International Journal of Canadian Studies
Revue internationale d'études canadiennes

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Citer cette note

Viola, S. (2008). Urban Renewal and Sustainable Development Efforts in Montreal: Vitality and Multiculturalism Requirements from an Identity Protection Perspective. *International Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue internationale d'études canadiennes*, (37), 197–207. https://doi.org/10.7202/040801ar

Résumé de l'article

Un chercheur italien, titulaire de la Bourse de recherche en études canadiennes des Affaires étrangères Canada, a étudié les conséquences sociales, économiques et environnementales des initiatives de renouvellement architectural et urbain entreprises à Montréal au cours des dix dernières années. Il a examiné les niveaux de satisfaction de nouveaux usagers des places et des allées extérieures pour évaluer l'efficacité des processus de préservation, de promotion et d'intégration des espaces publics visant à créer une culture pédestre qui reflète la vitalité et le multiculturalisme contemporains. En général, les espaces ouverts ont contribué à façonner l'identité des environnements bâtis d'un point de vue technique et architectural, tout en tenant compte de la dynamique sociale et économique. Une revue des documents écrits sur l'évolution des espaces urbains de Montréal suggère que l'environnement bâti est devenu un moteur de développement dans le mouvement de préservation de l'identité. Les places et les allées, deux éléments qui incarnent le patrimoine de la collectivité et qui symbolisent son identité, ont été étudiées pour mettre à jour leur valeur culturelle et visuelle et pour comprendre la façon dont elles conjuguent les intérêts individuels et les valeurs sociales.

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Urban Renewal and Sustainable Development Efforts in Montreal: Vitality and Multiculturalism Requirements from an Identity Protection Perspective

Abstract

An Italian researcher, sponsored by the Canadian Studies Faculty Research Program of Canadian Foreign Affairs, investigated the social, economic, and developmental consequences of the urban and architectural renewal initiatives undertaken in Montreal during the last ten years. The study looked at the satisfaction levels of new users of outdoor squares and walkways to evaluate the effectiveness of the preservation, promotion, and integration processes applied to public spaces in response to the challenges of creating a pedestrian culture reflective of contemporary vitality and multiculturalism. Traditionally, open spaces have helped shape the identity of built environments from a technical and constructive perspective while taking into account social and economic dynamics. A review of written documents on the evolution of Montreal's urban spaces suggests that the built environment has become a development driver in the active progress of identity preservation. The squares and walkways, the two elements that epitomize the community's heritage and symbolize its identity, were studied in order to unearth their cultural and imagery value and to understand how they combine individual interests with social values.

Résumé

Un chercheur italien, titulaire de la Bourse de recherche en études canadiennes des Affaires étrangères Canada, a étudié les conséquences sociales, économiques et environnementales des initiatives de renouvellement architectural et urbain entreprises à Montréal au cours des dix dernières années. Il a examiné les niveaux de satisfaction de nouveaux usagers des places et des allées extérieures pour évaluer l'efficacité des processus de préservation, de promotion et d'intégration des espaces publics visant à créer une culture pédestre qui reflète la vitalité et le multiculturalisme contemporains. En général, les espaces ouverts ont contribué à façonner l'identité des environnements bâtis d'un point de vue technique et architectural, tout en tenant compte de la dynamique sociale et économique. Une revue des documents écrits sur l'évolution des espaces urbains de Montréal suggère que l'environnement bâti est devenu un moteur de développement dans le mouvement de préservation de l'identité. Les places et les allées, deux éléments qui incarnent le patrimoine de la collectivité et qui symbolisent son identité, ont été étudiées pour mettre à jour leur valeur

culturelle et visuelle et pour comprendre la façon dont elles conjuguent les intérêts individuels et les valeurs sociales.

Introduction

Montréal est une ville toujours à construire, non définitive, une ville qui offre un espace ouvert à la création, à la recherche et à l'affirmation de sa propre identité[1]. Having anticipated the international upsurge in interest for urban renewal of Western cities all over the world, the municipality of Montreal has taken societal aspirations into account in designing its built environment. The characters and images of built environments have contributed to the evolution of local community needs and values, and, as a result, can be viewed today as important markers of urban growth.

