

EconMatters

Faculty Profile

Catherine Boulatoff

When looking back, the path that led me to Dalhousie University looks somewhat circumvoluted.

After completing my Master in Psychology at the Université Catholique de l'Ouest, in France, I moved to Utah, and completed my Ph.D. in Economics at Utah State University (USU). Interestingly enough, it is while taking a karate class that I met a fellow student who recommended I meet Dr. J. Keith, an Economics professor at USU, who later became my advisor. While completing my studies, I also taught French at the university level.



When the time came to work on my dissertation, my background in psychology proved to be quite useful to design, administer and analyze the results of a Contingent Valuation Survey on the costs of preserving habitat along the Garonne River, France. I was very fortunate to meet Dr. B. Desaignes, a French researcher specializing in non-market valuation. I joined her and her team in Toulouse in 1996-1997. There, I worked with researchers from the Institute National de Recherche Agronomique (INRA) and Toulouse School of Economics (TSE).

Upon my return in Utah, I became Research Associate at the Early Intervention Research Institute (EIRI), an organization affiliated with Utah State University working on different projects related to population ageing, children with disabilities, child abuse and neglect. During my two years working at EIRI, I learned to write (and obtain) grants, and conduct economic analysis to these diverse projects. The one I most fondly remember is when, along with Dr V. Jump – who specialized in early education and infant massage – I worked on evaluating the cost effectiveness of an Ohio early childhood program to prevent child abuse and neglect.

In many ways, the different turns and twists of my professional life have followed the trials and tribulations of my personal life, and it is again for these reasons that I found myself accepting an assistant professor position in upstate New York, first at Clarkson University, then at St Lawrence University.

Since I joined Dalhousie University in 2010, I have met wonderful colleagues and interesting students. I greatly enjoy teaching, whether it be Introductory Economics, Environmental Economics, Writing, or International Trade. My areas of research interests today lie in Environmental Economics, the nexus between Trade and the Environment, Urban Economics, and the Economics of Teaching.

I typically like to focus on applied projects, whenever possible, related to Canada, Nova Scotia, or Halifax. For instance, Dr. M Akbulut-Yuksel and I are currently analyzing the impact of a green nudge policy in Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) that was recently implemented in Halifax. Using administrative data and recognizing the interplay between psycho-social and economic contents of preference in environmental policies, we use a Regression Discontinuity (RD) design to measure the impact of the policy on recycling and overall MSW generation in our community (also funded by SSHRC Explore grant). Another project with Drs. T Iscan and Y. Kotlyarova, issued this time from a grant project funded by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), focuses on looking at service trade between Canadian provinces between 2007 and 2013. Finally, Dr. T. Cyrus and I have been working on modifying the design of how our introductory Economics classes are being taught, and we will be looking at the effectiveness of this redesign as measured by students' learning and satisfaction.

Though it has been a winding road with many detours and side routes, travelling the path that has been my life has led me to Dalhousie. To teach in this Department at this institution, sharing my knowledge and research with the next generation of economists that pass through our doors, has been an extraordinary privilege and the high point of my career.

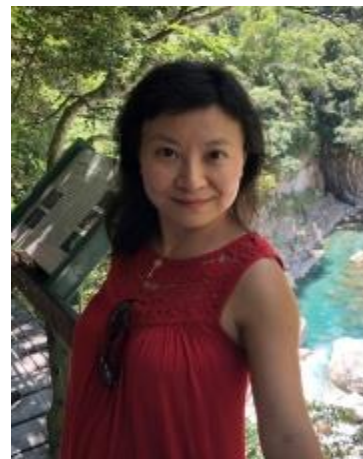
At the risk of seeming rather kitschy, I would like to finish this reflection with something the Dalai Lama once said: "*Judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it.*"

Alumni Profiles

Nan Geng (MA 2004)

Nan is currently an economist in European Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). She graduated from the Master's in Economics program at Dalhousie University in 2004 and obtained a PhD in Economics from University of California, Santa Cruz, before joining the IMF in 2010—an organization that was at the top of her potential employer list.

Nan has now enjoyed a fulfilling eight years filled with memorable international experiences at the IMF. She has traveled to and worked with people from many countries in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region where her work has impacted countries' macroeconomic policies. She has published on a broad range of topics in economics journals, books, and as IMF working papers; she has been cited widely, including in *The Economist*. Outside working hours, her 8-month old daughter, Ainan, and 5-year-old son, Sinan, keep her happily busy.



