

Co-producing a resilient and just city



Civic practices
of resourcefulness
in Parc-Extension



Fig. 1
Cultural dances during the
community event Parc-Ex Live
organized by Brique par Brique in
Parc-Extension, Montreal



Fig. 2
 Graffiti on promotional poster announcing the construction of the new university Campus MIL on a former industrial site near Parc-Extension, Montreal



Fig. 3
 Block party in the back alley of Brique par Brique’s community space in Parc-Extension

table

Territorial Acknowledgement	8
Introduction	12
<i>Right to the City and Spatial Justice</i>	14
<i>Parc-Extension against the speculative city</i>	18
Methodology	18
Little story of Plaza Hutchison	19
Situating Parc-Extension	24
Historical perspective and spatial divide	28
Current Housing issues in Parc-Extension	33
The In-between, new core of urban capital	34
State-led Gentrification, <i>by extension</i>	37
Co-producing commons-based resilience	43
Co-produced knowledge and visioning tools	46
Social infrastructures and community currencies	52
Local food ecosystems	57
Lessons learned	67
<i>Reclaiming Plaza Hutchison</i>	68
References	70



Fig. 4
View on the Acadie Boulevard separating Parc-Extension neighborhood and Town of Mount Royal

territorial acknowledgement

1. Gibson;
Goldenweiser.
Concerning the
League: The Iro-
quois League Tradi-
tion as Dictated in
Onondaga. 1992,
457

“We promise to have only one dish among us; in it will be beaver tail and no knife will be there... which means that we will all have equal share of the game roaming about in the hunting grounds and fields, and then everything will become peaceful among all of the people; and there will be no knife near our dish, which means that if a knife were there, someone might presently get cut, causing bloodshed, and this is trouble-some, should it happen thus, and for this reason there should be no knife near our dish.”¹

2. Lytwyn, Victor
P. *A Dish with One
Spoon (...)*, 210

The Dish with One Spoon is the symbolic representation used by indigenous people in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence valley region “to describe agreements concerning shared hunting grounds”² and the importance of using their resources in a spirit of mutual cooperation.

One dish for all, affirms the shared duty of all signatories to a peace treaty to live sustainably by caring for the land – and thus, “all of the living beings” they share it with – protecting its abundance, making sure it never goes barren. One spoon for all, in turns, insists that there can be no knives at the table, that no blood can be shed on common grounds, for which peace must be kept.³

3. *The Canadian En-
cyclopedia, A Dish
With One Spoon,*
2023

A concept enshrining the right of all to use but not abuse the land by cultivating environmental sustainability.

4. *Idem*

A concept enabling “First Nations to recognize each other’s independence and distinct identity”⁴ by maintaining their sovereignty all the while sharing the land.

5. *Idem*

But also a concept “that led to many misunderstandings”⁵ between indigenous peoples, willing to share, and European powers and settler communities, seeking to own.⁶

6. *Idem*

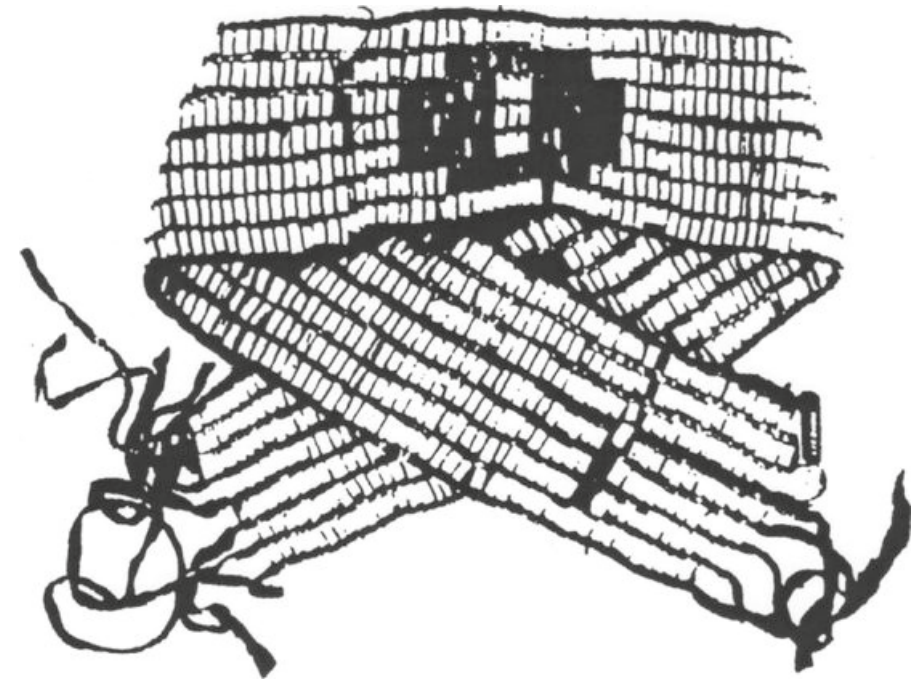


Fig. 5
*Dish with One Spoon wampum
belt, with round area in the center
symbolizing the dish*

tiohtià: ke / montreal

I acknowledge that this research project takes place on unceded indigenous territory. The collaborators and communities mentioned in this research live for the most part in Montreal, or Tiohtià: ke for the Kanien'kehá: ka nation. Historically, Montreal has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. A diverse indigenous population, as well as other peoples, reside here today.*

I wish to recognise that history on this land began long before 1867 and that present-day Canada is a settler colonial state made possible through dispossession and violence.

I also wish to recognize the ongoing contribution of indigenous peoples to the cultural, political and spiritual life of the Tiohtià: ke / Montreal region and respect these nations as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which it sits today.

**Haudenosaunee (h oh - D EE - n oh - SH oh - n ee) and Anishinabeg (Ah-ni-sh-ih-nah'-bey)*

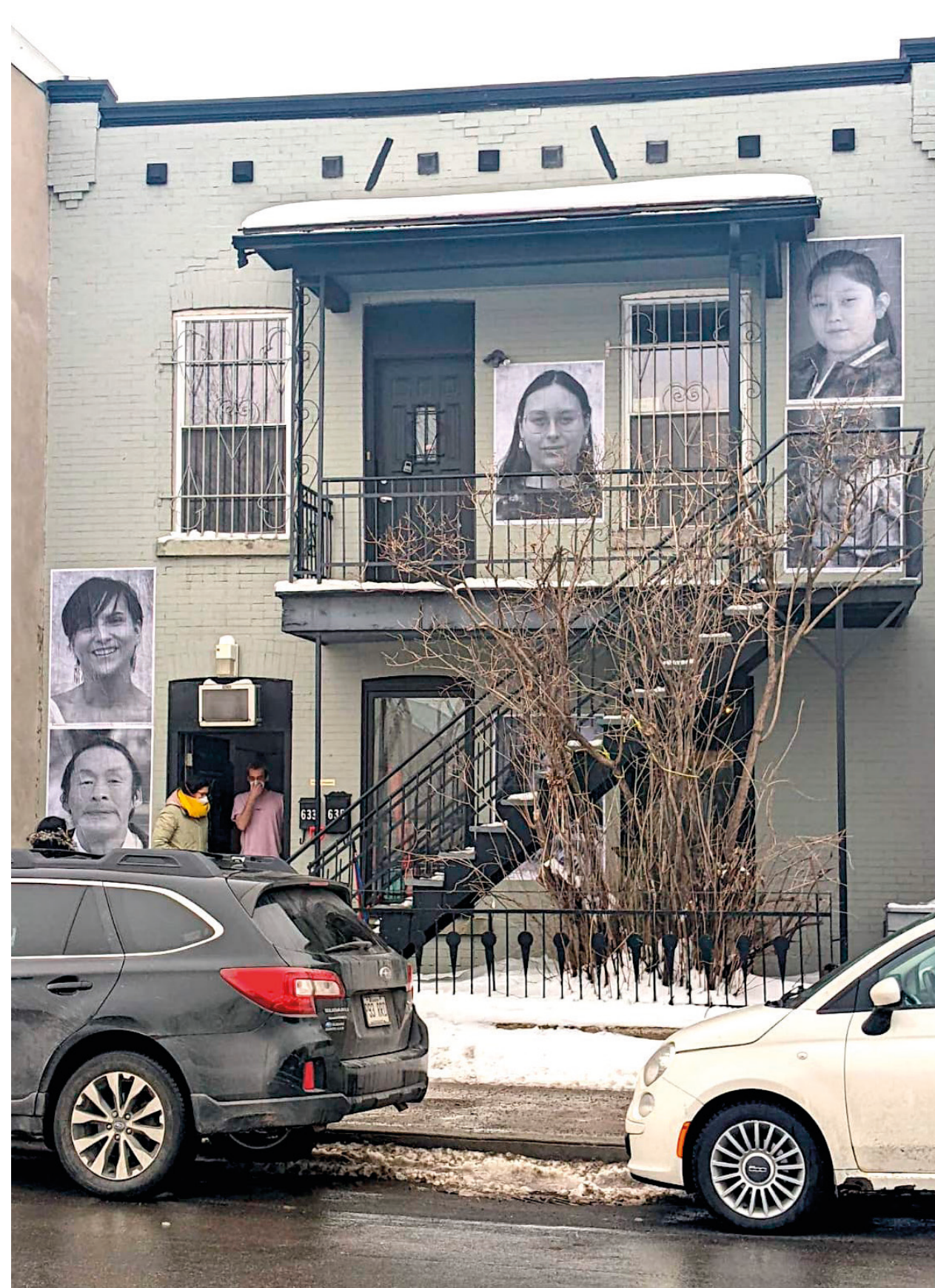


Fig. 6
Front façade of Brique par Brique's
community center in Parc-Extension,
showcasing a photography exhibit of
Indigenous community members.

introduction

Resilience is poised to be a defining characteristic of the global 21st century. As we approach the uncertain and unpredictable impacts of climate change, along with the multitude of challenges stemming from resource depletion, the erosion of the welfare state, and economic downturns, it becomes evident that our existing lifestyles lack resilience. Our urban structures and economies, as well as our systems of management and governance, still maintain strong connections to models emphasizing unchecked free-market growth, individualism, and consumerism. Research has shown that climate change-related crises will become increasingly frequent and severe (IPCC, 2022). What we also know is that the effects of climate change are not evenly distributed across places and people, nor are the resources needed to meet these challenges.

