

The working poor in the Montréal CMA: Their socio-spatial characteristics

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1. Rationale & Potential Policy Relevance

In their *A City-Region Growing Apart?* report (2013), Rose and Twigge-Molecey showed that income inequalities between neighbourhoods have been widening in the Montréal metropolitan area over the last decades, even if they are not as substantial as in Toronto or Vancouver. The lowest-income neighbourhoods of Greater Montréal are also neighbourhoods with major concentrations of recent immigrants (Côte-des-Neiges, Parc-Extension, Montréal-Nord, Saint-Michel, LaSalle...). To expand on these findings, we propose to study the working poor in the Greater Montréal region (and a few adjacent zones so as to fully cover the territory of our main partner, Centraide). The first objective is to identify the key characteristics of the working poor in Montreal, based on the report written by our Toronto colleagues for the Metcalf Foundation. In its latest report on the state of work in Quebec (Kilolo-Malambwe and Rabemananjara 2014), the *Institut de la statistique du Québec* has revealed that women still earn less than men and that nearly all new jobs that are filled by immigrants are in the service sector, two processes strongly related to low earnings. This diversity of interrelated factors encourages us to adopt an intersectional framework in order to give more depth to the results by giving accurate portraits of different types of working poor. The second objective is to determine whether the working poor live in the neighbourhoods with the lowest incomes. This socio-geographical knowledge of the working poor will enable our partner Centraide to inform local NGOs about the particular needs of this population that often experiences a threefold flexibility (i.e. wages, schedules, staff) (Ulysse 2009). Finally, this report is about identifying socio-spatial trends of working poverty in Greater Montreal. Our team will analyze special compilations of 2001 and 2006 census data, and will compare the results with similar studies such as that of Ulysse (2006) "When work does not protect one from falling into poverty". They will also be compared to the conclusions of the Toronto study in order to identify some common trends that may come up in various Canadian urban contexts.

2. Research Questions

1. Who are the working poor of the Montreal region? What are the most frequent characteristic in terms of gender, ethnicity, visible minority status, age, income, sector of employment, education level, etc., and which combinations of these characteristics are the most relevant to understand the working-poor phenomenon?
2. What is the proportion of working poor among each of the above-mentioned characteristics?
3. How is the working-poor phenomenon related to immigration? Which ethnic or visible minority groups are most-at-risk of belonging to the working poor category?
4. To what extent is family status a factor in the working poor phenomenon?
5. Is there a specific geographical pattern of the working poor in the Montréal region?
6. Are working poor living areas coincident with Montreal's poorest neighbourhoods?

3. Specific Fit with the NCRP Objectives & Research Questions

At the core of our research is an understanding of socio-spatial trends among the working poor, in relation to the socio-spatial dynamics of poverty in the Montréal region. The research completed by Rose and Twigge-Molecey for the Public Outreach project (NCRP predecessor) will be our starting point.

- The data set on which this project revolves is designed with variables and spatial scales relevant to our main partner's needs, including their own administrative definition of 'neighbourhoods'.
- The research will be compared to the report *The "Working Poor" in the Toronto Region* to see if parallels can be drawn and if these common trends could apply to other metropolitan regions in Canada.
- With our partner's collaboration, the research will help better understand the potential impact of local agencies, policies and programs on neighbourhood dynamics, with a specific focus on the working poor.

4. Research Design & Methods (specific tasks)

- A literature review of academic works and reports related to the working poor in Québec and Montréal;
- Analyse a new set of special compilations for 2001 and 2006 to provide a socio-spatial portrait of the working poor in Greater Montréal; this is a revised version of the data set previously obtained by the Metcalf Foundation (and used in Stapleton et al. 2012). We added gender (missing from original data set) and recency of immigration as cross-cutting variables. Visible minorities are now included and we added two age categories for lone parents. We created geographies compatible with the territories of intervention of Centraide, with municipal/borough boundaries, and the Montréal Metropolitan Community, as well as the CMA.
- Compare the results to those of the report on the working poor in the Toronto region and emphasize similarities and differences between the working poor in both cities.