Being a multicultural metropolis, Montreal has had to cope with the process of integrated development, balancing its French and British cultures and history with that of over 80 other communities from all over the world. Today, Montreal's Euro-American ambiance and its heritage and commitment to ensuring a high quality of life attract and fascinate visitors. From a sustainable development perspective based on some of Montreal's urban renewal decisions, this research note offers an account of the role played by heritage protection and promotion initiatives in matters related to societal and cultural problems.

Heritage Identity Protection and Sustainable Development

Among municipalities involved in a sustainable development process, Montreal has managed to improve the quality of life of its citizens through ecological, cultural, political, institutional, social, and economic initiatives. The municipality has adopted plans and policies aimed at ensuring adequate resource availability and reutilization, social comfort and equity, economic development, and prosperity for future generations. Special efforts have been made to change urban lifestyles, reduce social gaps between citizens, and develop a local culture and identity. The process, through architectural and urban design, has helped ensure the preservation of the original quality of life, promote a pedestrian use of the space, make infrastructures more efficient, respect and maintain the character of the different boroughs, save all the natural spaces from transformation, and integrate them into the urban development scheme.

According to the *Stockholm Declaration on Human Environment* and the *Brundtland Report*, since 1980 Montreal has been engaged in a sustainable development approach, "for a new era of economic growth, based on policies that sustain and expand the environmental resource base."[2] As one of the most active municipalities in sustainable approaches, Montreal has used administrative processes, public consultations, and design experiences to modify its structure, image, and roles in order to satisfy

developmental requirements and preserve built resources. Economic vitality, social equity, environmental preservation, and respect for the needs of future generations are the guiding principles of Montreal's balanced approach to urban development. Borrowing from the ancients the Latin expression *civitas*, Montreal's government has been working to create an abstract model of city as a broad and enduring settlement as well as the principal tangible expression of local community and culture, the pattern of material and non-material traditions. A growing awareness of the important role played by urban planning and architectural design in the viability of communities and a preference for multidisciplinary approaches has driven Montreal's transformation and management. The city has been able to deal with increasing requests for intensive development, typical of Western cities during the 20th century. Faced with new models of urban organization and distribution, its decisions have been guided by economic, social, and cultural consequences. While taking into account the dynamics of globalization, Montreal's architectural and urban management policies emphasize the promotion of local sustainable development by focusing on the built environment. Since the 1950s, before the adoption of sustainable development attitudes and best practices for cities, Montreal's researchers and specialists have developed built environment protection approaches and technologies on an environmental and architectural scale. Old Montreal is one of the most engaging settlements of the new world, an interesting theoretical and practical laboratory where the idea of cultural heritage is not only experienced in terms of maintenance and restoration, but is also assumed as a development opportunity, paying tribute to the past.

The institutional development guidelines[3] orienting this process have emerged from a blend of political considerations, cultural strategies, and architectural and functional options. Public debates related to the decline of Old Montreal started after the Second World War, when property developers turned their attention to the new downtown and suggested wide-ranging demolitions. Despite the construction of several new buildings, thanks to the efforts of artists and renovators, Old Montreal was declared a historic district in the 1960s. While a conservative approach guided the decisions related to Old Montreal until the 1970s, since the 1980s, the built environment has been viewed as a sort of active screen for economic revitalization, improving the quality of life and sustainable development. A close relationship has been established between the quality of life of citizens, measured in terms of their well-being, mobility, employment, social inclusion and health, and considerations such as urban form, urban structure, urban organization, and the use of green spaces. As expressed in the city's plans, charters, and related documents, especially over the last 10 years, lifestyles have been changing and have influenced citizens' relationships with urban spaces. In order to counter the anthropic uncontrolled changes afforded by the built heritage, the municipality of Montreal has adopted preservation and protection strategies aimed at

