

# Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership

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## Mapping Space, Place, and Cultural Shifts in Saint-Henri, Montréal

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### 1. Rationale

Saint-Henri is a post-industrial neighbourhood in the Southwest of Montréal. Originally developed around the opening of the Lachine Canal in 1826, it is one of the oldest working class neighbourhoods in Canada (Mills, 2010). In tandem with this working class history is a history of labour struggle and activism. In 1880 workers went on strike to protest wages and working conditions in factories, and it was one of the earliest markers of activism that would become part of the character of the neighbourhood, with decades of trade union organizing (Mills, 2010).

After the decline of industry and the closing the Lachine Canal in 1970, Saint-Henri's residents faced marginalization through unemployment and responded with the development of community organizations, including the first citizen's committees in the 1960s and many other popular institutions (Mills, 2010). Today Saint-Henri remains a largely working-class neighbourhood, but it has seen rapid changes in recent years with the conversion of former industrial buildings into housing, notably the new condominium developments along the Lachine Canal (Twigge-Molecey, 2013). There are also marked shifts along the major commercial corridor of Notre Dame, including the opening of new upscale cafes, restaurants, and art galleries (Bellavance & Latouche, 2008). These commercial changes and the intensity of new build and conversion housing has been taken up by community groups and the local Comité Logement, POPIR, who are engaged in struggles for affordable housing and resisting displacement, and call for transformation in the neighbourhood to be controlled or mediated by the communities already living there (POPIR, 2011).

This project will investigate the relationship between artists and gentrification in Saint-Henri. In the last 10-20 years many new artists have moved to the neighbourhood, drawn by inexpensive rent and studio space. Some of these artists have also connected with struggles for housing, and others to community organizing and movement building. Some artist spaces and projects in Saint-Henri have sought to align themselves with political movements, such as the artists of the Ste. Emilie Skillshare, a now closed (due to no-fault eviction) arts space that opened in 2007 with the mandate to provide space and resources for artists of marginalized identities, namely queer people and people of colour (Qteam, 2011).

There has been much debate about the role of artists in gentrification, and how artists are connected, if at all, to neighbourhood struggles. These issues have been taken up in the academic literature, usually suggesting that artists are a colonizing arm of neoliberal development, or that artists' ability to shape urban space through aestheticization makes them a particular part of the early stages of the gentrification process (Ley, 2003; Zukin, 2004). Others have suggested that artists are separate from other so-called creative class workers, and that the work of artists cannot be conflated with neoliberal development, as they can be a force of political mobilizing related to neighbourhood change (Markusen, 2006; Grodach, 2010). In addition, research has shown that in areas in Montréal, such as the Mile End and Centre-Sud, studio and living space has been secured for artists through community organizing (Rantisi, 2013). This organizing can be seen as a challenge to a gentrification process, but has also been critiqued for being a compromise that fails to avert the displacement of other (non-artist) residents of the neighbourhood (Rantisi, 2013).

There is a need to examine the activism of artist and non-artist residents in other Montreal neighbourhoods like Saint-Henri, and to consider why the same protections for artists' spaces have not yet been instituted. There is a need, as well, to investigate how artists of marginalized identities fit into these struggles. The existing literature leaves room, in particular, for investigations of working class artists who are members of the communities being displaced, as well as the ways that artists of marginalized identities, such as people of colour and queer people, are implicated and impacted in these gentrifying neighbourhoods. These aspects will be addressed in the present research.

## **2. Potential Policy Relevance**

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This research will inform discussions in three policy areas. The first concerns housing and tenant rights. POPIR is one among many organizations in Quebec (and elsewhere) that are pushing for better housing policies, policies that protect tenant rights. This research will nourish these discussions by clarifying the relationship between artists and displacement. Most often, the arrival of artists in a neighbourhood is seen as the "upside" of displacement; to have artists in a neighbourhood, then, seems to require displacement. In contrast, this research will break up the category "artist" and examine whether some artists (especially artists from working class and marginalized backgrounds) are actually caught up in the displacement that (it is often asserted) brings artists to a neighbourhood. This research will also inform related discussions around art and artists. Montreal, like many cities, has sought to support artists in the city, mostly on the assumption that they stimulate the economy. In general, these efforts have paid little attention to distinctions within the category "artist," and have not explicitly attempted to support working-class or marginalized artists. This research, then, will make it possible to understand whether certain artists are affected differently by gentrification / displacement and whether, consequently, policies need to be more explicit about which artists they intend to support.

## **3. Research Questions**

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The broad objective of this research is to understand the recent waves of gentrification in Saint-Henri, and look specifically at the cultural element of gentrification. The major questions that it asks are the following:

- 1) What is the history of artists and art spaces in St-Henri? What kinds of relationships have existed between artists and working-class residents? How do artists of marginalized identities and experiences engage with neighbourhood organizing? Do artists mainly engage with within the arts and culture sector or also with other kinds of organizations?
- 2) How has the dynamic of gentrification changed the use of local spaces by artists living in Saint-Henri? What effects have these changes in artists' spaces had on other residents and other local economic activities?
- 3) Has gentrification changed artists' involvement in organizations and in collective action? If so, what kind of actions and with what kinds of organizations? In particular, have artists initiated or participated in collective actions to fight gentrification or mitigate its effects?
- 4) What can be learned about the process of gentrification through charting these spatial and social movements of artists? How can understanding this relationship help community organizations to better influence and shape redevelopment? What ideas and plans for alternative development projects are artists in other parts of Montréal involved in, and what are the potential for these alternatives in Saint-Henri?

