Making Co-opville:
Layers of Activism in Point St-Charles (1983-1992)

Simon Vickers

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

History

July 2013

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Simon Vickers

Entitled: Making Co-opville: Layers of Activism in Point St-Charles (1983-1992)

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts (History)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final Examining Committee:

Dr. Ted McCormick _____Chair

Dr. Ted Rutland _____ Examiner

Dr. Peter Gossage _____ Examiner

Dr. Steven High _____ Supervisor

Approved by _____

Chair of Department of Graduate Program Director

_____2013   _____

Dean of Faculty

Abstract

Making Co-opville:
Layers of Activism in Point St-Charles (1983-1992)

Simon Vickers

To date, most writing on co-operative housing has begun from the assumption that co-operatives are objectively good. These celebratory narratives have emphasized the affordability and sense of community that they associate with co-op housing. What is missing from these narratives, however, is the acknowledgement that through their process of selecting neighbours housing co-ops are, by necessity, exclusive.

This thesis will take a more critical approach to co-operative housing by stepping outside of individual co-ops, and looking at the way they were perceived through the frame of a neighbourhood. In 1983, local activists in the Montreal neighbourhood of Point St-Charles launched PROJET St-Charles. Promoted as an alternative to the revitalization strategies of a city government that actively promoted gentrification, PROJET supporters sought to build 500 hundred non-market co-ops over the next three years.

Over the next decade, debates over how to fund, build and fill these co-ops revealed much about the multiple undercurrents of culture and activism in Point St-Charles. Although these "layers" of social relations could normally co-exist, the process of choosing members for co-operative housing required that the Comité become selective. Through their governance of a plan to build and fill co-ops for and by the neighbourhood, the Comité St-Charles literally chose who would represent Point St-Charles in the coming years.

Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to my father and mother for too many reasons to count.

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Illustrations

List of Maps

List of Acronyms in Order of Appearance

CCF : Co-operative Commonwealth Federation

RIL : Regroupement information logement de Pointe-Saint-Charles

FRAP : Front d'action politique

MCM : Montreal Citizens Movement

CHF : Co-operative Housing Federation

NHA : National Housing Act

SHQ : Société habitation de Québec

PQ : Parti Québécois

GRT : Groupes de ressources techniques

HLM : Habitation à loyer modique (Public Housing)

SARP : Service d'aide à rénovation de Pointe-Saint-Charles

SOCAM : Société d'amélioration de Pointe-Saint-Charles

PIQA : Programme d'intervention dans les quartiers anciens

SODIM : Société de dévéloppement industriel de Montréal

FRAPRU : Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain

NDP : New Democratic Party

Introduction

PAQUETTE: Oui, midnight move, for sure. Hey, just like the
Arsenaults en bas. Fuck the landlords! It's the best way.
JOHNNY: Yeah…. Whew, hot. Going anywhere this summer?
PAQUETTE: Moi? Balconville
JOHNNY: Yeah. Miami Beach[1]

—From David Fennario's Balconville, 1979

Montreal playwright David Fennario introduced his new play, *Balconville*, at the

Centaur Theatre in the Old Montreal district in 1979. Set in the real life neighbourhood

of Point St-Charles, situated only a couple of miles away, *Balconville* told a story that

few theatre goers could relate to. Unlike those with the disposable income to attend a

show at the expensive Centaur Theatre, the residents of Balconville spent their free time

watching the world from their balconies. Faced with a deteriorating building, the threat

of gentrification, and widespread unemployment, the adult characters reminisced about a

time in which things were better, politicians worked harder, and children were more

responsible. The fact that Fennario's characters lived in a "ville" within the borders of

the city of Montreal implied an isolated existence. The characters mentioned other places

in Montreal such as Westmount, Verdun and Park Extension, but referred to them in

sharp contrast to their own neighbourhood.[2]

For much of its history, Point St-Charles was linked to other neighbourhoods in

the south-west of Montreal through its proximity to the heavily industrialized Lachine

Canal. Completed in the mid nineteenth century, the canal was built so that ships could

---

[1] David Fennario, *Balconville: A Play* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1980) 28.
[2] Ibid, whole book.

bypass a set of rapids on the St-Lawrence River.[3] The building of the Grand Trunk

Railway terminus in Point St-Charles in 1859 furthered the Canal's importance as a

nexus of trade. Large factories settled along the Canal to take advantage of the shipping

bottleneck, making the Canal one of the most important (if not the most important)

manufacturing hubs in Canada.[4] Along with the present day neighbourhoods of

Griffintown, Little Burgundy, St-Henri and Côte Saint Paul, the residential areas of Point

St-Charles expanded in the shadows of some of the biggest factories in Canada.

Collectively labelled "the city below the hill" by nineteenth century sociologist Herbert

Ames, the residential neighbourhoods of the Southwest were defined by a high

concentration of poor industrial workers and set in contrast to the more affluent part of

the city above the hill.[5] Geographer Robert Lewis supports Ames' claim, providing

evidence that many residents experienced the Southwest as a city of its own. In

Manufacturing Montreal, he argues that several pockets around the city, including the

Southwest, qualified as early examples of industrial suburbs. Linked by their proximity

and industrial culture, Lewis argues that neighbourhoods in the Southwest were more

connected to each other than to downtown Montreal.[6]

      The industries that provided jobs for the residents of the Southwest, however, fell

into steep decline following the end of World War Two. Highlighted by the opening of

---

[3] The canal would go through many changes since its opening. For an interesting look at how these changes have been reflected and contributed to urban processes see: Desmond Bliek and Pierre Gauthier, "Understanding the Built Form of Industrialization along the Lachine Canal in Montreal," *Urban History Review* 35, no. 1 (Fall 2006)

[4] Robert D. Lewis, *Manufacturing Montreal: The Making of an Industrial Landscape, 1850 to 1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 100-128.

[5] Ames actually did not include all of the present day Southwest Burrough or Point St-Charles in his city below the hill: "Beyond Centre Street lies the special district of Point St-Charles, which is almost an independent suburb by itself, being sustained by employment in the offices and workshops of the G.T.R.(Grand Trunk Railway): Herbert Brown Ames, *The City below the Hill; a Sociological Study of a Portion of the City of Montreal, Canada.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 8.

[6] Robert D. Lewis, *Manufacturing Montreal*, 221-255.

an alternate canal on the south shore of the St-Lawrence in 1959, the de-industrialization

of the area along the Lachine Canal led to mass layoffs all over the Southwest. This

gradual process inspired many former factory workers and their families to move

elsewhere, and between 1961 and 1981 the population of the Southwest decreased from
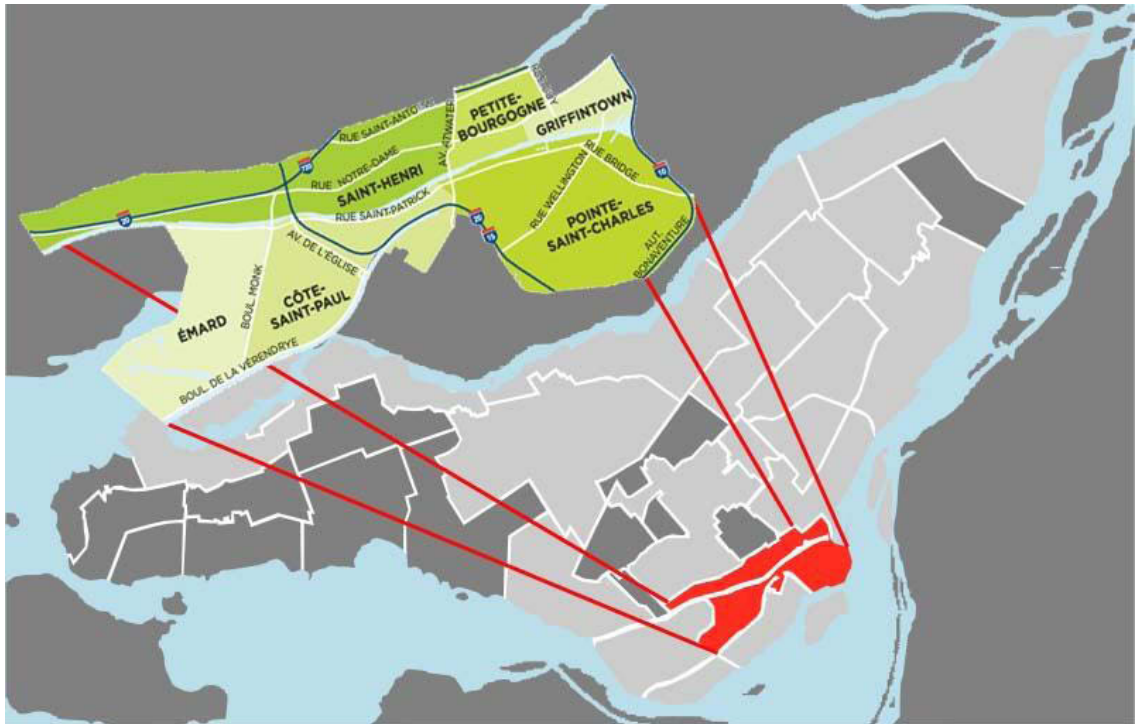
Map 1.1: Map of Montreal and the Southwest Borough today.[7]

107,011 to 54,749.[8] Those who stayed faced increasing levels of unemployment with

rates increasing from 5.1 to 14.7 percent over the same period.[9] The difficult conditions

caused by de-industrialization, however, were not received passively, and starting in the

1960s some residents began to assemble around neighbourhood organizations in order to

---

[7] Map created by Simon Vickers from maps made by the city of Montreal.
[8] Point St-Charles declined by a similar percentage from 25,478 to 14,048: Andre Hoffman, *Arrondissement Sud-Ouest: Dossier Urbain*, report (Montreal: Service De L'Habitation Et Du Développement Urbain, 1990), 13.
[9] Comité pour la relancement économique et de l'emploi du Sud-Ouest de Montreal, *Sud-Ouest diagnostic*, report (Montreal: CREESOM, 1989), 100.

3

provide locally based advocacy and services. In Point St-Charles, many of these new

solidarity organizations were structured around the frame of the neighbourhood.
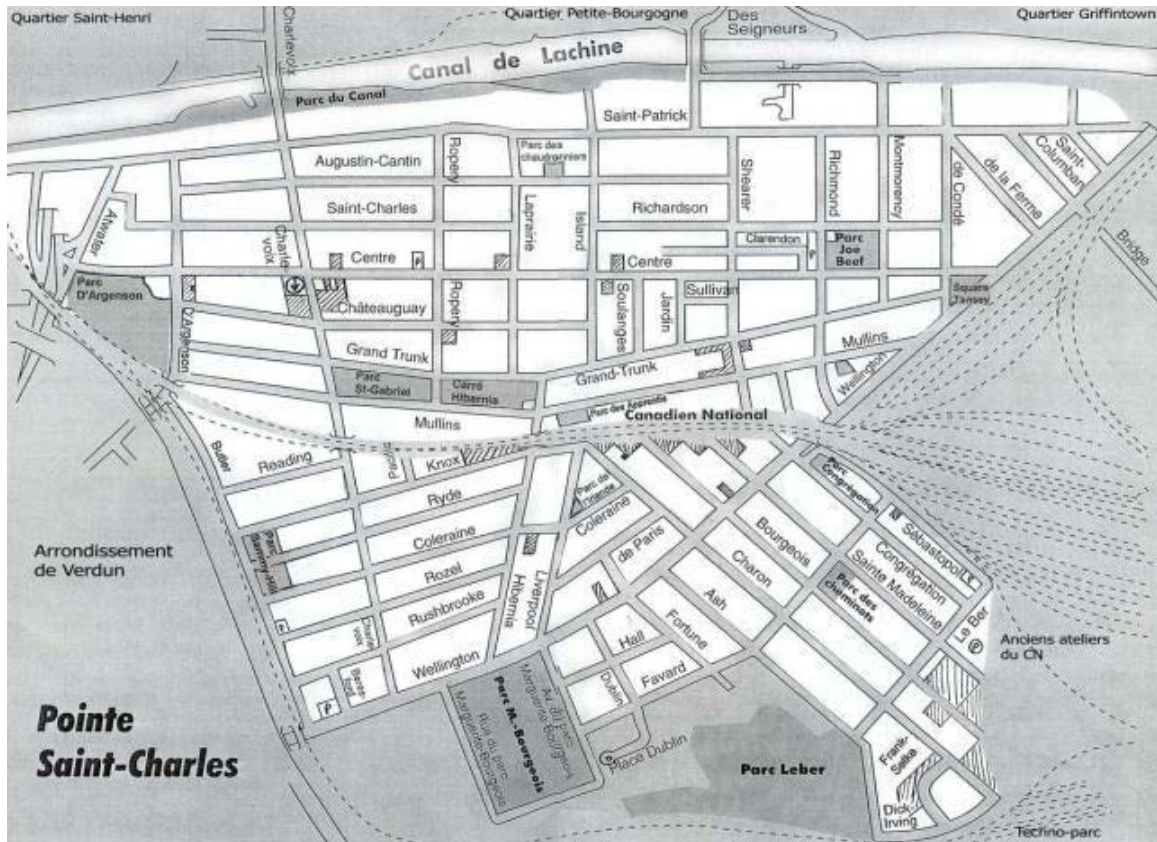
Map 1.2: Map of Point St-Charles bordered by the Lachine Canal to the North, train tracks on the west and south, and the former Grand Trunk railyard to the east.[10]

When Fennario released *Balconville* in the late 1970s, the state of housing in

Point St-Charles was a major concern. Most of the housing in the area was rental, and

landlords, who had little incentive to fix them up for working-class tenants, had let

apartments fall into disrepair. Over the course of the sixties and seventies, this lack of

attention given to the aging infrastructure and its negative effect on the health and safety

of tenants had become a major issue for local neighbourhood organizations. There was,

however, no simple solution to this problem, as the improvement of infrastructure would

---

[10] Map was produced by the Pointe Libertaire..

likely allow landlords to charge more in rent, a process that was already happening in other neighbourhoods in Montreal.[11] This process was accelerated in the late 1970s when the municipal government introduced plans to improve the aging residential and commercial infrastructure in neighbourhoods like Point St-Charles, a move that local organizations saw as actively promoting gentrification. These worries were not unfounded, as the same municipal party had already 'renewed' a portion of Little Burgundy on the other side of the Canal, a plan which had resulted in significant displacement. In his play, Fennario replicated this anxiety through his characters' relationship with a broken step in their stairwell. The broken step was a nuisance throughout the play, but everyone refused to fix it for fear of a rent increase. This fear of displacement was bolstered by rumours that local landlords had been starting fires in order to collect insurance money. The residents of Balconville were, therefore, stuck in an unwinnable situation and were forced into perpetual inactivity.

Gentrification also threatened to derail the active citizens' organizations that had been working to improve conditions in their neighbourhood for more that a decade. However, instead of being controlled by "the broken step problem," neighbourhood organizations in the Point decided to actively challenge the system that created it. In 1983, a local organization in charge of housing launched a planning strategy that would be run both for and by the neighbourhood. Named PROJET St. Charles, the plan involved building 500 new low-income co-op housing units over the next three years. The committee that drafted the plan argued that by adding 500 non-market units they

---

[11] The increase in rents was most significant in areas close to downtown such as the Plateau, Old Montreal and Griffintown, as well as in the more peripheral areas of Notre Dame de Grace and Outremont: David Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 90.

could counter speculative pursuits and protect all residents from gentrification. As a form of housing tenure that was based on forming co-operative communities, co-ops would also maintain the 'ville' in Balconville.

In early 1980s Point St-Charles, co-ops were imagined as the ideal counter to the broken step problem in *Balconville*.[12] As one can see in the quote that introduced this section, the term Balconville was meant to express a common class. The people who lived in the apartment building were united by similar material circumstances that prevented them from escaping their sweltering balconies. Non-market co-ops could counter these conditions by providing an alternative to the exploitative landlord/tenant relationship. This same material condition also required that residents interact with their neighbours, resulting in for better or worse, a tightly knit community who identified with their neighbourhood. In the plan to re-make Point St-Charles into a co-operative neighbourhood these two interpretations of Balconville came to the fore. Were co-ops built to protect Balconville or to change it?

Co-operatives and Housing: Balancing Class and Community

Modern understandings of co-operative movements in the western world owe much to the founding of the Rochdale Co-op in 19th century Britain. Heavily influenced by the philosophy of Robert Owen, Rochdale started as a co-operative alliance of weavers in 1844. Over time, the Rochdale pioneers inspired similar projects elsewhere in Britain and began forming other co-operative enterprises, such as in banking and education. The Rochdale movement continued to grow over the next century, and its

---

[12] For a great thesis on how Point Saint Charles is imagined today, see Jessica Mills' MA thesis: Jessica J. Mills, *What's the Point?: The Meaning of Place, Memory, and Community in Point Saint Charles, Quebec*, thesis, Montreal, Concordia University, 2011

principles were eventually codified as a non-official guide for co-operatives by the International Co-operative Alliance in 1937.[13] Embracing principles of equality and democratic participation, the Rochdale Principles have since been revised twice and have been adopted by co-operative movements all over the world.[14]

In the preface of his book on Rochdale and the British co-operative movement, Johnston Birchall differentiates between what he calls small c and big C co-operation. Small c co-operation means simply working together, reflecting a philosophy of human nature in which people want to co-operate. Birchall believes that small c co-operative social organization was taken for granted in the pre-Industrial Revolution villages and kinship networks of early 19th century Britain. With the onset of the Industrial Revolution, however, the 'natural' co-operation of these villages began to break down. To resist the new market driven system of social relations, some enterprising artisans began to actively (C)ooperate. Birchall identifies the founding of the Rochdale as the first successful expression of big C Co-operation in Britain.[15]

Despite Birchall's overly simplistic description of the historical origins of co-operatives, the differentiation between small c and big C co-operation is interesting. He sees village co-operation as natural; there is no identifiable origin to small c co-operation but in the last two-hundred years it has run up against a manufactured form of capitalist social relations. Big C Co-operatives on the other hand, had a start and end date. They

---

[13] These principles have been interpreted and revised by several co-operative organizations over the last 150 years but maintain the title of "Rochdale Principles": Brett Fairbairn, "The Meaning of Rochdale: The Rochdale Pioneers and the Co-operative Principles," *Occasional Paper*, 1994, 1.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Johnston Birchall, *Co-op: The People's Business* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1994) vii-viii.

were consciously founded to resist the historic trends going on around them; their strategies and philosophies were imbedded in historical context.[16]

This historical context, however, was more complicated than Birchall is willing to admit. It may be true that the artisans who founded the Rochdale coop were reacting to the breakdown of small c co-operation through industrialization, but there were likely other factors at play. G.D.H. Cole referred to the decade that produced the Rochdale group as "The Hungry 'Forties," and emphasized the class-based motivations behind the movement.[17] The legacy of Rochdale, therefore, should not be removed from the time and place in which it occurred. Contrary to what Birchall suggests, big C co-operatives were not simply an extension of little c village co-operation.

Most of the scholarship on the history of co-operative movements in Canada has reflected this debate over whether co-ops were about class solidarity or the defence of village-like social relations. This has resulted in two roughly defined interpretations of how co-operative movements work that have competing political implications. The first of these interpretations has generally been published by co-operative unions or university research centers associated with co-operatives, and has emphasised the principles on which co-operative movements were founded.[18] These histories begin their narratives at the turn of the twentieth century and focus on their moral and philosophical underpinnings. In Ontario and the Prairies, the Co-operative Union of Canada formed in

---

[16] Ibid

[17] G. D. H. Cole, *A Century of Co-operation* (London: G. Allen & Unwin for the Co-operative Union, 1944) 1-11. This idea is contested in Arnold Bonner's book on the same movement. Bonner believes that the Rochdale class dynamic has been overemphasized, and it was made up primarily of middle class Owenites with ideological reasons: Arnold Bonner, *British Co-operation* (Manchester: Co-operative Union Ltd, 1961) 45-46.

[18] The two most well known academic historians in Canada who focus on co-operative movements are also involved in research centres that focus on co-operatives: Ian MacPherson founded the *B.C. Institute for Co-operative Studies* at University of Victoria and Brett Fairbairn was the former director of *the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives* at University of Saskatchewan.

1909 to assemble the small agriculture co-operatives that had been appearing across the rural countryside. Guided by the co-operative motto "each for all, and all for each,"[19] the relatively wealthy founders of the Co-operative Union were inspired by their strong Christian belief in the responsibility to better the world around them.[20] They understood co-operatives to be a moral alternative to the ills of modern capitalism. In 1915, one of the founders stated that "the object of the pioneer co-operators was not to produce material results for the people so much as to seek, by the improvement of their material condition to arrest the decay of character, and raise them to a higher plane; to create indeed, a new moral world."[21] In Quebec, Alphonse Desjardins founded a rural credit union in 1900 under a similarly moralistic banner. Desjardins was not anti-capitalist, but rather saw his caisses populaires as a way for local parishes to counter what he saw as the immoral and exploitative practice of usury loans.[22] In the Maritime Provinces, the Antigonish movement was founded in 1928 by a group of educators associated with the Catholic Church. Emerging in response to the economic difficulties associated with the Great Depression, especially amongst miners, fisherman and farmers, the Antigonish

---

[19] Ian MacPherson, *Building and Protecting the Co-operative Movement: A Brief History of the Co-operative Union of Canada, 1909-1984* (Ottawa: Co-operative Union of Canada, 1984), 6

[20] George Keen, one of the primary philosophers for the movement, idealized the Middle Ages as a period in which "the church appeared to dominate all life, and men could work securely at their crafts": Ibid, 14.

[21] Ibid, 18. See also: Ian MacPherson, *Each for All: A History of the Co-operative Movement in English Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada in Association with the Institute of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, 1979)

[22] There are many biographies of Alphonse Desjardins and books that tell the story of the caisse populaire from the perspective of its founder including: Yves Roby, *Alphonse Desjardins ; Les Caisses Populaires, 1900-1920* (Lévis, Québec: La fédération de Québec des Caisses Populaires Desjardins, 1975) and Pierre Poulin, *Histoire du mouvement Desjardins.* Montréal: Québec/Amérique, 1990. And Guy Bélanger, *Alphonse Desjardins: 1854-1920* (Québec: Septentrion, 2012)

movement was broadly conceived, and combined educative and co-operative principles to encourage regional self reliance.[23]

The second stream of scholarship has emphasised the socio/economic context that drove co-operative members to become involved. In the preface to his book titled *In Whose Interest?* about the Desjardins credit unions, Ronald Rudin points out how historians of co-operative movements have focused primarily on the ideological underpinnings of their leaders. Rudin seeks to counter the "trend to place Desjardins on a pedestal" amongst Quebec nationalist historians and looks favourably on recent publications that have focused on the economic factors that drove the movement.[24] James Sacouman has made a similar observation about the scholarly focus on the leadership of two priests within the Antigonish movement.[25] In their book on the same movement, Santo Dodaro and Leonard Pluta comment that "generally, co-operation is made necessary not primarily on philosophical or ideological grounds but by the fact that each member's resources, are not sufficient to undertake significant economic activity."[26]

Few academics have fully acknowledged the potential for ambiguous perceptions of co-operative movements from within. Absent from their accounts are stories of people who might have joined a co-operative movement for both moral/ideological and economic reasons. It is difficult to imagine a poor Christian farmer joining a consumer

---

[23] Jim Lotz and Michael Robert Welton, "Knowledge for the People: The Origins and Development of the Antigonish Movement," in *Knowledge for the People: The Struggle for Adult Learning in English-speaking Canada, 1828-1973*, by Michael Robert Welton (Toronto: OISE Press, 1987)

[24] Rudin is particularly concerned with showing how the caisse populaire represented the interests of Quebec's petit bourgeoisies who wanted to "re-create the social relations of an earlier time by closely associating the petit bourgeoisies with workers and farmers": Ronald Rudin, *In Whose Interest?: Quebec's Caisses Populaires, 1900-1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), xi.