defining new quality standards, based on the idea that built identity is the main value for a community. All urban and architectural design initiatives have been managed in such a way that they emphasize the need to safeguard, protect, adopt, promote, and disseminate the natural or cultural, tangible or intangible heritage. In 2004, both the *Enoncé d'orientation pour une politique du patrimoine* and the *Plan d'urbanisme*[4] proposed a new set of attitudes and requirements for Old Montreal. The local government has made several integrated management decisions related to the built environment, focusing attention on squares and walkways, to protect the landscaped heritage and promote new compatible uses and activities. In accordance with sustainable development principles, the City of Montreal has adopted a policy designed to emphasize the city's traditional pedestrian heritage, blending built environment identities, new sustainable development requirements, and social groups.

Urban Vitality and Multiculturalism

Throughout Montreal's history, the experiences of the city's founders have been evident in the role played by squares in the city's social, economic, and environmental development. In keeping with Europe's co-operative, entrepreneurial, cultural, and democratically organized urban civilization, the French founders of Ville Marie adopted an organization scheme for their village borrowed directly from their country of origin: *"En 1685, le charactère français de Montréal ne fait aucun doute ... Tout dans la manière de construire et d'habiter les lieux reste de tradition française."*[5] A Montreal map of the early 1700s shows two squares: Place d'Armes near the (original) Notre-Dame church, and the marketplace in today's Place Royale. These first urban choices were designed to ensure that their shapes responded to the needs of people and their quality of life. The social and cultural transformations of the 18th and 19th centuries also reflected the importance of squares: today's Place Jacques-Cartier replaced the new Market Place (1808) in 1848; Victoria Square (1872) shows the industrial development of the late 1800s; Place des Arts in the late 1900s exemplifies the new role culture and arts play in urban growth.

In addition to their historic value, Montreal's squares are valuable because they foster sociability and attract tourists. Montreal's ongoing social, political, and cultural effervescence is innovative and invigorating. It offers a whirlwind of cultural creations both traditional and modern. The great variety of activities and events available in squares of Old Montreal as well as in the squares of the 19 new boroughs differentiate Montreal's outdoor spaces from those of Europe and North America. Their architectural character and arrangement seem to flow directly from the sustainable development dynamic approaches, beginning with the idea that architecture can be the major catalyst for change in cities. Montreal's outdoor public spaces, and especially its squares, can be considered the most significant examples of urban life renewal in a multicultural

perspective. With some of the largest events in the world such as the Just for Laughs festival and the Montreal International Jazz Festival, along with many free activities, the municipality of Montreal has managed both technically and socially to improve and maintain its built environments. In Montreal, the concept of quality of life has been increasingly associated with urban environment management.

Multiculturalism emerged in the 1960s and the 1970s from the debate launched by the Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The initial strict focus of the Commission on the unequal relationship between French and British Canadians was soon replaced by a reflection on the contribution of all groups. In 1971, the Trudeau government enunciated a series of principles that became the foundation for Canada's multicultural policy.[6]

Today's European visitors to Montreal are fascinated by the presence of such a diversity of cultural elements in the built environment. If Montreal's defining urban structures, shapes, and functions have belonged to European constructive culture for the last few centuries, today the city seems to be completely involved in mediation actions between multicultural presences and specific cultures. Respect of identity and the creation of common references for a peaceful and balanced cohabitation have been recognized as the central administrative issue. Within this vision, the municipality has given culture the role of catalyst to create and consolidate new common roots.[7] Representative of the North American idea of "multicultural town," where the dominant character is linked to the presence of several communities, traditions, and languages, Montreal has been attempting to build up a new network to integrate cultures, based on the notion of shared lifestyles, rites, and symbols. The municipality of Montreal has recognized that built environment projects are occasions for promoting a multicultural evolution. The built heritage initiatives undertaken over the last 10 years are in response to the basic issues of preventing social contrasts, creating synergies, and integrating cultures. Referring to the built heritage, a theoretical abstraction, it is possible to say that as a multicultural city, Montreal is marked by nostalgia and a search for common roots.