## **4. Specific Fit with the NCRP Objectives & Research Questions**

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In line with the NCRP's mandate, the proposed research seeks to examine the role of gentrification, and specifically the presence of artists, in influencing extant social-spatial inequalities at the neighbourhood scale. More than just illuminating the relationship between gentrification and socio-spatial inequalities in

Saint-Henri, it will shed light on the cultural aspects of gentrification and how the involvement of artists in neighbourhood organizing can influence the future of a neighbourhood. The research will review the issues of new businesses and the opening of artistic spaces in the neighbourhood, and what connection, if any, they have to gentrification in Saint-Henri. Additionally, the research will analyze the relationship of artists to urban development in the Mile End and Centre-Sud (where the preservation of artists spaces has occurred) to the same relationship in Saint-Henri. What similarities and differences exist between these neighbourhoods (in terms of artists' relationship to urban development)? Looking across (i.e., comparing) these three areas of the city will deliver new insights on the (potentially different) roles that artists have played in neighbourhood-level anti-gentrification organizing. This research will document and contextualize the community development work of artists in Saint-Henri while providing important insight into considering the complex nature of gentrification and the changing landscapes of urban space in Montreal. The Montreal local research team of the NCRP recognizes the social relevance of the project and sees its potential to contribute to efforts to diminish the inequities (in terms of access to resources) in the context of gentrification. The team appreciates, moreover, that the research findings and implications will be presented and debated in various formats with a variety of local stakeholders.

## **5. Research Design & Methods**

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An 8-10 month research project that will involve community participation days where residents of Saint-Henri and volunteers will assist with data collection around key areas of interest. The first will be a community mapping day to determine what art spaces currently exist and how long they have been in the neighbourhood. Community mapping is a tool that is used to take stock of what is currently present in a neighbourhood. This mapping will engage the research team and several volunteers to go out into the neighbourhood and record particular sites in the neighbourhood, rather than speculating about the feel of changing facades. The purpose of this mapping is to document places from more aestheticized spaces discussed in the current literature to community pottery and knitting classes at the YMCA. The research will focus on the last 10 years, detailing spaces that had more consistent tenure as well as spaces used for temporary exhibits and events. These sites will also be cross-referenced with the Provincial property assessment database, the Registre Foncier, to note any changes in ownership and value, if any. The second major mapping project will involve mapping sections of Notre Dame to note changes in businesses and ownership in the last 5 years.

This research team will be led by the principal investigator, who will supervise a Master's student, research assistant, and volunteers from the neighborhood. The team will analyze data collected from community mapping days, and carry out 25 to 30 semi-structured interviews with current and former residents of the neighbourhood. The team will draw on the connections of Saint-Henri-based organizations (including POPIR, the St-Henri public library, la Ruche d'Art, and Mile-End-based Pied Carré) to find individuals who are artists, cultural producers, or involved with art spaces. A detailed questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions will be developed for the interviews. Each interview should take approximately 30 minutes and will be held at a time that is convenient for the participant. Clips of the interviews will be embedded with the maps online and in the report.

The project will clear ethics review through Concordia for conducting interviews. The main purpose of the recording (of interviews) is to keep a detailed record of the interview. These will later be transcribed using voice recognition software.

The interviewees will be recruited through networks of POPIR, the public library, the Centre Récréatif, Culturel et Sportif (CRCS) St-Zotique, the Ruche D'Art Saint-Henri, and through contacting members of specific art groups including the above-mentioned Ste Emilie Skillshare. Using multiple recruitment channels will assist in reaching a diverse sample of people across age, gender, ethnicity and length of residence in the neighbourhood. The sample will be selected to honour the long-term Francophone residents of the area, but will also seek to highlight marginalized narratives from immigrants, people of colour, queer and trans people, among others. There will be small honoraria for interview participants.

## **6. Role of Community Partner**

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This study responds directly to concerns expressed by community organizers from the Comité Logement POPIR about the need for research about the changing face of rue Notre-Dame and the cultural impact of gentrification, specifically investigating the role of artists. The research will support developing new ways of addressing the problems of neighbourhood change that don't rely on old stereotypes. This research provides insight into an aspect of gentrification that neither POPIR, nor any other Montreal community organization, has done before.

The staff and volunteers at POPIR will play multiple roles: participating in team meetings and research design, reviewing the data analysis and report, helping connect the researchers to interviewees, and organizing a forum to present findings of research. As the main community partner, POPIR will serve as the organizational base for the team and will take responsibility for storing copies of the report and disseminating it to individuals, non-profit and public organizations in Saint-Henri and across Montreal.