[25] R. James Sacouman, "Underdevelopment and the Structural Origins of Antigonish Movement Co-Operatives in Eastern Nova Scotia." In *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada*, by Robert J. Brym and R. James Sacouman (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1979) 109-110

[26] Santo Dodaro and Leonard Pluta, *The Big Picture: The Antigonish Movement of Eastern Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 10.

co-op without considering both its economic and moral function, and yet academics tend to emphasise the "end" of any particular movement as one or the other. This has a great deal to do with the tendency to write grand celebratory narratives of broad co-op movements such as the Co-op Union of Canada, the Desjardins movement, and the Antigonish movement.[27]

Although different regional co-op movements involved different sectors of the economy, each was founded by religious members of the middle class to create a moral alternative to developing capitalist economic and social relations. They were overwhelmingly rural and tended to be promotional of small town values. Over time, however, as the number of co-operative enterprises grew, many distanced themselves from the churches. In Quebec, the religious pastoral undertones of their co-operative movements had always been associated with the Francophone Catholic majority. Whether or not these co-ops were founded under a nationalist philosophy is debatable, but co-ops did follow the post-World War II nationalist trend toward a more secular society in which the Quebec state supplanted many religious institutions.[28] In the midst of this "Quiet Revolution," the newly elected Liberal government took an interest in the caisse populaire, instituting several laws to support the distinctly Québécois institution.[29]

---

[27] These are not the only co-op movements in Canada but are definitely the most highly represented in literature. Studies on the Desjardins Movement and the Co-op Union of Canada are often funded by co-operative organizations with a desire to promote the movement such as: The Canadian Co-operatives Limited, Federated Co-ops Limited and the Société Historique Alphonse-Desjardins. Interest in the Antigonish movement is linked to its origins at Saint Francis Xavier University's extension department which has kept the Anigonish movement alive.

[28] Yves Bélanger has stated that "co-operativism is probably the form of capital holding that responded best to the ideals conveyed by the Quiet Revolution" Translated by Benoît Lévesque: Yves Bélanger, *Génese du developpement de l'entiprise Québécoise, 1850-1950: Essai sur l'évolution de la bourgeoisie Quebecoise*, thesis, UQAM, 1984,

[29] Benoît Lévesque, "State Intervention and the Development of Co-operatives (Old and New) in Quebec, 1968-1988," *Studies in Political Economy*, 1990.

Following the Second World War, the co-op sector also began to expand beyond its rural exclusivity into urban areas. In Montreal, religious figures concerned with the immoral slum conditions in working-class neighbourhoods organized house building co-ops. These early housing co-operatives acted as collective bodies through which workers could purchase housing materials and land in bulk.[30] In Winnipeg, a group made up of co-op organizations and workers lobbied the government to fund the first housing co-operative in Canada to be run collectively by the resident renter/owners in 1963.[31] The success of these early housing co-operatives would soon inspire the government to fill the void left by the Church and provide reliable support for a thriving co-op housing sector.

To understand the reasons that the federal government became involved in co-operative housing, it is important to understand what came before. In his historiographic essay on housing policy in Canada, titled "More American than the United States," Richard Harris asserts that academics have tended to place Canada somewhere between "British regulation and American freedom,"[32] a tendency which he believes to be false. Instead, he demonstrates how for the first half of the 20th century, Canadian housing policy was guided by a much more laissez faire attitude than their American neighbours.[33]

Jill Wade agrees with Harris on the relatively laissez faire approach of the Canadian federal government in her book on the struggle for social housing in Vancouver. Wade demonstrates how the Canadian government reacted to the Great

---

[30] Jean-Pierre Collin, "Crise du logement et action Catholique à Montréal, 1940-1960," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique Française* 41, no. 2 (1987), 179-203.
[31] Ian MacPherson, *A Century of Co-operation* (Ottawa: Canadian Co-operative Association, 2009) 144.
[32] Richard Harris, "More American than the United States: Housing in Urban Canada in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 4 (2000), 471.
[33] Ibid, 471.

Depression by focusing more on stimulating job growth through house building than actually housing the poor. The book centres on the city of Vancouver in order to look at the interplay between different levels of government in reaction to local organizing around housing issues. The author seeks to dispel the common assumption that the Canadian government naturally progressed toward a policy of intervention due to the historical development of the Depression. Instead, Wade demonstrates how the provincial and federal governments developed housing intervention policies, at least partially, out fear of the growing support for the leftist Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, or CCF.[34]

In an article examining a similar process in Toronto, Kevin Brushett argues that Toronto's municipal government began building public housing in response to pressure from local reformers. He tracks the development of the Toronto Reconstruction Council, which was founded in 1943 to allow local organizations and citizens to participate in developing a master plan for the city. The ensuing discussions over what was meant by community and citizen participation in planning revealed the complexity of the issue. Leftist labour groups such as the CCF and communist party, anti-communist ethnic groups, social workers and Tory politicians ultimately had different ideas regarding what needed to be done. This came to a head in 1948 when another citizens' planning group convinced the city government to green-light and fund the Regent Park urban renewal project without consulting the area's population.[35] Within a year after Regent Park was

---

[34] Jill Wade, *Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994)

[35] Kevin Brushett, ""People and Government Travelling Together": Community Organization, Urban Planning and the Politics of Post-war Reconstruction in Toronto, 1943-1953," *Urban History Review / Revue D'histoire Urbaine* 27, no. 2 (March 1999)

announced, the federal government amended the National Housing Act and committed

funding to the country's first federally funded housing renewal project.[36]

Despite the funding of Regent Park and the resulting amendment to the National

Housing Act, federal and provincial governments continued to drag their feet in

promoting public housing.[37] It was, for the most part, left up to municipalities to take the

reigns, resulting in an unequal distribution of housing projects across Canadian cities.[38]

The city of Toronto led the way in the construction of public housing, authorizing several

large projects over the next two decades. In Montreal, the municipal government was

less receptive to subsidized housing. This is not surprising since, as Choko and Harris

have argued, since confederation Montreal has been the perpetual outlier in relation to

more general Canadian housing trends. Unlike Toronto, which was more representative

of the Canadian norm, several idiosyncratic conditions related to rapid industrial

expansion, Franco/Anglo relations and city bylaws, led to Montreal being a much more

renter friendly city.[39] Linking this trend to the development of public housing in

Montreal would be a long and complicated process warranting its own thesis.

Nevertheless, it makes sense that as the Canadian outlier in general housing trends,

---

[36] John C. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993) 11. Regent Park is by far the most referenced public housing project in Canada. See the three articles by Sean Purdy on the subject for a highly critical view of how Regent Park has been treated within public discourse.

[37] The one exception to this is the province of Saskatchewan, where a CCF government actively lobbied for more money for social housing.

[38] In his Masters' paper, Christopher Lyons ranks the level of assertiveness of Canada's three largest cities in building public housing as: 1)Toronto 2)Vancouver and 3) Montreal: Christopher M. Lyons, *Battles on the Homes Front: Montreal's Response to Federal Housing Initiatives, 1941-1947*, thesis, Concordia University, Montreal, 2002, 11.

[39] Choko and Harris link these developments to a culture linked to renter-ship that had its origins in the rapid urban growth that occurred during the industrial period. Conditions in the city were not favourable to self-built housing like in other cities, leading to the development of the "plex" style of cheap rentals. Choko and Harris also argue that it was the amendment to the 1947 National Housing Act that has pushed Montreal to become more owner friendly: Marc Choko and Richard Harris, "The Local Culture of Property: A Comparative History of Housing Tenure in Montreal and Toronto," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80, no. 1 (1990), 73-95.

Montreal would also differ in its approach to public housing. The city's only large scale

housing renewal project, Habitation Jeanne Mance, was almost scrapped by a city

government that felt that housing should be left up to the free market, and was only saved

through intervention from a previously reluctant provincial government.[40]   Different

cities across Canada, therefore, responded to and influenced the provision of public

housing in different ways. While Montreal chose to leave the provision of housing to

market forces, the city of Toronto opened its doors to housing renewal.

Neighbourhood, Class and the New Left

During the sixties, attitudes toward housing and planning in the western world

began to change as neighbourhood groups started to resist the top down planning

strategies of city governments. While this citizen resistance was rooted in the varied

urban conditions in which they took place, their principle 'visionary' was Jane Jacobs. In

1961, Jacobs published *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* while living in New

York's Greenwich Village as "an attack on current city planning and rebuilding."[41] She

argued that the process of renewing parts of the city through building housing projects

actually created the perfect conditions for slums to thrive by destroying the vitality of

neighbourhoods.[42] According to Jacobs, neighbourhoods needed to satisfy diverse

functions in order to promote an active street culture; this would then provide a system of

self regulation in which citizens could be "the natural proprietors of the street."[43]

---

[40] Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 14-15. The Quartier disparus exhibit at the Centre histoire de Montreal offers a fascinating perspective on the neighbourhood that was cleared to build the Jeanne-Mance by those who lived there.
[41] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* (New York: Random House, 1961) 3.
[42] Ibid, 270-290.
[43] Ibid, 35.

Influenced by the view from her window, *The Death and Life* would become increasingly influential over the years and has often been cited as one of the most important books of the twentieth century.[44]

Few academics who study urban spaces would contest Jacobs' influence over their field. There is much debate, however, on how to interpret her legacy. Many books are outright celebratory of Jacobs as a hero of citizens' movements and human oriented city planning. Often written by neighbourhood activists themselves, these works tend to celebrate Jacobs' commitment to cities organized for liveability rather than the accumulation of wealth and position her in opposition to modernist villains such as Robert Moses.[45] Others have provided a more complicated view of Jacobs' life and vision. In her mostly celebratory biography of Jane Jacobs, Alice Spaberg Alexiou named one of her chapters "Housewife with no College Degree," to celebrate Jacobs' vantage point as a citizen rather than an expert.[46] Alexiou, however, also points out that Jacobs lived in a mostly white neighbourhood and the view from her window contributed to *The Death and Life* being almost devoid of commentary on race. This omission was, however, not simply out of negligence, but due to the uncomfortable fact that there were very few "white urban pioneers" who were fighting "to ensure that people of color are not pushed out of their now-gentrifying neighbourhoods."[47]

In the introduction to his co-edited work titled *Reconsidering Jane Jacobs*, Max Page points out how although Jane Jacobs' ideas about planning should be taken

---

[44] This is based on several Google searches for "most influential books of the twentieth century."

[45] Anthony Flint, *Wrestling with Moses: How Jane Jacobs Took on New York's Master Builder and Transformed the American City* (New York: Random House, 2009) And Roberta Brandes Gratz, *The Battle for Gotham: New York in the Shadow of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs* (New York: Nation Books, 2010)

[46] Alice Sparberg Alexiou, *Jane Jacobs: Urban Visionary* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006) 57-94.

[47] Ibid, 135-136.

seriously, her fans have preferred to emphasise her nostalgic position toward neighbourhoods. Page points out that, over time, this nostalgia became the dominant representation of her legacy, causing former supporters like Marshall Berman to comment: "today we've got to wonder, is this (Jacobs' vision) pragmatism or pastoral? Is it direct experience of city life or a grid of prescribed happy meanings forcibly imposed on city life?"[48] Page argues that these pastoral interpretations of Jacobs' vision have contributed to imitation "main streets" that reproduce the aesthetic of neighbourhoods without the substance.[49] In his critique of Jacobs, Timothy Mennel labels her vision as "a kind of panopticon" that ignores large portions of the urban fabric and that "her hope for a natural instinct toward co-operation and socially sustaining behaviour verges on the starry-eyed."[50] Nevertheless, Jacobs' popularity has only increased over the years, a phenomenon that geographer Richard Harris attributes to her ability to "present herself as someone who lived and thought close to the ground."[51] Sharon Zukin critiques Jacobs' neglect of how capital had shaped the neighbourhood which she described. According to Zukin, Jacobs "hones in on the physical characteristics of buildings,"[52] ignoring the ways that flows of economic and social capital have dictated the development of her neighbourhood. Essentially, Jacobs believed that neighbourhood development and planning should be left up to the "gradual" investment through the market rather than

---

[48] Max Page, "More than Meets the Eye," in *Reconsidering Jane Jacobs*, ed. Max Page and Timothy Mennel (Chicago: American Planning Association Planners Press, 2011) 11-12

[49] Ibid, 3-14.

[50] Timothy Mennel, "Jane Jacobs, Andy Warhol, and the Kind of Problem a Community is," in *Reconsidering Jane Jacobs*, ed. Max Page and Timothy Mennel (Chicago: American Planning Association Planners Press, 2011) 122.

[51] Richard Harris, "The Magpie and the Bee: Jane Jacobs's Magnificent Obsession," in *Reconsidering Jane Jacobs*, ed. Max Page and Timothy Mennel (Chicago: American Planning Association Planners Press, 2011) 80.

[52] Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 17.

"cataclysmic" investment of government sponsored mega projects.[53] Zukin argues that despite Jacobs' preference for small scale investment from "highly educated, higher income people like herself," she ignored the fact that this process would gentrify neighbourhoods and "grease the wheels of developers' high-stakes, large-scale projects."[54] As a result, since her time urban planners have used Jacobs' vision to create spaces that "encourage mixed uses, but not mixed populations."[55]

This nostalgia toward neighbourhoods as a more authentic unit for urban planning fit well with the directly democratic principles of the New Left. The New Left is difficult to define comprehensively but it emerged during the second half of the twentieth century as an alternative perspective to the "Old Left" focus on labour and the workplace. Identified by C Wright Mills in his influential letter to the *New Left Review* as a reaction of a younger generation to "all the old crap" of traditional leftism,[56] the New Left opened a new front in opposition to broad concepts of alienation, colonialism and existing structures of authority. Urban planner Peter Marcuse has defined the New Left by its concern with "urban" issues. These urban movements were new because they "were not workplace issues, that was clear. They were variously defined as residential rather than workplace, as consumption rather than production, sometimes newly as spatial, sometimes as community, later as identity, as cultural."[57]

In his book *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, Ian McKay identifies five stages of leftism in Canada, with the New Left following a stage which he calls "Radical Plannism." McKay uses the term Radical Plannism to describe the period between the mid 1930s to the mid

---

[53] Ibid, 227.
[54] Ibid, 227.
[55] Ibid, 25.
[56] Charles Wright Mills, "Letter to the New Left," *New Left Review* 5 (September/October 1960)
[57] Peter Marcuse, "Housing Movements in the USA." *Housing, Theory and Society* 16, no. 2 (1999), 67.

1960s in which parliamentary socialism dominated leftist discourse. Emerging out of the

Great Depression, Radical Plannism was inspired by the ideas of the intellectuals

associated with the League for Social Reconstruction. These ideas were then introduced

into mainstream politics through the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation.[58] McKay

describes proponents of Radical Plannism as having sought "the achievement of a

planning state that will draw upon the expertise of a professional social science to

intervene scientifically in the business cycle, socialize massive amounts of economy,

equalize life opportunities as much as possible, and achieve a genuine Canadian

independence."[59] In the mid 1960s, however, Radical Plannism was challenged by the

New Left. The New Left rejected the hierarchical structures of Plannism and fought for a

future predicated upon what McKay calls "anticipatory forms of a humanistic,

emancipated society."[60] Less concerned with the "functional requirements of systematic

change,"[61] the New Left valued thinkers like Jacobs who were "starry eyed" and "close to

the ground."

In Canada, as elsewhere, the transition toward the New Left was heavily

influenced by anti-colonial discourses. For many white Anglo-Canadians, this

manifested itself through a form of "new nationalism" that was particularly anxious about

the colonizing influence of American capital within their borders.[62] Books like Grant's

Lament of a Nation and Levitt's *Silent Surrender* reflected and proliferated the idea that

---

[58] For the history of the League of Social Reconstruction see: Michiel Horn, *The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada, 1930-1942* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980)
[59] Ian McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005) 180.
[60] Ibid, 184.
[61] Ibid, 184.
[62] Stephen Azzi, *Walter Gordon and the Rise of Canadian Nationalism* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1999) 167-188.

Canada had become colonized.[63] During the sixties, this othering of U.S. imperialism

became a powerful tool of resistance. In his study of reactions to de-industrialization in

the U.S. and Canada, Steven High demonstrates how Canadian labour unions were able

to inspire legislative support for their resistance to the shutdown of American owned

factories by wrapping themselves in the Canadian flag.[64] Not everyone in Canada,

however, was included in this idea of the nation. Like their counterparts across the

border in the U.S., black and indigenous activists used anti-colonial discourses to frame

their resistance against racism in Canada. Red and Black Power movements emerged

across Canada as a method to combat the political, economic and cultural inequalities

associated with their legacy as colonized peoples.[65]

     According to McKay, what made the Canadian New Left experience unique was

the question of Quebec sovereignty. Since World War Two, Quebecers had increasingly

contested the alliance between the government of Maurice Duplessis and the Catholic

Church. This movement, which would eventually become known as the Quiet

Revolution, included the secularization of Quebec society and politics and promoted a

more bureaucratic state motivated by a technocratic middle class. The Quiet Revolution

was also driven by underpinnings of French Canadian nationalism, the conception of

which would become more radical over the course of the 1960s. This was particularly

the case in the city of Montreal, where the Front de libération du Québec prepared to free

---

[63] Grants book has been a best seller and both have had many editions since original publishing date:
George P. Grant, *Lament for a Nation* 2nd ed. (Carleton: Carleton University Press, 1970) and Kari Levitt,
Silent Surrender; the Multinational Corporation in Canada. (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1970)
[64] Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto:
University of Toronto Press, 2003) 167-200.
[65] See James W. St James. Walker and Bryan D Palmer's articles in: Gregory S. Kealey, Lara Campbell,
and Dominique Clément, *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,
2012) And David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto:
Between the Lines, 2012)

their province from Anglo-Canadian dominance. In his book *The Empire Within*, Sean Mills demonstrates how this language of liberation was not exclusive to Francophone nationalist groups, but in fact pervaded all aspects of Montreal's New Left. Mills contends that ethnic, linguistic, gender, neighbourhood and labour movements were all responding to "a complicated and layered history of colonization and conquest" that had "scarred the city's landscape with distinct geographies of power."[66] Although these different groups used the language of liberation in different ways, they were united in their "othering" of a broadly understood concept of "empire." By appropriating the anti-colonial language of foreign intellectuals like Franz Fanon and Alfred Memmi, however, Mills points out that Montreal's New Left often ignored the layers of empire that allowed one to be at once colonized and a colonizer.[67]

Mills demonstrates how amongst Montreal's neighbourhood activists, emancipation meant contesting empire in the form of the economic and structural conditions perpetuated by electoral politics. This, however, was not the case for all Canadian neighbourhood movements. Urban neighbourhood movements outside of Quebec did not have the benefit of such a widely mobilized left. In other cities in Canada, like Toronto and Vancouver, neighbourhoods mobilized in self-defence against specific plans but rarely sought broad social change. In David Ley's book *The New Middle Class* he argues that the cultural trends that emerged in Canadian cities during the 1960s actually contributed to gentrification. Ley includes Montreal in his analysis, but does so awkwardly and sporadically, revealing a lack of confidence on how to approach the city. The majority of his book instead focuses on the student heavy counter cultures

---

[66] Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010) 4.
[67] Ibid, 3-15.

of Yorkville in Toronto and Kitsilano in Vancouver. In those neighbourhoods, the influence of the New Left was evident more through local residents seeking to live otherwise than through their pursuit of structural change.[68] This was perhaps most evident in Yorkville with the formation of the Rochdale co-operative. Stuart Henderson describes the process of how Rochdale College, founded in 1968 as one of the first student co-ops in Canada, became an insular container for the counter culture that had previously populated the streets of Toronto's Yorkville Village. Instead of trying to rid their society from the forces of alienation, the Rochdale founders hid from them and sought to establish a real counter-culture environment within the walls of their fortress co-op.[69]

Ley shows how the largely middle class participants of the neighbourhood movements in these cities followed suit in their search for more authentic spaces. While many of these movements had initially been conscious of class inequality, Ley argues their predominant focus on local control of planning resulted in them promoting plans that reflected their middle-class origins. Again, however, Ley does not account for the divergent objectives and methods that continued to dominate the Montreal citizens' movements. This is in part due to the fact that he does not acknowledge the working-class citizens' movements that were not formed in reaction to renewal. In 1963, for instance, popular groups organized around parishes in the Montreal working-class neighbourhoods of St-Henri and Point St-Charles.[70] With the help of local priests with a

---

[68] David Ley, *The New Middle Class*.

[69] Stuart Henderson, "Off the Streets and into the Fortress: Experiments in Hip Separatism at Toronto's Rochdale College," *The Canadian Historical Review* 92, no. 1 (2011), 107-133.

[70] Paul R. Bélanger and Benoît Lévesque, "Le mouvement populaire et communautaire: de la revendication au partenariat (1963-1992)," in *Le Québec en jeu. comprendre les grands défis*, ed. Gérard Daigle and Guy Rocher (Montréal: Les Presses De L'Université De Montréal, 1992)

"radical Christian social ethic,"[71] these groups fought against the unequal social conditions in their neighbourhood. While they fought to improve local conditions, however, the frame of their solidarity was more class than neighbourhood. In St-Henri, the first of these organizations formed to demand the renovation of a neglected Catholic elementary school that had been condemned as unsafe by the fire department, something that they believed would not have happened in a wealthier neighbourhood.[72]

As political, social and cultural life became more secular in Quebec during the Quiet Revolution, so too did the citizens' movements in Montreal. In parts of the city such as the Centre-Sud and Hochelaga, citizens' groups formed neighbourhood clinics and food co-ops to service their working-class populations.[73] Over the course of the 1970s the number of Montreal's neighbourhood organizations continued to grow in working-class areas all over the city. In Point St-Charles, citizens' groups founded service organizations like the local Carrefour d'éducation populaire (1967) the Clinique communautaire (1968), and the Aide juridique (1970) as neighbourhood focused and controlled alternatives to the services provided by the state.[74] Point St-Charles residents also organized around several prominent English language organizations such as the St-Columba House (run by the United Church) and were active in the Greater Montreal Anti-Poverty Coordinating Committee.[75] These groups operated under the pretence that

[71] Gérald Doré, "L'Organization communautaire et les mutations dans les services sociaux au Québec, 1961-1991. La marge et le mouvement comme lieux de l'identité," *Service Social* 41, no. 2 (1992), 131-162.
[72] Donald McGraw, *Le developpement des groupes populaires a Montreal (1963-1973)* (Montreal: UQAM, 1978) 45-74.
[73] Ibid, 75-104.
[74] CourtePointe Collective, *The Point Is- Grassroots Organizing Works: Women from Point St. Charles Sharing Stories of Solidarity* (Montréal: Éditions Du Remue-ménage, 2006)
[75] Anna K. Kruzynski and Eric Shragge, "Getting Organized: Anti-Poverty Organizing and Social Citizenship in the Seventies," *Community Development Journal* 34, no. 4 (October 1999)

Montreal's poor were victims of a distant bureaucratic 'empire' and they resisted by acting autonomously.