7. Richardson et al.
"Earth beyond Six
of Nine Planetary
Boundaries"

8. Richie and Roser,
"Urbanization," Our
World in Data

The age of accelerations in which we live is not only pushing the Earth system beyond its capacity (6 out of 9 planetary limits since 2022)⁷, it is also driving the rapid fragmentation of our societies, straining our social relations and eroding our political and living spaces. The logic of extraction and accumulation distributes its injustices unevenly, to the detriment of geographies and populations that are thrown or maintained in a state of dispossession. Among these accelerations, the growth of urban populations - $\frac{2}{3}$ of the world's population by 2050⁸ - opens the space of the city to intensifying struggles for democratic access to resources and agency. Although these phenomena operate in globalized contexts and through globalized policies, their repercussions manifest every day in localized scales. Place-specific responses that engage with and, above all, emerge from citizens themselves are therefore needed.

To what extent can civic practices organized around collective resources help communities build tools of urban resilience?

Can architecture and the co-production of space contribute to social reproduction on a neighborhood scale?

We'll start by looking at the Right to the City, lingering on the ways by which the extractive approach to urbanization leads to spatial injustice in our territories and cities.

Then we'll report on a case study of Parc-Extension in Montreal, exploring its struggle for spatial justice and the right to the city. The focus will be on how the community meets the challenges of authoritarian planning by rallying around shared knowledge and resources, leveraging local power to meet its own needs. In addition, I will discuss the ongoing collaboration with Brique par Brique, share lessons learned and outline the vision of co-designing a community project in Parc-Extension for the Master Project.

right to the city and spatial justice

9. Swyngedouw, *Divided Cities*, 2006

*“Questions of justice cannot be seen independently from the urban condition, not only because most of the world’s population lives in cities, but above all because the city condenses the manifold tensions and contradictions that infuse modern life.”*⁹

-Erik Swyngedouw, *Divided Cities*, 2006

10. Harvey, *Le capitalisme contre le droit à la ville*, 23

David Harvey defines the right to the city as including not just the use and access to urban spaces but also the liberty to conceptualize and shape the social and cultural dynamics at work within them. A fundamental right, he posits, which can only be asserted by gaining a transformative influence over how cities evolve. Yet, Harvey observes that since urban development’s trajectory mimicked that of capitalism since its inception, “the design and structure of cities have functioned as mechanisms for absorbing surplus capital”.¹⁰

11. Harvey, *Le capitalisme contre le droit à la ville*, 12-17

Both in France and in the United States, Harvey illustrates, “the development of cities has hinged on the capitalist mechanisms of credit while instigating social transformations.”¹¹ It was so with the extensive renovation of Paris under Haussmann, funded through a real estate credit system, which profoundly altered the city’s infrastructure, while coinciding with new narratives romanticizing the lavish Parisian lifestyle and coining it “Ville Lumière”. And again in New York, with Robert Moses’ dramatic expansion of urban areas and the American suburban lifestyle through changes in the scale of infrastructure and highways.

12. Harvey, *Le capitalisme contre le droit à la ville*, 17-18

These transformations brought about political, social, and economic crises, often exacerbating power imbalances between social classes. The working class, in particular, faced exclusion from certain urban areas, being pushed into areas under intense speculative pressure.¹²

In Canada, spatial injustice, segregation, and displacement hold a long and perpetual story, rooted in its foundation as a colonial project, which gave way to neoliberal urban transformation strategies. The gentrification of cities, most notably, not only has the effect of dislocating certain social groups, but holds it as its primary goal¹³. Cities and developers almost exclusively hold the levers of gentrification, giving them the power to choose their residents through massive gentrification and urban renewal projects that combine economic and cultural motives¹⁴.

*“Those vested with the power to produce the physical spaces we inhabit through development, investment, planning – as well as through grassroots embodied activism – are likewise vested with the power to perpetuate injustices and/or create just spaces...What a just space looks like is necessarily kept open, but must be rooted in the active negotiation of multiple publics, in search of productive ways to build solidarities across difference.”*¹³ -Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 2010

13. Glass, *London: Aspects of change*, 1964

14. Smith, *Which new urbanism? The revanchist* 90s. 98–105., 1999

15. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 28

right to the city and spatial justice

16. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 96

The concept of spatial justice is deeply rooted in critical geography. Soja proposed that spatial justice is fundamentally about the just and equitable distribution of socially valuable resources and opportunities in space. He connected this idea to the concept of commons and advocated for a “new spatial consciousness”¹⁶. This intersection of concepts is critical for understanding the complex dynamics of urban development, particularly in the context of neighborhoods like Parc-Extension, where issues of class, race, and gender intertwine with spatial distribution and urban planning.

The integration of the right to the city and spatial justice into discussions about commons, particularly urban commoning practices, offers a richer understanding of urban spaces. Scholars like De Angelis (2007) and Hardt & Negri (2009) define commons as collective social relationships that operate outside market or state control, encompassing material or immaterial territories. These commons are composed of three elements: common-pool resources, commoning practices, and the community itself. De Angelis emphasizes that commons are created and sustained by communities through networks of mutual aid, solidarity, and non-market exchanges.

Commoning, as Linebaugh (2010) suggests, is more of an active process than just a resource to be shared. It involves social practices of mutual care, reciprocity, and sharing, and is oriented towards resisting socio-spatial enclosures. This makes commoning inherently spatial, as it seeks to create, reinvent, and sustain egalitarian and unoppressive spaces for collective life.

The link between urban commons, the right to the city, and spatial justice lies in how these concepts intersect in the social and spatial realms. Stavrides, in *An Architektur* (2010), views the right to the city as emerging from interactions that foster new values, dreams, and collective experiences, extending the idea of commons beyond mere utility. Similarly, Chatterton (2010) proposes combining the concept of commons with spatial justice, arguing that the pursuit of greater spatial justice is enhanced by using the commons as both a political concept and a practical tool for organization and aspiration. This approach suggests that the right to the city and spatial justice can be effectively pursued through practices that emphasize shared resources, collective action, and community-driven development.

parc-extension against the speculative city

methodology

The knowledge collected throughout this case study of Parc-Extension has stemmed from various sources, notably the substantial community-based documentation (studies, articles, reports, letters, videos, etc.) published in recent years around the ongoing housing discrimination and its resistance in the neighborhood, but also throughout informal conversations and interviews with local community leaders engaged in on the ground work on a daily basis.

Over the course of the semester, these conversations have allowed me to understand the many layers related to Parc-Extension's history as an arrival neighborhood tackling gentrification but also as a resilient community in practice, bounded by strong solidarity networks.

More importantly, in the beginning of September while I was in Montreal, I approached a local organization called Brique par Brique, whom I knew was doing a lot of initiatives in the neighborhood, to offer my help, in the hope of learning by participating in existing community efforts.

Following this, an ongoing collaboration process started with Brique par Brique's director Faiz Abhuani, around the development of a community housing project in a particular site in the neighborhood that they had sought to pursue for some time now but lacked the resources to do so.

This site, which I came to learn holds a symbolic character in the local imaginary, was in a way my point of entry inside Parc-Extension's fight for spatial justice against the speculative city.

little story of plaza hutchison

The Plaza Hutchison building sits in the vibrant worker and immigrant hub of Parc-Extension in Montreal and holds a particular anchorage in the imagination of local residents. Across from the Parc Metro station (previously Jean-Talon railway station) and at the intersection of several important bus lines (#80, #480, #92), for many, it serves as a point of entry into the neighborhood. The five-story brick building was built at the turn of the 20th Century back when the city of Montreal was the primary center for the garment manufacturing sector in Canada. It housed a jeans factory which employed many local workers for several decades until the industry was relocated in the mid-1980s, leaving the building empty. Before long, the Plaza Hutchison became home again, this time, to numerous community organizations, places of worship, a radio station, a famous costume shop and small family businesses reflecting the neighborhood's evolving and diverse cultural economy. From the neighborhood's entry point to the gateway into its community. But in addition to being a historical and cultural landmark in Parc-Ex, the Plaza Hutchison has recently transformed into a symbol of the neighborhood's ongoing struggles against displacement.

In December 2017, the BSR Groupe, a real estate development company who had recently acquired the building undertook plans to convert it into luxury apartments, a project which ran counter to the essential needs of the local population. The non-residential tenants saw their water, electricity and heating supply cut off in the middle of winter to force their departure.¹⁷

Several groups offering services to the local population were forced to cease their activities and relocate outside the neighborhood. Among the associations that had to leave

17. Marchand, "I Don't Know What I Will Do": Parc-Extension Residents, Merchants Upset over Building Sale, Evictions", 2017

the building, we can mention three Tamil organizations, an immigrant aid center (CLAM), a music school, a language school, a gym, a furniture store, and a local food market.

Rapidly, residents created the Parc-Ex Contre la Gentrification group and organized a popular assembly to protest the forced evictions and the construction of these homes for a much wealthier clientele. By that time, the owner was in process of obtaining a construction permit, but far from getting the approval of the community. Two years of continuous citizen mobilization to save the building and put a stop to the gentrification project followed, with interruptions of Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension borough council meetings in February and March 2018 and the occupation of BSR Groupe offices in August 2018¹⁸. On a Sunday afternoon mid-August, Parc-Ex residents also rallied in the public square facing the building for a picnic, sharing food, speeches, storytelling as well as scrapbooking and screen-printing to celebrate Plaza Hutchison's history and continue the struggle to return the building to the community.

At the end of summer 2020, the real estate group went bankrupt, and Plaza Hutchison was put up for sale again. In response to popular demands and the pressures generated from real estate developments in the neighborhood, the City of Montreal decided to purchase the building through its right of first refusal, with the aim of creating social housing in collaboration with the borough.¹⁹

This decision was experienced as a collective victory, but a partial one. The desire to see this building rehabilitated to serve the neighborhood's residents and stakeholders is a sentiment shared by many members of the community, but the City's attribution policy for social housing development is messy and stagnant. Since its acquisition by the City, the Plaza Hutchison has remained vacant. No affordable housing development project has been initiated by the govern-

ment to date and the negative impact of gentrification in the neighborhood continues.