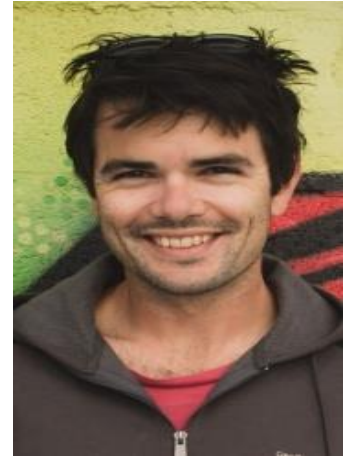
"Coming back to my alma mater for a talk on one of my recently published IMF working papers brings back a lot of cherished memories," Nan says. "I travelled abroad for the first time from China to study at Dalhousie with a full scholarship in the fall of 2003 when I was a shy girl. I fell in love at the first sight of our Economics department and the nice faculty and staff there who make me feel like its home.

"It's a very special community—both small and student-centered—which fosters the diverse interests of students and provides lots of precious opportunities to grow. For me, this included working as the research assistant for Prof. Lars Osberg on a UN project, evaluating poverty. Lars later became my thesis advisor and Prof. Kuan Xu was on my thesis committee. They provided strong intellectual rigour alongside practical lessons for life, and have profoundly influenced my career. They were patient and had a knack for explaining complex things in very clear ways. When I need to explain something complex to a junior colleague or to a minister or government official, I still think about how Osberg and Xu would explain it.

"They also taught me to think closely about what I wanted to do and what is important to me. When you really enjoy what you are doing, you will excel at it. They will always remain role models for how I work with colleagues and partners at the Fund."

Andrew Fanning (MDE 2012)

I graduated from Dal twice – once with a BA in International Development Studies and Economics (2007), and the second time with a Master's in Development Economics (MDE) in 2012. Since then, I have completed doctoral studies at the Universidad de Cadiz (Spain), and I am currently a Marie Skłodowska Curie Research Fellow in the Sustainability Research Institute at the University of Leeds (United Kingdom). My research aims to identify the changes needed to maintain or enhance human well-being in a world where the environmental pressures of economic activity are kept within planetary boundaries.



When I think about how my time at Dal has led me to where I am today, I can point to two life-changing chains of events that began in the Department of Economics.

The first one began in the first year of my undergrad (2003-04), when I saw a poster in a poorly lit corner of one of the Maxwell house basements. It was entitled "Study, Live and Learn in Buenos Aires" and advertised an exchange agreement for 3rd and 4th year economics undergraduates between Dalhousie and Universidad Torcuato di Tella in Buenos Aires (Argentina). I remember my first thought was that I wanted to do it. My second thought was that I would need to learn Spanish! Long story short, I spent the next two years learning some Spanish at Dal and abroad, and finally got the chance to study in Buenos Aires for a life-changing semester during my 4th year.

The second chain of events began during the first year of my 2-year Master's in 2010, thanks to the unique requirement of the MDE program to take graduate-level courses outside the Department of Economics. I remember being excited to find a course entitled "Economics for Resource and Environmental Management" in the School for Resource and Environmental Studies (SRES). That course unexpectedly introduced me to the field of ecological economics (not to be confused with environmental economics), and included a simple question that blew my mind: How big should economies grow on our finite planet? I remember being shocked that my macroeconomics training couldn't provide a clear answer, and I felt silly because the question had never occurred to me. So I started reading, thinking, and writing – and I haven't really stopped.

Fast-forward to nearly a decade later, my interests in development and environment have combined to grapple with the challenge of how to meet the needs of all within the means of the planet. As part of this work, I have led the development of an interactive website, A Good Life For All, to foster a public discussion about the meaning of a "good life" and what it could look like in a world that lives within planetary boundaries. This discussion is vital – and urgent – because our research finds that no country currently meets basic needs for its citizens at a globally sustainable level of resource use. In other words, as my colleague Kate Raworth puts it: "We are all developing countries now." To me, that means it's more important than ever to be rethinking economics so that it's fit to face social and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

News

Canada's Economy in the Next 50 Years: What Do Canadians Want?

In celebration of Dalhousie University's 200th anniversary, the Department of Economics hosted two events on September 29th focusing on the theme: *Canada's Economy in the Next 50 Years: What do Canadians Want?* **Jamie Charlebois** (MDE 2012) and a group of Alumni from the Master of Development Economics (MDE) program organized the participatory conference and panel discussion.

The conference took place during the day and was comprised mostly of DAL alumni and members of the broader Halifax community. The objective of the conference was to explore what *economic prosperity* means to Canadians and what we collectively want the Canadian economy to look like in the next 50 years. While there was a diversity of opinions on the definition of economic prosperity, most participants emphasized the importance of balancing financial security now and for future generations. As for broad areas in need of change, in order to achieve economic prosperity now and in the future, three areas were identified: environment, equality, and education. The conference participants then broke out into groups to brainstorm solutions to the major areas identified.

