

“It’s not for us”: Physical and social transformations in a working class neighbourhood

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of a mixed-methods approach used to investigate the impact of revitalization of public spaces on the definition of home territory. Regeneration of derelict neighbourhoods is an objective of many (local) governments. Investments in infrastructures, façades of buildings and public spaces take place in these neighbourhoods, sometimes inspired by other cities’ success stories. These actions are assumed to benefit local residents. However, the rehabilitation of the physical environment may attract a new population with different socio-economic profiles and lifestyles. This will be reflected in the residential space of the new population as well as in the way public space is used and appropriated. How do indigenous residents react to this form of invasion of their home territory? Are their defensive reactions to redefine their home territory? The first case of this multiple case study is located in the Southwest Borough in the city of Montreal (Canada). On the historical site of the birth of industrialization in Canada, the federal government has created a linear park in the proximity of working class neighbourhoods. This major investment favours the rehabilitation of a brownfield site into a residential area housing luxurious condominiums and townhouses. Results show that there is a clear distinction in the use of space based on socio-economic profiles. This presentation will also explore how users and residents define their social and physical environment and their home territory.

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AUTHORIZATION

INTRODUCTION: REVITALIZATION AND GENTRIFICATION OF CENTRAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

Gentrification has been a subject of debate since the pioneering work of Ruth Glass was published in the beginning of the 1960s (Glass, 1989), where she observed the “return of the gentry” in London’s central neighbourhoods¹. Despite the lack of consensus about what is gentrification, most researchers agree that there is some form of displacement of people, of a substitution of a working class population with a wealthier one (financially or culturally). Several characteristics of newcomers that stand out are smaller households, families with a higher than average level of education and employment in the new economy. Gentrifiers, with, lifestyles different than the traditional suburban middle class, (re)appropriate residential areas in close proximity to the CBD- an area that typically possesses the most important architectural and urban qualities (Carpenter & Lee, 1995; Dansereau & L’Écuyer, 1987; Smith & Defilippis, 1999). Sometimes, the process is more consumer-oriented and results from the aggregation of individual decisions to rehabilitate affordable but derelict housing in the center. Other times it is production oriented, induced by public or private investments, sometimes with evictions of local residents such as in the well-documented Society Hill project in Philadelphia (Smith, 1996).

Rehabilitation, revitalization and restoration of a neighbourhood’s physical environment— including its public spaces— can make the area more attractive to gentrifiers. Interventions on the built environment participate in the construction of a positive image of an area, neighbourhood, and city, even if some of them are simply aimed at reducing physical degradation or socioeconomic decline of specific areas of the city. For public administrations, gentrification might be positive, rehabilitating rundown areas and increasing fiscal revenues. In this sense, gentrification should benefit everyone. However, local residents fear “forced” displacement by eviction or by the increasing pressure of the real estate market that is associated with the gentrification process (Smith, 1996, among others). This fear will feed protest movements– anti-gentrification movements– against any apparent revitalizing action. But the work of Freeman (2005) shows that in most cases there is little empirical evidence to demonstrate that displacement *per se* is the initiator/accelerator of the gentrification process. Indigenous² residents might choose to move for other reasons than real estate market pressure. The role played by the dissatisfaction experienced by indigenous residents about the transformation of their physical and social environment has not been well documented in the abundant gentrification studies. We should question if indigenous residents are strongly influenced to move following the arrival of new households with different socio-professional characteristics and lifestyles,. Many studies have demonstrated, in a larger context, that dissatisfaction with the living environment is an important incentive to relocate (Brown & Moore, 1970, among others). By leaving the neighbourhood, indigenous residents can facilitate or accelerate the social

¹ For an example of different definitions and case studies, see for example Bidou, C. (2003). *Retours en ville : des processus de "gentrification" urbaine aux politiques de "revitalisation" des centres*. Paris, Descartes.

² We choose the term indigenous in the sense of natural, i.e. the indigenous residents are of the same socioprofessional class than the traditional one.

transformations associated with the gentrification process of a defined area. This is the interest of our research.

In this equation, where does public space fit in?

What meaning do residents attach to public spaces in residential areas? Individuals, households and groups, through their uses and representations, appropriate physical/public space;³ Familiarity with a space, can develop feelings of attachment, thus encouraging feelings of ‘ownership’. In other words, through their daily practices, users of public space can extend their home from the dwelling to include public spaces, making these spaces part of their home environment (Rapoport, 1985). In this form of control, they can exclude (implicitly or explicitly) other users and uses.

Private and public investors may succeed in attracting new residents by creating or highlighting a (new) positive image of an area (through the creation, redesigning, rehabilitation, programmed activities or sanitation/homogenization of public space. The arrival of new users with different socio-economic profiles and lifestyles may cause some friction about the use and ownership of public space. Schaller and Modan (2005) highlighted this tension between social and ethnic groups in their work on Mont Pleasant, Washington following the Neighbourhood Business Improvement District (NBID) program. In this area in the process of gentrification, immigrants and working class populations continued to socialize in public spaces— spaces they felt were meant, for this purpose. For gentrifiers, these spaces were meant for circulation or consumption thus the behaviour of the indigenous residents was considered “inadequate”. Unfortunately, the study of Schaller and Modan (2005) does not elaborate on any defensive or offensive reaction of either group addressing the perceived misuse of the space, an invasion of their territory. These reactions could vary from fighting as in the case with anti-gentrification movement, to reducing territorial claim (Taylor and Bower, 1985). In our view, reducing territorial claim may cause the indigenous residents to feel dissatisfied with regard to their living environment.

This paper will present the results of the case of the Southwest Borough in the city of Montreal. At this stage of our investigation, we do not yet claim to be able to answer our main question. The objectives of this work-in-progress are: (1) to understand the dynamics of the shared public space under study and the possible conflicts between new residents and indigenous residents; (2) and to understand how the creation of the Lachine Canal Park, and its influence on the redevelopment of the area, influence the (re)definition of the home territory of the indigenous and new residents as well as their residential satisfaction. Our hypothesis is that the extension of the home into public spaces by new residents (identified here as gentrifiers), and the withdrawal into the private sphere (i.e., the redefinition of the home territory) by the indigenous residents cause increasing dissatisfaction of the latter with their living environment. This dissatisfaction may eventually contribute to a decision to relocate.

³ We want to think of public spaces as physical spaces open to the public (Bassand & Güller, 2001).