The story of the Plaza Hutchison is not an isolated one. Since 2017, there has been several other cases of citizen mobilization to block redevelopment projects and pressure the City to use its right of first refusal to secure built assets for well needed affordable housing. These urban struggles don't always succeed, a testimony to the challenge of fighting for a right to the city in the era of financial capitalism where housing has become a commodity.

Gentrification has been recognized by numerous studies as deeply destabilizing for longtime residents of historically low-income neighborhoods²⁰. It disrupts family ties, uproots communities, erases the cultural heritage of working-class communities, often of color, as such is the case in Montreal's Parc-Extension.

This process can take many forms and rarely follows a linear path when met with collective resistance and local action. It has taken a particular course in this neighborhood, due to its specific pericentric context and as a geographic and democratic enclave. These socio-spatial characteristics have both created the conditions for resilience around strong local community networks, but they have also been a factor of vulnerability and discrimination.



20. Nichols, *Homelessness, Hardship and Public Action in Gentrifying Areas: The Case of Park Extension, Montreal*, 2019

Fig. 7 Illustration of the fight for the Plaza Hutchison. August 2018. Parc-Ex Contre la Gentrification group.

18. Corriveau, "Une trentaine d'expulsions lors du conseil d'arrondissement de Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension," 2018

19. Corriveau, "Montreal acquiert la Plaza Hutchison pour des logements sociaux" 2020



Fig. 8 Plaza Hutchison building with Parc Metro Station in the front



Fig. 9 Street demonstration and occupation by residents to protest the luxury housing project in the Plaza Hutchison building. Residents rallied in front of the former train station nearby

situating parc-extension

21. *Centraide of Greater Montreal, Territorial Analysis, 2019-2020*

Founded in the early 20th century, Parc-Extension evolved from a working-class suburb to a rapidly densifying area after the Second World War. Located in north-pericentric Montreal near the Canadian Pacific rail yard, it played a key role in welcoming and integrating successive waves of immigrants to Montreal. Parc-Extension is now a densely populated immigrant and newcomer neighborhood, with a majority of its residents born outside Canada, and the highest population density in the Montreal area with 17,672 inhabitants per square kilometer, more than four times that of the city's.²¹

Parc-Extension now represents some one hundred different ethnic groups living together in this 1.6 km² quadrilateral, of which two-thirds are visible minorities. Almost three quarters of the neighborhood consists of families with children (compared to 63% for the Island of Montreal). These diverse communities are very active and present through the neighborhood's many family-run businesses, its quality restaurants, local food stores and places of worship. Despite this diversity, the neighborhood is also one of the poorest in Canada, with over 38% of households below the Low Income Measure threshold in 2016.²²

Occupying the western part of the Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension borough, Parc-Extension is hemmed in by major transport infrastructure. Bordered to the east and south by train tracks that cut it off from neighboring districts, to the west by the heavy-trafficked Acadie Boulevard - separating it from the semi-gated affluent community of Town of Mount Royal - and to the north by the Metropolitan Expressway, this neighborhood feels like a small landlocked country. There are few places in Montreal where borders are so marked, thus

22. *Centraide of Greater Montreal, Territorial Analysis, 2019-2020*

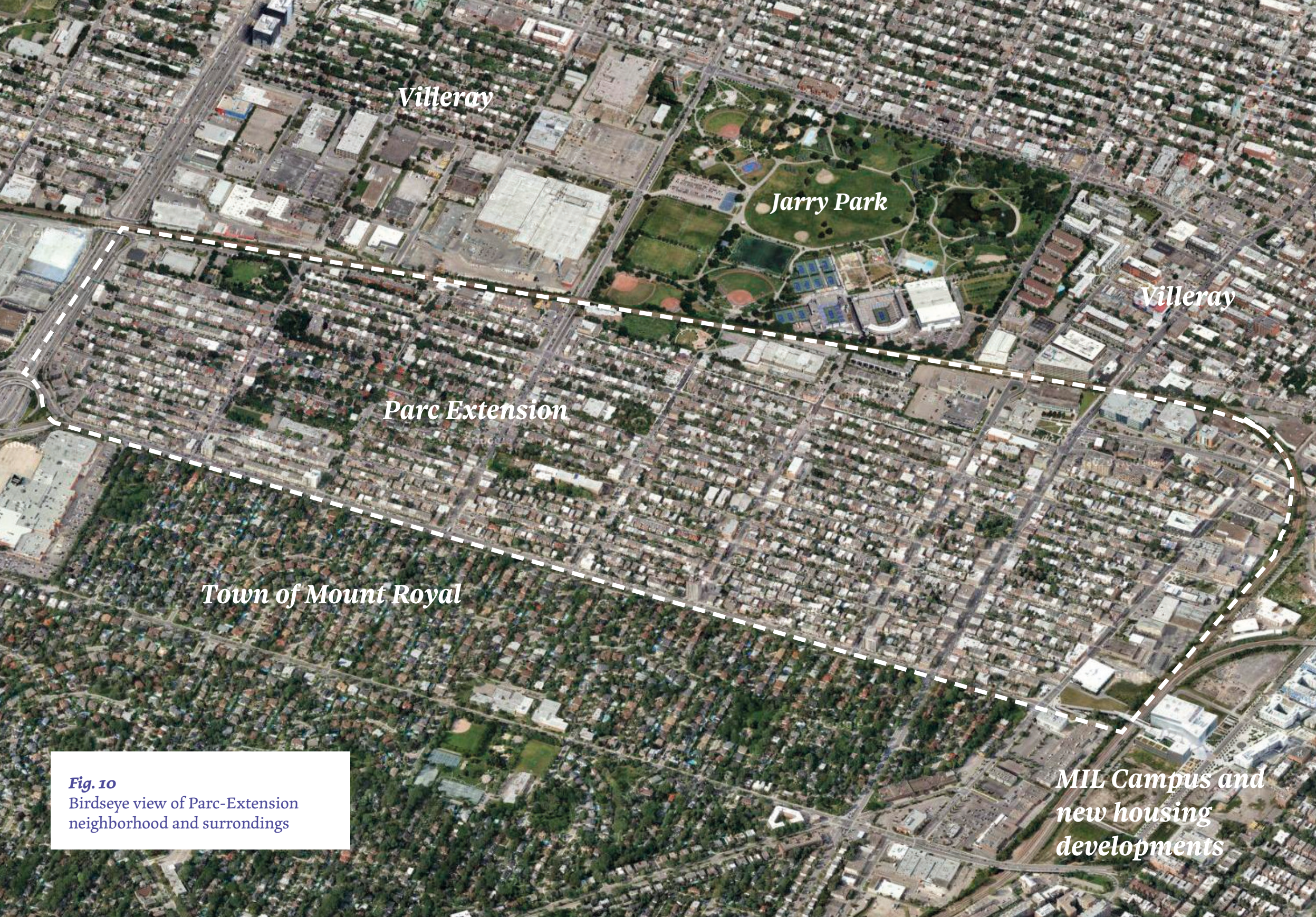
inscribing it as a geographical enclave within the City.²³

Although Parc-Extension was, and still is, an enclaved neighborhood, its development was paradoxically closely linked, perhaps too closely, to the development of the surrounding neighborhoods and it has at times suffered from this proximity. The major rail and road infrastructure, the large parks and certain public services on its territory or on the periphery were designed to serve the entire city. If it did benefit from them, it was often by default, by accident or long after they had been installed. This is borne out by the slow pace of development in the early years and the long absence of public cultural and leisure infrastructure in the area. The most obvious example is the choice of the neighborhood to build the Park Avenue (later named Jean-Talon) train station, which primarily served wealthier communities traveling towards Quebec City, Ottawa and the Laurentians. According to testimonials gathered by the Historical Society, the local population seems to have made very little use of its services.²⁴

From the outset, however, this isolation has stimulated a local sense of responsibility based on religious and ethno-community solidarity. The presence of numerous churches and citizen associations, and the involvement of many residents and organizations in sports and leisure activities, bear witness to this.

23. Favretti, "Parc-Extension: 100 Ans d'histoire" 2011, 8

24. *Idem*, 8



Villeray

Jarry Park

Villeray

Parc Extension

Town of Mount Royal

*MIL Campus and
new housing
developments*

Fig. 10
Birdseye view of Parc-Extension
neighborhood and surroundings

historical perspective and spatial divide

25. Linteau, *“Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération”*, 1992, 207

“The Parc-Extension district was born at a time when Montreal was experiencing extraordinary growth, as historian Paul-André Linteau describes it: “The population tripled between 1881 and 1911 [...]. Backed by the port and railroads, a diversified industrial base and numerous financial institutions, the city’s economy was expanding. Montreal was now at the height of its power as Canada’s metropolis.”²⁵

26. Benoît, Gratton, *“La Cité Du Nord”*, 1991, 249-271

New residents were flocking to areas recently linked to the city by train and streetcar. These new hubs of urbanization were therefore also attracting real estate developers who saw business opportunities. The story is the same for Parc-Extension’s neighboring districts, such as Villeray and Rosemont, as well as Plateau Mont-Royal and Maisonneuve. Speculators acquired farmland, subdivided it and sold it on. Urban development in the north of the island accelerated after the arrival of the tramway, to such an extent that the area came to be known as “la Cité du Nord”.²⁶

27. Favretti, *“Parc-Extension: 100 Ans d’histoire”* 2011, 49

Contrasted with the highly planned and exclusive nature of Town of Mount Royal, Parc-Extension developed as part of the housing boom that occurred with the expansion of Montreal described above. Pierre Brassard, in “Les origines de Parc-Extension,” gives an account of how the area was converted from farmland, divided into small plots by real estate speculators, and sold to families of modest income, ‘extending’ Parc Avenue to create the Parc Avenue Extension subdivision. To avoid assuming the cost of implementing infrastructures, realtors petitioned for its annexation to the City of Montreal which succeeded in 1910. Yet, the development of the Parc-Extension neighborhood was subject to external constraints that prevented it from fully participating in the momentum that animated the surrounding neighborhoods.²⁷

The railroad and the Canadian Pacific shunting yard built at the end of the 19th century formed a physical barrier to the urban development of the area. Without a tunnel under the Canadian Pacific tracks, the neighborhood failed to be connected to the tramway network until 1921. Streetcar line 80 serving Parc Avenue stopped at the railroad tracks, and residents had to walk to the intersection of Atlantic Avenue and Parc Avenue to take the streetcar downtown. The ten-year delay in streetcar service, coupled with severe delays in installing essential urban services like sewerage and running water, led to difficult sanitary conditions for residents as most homeowners were of modest means and lacked influence on decision-makers.²⁸

28. *Idem*, 50-56

Nevertheless, residents showed remarkable energy and civic spirit in expressing their grievances to Montreal city administrators. They founded the Parc-Extension Municipal Reform Association to speak on their behalf. A citizens’ assembly was planned to protest the City of Montreal’s slowness in providing the urban services promised at the time of the annexations.