Layers of Social Relations in Point Saint Charles

Point St-Charles emerged from the 1970s with an elaborate network of citizens' groups that were responding to the "geographies of power" that had been maintained since Ames wrote of *The City Below the Hill* almost a century before. Their concept of liberation from empire was understood largely in spatial terms; the services that were meant to alleviate their poor living conditions were in fact conceived from afar and did not respond to the real needs of citizens. Citizen-run organizations could provide alternative services in order to break the cycle of disenfranchisement and respond to residents' needs from a street level.

These geographies of power, however, could be read in different ways. In her book *Spatial Divisions of Labor*, Doreen Massey argues for interpretations of space as an articulation of social relations rather than areas on a map. As such, "the structure of local economies can be seen as a product of the combination of 'layers,' of the successive imposition over the years of new rounds of investment, new forms of activity."[76] The autonomous citizens' groups could thus be understood as just another layer which was "superimposed upon and combined with, the effects of the spatial structures which came before."[77] Citizen-run services did not supplant the Church or the state entirely, but

---

[76] Doreen Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labor: Social Structures and the Geography of Production*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1995) 114.
[77] Ibid, 114.

instead acted as one of many layers that had responded to economic trends within larger spatial structures such as the city, province and nation.

These various layers were made evident by the internal struggles over how to interpret PROJET St-Charles and co-operative housing. Co-operative housing was not a static concept, and had been interpreted in different ways within different spatial frames. Ideas about co-operatives (and the underlying notion of co-operation) were then codified through the subsidies provided at the national, provincial, and municipal levels. These institutional conceptions were at times challenged by activists who developed their own interpretation of what co-ops were for. In Point St-Charles, co-operatives were interpreted during a period of flux, contributing to conflicting ideas of how co-ops reflected the neighbourhood's past, and how they should influence its future.

This thesis will trace the development of co-operative housing in Point St-Charles between 1983 and 1992 to show how debates over the purpose of PROJET St-Charles reflected different understandings of neighbourhood organizing. Some saw the PROJET as in line with broader Montreal movements and wanted to use it as a tool for radical social change; citizens could become politicised and organize around co-operative housing to challenge the capitalist status quo and work toward a co-operative society. Others with interest in the PROJET eventually challenged this conception for being unsuccessful in securing enough co-op housing and sacrificing the interests of the neighbourhood for a broader political stance. These competing visions for the PROJET represented different understandings of how to translate the social solidarity in Point St-Charles and how that solidarity could be manifested through co-operative housing. Never

exclusively for class or community, the fight for co-opville exposed the inherent contradictions in the layers of activism in Point St-Charles.

What united these different understandings of PROJET St-Charles was the perception that living in co-operatives would put citizens of Point St-Charles in a position to participate in building the future of their neighbourhood. As a conduit for citizen power, co-ops were perceived as a more inclusive form of housing. In reality, housing co-operatives are by nature exclusive, requiring that residents are able to choose their neighbours. Furthermore, the vetting process through which the leaders of the PROJET decided who would make a good co-operative neighbour often excluded people with the least amount of social and cultural capital.   By promoting co-op housing as something that represented the spirit of the neighbourhood, the PROJET ended up reproducing the internal power relations of Point St-Charles. Who ended up occupying these co-ops therefore reflected the way that people wanted to see the neighbourhood instead of how it really was.

The first chapter will demonstrate how ideas about co-operative housing have evolved across different spatial frames and how these frames influenced the initial conception of PROJET St-Charles. This chapter approaches the neighbourhood of Point St-Charles in a way that follows from Massey's assertion that "(N)o two places are alike" and that it is useful to study how places emerge from complex systems of social relations that relate to various spatial frames.[78] This position opposes more traditional spatial Marxist interpretations, such as those of David Harvey, in which local development

---

[78] Ibid, 113.

should always be studied as reflective of the capitalist system.[79] By choosing this approach I am also seeking to avoid a simple locality study that ignores external discourses on co-operatives and co-operation.

The second chapter focuses in on the frame of the neighbourhood to see how different understandings of co-operatives played out on a street level. Unlike much of the literature on co-operatives, I begin with the assumption that people in the Point could have seen the PROJET with a level of ambiguity. PROJET St-Charles was not only a pragmatic solution to economic circumstances or simpy based on a broader ideological concept of co-operation, but rather a complicated (and sometimes conflicted) mixture of the two. The PROJET was initially conceived to remake Point St-Charles in a manner better suited to resist gentrification, and the ensuing struggles over how to proceed reflected different conceptions of place. By focusing on these struggles, the different "layers of activity" revealed themselves because, as Massey describes, "histories of the past, moreover, are constructed so as to confirm the views and convictions of the present. It is this which enables them to warrant the building of a particular future."[80] Who constructed these views of what Point St-Charles was, and how it should build its future reflected power structures within the Point. Moreover, since the PROJET was explicitly for the neighbourhood, the dominant understanding of what the neighbourhood meant dictated who was given housing and who was not.

---

[79] This debate between Massey and Harvey has been extensive and occasionally very heated. Massey essentially rejects all encompassing meta-narratives but does not reject broad structures of analysis: Ibid, 296-301. Harvey believes in Marxist meta-narratives and thinks that all social organization can be explained through class: David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990). Massey has criticized Harvey for ignoring elements of social relations that have transcended capitalist social relations, particularly gender relations: Doreen Massey, "Flexible Sexism," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, v. 9 (1991).
[80] Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal* 39, no. 1 (1995), 186.

The majority of my research about Point St-Charles was done in the Archive

Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles at McGill University. This extremely rich collection

contains archives from several different neighbourhood organizations including the

Regroupement Information Logement (RIL), which dealt with housing issues and

founded the PROJET St-Charles. Most of this thesis is based on the meeting minutes and

documents produced by the Comité St-Charles, which was the governing body of the

PROJET. As the reader will see, due to the recentness of the events described and the

sensitivity of the subject, I was not given access to some information. This was

particularly the case with the co-op application forms at the end of the chapter titled

"Balcony Politics." For understandable reasons, the archive redacted the names of all co-

op applicants and requested that I cite only the range of twenty-four folders that included

application forms when referring to these documents. Although these restrictions made it

difficult to put a face to many of the people involved, I have done my best to humanize

the people involved by drawing on interviews from the "From Balconville to

Condoville," oral history collection, as well public documents that were created by or

about Comité members.[81] For my analysis of co-operatives outside of the

neighbourhood, I have drawn on several influential government reports and policies that

were created by the federal and provincial governments. Within the frame of Montreal, I

have also looked at newsletters and promotional materials, particularly by the association

of Montreal professionals who were in charge of building co-op housing.

Although I am most interested in the way that co-ops were imagined in relation to

neighbourhoods and community based activism, I recognize that I am ignoring many of

---

[81] "From Balconville to Condoville" is a project affiliated with the Centre for Oral Histoy and Digital
Storytelling at Concordia University. For more information see the website:
http://postindustrialmontreal.ca/

the structural and economic factors that have contributed to perceptions of co-op housing. As I wrote earlier, Montreal's housing market was notably different from other Canadian cities due to its large stock of rental housing. Co-op housing would have been understood in relation to other forms of housing tenure, and it is regrettable that I did not have time or space to explore these relations fully.

In writing the history of a neighbourhood through the perspective of a co-operative housing movement that began in the 1980s, I am seeking to extend historical discussions of the New Left beyond the often studied period of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Histories of this period in Canada have so far tended to emphasize student or youth driven activism, a tendency that is likely related to the fact that many influential academics spent their formative years close to these movements.[82] This heavy focus on students has resulted in several academics dismissing the period as a negligible mobilization of privileged white kids.[83] Recently, several books have stretched the concept of the sixties to de-emphasize the role of students. These works have focused attention on the feminist, race based, environmental and labour movements that also emerged during this period.[84] Furthermore, this thesis seeks to contribute to the lack of scholarship on the ways that the influence of the New Left continued to be felt outside of Quebec. In his book *Democracy in Kingston*, Richard Harris comments on how there are several works that position "the Canadian New Left in its international context. But the

---

[82] This is supported by the fact that most Québécois literature written by francophones on the period has emphasized the political rather than the cultural implications of the sixties, something that could come from the fact that Montreal universities had a comparably more radical experience than those in other cities.
[83] Two books that have had a particularly dismissive position of the political intentions of the sixties are Stuart Robert Henderson, *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) and Cyril Levitt, *Children of Privilege: Student Revolt in the Sixties : A Study of Student Movements in Canada, the United States, and West Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984)
[84] Sean Mills talks about the long sixties, see also: Kealey, Campbell, and Clément, *Debating Dissent*.

other current of traditional party based reform has been almost entirely ignored." Harris

sees this as an unfortunate omission since compared to countries like the United States,

the presence of the left leaning New Democratic Party facilitated more progressive party

reform.[85] Federal social housing policy was one area in which this progressive reform

was evident in that co-operatives represented a more grassroots alternative to their

previous urban renewal strategy. When examined within the frame of Point St-Charles,

the conflict between the lingering Montreal citizens' movements and the institutionalized

'grassroots' policies of the federal and provincial government provides a unique

opportunity to look at the complex and lasting influence of the New Left.

In focusing on co-op housing, this thesis will also contribute to the critical gap in

an important part of Canadian history. With some exceptions, most English language

authors have written about co-operative housing in order to celebrate it within the broader

legacy of Canadian co-operatives. These works are usually funded by co-operative

unions and favour the idea of co-operation over the context in which disparate

movements were founded.[86] On the French side, most of the work on housing co-ops has

come out of university departments concerned with promoting social economy. While

these books tend to be more critical of the past, they approach the development of co-ops

as a pseudoscience based on numbers and graphs and start from the basis that co-ops are

---

[85] Richard Harris, *Democracy in Kingston: A Social Movement in Urban Politics, 1965-1970* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988) 10.
[86] Some examples with input from historians are: Brett Fairbairn, Ian MacPherson, and Nora Russell, *Canadian Co-operatives in the Year 2000: Memory, Mutual Aid, and the Millennium* (Saskatoon: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, 2000) and Ian MacPherson, *A Century of Co-operation* (Ottawa: Canadian Co-operative Association, 2009). For an interesting, but still celebratory, look at co-operative housing specifically see: Leslie Cole, *Under Construction: A History of Co-operative Housing in Canada* (Ottawa: Borealis Press, 2008)

objectively good.[87]   There are also some critical studies of housing co-operatives that explain the logic of government subsidies within a Marxist frame, but they do not address the lived experience within co-op housing.[88]   By approaching a housing co-op movement on a smaller scale, I am seeking to show the existence of an ambiguous middle ground between economic context and co-operative ideology.[89]   Citizens' groups in Point St-Charles chose to launch PROJET St-Charles out of both need and choice, and their blending of the two created a unique and ever-changing perception of co-operative housing.

---

[87] Marie J. Bouchard and Marcellin Hudon have written extensively on this subject. A good intro to their work is : Marie J. Bouchard and Marcellin Hudon, *Se loger autrement au Québec: Le mouvement de l'habitat communautaire, un acteur du développement social et économique* (Anjou, Québec: Éditions Saint-Martin, 2008)

[88] Ruth Fincher and Susan Ruddick, "Transformation Possibilities Within the Capitalist State," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 7, no. 1 (March 1983)

[89] For a great ethnography of a single co-operative check see: Matthew Cooper and Margaret Critchlow Rodman, *New Neighbours: A Case Study of Co-operative Housing in Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992)

Chapter 1

Making Projet St-Charles

"Rochdale is a living, active symbol that influences understanding of co-operatives in countries around the world today. The myth of Rochdale has to do with twenty-eight impoverished weavers who started a shop in Toad Lane in 1844; a shop that became the first successful co-operative in the world; a co-operative that defined the principles for all later co-operatives to follow. Each of those three contentions, by the way, is largely false: that Rochdale was opened by starving weavers, that it was the world's first successful co-operative, that one need look only at its statutes to find the true co-operative principles. But no matter, the myth has its own kind of truth, and such myths and such truths are to be respected. This myth is a good and constructive one and contains elements that are true by anyone's definition. Rochdale is a historical reality, and it is an icon or totem for the world co-operative movement, an object of belief and inspiration for millions. What does it mean? The important thing to remember is that the meaning of Rochdale is constructed by each generation to meet its own needs."[90]

—Dr. Brett Fairbairn (University of Saskatchewan) Faculty member in the Department of History and the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives

In December 1983, a Point St-Charles committee assigned to develop a neighbourhood reaction to impending gentrification presented their plan to the local organization in charge of housing. This "Plan de travail" was the work of six citizen representatives, two housing professional and three members of the Clinique communautaire, all of whom worked together over six months to draft the document. In their plan, the committee described a neighbourhood housing strategy that would emphasize the building of low-income co-operative housing to counter gentrification. Their report contained research on the viability of their plan, and included figures and statistics to support their claim that the building of 500 co-operative housing units would shelter all residents of the Point from further gentrification. The tone of the document

---

[90] Fairbairn, "The Meaning of Rochdale," 1.

was straightforward, pragmatic and, with minor adjustments, could have been applied to almost any working-class neighbourhood in Montreal.[91]

After the "Plan de travail" was approved, the Comité St-Charles was formed to carry the PROJET St-Charles through to fruition. After another six months, the Comité drafted a second document along with a press release to announce the PROJET to a larger audience. This second document, named "Des logements pour les gens du quartier," celebrated the neighbourhood as something worth protecting. Whereas in other parts of the city, neighbours rarely mingled and were driven by money instead of community, Point St-Charles had maintained an "ambiance humaine" despite recent economic hardship.[92] The document focused on the specific borders and common history of the neighbourhood, depicting the Point as an urban village with a population "bien enracinée."[93] Like Birchall's description of Rochdale, PROJET supporters outlined their plan as a natural jump between little c co-operation and big C co-operatives.[94]

The difference between these two introductory documents is striking. How could two expressions of a plan to build 500 units of co-operative housing that were written only months apart have taken on such dissimilar tones? The answer lies in the constructed meaning of co-op housing. Co-ops did not emerge in 1983 within the isolated context of the neighbourhood. What co-ops meant and what they were a reaction to depended on discursive layers being acted out within different frames beyond Point St-Charles. Co-op housing relied on federal, provincial and municipal subsidies, all of

---

[91] "Plan de travail rattache au Projet St-Charles: presente par le Comité Provisoire au C.A. du R.I.L.," le 5 Decembre 1983, Archive Populaire de Pointe-Saint-Charles, Mcgill University, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.17.
[92] Comité St-Charles, "Des logement pour les gens du quartier," July 1984. Archive Populaire de Pointe-Saint-Charles, Mcgill University, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.17., 4.
[93] Ibid, 4.
[94] Birchall, *Co-op: The People's Business*, vii-viii.

which took different form depending on the social and political context in which they were created. These 'official' understandings of co-ops were also challenged by dissenting voices in different ways and in different contexts.

National decision making was ultimately what made co-op housing a viable option for low-income Canadians. David Hulchanski identified the prevalence of non-profit housing, including co-operatives, as the primary difference between Canadian and U.S. housing policy since 1970. According to Hulchanski, Canada's decision to invest in "3rd sector" non-profit and co-op housing following their abandonment of large scale public housing projects had created a much more stable housing environment than their neighbours to the south. The United States instead decided to subsidize rents on the private market, resulting in an underdeveloped "third-sector" of housing and housing professionals. Subsidizing housing co-ops was a federal phenomenon, something that, at least compared to the United States, was specifically Canadian.[95]

The federal policies that supported co-op development were also informed by and absorbed into a broader cultural context. In *The New Middle Class,* David Ley looks at the origins of 1970s Canadian neighbourhood movements in order to understand a form of gentrification perpetuated by the "new middle class." Inspired by the anti-modernist social movements of the sixties that were "self-consciously of the city, addressing poverty, housing, and development issues,"[96] these neighbourhood movements fought to re-insert humanity into urban planning. As a form of housing that encouraged human interaction, especially across class lines, co-operatives were perhaps the ideal manifestation of humane planning. Ley argues that co-ops served as a metaphor for the

---

[95] David Hulchanski, "The Role of Nonprofit Housing in Canada and the United States: Some Comparisons," *Housing Policy Debate* 4, no. 1.
[96] Ley, *The New Middle Class*, 223.

34

liveliness that influential thinkers within the neighbourhood movements, most notably

Jane Jacobs, felt was at the heart of a liveable city. Jacobs expressed this liveability

through the contrast between a modern and older part of the city; the older

neighbourhood was depicted as full of life while the other was cold and dead.[97] Ley also

argues that the association between community and communal living was particularly

evident in the architectural style preferred by co-ops, exhibited by their effort to recreate

an aesthetic that was "more firmly rooted in the neighbourhood context and regional

traditions."[98] To members of the new middle class, co-ops recreated the feeling of

community that modernist urban development was trying to destroy.[99] Although many

neighbourhood movements where sympathetic to the problems of poorer citizens, they

tended to be most concerned with defending the 'liveability' of neighbourhoods. The

desirability of liveable neighbourhoods soon drove up rental prices and, Ley argues,

actually contributed to gentrification.[100]

PROJET St-Charles, however, was not a project for the middle class. The authors

of "Des logements" considered the Point working-class, and the PROJET focused on

low-income residents. In *The Empire Within*, Sean Mills demonstrates how the

emergence of the FRAP municipal political party in Montreal in the early seventies had

made possible an alliance between neighbourhood activists, labour and students. FRAP

operated under the philosophy that neighbourhood organizations needed to unite with

similarly minded groups to collectively take control of systems of power.[101] Although

FRAP was dismantled soon after, a similar party was founded in 1973 under the name the

---

[97] Ibid, 224-258.
[98] Ibid, 318.
[99] Ibid, 317-319
[100] Ibid, 175-221.
[101] Mills, *The Empire Within*, 171-174.

Montreal Citizens Movement (MCM).[102]   Acting as both a political party and a network

for neighbourhood activism, the philosophy and tactics of the MCM differed significantly

from citizens' movements in other Canadian cities. Whereas citizens' municipal parties

in other cities usually fought around specific issues, the Montreal party contested an

electoral system that they believed served the interests of the wealthy.[103]

This chapter will explore the intellectual origins of PROJET St-Charles in relation

to external perceptions of co-operative housing. In his article on the ways that historians

have framed reactions to de-industrialization, Steven High points out a persistent lack of

interest amongst historians to explore non-local factors. Instead, recent work on the

subject has focused on the dichotomous narrative of community vs. capital. Quoting

Miranda Joseph, High notes that community is usually lauded as "organic, natural, and

spontaneous,"[104] that emerges in natural opposition to capital. This tendency is based on

the pretence that "community is somehow autonomous of capitalist society," and that

members of communities do not possess traces of non-community identity.[105] With this

in mind, it is important to consider the context in which the PROJET St-Charles was

conceived. Despite the authors' of "Des logements" assertion that the PROJET reflected

the culture of the Point, PROJET St-Charles did not emerge independent from external

discussions on co-operative housing. Co-ops, and their underlying principle of co-

operation, were concepts that could be interpreted in different ways.

---

[102] Dimitrios I. Roussopoulos, *The City and Radical Social Change* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1982), 11-35. See also: Henri Lustiger-Thaler and Eric Shragge, "The New Urban Left: Parties Without Actors," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 22, no. 2 (1998), 233-244.
[103] Timothy Thomas, "New Forms of Political Representation: European Ecological Politics and the Montreal Citizen's Movement," *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne De Science Politique* 28, no. 3 (September 1995)
[104] Steven High, "Capital and Community Reconsidered: The Politics and Meaning of Deindustrialization," *Labour/Le Travail* 55 (Spring 2005)
[105] Ibid, 187-196. Also see: Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002)

From Nation to Neighbourhood

The Canadian federal government began to focus on low-income housing after World War Two. In response to housing shortages and sub-standard living conditions for the poor, the government took on more responsibility for the provision of social housing. Initially, this intervention took the form of 'renewal' in which the government would clear privately owned housing that it deemed to be inadequate, and build public housing in its place. The federal government then subsidized the rents of all or some of the new apartments in order to compensate for their increased value after renewal. It was through these subsidies that cities began to build large scale housing projects, the first of which was Toronto's Regent Park in the first half of the 1950s.[106] For better or for worse, this method of government intervention dominated social housing policy for more than two decades.[107]

During the sixties, however, urban citizens' groups began resisting their city governments' attempts to appropriate land for public projects. Although the specifics of these resistance movements were diverse, they were largely opposed to the modernist urban strategies of governments. This form of resistance was particularly strong in the city of Toronto, where citizens' groups had become increasingly vocal in defending their neighbourhoods against modernist planning. The building of the Spadina Expressway through the downtown Annex neighbourhood had sparked a significant response from its middle class residents, who had been joined by Jane Jacobs after her move to the city in

---

[106] A federal social housing project in Montreal called Benny Farm actually pre-dated Regent Park. Benny Farm was completed in 1947 for returning war veterans, but was built on a site occupied by a farm and did not result in significant displacement: Erin Silver, ""Hope. Effort. Family." The Benny Farm Community Then... and Now?," April 18, 2008.
http://cityaspalimpsest.concordia.ca/conf08_palimpsest/papers/Erin_Silver.pdf.
[107] Alvin Finkel. *Social Policy and Practice in Canada: A History* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006)

1968. The real blow to large scale public housing projects, however, came out of the Trefann Court citizens' resistance movement. Over the course of the sixties, citizen groups became more organized in their resistance to neighbourhood renewal. In 1966, residents of the Trefann Court neighbourhood just south of Regent Park organized in response to the announcement that their neighbourhood would be replaced with housing projects. After a four year struggle, the Trefann citizens' movement became the first of its kind to convince the Toronto city council to allow for an alternative, neighbourhood guided plan. The failure of the Trefann Court renewal plan reflected a general shift in the city's attitudes toward urban planning and was the last of its kind in Toronto.[108]

While Trefann Court signalled the death knell of large-scale housing projects in Toronto, in 1968 two events inspired a more general change in federal social housing policy. The first, and more publicized of these, was the election of Pierre Trudeau's Liberals as a majority in Parliament. Running on a platform of "a 'just society' and a truly 'participatory democracy,'"[109] the relatively young Trudeau was seen by many Canadians to embody the hopes of the middle class, urban Canadians who were opposed to modernist urban development.[110] The second event was the establishment of the Co-operative Housing Foundation (CHF) of Canada, a group consisting of the Co-operative Union of Canada, the Canadian Union of Students and the Canadian Labour Congress, which began lobbying the government to subsidize co-operative housing. The CHF envisioned co-op housing as a necessary addition to the federal government's policy on housing the poor which they described as token in that it did not consider the needs of

---

[108] John Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) 135-173.
[109] Richard Harris, "A Social Movement in Urban Politics: A Reinterpretation of Urban Reform in Canada," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 11, no. 3 (October 14, 2009), 367.
[110] Ibid, 366-367.

residents, particularly in urban centres.[111] As an alternative, co-op advocates pointed to the example of student co-ops that had been popping up around university campuses across Canada. In a report issued by the Co-operative Union of Canada, they identified the Rochdale student coop in central Toronto as a prime example of the potential of urban co-ops to provide cheap, resident run living spaces at a high density.[112]

Co-operative advocates were not the only people who were unhappy with housing projects that had been built through urban renewal. Over the course of the sixties, the media had increasingly presented 'housing projects' in Canada, and especially in the United States, as being hotbeds of vice and crime.[113] In Toronto, reporters began to attack the high profile Regent Park project for the prevalence of juvenile delinquency and vandalism, a factor that had become linked with its high rate of single mothers. Many academics attributed the project's apparent failure to its large size and uniformity and condemned the planning that had produced it.[114]

In 1968, the federal government created a task force to study contemporary housing issues. The CHF saw this as an opportunity to drive co-operatives into federal discussions on housing policy and began lobbying the task force to include co-ops in its report. Fortunately for them, the leader of the task force, housing minister Paul Hellyer, was involved in Toronto real estate and had his ear to the citizens' movements going on there. As a businessman, the outspoken Hellyer was also critical of the federal

---

[111] J. David Hulchanski, "The Evolution of Property Rights and Housing Tenure in Postwar Canada: Implications for Housing Policy," *Urban Law and Policy* 9 (1988): 144-145.