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Three main topics are explored in this investigation, using different tools: 1) the socioresidential dynamic, using a hierarchical cluster analysis; 2) the users and the uses of public spaces, using observations and a short questionnaire; 3) the public space, the home territory and its meanings, using semi-structured interviews. The choice of the different tools was not dictated by only ‘technical’ considerations (Walker, 1985 quoted by Bryman, 1988). The characteristics of the tools used are explained in the following sections.

In order to isolate a possible local (cultural) effect in a process that seems to occur in many different parts of the world, the research project was designed to proceed with a multiple case study⁴. Only results of the first case are presented in this paper.

The Montreal case study

With 1.85 million residents, Montreal is the second largest city in Canada. In 2006, Montreal was declared “City of Design” by UNESCO. Many of its old neighbourhoods are well preserved such as the neighbourhoods of Old Montreal or the (now gentrified) Plateau. The area under study is enclosed by highways and railways, in close proximity to the CBD and located in the Southwest borough which covers an area of 13.5 km² (figure 1). This area developed along the Lachine Canal, which was built to connect the Atlantic Ocean, via the St. Lawrence River, to the Great Lakes. Because of its hydraulic potential, industries rapidly settled on the canal’s banks making this area the first site of Canada’s industrialization. Poor and working class neighbourhoods (such as Pointe-St.-Charles, St.-Henri or Little Burgundy) formed in proximity to this industrial hub (Benoît & Gratton, 1991). With the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway and new industry requirements, industries began to leave the area for better locations. This exodus began in earnest in 1945, and the canal closed to navigation in 1970. Parks Canada (a federal agency) took over the site in 1978 to transform it into a linear park, one year after the opening of the multipurpose path⁵. In 1998, the canal reopened to pleasure boating, the end result of a revitalization project aimed at giving the canal back to the local population.

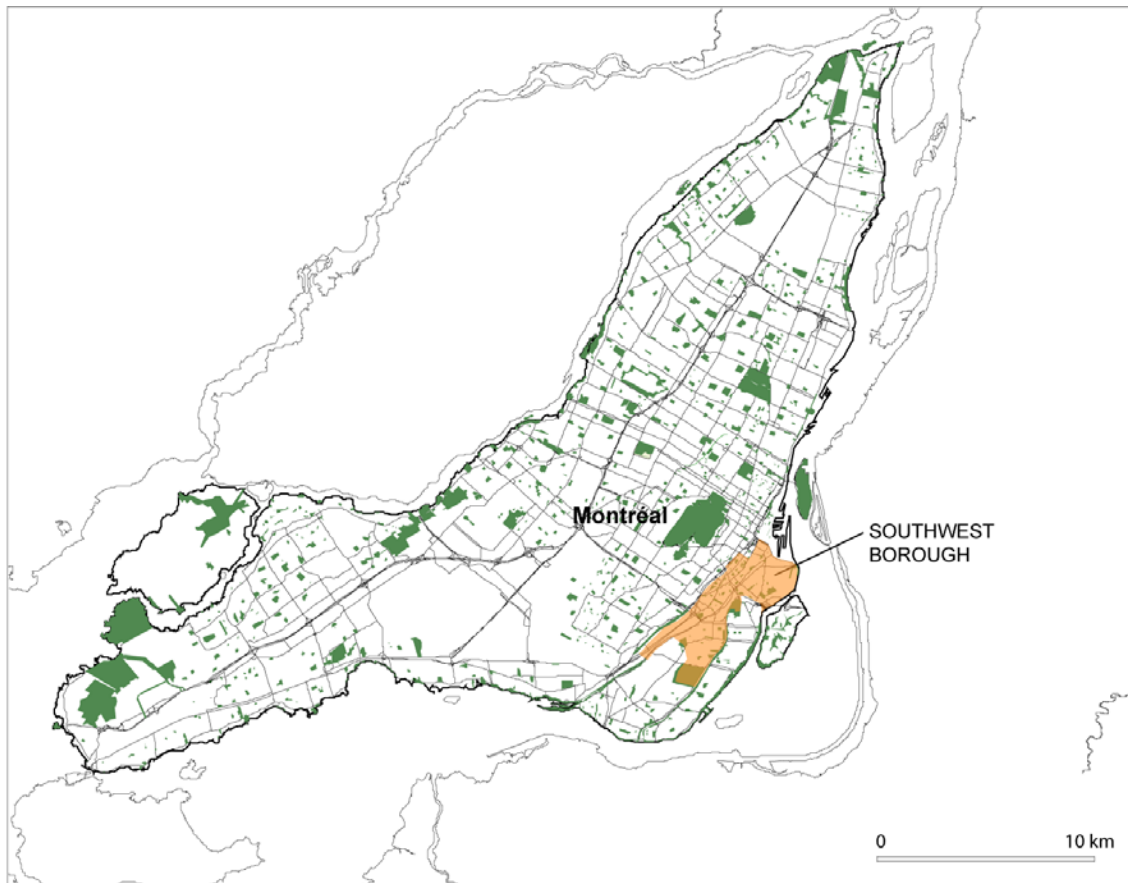
As in many industrial cities, the relocation of industries had a negative impact on the economic vitality of surrounding neighbourhoods. However, local community development organizations were, and continue to be, very active in the area. Almost 30% of the dwellings are social and/or affordable housing. This density of affordable and/or social housing is the largest density of such housing in Canada. With the conversion of the canal into a park and its opening to (pleasure) boating, the Southwest Borough became attractive to wealthy households. Private investors began to rehabilitate and transform the old industrial buildings into luxury housing and, in some cases, artist/professional studios. New buildings were also built on empty lots. After 30 years of demographic and economic decline, the Southwest Borough seems to be witnessing growth again (Ville de Montréal, 2007).

⁴ Please, contact the first author for more information about the other cases under study.

⁵ Which makes it one of the oldest in Montreal, shared by cyclists, skaters and pedestrians.

The major social and physical changes in the area did eventually put pressure on the local housing market and the social transformation has begun to influence the commercial offer on the north shore of the canal⁶. With the combination of (1) various transformations of their living environment, (2) the new popularity of the area and (3) the shortage of affordable housing, indigenous residents have begun to fear being pushed away from their historical working class neighbourhood by the gentrification process.

