Report on Innovation by Design focus groups held at the University of Manitoba January 10ᵗʰ (virtual) and January 11ᵗʰ (In-person)

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Students Association at the University of Manitoba co-hosted two focus groups with graduate students to gain insight into their perspectives on how research in the social sciences, arts and humanities contribute to innovation. The focus groups were held on two separate occasions with one being virtual and the other in person. A total of 16 graduate students took part in the consultation. The Asper School of Business, Engineering, Architecture, Health Sciences, Food and Nutritional Science and the School of Art were represented in the graduate student participants. We also shared the questions with those who had registered but were unable to attend the two workshops (52 graduate students) through a MS Form to allow another opportunity for feedback.

Graduate students were asked 4 questions:

1. What skills specific to the social sciences, arts and humanities contribute to stimulating social or ethical innovation in Canada?

2. How do the social sciences, arts and humanities contribute to new models of research in innovation? What are the differences in approaches to innovation in the SSH versus the STEM fields? What are the similarities?

3. How do the social science, arts and humanities challenge norms (norms in academia) that leads to the development and implementation of new products, services, strategies and solutions that add value to society? (definition of innovation being used in this study).

4. How can the SSH fields better engage with conversations about innovation? How can they raise the public profile of SSH-led innovations?

The following themes emerged from the focus groups:

Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities Ground Innovation in Community

Research in the social science, arts and humanities involves the voice of the community, everyday people and grassroots more often that STEM fields. This community-based participation in research leads to innovation that is more empathic of the needs of community, culturally grounded and specific rather than universal and, ethical in the way the research and innovation is conducted.

Participants comments were:

> *"I think also that the social sciences, arts and humanities open up more people to the innovation process…you can engage more everyday people you can have more bottom-up approaches to innovation."*

> *"So, the SSH deals with morality, while the other field like STEM takes with ethics. Ethics is an external code of conduct, but morality is linked about to an individual thinking what is right versus what is wrong. So, we'll be building conversations about innovation, there is no constraint and lots of ideas can be generated over it…So innovation can be improved."*

> *"Yeah, certainly my colleagues in >>>> are going to look beyond the Euro-Western or for that matter IndoAsian worldviews, like you said, traditional ecological knowledge from Indigenous. They will embrace that.""*

> *"But if you want to actually introduce something to people who will be actually using that technology or product is better you base it off the culture."*

Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities Embrace Interdisciplinarity and Transdisciplinary Approaches Contributing to Innovation

The social sciences, arts and humanities embraces a variety of research methodologies and hypotheses and research methods and can draw upon many disciplines to explore questions. These research methodologies adapt as research progresses which supports a more flexible research framework. The opportunity to think 'outside the box' is more likely in the social sciences, arts and humanities.

Participants comments were:

> *"But in … the social sciences… depending on the methodology, not all of them, you can adapt along the way. Some of them you also have an end goal in mind, and you'll walk away but some of them are more flexible. And then you can adjust and instead of wasting that time to the end and getting negative finding which is also a finding. You adapt and adjust to have something meaningful towards the end."*

> *"But in the social sciences, it brings other ways of doing research or other ways of producing knowledge, and therefore innovation for society…But also it can challenge these norms in academia that only quantitative research has value."*

> *"But because of COVID, in the world disruption, the field of health became incredibly cross cutting with every single discipline in the world. And we're only seeing that now. So a couple of accreditations that I did over the summer, were healthy building. And so that's teams of engineers, and doctors and epidemiologists, sociologists, and organizational behavior, people. And so there's these massive international frames now that are basically trying to help people feel good about getting into a building again."*

Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities Challenge the Premises/Claims to Innovation

The social sciences, arts and humanities challenges/question the ways in which innovation is framed that may not prioritize societies' ethics, morals or ways of thinking.

Participants comments were:

> *"I think part of our responsibility within the social sciences and humanities is to reframe and redefine what innovation means within our contexts and wide stuff, people. So, we have allowed, rightly or wrongly, a society to frame innovation in a certain way that doesn't necessarily prioritize our ways, our approaches, right?... Because all SSH does is outside the box thinking and challenge systems and fight against normative behavior in a way that everyone else just says... But what we require is the push the social sciences, humanities allow us to see beyond those boundaries and beyond those gates, and we've just done a really lousy job of allowing everyone else to co-opt things from us and convince us then in turn, we're not good at that thing."*