[112] The Co-operative Union of Canada, *Brief on Housing Presented to the Federal Minister of Transport and the Task Force on Housing*, report (Ottawa, 1968)

[113] Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011) and Ley, *The New Middle Class.* (223-292)

[114] Sean Purdy, "Ripped Off" by the System: Housing Policy, Poverty, and Territorial Stigmatization in Regent Park Housing Project, 1951-1991," *Labour/Le Travail* 52 (Fall 2003).

government's heavy involvement in providing and managing low-income housing.[115]

Under his leadership, the federal task force completed its report within a year, and

introduced it with a twenty-page retrospective on its journey across the country which

read more like a travel novel than a government report.[116] The task force emphasised the

"grassroots" nature of its data collection in which it conducted "town meetings" in

"recreation centres, church basements and schools."[117] In the prologue, the task force

expressed particular appreciation for the "unorganized Canadians who, in their homes

and at town meetings, gave the task force an insight, more human and striking than any

written word, into the real issues of housing and urban development in Canada."[118]

Hellyer admitted that the report was rushed, but stated that "the members offer no

apology for the fact that some of their comments and conclusions stem as much from

mental note or emotional impression as they do from proven fact."[119] Later in the report,

the authors expressed the superiority of their grassroots methods and stated that they felt

"justified in pointing a particular finger at the academics and professionals," who used

"conventional wisdom" rather than listening to the people.[120] Hellyer's report was

particularly condemnatory of the "continuous flow of expert testimony that future

housing policies must be directed to the provision of multiple-unit accommodation,

largely on a rental basis,"[121] which defied the "definite 'philosophy of home ownership'

---

[115] Leslie Cole, *Under Construction: A History of Co-operative Housing in Canada* (Ottawa: Borealis Press, 2008), 45.
[116] Paul Hellyer, *Report of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development.* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969) 1-21.
[117] Ibid, 3.
[118] Ibid, 3.
[119] Ibid, 7.
[120] Ibid, 20.
[121] Ibid, 15.

among the Canadian people."[122] The solution, in the eyes of the task force, was to listen to the people and promote home ownership.

Their dislike of rental housing was, above all, directed at public housing, with a specific reference to Regent Park. Not only were residents of public housing forced to rent their homes, but their landlord was the biggest and most distant of them all: the federal government. As an alternative, the report suggested subsidizing housing purchases for non-profit organizations including co-ops. The non-profit could then pass on the benefit of that subsidy to renters (or in the case of co-ops, renter/owners). These non-profits would provide a third sector in the housing market, acting as neither a private nor a public institution. The report also mentioned the specific attention that the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation should give to the promotion of co-operatives, which would provide residents with the added benefit of being part owner of their home. Finally, the task force recommended that the federal government take advice from the Co-operative Housing Foundation and develop a plan to inform people about co-op living. They suggested the promotion of university programs where students could learn how to guide co-ops through to completion.[123]

Despite the report's lack of attention to actual policy implications and its initial dismissal by the Trudeau government, in 1970 the federal government allocated a one-time sum of $200 million to invest in new forms of housing, a portion of which went into establishing 1200 new co-op units across Canada.[124] The program was then codified in 1973 when the federal government amended the National Housing Act to include a

---

[122] Ibid, 17.
[123] Ibid, 37.
[124] After Trudeau initially rejected Hellyer's proposals, the housing minister resigned: Cole, *Under Construction*, 47

provision through which non-profits and co-ops could acquire subsidized loans.[125] This

method of funding provided the means for non-profits and co-ops to acquire long-term

mortgages from the government at low interest rates. Once received, non-profits and co-

ops were responsible for paying only 90% of the mortgage, leaving the other 10% as a

grant to be kept. Finally, co-ops could provide an additional benefit to low-income

residents by redistributing rent costs based on earnings, resulting in higher earners

contributing to a pool to subsidize the rents of lower earners.[126]

The inclusion of a subsidy that would pass from higher to lower earners

demonstrated the government's early vision for co-op housing. Although co-ops would

absorb some low-income residents, they would also house members of the middle class.

The mix was to save the government from having to provide additional subsidies, but a

report issued by the Canadian Council on Social Development indicated that it had

caused controversy amongst community housing groups. Apparently, several of these

organizations had expressed worry that higher-income people "will leave projects as soon

as the surcharge begins, denying the projects leadership potential."[127] Who these middle

class co-op leaders were was not explicitly stated, but it would not be a stretch to assume

that they might include the same student leaders mentioned in Hellyer's report.

Over the next five years 7,700 new co-op units were acquired under the 1973

amendment. In 1978, the government discontinued their initial subsidy and replaced it

with a new funding method. The government dropped the 10% grant and began

financing reduced rate mortgages on the private market by providing subsidies directly to

---

[125] Hulchanski, "The Evolution of Property Rights." 145.
[126] Tom Carter, "Current Practices for Procuring Affordable Housing: The Canadian Context," *Housing Policy Debate* 8, no. 3 (1997): 596-605.
[127] *A Review of Canadian Social Housing Policy.* (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, 1977): 126.

co-ops. Under this new financing agreement, co-op numbers continued to grow, resulting in the funding of 39,000 co-op residences over the next six years.[128]

Individual provinces also began developing strategies to promote co-operative housing. In their book on co-op housing in Quebec, Bouchard and Hudon identified three stages of co-op development. The first of these stages occurred between 1938 and 1967 and included the co-operative purchase of land and supplies for building individual family homes. These co-op construction movements were responding to a housing crisis that had resulted in overcrowding and unsanitary conditions, particularly in poorer urban areas. They were spearheaded by an alliance between the Catholic Church and labour and were inspired by the Church's aversion to the immoral living conditions of industrial neighbourhoods.[129] Jean-Pierre Collin elaborated on this trend in his work on the Ligue ouvrière Catholique's involvement in co-operative housing development, arguing that religious morality and traditional values provided motivation for the movement. The Church promoted house building co-ops in the years following World War Two as a solution to the hygienic and moral pitfalls that they associated with multi-family housing.[130]

The second stage of co-op development emerged in response to a continued need for housing in Quebec, especially for low-income people, that had persisted since the Second World War. Over the course of the sixties, the housing crunch became even more aggravated by large scale development projects in the city of Montreal. In

---

[128] William McKnight, *A National Direction for Housing Solutions* (Ottawa: CMHC, 1986): 12-14. and "CHF Canada : Housing Co-op History," CHF Canada : Housing Co-op History, accessed January 27, 2013, http://www.chfcanada.co-op/eng/pages2007/about_1_4.asp.
[129] Bouchard and Hudon, *Se loger autrement au Québec,* 16-50.
[130] Jean-Pierre Collin, "Crise du logement et action Catholique à Montréal, 1940-1960," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique Française* 41, no. 2 (1987)

response, Catholic groups associated with the co-operative construction sector and citizens' groups that had emerged in Montreal neighbourhoods like St-Henri and Little Burgundy began to organize around housing issues.[131] This coincided with the publication of an influential report by the Co-operative Council of Quebec which promoted the development of co-op housing as a provincial strategy moving forward. The Co-operative Council looked outside of Canada to examples of co-op development in Sweden, Norway and France, suggesting that Quebec take inspiration from their experiences.[132] Subsidies for the development of co-operative housing were made possible through the increasing presence of the Quebec government in the provision of social services following the Quiet Revolution, and in 1967 the provincial government established the Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ) to deal with provincial housing needs.[133]

In 1968, Quebecers founded the Fédération co-op-habitat du Québec to expand co-op housing with funding from the SHQ. The structure of Fédération was based on the Swedish model, and consisted of provincial, regional and local level councils. It was also structured from the top down with the provincial council maintaining control over the technical resources and funding. The provincial body then divided Quebec into regions which would recruit potential co-op residents and lobby the provincial council to build co-operatives in their locality. This top down approach was successful in founding thirteen large projects with 1,432 units, but it also garnered complaints from residents who felt that the provincial council retained too much control over the management of

---

[131] Claude Vienney, *Analyse socio-économique comparée des coopératives d'habitation en France et au Québec: Rapport de recherche* (Chicoutimi: Groupe de recherche et d'intervention régionales (GRIR), Université Du Québec À Chicoutimi, 1985), 151-178.
[132] Conseil de la coopération du Québec, *Les coopératives d'habitation au Québec* (Québec, 1968)
[133] Vienney, *Analyse Socio*, 159-160.

their co-ops. Despite these dissenting voices, it was the rapid success of co-op development that ultimately led to the downfall of the Fédération. The massive expense of building so many co-ops at once was exacerbated by a construction strike in 1969, and in 1970 the SHQ withdrew their funding from the Fédération.[134]

The 1973 amendment to the Federal Housing Act, however, reinvigorated Quebec's supporters of co-op housing. At first these new co-ops developed slowly, but things changed in 1976 when the province elected the Parti Québécois for the first time. The PQ's emphasis on provincial self-determination initially leant itself to a philosophy of decentralization and more democratic political structures.[135] In their 1976 platform, the Parti Quebecois encouraged co-ops in the labour, finance, consumption, and housing sector, which they felt would encourage the de-centralization of decision making. In their section on housing, they emphasized their commitment to maintain a human environment through decentralized planning. The co-op was placed at the center of this strategy, evidenced through their call for a general change in housing politics in which they only explicitly promoted one sort of housing: co-operatives.[136]

The next year, the PQ announced a program that would complement the National Housing Act subsidies to make co-ops a more viable option for low-income people. Programme Logipop provided start-up funds for organizing co-operatives, subsidies of $1,500 per unit of 3rd sector housing, and the funding of groupes de ressources techniques (technical resource groups or GRTs) to help guide new projects through to

---

[134] New co-operative housing construction did not disappear during this time, but was taken up with groups not associated with the Fédération. These co-ops tended to be smaller and were founded by groups without help from the government: Conseil de la coopération du Québec, *Habitation coopérative: rapport du comité d'étude*, report (1976), 1-10.
[135] Parti Québécois, *Le programme électoral du Parti Québécois* (1976). 251-252.
[136] Ibid. 299-301.

completion.[137] Logipop contributed to a boom in Quebec co-operative housing, and each provision offered by the government increased in number over the course of the seventies.

Logipop Subsidies in Quebec (1977-1980)			
	New co-ops receiving start-up subsidies (units within those co-ops)	Number of technical resource groups receiving subsidies	Total spent yearly on Logipop subsidies
1977	14 (367)	15	$124,000
1978	99 (1,534)	31	$954,500
1979	124 (1,939)	34	$1,798,500
1980	127 (2,622)	40	$5,520,000

Figure 2.1: Chart showing the increasing influence of the Logipop subsidies over time. Data was assembled from several annual reports by the Société d'habitation du Québec[138]

Many of the people who found jobs through Logipop subsidies had "ancestry" in the citizens' movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s.[139] During this period, several university departments in Montreal began to shift focus toward a more decentralized approach to their discipline. In 1970, a professor of architecture at McGill University named Joseph Baker founded the "Community Design Workshop" to train students on how to implement neighbourhood plans in co-operation with citizens' groups. On the French side, the architecture school at University of Montreal had moved toward neighbourhood based planning in 1971 after a group of students had occupied university offices to protest their school's technocratic philosophy. Their protest eventually prompted the resignation of the director and the election of a new chair, Serge Carreau,

---

[137] *Rapport Annuel* (Québec: Société D'habitation Du Québec, 1977) : 20
[138] Ibid.
[139] Drouin, Martin. "De la démolition des taudis à la sauvegarde du patrimoine bâti (Montréal, 1954-1973)." *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine* 41, no. 1 (2012). 32.

who was involved in local popular movements. These university programs adopted a more "hands on" approach to learning, often combining classroom education with participation in citizen based projects. Many of the young architects who graduated from these programs emerged with new ideas about urban planning that stressed the importance of popular control, and many of them found work with the GRTs.[140]

As the number of co-ops grew, so did the desire for a Quebec co-op movement. In March 1977, a group of residents representing more than 50 co-ops met in Sherbrooke to draft a manifesto advocating for the "development of co-ops according to their principles."[141] After two days of deliberation, the assembly came up with five points on which to base further co-operative development. They included the recognition of the right to housing for all people, the rejection of the current method of housing that was based on profit for a few, and the necessity of member governed co-ops. Furthermore, the manifesto declared for an "authentic co-operative movement within the housing sector," which would "educate its members and broaden their horizons to other dimensions and problems within their neighbourhood and society." The goals of these early co-op activists were therefore twofold. While they sought to improve housing conditions for the poor through the provision of housing, they also saw the organizational potential of co-operatives. Each co-op would provide a site for disenfranchised people who, with the help of the co-op movement, would become conscious of the societal structures that perpetuated their disenfranchisement. Residents could become

---

[140] Marc H. Choko, "La clinique d'aménagement de l'école d'architecture de l'Université De Montreal," in *Aménagement et développement: Vers un nouvelles practiques?* (Québec: Les presses de l'Université Du Québec, 1986)
[141] It's worth noting that since this meeting occurred in 1977 they would not have been funded through Logipop and would not have been encouraged by GRTs. These co-op residents, therefore would have likely founded their co-op according to an attraction to co-op living rather than a need for low-income housing.

empowered through their participation in their co-op and then help to expand the movement.[142]

As the influence of the groupes de ressources techniques grew, they too came out in support of a co-op movement. In 1979, three GRT workers and one co-op resident from Montreal began publishing a journal to be distributed to co-ops all over Quebec. The first issue of this journal, titled *Hebdo Co-op*, announced that its goal was to inform and organize residents around issues related to provincial and national co-op legislation.[143] Soon thereafter, Quebec's GRTs officially declared their support for a co-op movement through a full page article published in *Le Devoir*.[144]

The GRTs expressed what this support meant during a summit organized by the provincial housing organization to review their effectiveness. During the meeting, representatives from the Regional Federation of Montreal and Eastern Quebec GRTs emphasized the necessity of educating new co-op residents to ensure proper management. This created conflict with the province, who felt the GRTs should concentrate on the quantity of new co-ops rather than the quality. The Montreal contingent rejected the primacy of quantity on the grounds that it would result in co-ops that were ill prepared for truly co-operative living, suggesting a separate budget for educational purposes. Another point of contention was regarding the target class of co-op residents. The province expressed a view that did not give primary consideration to low-income residents. Some of the representatives of the GRTs replied by arguing that this might result in the

---

[142] Assemblée provinciale des co-opératives d'habitation à Sherbrooke, Mars 1977, "Manifeste des co-opératives d'habitation," news release, Confédération Québecoise des co-opératives d'habitation, http://www.co-operativehabitation.co-op/site.asp?page=element&nIDElement=22.
[143] *Hebdo Co-op* 1 (March 10, 1979).
[144] Les groupes de resources techniques de Montréal. "Pourquoi appuyer les co-opératives d'habitation." *Le Devoir* (Montréal), March 13, 1979.

exclusion of the poor and would lead to "limited involvement of a potentially militant sector of the working-class."[145] Finally the two sides were unable to agree on whether or not the individual co-operatives should have any say in the funding of their respective GRTs. The GRTs felt that since they were "community controlled," questions of funding should go through a board consisting of co-op and neighbourhood residents.[146]

Throughout these negotiations the Montreal contingent was clearly the most radical. Born out of university programs at McGill and University of Montreal that had begun to promote citizen control over neighbourhood planning, these housing professionals did not agree with the top-down intentions of the provincial government. Many of them had been deeply influenced by their experience during the hot period of student activism in the 1960s and 1970s and had no problem challenging authoritative structures to pursue what they believed to be a more just society. Their concern went beyond the need to mobilize residents to secure housing and toward the vision of a co-operative society. Some of the Montreal GRTs had even suggested that they begin to organize other forms of co-operative ownership, such as in the workplace.[147] Their emphasis on co-operatives for people with low incomes in order to recruit "desirable working-class militants" suggests something far more radical than simply housing the poor.

The push for a co-operative movement was particularly strong on and around the Island of Montreal. Several large co-ops had developed across the region during the late 1970s early 1980s, including the high profile success of the Milton-Parc project. The

---

[145] Fincher and Ruddick, "Transformation Possibilities Within the Capitalist State," 67.
[146] Ibid, 64-67. This source includes a footnote indicating that the information about the GRT summit was gathered by Ruddick, who participated in the event.
[147] Ibid, 66.

49

fight to establish a co-op complex in the Milton-Parc neighbourhood near McGill

University was significant both as a major co-op development and for the publicity it

brought against the top down urban planning of Mayor Jean Drapeau. Since 1960,

Drapeau's Civic Party had been engineering Montreal's urban landscape to fit their vision

of a modern city. The importance given to mega-projects such as Expo 67, the 1976

Olympics and the Radio Canada building, meant that certain neighbourhoods were

cleared to make room.[148] The Milton Parc co-ops were conceived in the wake of a

similar project. In 1968, the municipal government backed an urban renewal plan by a

construction company named Concordia Estates to replace the neighbourhood with

several large apartment buildings. Bolstered by an active community of students, and

unwilling to let their neighbourhood be demolished, residents of Milton Parc organized

resistance. In the end, they were unable to stop the Concordia Estates project altogether,

but their resistance movement united a network of residents who in April 1979,

succeeded in lobbying the federal government to pay for 613 units of co-op housing. The

high profile success of the Milton Parc project brought attention to the possibilities of co-

operatives as a form of housing and as a basis for neighbourhood defence.[149]

      Although perhaps the most famous, Milton-Parc was not the only co-operative in

the city. The density of co-ops on and around the island of Montreal made the idea of

organizing a regional inter-co-op movement more plausible than a provincial one. In

1980, the publishers of *Hebdo Co-op* decided that they too would emphasize their region,

announcing that they would publish an issue for each co-op resident in and around

---

[148] The 'slum' of Goose Village in Point St-Charles was demolished during Expo 67 and the Faubourg de M'lasse was destroyed to make way for the Radio Canada building.

[149] Claire Helman, *The Milton-Park Affair: Canada's Largest Citizen-developer Confrontation* (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 1987) For a more critical analysis see Ley, *The New Middle Class.*

Montreal, but would send only one issue per co-op everywhere else in Quebec.[150] This

was also followed by a major shift in the way that *Hebdo Co-op* was assembled. The

editors announced a change in the structure of the magazine, replacing its method of

financing based on donations with reliance on an automatic payment of three dollars per

co-op resident.[151] With the more stable source of income, the magazine was able to

increase its page number and to work with outside collaborators to do specific pieces on

individual co-ops and neighbourhoods. The new format featured regional success stories,

cartoons, recipes, and included photographs of well attended general assemblies.

Compared to the original, more distant version of *Hebdo Co-op*, which focused almost

entirely on the provincial and federal situation, the new version celebrated the movement

as a collection of individual co-operative experiences.[152]

The expansion of the co-operative housing movement required that people

continued to found and move into co-ops. This meant that beyond mobilizing around

existing co-ops, the GRTs had to attract new recruits by emphasizing the superiority of

co-ops over other housing options. In 1980, the technical resource groups of Montreal

published a comic book on how and why people should establish co-operatives. The

book followed the lives of several Montreal citizens who were not able to find affordable,

quality housing on the private market. The characters in the comic ranged in class, and

while some were low-income and were displaced due to rent increases or slum

conditions, others seemed economically secure but were stuck renting because they could

not afford to buy a home. At first, some of the characters tried to solve their problems by

moving into large public housing projects. They found, however, that high rise projects

---

[150] *Hebdo Co-op* 21 (1980)
[151] *Hebdo Co-op* 23 (1980)
[152] The first issue with this new format was: *Hebdo Co-op* 31 (1980)

presented new problems. The rooms were too small, and the buildings did not promote

an active community, causing one character to complain that "j'me sentais jamais

vraiment chez nous."[153] Eventually, the characters discovered co-ops as a third option

that provided the combination of housing security, autonomy and community that they

could not find through private or public housing.[154]

Figure 1.2: Woman complaining about HLMs (Habitations à Loyer Modique: the Quebecois term for public housing). This is the moment in the comic book when the characters realize that co-ops are the answer.[155]

One Montreal neighbourhood that had become particularly implicated in the co-

op movement was Point St-Charles. This was in part due to the strong presence of co-

operatives in the neighbourhood that had been created under the Loge-Peuple program in

---

[153] Ibid, 12.

[154] Ibid, whole text.