Case Histories

The characteristics of Montreal's built environment have been investigated using several examples of the walkways and squares located in Old Montreal that have led to the city's designation as the "UNESCO City of Design" on 17 May 2006.[8] In each of these cases, the municipality undertook complex development operations aimed at promoting, preserving, and managing Montreal's natural and cultural heritage. Special attention was given to the Vieux-Port area with the innovative design for rue de la Commune and Place d'Youville. Place Riopelle and Victoria

Square are examples of downtown Montreal's international district that have undergone urban renewal since 2002.

All the cases have been selected for their typical features from a sustainable development perspective:

1. **Efforts to track and outline the town's historical complexity by integrating new designs with Montreal's architectural traditional characteristics, like squares and walkways.** From a historic perspective, the research has taken into account the preservation processes of public spaces undertaken in Old Montreal since the 1950s, focusing specifically on the operations for Place Jacques-Cartier and rue de la Commune to arrive at the definition of the *Enoncé d'orientation* guidelines. The consequences of these operations have been studied taking into account the administrative transformations that occurred after the changes of 1 January 2006 took effect following the establishment of the new municipal organization.[9]

2. **Concertation efforts between users and the municipality.** From an architectural perspective, the research has referred to the construction characteristics and traditions, noting the special attention given in Montreal to elements related to architecture and urban design. The materials and finishes used in the streets and walkways are indicators of an inner cultural and material identity. The qualities of urban spaces become markers of social identity and realities.

3. **Efforts to propose new models for the use of urban spaces.** From a city planning perspective, the research has investigated the pedestrian policies pursued by the local municipality as expressed by the renewal of walkways located in the protected areas of Old Montreal and the creation of new outdoor and indoor passages.

All the selected cases have been reviewed based on the factors considered basic to preservation of the area's identity: 1) promotion, preservation, and presentation of Montreal's heritage in its multiple forms; 2) making them accessible to citizens; and 3) helping pass the heritage to future generations.

The research has also identified several strategies used by Montreal to improve urban multiculturalism and vitality:

- understanding urban spaces, their uses and the needs of the users;
- emphasizing urban walkways for tourists;
- adopting a coherent approach for all the renewal actions;
- integrating squares and walkways with green areas to promote pedestrian use of space and public transportation;
- eliminating architectural barriers from squares and walkways to ensure the safety of all users;
- rehabilitating the links between site/micro-climate/technical solutions, with special attention to the impact of weather

conditions on the use of the built environment and to noise pollution due to the coexistence of pedestrians and cars.

La promenade de la Commune

La promenade de la Commune, the first renewal operation started in Montreal after 1970, was aimed at allowing public access to historic areas that had been denied to the public for some time. It has been referred to as a "ribbon of granite that follows the winding curve of the 19th century grey stone façades of Old Montreal, marking the limit between the once-fortified city and the St. Lawrence River."[10] Rue de la Commune is one of the most ancient sites in Montreal. In 1651, Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve granted Jean de Saint-Père a 58.4m by 2.3km plot of land along the river, called "*la commune.*" Later, the zoning of this area was changed from pastureland to residential. A path beside the river was built in 1700. Until the 1800s, the street was between 9 and 12m wide, but it was widened after the reorganization of the harbour. The new imperatives of naval transportation over the past decades for the Vieux-Port and the move of businesses to the east side of the harbour resulted in the obsolescence of the original buildings and services. Between 1978 and 1983, the municipality demolished two grain elevators. Public consultations were organized to define possible uses for the area and to review the possibility of creating an urban park, "*une large fenêtre sur le fleuve*"[12], beside Old Montreal.

Between 1981 and 1992, the first phase of the promenade was completed. The design by architects Melvin Charney, Peter Rose, and Aurèle Cardinal emphasizes the underlying naval identity of the area and establishes new links with the archaeological remains. More specifically, the design re-establishes the city's ancient riverfront, featuring the façade of the buildings and creating a visual relationship between the river, the old port, and Montreal's built environment. The pedestrian network returns the ancient promenade to its first vocation and serves to promote the renewal and restoration of ancient buildings.

