

Improvisation and Community Health
IICSI-IHSP-SALA Conference
June 5-6 2015
Mackay Centre School & Sala Rossa, Montreal

Improvisational theory and community health policy share many concerns, and overlap with regards to methods, problematics and theory. Many public health initiatives and the theories that inform them have in common features of improvisatory practices: a focus on dialogicality, the desired equality of voices, flexibility and an openness to contingencies, and a rejection of both top-down management and traditional silos, whether they concern sources of agency, genres, or institutional and governmental responsibilities and mandates. Community health initiatives often take place against a backdrop of insufficient resources and uncertain outcomes—conditions that often suggest improvisatory gestures in response. In a narrower sense, improvisatory arts practices are commonly theorized as potent sites for identity formation, interpersonal understanding across barriers of difference, creation of bonds of solidarity, collective contestation of status quos, and so can themselves be important parts of community health initiatives.

This conference will explore these and other related themes, asking questions such as: How might features of improvisatory practices (whether they concern the production, reception or mediation of the improvisatory) suggest new models of social policy? How might the improvisatory arts play a role in creating healthy communities? How might inclusive models of collective improvisation both model, and actually help create, more inclusive, healthy communities? What do policy makers have to learn from improvisers, and improvisers from policy makers? How might improvisatory models of the distribution of agency, responsibility, ownership and action translate into constructive models for improving community health? What is/could be/should be the role and function of the improvising artist in creating and maintaining healthy communities? How might a study of the improvisatory reveal hidden assumptions, agendas and shortcomings in our conception of what constitutes a healthy community? What are the similarities and differences between “unhealthy” improvisations and “ill” communities?

June 5 will be held at the Mackay Center School, a school for children with physical disabilities, committed to creating a healthy and creative community via collective improvisatory music making. **June 6** will be held at the Sala Rossa, a performance space committed to community activism and liberatory arts.

Submission Details: We are soliciting proposals for individual papers, panels, workshops, interventions, or other possible presentation forms. Please send us one page abstracts/descriptions of your proposal. For proposals that involve multiple presenters, please give us the names and contact information for all those involved. Let us know your technical needs. Please also send a short (single paragraph) bio for all presenters/participants. Single person presentations should be limited to a half-hour presentation. Panels, workshops, and other collective interventions can request up to a two-hour time slot. There will be evening concerts/performances in association with the conference and our partner SALA.

Deadline for submissions: March 8, 2015

Please send all submissions to the following three email addresses: eric.lewis@Mcgill.ca;
illacarrillo2@gmail.com; & danielweins@gmail.com

IICSI: International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation
IHSP: McGill Institute for Health and Public Policy
SALA: Société des arts libres et actuels

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