[155] "C'est une bonne idée," comic strip (Montréal: Groupes de ressources techniques en habitation de Montréal, 1980), 13.

the early 1970s. Loge-Peuple had been founded by McGill architecture professor Joseph

Baker in 1971, and worked closely with the English language Parallel Institute. Parallel

was an organization that had been set up by a group of students and activists in the late

1960s to promote citizen participation in working-class neighbourhoods.[156] Between

1971 and 1974, Loge-Peuple bought 17 buildings that they planned on converting into

include 122 individual co-op units. Despite their success in acquiring new buildings, the

Loge-Peuple program was fraught with tension due to power struggles between the

Parallel Institute and residents from the Point. Parallel interpreted the situation in Point

St-Charles from a Marxist perspective, seeing housing as part of an "industrial structure"

in which all local systems of production and consumption were linked in a web of

capitalist exploitation.[157] The Marxist 'experts' at Parallel thus preferred to use their

organization as a platform to fight against the capitalist system than to consult and

include local citizens. In the early 1970s, a group of citizens assembled a list of eight

demands expressing extreme dissatisfaction with Parallel. The document indicated that

Parallel members were taking over assemblies, and demanded that all professionals be

screened before entering neighbourhood meetings. They were also fed up with Parallel's

lack of transparency or consultation in their dealings with Loge-Peuple, stating that they

had no idea how much money was being spent, who was making the decision to spend it,

and where it was going.[158] Eventually, Loge-Peuple had to fold due to a combination of

infighting and a lack of funding, and the buildings they had acquired were turned over to

---

[156] This was the same Joseph Baker that founded the Community Design Workshop that had trained many future GRT workers. Several of Baker's students also worked at Loge-Peuple: Choko, "La Clinique D'Aménagement."

[157] Alex Weiner, *Point St. Charles: Preliminary Economic Report*, report (Montreal: Parallel Institute for Community and Regional Development, 1970). Fonds St-Columba House, Bibliothèques et Archives National de Québec, P611 2007-07-001/1, 003.01.

[158] Citizens of Point St-Charles. *Initial Demands*. Fonds St-Columba House, Bibliothèques et Archives National de Québec, P611 2007-07-001/1, 003.02.

the federal government.[159]

In 1977, the development of local co-ops was reignited when a group of co-op advocates used the Logipop program to create the *Service d'aide à la rénovation de Pointe-Saint-Charles* (SARP). SARP was founded by people who were linked to one of the Loge-Peuple co-operatives called Co-op Progrés,[160] and architecture students like Charles Guindon, who had graduated with a degree from University of Montreal during the tumultuous sixties.[161] Soon thereafter, SARP formed a sister group called the *Société d'amélioration de Pointe-Saint-Charles* (SOCAM) to take charge of the acquisition of new buildings. The new technical resource group soon followed suit with GRTs across Montreal and in 1978 created the *Regroupement information logement de Point St-Charles* (RIL) as a mechanism for citizen control.[162] RIL consisted of an administrative council and a general assembly that was open to all residents of the Point. The administrative council was elected by the general assembly and consisted of seven representatives from co-operative housing, one from private housing, one from public housing and four others from the general assembly. RIL's initial mandate was to direct SARP, to develop inter-co-op relationships and to advocate for neighbourhood involvement in the development of both public and private housing. Soon thereafter, members proposed amendments that shifted the organization toward a more exclusive focus on co-operative housing. In 1980, the administrative council presented the general assembly with a bylaw change to increase the number of co-op representatives from

---

[159] Regroupement information logement de Pointe-Saint-Charles, Groupe de ressources techniques bâtir son quartier, and Société d'habitation de Québec, *Le logement social à Pointe-Saint-Charles bilan et perspective*, report (1999), 8.

[160] CourtePointe Collective, *The Point Is-- Grassroots Organizing Works: Women from Point St. Charles Sharing Stories of Solidarity* (Montréal: Éditions Du Remue-ménage, 2006), 89.

[161] Gathered from Charles Guidon's LINKEDIN page.

[162] RIL, *Le logement social à Pointe-Saint-Charles*, 8-9.

seven to nine and to allow them to appoint an employee from both SARP and SOCAM to the council. The proposed bylaw changes also expanded RIL's mandate to provide co-operative education.[163]

PROJET St-Charles

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a second housing trend provided added motivation to expand co-op development. Working-class neighbourhoods were becoming gentrified in the name of revitalization. At first, this took the form of large scale urban renewal projects; labelled as slums, neighbourhoods like Little Burgundy in the Southwest and the red-light district between St-Laurent and St-Denis were cleared and replaced with public housing. This strategy, however, began to change after the federal government discontinued its renewal policy. Over the course of the seventies, the Drapeau regime began favouring smaller scale intervention over mega-projects with city-wide appeal.[164] In response to a diminishing population across Montreal, particularly in former industrial neighbourhoods, the municipal government launched a series of programs to attract middle class residents back to the city. In the late seventies, the Drapeau government launched Opération 10,000 logements (later increased to 20,000 logements) in which the government identified available property for renovation and resale. The goal of this project was to convince those who had fled the city centre for the suburbs to return, and the municipal government saw revitalization and subsidized middle class housing as the key. Despite the potential of these programs to contribute to

<hr />

[163] "Reglements de regie interne du Regroupement information logement de Pointe St-Charles," 1980, Archive Populaire de Pointe-Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archive, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.553.
[164] Geoffrey P. DeVerteuil, *Evolution and Impacts of Public Policy on the Changing Canadian Inner City: Case Study of Southwest Montreal 1960-1990*, thesis, The University of British Columbia, 1993, 55-65.

gentrification, the provision of low-income housing was treated as an afterthought to the primary goal of raising the profile of neighbourhoods.[165]

Two other government initiatives were also launched during this period to pursue similar goals to that of 20,000 logements. The first, the *Programme d'intervention dans les quartier anciens* (PIQA) was founded in 1979 and targeted Montreal's older neighbourhoods or "grey areas" with the goal to "progressively bring the older areas back into the mainstream of urban life and the city economy."[166] PIQA was run entirely by the city, and involved projects that varied according to neighbourhood.[167] The second intervention was led by a group called the *Société de développement industriel de Montréal* (SODIM), whose purpose was to revitalize commercial and industrial areas. Under SODIM, entire streets were targeted and subsidies were made available for commercial business development.[168]

Neighbourhoods in the south-west of Montreal were disproportionally targeted by all three of the revitalization plans. The people who had moved out of the neighbourhoods surrounding the Lachine Canal over the previous three decades had left many abandoned homes that could be renovated to attract new residents. By 1988, over 3200 units were built through 20,000 Logements across the Southwest, with a majority in the neighbourhoods of Little Burgundy and Griffintown. These neighbourhoods had become increasingly attractive to downtown commuters due to their proximity to the city center and the recently built highway and metro stations.[169] PIQA was particularly active

---

[165] Benoît Lacroix, *Analyze de l'opération 20000 logements*, thesis, Mcgill University, 1989
[166] Yvonne M. Macor, *Revitalization of the Montreal Urban Environment*, thesis, Mcgill University, 1982, 111.
[167] Ibid, 111-113.
[168] DeVerteuil, *Evolution and Impacts of Public Policy,* 67-75.
[169] In 1964 the Drapeau government invested in new freeway construction in preperation for Expo 67. This included the completion of the Bonaventure Autoroute in 1967 and Autoroute 15, both of which met to

in Point St-Charles; of the eleven Montreal sites selected for intervention, five were in the Southwest and three in Point St-Charles.[170]
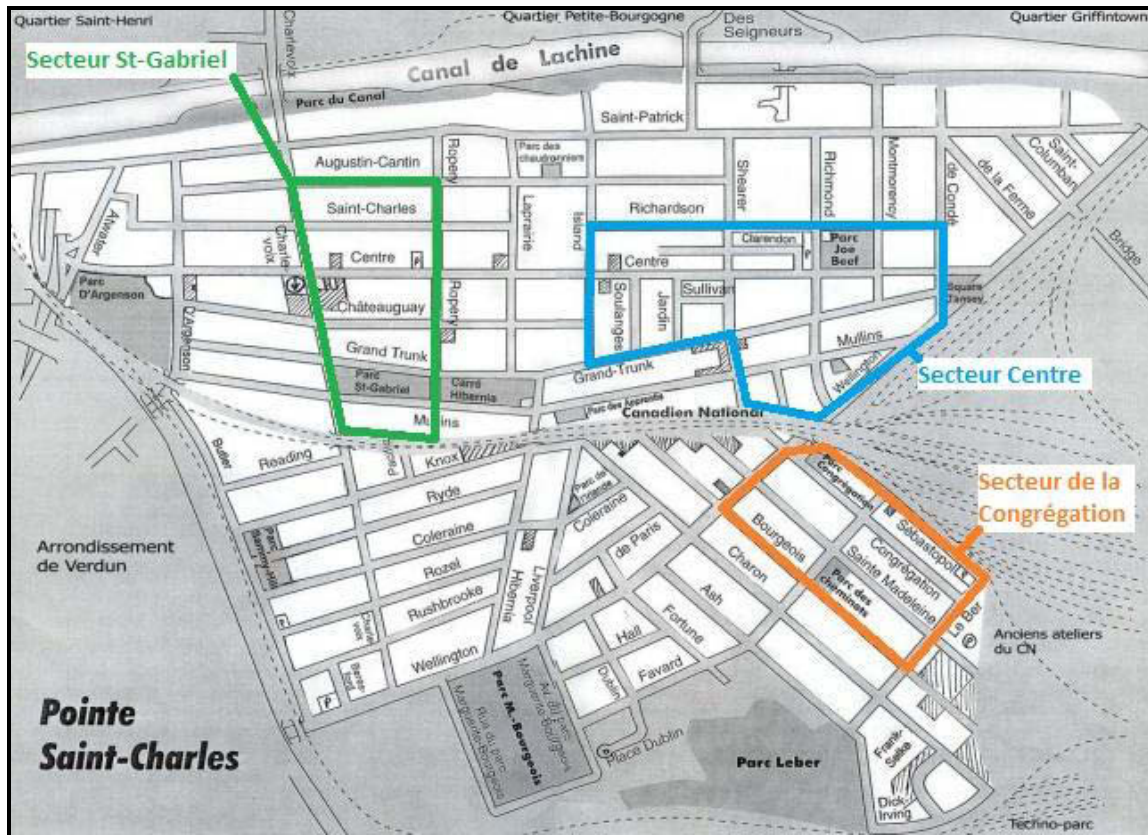
Map 2.1: The three PIQA Sites in Point St-Charles.[171]

PIQA allowed for a wide range of revitalization strategies in order to improve the desirability of neighbourhoods, including housing renovation and park and public space improvements.[172] In the Secteur Centre (See map 2.1), PIQA sought to improve the

cross the Champlain Bridge at the south end of Point St-Charles. In 1975, the Montreal Urban Community (a group comprised of municipalities in the Montreal Metropolitan area) began expanding the green and orange line of the metro system into the Southwest: Ibid, 51-55.
[170] Ibid, 70
[171] Assembled from data in: Macor, *Revitalization of the Monttreal Environment*.
[172] Inventory of Interventions Possible Under PIQA. Found in: Macor, *Revitalization of the Montreal Urban Environment*, 114-115.

residential atmosphere of an area that had previously acted as a parking lot for nearby factories. In Secteur St-Gabriel, they planned to improve the housing stock to maintain the residential character. South of the tracks in an area near the Canadian National yards, they planned to create a buffer zone to protect nearby homes from the heavy traffic associated with the rail industry. In total, the intervention sites covered only 45.8 of the 400 hectares of land in Point St-Charles, but the areas were spread out in a way that would suppress the industrial character of the neighbourhood and re-make it as a residential oasis.[173]

By 1981, government interventions were beginning to worry residents of Point St-Charles. Sandwiched between Goose Village and Little Burgundy, two neighbourhoods that had been cleared in recent memory,[174] local residents were particularly nervous of displacement. These worries were seemingly justified when the city announced their PIQA plans in the basement of l'Église St-Charles in the fall of 1981. Despite a mandate for the planning department to consult public opinion in the affected neighbourhoods, local neighbourhood organizations claimed that no such consultation had taken place.[175] Soon thereafter, a local watchdog organization began to mobilize opposition. Named Action Gardien, the organization was governed by an assembly of the various different neighbourhood organizations and successfully prompted the government to retreat from its plan to renovate buildings within the Centre Street project area. Local organizations, however, recognized the victory as temporary and began pushing for an alternative renovation strategy that would maintain the existing population of the neighbourhood.

---

[173] Programme general d'intervention dans les quartiers anciens: Notes explicatives. Found in: Ibid, 191-193.

[174] Only part of Little Burgundy was cleared, whereas Goose Village was totally destroyed.

[175] Macor, *Revitalization of the Montreal Urban Environment*, 113.

For this to work, citizens of the Point would need to take charge of the housing decisions for their neighbourhood.[176]

In the winter of 1983, a provisional committee set up to develop an alternative to PIQA drafted a plan to present to the administrative council of RIL. Named simply PROJET St-Charles, this plan of action involved the acquisition of 500 new low-income housing units to be renovated or built within the Point over three years. Admitting inspiration from the success of Milton-Parc, the report emphasised the need to frame the PROJET as a single project.[177] To ensure that the PROJET would be representative of the neighbourhood as a whole, the provisional committee suggested a group of local representatives to manage the professionals at the GRTs. The committee in charge would ensure that rent costs were representative of local incomes so that residents would not be displaced after renovations. Funding for the PROJET would come from federal, provincial and municipal sources, which would then be used to renovate or construct new housing consistent with the existing architectural style of the neighbourhood.[178]

The authors of the "Plan de travail" justified the seemingly arbitrary number of 500 new homes as the required amount of non-market units to protect against speculation. Adding 500 non-profit units to the 1,100 already in existence would result in 30% of all homes in the Point being removed from the market, a proportion that the committee believed was just enough to prevent further speculation. The PROJET would thus not only benefit those who received new housing, but would fulfill its mandate of maintaining the existing population. The plan, however, offered no evidence to support the 30% safe-guard, but did mention the danger that the PROJET might actually

---

[176] "Plan de travail"
[177] Ibid, 8.
[178] Ibid, whole text.

accelerate gentrification.[179] They worried that an announcement of a plan to purchase

500 units of housing might inspire local property owners who were in a good position to

sell to increase their price. Despite this admission of the potential pitfalls, the committee

emphasized the need to launch the project as soon as possible in order to halt the "savage

interventions" by the city.[180] Considering that the PROJET was conceived as a response

to speculation, the lack of caution given to a plan that might actually encourage

speculation is interesting. While the committee likely felt that they were protecting Point

St-Charles from gentrification, this protection seemed like an afterthought compared to

the 500 non-market homes.

The provisional committee identified co-operative development as an essential

component of their plan, suggesting that the PROJET concentrate their efforts on

developing small co-ops. For this to work, however, participants in the PROJET would

need to learn about co-operative living. The provisional committee suggested the

formation of an education sub-committee to inform residents who were less

knowledgeable about the concept. In order to accommodate the necessary co-op

education, the committee suggested that a series of general assemblies be held to train

potential residents. These assemblies would be entirely top down, with the PROJET

council setting the agenda. It also suggested that no motions be voted on during general

assemblies, leaving all decision making to the PROJET committee.[181]

The provisional committee justified the absence of power given to the general

assembly on the existence of a representative PROJET council. The council (called

---

[179] According to the minutes of a previous meeting this information came from a study conducted in Hull
Quebec, very little information, however, was provided. Reunion de Projet Saint Charles, 6 September
1983, Archive Populaire de Pointe-Saint-Charles, Mcgill University, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.17.
[180] "Plan de travail, " 6-9.
[181] Ibid, 15-16

Comité St- Charles) would be appointed by the administrative council of RIL, which consisted of members who were elected at their general assembly. The provisional committee were worried that if Comité members were elected at a general assembly, the nine available positions might be infiltrated by people with alternative objectives.[182] As we have seen, however, RIL was structured to promote co-op development above all else. Their general assembly did elect the majority of their administrative council, but most of the positions were only open to co-op residents. It was, therefore, not surprising that a PROJET needing RIL's approval would concentrate on developing co-ops.

Although PROJET St-Charles was presented as an alternative solution to PIQA, it too lacked venues for consultation. The ultimate decision making body, the Comité, was not responsible to the will of their general assembly and its members were appointed by a council that had become implicated in the co-op movement. The assertion that the people of the Point needed to be taught how co-ops functioned provided further justification for a top down approach. As a defensive plan, the PROJET represented what a small co-op sector thought was best for the neighbourhood.

The Plan, however, did emphasize that the PROJET was based on citizen participation, and the provisional committee saw mobilization as the most important tool to further the PROJET. The PROJET would not ask for co-op housing, they would demand it, relying on pressure tactics to embarrass the government into providing subsidies. Of the four working sub-committees that were suggested in the plan, three dealt with mobilizing people in the neighbourhood: the animation-education committee was in charge of informing the people of the importance of the PROJET, the recruitment-mobilisation committee was in charge of mobilizing for actions and other pressure

---

[182] Ibid, 12.

tactics, and the *information et publicity* committee was responsible for printing posters

and interacting with other community organizations and the media. The fourth sub-

committee was for negotiating, but only after pressure had been applied through the

media and political action. The emphasis on mobilization was, however, also top down.

The three sub-committees that dealt with mobilization were in charge of disseminated

information, but nothing in their description indicated they were supposed to consult the

people they were mobilizing. These top down procedures were justified through the need

for rapid action; the government and speculators had the potential to react quickly, and so

the PROJET would need to do the same.[183]

Several months later, the PROJET was presented to the general public through a

document titled "Des logements pour les gens du quartier."[184] Its purpose was to inform

and to motivate participation; the PROJET was meant to be a plan for the neighbourhood

by the neighbourhood and relied on mobilization to put pressure on different levels of

government. To do this it had to properly express why the PROJET was important. Why

should the public care whether or not 500 new co-operative housing units were built in

Point St-Charles?

Unlike the "Plan de Travail," this second report emphasized the need to protect the

distinctiveness of Point St-Charles. The Point was characterized as a "communauté

unique de par son histoire, vivante et enracinée géographiquement,"[185] worthy of

preservation through its rich local culture. Under the section titled "Le Quartier" the

authors emphasized the borders of the neighbourhood as "D'une superficie de quelques

445 hectares, il est délimité au nord-ouest par le Canal Lachine, à l'est et au sud par

[183] Ibid
[184] "Des logement pour les gens du quartier," whole text.
[185] Ibid, 4.

l'autoroute Bonaventure et le fleuve St-Laurent, et à l'ouest par la voie d'accès au Pont Champlain."[186] These hard borders reinforced local culture, serving as physical barriers that isolated the Point from the surrounding area. The Comité explained the neighbourhood's distinctiveness through a description of their common industrial past. They devoted one page to describing 300 years of history, identifying the Point through its relationship to the Lachine Canal industrial corridor, the message clearly stated: the Point was working-class.[187]

As a PROJET for "les gens du quartier," the report emphasized the need to reflect this culture. Unlike in other neighbourhoods, people of the Point were "bien enracinée." Their lives were in the neighbourhood, and they were more likely to develop interdependence with their neighbours: "Les gens de la Pointe se connaissent, fonctionnent en réseaux de familles et d'amis, entretiennent des souvenirs et des désirs pour leurs quartier."[188] The authors asserted that while the rest of the world was being swallowed up by the homogeneity of modern capitalism, Point St-Charles had been able to maintain a real community. Pointers were also willing to organize in defence of their neighbourhood, having developed dozens of community organizations to fight for survival. These organizations had resisted the top down control of government and capital, and had thus been able to maintain "une échelle et une ambiance humaine." Facing threats from the 'non-human' alliance of the city and property speculators, the Point was positioned as a real community.[189]

The authors of "Des Logement," however, ignored how the governing structure of

---

[186] Ibid, 2.
[187] Ibid, 2-3.
[188] Ibid, 4.
[189] Ibid, whole text.

the PROJET would actually function. The document included background information on why and how the PROJET was conceived, and explained the logic behind the end goal of 500 new units, but there was no mention of the make-up of the Comité or how they planned on getting the subsidies to finance these co-ops. In one section, the authors emphasized how the PROJET depended on conditions of "implication et consultation" due to the end goal of building participatory co-ops, but fail to mention the lack of consultation regarding how, where and why these co-ops would be founded.[190] Instead of presenting the PROJET with a progression of: A. Problem B. Method C. Solution, the document skipped from A to C, indicating that the Comité felt their methods were of little importance to "Les gens du quartier."

Unlike the original "Plan de travail," which was presented only to the RIL council, the expression of the PROJET to "Les gens du quartier," sold co-operative housing as a continuation of local Point culture. While both documents emphasized the urgency of rapid action to halt what was seen as an immediate threat to the neighbourhood, the reason for this urgency was depicted differently. The authors of the "Plan de travail" focused on resisting the actual process of gentrification, emphasizing the classist aspect of the PIQA renovations. These classist processes were still emphasized in "Des Logements," but they took a secondary position to the protection of the neighbourhood's unique working-class village-like culture.

The difference between the two documents that introduced PROJET St-Charles reflected the often confused relationship between co-operation and co-operatives. The emphasis in "Des logements" on the need to preserve the village atmosphere of the Point and its neighbourly co-operation resembled Birchall's understanding of big C co-

---

[190] Ibid, 14.

operatives replacing little c co-operation. As the "Plan de travail" more fully expresses, however, the PROJET was conceived within wider discussions happening in Montreal, Quebec and Canada. These discussions differed on issues of who co-ops were for, what they protecting against and to what end.

Conclusion

In Canada, the Federal government responded to pressure from organizations like the Co-operative Housing Foundation to develop an alternative to the 'renewal' style public housing. The federal state needed to continue to house the poor, but sought to do so in a way that would allow for residents to engage more with their neighbours and with their home. Co-op development allowed for both, and its emphasis on mixed incomes provided the added benefit of deferring subsidies to co-ops' wealthier residents. The federal government also saw the middle class as essential to providing the leadership and expertise needed to guide individual co-ops from acquisition to co-operation.

In Quebec, the provincial government also promoted housing co-operatives, but insisted on a more top-down structure. This was true during the wave of provincially funded co-ops built under the Fédération co-op habitat du Québec and during the second wave after the election of the Parti Québécois. Unlike the federal government, which emphasized the role of autonomous middle-class leaders, the Quebec government funded central systems of professionals to guide projects through to completion. Many activists for co-op housing and certain members of the GRTs, particularly in Montreal, rejected this top down approach as violating the purpose of co-operative housing. Rooted in the anti-empire neighbourhood movements of the late sixties and early seventies, the co-op

community in Montreal emphasized the need for co-operative development to be controlled by citizens. Advocates for citizen control were also tuned to the potential for non-market co-ops to subvert the forces of gentrification that were displacing people from poorer neighbourhoods. As a form of housing that promoted the organisation of poorer citizens, Montreal activists felt that co-op housing should be promoted as a platform for a more general co-operative social movement.

Point St-Charles was one of the neighbourhoods poised to actively join the co-op movement. The perception of the Point as an exclusively working-class neighbourhood, its need of housing, and its relatively large and longstanding co-op sector made it appear as an ideal incubator for a class based co-operative social movement. In the early eighties, the spark to galvanize local residents for a neighbourhood-wide movement came when the municipal government sought to revitalize the neighbourhood. The conditions were set for proponents of a broad co-operative movement to launch a neighbourhood experiment. It remained to be seen, however, how the residents of Point St-Charles would respond.

Chapter 2

Balcony Politics:
PROJET St-Charles and Neighbourhood Identity(ies)

Thibault : "Eh, Madame Paquette, y a un gros feu là-
bas! Hey, good thing we fix that step eh?"[191]

⸺From David Fennario's Balconville, 1979.