The neighborhood of Parc-Extension grew slowly at first, but the construction of the Park Avenue railway station in 1931 converted the area into a major transportation hub, contributing to the urbanization of the city and attracting all kinds of small industries around the railroad, such as warehouses, tool and machine shops, as well as garment manufacturers. Canadian Pacific workers and factory workers settled near the station, gradually transforming Parc-Extension into a residential neighborhood.²⁹

29. *Idem*, 56

Leisure in this working-class neighborhood depended largely on the initiative of its citizens, with informal activities

such as card games, parties between neighbors, brass bands playing for the children, small children's plays and street dances organized by the churches. The many vacant lots also served as recreation grounds for residents and impromptu field hockey in winter. In this sense, testimonials highlight a form of local participatory democracy, where residents mobilized to solve problems such as snow removal, debating controversial projects such as a coal enclosure and organizing meetings through a local community hall.³⁰

30. *Idem*, 60-61

The world economic crisis of the 1930s slowed urban development in Parc-Extension, affecting small, indebted owners who lost their properties for non-payment of taxes, leading to the seizure of land by the City at low prices, while economic restrictions encouraged residents to cultivate vegetable gardens on vacant lots. After the Second World War, the district experienced an urban development boom, with over 88% of housing units built between 1945 and 1970, in response to the demographic growth resulting from the end of the war, welcoming mainly immigrants, and confirming its role as an arrival neighborhood. The economic and demographic context of this period also marked a shift from owner-occupied houses towards tenancy. While construction mainly consisted of duplexes and triplexes typical of Montreal, Parc-Extension also saw the emergence of new forms of housing, including bungalows, also known as «veterans' homes» and multiplexes. In response to rapid population growth in the 1970s, a few public infrastructures were created, among which two English-language schools and the neighborhood's first arena.³¹

31. *Idem*, 63-65

Montreal's industrial decline and the global economic crisis that hit the city in the 1980s hit this working-class neighborhood hard, surrounded by factories and infrastructures that no longer brought prosperity. Many textile workshops closed and relocated, and unemployment hovered around 30%.³² The rail industry also slowed down with the rise of road haulage, announcing the closure of the Jean-Talon

32. *Idem*, 71

train station in 1983. From the late 1980s onwards, however, the economic recession led to the mobilization of many citizens and the formation of ethnocultural community organizations, as well as local action groups. Most community associations and groups formed in the 1990s, except for the Parc-Extension Youth Organization (PEYO), founded in 1967. Still active today, the PEYO offers sports activities for young people and community support for neighborhood residents, such as a community cafeteria, Meals-on-Wheels, 'Arts and Stories', a summer program and cultural events. At the same time, groups were forming to revitalize the neighborhood, such as the Regroupement en aménagement de Parc-Extension (RAMPE) and the Comité d'action de Parc-Extension (CAPE).³³

33. *Idem*, 72

At the end of the 1990s, the redevelopment of the former Jean-Talon train station came to the forefront of public attention, the City of Montreal having acquired the site from the Canadian Pacific at the time of its closure. Part of the station's original vocation was preserved with the opening of the Parc metro station (in front of Plaza Hutchison) occupying the west entrance, which restored some of the area's former liveliness. Residents and community groups advocated for its rehabilitation into public infrastructure and green spaces to serve the needs of the community.³⁴ But aside from the creation of a public square in front of the heritage building, the City has since favored commercial leasing of the former station and the establishment of a large grocery chain store on site.

34. *Idem*, 76

The neighborhood has seen waves of immigration transforming its cultural and built landscape. From a mixed Anglophone/Francophone small suburb in the 1940s, Parc-Extension's Jewish community experienced significant growth in the 1950s, followed by the arrival of Italian and Greek immigrants in the 1960s-1980s.³⁵

35. *Idem*, 66-67

Since the 1980s, South Asian communities from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan notably have populated the area, making up 64% of its immigrant population. The arrival of new cultural communities and visible minorities has accentuated the multi-ethnic character of the area and the public space has been transformed. The old Greek shops have been replaced by boutiques and grocery stores reminiscent of India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Community life also organizes around new places of worship: Hindu temples, Sikhs and mosques color the landscape of Parc-Extension. The sports practiced by the population followed the evolution of the neighborhood's cultural portrait. The baseball of the 1980s and 1990s has slowly given way to cricket, a sport played by South Asians and people from the Antilles.³⁶

36. *Idem*, 73

The Parc-Extension neighborhood had a number of assets that made it a good place to put down roots: low-cost housing, places to socialize, a local economy and a cultural vitality. The development of places of worship and the founding of community associations are a sign of this appropriation of the neighborhood. Residents now have access to a wide variety of services that provide a strong socio-cultural infrastructure for both long-time and new residents: multifunctional community centers, women's and youth organizations, temporary housing for homeless youth, women's shelters, services for seniors, as well as several non-profit organizations offering services related to translation, housing, babysitting, food aid, health, employment and language training. Parc-Extension residents therefore live close to networks and services they wouldn't have access to as easily elsewhere. A map produced by geography students at the Université de Montreal, as part of a field course taught by Violaine Jolivet in summer 2019, clearly shows the concentration of services offered in Parc-Extension.³⁷

37. *Idem*, 73

current housing issues in parc-extension

After a long period of downgrading and marginalization in the 1980–1990s due to the degradation of the housing stock and the influx of newcomers, public stakeholders and real estate developers have recently begun reinvesting in the neighborhood. Coupled with its central location, housing market prices have become an argument of choice for realtors, advertising the potential profit of investments (rent-gap) in this devalued area surrounded by gentrified districts.³⁸ Since the 2010s, Parc-Extension seems on the edge of a socio-economic transition from a neighborhood left behind to a new hotspot for developers.

38. Jolivet and al. "Before Displacement: Studentification, Campus-Led Gentrification and Rental Market Transformation in a Multiethnic Neighborhood," 2023, 8

In the 2016 census, 81% of households in Parc-Extension were tenants, with 42% of them spending over 30% of their income on rent, both higher than the city's average.³⁹ The neighborhood now faces significant housing challenges, including a shortage of rentals, rising costs, renovictions, and exploitation by landlords. These housing figures are particularly important when considering gentrification and displacement as tenants have considerably less power to stay put in their homes than do owners.

39. Statistique Canada, *Housing in Canada: Key Results from the 2016*

As of 2018, the vacancy rate for one and two-bedroom units in Parc-Extension was 0.7% and 0.6%, respectively, much lower than the city's average and the recommended 3% for a healthy housing market. This scarcity has led to overcrowded living conditions, especially for large families. Parc-Extension residents also face issues like discriminatory landlords, limited housing supply, and substandard living conditions. The 2016 census shows that nearly 10% of housing in Parc-Extension needs major repairs, compared to Montreal's average of 8.5%.⁴⁰ The Comité d'action de Parc-Extension receives numerous reports each year about housing conditions, with 17% involving cockroach issues

40. Statistique Canada, *Housing in Canada: Key Results from the 2016*

41. Comité logement la Petite Patrie (CLPP). “Entre Fraude Et Spéculation – Enquêtes Sur Les Reprises Et Évictions De Logement”, 2020

42. Table de Quartier de Parc Extension. “Systemic Racism in Parc Extension: A Summary of the Issues and Recommendations”, 2019.

43. Senécal, Tremblay, and Teufel, “Gentrification ou étalement urbain?”, 1990

and 15% involving rodent infestations, often overlapping.⁴¹

Residents’ consultations reveal a power imbalance between tenants and landlords, worsened by language barriers, immigration fears, limited knowledge of housing laws, or social exclusion upon arrival. Reports from a community roundtable on systemic racism in Parc-Extension highlight instances of racial profiling by police, employers, and landlords, favoring students over racialized tenants.⁴² These demographic factors mean that many people living in Parc-Extension are particularly vulnerable to abusive spatial practices.

The ongoing gentrification of the neighborhood is attributed in large part to the planning and construction of Université de Montreal’s new Campus MIL, recently built on the site of the former shunting yard at the southern edge of Parc-Extension.

the in-between, new core of urban capital

In the North American context, studies (Vicino, 2008, Hallon, B. 2008) show that nearby industrial suburbs like Parc-Extension have undergone negative socio-economic transformations, particularly after the “white flight” phenomenon in the 1970s-1980s. While the capitalist dynamics of urban production favored the urban sprawl of suburbs and the gentrification of downtowns, pericentral neighborhoods were often neglected, becoming «in-between» spaces where the infrastructures needed for metropolitan development and the lower-income classes were relegated.³⁵

The 1980s-1990s were marked by a general process of decline, ethnicization and impoverishment in the inner suburbs, including Montreal. A 1990 report entitled, “Gentrification ou étalement urbain? Montreal’s Center and Surroundings”⁴³, highlighted demographic and economic trends in the metropolitan region, marking population decline in the downtown core versus growth in the outer suburbs. At the time,

however, gentrification mainly affected the downtown area and did not involve the outer suburbs.

Over the following decade, gentrification began to spread to Montreal’s pericentral ring, but neighborhoods such as Côte-des-Neiges, Saint-Michel and Parc-Extension showed a deterioration in socioeconomic indicators, unlike most central neighborhoods. In the years 1990-2000, Montreal’s pericentral neighborhoods reached their peak of housing disinvestment.⁴⁴

And yet, despite these negative indicators, public authorities have identified pericentral districts as strategic areas for the economic transition to a post-industrial Montreal focused on the creative and digital economy.⁴⁵ This marked a shift in development policies, bringing about a “re-centralization” of urban capital, which, after reinvesting in down town areas, was extended to pericentral neighborhoods. Rail corridors, freeways and brownfield sites were seen as opportunities for new urban projects.