Figure 1: The Southwest Borough in the Island of Montreal



The socioresidential dynamic

The objective in the first step of the research project was to mark out the socioresidential dynamic during the last 15 years in order to evaluate if the area underwent an important gentrification process. The interest was not, *per se*, to demonstrate statistically the gentrification process, or its acceleration, in a neighbourhood but rather to use these results to better understand the perceptions and representations of the physical and social transformations of the neighbourhood by indigenous residents. Hierarchical cluster analysis was used to measure the Euclidian or

⁶ Mostly in Little Burgundy and St.-Henri.

geometric distance, using the Ward method of aggregation⁷. This classification technique was used on population census data, data translating the characteristics of gentrifiers.

Having an *a priori* of the expected results, only (standardized) variables, translating gentrifiers’ characteristics were introduced in the test, including the median income rank⁸ (table 1). With the political boundaries of Montreal changing twice in the last ten years the test was done on (standardized) census tracts located in a 15 km radius from the central business district⁹. Results of the hierarchical cluster analysis were mapped.

Table 1: Selected variables

Characteristics	Variables in the census
Smaller households with fewer children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average number of persons per household • Proportion of the population less than 5 years old
Non-familial household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-familial household
Higher education than average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 years or older with university study
Job in the new economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profession
Double-income households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female participation rate • Median income (rank)

The analysis of the classification tree indicates an optimal classification with three clusters¹⁰. Table 2 below shows the clusters’ barycentres on variables. Without indicating a clear continuum of a concentration of gentrifiers, results show that they clearly concentrate in cluster 3. There, we find a larger concentration of smaller households, fewer children, non-familial households, a greater education than average, greater activity rate among women and more professional workers.

⁷ For more information about the technique, see Sanders (1989), among others.

⁸ In that case the census tracts were divided according to their median income in five groups. The first three lower ones regroup 20% of the census tract each, the fourth one 18% and the last one 2% of the highest median income. In order to minimize the noise introduced by very wealthy areas, this last group was excluded from the test. It regroups census tract in very well-known rich areas.

⁹ We should specify that between 1991 and 2006, the political boundaries on the island of Montreal changed twice. The first major change occurred in 2002 with the merger of 27 independent municipalities with the city of Montreal, followed by the ‘demerger’ of 15 of them a few years later. In order to facilitate the statistical analysis, the decision was made to include standardized census tracts of the borough and municipalities inside a radius of 15 km from the CBD, which excludes most of the newly reconstituted, independent municipalities.

¹⁰ Variance for 1991: 55% intra-class and 45% inter-class. Variance for 2006: 61% intra-class and 39% inter-class.

Table 2: Clusters barycentres on variables

Cluster	Pop less 5 years	Person/house	Non-familiar household	University education	Female activity	Professional	Median income rank
1991							
1	0.062	0.599	-0.683	-0.237	0.128	-0.291	2.617
2	0.192	-0.282	0.380	-0.537	-0.638	-0.497	4.530
3	-0.904	-0.891	1.060	1.393	1.066	1.254	3.386
2006							
1	0.339	0.665	-0.731	-0.708	-0.328	-0.823	3.348
2	-0.618	-0.736	0.877	-0.078	-0.111	-0.093	4.623
3	-0.373	-0.364	0.376	0.944	0.941	1.021	2.975

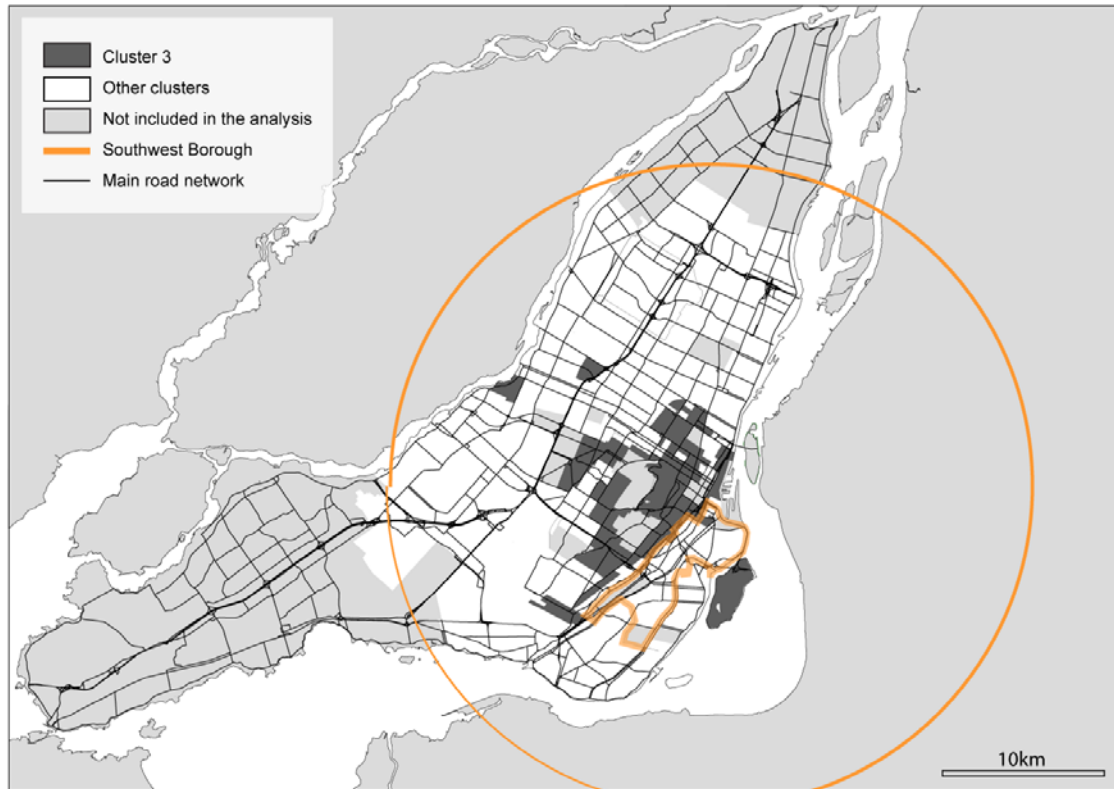
Table 3 below presents the values of the central object (census tracts) for the two periods, compared with the values for the territory of reference. The total number of census tracts that are part of the cluster concentrating gentrifiers increased significantly from 88 in 1991 to 157 in 2006. This could be interpreted as a physical expansion of areas where gentrifiers concentrate.