The project was engulfed in many controversies. It caused a clash of cultures, the culture of urban architectural know-how on the one hand and the culture of the traffic engineers on the other. The idea of narrowing the roadway to slow down vehicle traffic, a project that would deliberately create congestion involving a chaotic albeit convivial mix of pedestrians, cyclists, calèches, buses, and cars was completely foreign to the modern culture of traffic engineering. The clash even carried over to the promenade project, where a concerted effort was made to divert the rue de la Commune's fast through traffic to other parallel streets. The principal factors taken into account in designing the promenade project were the mix of people, the multiplicity of functions, and the hierarchical mix of different types of traffic: pedestrian, cyclist, calèches, buses, and cars.

Place D'Youville

Place D'Youville extends from place Royale to rue McGill. Its asymmetric shape, rooted in the district's history, is the result of the fortification walls and the Soeurs Grises complex. Place D'Youville is one of the oldest sites in Montreal. Between 1804 and 1810, after the demolition of the fortification, rue des Enfants-Trouvés was opened and small bridges were built to bypass the Petite rivière Saint-Pierre. In 1827 in the eastern part of the area, the marché Sainte-Anne was built. When Montreal was designated the seat of the Canadian government in 1843, the marché Sainte-Anne became the headquarters of the United Canada. In 1849 the building burned. After 1851, George Brown proposed a new market for the area. Since 1920, the square has been used for parking.

The design proposed by Cardinal Hardy and Claude Cormier in 1998–99 resulted from a municipal competition to create a public square in a historic place. The winners wanted to develop the eastern portion of Place D'Youville, now called Place de la Grande-Paix, as a contemporary setting. A pedestrian space, a grass-covered shelf crossed by a central walkway designed to evoke the Saint-Pierre River converted into canals, was created, as well as a network of walkways reminiscent of a physical link between the city, the *faubourgs*, and the St. Lawrence River. Using several materials, such as wood, limestone, and concrete, the new square, called "*collecteur de piétons*," is designed to amplify the pedestrian's perception of space on a chromatic and sonorous dimension. Moving from one material to another, it is possible to revisit the historic events with a new choreography of times, speeds, and climates. While conserving the trees, all the technical solutions commonly used for sidewalks were used: wood elements mark the crossover from residential spaces, concrete elements connect urban functions, and limestone elements are reminiscent of institutional places.

Montreal's International District

Montreal's International District, a 27-hectare area bounded by St-Urbain Street to the east, St-Antoine Street to the south, University Street to the west, and Viger Avenue to the north, was split in the 1960s by the Ville Marie Expressway and consequently reduced to a space with no identity, devoted mostly to parking. Early in 1997, following the failure of the Palais des Congrès project in 1983, the Quebec government launched the idea of creating an international district designed as a centre for strategic growth in Montreal. Attracting pedestrians, the main aim of this urban operation gambled on the quality of the proposed facilities, a strong international flavour, and the use of public transit and walkways. On the whole, the project for this area focused on re-establishing the continuity of Montreal's downtown with Old Montreal. The municipality of Montreal tried to correct the urban problems by creating a central business district, thereby

rejuvenating a wide area afflicted by the urban blight phenomenon. The city's design choices gravitate toward the idea of using public areas as catalysts for future developments and contributing to the streets becoming prestigious addresses. Quality and durability dictated design choices.

Place Jean-Paul-Riopelle

Place Jean-Paul-Riopelle is one of the most interesting hubs in the new Quartier international de Montreal. Place Riopelle provides an attractive background for the expansion of the Palais des Congrès. The designer, Daoust Lestage, wanted to fill the visitors with wonder by creating a sort of *"forêt urbaine"* with trees indigenous to the Montreal region. Following a random pattern, narrow paths wander between the mature trees much like computer circuits. The sculpture fountain *la Joute* created by the artist Jean-Paul Riopelle completes the design. The structure, composed of bronze sculptures, refers to the ancient aboriginal culture, suggesting a number of freestanding abstract animal figures representative of the old traditions. A fountain basin serves to group and link the different elements. At nightfall, *la Joute* becomes a kinetic sculpture, with the help of special effects such as the illumination of the basin and the covering of the whole square with fog. Mist blowers and underground lights are on a 30-minute timer.