The characters in David Fennario's play *Balconville* were plagued by their inability to get along. All the residents of Balconville shared the same poor quality housing and dealt with the fact that there was nothing they could do about it. Despite their common problem, issues of age, gender, language and place of origin divided the neighbours who failed to realize their common interests. Instead of contesting the system that prevented them from improving their situation, their bickering distracted them from the ongoing gentrification of their neighbourhood. Near the end of the play, Balconville burned to the ground amidst a fight between Francophone and Anglophone neighbours. The organizing potential of their common living space was, therefore, destroyed by their insistence on difference.[192]

Despite the inability of the characters of *Balconville* to set aside their differences in the face of a bigger threat, the playwright asserts that they were based on real people. In fact, part of what makes his play great is that the residents of Balconville were not simple identity tropes. Fennario grew up in the neighbouring town of Verdun, and based

---

[191] Fennario, *Balconville*, 119.
[192] Ibid, whole text.

many of his characters on people he grew up with. The Francophone character Claude Paquette, for instance, migrated from the country to the city, a fact that causes conflict with his more cosmopolitan daughter. Claude's wife Diane is also a Francophone migrant, but instead of arguing over linguistic issues she annoys the other women with her rural passivity. The characters are thus more people than symbols, and above all, their use of local slang in both English and French locates them and their problems in the neighbourhood.[193]

PROJET St-Charles was launched four years after the release of Fennario's play to combat the same broken step dilemma that plagued the families of Balconville. If it worked according to plan, residents of the Point would no longer have to choose between poor quality housing and being displaced. Instead they could find quality, secure housing in local co-ops. No longer relegated to the perpetual poverty of Balconville, they could begin to fight for Co-opville. As a plan for the neighbourhood by the neighbourhood, however, the PROJET had to contend with the same diversity of identities that populated Fennario's play. Despite a history of neighbourhood-based struggle that reflected a strong sense of community solidarity, Point St-Charles was still made up of a collection of complex people. Neighbours who shared similar housing conditions and fears of displacement also hung different flags during the first Quebec sovereignty referendum in 1980. Discussions on race and gender relations and the strong generational gap that had emerged in the late 1960s also had the potential to divide men and women of different ages. This diversity of identity, however, does not come through in most of the archival documents associated with PROJET St-Charles. The need to express a unified front

---

[193] Ibid see also: *David Fennario's Banana Boots*, dir. Alec Macleod, perf. David Fennario (National Film Board, 1998) for some of Fennario's reflections on the play.

against gentrification took precedence over acknowledging difference in the reports, letters, posters and newspaper articles that populate the archive.

In writing their book *The Point Is…*, a Point-St Charles group called Courte-Pointe Collective demonstrated how and why difference can be muted to encourage community solidarity. The book drew from a combination of archival sources and oral history, and cited its purpose as celebrating the efforts of local activists from the 60s to the present. The book was written by two members of the group, Anna Krusynski and Isabelle Drolet, but involved input from the other people in the collective and ultimately resembled something like consensus. By representing the history of Point St-Charles neighbourhood activism as something that was both comprehensive and acceptable to all Courte-Pointe participants, however, many divisive issues were glossed over or ignored. There are some instances in which conflict within local organizations was acknowledged, but it was expressed as factional disputes between Point citizens and outside activists.[194] Otherwise, disagreements were often described as having been resolved after local residents had experienced a collective shift in opinion. For example, the book describes a debate in which local citizens disagreed on the issue of whether or not to demand for a local 'beat' policeman to curtail a recent spike in crime. The disagreement was understood to be largely generational, with the older residents nostalgically remembering the friendly neighbourhood policeman and the younger generation having experienced police repression during protests in the 1960s.[195] According to the book, the dispute was resolved when "parents understood that the police weren't working for them, but for the

---

[194] CourtePointe Collective, *The Point Is-Grassroots Organizing Works*.
[195] Ibid, 70-72.

system, and that the system was responsible for petty crimes."[196] The idea, however, that

such a disagreement would be resolved with such a painless shift in opinion was likely a

drastic oversimplification. The older generation who had once defended the idea of a

'beat' policeman would have been too old to participate in the collective.

Lucy Taksa urges historians to move beyond interpretations of communities that

depict them as a united whole by encouraging an analytic balance between individual and

collective identity. Taksa argues that labour historians have traditionally treated the

relationship between community and the working-class as structurally rigid, assuming

that community was either subversive, complementary or synonymous with working-

class interests. Instead, Taksa asserts that these three ways of relating the working-class

and community are not mutually exclusive and that treating them as such leads historians

to "lose sight of individuals, their subjectivity and agency."[197] Focusing too heavily on

individual identity, however, has the equally negative effect of denying the influence of

social solidarity on communities responding to common structural conditions. To

respond to this "ambiguous" situation in which "people reconcile simultaneous

membership of numerous communities, particularly when the demand for mobilization is

associated with one and not all communities to which they might belong at any given

time,"[198] Taksa borrows from Debra Meyerson and Joanne Martin's interpretation of

ambiguity in which "consensus, dissensus and confusion coexist, making it difficult to

draw cultural and subcultural boundaries."[199] Applying this concept of ambiguity to

---

[196] Ibid, 72.
[197] Lucy Taksa, "Like a Bicycle, Forever Teetering Between Individualism and Collectivism," *Labour History* 78 (May 2000), 17.
[198] Ibid, 26.
[199] Debra Meyerson and Joanne Martin, "Cultural Change: An Integration Of Three Different Views," *Journal of Management Studies* 24, no. 6 (1987), 637.

working-class history helps reconcile the dialectic relationship between common place-based identity and the complex identities of individuals.

Craig Calhoun offers a complementary description of community in his book, *The Question of Class Struggle.* Calhoun describes community as being derived from "cultural rules and both local and widespread tradition," and that this tradition "is malleable and is not infrequently developed and adapted to the demands of a new situation by enterprising persons."[200] He then goes on to say that "The malleability of tradition is, to be sure, wholly relative. It can nowhere be totally absent, or the practices and ideas of communities and societies would become brittle and fail to adapt to changing conditions. On the other hand, where tradition's real links with the past become actually lost, it is unlikely to be the source of any enduring consensus."[201] In order to study communities one should acknowledge that "community is made up of relationships among social actors, and relations among these relationships."[202] Analysis of communities must acknowledge the internal relationships between sub-communities, each of which may extend beyond the community that binds them.

In the early eighties, Point Saint Charles was a neighbourhood that was indeed losing its "links with the past." The de-industrialization of the Lachine Canal had left the population dwindling, and the threat of further displacement through gentrification required that the residents act. Proponents of the PROJET appealed to the residents of the neighbourhood: they could let the gentrifiers change the neighbourhood and let it die, or they could change the neighbourhood to keep it the same.

---

[200] Craig J. Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism during the Industrial Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 156.
[201] Ibid, 156.
[202] Ibid, 156.

John C. Walsh and Steven High argue for historians to avoid conceptions of 'community' that are definitive and static. Instead, they invite historians to see community as a process, to acknowledge that "historical communities were constructed from internal and external perspectives."[203] Historical communities were also "imagined' and clearly embedded in much broader systems of power," and any study thereof addresses issues of "governance, production/reproduction, and identity."[204] Communities are, like countries or states, imagined and re-imagined to reflect shifting power relationships.[205]

PROJET St-Charles was initially conceived as a project to help re-imagine the community of Point St-Charles. Activists who saw a broader co-operative movement as representing the interests of the working-class community sought to harness the idea of the Point as built on human interaction and mutual aid and turn it into a base for a broad co-operative movement. It would turn out, however, that the neighbourhood of Point St-Charles was not as homogenous as the supporters of the PROJET had anticipated. The Point's sense of neighbourhood solidarity did not exempt it from an internal power structure based on race, gender, language and class.

The Comité St-Charles

It is important to recognize that not everyone in Point St-Charles was involved in PROJET St-Charles. While many people cared about the fate of their neighbourhood and their role in it, this did not always translate to actively participating in the PROJET. The

---

[203] John C. Walsh and Steven High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community," *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 32, no. 64 (1999), 272.
[204] Ibid, 273.
[205] The term imagined communities was popularized by Benedict Anderson to refer to nation states: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. (New York: Verso, 1991).

PROJET could not broadcast news and events through TV or Radio, and would have

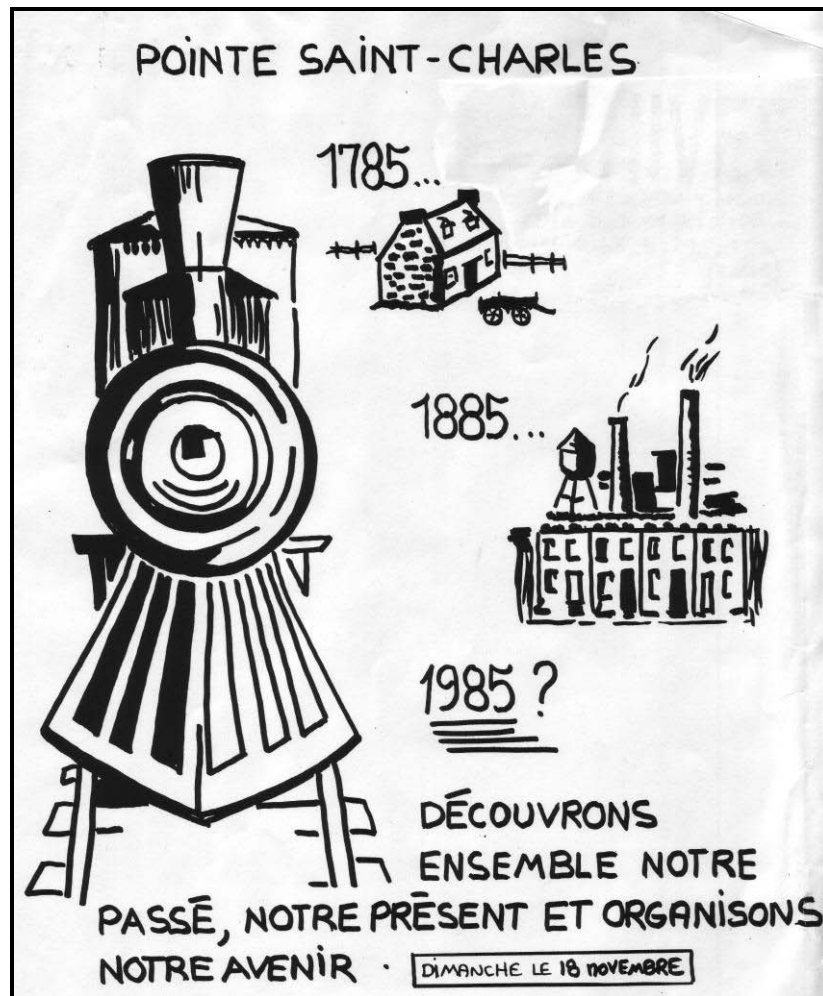relied on actions, word of mouth and postering for publicity. A person's physical

Figure 3.1: Poster advertising for Projet St-Charles[206]

proximity to the areas with high concentrations of PROJET events or even their route to

work could have effected whether or not they were kept in the loop. People who lived

further away from PROJET events might also have been less likely to attend meetings,

especially during colder months in which it was more difficult to get around. During the

1980s, most PROJET related events were concentrated on the north end of the railway

---

[206] Projet St-Charles, *Découvrons ensemble notre passé, notre présent et organisons notre avenir* (1985).
Archive Populaire de Pointe-Saint-Charles, Mcgill University, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.22.

tracks that divided the neighbourhood in two. These tracks provided both a physical barrier that made passage between the north and south more difficult and a symbolic barrier between the historically Francophone north side and the Anglophone south side. All general assemblies during the eighties were held on the north side of the neighbourhood in either the Catholic churches on Centre Street or the St-Columba House on Grand Trunk. The majority of the demonstrations were also held in the north near the highly contested development areas close to the Lachine Canal. This distance and division meant that many people could continue to go to work, school or elsewhere without ever thinking of co-operative housing or a co-operative society.

The group in charge of re-imagining the Point as a co-operative neighbourhood was actually very small. The Comité consisted of nine members who were appointed by the administrative council of RIL. Despite the emphasis on neighbourhood control, however, the Comité did not represent all voices in the neighbourhood. All Comité business was conducted in French, which would have excluded Anglophones and Allophones who were not proficient in that language. Also, RIL would have appointed the people that they felt could get the PROJET done; this likely favoured people with some education and would have excluded those who had difficulties with literacy. Furthermore, the time commitment of participating in the Comité likely dissuaded people who worked long hours.

Since the Comité was not responsible to any general assembly, they operated on the assumption that they could know the neighbourhood, and knew what was best for it. The nine members were therefore working from their own intuition. They represented diverse identities and interests and had experienced their neighbourhood in different

ways. Many of the initial participants were people who had taken part in the protests against the PIQA interventions with Action Gardien. Recently, a group of people who had been involved in these early protests met and were filmed as part of Action Gardien's "30 ans d'histoire communautaire" initiative. Each person that Action Gardien had recruited to participate in the meeting had in some way been involved in the PROJET. Charles Guindon, the technical resource professional who had co-founded SARP, had been heavily involved in the actions to block the PIQA development. He was also joined by Suzanne Lafferière and Lise Ferland, who would both go on to join the team that drafted the original "Plan de travail" for the PROJET. The third participant was an older resident named Jean-Guy Dutil, who fondly remembered joining Action Gardien in protests and would later become a member of the Comité St-Charles. Although all four had participated in the founding of the PROJET, what they remembered was different. Of the four, Guindon, Lafferière and Ferland spoke the most, and stuck to the topic of how and why they resisted against the PIQA project as well as the logic of why they took the actions they did.[207] Dutil, on the other hand, was shown speaking on camera very little, and in his one comment on the Action Gardien protests he emphasised how fun these demonstrations were rather than the logic behind the actions, stating that "souvent il y avait la bœuf, le sketch, et la musique."[208] He was then, however, cut off by another participant who made sure to comment on how all of those things were not just for fun, but were done to attract publicity to their cause.

---

[207] *Action gardien de la Pointe. Histoire de la table de concertation communautaire. 1981.*, dir. Leïla Brener, perf. Suzanne Lafferrière, Jean-Guy Dutil, Lise Ferland Et Charles Guindon, 30 Ans D'histoire Communautaire, 2011, http://actiongardien.org/node/1246.
[208] Ibid, 00:09:00.

75

Compared to the other three at the table, Jean-Guy Dutil appeared to be the oldest. He is currently in his early eighties and would have participated in the PROJET as a man of around fifty. By that point he had already had time to acquire a reputation as someone who was engaged in neighbourhood affairs. In a recent interview, he described how he had become involved in neighbourhood organizing from two directions.[209] As an employee at Canadian National, he had become implicated in the local chapter of his labour union and described having been involved in organizing strikes.[210] He was also involved in his local church, were he attended neighbourhood related events with his wife.[211] Dutil came across as an extremely friendly and jovial man, and it is not difficult to imagine him being well liked in the neighbourhood. The other three people in the Action Gardien video seemed comparatively younger. They also seemed more interested in describing the movement through broader processes of gentrification: Guindon has been involved in the broader association of GRTs and Laferrière has written about PIQA for the Quebec wide housing organization FRAPRU.[212] One would, therefore, imagine that Jean Dutil was appointed to the PROJET for a different reason that was less related to his interest in housing politics and more for his social capital and organizing skills in the neighbourhood.

At Comité St-Charles meetings, the voices of people with more experience in housing issues and organizing often took precedence over the voices of others. In one of the very first gatherings of the Comité, the members took turns expressing how they felt

---

[209] "Jean-Guy Dutil." Interview by Marie-Hélène Sauvé. December 4, 2012, whole interview.
[210] Ibid, 00:22:00.
[211] Ibid, 00:19:24.
[212] Suzanne Laferrière, "La Pointe Saint-Charles: Un quartier au aguets," in *On reste ici! : La lutte pour sauver nos logements et nos quartiers* (Montreal: Front D'Action Populaire En Réménagement Urbain, 1989) http://bv.cdeacf.ca/EA_PDF/2004_11_0550.pdf, 45-47.

about the way the meetings were conducted. As they went around the room several

members expressed a positive view of where the PROJET was going. One member who

came across as experienced in citizen movements said he felt relaxed and comfortable in

the proceedings so far. Another celebrated the fact that they had maintained citizen

control. There was, however, one member who did not feel comfortable in the meetings.

She confessed that she felt overwhelmed by the PROJET and the Comité meetings, and

worried about her ability to participate in discussions. Despite this dissenting voice, the

author of the minutes concluded by celebrating how positive the meeting was, not

acknowledging that it might not have been positive for everyone.[213]

One member who did feel comfortable expressing his opinion at Comité meetings

was Marcel Sévigny. Sévigny moved from elsewhere in Montreal to a co-operative in

Point St-Charles in 1982, and soon began participating in Comité meetings. Upon his

arrival in the Point, he had already acquired a great deal of experience in citizens'

organizations and was a firm advocate of a co-operative housing movement. Sévigny

was an active participant in the Montreal Citizens Movement municipal party, and was

eventually elected as a representative for the riding that included Point St-Charles in

1986. Sévigny has also been an active author, and has written two books detailing his

politics and history as an activist.[214] During the eighties, he also contributed to several

popular journals and was frequently mentioned as a consultant for *Hebdo Co-op*.

Sévigny got involved in his local branch of the Montreal Citizens Movement in

1974. After four years, he became disheartened by the "electoralist" direction of the

---

[213] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, February 16, 1984, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.559.

[214] Marcel Sévigny, *Trente ans de politique municipale: Plaidoyer pour une citoyenneté active* (Montréal: Editions Ecosociété, 2001) and Marcel Sévigny, *Et nous serions paresseux?: Résistance populaire et autogestion libertaire* (Montréal: Éditions Écosociété, 2009)

movement and along with several other members of his local branch near Papineau Street, left the party.[215] Sévigny, however, remained involved in citizens' groups, and was active in promoting a co-op movement, particularly as a basis for autonomous neighbourhood organizing. In the summer of 1980, the editors of the magazine *Hebdo Co-op* made an announcement that a working group that included Marcel Sévigny was looking for alternatives to funding housing co-ops through the government in order to escape dependence on state subsidies. This had become more urgent in recent years due to changes in federal policy that favoured private markets.[216]

This position was elaborated further in Sévigny's contribution to a Quebec workers magazine titled *Vie ouvrière* in 1981. In an issue on "Logment et vie de quartier," Sévigny and a co-author wrote five articles on recent developments in the way the federal and provincial governments subsidized housing. The tone of the articles was bluntly critical of recent government interventions in the housing sector, arguing that neighbourhoods were becoming gentrified through the provision of home renovation subsidies and that they were too low to be useful to low-income residents. They also criticized the federal and provincial governments' lack of commitment to social housing, stating that while public housing had led to poor housing conditions, government dependency and the formation of ghettos, the decision to stop building new low-income units was unacceptable. In an article about the potential of co-op housing, Sévigny and his co-author positioned co-operatives and GRTs against a government that only served

---

[215] Sévigny, *Trente ans.*
[216] *Hebdo Co-op* 1 (June 12, 1979).

market interest. For this reason, the authors called for resistance against the provincial government's preference for top-down co-op housing development.[217]

Near the end of the issue, the two authors discussed the best options for moving forward. They recognized that there was a need to improve living conditions in working-class neighbourhoods and argued that they could benefit from attracting "a population that feels more comfortable in popular neighbourhoods to restore some balance to its social composition."[218] They felt, however, that this should depend on the condition that the existing populations were maintained, requiring coherent interventions in all aspects of life including jobs for neighbourhood residents and popular education. The authors asserted that different levels of government needed to approach housing for its use value and not its market value, something that was unlikely under a capitalist or social democratic government. They, therefore, determined that the best option for working-class neighbourhoods was to acquire co-operative housing. While these co-ops might rely on government subsidies, they would also train residents in collective organizing:

> They are a means of social advancement for their members; they are a new form of non- profit housing production and management; they subtract units from the private housing market. It is a solution which, if pushed to the extreme, would allow collective ownership of housing on a basis of self-management, and decentralization, giving the housing a character of "essential good."[219]

Sévigny and his co-author were suspicious of government intervention in housing generally. They saw government as serving the interests of the rich by opening property to speculation and by asserting control over the lives of the poor through central

---

[217] Marcel Sévigny and Denis Tremblay, "Les co-opératives d'habitation (Locatives)," *Vie Ouvrière* 31 (April 1981) 16-17

[218] Marcel Sévigny and Denis Tremblay, "Le nouveau style d'intervention de L'État," *Vie Ouvrière* 31 (April 1981) 28-29.

[219] Ibid, 30-31.

management. Co-op housing, however, while still funded by government, could serve as a platform for a truly co-operative society in which goods were judged based on their use rather than exchange value.

It was with these opinions on co-operative housing that Sévigny moved into a co-op in Point St-Charles in 1982. Sévigny soon became involved with PROJET St-Charles and in 1984, his name began to show up in Comité meeting minutes. He entered the Comité with a great deal of experience in citizens' movements and was not shy in expressing his opinion. In February 1985, he wrote an analysis of PROJET St-Charles and shared it with his fellow members. He described a political situation that was extremely unfavourable to further co-op development, and that there was little chance of contesting policy decisions. He argued that unlike the 1960s and 1970s when neighbourhood movements could rely on a widely mobilized left, the PROJET needed to focus attention on mobilization to pressure the government into complying with their demands. The Comité needed a more succinct plan of action, which could only work if the members resolved some ambiguity regarding their goals. In order to move past this impasse he proposed that the Comité discuss a series of fifteen questions such as who the PROJET was for? Who was it against? Why co-ops and to what end? Was the purpose of the PROJET revolutionary? Was it a service for people needing social housing? Or was it to create a more communal environment?[220]

These questions revealed different understandings of why Point St-Charles needed co-operative housing. While Sévigny saw co-ops as a means to affecting broad social change, others saw the PROJET simply as a project to acquire low-income housing

---

[220] Marcel Sévigny, Analyse de la Situation (Bilan Partiel), February 10, 1985, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.561.

in the Point. These members wanted to first protect their neighbourhood from displacement, and the acquisition of non-market co-ops served this end by providing cheap housing. Their primary concern was to buy, renovate, and fill co-ops as efficiently as possible.

While these different understandings of co-operative housing were not necessarily mutually exclusive, they involved different conceptions of the PROJET's relationship to government. For Sévigny, government subsidies were a necessary evil for further co-op development that would be provided only so long as the PROJET continued to exert pressure. Others, however, were less comfortable with a confrontational stance. Early on, this tension caused conflict within the Comité over whether or not to court specific political parties during the federal election of 1984. The 1984 election was important for the future of social housing as the Brian Mulroney led Progressive Conservative Party, which was less likely to favour social spending, seemed poised to take power away from the Liberals. The Comité's stance toward electoral politics became a topic of discussion after two members of the PROJET had insulted an NDP candidate who actively promoted co-op development. The two had allegedly denounced both electoral politics and the federal government during a recent rally in Montreal.[221] After a divisive meeting, the other member of the Comité deemed their conduct unacceptable, stating that they should be making strategic alliances that would support co-op development rather than taking broad positions that might hurt their immediate cause.[222]

---

[221] This could also have something to do Québécois Nationalism, as the two specifically mentioned that they were against the federal government.
[222] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, August 23, 1984, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.