5. Role of Community Partner

Collaborators from Centraide have participated in the design of this research proposal, especially in the early stages. They helped identify research questions as well as relevant census variables and cross-tabulations, which testifies to their strong interest for this topic. Their data analyst has already made a major contribution in kind by investing many hours in translating the geographic boundaries of Centraide's zones of intervention into zones compatible with census geographies.

- Centraide will assist us throughout the research by pointing out specific themes and/or problems that need to be addressed.
- Centraide hopes to obtain resources, in a subsequent phase, for the creation of an interactive web-based interface to make the findings of this project accessible in on-demand map and graphical form for non-specialist users.

6. Role of Students / Research Assistants and Contributions to Training

One graduate student (master's level) will be involved throughout the project. She will be paid in the form of a stipend. She will be in charge of the literature review, the statistical analysis, and the preliminary cartography, under the supervision of the project investigators. Her involvement in the project will provide her with training and practical experience in various statistical and cartographic tools, as well as with the opportunity to participate in all stages of a full research project.

7. Schedule

Timeline	Research tasks
May – September 2014	Literature review; Building of the geodatabase to reflect Centraide's territories of intervention; Verification of census tables. Preliminary statistical analysis
October 2014 – March 2015	Main statistical analysis; Cartography; Release of the draft report; Assessment of the project with the main partner – review of the draft report; suggestions for further analysis
April – July 2015	Finalization of the final report with the main partner
August – October 2015	Production of the executive summary for the main partner Presentation of the report to Centraide and their local partners

8. Outcomes

- Final report (academic audience) [schedule: end of the project]
- Executive summary of the main findings for partners [schedule: end of the project]
- Briefing notes (1-, 2- and 5-pagers) on main dimensions of the working-poor phenomenon (i.e. immigration, gender, age, etc.) or territory of intervention (i.e. Montréal Island, West- / East-Island, suburbs, etc.) [schedule: end of the project]
- Oral presentations to the main partner (Centraide) at various stages of the project and of the final results to local NGOs
- One co-authored submission to an urban studies/geography journal.

9. Budget Explanation

The largest part of the budget will be devoted to financing the stipend for the master's student contributing to the project, for a total of 900 hours.

Part of the budget will also be used to pay (estimated 30 hours) for a data analyst at INRS-UCS, Nathalie Vachon. Her main role will be to build the geo database for the project (she will create the boundary files for the user-defined geographic zones on which our special compilation of census data is based) and to assist the team in the production of the maps for the final report (we expect to include between 12 and 15 maps in our final report).

Finally, a small amount of the budget will be dedicated to cover the costs associated with the dissemination of the various outcomes of the project (printing of a few copies of the final report, executive summary and focus notes). There is no budget line for the data purchase since this has already been covered by the NCRP.

References cited

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- Rose, D., and A. Twigge-Molecey. 2013. [*A City-region Growing Apart? Taking Stock of Income Disparity in Greater Montréal, 1970-2005*](#). Toronto: University of Toronto, Cities Centre, Research Paper 222 (65 p.).
- Stapleton, J., B. Murphy, and Y. Xing. 2012. [*The "Working Poor" in the Toronto Region: Who they are, where they live, and how trends are changing*](#). Toronto: Metcalf Foundation.
- Ulysse, P.-J. 2006. [*Quand le travail n'empêche plus d'être pauvre. Rapport de recherche*](#). Forum régional sur le développement social de l'île de Montréal.
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- Ulysse, P.-J. 2009. [*Travailleur pauvre et pauvreté en emploi. Quelles stratégies d'intervention?*](#) *Développement social* 10 (2):33.

One student (Master's) will be involved in the project; hourly rate (2014-2015) at INRS-UCS is \$16.69 for first year student and \$18.06 for second year student.

**Hourly rate for the professional in charge of the geo database: \$52.68 (we estimate that 30 hours of her work will be required).

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4 Dait Hulechanski