The urban project around the MIL campus is a specific example of the revitalization of pericentral areas. Presented as a response to the metropolis’ new strategic orientations, the MIL project acts as an urban-planning tool aimed at revaluing land, boosting property values, generating tax revenues for the municipality and driving gentrification in hitherto neglected areas of the metropolis. Ultimately, this initiative seeks to transform these “in-between” spaces into attractive centers for investment and the new urban economy.⁴⁶

44. Jolivet and Reiser, “La gentrification par projet : politiques publiques et revalorisation des quartiers péricentraux, le cas du Campus MIL à Montreal”, 2022, 4

45. Senécal, Tremblay, and Teufel, “Gentrification ou étalement urbain?”, 1990

46. Jolivet and Reiser, 2022, 5



Fig. 11 Above. View of the new university Campus MIL from Parc-Extension residential street

Fig. 12 Below. View from the new university Campus MIL onto Parc-Extension



state-led gentrification, by extension

Amidst the construction of over one thousand upscale condos and modern urban designs, concerned citizens, Parc-Extension residents and community activists met with protests the unveiling of Université de Montréal's new science campus, MIL. The event marked a significant urban transformation for the city, one which would exacerbate the existing housing crisis, placing undue strain on the already marginalized community and its limited rental market.⁴⁷

47. Jolivet et al.,
"Before Displacement.", 1

A collaboration between the City of Montreal and the Université de Montréal, The MIL project's acronym reflects its dual identity as "Montreal Innovative Lab", destined to become its latest centrality, "Middle of the Island."⁴⁸

48. Jolivet et al.,
"Before Displacement.", 1

Situated in affluent Outremont and separated only by a railway line from the less affluent Parc-Extension, MIL is aiming to transform an old industrial corridor into a creativity hub through rezoning and new housing development. Still, at the municipal level, the location of this 350 million dollar construction project has been considered, since before the project's inception in 2006, as only part of a city-wide regeneration plan.

Already embedded in the city's 2004 master plan the requalification of the industrial corridor was praised for both its "high reuse and improvement potential, especially in light of its central location and the ready availability of land and buildings. An eloquent example is the [CP] railyard, which offers excellent potential for reuse as residential space".⁴⁹

49. City of
Montreal, 2004, 219

However, the discourse around the economic revitalization of a disinvested space too often concealed the gentrification implications for nearby areas predominantly inhabited by



Fig. 13
Axonometric view of the southern borders between Parc-Extension and Outremont district, with the new pedestrian bridge connecting the university Campus MIL to the nearby metro station in Parc-Extension.

poor and immigrant communities. Alongside the campus, 1300 new units and green spaces are being developed, significantly altering the Parc-Extension neighborhood. This transformation is attracting a new demographic, as Parc-Extension, traditionally an immigrant neighborhood, is becoming increasingly desirable to, primarily, white students and professionals in the emerging AI industry sector, a trend noted in reports by PEAMP (2020) and researchers Sprague & Rantisi (2019).

In 2007, about a year after the project's inception, a coalition of about twenty local organizations raised alarms about the project's potential impacts. They acknowledged the project's potential to enhance the metropolitan area but stressed the need to consider both opportunities and threats it posed to their urban neighborhood. "The project will add value to the metropolitan area and the area surrounding the yard site, but we must consider the opportunities and potential threats that a project of this size poses to an urban neighborhood like ours."⁴⁹

49. RAMPE, *Rapport OCPM*, 2007, 2

In 2019, it was disclosed by a university spokesperson that the original plan for the MIL Campus project in Montreal, which included building 1,058 beds in dedicated student housing for an anticipated 2,000 students, was revised. The revision, driven by profit considerations, shifted focus away from providing student housing. This change underscores the conflict between the objectives of urban development and the necessities of the community, as highlighted in the 2020 PEAEMP report and 2007 statements from community groups like RAMPE.

The MIL project is a pivotal part of Montreal's redevelopment strategy, championing sustainable urbanism and the knowledge economy, as outlined in the 2013 PDUES. Yet, according to López-Morales et al. (2019), this project has been a driving force behind the rapid gentrification in the Parc-Extension area. This is attributed to strategies like

land upzoning and the promotion of centralization and infrastructure improvements, which have led to an increase in the rent gap.

This situation illustrates the complex interplay between urban redevelopment, economic interests, and the impact on local communities, particularly in terms of housing affordability and the social fabric of neighborhoods. The MIL project raises critical questions about who benefits from such development and at what cost to existing communities.

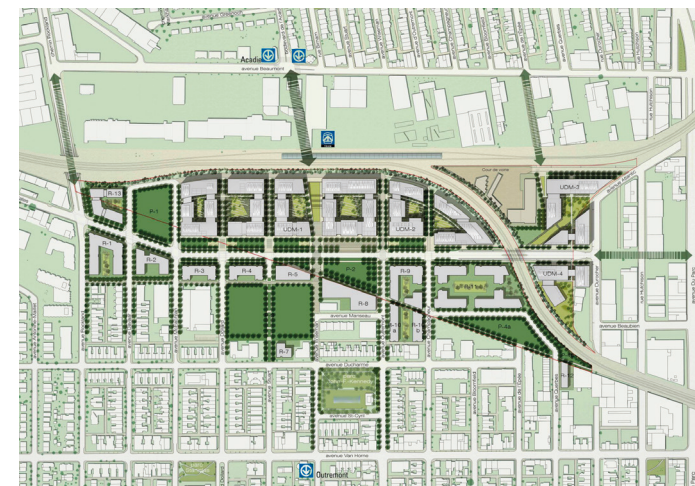


Fig. 14
Plan de développement urbain, économique et social (PDUES) for the sector Campus MIL 2013

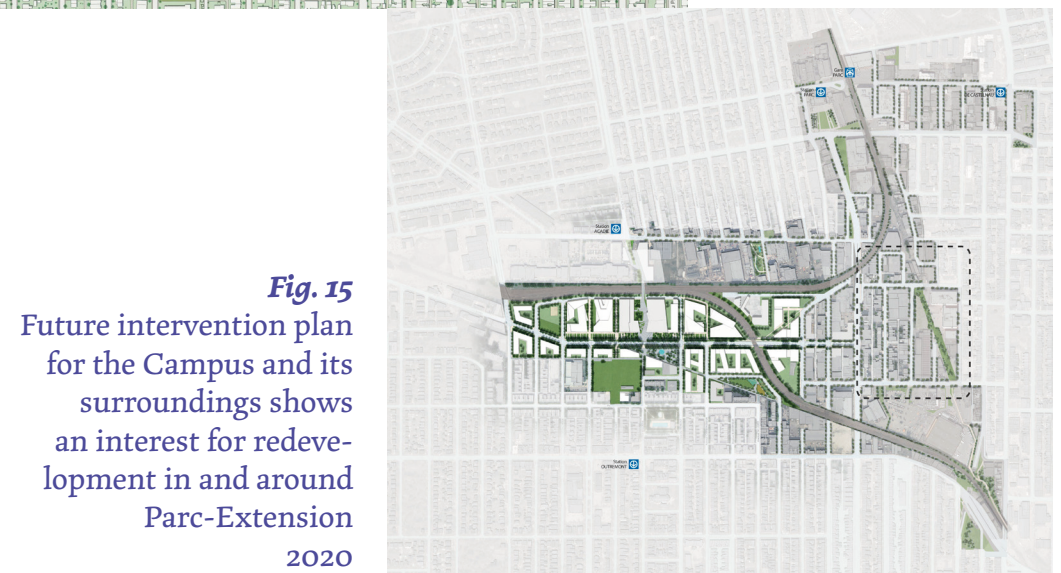


Fig. 15
Future intervention plan for the Campus and its surroundings shows an interest for redevelopment in and around Parc-Extension 2020



co-producing commons-based resilience

The city of Montreal and the university can still take action to mitigate the impacts of this project-driven gentrification by reconnecting it with the needs of the territories in which the university is situated, through the creation of student residences, the construction of social housing, and the implementation of rent controls.

But in recent years, the community of Parc-Extension has started to take matters into its own hands to mitigate the ongoing transformation of the neighborhood, engaging in various practices of resourcefulness to build community resilience. Embedded in social networks of collaboration and sharing, these processes revolve around the co-production, collective governance, and maintenance of urban commons, and thus could be described as a form of commoning.

In his text *Grounding social revolution: elements for a systems theory of commoning*, Massimo De Angelis describes the concept of commons as that of a social system in which a community of subjects share resources and practices in a common goal towards sustainability and social reproduction⁵⁰. He goes on to argue that the principal manifestation of this sharing culture for reproduction is the practice of commoning, or doing in common, a form of social labor which is in direct relation to the needs, desires, and aspirations of the commoners and bound through networks of solidarity, sufficiency, and mutual aid. Though commons rarely operate in total autonomy and usually take part inside systems of state and capital, they help found the conditions of resilience and self-organization which facilitate the reproduction of the community through time⁵¹.