Table 3: Values of the central object of the “gentrified” cluster

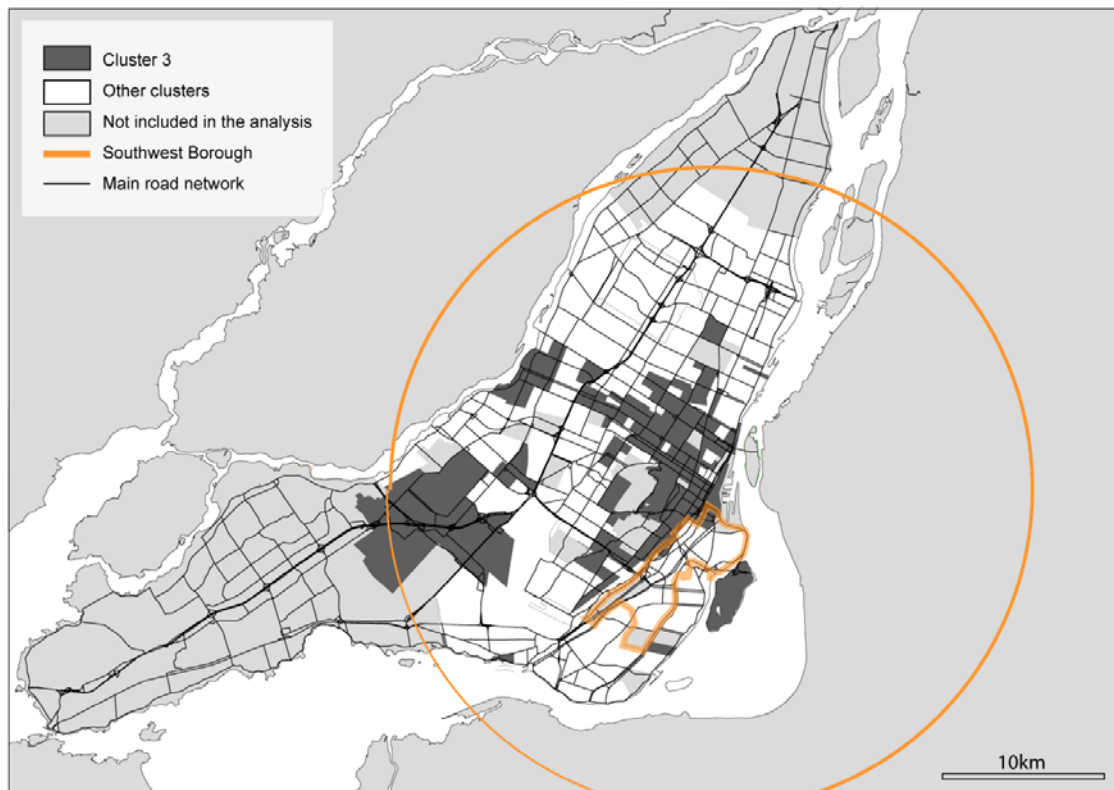
	1991 0109.00	2006 0232.00	1991 MTL	2006 MTL
Pop less 5 years	4.36	4.71	5.68	5.12
Person/house	1.90	1.90	2.29	2.18
Non-familiar household	56.59	50.64	40.46	43.76
University education	62.14	76.82	26.46	39.45
Female activity	67.90	67.00	55.88	58.02
Professional	51.88	48.84	35.15	42.37
Median income rank	3.00	3.00	3.47	3.480

In 1991, gentrifiers seemed to concentrate in specific areas of the island (dark grey shade in figure 2). Not surprisingly, central neighbourhoods such as the Plateau or Old Montreal, and areas surrounding old wealthy suburbs (such as the municipality of Westmount), are included in these areas. Fifteen years later, the size of the gentrified area increased, as if the process was spreading into areas such as the St.-Laurent Borough where many new condo developments were built for professionals.

**Figure 2: Gentrifiers spatial concentration, Montreal
1991**

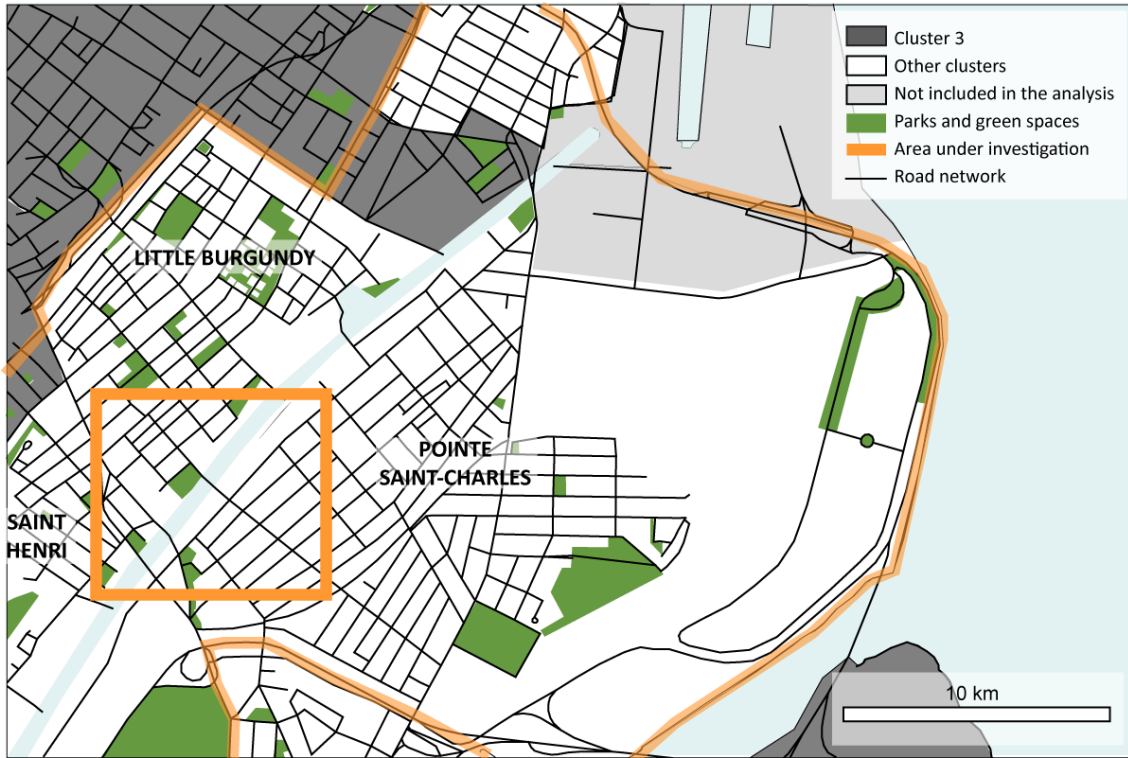


2006



Focussing more on the area under study in the Southwest Borough (figure 3), the maps show that gentrification occurred on the north shore of the canal, in close proximity to the CBD and the City of Westmount. As for the south shore of the canal, including the Pointe-St.-Charles neighbourhood, there were no noticeable changes in the socioresidential profile, despite the construction of luxurious condominiums on the canal’s bank. Even with the arrival of a new wealthy, professional population in the area, the concentration of social housing may have rendered it difficult to translate the process statistically. In other words, census data do not capture what many observers perceived: the transformation of the physical and social environment since the revitalisation of the Lachine Canal Park. So far, we cannot conclude that there was a noticeable displacement/replacement of population.