Dr. Talan Iscan, Head of The Department of Economics, kicked the conference off by providing comments on the Canadian economy that helped to provide some context to the day's discussions. Ian McAllister, "Retired" Professor and founder of Dalhousie's MDE program, offered potential future directions that the conference initiative could take, as closing remarks. Those who know Ian doubt the fact that he is retired, given his tireless dedication to teaching and to his students. The organizing committee is very thankful to Talan and Ian for their steadfast support and encouragement of these events.

A more public-facing panel discussion took place in the early evening at the new Halifax Central Library and drew around 70 audience members. An especially impressive feat given that it was perhaps the last warm fall evening of the year. The panelists were: Lisa Roberts (MDE 2004), MLA for Halifax Needham, **Dale Prest** (BSc'10, Environmental Science), and Ecosystem Services Specialist with Community Forests International, **Robert Bernard**, President & CEO of Diversity Management Group, and **Susanna Fuller** (PhD'11, Marine Biology), Senior Project Officer with Oceans North. This diverse group of panelists shared their thoughts on the future of Canada's economy and the area's most in need of change. The panel discussion was followed by a reception that inspired further conversation, connection, and relationship building.

The organizing committee would like to thank Robert Bernard, in particular, for his participation. As a Mi'kmaw business owner of a capacity building firm, Robert was able to offer some important Indigenous perspectives; perspectives that have traditionally been absent from these discussions and that are crucial to include for the sake of our common future. Both of these events encouraged wide-ranging debate and provided the space for exchanging diverse opinions about the future prosperity and sustainability of Canada's economy. It was refreshing to see the economy discussed as something that we have created and can therefore influence, rather than as an autonomous beast to be served.

Photo Gallery: Canada 2050 Conference





Events

John F. Graham Memorial Lecture 2019

This year's John F. Graham Memorial Lecture will be held on March 28 2019. The lecture, "The Collapse of the Middle Class Wealth in the US... but it's Rise (?) in Canada" will be delivered by Dr. Edward Wolff, Professor of Economics from New York University.

Winter 2019 Seminar Series

We might be past the half-way point of our Winter 2019 Economics Seminar Series, but there are still a few more weeks you can come and attend. Each Friday at 2:30 in Room 2198 McCain Arts Building, a visiting speaker from across the continent; in the weeks ahead we'll have speakers from Oregon, Puerto Rico, Toronto and Montreal. Check Economics department webpage to see the complete list of speakers and dates.

Recognitions

Faculty Impact

Recent achievements by and recognitions of the faculty in Dalhousie's Department of Economics, including publications, interviews, nominations and awards.

Dr. Mevlude Akbulut has been recently nominated to serve as one of the twelve Council Members at the Board of Directors of the Canadian Economic Association (CEA) for a four-year term. The CEA is the organization of academic economists in Canada with 2000 members in Canada and abroad.

Dr. Melvin Cross is serving the second year of a two year term as Chairperson on the awards committee of the annual Joseph J. Spengler Prize for the best book concerning history of economic thought. Fellow committee members are Guy Numa (University of Massachusetts, Boston) and Cléo Chassonnery-Zaigouche (Université de Lausanne). Original books about topics in History of Economic Thought published in English during the three calendar years prior to the Annual Conference of the History of Economics Society are eligible for nomination. The next Conference of the History of Economics Society will be held June 20-23, 2019, Faculty House, Columbia University, New York, New York. Dr. Cross also presented "Lessons on Corporate Behaviour and Regulatory Policy: What can we Learn from the 19th Century American Railroad Industry?" to the Department of Economics, Acadia University, October 19, 2018.

Dr. Barry Lesser, China Program Director and Professor Emeritus, Department of Economics, received the Shandong Province of China Qilu Friendship Award in a ceremony in Weihai, China, on October 27 2018. The Qilu Friendship Award is the highest honour awarded by the Government of Shandong Province, given in recognition of the outstanding contributions made by foreign experts in promoting the economic construction and social development of Shandong Province.

Dr. Dozie Okoye has received a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connection Grant to host a workshop on Data Driven Development to be held May. This event is co-sponsored by the Faculty of Science, Departments of Economics, and International Development Studies. Dr. Okoye has also co-authored an article, published on January 8 2019 in the Journal of Economic Geography, entitled Six decades after independence: the enduring influence of missionary activities on regional wealth inequalities in Ghana.

Dr. Daniel Rosenblum was interviewed in the December 5th 2018 edition of Halifax newspaper The Chronicle Herald. The article, "Fentanyl's spread likely linked to heroin shortage: report", covered Rosenblum's recently accepted paper on fentanyl (Mars S., D. Rosenblum and D. Ciccarone (forthcoming) "Illicit fentanyls in the opioid street market: desired or imposed?" Addiction.)