Fig. 16 Volunteering residents harvest fruit from trees in Parc-Extension with the collective Les Fruits Défendus

50. De Angelis, "Grounding Social Revolution: Elements for a Systems Theory of Commoning," 211

51. De Angelis, "Grounding Social Revolution: Elements for a Systems Theory of Commoning," 213



Fig. 17 Diagram of urban commoning practices in Parc-Extension, by author

Practices of commoning taking place in Parc-Extension and analysed below can be categorized into four types of urban commons: co-produced knowledge and visioning tools, social infrastructures, community currencies and local food ecosystems.

co-produced knowledge and visioning tools

Co-production of knowledge entails the creation of data or information through a shared research process that involves diverse stakeholders, often of academic and non-academic background to represent different perspectives around a project. The inclusion of community-based actors holding different methodologies and assessment processes as well as knowledge systems allows to generate more reliable information to be used for future solutions.⁵²

Parc-Extension Anti-Eviction Mapping Project

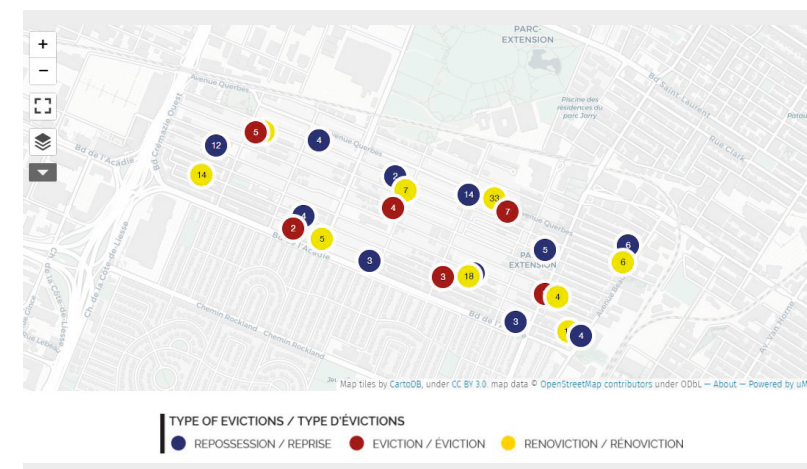
Around the time that University of Montreal's MIL Campus opened, the Comité d'action de Parc-Extension (CAPE), who has been working since 1986 to improve housing conditions for underprivileged residents, started to notice a change in the complaints they were receiving. Up until then, most of the data they collected and field work they did to defend tenants' rights were concerned with unsanitary conditions and lack of maintenance by landlords. However, residents quickly began to request CAPE's help regarding problems stemming from gentrification such as eviction notices for housing repossessions, expansion and subdivisions of apartments, and notices to leave for major renovations, or as frequently called reno-victions. These trends were also corroborated by the committee's weekly door to door fieldwork and encounters with community members in the neighborhood.⁵³

Therefore, a collaboration between CAPE, residents and members of the local Community-Based Action Re-

search Network (CBAR) led to the creation in 2019 of the Parc-Extension Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (PEAMP). Following similar initiatives in San Francisco and Los Angeles, the project aims to raise awareness and document the consequences of gentrification in Parc-Extension, combining digital mapping tools, quantitative data with multimedia intervention and storytelling⁵⁴. It also seeks to hold politicians, institutions and businesses like the University of Montreal and the emerging tech industries accountable for their impact on gentrification, while providing oral histories and narratives that posit residents of Parc-Extension not as victims but as actors resisting the current wave of evictions. The project used data collected by the CAPE since 2017 and conducted interviews with local actors to create two different maps hosted on an online platform.

Eviction map

The first map displays both the locations and reasons behind evictions in the neighborhood, as well as the last price paid by the tenant. A significant increase in evictions, renovations and repossessions over the last four years can be observed. CAPE stated that in 2021 alone the number of evictions reported to them had doubled⁵⁵. This only points to the tip of the iceberg, as many evictions are happening without the tenants contacting the CAPE beforehand.



54. Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, <https://antieviction-map.com>.

55. Trépanier, "Community Power Map: Comité d'Action de Parc-Extension & la collecte des données", 2021

Fig. 18 Eviction Map produced for the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project

52. Ellam Yua and al. "A Framework for Co-Production of Knowledge in the Context of Arctic Research," 2022 1

53. Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, <https://antieviction-map.com>.

Community Map

The second map offers a portrait of community-led projects, actions and organizations to challenge the housing crisis in the neighborhood and to put forward solutions adapted to local priorities. Users can watch interviews with activists and get more information on community organizations as well as the concerned mobilizations and sites. Data can be added to the map by completing a questionnaire, with the goal of documenting initiatives and struggles happening in Parc-Extension, as well as sharing knowledge and strategies between various groups.

Fig. 19 Outdoor projection event to share the results from the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project with residents



To increase its visibility and accessibility, the project was launched in a public square through an outdoor projection and the screening of two films documenting its process. In consultation with community groups, the PEAMP collective also created the brochure “What you can do to counter the harmful effects of gentrification in Parc-Extension”, a guide for new residents, students, businesses, and community groups, which was distributed at various community events and made available online.⁵⁶

While the CAPE’s first objective to collect data was for internal use, the need for political representation, media outreach and eviction mapping brought a new dimension

to the data. The Mapping Project’s process of co-produced knowledge allowed to bring in support from academic researchers to create visual and live archives of the neighborhood’s fight for spatial justice. It also generated more research initiatives, co-produced studies about the ongoing processes of displacement related to the Campus MIL, such as the MIL façons de se faire évincer (1000 ways to be evicted) report which was largely covered in the media and which’s data provided valuable arguments to advocate for community-led development and housing decommodification. Notably, the report reveals that from February to May 2020, rental costs for two and three-bedroom units in Parc Extension were more than double the averages provided by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, indicating a rapid increase.⁵⁷

CAPE’s research shows that many rental listings in the area directly target UdeM students and young professionals, suggesting a shift in the neighborhood’s demographic. Another study led by Professor Violaine Jolivet of Université de Montreal, in collaboration with CAPE in 2022 indicates that over a third of rental listings in Parc Extension mention the new campus, with units highlighting proximity to campus costing an average of \$100 more per month⁵⁸.

In this case, data can be seen as an immaterial urban common, which becomes spatialized through its activation by community members in collective action to resist displacement and fight for equitable access to material resources in the city. The co-production of knowledge acts as a commoning practice to preserve and communicate the neighborhood’s ongoing struggle for justice.

Parc-Extension Roundtable

Another example of collaborative efforts to create knowledge-base resources towards community resilience in Parc-Extension can be seen through the recent establi

57. Jolivet and al. “MIL Façons de Se Faire Évincer : L’Université de Montreal et La Gentrification à Parc-Extension”, 2020, 16

58. Jolivet et al., “Before Displacement.”, 15

56. Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, <https://antieviction-map.com>.

59. *Table de Quartier de Parc-Extension, “Qui sommes-nous?”*, <https://www.parcex.org>

shment of a local concertation group, the Parc-Extension Roundtable. Created in the summer of 2018, it acts as a consultation mechanism for social development that brings together many local stakeholders around its mission to improve living conditions and promote the collective rights and interests of residents. The idea behind the roundtable stems from a collective desire among community actors to create a “multi-sector, multi-network entity”⁵⁹ capable of developing long-term community-based planning. In this sense, it gathers actors from local schools, residents, community organizations, public health representatives actively working in the neighborhood to identify and prioritize issues to be addressed through community-led projects. The roundtable therefore acts as a bottom-up urban planning tool outside of traditional governmental instances.

60. *Table de quartier de Parc-Extension, Plan de développement social et communautaire de Parc-Extension, 2018*

Following its creation in 2018, the consultation body has created 5-year community plan around 5 main objectives – a food security network, youth supportive programs, affordable housing, accessibility to existing services and socio-professional integration – and centered around 42 proactive initiatives.⁶⁰ This powerful visioning tool includes many spatial resources and infrastructures for the community such as the creation of a dedicated space for socio-professional integration, the construction of community housing projects, the development of new spaces for community gardening, the creation of a community grocery store, the acquisition of a truck to recuperate and distribute donated food products, the mutualization of kitchen spaces among local partners, the building of a large community center to centralize community services, and the creation of a local resource directory office.

These last two projects have been selected as priority for development, with focus groups created to source funding and manage an action plan. The community center has not yet taken life, but as result of these processes, the Bureau d’information de Parc-Extension (BIPE) which acts as a living



Fig. 20 Community assembly organized by the Parc-Extension Roundtable to discuss community plan

directory for neighborhood community resources opened in the local library. BIPE’s goal is to provide multilingual referrals to the right resources in Parc-Extension and beyond, through active and sympathetic listening. It also aims to showcase the neighborhood’s community organizations and encourage the creation of links between the various players in the community. Residents come to find answers to their questions from the three advisors who currently make up the BIPE team. Shahista, Anastasia and Arpita are three residents who are very involved in the Parc-Extension community and can offer appropriate referrals in the languages spoken by residents (Punjabi, Greek, Bengali, Urdu, etc.).

social infrastructures and community currencies

In recent years, community-driven initiatives and new socio-financing tools have allowed the creation social housing projects as well as cultural and community spaces that respond to the needs of Parc-Extension residents.

Building social infrastructures, brick per brick

Brique par Brique is a nonprofit organization founded in 2016 by community organizers and professionals of color to respond innovatively and from a social justice perspective to the need for affordable housing and community spaces in Parc-Extension. They decided to take action when the announcement of the new University of Montreal campus to be built in the area made it clear that the neighborhood would soon become a very attractive place for developers, threatening its status as a place accessible to low-income families, racialized communities and other marginalized people. Another main driver for this initiative was the lack of governmental action to fund and provide solutions to the housing crisis.

“Parc Extension is a poor neighborhood,” says Faiz Abhuani, Brique par Brique’s director and Parc-Extension long-term resident, “but it’s also a neighborhood that has a lot of creative energy and that’s something we really want to preserve. We realized that there was a certain urgency for us to create some sort of infrastructure that tries to secure space for local residents and ensures affordable rents.”⁶¹

The organization’s approach to sustainable development therefore takes an anti-speculation stance rooted in grassroots leadership, by focusing on decommodifying buildings in the neighborhood to create long-term community assets. To do so, Brique par Brique has mobilized since its creation the use of an innovative development model based on community bonds as a lever for financing its projects. Community bonds are debt instruments with characteristics like

any other bond: a face value, a maturity date and an interest rate but can only be issued by non-profit organizations. The organizations campaign in their communities and issue their bonds without intermediaries. The bonds are available at various low-price points therefore making it an accessible investment tools for community members who share a common vision around the development of a project with a social vocation. In 2019, a first socio-financing campaign raised over \$350,000 in community bonds to further the organization’s objective, making Brique par Brique the second largest issuer of this type of bond in the residential sector in Canada.

In December 2021, Brique par Brique acquired a duplex on Beaumont Avenue in Parc-Extension, transforming it into a community space that meets the needs of the residents.

Fig. 21 Creative writing workshop at Brique par Brique’s cultural space



61. Sproull, “Support Affordable Housing by Buying Community Bonds,” Interview, 2017

62. Brique Par Brique, <https://www.briquepar-brique.com/>

Fig. 22 Presentation of Parc-Extension's many services to newcomers at BxB's cultural space



“We envision this community center as a shared living room for our neighbors that must deal with smaller and more expensive apartments. We are co-creating a meeting space for folks to share and care, and to find joy in collective action.”⁶²

In this sense, the cultural programming of the center is developed in partnerships with local actors through various consultation processes and hosts a wide range of activities such as people’s assemblies to discuss neighborhood issues and collective action, creative workshops, women groups, culturally sensitive childcare services, food programs and community dance sessions. The space is also made available for rental at a low-cost fee for other community groups to organize events.