**Figure 3: Gentrifiers spatial concentration, Southwest Borough
1991**



2006

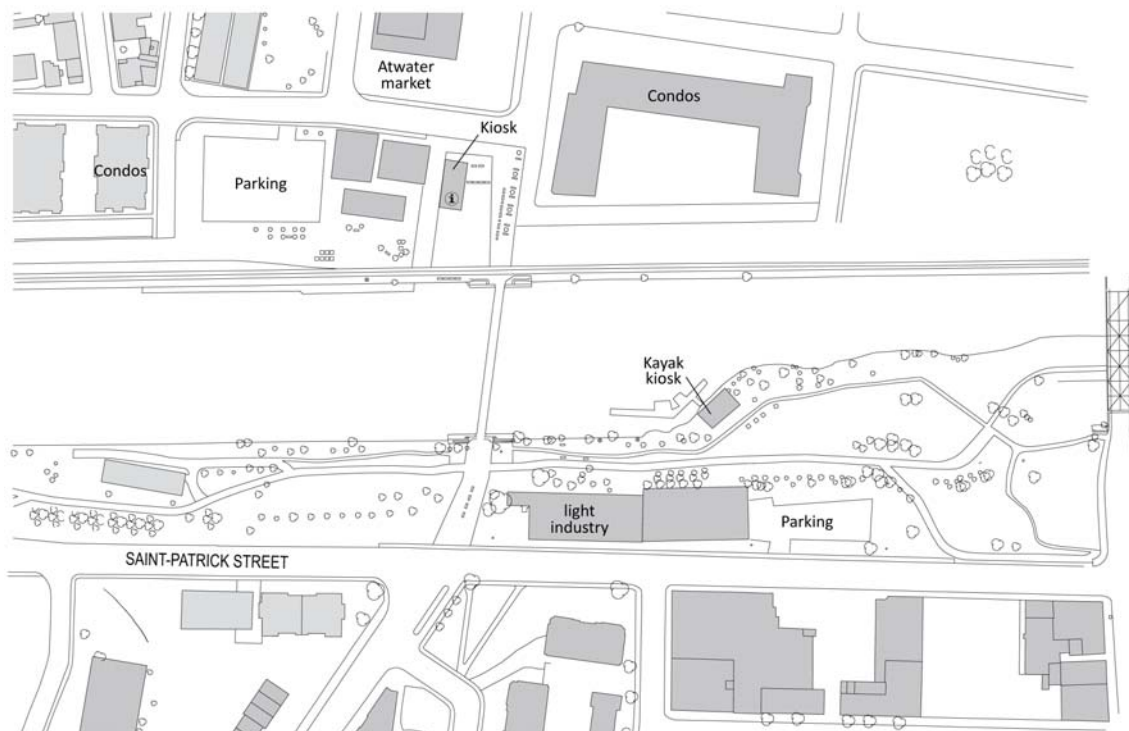


The users and the uses of public spaces

The Lachine Canal Park is a 14.5 km linear park going from the old port of Montreal to Lac St-Louis. Only the part in the Southwest Borough (under intense redevelopment) in close proximity to the Lachine Canal Park was chosen for the study (see figure 4). The chosen site contains programmed spaces (a public place with an information/ice cream kiosk, tables, benches, supports for temporary exhibitions, sculptures, bike path, etc.) and very open-ended spaces (green open spaces). Who are the users of (this part of) the Lachine Canal Park? What are the uses and the intensity of uses? How do the users negotiate the sharing of the public space?

This part of the fieldwork used non-participant (although open) observations. For a total of more than 55 hours of observation, observers (using maps, index cards, audio tapes, cameras, etc.) indexed the users (age, gender), their activities, how they appropriated the space and negotiated the sharing of space. These observers were posted in different locations of the public space in order to cover the entire site during every period of observation. These periods of observation included weekdays and weekends, at different periods of day from early morning until dusk during the summer of 2008. The results were noted on cards and maps using a predetermined typology. A synthesis telling the “story” of a typical weekday, a typical Friday and Saturday (weekend) and a typical Sunday was made and mapped. These findings are in the process of validation with a second set of observation periods and a short questionnaire.

Figure 4: The area under study



Weekday story

During weekday mornings, the space is predominantly a transit space on both sides of the canal. At first, cyclists outnumber walkers. Young adults are apparently dressed for (clerical) work but older people (possibly retired) wear sport clothing. Almost all of them are white, French or English speaking. All of them, judged according to appearance, seem to be part of the middle class. There are few children and teenagers during the day, with the exception on some days of several teenagers on bicycles doing tricks on the stairs or in the open space close to the information/ice cream kiosk¹¹. We must conclude that the use of the space is still quite marginal. However, as soon as it gets closer to lunch time, the area gets busier- more walkers arrive from the north, possibly from the public market, from the few offices located nearby, or from local housing. These pedestrians stop at the tables, benches, and sculptures (where they can sit) to eat lunch.

On the other side of the canal, on the grass-covered area, users coming from the north shore are mostly walkers, probably coming during their lunchtime— an observation that seems to be confirmed by small groups of picnickers. As for the users coming from the south, they are a lot less numerous (amounting to perhaps a third of those coming from the north side), and are mostly cyclists. On both sides of the canal, few people appropriate the spaces except during short periods of time for lunch. The area acts as more of a transitional space.

Time is passing and the space is becoming more animated. On the north side, flâneurs are beginning to stop by during the afternoon to look at the photo exhibit or to eat an ice-cream (now that the kiosk is open). The space is still a space to pass through or to rest for a short period of time after shopping at the market, which is evidenced by people carrying bags. At this point, nothing in particular is capturing one’s attention in this quiet, mono-middle-class public space, despite a few interruptions by homeless people passing through or searching the trashcan.

