obligations and responsibilities. We always begin with jobs that will help us get immediate income. Moving out of these 'survival jobs' usually requires a lot of effort and may even mean going back to school to pursue a second career.

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Surguie added:

[...] with a B.A in Sociology, I got difficulties finding jobs in my field, though I had a good education and skills. I was under-employed and worked on call, or did part time jobs unrelated to my field of study. My first job was in McDonald's restaurant, which I didn't keep because of type of language young people used at work place.

One means of solving this dilemma was to earn a graduate degree from an accredited Canadian institution. Escaping this Catch-22, however, cascaded into another. In this context, completing further post-secondary studies in Canada led to the participants being classified as "overqualified

candidates” for the jobs that were available to them. This was another factor promoting unemployment among racialized migrants. Accordingly, migrants came to the conclusion that accepting training in a different field, especially at an advanced level, was preferable to training that led to entry level positions in their professional field. Another rationale for accepting training in a different field was to avoid feelings of demotion in their specialized field; as racialized migrants professionals felt that they had more skills and qualifications than their superiors in the workplace.

Anne stated:

[...] I know I am a Medical Doctor, but now that I have a degree in Social Work from Canada I will continue working here as a Social Worker. I know I have a Master’s degree from Canada, but it would not be the same as people who were born and finished their schooling here and have the same Master’s degree.

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Surgie added:

I had my first degree in sociology from back home...I am now on a career transition to do Master’s program either in social work, or conflict studies program to increase my employability skills. Since labor market is unstable and frustrating in Canada, it is hard to decide or say anything about my future career or employment situation at this time.

The decision to seek training was prompted by complicated labor market requirements and lack of understanding of the systemic and bureaucratic barriers in the profession. The cycle of training and active job search continued until a full time job was attained, high debt was accumulated, or individuals were not financially able to pay for the cost of more training. Training was considered “successful” if it led to a meaningful full time job in their professional field. Otherwise, re-training in that field was revisited if an opportunity

warranted. In this case, advanced training gained in Canada had an impact on assessment for further training, or retraining in the field, when the financial burden was covered by government employment services and programs.

Susan stated:

I had an opportunity to take a course to be an Ultra Sound Technician. That course was a fast track course geared toward foreign-trained doctors for three months to work as an ultra sound technician in Canada and the United States, as I could have written a test for the two Associations. The cost of the course was CAD \$3000 and I didn't have the money for it. I asked for the money through Employment Insurance, through Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) to cover the cost of training, but they denied me because of having a Master of Social Work from Canada. Their decision made me very upset with the system, because that course would have encouraged me to go back to work in my field as a Medical Doctor.

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In some situations, individuals preferred to continue training because they thought that working in entry-level positions was a waste of time, talents and resources. Participants thought that experience gaps often perceived by employers as their personal deficit were, in fact, a matter of previous work experience obtained in their country of origin and educational background being inappropriately assessed and recognized. The employers depended heavily on the regulatory bodies for credential assessment and interpreted this as an accurate indication of the candidates' ability to function in their professional field. Participants felt that this sort of evaluation and its letter of assessments were meaningless and worthless, except for the minimal confirmation of the authenticity of degrees and the degree-granting institution.

“Letters of assessments were worthless, except for the minimal confirmation of the authenticity of degrees”

Richard stated:

I had my BA and Master’s degree in the field of hospitality from Canada, but employers would prefer hiring young high school nice-looking white men or women to promote business rather than old visible minority migrant like myself with high degrees in the sector. They would think they might have more business. I did apply for several years to work in my field, but I don’t think my resume reached managers.. I think my resumes were being destroyed. Out of suspiciousness, I always provided them with extra copy of my resume when I did follow up, but there was no success.

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Other professions such as medicine, engineering and teaching required further accreditation, licensing, regulatory body registration, and union affiliations. Participants’ disparities were discussed in form of difficulties with licensing, accreditation and evaluations, which they thought took an unduly long time to assess, were costly and were not recognized by employers. The pattern of requiring racialized foreign-trained doctors to take additional tests and training not required of their Canadian-born counterparts in the same field, with the same qualifications, was also a barrier.

Further, after passing the prescribed test, racialized foreign-trained doctors in the field of medicine were required to secure residency in the rural areas to practice under the supervision of a practicing Canadian doctor. Participants

discussed this requirement as challenging due to the unwillingness of many hospitals to allow this. Racialized migrants who had passed the required exams were given a fraction of the residency spaces available annually – in fact, less than a quarter of the total number allocated to the Canadian born who graduated from Canadian medical institutions.

“Migrants who had passed the required exams were given a fraction of the residency spaces available annually”

Participants discussed four avenues in their decision-making process that led to selecting a training that fit their aspirations and needs for their professional development. These consisted of: (1) choosing training through evaluating experiences of other individuals with the same profession and seeking jobs and training in the same field, (2) struggling with letting go of previous qualifications and seeking training in different fields of specialization, (3) reconsidering training in the profession, and, (4) deciding what training fits their professional needs. These four stages are best understood as the factors influencing the decision-making process leading to selection of training and retraining, including volunteer work. If the mentioned four strategies did not work, migrants turn to accepting survival jobs as laborers, finding jobs in different professions, seeking opportunities in other provinces, finding jobs overseas or returning to their country of origin whenever safe to do so.