Another initiative for which Brique par Brique is acting as the lead group is the Bétonel project, which will comprise some thirty large-scale affordable housing units with community services, including a collective garden, a food bank and a day-care service. The project will be built in 2024 on the site of a former paint factory in the north end of the district which the organization succeeded in purchasing with the support of the City of Montreal and a community bonds campaign. Brique par Brique is carrying out this initiative in collaboration with CAPE for various aspects, including the elaboration of equity principles for its membership, “offering priority to people who already live in the area, who identify as being racialized, LGBTQ2I as well as people Indigenous to this land.”⁶³

63. Megelas, Nichols, Abhuani. “For Us by Us: Brique Par Brique’s Approach to Housing Self-Determination, 2018

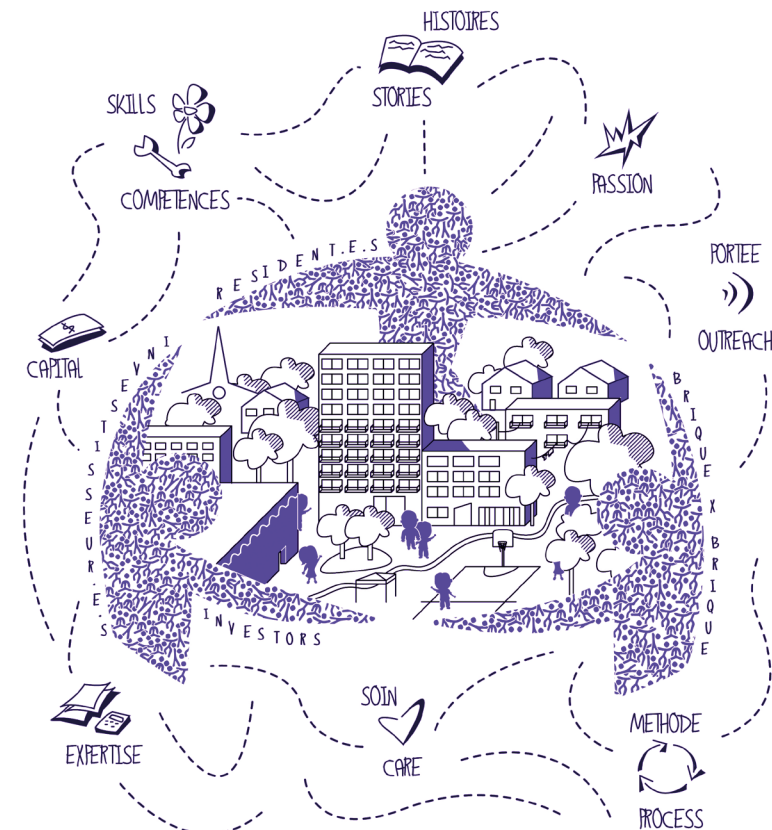


Fig. 23 Brique par Brique’s diagram of values and process framing community development in Parc-Ex

Brique par Brique's Time Bank Project

In addition to housing and community space projects, Brique par Brique is also developing initiatives reinforcing mutual aid and a local sharing economy. Its recent Time-Bank project is designed as an online platform facilitating community members to exchange their services and talents for other services, thereby fostering an ecosystem of reciprocity. Here, it is time, and not money which acts as a currency for exchanging services, creating practices of resourcefulness among community members.

Fig. 24

Residents gather for a community event at La Place Commune's cafe



local food ecosystems

The Parc-Extension neighborhood has also given rise to a food production ecosystem based on the sharing of tangible and intangible resources, as well as the promotion and implementation of collective practices aimed at strengthening community resilience.

La Place Commune

Quotes are from an interview with Simone Chen, local community organizer

With the help of its partners, the La Place Commune cooperative has set up fruit and vegetable production, retrieval, transformation and distribution activities through the Parc-Extension Local Food Solidarity Network. “We don’t want to do charity, we want to help them discover their own agency, [...] to feel able to make choices and take action,” explains community worker Simone Chen, who knows the Network well, having worked there on multiple levels since 2019. “We wanted to set up projects that were based more on solidarity than charity, to lead to greater collective resilience. [...] With this in mind, we launched the Food Solidarity Network project.” The participating organizations thus contribute to the food empowerment of neighborhood residents, as well as to the accessibility of healthy products and production spaces such as collective kitchens and otherwise unused cultivable spaces.

Fig. 25 and 26
Food production in backyard gardens
of Parc-Extension



Les Fruits Défendus

One example is the urban picking collective Les Fruits Défendus, “which works to enhance the value of the thousands of fruit trees that remain unharvested throughout the city [of Montreal],” points out Ms. Chen. The collective’s volunteers map unharvested trees on private land before contacting their owners to put them in touch with a volunteer picker, she outlines. “The fruits are [then] distributed in the neighborhood, to a food bank, a collective kitchen, or a community organization responsible for making them freely available.” Through its actions, the collective manages to prevent “precious local food resources from going to waste”.⁶⁴

64. La Place Commune, “Projets d’agriculture & sécurité alimentaire,” <https://laplacecommune.com/fr/projets-agriculture/>.

Fig. 27 Residents harvest fruits from vines in Parc-Extension alleyway with Les Fruits Défendus Collective



La Place Commune expressed its desire to collaborate with the collective after noticing that the Parc Extension neighborhood was home to a large number of fruit trees. Indeed, the majority of its triplexes “were built with a backyard, but also a front yard”, which represents “a lot of cultivable space, something you don’t see elsewhere in Montreal”. What’s more, the neighborhood also boasts an arboreal heritage unique in the city due to its settlement history. Immigrants, notably Italians and Greeks, who settled in the neighborhood in the 50s and 60s, “brought a lot of grape vines, plum trees and trees”, for example, says Ms. Chen. “You can tell by walking down the alleys that it’s a Bengali who lives here because he grows these kinds of beans. You can tell it’s a Portuguese who lives here because he prunes his vines like this.” “There are a lot of people who share their seeds, who share their knowledge.” One homeowner confided that the trees in his garden come from seeds his grandfather hid in his hat before crossing the Atlantic by boat.

94.

However, the people who cared for these trees are aging and no longer able to harvest. The organization has thus identified in the alleys and courtyards of Parc-Extension an “enormous potential for harvesting”, but also “enormous needs in terms of food and healthy eating”, while a more recent “wave of South Asian immigration is suffering” from poverty.

Other projects

This was the context in which the Les Fruits Défendus collective joined the Network in 2019 to expand its mission, and Ms. Chen set about mobilizing Parc-Extension residents in a project to share cultivable spaces. “If there was a yard or a cultivable species that wasn’t being used, we’d turn it into a vegetable garden and then give the vegetables back to the neighborhood.” The harvest is then shared in three equal parts between neighborhood organizations, participating residents and the volunteers who accompanied them from

planting to harvest. The Network also coordinates two projects aimed at recovering food industry surpluses. The first is a peri-urban gleaning project, in partnership with local farms willing to exchange their unmarketable surpluses for volunteer work. The second, with large grocers.

The garden and Collective Craterre

Finally, the network collaborates with citizens who have transformed part of the vacant lot acquired by the Université de Montreal for its Campus Mil into a garden. La Place Commune oversees the work of the member-gardeners and assistant-gardeners of the CRATERRE Collective, who supply it “with vegetables, herbs, teas and fruits for most of the year”.⁶⁵ However, the market garden is now threatened by Campus MIL, laments Simone Chen. After authorizing its activities and promoting them in its communications, the Université de Montreal is trying to put an end to them. Ms. Chen fears that it will turn its back on “10 years of citizen work to cultivate this land” and transform it into “a magnificent, spectacular garden” in favor of “an agreement with the borough of Outremont to turn it into a parking lot”.

Results

La Place Commune estimates that the initiatives of Parc-Extension’s Local Food Solidarity Network alone managed to save and distribute nearly 45 tons of fruit and vegetables in the neighborhood in 2022. “In itself, the figures are enormous”, exclaims Ms. Chen, adding that this is without counting the unquantifiable impact. “It cultivates joy in a lot of people.” “It was validated by the population. We were fulfilling our mission, meeting a real need.”

Critiques

Some community members blame the Network’s initiatives for contributing to the gentrification of Parc-Extension.

Ms. Chen says that the issue of eco-gentrification gives rise to “very frequent discussions” at team and planning meetings. “We always take stock of what’s going on, what we’re doing [to make sure] it’s meeting a need.”

“[We put] in place the basics, the principles, the ideas, the basic infrastructure, as well as offering the resources,” she explains. “It’s not easy to set up a project that tries to tackle all these issues.”

In her view, the Network’s activities are distinct from eco-gentrification, which unfolds from the top down, through the implementation of “projects that can be appropriated by citizens”.

Challenges

While there are many challenges facing community organizations working in the area of food security, Simone Chen believes that “the central issue” is the lack of resources at virtually all of Parc-Extension’s community organizations. She deplores the fact that so few resources are devoted to food insecurity, forcing organizations to “always be in a race to find funding for, not even next year, but next month”. She also cites the issue of governance and the difficulty of adopting an organizational structure and vision shared by all its members. Lastly, Ms. Chen acknowledges that mobilizing citizens proved to be very tricky, as it was sometimes “difficult to ask people already living in precarious situations to give their time”. “Being able to volunteer is a privilege,” she sums up, “but we had to find the right balance”.

65. La Place Commune, “Projets d’agriculture & sécurité alimentaire,” <https://laplacecommune.com/fr/projets-agriculture/>.

Parc-Ex Curry Collective

Quotes are from an interview with Leonora Indira King, local community organizer and founder of the PECC

Place Commune also operates a café-restaurant-grocery serving as a “nourishing third place” for neighborhood residents and partner organizations. Such is the case with the Curry Collective, a delivery service for meals cooked by asylum seekers and recent immigrant women in Parc-Extension. The catering service uses Café La Place Commune as a pick-up point for customer orders.

Leonora Indira King founded Curry Collective in April 2021 to provide financial support to women who face “barriers to employment due to their precarious immigration status”⁶⁶ as well as to foster their resilience and integration. Since then, the projects have multiplied organically, through meetings and the establishment of partnerships with other organizations in the neighborhood.

