



Citizen history and community engagement: a reappraisal of the professional/“amateur” relationship and its evolution in Quebec

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UQÀM

LHPM

Laboratoire d'histoire et
de patrimoine de Montréal

FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES HUMAINES

Plan

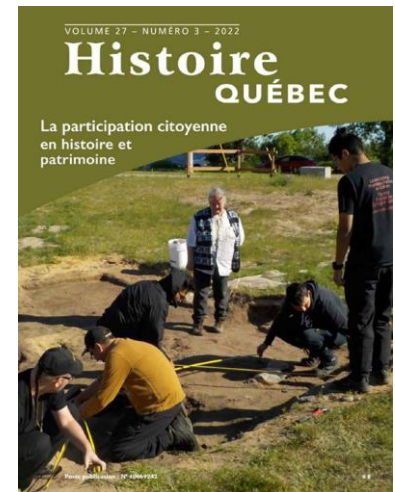
1. *Memory Agents* : About our project
2. Shifting paradigm : towards citizen history
3. A diachronic review: from antiquarians to citizen history
4. A synchronic perspective: multi-faceted citizen historic contributions
5. From collaboration to empowerment : impacts on public history practices
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1. About our research project

“From antiquarians to memory agents: historical societies and citizen associations in the valorization of the past”

- Launched in 2019 by a team of the *Laboratoire d'histoire et de patrimoine de Montréal* (UQAM). Composed of two researchers and a representative from Fédération Histoire Québec (FHQ)
- Issue : “Amateur” history has generally been overlooked as historical practice, even if historical societies and citizens' associations have long been active agents in the construction of collective memory.
- We consider citizen history as a research object and as a collaborative approach to our research.
- Diachronic and synchronic dimensions under scrutiny.



2. Shifting paradigm : towards citizen history

History as cultural practice

Three types of practices (data collected in 2014):

- **Consumption practices**, e. g. visiting museums, reading historical or works, etc. (Attendance to non-art museum: 33%; historic heritage sites and interpretive venues 27% , about 2 million people)
- **Production practices**, e. g. researching, writing papers: “Practice of activities related to history, genealogy, archaeology or heritage in a leisure context at least a few times a year” (14.4% of adults over 15, or about 1 million).
- **Engagement practices**, e. g. Participation as a volunteer or administrator in an organization (data too granular)
- Our project focuses on production practices, past and present.

Shifting paradigm : towards citizen history

Public History and citizen science

The recent surge in citizen science has prompted not only new contributions to contemporary knowledge but also a fresh look at the evolution of older citizen science practices, as it the case in history.

Many factors contribute to this surge:

1. The “participatory turn” or imperative, e. g. the request for public participation in every domain, including history and heritage;
2. Crowdsourcing as a technological approach for improved content;
3. The reassessment of past and present citizen involvement (antiquarians and amateurs) in historical knowledge, considering both individual or collective contributions;
4. Improved relationships between professional and citizen historians to address issues facing communities.

3. A diachronic review : from antiquarians to citizen history

1. Antiquarian history and archaeology (19th Century-1920)
2. Regionalist history (1920-1960)
3. Local history (1960-2010)
4. Towards citizen history (2010-)

4. A synchronic perspective

Assessing the multi-faceted citizen historic contributions

If the extent of citizen practices of history is impressive, their importance, scope, relationship to professional and public history, or impact on the memory of communities are mostly unknown.

Engagement, pilot program in citizen science in Quebec (2022-2024)

- Start up Phase (2022): Assessing method / available knowledge (\$15 K)
- Action Phase (TBC) (2023-2024): Deployment of participatory research across Quebec (\$ 30K).
- Our funded project is the only one in history amongst 10 of 74 submissions accepted.

Engagement: a citizen science approach to memory

Context : The pilot program is aimed at putting "at the heart of the scientific process" and to invite researchers "to develop innovative participatory science practices".

Our objective : to answer the question *What is the influence of citizen participation on the collective memory of Quebecers?*

Collaborative team structure: at different levels (core team, consultative committee), there is parity between researchers and involved citizens.



Comme Richard, tu es curieux?
Tu veux changer le monde par la science?



Des milliers de bénévoles œuvrent dans les associations d'histoire au Québec, mais leur contribution est très peu valorisée.

Quelle est l'influence de ce type d'implication sur la mémoire collective québécoise?

Participe au programme *engagement* qui te place au cœur d'un projet de recherche.

Ta question m'intrigue. Est-ce que tu veux qu'on débute un projet de recherche ensemble?



Soumets ta question avant le 15 septembre et forme un duo avec un chercheur ou une chercheuse.



<https://forms.gle/kbjCHegraHY3G9UY9>



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Engagement, Phase 1 (2022)

Phase 1 (2022)

- Quantitative component: survey.
- Qualitative analysis : two regional portraits of the contribution of historical societies and citizens' associations

Phase 2 (2023-2024, TBC)

- Action plan: mobilize citizen historians to look at their own history and practices, in order to create a kind of digital encyclopedia of Quebec citizen history.

5. From collaboration to empowerment :

Citizen history practice and its challenges

Valuing citizen practices does not mean erasing their differences or limitations, but rather recognizing their specific contributions as well as their limitations.

Contributions

- Democratization of participation, e.g. broadening of civic engagement from an interest in history to an agentivity of memory in the 20th century.
- Willingness to tell the truth and to use some well-known aspects of the methodology
Commitment to the community

Limitations

- Difficulty in problematizing, asking a question or intervening in a relevant way
- Lack of reflexivity about practice and of insertion in historiographic debates
- Lack of broader perspectives ("refusal" to synthesize) sometimes makes information too granular or very specific, making it meaningless.

5. From collaboration to empowerment : Impacts on public history practices

- Public historians are at the forefront of collaborative approaches.
- Could we think of moving a step forward ? An approach of empowerment would allow:
 - To recognize each other's contributions
 - To encourage dialogue and collaboration
 - Strengthen the overall presence of sound historical practices in society.
 - Allow, through a self-reflexive and collaborative approach, an improvement of the relevance of citizen history.

About our project : Looking forward...

- **Continuation of research**
 - On the evolution of citizen history in Quebec
 - Engagement 2023-2024
- **Bridging the historical community in Canada (2023)**
 - Meetings between professional historian associations and historical society federations of provinces and territories to share concerns and develop common ground for future collaboration.
- **Conference – October 2023**
 - Organized by a partnership between three university institutes or departments and Fédération Histoire Québec.
 - Objective: disseminate results and extend the conversation
- **Publications**
 - Papers in journals, etc.
 - Books, etc.

Questions ?

Links of interest

Research project webpage:
<https://tinyurl.com/yc3bu52r>

Histoire Québec, “On citizen participation in history and heritage” (27,3. 2022):
<https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/hq/2022-v27-n3-hq06946/>

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