There is also an increase of activity on the south side with the “return from work” time approaching. There is movement in every direction— families, couples, joggers, people alone, people of all ages. A few of them are taking a short break. Then a small group, regularly observed users of a defined space on the south side of the canal, begin to arrive. This group looks a lot poorer than the majority of users. They arrive from the south, which gives the impression that they may be residents of the Pointe-St.-Charles neighbourhood. The members of this group are all approximately 50 to 60 years old, except for a younger member in his 30s. This group seems very adapted to the site and always regroups around a couple of picnic tables close to the kayak rental kiosk (where there are areas to sit in either the sun or shade). There, they are gathering to talk, drink beer and smoke.

¹¹ The kiosk was closed at the time this activity was observed

Weekend story

As during the week, there is little activity in the morning. A few people are passing without stopping. On Saturday mornings, the activity on the north side seems to be stimulated by the cafe at the corner— after purchasing coffee, people enter the park area to sit.

During one session, we observed a few young adults, who appeared poorer than the average user, passing through the area. They hung out for a few minutes, used the space differently than most: walking on tables, climbing or kicking the sculptures. Their intention, however, did not seem ‘destructive’, and the other people there did not seem to notice what they were doing. It is interesting to note is that the users seem, according to appearance, a lot poorer than the users observed during week mornings. The departure of these users and the arrival of wealthier looking lunchtime users mark a succession of users and use of space.

There are more users on both sides of the canal during lunchtime although at first sight, the north side seems more animated. Small groups spread throughout the space, sitting on benches, tree pots, grass (on the south side), etc. to eat lunch. Interestingly, picnic tables are often the last places to be occupied by users. After lunch, another group of users, mostly families or adults with dogs, replace the first groups of adults. Children rapidly explore and appropriate the space, playing with sculptures. Despite spatial proximity, users try to maximise the distance between themselves and their nearest neighbour. In the increasing activity, the entrance of the bridge serves as a meeting point, an activity that does not take place during the week. Another interesting aspect is the feeling of safety manifested indirectly by users. Both men and women take naps, leaving personal belongings unattended—perhaps an indication of their personal feeling of security in this space.

Like the north side, the south side is more of a transit space during the morning. Some people are passing, apparently dressed for (clerical) work, and different socioeconomic groups are arriving from different areas. Observation has determined that individuals arriving from the north (possibly from recent condo developments) appear wealthier, than those who arrive from the south (who may be arriving from either residential areas of one of the few remaining factories). A lot of activity is caused by the traffic going to and coming from the market (as evidenced by the shopping bags carried by those coming from the north side). The majority of users are white adults between 30 and 50. As is the case on the north side, if people stop on the south side of the canal, they tend to do it at the entrance of the bridge.

Graffiti appeared on a wall, benches and a sign (observed to have appeared between two observation periods)—a marginal form of appropriation of the space. Finally, the members of the group of regular users on the south side of the canal arrive one after the other at the beginning of the afternoon. As usual, they will still stay all afternoon and still be there as the observation sessions come to an end. These users appropriate and mark their spot by leaving traces of their use with beer bottle caps and cigarette butts in great abundance.

The afternoon is also a time for leisure/sport activities on the grass: frisbee™ for adolescents or young adults in one area, family activities in another, or walking, riding bicycles or skating on the paths. The traffic increases in the middle of the afternoon.

After a few observation sessions, one very interesting pattern emerged. Older people and/or poorer people seem to use more peripheral spaces (in the geographical and perceptual sense). On the north side they use the picnic tables close to the public market parking lot to play chess, or use the grass outside the area of observation at its limits (where the predominant users are street youth). On the south side, the area used mostly by older and/or poorer people appears to be right in the middle of all the action, when it is actually a location that is very isolated / apart from the action.

Another example of a succession of users takes place in the afternoon when, over time, more and more young people appear. Toward the end of the afternoon, when the temperature is getting cooler, people begin to leave and go in all directions, many of them crossing the bridge— The space is begins to empty. Young BMX cyclists take the space over again, doing bicycle tricks. Other older people arrive to savour the last of the day’s sunshine. At this time of day, “locals” take over use of the space. Eventually, the space is gets so quiet that it seems underused. It is at this time of the day that the nearby condos seem unoccupied. During our observation sessions, no one is ever seen in the windows, on the balconies or going into/coming out of these buildings.

Sunday

Sundays are usually quite busy. The day’s activity begins slowly in the morning. As time passes, there are more and more cyclists and walkers, and the space is heavily used immediately after lunch. Among the cyclists and walkers are a few shoppers, most likely local people.

On the north side of the canal, the ice cream kiosk is a point of attraction, and at certain times of the day there are no free seats available. People search out any useful surface on which to sit to eat their ice cream- even sculptures. During the afternoon, users appear wealthy. The traffic comes and goes in all directions. During this period, there are so many people that it is difficult to conduct observations. By the end of the afternoon, the flow of people has diminished considerably. The canal clearly acts as an attraction point where people sit facing the canal, even when in groups. Most of the users are adults.

Users give the impression of being on their way home, of being at the end of their day. Several people have shopping bags (which become more apparent now). Children using the space are young and with their parents. Even if it is quieter than during the middle of the afternoon, people, due to lack of space, often join strangers at a picnic table without saying hello or asking permission. When tables are freed up, those sharing tables will move (or disperse) to maximize distance between individuals. People do not speak much to strangers- most are in small groups and keep to themselves.