In an interview, she recalls that the creation of the mutual aid initiative came about by “accident, it was an experiment.” At the time, King was a researcher with Concordia’s Office of Community Engagement and coordinator for the organization *Afrique au féminin*, working with women seeking asylum. She says she quickly realized that the language barrier, their financial dependence on their husbands, their family responsibilities and their migratory status were all obstacles to their integration into their host society.

“These women need to start their integration, to have some money, because there they are completely dependent on their husbands.” Seeing all these women “who stay at home and cook all day”, Ms King says she had the idea of enabling them to earn an income from their culinary skills while staying at home to look after their children. “It’s not just income for them, it’s also a source of integration.”

Ms. King takes care of all the administrative side of things, as well as customer relations, while her chef-cooks put together the menu and prepare the dishes. She also used to deliver orders to customers herself, but Curry Collective’s success now requires a team of five delivery drivers, including three volunteers. “One of these delivery drivers is an asylum seeker, another is a newcomer, so I try to give them work.”

To free up her cooks and allow them to devote more time to their francization courses, Ms. King has also set up a childcare service and an intergenerational space in the Parc-Extension community, in partnership with the *Brique par Brique* collective, which lends her a space. Today, the collective daycare is reserved for non-status families who do not have access to subsidized daycare.

“Without a childcare solution, [these women] can’t work, attend vocational training or language courses.”



Fig. 28 Head chefs of the Parc-Ex Curry Collective cook meals in the kitchen shared with Sun Youth organization

However, the service plans to move in the spring of 2024 to much larger premises that have been made available through a partnership with the Sun Youth organization. The latter uses the space on evenings only as part of after-school programs for juveniles. Sun Youth has also been sharing its community kitchen with Curry Collective since September 2023, when its chefs' stoves were no longer sufficient to meet demand. "They've really accommodated us to get us set up. We can use all their equipment and we bought a freezer."

Ms. King attributes the success of the Curry Collective's initiatives to her approach that avoids tying herself to a single organization. "I'm not monogamous with a community center." She believes it's much trickier to navigate the sometimes competitive relationships between organizations in the same neighborhood when favoring one.

"It's really about working your relationships, sitting on committees, staying on top of what's going on, but above all working with different people, different centers as well to find openings." She also points out that this networking work promotes the sharing of information crucial to identifying under-utilized resources in a community and enabling them to be pooled for the benefit of its members.

Fig. 29 Home cooked meal from Parc-Ex Curry Collective



Fig. 30 Chefs from the Curry Collective cultivate vegetables in the garden plot offered by a neighbor



lessons learned

*"Just as none of us is beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings."*⁶⁶ -Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993

66. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993

Like the Indigenous treaty of the Dish with One Spoon, Parc-Extension's community practices invite us to rethink the notion of territory through a vision of fair and equitable resource sharing. The tactics of protest and consultation, the mechanisms of co-production and the culture of mutuality at work in the neighborhood reveal a community working to preserve its collective motive, a *vivre-ensemble* that it weaves beyond and against all the boundaries imposed by the city.

Still, the city extends over the veil of Parc-Extension, and with it the speculative logic of a neoliberal economy. Urbanism by extension has arrived at the gates of its stronghold and is pounding with evictions and exclusion. Project-driven gentrification chooses its subjects for the benefit of a creative yet destructive class. The process of dispossession is continuous and all too reminiscent of the mobilization of the bourgeois settler subject against its necessary Other.

But to the violence of urbanization, Parc-Extension proposes territorial resilience. It organizes, transforms, regenerates, imagines, and innovates, produces and cares for the urban commons in a collective tango between place-making and place-caring.

*"Commoning thus relies on a dance of values on the floor of community sharing."*⁶⁷

67. Ruivenkamp, and Hilton, eds. "Perspectives on Commoning: Autonomist Principles and Practices.", 2017, 228

reclaiming plaza hutchison

68. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 2010, 28

“Justice is therefore not abstract, and not solely something “handed down” or doled out by the state, it is rather a shared responsibility of engaged actors in the socio-spatial systems they inhabit and (re)produce.” -Edward Soja, Seeking Spatial Justice, 2010

As you can imagine by now, the coveted site around which has revolved my collaboration process with Brique par Brique is that of the Plaza Hutchison. As mentioned in the beginning of this case study, the City of Montreal has yet to present a plan for the rehabilitation of the building, which continues to sit empty and in increasing disrepair amidst an important housing crisis in Parc-Extension. One of the reasons for this delay is due to the latency of the City's Service de l'Habitation (Housing Services Department) to establish a policy for attributing and selling its assets. With the local support of community organizations, Brique par Brique has decided to engage in a more proactive approach towards its collective acquisition and conversion into community housing.

This is where my volunteer work within the organization came in. Weekly calls with Faiz Abhuani allowed to establish the first steps as well as the broad strokes of local needs to which the project should respond. After requesting the building plans from city departments, I researched available sources of private and public financing adapted to the project's vocation, developed a first economical model and timeline for the project and elaborated a preliminary analysis of the potential distribution of mixed-use space in the building. Finally, I drafted a first project outline to be used as a pitch document for inquiring the City and prospecting financial and industry partners to join and presented the results along with Faiz Abhuani to the Brique par Brique steering committee mid-December.

moving forward

Moving into the Master Project, I would like to continue exploring the site of the Plaza Hutchison, the nearby Jean-Talon public square, and its former train station to develop a community vision for their rehabilitation into affordable housing and collective spaces of production. As the point of entry into the neighborhood, this site appears as a tactical choice to formulate a counter-project to the state-led gentrification responsible for the dispossession of Parc-Extension's long-term stewards. Although there are many political and economic constraints related to community development, new imaginings, new material forms, and new modes of governing the commons appear as a valuable path towards restoring Parc-Extension's residents' Right to the inner city and its past, present and future heritage. In continuing the collaborative work started with Brique par Brique, I would like to explore participatory design with local community actors to inscribe my architectural role as a facilitator, gardener, and civil agent for urban resilience.



Fig. 31 Jean-Talon station public square with Plaza Hutchison building in the back

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Cover page photo : Parc-Extension residents protest the opening of the Campus MIL. September 2019. Comité d’action de Parc-Extension

Back cover photo (upper left): Volunteering residents harvest fruit from trees in Parc-Extension with the collective Les Fruits Défendus. July 2022. Les Fruits Défendus

Back cover photo (lower left): Cultural dances during the community event Parc-Ex Live organized by Brique par Brique. August 2020. Brique par Brique

Figure 1. Cultural dances during the community event Parc-Ex Live organized by Brique par Brique. August 2020. Brique par Brique

Figure 2. Graffiti on promotional poster announcing the construction of the new university Campus MIL on a former industrial site near Parc-Extension, Montreal. February 2019. Parc-Extension Anti-Eviction Mapping Project

Figure 3. Block party in the back alley of Brique par Brique’s community space in Parc-Extension. September 2022. Brique par Brique

Figure 4. Adapted by author from: Jenny Cartwright. View on the Acadie Boulevard separating Parc-Extension neighborhood and Town of Mount Royal. Documentary film *Trajectoires*. 2017.

Figure 5. Dish with one Spoon wampum belt, with round area in the center symbolizing the dish. Source: Dept. of Ethnology, Royal Ontario Museum

Figure 6. Front façade of Brique par Brique’s community center in Parc-Extension, Montreal, showcasing a photography exhibit of Indigenous community members. March 2022. Brique par Brique

Figure 7. Illustration of the fight for the Plaza Hutchison. August 2018. Parc-Ex Contre la Gentrification group.

iconography

Figure 8. Plaza Hutchison building with Parc Metro Station in the front. 2020. Édouard Plante-Fréchette, La Presse

Figure 9. Street demonstration and occupation by residents to protest the luxury housing project in the Plaza Hutchison building. Residents rallied in front of the former train station nearby. 2018. Parx-Ex Contre la gentrification group

Figure 10. Birdseye view of Parc-Extension neighborhood and surroundings. 2023. Google Maps Satellite

Figure 11. View of the new university Campus MIL from Parc-Extension residential street. October 2021. Matias Brunet-Kirk

Figure 12. View from the new university Campus MIL onto Parc-Extension. September 2019. Bonesso-Dumas. University of Montreal

Figure 13. Axonometric view of the southern borders between Parc-Extension and Outremont district, with the new pedestrian bridge connecting the university Campus MIL to the nearby metro station in Parc-Extension. 2023. Google Maps Satellite

Figure 14. Plan de développement urbain, économique et social (PDUES) for the sector Campus MIL 2013. Ville de Montreal

Figure 15. Future intervention plan for the Campus and its surroundings shows an interest for redevelopment in and around Parc-Extension. 2020. Ville de Montreal

Figure 16. Volunteering residents harvest fruit from trees in Parc-Extension with the collective Les Fruits Défendus. Summer 2022. Les Fruits Défendus

Figure 17. Diagram of urban commoning in Parc-Extension. 2023. by author

iconography

Figure 18. Eviction Map produced for the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project. 2019. Parc-Extension Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (PEAMP)

Figure 20. Community assembly organized by the Parc-Extension Roundtable to discuss community plan. 2020. Table de quartier de Parc-Extension

Figure 21. Creative writing workshop at Brique par Brique's cultural space. 2021. Brique par Brique

Figure 22. Presentation of Parc-Extension's many services to newcomers at BxB's cultural space. August 2023. Brique par Brique

Figure 23. Brique par Brique's diagram of values and process framing community development in Parc-Ex. 2019. Brique par Brique

Figure 24. Residents gather for a community event at La Place Commune's cafe. 2021. La Place Commune

Figure 25 and 26. Food protection in backyard gardens of Parc-Extension. August 2023. Catherine Juneau

Figure 27. Residents harvest fruits from vines in Parc-Extension alleyway with Les Fruits Défendus Collective. 2019. Les Fruits Défendus

Figure 28. Head chefs of the Parc-Ex Curry Collective cook meals in the kitchen shared with Sun Youth organization. 2023. Parc-Ex Curry Collective

Figure 29. Home cooked meal from Parc-Ex Curry Collective. 2022. Parc-Ex Curry Collective

Figure 30. Chefs from the Curry Collective cultivate vegetables in the garden plot offered by a neighbor. 2022. Parc-Ex Curry Collective

Figure 31. Jean-Talon station public square with Plaza Hutchison building in the back. 2000. Elise Beauregard.

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