## **7. Role of Students / Research Assistants and Contributions to Training**

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The Master's student is enrolled in a MSc program in Geography, Urban and Environmental Studies at Concordia University and interrogating the role of artists in gentrification, where she seeks to challenge the current narratives about artists and gentrification in academic literature. She has many years of experience in community research, and in anti-gentrification neighbourhood organizing. In consultation with the PI, the Master's student will handle all major administrative and technical aspects of the research. This research will form a significant part of her master's thesis research and she will produce a journal article that will be presented at a conference.

## **8. Schedule (timeline of research tasks, including deliverables submission dates)**

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The project is in the beginning stages and will continue over the next 7 to 8 months. The funding is being requested for 8 months of the study. The schedule is as follows:

- Late April – June 2015: ethics review, research plan development, community mapping and recruitment of interviewees.
- June – August 2016: produce the maps and setting up interviews.
- July – August 2016: hold interviews with up to 30 artists connected to the neighbourhood, from a broad age sample.
- August – December 2016: compile results from the interviews and analyse the findings, audio editing work to highlight audio clips to reflect the key findings of the research.
- September – December 2016: produce and present the report of the research findings, embed key interview clips into online maps.

In 2016, the PI and the Master's student will look for opportunities to present findings of the study at neighbourhood meetings in Saint-Henri and professional and academic conferences both within and beyond Montreal. The mapping project will be presented to the membership of POPIR and to arts and community organizations in Saint-Henri. Centraide, Solidarité Saint-Henri, and other groups will also be contacted about the results; a presentation of the results, or workshop, will be offered to them. The research team will host workshops in Saint-Henri on how to work with data to create more maps to add to the website.

## **9. Outcomes / Deliverables**

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The project will produce three major deliverables, namely:

- 1) A public interest report produced by the research team on neighbourhood change and the cultural dimensions of gentrification in Saint-Henri (completed in the Autumn of 2016).

- 2) A website, hosted by POPIR, that presents the research through interactive maps that show current and past artist centres with embedded audio clips about artists and gentrification in Saint-Henri, this would be the beginning of several maps to support the work of housing committees in Montreal, similar to that of the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project ([www.antievictionmap.com](http://www.antievictionmap.com)) in the San Francisco Bay Area.
- 3) A journal publication written by the principal investigator, graduate student, and research assistant on cultural dimensions, specifically on the role of artists and arts institutions (submitted for review in the Autumn/Winter of 2016).

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**10. Budget Explanation** (and fill in separate budget worksheet page)

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- 1) MSc student: \$20/hour. Coordinate and supervise the Research project with POPIR staff and volunteers, and a research assistant. The amount requested is to cover the MSc student's hours, which will be consistent throughout the school year. The tasks of the MSc student include: a once a week meeting at POPIR, conducting several interviews, coordinating community data collection and analysis, accessing and analyzing the Provincial datasets, creating maps and producing a website to make them publicly accessible, producing a final hard copy report, planning group presentations including a workshop on how to create these maps, and co-authoring an academic publication.
  - 2) Research Assistant and Technical Support/Website Design: \$18/hour. This person would be a current undergraduate student at Concordia, and their roles would include supporting the data collection and analysis, to provide support in the creation of the maps in QGIS, and the creation of the website. Other tasks include assisting with planning and facilitating meetings, keeping meeting minutes, assisting with the fieldwork and holding interviews, assisting with report writing and dissemination. This research assistant should have experience in digital mapping and web development.
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- Sent to the NCRP's Research Advisory Board for comment: date April 29, 2016 deadline: \_\_\_\_\_
- Funding approved by the NCRP's Board: \$\_\_\_\_\_ date\_\_\_\_\_

## SSHRC Budget Worksheet

	Amount requested from NCRP	Contributions (In-Kind / Cash)	Contribution source	Total Project Cost
<b>Personnel costs</b>				
<b>Student salaries and benefits/Stipends</b>				
Masters *	475 hours (May - December) x \$20.00/hour			\$9500 Plus benefits and deductions at 17.52% = \$11,165
Doctorate *				
<b>Non-student salaries and benefits/Stipends</b>				
Postdoctoral				
Other (undergraduate research assistant and technical coordinator)	200 hours (May – December) x \$18.00/hour			\$3600 Plus benefits and deductions at 17.52% = 4231
<b>Travel and subsistence costs</b>				
<b>Applicant/Team member(s)</b>				
Local travel – STM Fares	STM Fares			\$80
<b>Students</b>				
Local travel – STM Fares	STM Fares			\$80
<b>Other expenses</b>				
<b>Non-disposable equipment</b> (specify)				
Recording device				\$50
Audio Recognition Software				\$200
<b>Professional / technical services</b> (specify)				
Partner staff and volunteer time	POPIR (assistance with interviews, organizing community mapping days, & dissemination of research report)	\$1000		\$1000
Expenses for team meetings				\$500
Hosting and Website purchase				\$200
<b>Other expenses</b> (specify: includes honoraria, data purchase, field costs, printing, supplies, etc.)				
Materials and Equipment (Printing of final Report, access to provincial property assessment information, honoraria)		\$250		\$1000
<b>Total</b>	<b>From NCRP: \$17,250.</b>	\$1,250		<b>\$18,500</b>



## 11. Bibliography

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