Another incident happened soon thereafter when the sub-committee in charge of publicity drafted an article announcing a strategy of confrontation with a municipal government that was still under the control of Drapeau's Civic Party. The logic behind the stance of confrontation was that they would be more successful at acquiring new co-ops through pressure rather than negotiation. They could also rally support from other groups who were against the Civic Party, such as the Montreal Citizens Movement, whose mayoral candidate Jean Doré had come in second in the 1982 municipal election.[223] Some people within the Comité, however, disagreed with this approach, stating that they should discuss their strategy with the city before announcing it publicly or else risk shutting down negotiations all together. Another member commented that the article looked like something that had come straight from Action Gardien, implying that the goals of the PROJET should be autonomous from the broader neighbourhood watchdog organization. The authors of the article responded with dissatisfaction at the slow pace of the PROJET and argued for the need to start moving forward. After some debate, the Comité decided not to authorize the article for fear that it would ostracize some members.[224] By the next meeting, the three Comité members who had drafted the article had sent in a notice of their resignation. Although they were vague in their reasons why, they stated that they had resigned for "political" reasons and felt they could not continue for fear of stalling the PROJET. Following the announcement, the Comité discussed what might have caused all three to resign with one member speculating that it

[223] City of Montreal, Election Results, 1833-2005, Http://www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/archives/democratie/democratie_fr/media/documents/expo/resultats_electoraux_1833_2005.pdf.
[224] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, September 27, 1984, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.559.

did not have to do with the disagreement over the article, but rather due to the more general tension between the Comité and SARP over control of the PROJET.[225]

Regardless of how the PROJET would relate to different levels of government, Comité members agreed on the principle of local control. They were, however, divided on who could claim to represent the neighbourhood. Early on, this was expressed through discussions over the role of the technical resource groups and RIL in Comité decisions. Before the launch of the PROJET, the provisional committee discussed how to ensure continuity considering participating in the PROJET would involve a great time commitment. Some members emphasized that relying too heavily on permanent employees would make the Comité unresponsive to the neighbourhood at large, feeling that the PROJET needed to be run by militants who volunteered their time. Furthermore, reliance on paid employees would de-emphasise mobilization as the foundation of the PROJET. Instead of recruiting citizens to do work, who would become politicized in the process, the primary incentive for employees was their salaries. This argument was countered by the faction who felt that it was too much to ask unpaid workers to devote the time that would be required to move the PROJET forward and argued the need for some permanent coordinators.[226] In the end they decided to hire some employees, but decided to limit themselves to a maximum of three at any one time.[227]

The initial plan also stressed the need for the Comité to be autonomous from RIL and the technical resource groups. This autonomy was, however, tested soon after the PROJET was launched when the SARP representative, Charles Guindon, sought to

[225] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, October 11, 1984, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.559.
[226] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, October 24, 1983, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.558.
[227] "Plan de travail."

intervene in a decision regarding the salary of the Comité's hired coordinator.   As a co-founder of both SARP and RIL, Guindon had both technical resource skills and experience working with neighbourhood organizations. Aided by these qualifications, he successfully lobbied the RIL council to allow his organization to take part in the selection process for the key position of PROJET coordinator. The Comité saw these interventions as the beginning of a "guerre de pouvoir," and decided to write a letter in response. After a four hour discussion on how they should respond, the group unanimously voted to take the "least radical" course of action. They drafted a seven page letter threatening to break away from RIL unless they negated the decision and reaffirmed the Comité's autonomy. RIL quickly relented, and affirmed the right for the Comité to choose a coordinator themselves.[228]

Disagreement over who was eligible to make decisions regarding the PROJET reflected ideas about who qualified as citizens of Point St-Charles. The choice to rely primarily on volunteers was made to guard against professionalizing the PROJET, but in doing so, favoured residents who could devote their time to volunteering. Also, while the technical resource groups were seen as necessary, their input regarding PROJET issues met with hostility from the Comité. As a group of non-local, paid employees, members of SARP were considered to have an alternative motive that might conflict with the interests of the neighbourhood. Members of SARP could use their technical resource skills to negotiate subsidies to fund co-ops, but in doing so, became entwined with the systems of power that controlled those subsidies.

---

[228] "Lettre du Comité St-Charles au C.A. de RIL and Lettre du C.A. de RIL au Comité St-Charles, April 4 and April 5, 1984, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.20.

Soon after Sévigny presented his analysis of the PROJET in 1985, the Comité St-Charles produced an overview of the progress made by the PROJET so far. Unlike earlier reports, the tone of the 1985 review was sombre and the outlook toward future co-op development, pessimistic. Ottawa and Quebec City had cut key funding sources for further co-op development,[229] and the city government were continuing their aggressive stance toward the revitalization of the Point. Furthermore, private contractors had built new condos in the neighbourhood, signalling the arrival of "un vent de spéculation."[230] The review had been produced as a working document based on a recent meeting of Comité. In the process of converting the minutes of the meeting to the review, the authors had synthesized points of debate and turned them into a document to work from while moving forward.

Unlike other public documents released by the Comité, the 1985 review revealed internal factors that were delaying the progress of the PROJET. The authors admitted to some major issues, both within the Comité and the neighbourhood at large. Comité members had disagreed on who constituted the "residents actuelle," and the cost of rent needed to keep them in the Point.[231] Interspersed throughout were segments revealing factional disagreements and the logic of each side. Tension also existed between the Comité and those who had enrolled in the PROJET. The Comité was disheartened that many participants were only interested in acquiring co-ops for the neighbourhood as a means to house themselves. Most actions, press releases and general assemblies had

---

[229] In 1984 the Progressive Conservatives won the federal election and in 1985 the Liberals won the provincial election. Both were more to the right that their predecessors.
[230] Comité St-Charles. "Ebauche pour un Bilan," April 1985, 10. Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.14.
[231] Ibid, 12

suffered from low attendance, leaving several of the Comité members wondering whether or not to seek out experienced co-opers from elsewhere in Montreal.[232]

The biggest internal conflict was the relationship between the Comité, RIL and the technical resource groups. The Comité was divided on whether it should have broken its affiliation with RIL altogether. Some members felt that RIL was holding them back from pursuing a more general political stance, and that the choice to remain under their umbrella forced the Comité to cater to the professional interests of the technical resource groups. This faction believed that the professional interests of the technical resource groups would always trump the interests of the PROJET. Their position was countered, however, by other Comité members who felt that breaking from RIL would divide local housing interests and weaken their chances of acquiring co-ops. Furthermore, it was following the decision to work closely with the technical resource groups that the PROJET had begun to take off.[233]

In a follow-up document titled "Les grandes lignes du plan de travail" that was released the following September, the Comité revaluated their strategy to deal with the reality that, so far, the PROJET had been largely ineffective at preventing speculation. One of the main shifts was to abandon the almost absolute emphasis on co-operative housing. The Comité recognized that not everyone was suited for co-operative living and that they needed to provide a larger role for social and non-profit housing.[234] The revised plan also expressed the need to maintain the PROJET as a protective umbrella over the whole neighbourhood in order to inspire mobilization amongst all residents. The Comité,

---

[232] Ibid, whole document.
[233] Ibid, 4-7.
[234] Comité St-Charles, "Les grandes lignes du plan de travail du Projet Saint-Charles pour l'année 1985-1986," September 7, 1985, 4-5. Archive Populaire de Pointe-Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.13

however, decided that while they needed to continue mobilizing support, they also needed to focus more attention on founding co-ops. This would be accomplished through closer collaborations with external groups like RIL and SARP as well as with technical resource groups from elsewhere in Montreal.[235] The points of contention that had divided the Comité at the April meeting had been synthesized into a new direction for the PROJET, muting internal contention. Together these two documents provide a window into the consensus making process.

Complicating the Neighbourhood: Race, Gender, Class and Language

With the reassessment of their PROJET in 1985, the Comité moved towards a more successful period in acquiring low-income and co-op housing, culminating in a wave of co-op development at the close of the decade. This did not mean, however, that the PROJET was without controversy. The new co-op housing units were far from adequate to house all of those enrolled in the PROJET, and required that the Comité oversee a process of selection. Furthermore, founders of individual co-ops needed to be able to select their new neighbours to ensure that they could work together. The Comité continued to insist on an element of central control, making guidelines that all new co-ops would have to follow in their selection process. Without these guidelines, co-ops might elect the candidates who would suit their particular co-ops rather than those who best represented the spirit of the PROJET as something for the neighbourhood as a whole.

Determining what constituted a resident of the neighbourhood and how one might judge a good co-oper from a bad one, however, proved to be difficult tasks. Language

---

[235] Ibid, 5.

issues and the inequalities of culture and gender further complicated the situation, often requiring exceptions that undermined the possibility of a comprehensive plan for the neighbourhood by the neighbourhood. The debates over who would get priority in co-operative housing revealed much about differing opinions regarding the future of Point St-Charles.

The success of co-op development during the period after 1985 required that the Comité create a hierarchy of selection criteria in order to place the most appropriate applicants. To be as objective as possible, the Comité adopted a point system that allowed co-op selection boards to quantify participation in the PROJET. People who completed PROJET related tasks earned points, and their total would accompany their housing application. All selection committees that represented housing inscribed to the PROJET were mandated to give priority to the PROJET members with the most participation points. The underlying philosophy of the points system was, however, deeply complex. It was originally set up to reflect each applicant's level of co-operative and activist training. Points were only given to people who participated in political actions or attended the educative general assemblies. By participating in these types of events, potential residents were trained in how to think and act co-operatively. This would provide them with the skills to confidently participate in their own co-operative, as well as to "work with others to defend both personal and collective housing needs."[236] While the incentive for citizens to participate in political actions through a points/reward system was an added perk, the Comité repeatedly emphasized the training aspect as the most important factor.

---

[236] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, March 26, 1987, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.603.

There were, however, many tasks related to the PROJET that did not have a training function. Initially, the Comité welcomed this unpaid work but did not recognize it as worthy of participation points. In a Comité meeting in 1987, one member argued that all PROJET related work should be recognized as moving the project forward, and should be rewarded. This would create an incentive for volunteers and reward those who had been unselfishly working for the PROJET. The issue of publicity was brought up as particularly time consuming, requiring the writing, printing and distribution of the PROJET's promotional newsletter *Le P'tites Vites*. After a long debate, the Comité voted in a split decision against limiting points to those who participated in actions and general assemblies, and then in another vote they decided to provide a half point for each hour devoted to volunteering.[237]

The decision to shift the nature of participation points from something that was exclusively symbolic of co-operative training to something that reflected the amount of work that one contributed reflected a move toward a more conservative conception of the PROJET. Although the difference of a half point for each hour of volunteering and a full point for actions and general assemblies demonstrated a continued emphasis on co-operative training, by rewarding work with points that could be spent on a place in a co-op the Comité ceased to prioritize co-operation and politicization in the same way. Experience in distributing flyers would not help one's ability to live co-operatively, nor would it contribute to a class consciousness that would mobilize people toward collective action.[238]

---

[237] Ibid.
[238] This sort of practice parallel's Robert Putnam's conception of social capital which he says "refers to the norms and networks of civil society that lubricate co-operative action among both citizens and their institutions." Robert Putnam, "Forward," *Housing Policy Debate* 9, no. 1 Putnam's promotion of social

Another criteria that the Comité was mandated to follow in selecting co-op residents was to choose people from the "quartier actuel." Defining what was meant by the "quartier actuel," however, was easier said than done. Before 1986, the lack of new co-ops meant that the Comité was able to define neighbourhood membership broadly. Despite claims of a neighbourhood with firm borders, different residents could maintain different criteria for inclusion without consequence. With the wave of new co-op and non-profit housing development after 1985, however, the selectivity of co-operatives required that Comité members discuss what it meant to be from the Point.

These meetings were very controversial. One minute taker made a rare personal comment and described the process as "very delicate,"[239] also indicating that these meetings took up a disproportionate amount of time. The Comité seemed particularly confused in how to strike a balance between being from the neighbourhood and other PROJET criteria such as participation points and low-income status. This resulted in frequent accommodations on a case by case basis.

Current address could not be the lone determinant of being from the neighbourhood due to the massive exodus of residents in recent years. Based on the conversations of the Comité, it was not uncommon for these former residents to participate in the PROJET with the hope of moving back. Since the PROJET was trying to reverse the process of displacement, they could hardly turn away those who had been

capital production for the purpose of community economic development has, however, been criticized by James DeFilipis, amongst others, who says "I argue that with the privileging of Putnam's interpretations of social capital, the term has lost its potential utility for the community development movement. In Putnam's understanding of the term, social capital becomes divorced from capital (in the literal and economic sense), stripped of power relations, and imbued with an assumption that social networks are win-win relationships and that individual gains, interests, and profits are synonymous with group gains, interests, and profits." From : James DeFilippis, "The Myth of Social Capital in Community Development," *Housing Policy Debate* 12, no. 4 (2001)

[239] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, October 29, 1986, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.602.

forced to leave due to their economic situation. In October 1986, the Comité discussed

how to accommodate people who had either left or never lived in Point St-Charles. After

a long deliberation they decided that they would work on a case by case basis,

considering factors such as whether candidates had ever lived in the Point, and if they

had, when they left and for what reason. In other words, it would be left up to the

discretion of the Comité as to who could claim to be from the Point and who could not.[240]

In one case, a woman who had lived in the Point but had left to move into an

HLM (Habitation à loyer modique or public housing) four year before, interviewed to be

included in the pool of applicants with a chance to be accepted into co-ops. She was

surviving on a small monthly welfare stipend which was designated for the elderly and

could not afford to pay market level rent. The application form included notes written by

the selection committee indicating the characteristics that they thought would matter in

determining whether or not she would qualify for re-entry into the neighbourhood. The

notes described that she had not wanted to leave the Point, and that she wished to return

to be closer to her family. They also emphasised her roots in the neighbourhood,

indicating that she used to live on Rue Saint Charles. After her interview, the selection

committee discussed her case, stating that if the practise of accepting ex-residents was

applied then she would be accepted.[241]

The perspective of being part of a neighbourhood co-operative movement also

attracted interest from people who had never lived in the Point. In one meeting, the

minute taker pointed out that these perspective members had not received PROJET

---

[240] Ibid.
[241] Due to the sensitivity of these Co-op and OSBL applications I have been asked by the Mcgill Archive to cite only the range of folders where they can be found: Co-op/OSBL applications, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.318-MUA 2009-0024.01.05.342.

publicity and had thus approached the Comité on their own accord. This initiative

demonstrated a particular interest in participating, an attribute that would translate well

toward co-operative living. These willing candidates were, however, not from the Point,

and might take a spot away from a local resident with less ability to participate. In the

end, not wanting to exclude them entirely, the Comité elected to create a second list of

candidates for people from outside the Point which would be referenced only after the list

of local members.[242]

The tension between these different criteria for entrance into the co-ops was more

acute when compared to actual housing need. The PROJET was launched in response to

the inability of locals to keep up with rising rents and was based on the premise that the

Point was a low-income neighbourhood. In order to prevent the displacement of the

"quartier actuel" the PROJET needed to advocate for those who were most vulnerable.

In reality, however, Point St-Charles had its own internal class dynamics and not

everyone was under threat of displacement. Historically, the south side of the train tracks

had been more affluent, with more single family homes that catered to skilled workers

associated with the Canadian National rail yards.[243] In 1984, the average annual income

per household in Point St-Charles was only \$14,198,[244] but if one compared that to the

high proportion of people who received social assistance (almost 35%), one would expect

to find a relatively wide range of incomes. Furthermore, although the vast majority of

housing in the neighbourhood was rental, 16.5% of families were wealthy enough to own

---

[242] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, December 9, 1987, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.603.
[243] Ames, *The City below the Hill*, 8.
[244] This was compared to average family income of \$34,500 in Quebec: Data from Statistics Canada, 1986.

their house.[245] This meant that the Comité St-Charles could not rely on a Point St-Charles address as reflective of housing need. In early 1987, one member of the Comité complained that their reliance on the point system had made their selection criteria too relaxed. Middle income residents of the neighbourhood could acquire points as well, and if those points determined who was accepted into co-ops, then wealthier people might take housing away from the people who needed it most.[246]

Class was not the only determining factor in judging who had the greatest need for stable housing. In certain cases, issues related to gender, age, disability and mental illness trumped the need of those who were simply unable to pay rent. Furthermore, some of those with the greatest need had never lived in Point St-Charles, forcing the Comité to create criteria that would privilege either housing need or being from the neighbourhood.

During the eighties, local organizations were generally concerned with Point St-Charles's reputation as a neighbourhood of families. The large out-migration over the previous few decades had had a serious effect on the tightly knit family networks that many considered to characterize the neighbourhood. The average age of the population was much higher than it had been during the 1950s and 1960s, indicating that young families were moving elsewhere. To counter this trend, the PROJET had been conceived with the idea that families would be a priority.[247] This need was made more pressing due to the statistics demonstrating that over forty percent of families in the Point were managed by a single-parent, and would thus be more vulnerable to displacement than a

---

[245] Pointe St-Charles Economic Program, "Situation socio-économique quartier Pointe St-Charles," December 1, 1984, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.21.
[246] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, January 7, 1987, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.603.
[247] Comité St-Charles. "Des logement," 9.

family with two potential bread-winners. Since the majority of these single-parents were

likely mothers, this commitment to housing families affected women more than men.

The authors also stated the need to provide housing for people with special

circumstances, using the example of women and families who were victims of violence.

The founders of the PROJET, however, did not clarify how this emphasis on housing

women and families in need would be negotiated with other criteria.[248]

As co-ops and non-profits moved toward completion there were several

circumstances in which selection criteria were negotiated or ignored to house women and

children with housing needs. In one instance, a selection committee from Co-op Bon

Vieux Temps sent a letter to the Comité regarding the logic of two recent selections.[249]

The letter indicated that one of the two rooms was filled by a woman who was not a

member of the PROJET but was well known in the community. The letter also

mentioned that she was in desperate need of housing as her husband had just passed away

and she had several children. During their meeting the next day, the Comité expressed

dismay that their selection criteria were not being followed and they decided to assign

someone to oversee Bon Vieux Temps' selection meetings. In 1990, however, the

Comité seemed to have lessened their insistence on PROJET membership when they

negotiated their selection criteria to accommodate a new non-profit that housed young

mothers under twenty-five.[250] They eventually settled on a set of criteria in which the

---

[248] Ibid.
[249] Villeneuve, Yollande, Compte rendu du comité de sélection pour l'octroi des deux logements
disponibles, May 23, 1989, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA
2008-0024.01.05.336.
[250] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, November 22 and December 20, 1989, Archive
Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.605.

non-profit would still give first priority to women enrolled in the PROJET, but after that the committee could select young mothers from anywhere.[251]

Accommodating people who suffered from mental illness also complicated the point system of the PROJET. In 1974, a group called Action Santé was formed by a group of people involved in neighbourhood organizing to provide non-institutionalized help to people with mental illness, depression, and isolation, conditions that they believed were related to poverty and the poor social conditions in the Point. Over the course of the eighties, increases in unemployment and problems of housing security only exacerbated the problem.[252] In the late 1980s, Action Santé decided to organize the Oasis non-profit housing complex through the PROJET for people with psychiatric issues. As was the case for all new co-ops associated with the PROJET, the founders of Oasis had to follow a set of selection criteria that was acceptable to the Comité. To accommodate the specific needs of the non-profit, the Comité created six levels of criteria that the organization should consider while making their selection. At the top of the list was "a (ex)resident of Pointe St-Charles, who lives with psychiatric issues, and is a member of Action Santé and the PROJET," while the lowest acceptable applicant was "a resident of Pointe St-Charles who is living with psychiatric issues."[253] Being from the neighbourhood and having psychiatric issues were the only necessary criteria throughout, but (ex)residents were only accepted if they were members of the PROJET. As a result, those with a current address in the Point did not need PROJET affiliation, but people who had left or been displaced

---

[251] Members of the Comité seemed frustrated with the ambiguity of this OSBL. At the meeting they raised questions regarding what exactly the mandate of the non-profit, stating that they were even confused regarding the definition of "Jeune mère."

[252] Comité St-Charles. "Des logements."

[253] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, October 24, 1988, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.604.

and needed housing would be excluded unless they joined the neighbourhood-based movement. At the next meeting, however, one Comité member delivered a disappointed response from Action-Santé. The Comité had ignored the detail that although they were a local neighbourhood organization, they did not restrict service to residents of the Point. Therefore, certain members of the non-profit group who needed housing had never lived in Point St-Charles. In response, the Comité amended their earlier criteria by earmarking 25% of the Oasis housing units to people without Point St-Charles affiliation. They also changed their six criteria levels, no longer requiring that (ex)residents be enrolled in the PROJET to be considered for housing.[254]

As in Fennario's play, the divisiveness of language was the most difficult identity issue for the Comité. With more than a third of the population of the Point identifying as Anglophone upon the launch of the PROJET, as well as another four percent identifying as "other," linguistic divides could not be ignored.[255] The train tracks that ran right through the Point also reinforced this division by placing an understood demarcation between the two linguistic communities. These divisions were often replicated in co-ops, which were dependant on their residents being able to communicate in order to collectively manage their home. Anglophones who had many participation points and could be selective in their choice of co-ops therefore began to congregate around the few co-operatives that were designated as English language. This was evident in the formation of the Shamrock co-op, whose name reflected the Point's longstanding community of English speaking Irish Catholics. Located close to the canal, Shamrock included twelve newly built units along Rue Augustin Cantin, and had apparently become

[254] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, November 23, 1988, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.604.
[255] Pointe St-Charles Economic Program, "Situation socio-Économique."

the co-op of choice for Anglophones with the most participation points. The existence of unilingual co-ops, therefore, pointed to and reinforced the linguistic division that existed in Point St-Charles.[256]

The Comité were especially concerned about the language issue during the heavy selection period between 1988 and 1992. Over the course of these four years the Comité frequently reviewed the satisfaction rate amongst Anglophone and Francophone attendees of their monthly general assemblies.[257] Since these meetings were conducted in French, the Comité was particularly anxious about the satisfaction of local Anglophones.[258] This was a pressing concern because attendance at general assemblies was one way to acquire participation points, and if Anglos felt excluded they might end up being excluded from the PROJET altogether. At each general assembly the Comité would conduct a survey that asked the people in attendance to rate how much they enjoyed the meeting and how helpful they found it. Overall, Francophones who responded to the survey outnumbered Anglophones 4:1, and in every meeting except one for which the results were archived, the satisfaction level amongst Francophones was higher than for Anglophones.[259] (See figure 3.2)

---

[256] Comité St-Charles and SARP, "Réunion spéciale de coordination sur le processus de sélection a venir," May 30, 1989, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.336.

[257] As was stated before, these were training general assemblies and involved workshops for the attendees.