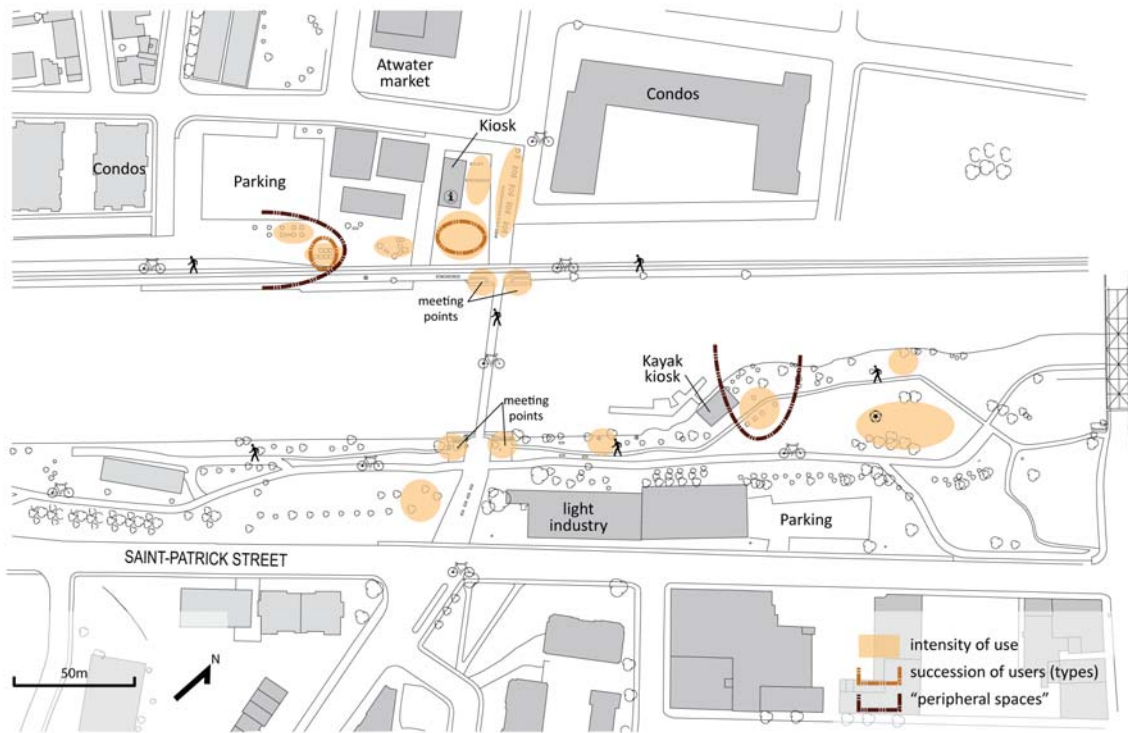
On the south side, the tables close to the canal (near the kayak rental kiosk) are popular with the regulars, who gather to drink and smoke regularly.

At the beginning of the evening on the north side, stores are closing. There are still a few people at the picnic tables and under the trees. A few young teenagers arrive (on break or after their work shift), wearing t-shirts that identify them as employees of a local hardware store- they talk and hang around the space, eventually fishing in the canal. Youth are getting more numerous and will hang out until dawn. Activity is diminishing as people continue to leave.

General Observations

The majority of users, based on their physical appearance, are from the middle class. There is a split, based on physical appearance only, along economic lines concerning the use of space. The park benches on the south side of the canal near the kayak rental kiosk is a very popular spot for men to sit and drink at different times of day. These men appear to be poorer than the average user of the space. On the north side of the canal, men and women who appear to be poorer than the average user of the space tend to use the picnic benches and park benches located closer to the public market parking lot. They also tend to abandon these places once (those who appear to be) employees of the market and local businesses arrive at the picnic tables for lunch. This space also seems to attract older, poorer appearing men who sit on the park benches alone to read. In addition, youths were observed several times arriving in groups along the canal on the north side, arriving from the west on foot. They too appear to be poorer than the average (majority) user of the space. It was much less common to see wealthier appearing youths using the space at all, unless they were with family members, or zooming through along the south side on bicycles and roller blades.

Figure 5: Division of space



Public space and home territory

The final step of the research project (still underway) consists of interviews with residents living in proximity to the public space under study, mostly on the south side of the canal. This tool is very important in addressing the central area of inquiry of this project: how the changing physical and social environments influence the redefinition of the home territory of the residents and their residential satisfaction.

Indigenous residents and new residents (gentrifiers) will be interviewed until the saturation point has been reached. Interviews last between 60 and 90 minutes and are audio-taped. The selection of interviewees is done using a snowball sampling technique with the first contacts made through neighbourhood associations and personal acquaintance. We expect to interview as many indigenous residents as new comers, and as many men as women, from different types of households (families, single parents, couples, non-family households, solos, etc.). Topics discussed include the level of satisfaction regarding the social and physical environment, the meaning and uses of public spaces and the perception of the home (and how it is defined). Because this part of the project is ongoing, the complete content analysis cannot be presented; Some general observations can be made however. Extracts from a few interviews, representing the results cumulated so far, were translated and are presented below.

Results presented are grouped under two main topics: (1) the satisfaction about the living environment and its social and physical transformations; and (2) the Lachine Canal Park, its users and its uses. Observations about the evaluation of the home territories and its evolution are made at the end of the section.

Satisfaction about the living environment and its social and physical transformations

So far, all the interviewees (gentrifiers and indigenous residents) are satisfied with their living environment including their dwelling, the neighbourhood in general and their neighbours. They are very well aware of the positive and negative aspects of their neighbourhood and the social and physical transformations that are taking place. Both groups of residents appreciate their location close to the CBD and the proximity of all sorts of services. Gentrifiers appreciate also the type of real estate development they are living in and the social mix in the neighbourhood while criticizing the lack of specific/specialized services or the lack of maintenance of some areas. This is the case of Mary, a professional living in one of the luxurious condo in an old industrial building along the canal.

And the location was important [...]. I am a little bit away from everything however not far from. What I like less I would say is probably Notre-Dame Street, east of the Atwater market. There you can feel that it is more derelict. I think they will slowly revitalize some areas but it seems that it won't be so soon. I would say that probably the only thing that I dislike in the neighbourhood and that I would like to see more are little shops, restaurants and cafés [...]

Mary (new resident)

Even if all of the indigenous residents interviewed had manifested openness to the social mix, they were very critical of the transformations in their neighbourhood. They mostly criticized the lack of architectural integration, the real estate market pressure that different projects put on the neighbourhoods, and the fact that these projects do not address local needs in terms of housing. Vanessa a university student who was raised in a Southwest neighbourhood and Steve, a community activist who has lived in Pointe-St.-Charles for nearly 30 years, summarized the main preoccupations.

Now, where there is a vacant space [in the neighbourhood], they built condos and it's not funny. This is what irritates me in the neighbourhood: the construction of condos because I know that in my neighbourhood, there are not people who have a lot of money. In spite of building social housing or just plain buildings, duplexes and triplexes, they built luxurious condos. It is changing visually too. You have lots of regular housing and then you have a super net condo. It is really strange.

[and further]

It is not for the neighbourhood's residents because there are luxurious condos. It is to attract new clients, to change the neighbourhood because people don't have the money to buy these condos. It puts pressure on the residents who live around because, when you build condos, it becomes

more prestigious, the neighbourhood begins to be wealthier so it can cause changes in the next few years. For now, we don’t feel it too much because it is not finished yet. It’s beginning...