Adam stated:

I moved from Quebec to Ottawa because of the unemployment and school system policies of forcing

kids to study in French instead of English. As unilingual English, I have failed to obtain a meaningful job and am unable to help my children with their homework. I decided to move to Ottawa, where my kids have access to English schools [...] My employability situation didn't change, but at least I was able to help my kids and followed their progress in school. Moving to a new city was just like migrating to a new country.

Jung added:

I am not doing anything important here in Canada, and not sure why I am still here. Even though I will be leaving Canada, I still believe that Canada has great values I liked; however, I do not want to live here poor forever. [...] I have a Master's degree from Canada and learned to speak French; I think my skills would be competitive in China. I am also planning to complete another certificate at Algonquin College for one year if granted funding. After I finish, I hope to find a job here in Canada. If not, I will continue to look for jobs in China.

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## Conclusion

Complicated labor market requirements and measures have forced many migrants to leave their professions and work in survival and labor jobs. Participants thought that their decision to accept training in a different field, (i.e., those with doctoral degrees becoming taxi drivers, and medical doctors becoming personal support workers or nurses) have led to gaining new survival and laborer skills and losing important professional skills that they have gained in their home countries.

It is relatively true that recognition of a Canadian education and abandonment of foreign credentials has improved

minority migrants' chances of gaining jobs through work placement and internships. According to the participants, however, it did not mean an equal status with Canadian-born candidates when competing for a job, as employers would still prefer a Canadian-born candidate with the same qualifications because of factors such as cultural familiarity and business experience.

Therefore, early exposure to workplace culture and the way the labor market works in Canada would save many wasted dollars, wasted hours, and enormous turmoil. These could be achieved through work placement, internships, mentorship and job shadowing and information centers. Nonetheless, it would be added value if Canadian institutions were willing to accept racialized migrant professionals to join their institutions to practice and be mentored by Canadian professionals. It does not make sense to give potential immigrants priority admission to Canada and tell them that their skills are needed, while subsequently abandoning them to a complicated process in which they endure systemic racism and protectionism and wherein jobs and access to economic opportunities are reserved for Canadian-born professionals. In short, most migrants spent several years of their lives acquiring new trainings (re-skilling) to secure employment, and subsequently losing skills (de-skilling), which were considered an asset in the process of migration to Canada.

Finally, it is worth noting that this research project was limited to participants' perceptions of local reality in their job search, training, and job retention in Canada, which was also their new country of resettlement. Therefore, no emphasis was placed on the perspectives of employers, employment professionals, or bureaucrats (government). Further research on these three pillars may add valuable insight to the discourse of visible minority unemployment, issues of diversity, and workplace culture in the city of Ottawa. The new research should be looked at from employers' and bureaucrats' perceptions through their own

stories (i.e., what employers who worked, or intended to work with visible minority migrants, think about barriers to employment and the job retention of the racialized minority migrant).

The same research prospects apply to employment professionals who may share their stories of working with racialized minority migrant professionals looking for job opportunities in Canada. For example, what did they find as deficit, or understand as opportunities? I believe that such research will facilitate an effective transition of racialized minority migrants into the local work force and support the effective contribution of migrants to the social and cultural rebuilding of their new city of resettlement as a means of contributing to the economic development.

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## Abstracts of all articles

- 9 Holocaust memory and the horizon of national identity: Canada's National Holocaust Monument (NHM) as a means for shaping Canadian identity  
Jason Chalmers

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In recent decades, 'the Holocaust' has become a free-floating symbolic signifier that can be applied to a variety of subjects regardless of their (dis)similarity to the Nazi persecution of European Jewry. This means that, while the ostensible purpose of Holocaust commemoration is to honour the dead, a community's decision to remember the Holocaust is compelled by a variety of interests. In 2011, the federal government of Canada announced that it would construct its own national memorial to the Holocaust – the National Holocaust Monument (NHM) – thereby raising the question of what interests have provoked this memorial. In the present study, I analyse the discourse surrounding this memorial to understand some of the primary motivations underlying the NHM. After establishing a theoretical framework for the study of Holocaust memorials, I discuss two major themes that have emerged from the discourse: the ethical and the global. Both themes frame the monument as an embodiment of 'Canadian' values, but each does

so for a different audience; in one instance the NHM acts as a mirror that reflects Canadian values towards Canadians, while the other is a beacon that projects these values to global society. Based on these related functions, I argue that Holocaust memory and the NHM are being used to broadcast Canadian values in multiple directions in an attempt to shape the nation's domestic and international identities.