Square Victoria

Finally, the design of Square Victoria, also by Daoust Lestage, was intended to return the space to the original 18th century plan. The north side border of the square has been straightened and access has been opened on the west side. A water path crosses the central area with 29 water jets. Newly planted trees line the basin on the east and west sides. The monument of Queen Victoria has been reinstated and the ancient Guimard entrance from the Paris metro rejuvenated.

In conclusion, in the last decades, a deep cultural evolution has been signing Montreal's Municipality attitudes towards built environment in terms of public spaces configuration and performances. New physical, social and economic approaches have been marking the urban and architectural preservation and renewal actions, from the promenade de La Commune operation, aimed to commemorate a national historic site and promote a traditional immigrant gateway, to the International District, linking the past to the reality of a 21st century cosmopolitan city. Information, communication and participation have been assumed as a common denominator in the renewal processes with the aim of involving citizens in the preservation — transformation actions, fostering partnerships, and sharing ideas and aims.

Notes

1. "L'écriture et la ville : Gabrielle Roy et Montréal", de Diego Rosa http://www.ub.es/cdona/Bellesa/DEDIEGO.pdf.
2. "By the turn of the century, almost half the world will live in urban areas — from small towns to huge megacities. The world's economic system is increasingly an urban one, with overlapping networks of communications, production, and trade. This system, with its flows of information, energy, capital, commerce, and people, provides the backbone for national development. A city's prospects — or a town's — depend critically on its place within the urban system, national and international" (*Brundtland Report 1987*; see http://www.worldinbalance.net/pdf/1987-brundtland.pdf).
3. *A Cultural Development Policy for Ville de Montréal 2005–2015: Montréal, Cultural Metropolis; Heritage Policy, First Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development*. Master Plan.
4. Improving the urban built environment is assumed to be a preferred way to enrich the quality of life of citizens, to meet the needs of all age groups, while encouraging multicultural mixing. Montreal's master plan gives parks, squares and other green spaces a structuring role in the organization and planning of living environments. It consolidates and develops Montreal's territory in relation to existing and planned transportation networks. It aims to improve Montreal's image as a gateway city, in this sense fostering the improvement of streetscape and incorporating facilities that favour public transportation as well as bicycle and foot traffic.
5. Gilles Lauzon, Madeleine Forget, *L'Histoire du Vieux-Montreal à travers son patrimoine* (Montréal: Les Publication du Québec, 2004), 55–62.
6. The principles of multiculturalism in 1971 became the foundation of the 1988 Law on Multiculturalism. In 1982, the multicultural character of Canada gained constitutional recognition in section 27 of the newly adopted Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
7. *A Cultural Development Policy for Ville de Montréal 2005–2015: Montréal, Cultural Metropolis* states, "Culture is at the heart of Montreal's identity, history and social cohesiveness. With this policy, Montreal affirms that culture is a driving force behind its development, its economic dynamics and its future prosperity. Accessibility, support for arts and culture and the impact of culture on Montrealers' living environment are the three main issues that inspired the content of this policy."
8. With this honour, Montreal becomes the first North American city to join the recent UNESCO City of Design network after Buenos Aires (August 2005) and Berlin (November 2005).
9. From an administrative perspective, it is important to note that after January 2002, with the fusion of the 27 *municipalités de l'île de Montréal* and the creation of the *nouvelle Ville de Montréal*, a new urban plan, linking together all the city's boroughs, was presented on 25 March 2003.
10. Wade Eide, "La promenade de la Commune: From Mono-Functional Urban Artery to River-Front Promenade"; see http://www.bicyclefixation.com/delacom2.htm.
11. http://www.bicyclefixation.com/delacom2.htm.

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