Vanessa (indigenous resident)

[When the city invested in the canal] they invited private interests to appropriate the land. They did it rapidly without guidelines to fight speculation [...]. So, it generated speculation which had the effect and continues to have the effect on the poor population. So, people are evicted from their neighbourhood, they have to move elsewhere [because it is too expensive]. This creates transformations, changes in population in the surrounding neighbourhoods. This is what is going on here.

Steve (indigenous resident)

Another critique that was expressed a few times is the lack of social integration of the new population; Simon, a student, resident and political activist in Pointe-St.-Charles, explains:

What is rehabilitated is often what is contributing to the transformation of the neighbourhood; the new buildings are generally too expensive for the local residents. So, the arrival of wealthier people creates a social division. Finally, they don’t participate in the cultural and social life already in place in the neighbourhood. They create their own parallel network. Is it improvement? I don’t think so.

[and further]

People that are part of the new residents of the neighbourhood, we don’t see them. They do not occupy the space. Their presence though has an important economic effect on the housing market and on the cost of goods and services, but they are still invisible [...]. There are two signs of their presence: the buildings and the luxurious cars [...]. But maybe I meet them everyday and I don’t recognize them. However, I do have the impression that they do not mix with people on the streets.

Simon (new indigenous resident)

The Lachine Canal Park, its users and its uses

All the interviewees go to the Lachine Canal Park, at minimum using the bike path as a transition space. Gentrifiers appreciate, use and consider the park an asset in their living environment. As for indigenous residents, they appreciate its design but made it very clear during the interviews that they were users of the space long before its revitalization in the 1990s. Despite their appreciation and use of the space since the revitalization, they don’t feel the park belongs to their neighbourhood; they don’t belong there and the new condos are acting as a barrier between their residential environment and the residential environment of their wealthier neighbours. Amelie—another university student who was raised in the area— Patrick— a long time residents and worker in a community center in the area— Vanessa and Simon all feel this way.

It is difficult to go there. You have to know how to access the park. Even if it is close by, it is not easily accessible.

Amelie (indigenous residents)

[Real estate projects] are like a large façade. There is the canal and on the background you see these large buildings and then, suddenly, it is old again. There are no links, no continuity between both.

Vanessa (indigenous residents)

The residential developments that took place in the last few years such as the condos were done along the canal. This acts as a barrier to the population that lives further. A sort of psychological barrier because we can go, I go and I know a lot of people who are going but an important part of the population doesn’t feel comfortable going there.

Peter (indigenous residents)

Passing there, it reminds me that when I said that there are no spaces where I feel excluded, well it is not entirely true. There is the canal at specific times. During the night, there is no one so I don’t feel excluded. However, during summer days it is probably the only place where we can see the other socioeconomic class different from the traditional population of the neighbourhood. And they do gather there, even more when you get close to the Atwater market, there, where there is the paved place. When I pass there, I have the impression that they are looking at me...

[and further]

It is basically this [the rich appropriate the canal]. I don’t have the impression that it causes a conflict *per se* because people who don’t feel at home stop going there. So I don’t see confrontation in the short term. Maybe we should politicize this issue [...] people must feel it and live it in their daily life without making links with the rest of the situation, the problematic [...]. However it is difficult to say if it’s because it was not done for the neighbourhood’s residents. Nothing marks it physically, I mean as if it does not belong to the residents. Really, there are few people [from the neighbourhood] who use it because they don’t feel comfortable in it [...] with all the development [...] the situation is not clear.

Simon (new indigenous resident)

In the light of these interviews (and observations) we can conclude that new residents have appropriated the public space and that they consider it to be an asset in their living environment. Indigenous residents, on the other hand, witnessed the social and physical transformations of their neighbourhood. Even as they continue to use the public space, their feelings of belonging seems to fade in the shadow of the developments along the canal. As they clearly stated, they were users long before anyone seemed to have been interested in the multipurpose path that existed for more than 30 years. Theses

observations show that the Lachine Canal Park may have been, but is no longer, included in the home territory of the indigenous residents. However, many interviews are underway and will need to be analysed before reaching a definitive conclusion.

CONCLUSION

Since the revitalisation of the Lachine Canal Park, many real estate private investments were made in the construction or rehabilitation and transformation of old industrial buildings into luxurious condominiums. It is not clear if the old working class neighbourhood suffers from the real estate market pressure more than other areas of the city. Certainly, residents feel the pressure and they have witnessed an important transformation of their physical and social environment.

The hierarchical cluster analysis was useful to illustrate the location of the areas of concentration of a population with the characteristics of gentrifiers. Results showed an enlargement of the central area where gentrifiers concentrate. As for the Southwest Borough, the results do not clearly indicate the gentrification of the area, except for a part of Little Burgundy, located on the north side of the canal. As mentioned previously, it is possible that the concentration of social and affordable housing slowed the process down statistically.

Nonetheless, indigenous residents see and feel the social and physical changes of their living environment. At this point in time, our investigation shows that these changes seem to have an impact on their daily territory. The indigenous residents represent the majority of residents of the Southwest Borough, but the minority of users of the Lachine Canal Park. As our observations have showed, except for a group of “regulars” which appropriate a small part of the park and mark their territory with relics of their consumption, most of the people who seem to be part of the indigenous residential group have given way to new users and return only when the new users have left. There are no apparent conflicts, only a tacit understanding, a succession of users.

Indigenous residents don’t feel they belong in the Lachine Canal Park and they expressed this during the interviews, despite the fact they continue to use the park (although less often for many of them). They feel that there is a psychological barrier that the new developments have created. This perception may be reinforced by the fact that the “other”, the gentrifier, does not seem to mix with indigenous residents on the streets. They don’t try to be part of the local community. They are invisible, except in the park.

Public spaces, as an extension of the dwelling, are part of the home (Rapoport, 1985). But the arrivals of a new population with different lifestyles, who appropriate public spaces, have an impact on the daily life of indigenous residents. Indigenous residents may develop dissatisfaction regarding the modes of cohabitation and new “rules” in public spaces— thus far, our research supports this. What needs to be addressed next is: Is dissatisfaction with the residential environment (including the public space)

translating into a desire to move? If this is the case, decisions to move made by members of the indigenous population will add to the real estate market pressure to accelerate the gentrification process.

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