- 39 Participative Web, social utility and ICT adoption:  
An issue of alignment  
Davide Dusi

Participative web and user-generated content as research fields are central topics within the contemporary internet debate. In this paper, I describe an action-research on low-digital-literate members of a voluntary association engaged in a collaborative storytelling project to support the Paediatric Oncology Department of the GB Rossi Hospital in Verona, Italy. The association members were facilitated by the researcher in adopting participative web technologies in order to construct a new communication strategy with the purpose of replacing the previous annual paper journal, phone calls and word of mouth based strategy. Furthermore, I try to identify the practices and processes through which neophytes of social media can be assisted to adopt collaborative web-based tools to support their initiatives. In the conclusion, I discuss how the alignment between users' skills and technologies' features is key in supporting both the adoption of ICT and social utility initiatives like this.

- 63 Unpacking the experiences and perspectives of  
Mexican immigrant women and their Dutch  
partners: An exploratory study  
Marlene Andrade Benítez

This is an exploratory study which looks at the increasing number of couples consisting of Mexican women and

Dutch men. First, it explores the reasons that encouraged both parties: in the case of Dutch men, to marry a Mexican; in the case of the women, to marry a Dutch man. Second, it studies their choice to settle in the Netherlands and the way in which the relationship develops. Third, the study seeks to present the parties' experiences and perspectives, the interactions between them, the roles each has within the relationship, and their feelings for each other. Finally, it explores the living outcomes of Mexican immigrant women who decided to move to the Netherlands in order to join their partners. After a qualitative analysis, the main findings portray the perspectives of the selected participant couples regarding key questions such as: What are the characteristics of this kind of relationship? How do they cope with what they perceive as cultural differences? Are these Mexican women better off living in the Netherlands? All the while, raising a fundamental question: Are these relationships about love? Or is there much more to be discovered?

- 93      How do racialized migrants cope with challenges of labor market integrations and resettlement?  
Kon K. Madut

This article explores socio-cultural realities of the Canadian labor market and the many ambiguous requirements placed on racialized migrant jobseekers in Canada. The article reviews current perceptions among these migrants and shows that having a Canadian education may reduce prejudices when competing for jobs against white Canadians job seekers that have the same qualifications and experience. During extensive interviews with these migrants, they persistently tell stories of long-term struggles to find jobs, while retraining to gain new skills and not utilizing skills acquired in their countries of origin. These migrants also stressed difficulties with finding and keeping jobs even with skills attained in Canada. The interviews – conducted in March 2010 through June 2010 – revealed strategies for navigating through socio-cultural

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and bureaucratic barriers to the Canadian labor market. These labor market barriers have forced racialized migrants to accept entry-level jobs, seek new training and seek work overseas.

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# Amsterdam Social Science

## Volume 8 – Issue 1

### Call for papers

We are looking for interesting articles and essays to be published in the coming issues of Amsterdam Social Science. The journal is open to research articles, theoretical discussions and essays pertaining to all (sub)fields of social science.

If you would like to submit a paper, e-mail us at [info@socialscience.nl](mailto:info@socialscience.nl). Papers submitted will be peer-refereed and judged on many criteria, including the following:

- Relevance and contribution to research field
- Innovativeness
- Argument structure and style
- Appeal

When submitting your article, please conform to the ASA-style guide (available on our website), write in British English and include both a short (1-4 lines) biography and abstract of your paper. Articles should be between 3000 and 7000 words, essays between 1000 and 3000.

### Comments and discussion

Please direct your comments on articles to [info@socialscience.nl](mailto:info@socialscience.nl). When interesting and relevant for our audience, discussions of articles published in this issue will appear in the discussion section of our next issue.

### Web features

Amsterdam Social Science has launched a new website, including a dynamic blog, still to be found at [www.socialscience.nl](http://www.socialscience.nl).

This blog provides an independent platform to all wanting to discuss their academic and everyday analyses. In this community you are encouraged to develop and share your critical and original ideas of the world around you. Whether students, promovendi, alumni, and/or simply independent thinkers, we aim to stimulate young scholars in Amsterdam and abroad to apply the perspectives of social science and thereby connect across disciplines and experiences.

Archives of past Amsterdam Social Science issues and articles are also available on [www.socialscience.nl](http://www.socialscience.nl).

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# Colophon

Amsterdam Social Science was established by Jonathan Mijs and Thomas Franssen, then students of the Graduate School of Social Sciences at the University of Amsterdam. The journal continues to be run by students of the University of Amsterdam and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The journal is issued twice per year and features innovative, interdisciplinary articles and essays written by Master's and PhD students. Amsterdam Social Science aims to interest students for each other's work and to give students an opportunity to learn how to run a journal and publish in it. All articles are double-blind peer-reviewed.

Alle rechten voorbehouden. Niets uit deze uitgave mag worden veelevoudigd, opgeslagen in een geautomatiseerd gegevensbestand, of openbaar gemaakt, in enige vorm of op enige wijze, hetzij elektronisch, mechanisch, door fotokopieën, opnamen, of op enige andere manier zonder voorafgaande schriftelijke toestemming van de uitgever. Voor het overnemen van gedeelte(n) uit deze uitgave in bloemlezingen, readers en andere compilatiewerken (art. 16 Auteurswet 1912) dient men zich tot de uitgever te wenden.

This issue is made possible by the Graduate Schools of Social Sciences at the University of Amsterdam and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

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## Contact

info@socialscience.nl  
 www.socialscience.nl

ISSN 2210-2310