[258] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, February 28, 1990, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.43.

[259] Review of General Assemblies, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.43. All data comes from a series of poles that looked at how attendees at the general assemblies were enjoying the meetings. I do not have information regarding how these surveys were conducted and assume they are not mandatory. The most likely circumstance is that the survey was distributed at the different workshops that were organized according to language.
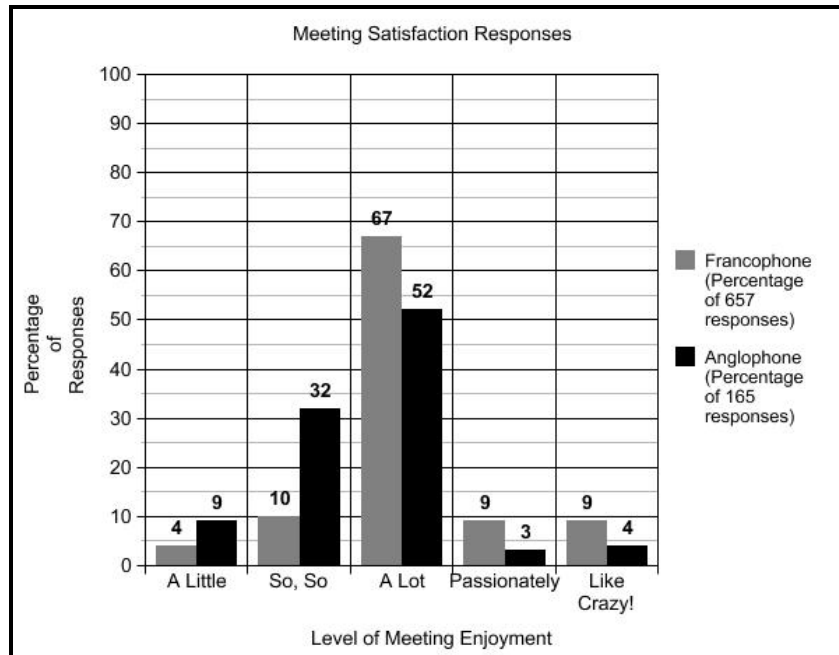
Figure 3.2: Chart demonstrating the distribution of the five possible general assembly survey answers according to linguistic group.[260]

The only meeting in which Anglophones were more satisfied was during a general assembly in 1990 that included the announcement of the next wave of co-op and non-profit development. The Comité emphasised that there was very little space for further development, forcing them to concentrate three-quarters of the 120 proposed units within a few blocks of each other south of the railway tracks on Charron St.[261] The majority of the new units were to be placed within the former Alexandra Hospital, a site whose previous owner had been the Protestant School Board (See Map 3.1). The reactions to

---

[260] This graph was made from the 822 response to the questionnaire that asked meeting attendees to rate their experience as PROJET general assemblies.

[261] This included two non-profits called Les Habitations Alexandra with 37 triplexes and Éveil Phase II with 27 units and a co-op for families and single people with 26 units over five stories. The actual number of co-op that made it through to completion is however lower.
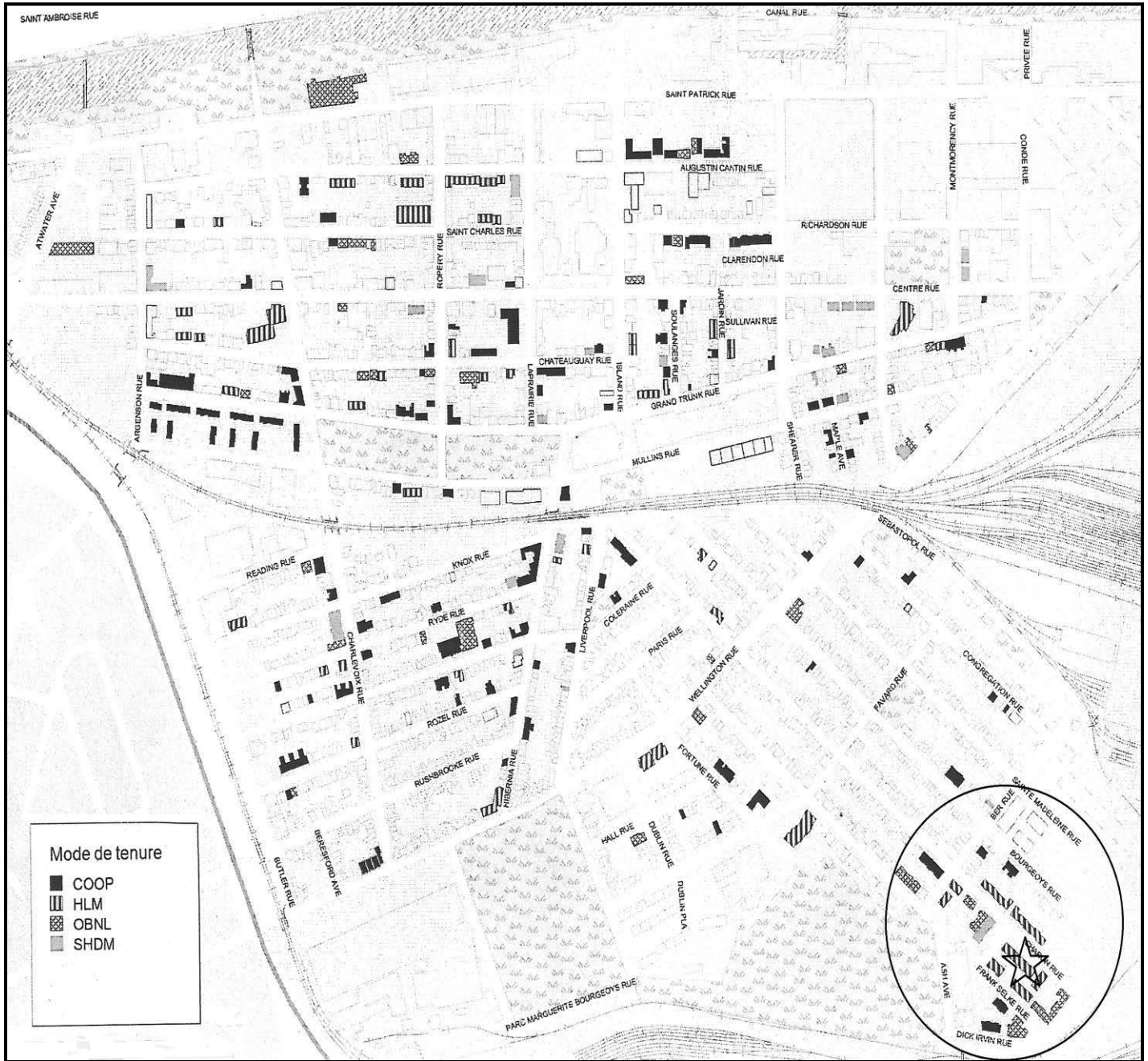
Map 3.1: Recent map of social housing in Point St-Charles according to type. The circle encompasses the housing that was built around the Alexandra, and the star indicates the exact location of former hospital.[262]

---

[262] Map was given to me during a visit to RIL. The person who gave it to me did not know the origins of the map or the date it was created, but I would guess it was made sometime after 1995.

this announcement varied (at least according to the Comité) along linguistic lines. Francophones in attendance protested that the Alexandra project was on the Anglo side of the tracks. They also complained that the other side was too far, inaccessible by transit and too noisy due to the rail traffic. The Anglophones countered by saying that it was a nice part of the neighbourhood with trees and parks, and that it was, in fact, very well connected to the rest of the city. When asked whether or not they would consider moving south of the tracks, one of the Francophone workshops said they would only if there was no other option. Another group said that although they were not opposed to the Alexandra project, they would not consider moving there. Not surprisingly, this general assembly was the only one in which Anglophones were more satisfied than Francophones.[263]

The Comité was clearly concerned over the poor satisfaction rates amongst Anglophones, but confused about how to fix it. They already translated unilingual parts of the meetings and made sure to always include English-language workshops. The Anglo/Franco divisions of the workshops, however, reinforced linguistic divisions. For each meeting, there were several French language workshops and one English one. As a result, Anglos could be observed as a block, and the Comité members noted that they were not participating to the same degree.[264] Factions within either linguistic group, such as according to class or gender, were also not identified due to the focus on language. During a meeting in 1990, in response to a poor review amongst Anglo participants of their last general assembly, the Comité asked themselves why there was such a noticeable

---

[263] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, April 25, 1990, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.43.
[264] Review of General Assemblies, February 28, 1990, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.43.

difference.[265] To answer the question they turned to the leader of the Anglo workshops, who recommended that the Comité ask them directly. Later in the meeting, however, the group considered the possibility that the poor reviews were related to fact that the leader of the English workshop had not been rewarding participation points to late arrivals.[266] Such trivial explanations, however, did little to explain the consistently high levels of dissatisfaction and low attendance amongst Anglophones.

The attention that the Comité gave to attracting Anglophones, however, did not extend to the four percent of the neighbourhood who were neither Francophone nor Anglophone. In one meeting, the Comité discussed how to accommodate "hispanophones," indicating the presence of participants who did not fit the Francophone/Anglophone dichotomy. The issue was, however, tabled to a later meeting where it was forgotten.[267] Furthermore, although the Comité paid particular attention to both class and gender, race was rarely mentioned. In the original "Plan de travail," the authors indicated that they had discussed whether or not to strike a sub-committee to represent ethnic groups, but had decided against it in order to "stay open to participation from diverse communities."[268] This was surprising considering the recent renewal of a heavily black section of Little Burgundy just north across the Lachine Canal. Based on the experience of Little Burgundy, it could have been argued that race was a significant determining factor in which neighbourhoods were displaced.

---

[265] Ibid.
[266] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, May 23, 1990, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.43.
[267] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, December 20, 1989, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.43.
[268] "Plan de travail."

Young mothers and the mentally ill were two sub-communities that the Comité perceived to have special housing needs. These sub-communities, however, spread beyond the Point, resulting in people from outside being given priority over people with addresses in the neighbourhood. Catering to groups with special housing needs therefore undermined the idea of a PROJET for and by a neighbourhood with fixed borders. Furthermore, the PROJET reinforced these sub-communities by clustering them together spatially within the frame of a co-op. This was especially the case regarding the debate over the Alexandra housing. Anglos within the PROJET did not want to go north of the tracks and Francophones felt the same way about going south. While these feelings were not universal, they did perpetuate the neighbourhood's linguistic divisions. The almost absolute emphasis on the Francophone/Anglophone dichotomy also meant that little attention was given to people who did not feel comfortable in either language. These people might have thus ended up with fewer points and would not receive the same shelter from displacement. Finally, although the Comité did not actively exclude any racial minorities, unlike gender and class, ethnicity was not acknowledged as a factor that made someone vulnerable to gentrification. As a result, certain groups, especially those who represented the dominant perceptions of the neighbourhood, were given priority access to Co-opville.

Selecting Citizens

Regardless of the preference given to certain groups, individual co-ops and non-profits still had their say in who became their neighbours. Accommodating individual co-op selection committees, however, often conflicted with the philosophy of the

PROJET. Even though selection committees were contractually obligated to follow the

selection rules put forth by the Comité, in practice these rules were often broken. The

reality of the situation was that the potential housing applicants would have to get along,

and in the case of co-ops, manage their building with their neighbours. As the housing

applications in the Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles show, reputations,

nepotism and stereotypes frequently swayed selection committees toward one candidate

or another.[269]

In his ethnography on two co-ops in Toronto, Matthew Cooper points out some of

the difficulties inherent in the co-op selection process. The selection committees in his

study were burdened with the task of establishing "harmony based on a sense of

community or like-mindedness among members,"[270] a task made more difficult by the

co-op's premise of mixed income. In order to cope with the huge responsibility of

judging someone's co-operative potential within a single interview, Cooper describes

how the committees developed adaptive strategies:

> Part of the process of constructing a community involves defining what a *good
> member* is. Highly charged terms like *commitment, giving, volunteering,
> neighbour, home,* and *co-operative* come into play. Such symbols helped
> selectors to create an image for themselves of what their co-op and its members
> should be like. For example, a good neighbour must achieve a delicate balance
> between being sociable and helpful and respecting others' privacy and property.
> As well, they allowed members to compress the wide range of applicants'

---

[269] There were several folders of applications to 13 different buildings: (Clair de Lune, Reflet 1, 2 and 3, L'Abri, Canal, Succes, Verdun 1, Verdun 2, Naufrages, Eclipse, HCV CN, Bon Vieux Temps) with 168 different applications. These applications were difficult to work with because the archive vetted them heavily and so cross referencing for different documents was difficult. Furthermore, many of the co-op selection boards did not write what co-op or OSBL they were representing and so I had to go off of what it said on the folders. Finally, it seems as though some buildings included various functions and could contain both co-op and non-profits. I therefore focused on comments made by the selection committees rather than try to do some statistical analysis. I will cite the range of folders containing these applications. Co-op/OSBL applications, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.318 through MUA 2008-0024.01.05.341.
[270] Matthew Cooper, *New Neighbours: A Case Study of Co-operative Housing in Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 97.

personal characteristics, experience, and needs into easier to handle wholes. The symbols also served within the community as rhetorical means with which to justify decisions.[271]

In order to meet the demands of selecting their neighbours in a compressed period of time, these selection committees were forced to recognize symbols that suggested similar values. Expressing these symbols was the key that opened the gate into the co-op community.

In Point St-Charles, the process of selecting new residents was, similarly, a subjective exercise. Ideally, a co-op would consist of active, engaged members who were capable of working together with their neighbours. But in reality, most people could not fill all of these requirements and selection committees needed to use their best judgement to find a happy medium. The fact that the PROJET was something for the neighbourhood and by the neighbourhood and was supposed to focus on low-income co-ops, meant that selection committees had to consider two additional factors that, as we have seen, were open to interpretation.

Each co-op applicant was required to fill out a form during their interview that contained financial information and a questionnaire. Individual co-ops were free to make up their own questionnaire, but most of them chose to use the model created by the PROJET. These included nineteen questions followed by comments by the committee and assessed the candidate's motivation for wanting to live in a co-op, whether or not they had skills that might be useful, the amount of time they had to attend meetings and if they would make a good neighbour.[272]

---

[271] Ibid, 99.
[272] Comité St-Charles, processus de sélection pour co-operatives ou O.S.B.L. qui on signé le contrat du Projet St-Charles, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.327.

Applicants for both co-ops and non-profits went through the selection process, but they differed in terms of how they were assessed. Co-op selection committees often referred PROJET members who were unable or seemed less enthusiastic to participate in co-operative living to non-profits. Since living in these non-profits did not require self-governance, the selection process tended to be less thorough and less concerned with elements of their personal life.[273] Financial need and the amount of participation points that an applicant had accumulated were the major criteria on which applicants to non-profit housing were evaluated.

The reasons for accepting or rejecting co-op applicants were more elaborate. Like the applicants to the Toronto co-op, these selection committees had very little time and information to evaluate potential neighbours, but unlike those in Cooper's study they were selecting for admission into a neighbourhood-wide project. Thus, on top of seeking out attributes that would make good neighbours, these selection committees were forced to respond to symbols that stood for Point St-Charles citizenship. In doing so, selection committees were choosing which people and which values would be protected from displacement.

Local reputation was one factor that prevented certain people from being selected for housing. The Point was a neighbourhood "bien enracinée" of only 14,000 people, many of whom had worked or gone to school together. Also, as in *Balconville*, residents spent a great deal of their time socializing on their balconies and stoops, giving them ample opportunity to observe and gossip about their neighbours. Many selection committees would come face to face with applicants with whom they had grown up with or had at least heard about. For understandable reasons, the selection committees were

---

[273] Non-profit or O.S.B.L. questionnaires were generally less detailed or altogether non-existent.

particularly concerned with substance abuse. Most questionnaires included a question on whether or not the candidate would accept help with addictions if need be, and two candidates were rejected after they were identified as alcoholics. In both cases, this information was gathered through hearsay from the neighbourhood, and in one case came from a co-op member who had had trouble with him in the past. In other circumstances, neighbourhood reputation had a positive effect on one's chances. The comments on one application indicated that the candidate seemed embarrassed (potentially a bad quality for a co-op), but was accepted after she was vouched for by a member of the selection committee who knew her. At another co-op, the selection committee was at first unsure about a candidate who had attended very few meetings and had only three participation points. They relented, however, after one member who knew him, commented that he would make a good neighbour and portrayed him as clean and responsible.[274]

In some cases, candidates with moderate or low levels of participation points were accepted due to their demonstration of positive qualities such as enthusiasm or youthfulness. One woman with only three points was positively reviewed because she was "interesting, young, and seemed to want to participate." Another candidate with a relatively high income of $19,100 per year but only 3 points received a positive review because she "would bring fresh blood to a co-op." In general, speculation about whether or not a candidate seemed willing to participate did not correlate with their number of participation points. In one pool of candidates, the woman with the second highest number of participation points was rejected because the committee thought she was not ready for co-op life. Another application was discarded because members of the

---

[274] Co-op/OSBL applications, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.318-MUA 2009-0024.01.05.342.

selection committee felt as though she had acquired her points without actually participating. Apparently, she had been showing up to meetings and actions but had not actively contributed. The committee also commented that her motivation for wanting to move into a co-op was the price and counted it against her. Despite having many points and a low income, she was eventually rejected due to these factors based on speculation and character judgement.[275]

The emphasis that the PROJET placed on being something for a neighbourhood with defined borders also turned out to be flexible. At times, candidates from Verdun, Little Burgundy and elsewhere were accepted over people from the Point. Some of these candidates had left the neighbourhood recently and could thus still qualify as 'locals.' One elderly man emphasized that although he had left several years before to live in public housing he had spent forty-two years his life in Point St-Charles. Others had never lived in the Point. One man mentioned that he had spent the last eleven years of his life in social housing across the river in Little Burgundy. He, however, wanted to leave to escape what he described as an area with a huge drug problem. Despite having never lived in the Point and already living in social housing, the co-op accepted him to help get him out of his "bad" neighbourhood and into a good one.[276]

The inconsistencies of the selection committees eventually caused a "crisis in confidence" related to the perception that the Comité favoured certain members over others.[277] The huge task of overseeing all of the selection processes during the late 1980s early 1990s meant that the Comité had become stretched too thin. This was evident in

---

[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, March 28, 1990, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.43.

their dealings with the Les Naufrages women's co-op, which began selecting members in

1989. The fight to build Les Naufrages had become a cause celebre for the PROJET after

the city discovered a high level of contamination on the chosen site at Grand Trunk and

Argenson St. in 1986. The Comité capitalized on the discovery to expose the lack of

attention given to the higher levels of pollution in poorer neighbourhoods. Over the next

three years the polluted site dominated Comité meetings and general assemblies, and in

1989 the municipal government agreed to pay to decontaminate the soil.[278] The symbolic

importance of Les Naufrages had attracted attention from some of the more involved

PROJET participants, and there were several instances in which the Comité and the Les

Naufrages butted heads. At a Comité meeting in 1990, the discussion surrounded a

recent proposal to balance the new co-ops by pre-selecting candidates for Naufrages and

five other co-ops at the same time followed by a draft in which co-ops would take turns

selecting candidates. This decision did not sit well with Naufrages and they refused to

comply.[279] There were more problems in 1991 when the Comité accused Les Naufrages

of violating their contract with the PROJET by not selecting their candidates from a pre-

approved list. The Comité could not pursue legal action because their contract with Les

Naufrages was not official, and they expressed worry that word might get around about

how little they could do to ensure that co-ops followed their contract. The members of

the Comité also felt compelled to discuss how the criteria that the PROJET required for

co-op admission were different from those of the government, demonstrating some

---

[278] There was a point in the agenda about the progress of the decontamination in almost every Comité meeting and general assembly during the late eighties. At a meeting in 1990, the Comité commented on how the people attending general assemblies were bored of talking about it: Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, November 22, 1989, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.43.
[279] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, November 22, 1989, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.43.

insecurity over their authoritative position. They asserted that the central authority of the PROJET was in fact necessary to oppose the government and ensure that they did not "stick their nose in our affairs." After a lengthy discussion, the Comité decided that it could do nothing more than send a condemnatory letter to the guilty party.[280]

The conflict over the Les Naufrages selection process demonstrated one of the inherent problems with the idea of a PROJET for and by the neighbourhood. PROJET St-Charles was meant as an alternative to a process by which the fate of the neighbourhood was left up to far away governments and outside speculators. In order to maintain a united defence of their neighbourhood, however, the Comité became a governing body as well. The will of the PROJET, however, did not always sit well with the smaller solidarity communities forming around individual co-ops. The residents of Les Naufrages wanted to build their co-op community according to their standards and not those of an external body.

Conclusion

Over the course of the 1980s, the Comité's conception of PROJET St-Charles became more about protecting the neighbourhood than participating in broad co-op movement. Early conflicts over whether or not the Comité should work closely with the other housing organizations reflected larger issues related to the purpose of the PROJET. If they were free of interference from the professionals at SARP and the responsible structure of RIL, some members of the Comité felt they would be free to take a more

---

[280] Meeting Minutes for the Comité Saint Charles, March 27, 1991, Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.43.

radical stance. This caused conflict with those who felt it was more important to work together with the other organizations to produce housing as quickly and efficiently as possible. The decision to reinforce the relationship between the Comité and the other housing organizations meant that housing local residents took precedence over a co-operative society.

The subsequent wave of new co-ops demonstrated the impossibility of a homogenous neighbourhood project. The diverse needs of people and the scarcity of housing units meant that to remain a PROJET by the neighbourhood, they would have to bend the rules to accommodate citizens. The resulting thematic co-ops and non-profits not only pointed out the non-homogeneity of the Point, but reinforced sub-communities within the frame of co-ops. It was difficult to tell, however, how far the PROJET could bend without breaking. As certain groups cried foul that the PROJET had become lax in its central principle of maintaining the "quartier actuel," others resented the central bureaucracy that dictated the selection process.

Conclusion

Co-ops not Condos!

The Changes in the neighbourhood are increasing: condo projects are
multiplying, the ratio of social housing is on the decline, rents are
dramatically increasing. This is far from addressing our needs. THE
SITUATION IS CRITICAL![281]

—Introduction to "Living in the Pointe." (2013)

The controversy surrounding the Naufrages co-op coincided with the beginning of

the Canadian government's gradual divestment from co-op housing. In 1992 the federal

government discontinued a major source of co-op subsidies in the midst of a drastic shift

in Canadian housing policy.[282] Between 1986 and 1994 Ottawa phased out its funding

for new social housing almost entirely, deferring responsibility to individual provinces.

Despite periodic reinvestment since the year 2000, the federal government has failed to

commit itself to any long term housing strategy.[283]

In spite of these debilitating changes to federal housing policy, the neighbourhood

of Point St-Charles has been more successful than most at developing low-income and

non-profit housing. In 1996, social and community housing reached an all time high of

forty percent of the neighbourhood's total housing, surpassing PROJET St-Charles's

initial objective of thirty percent by a wide margin. Since 1996, however, the proportion

of social and community housing has been in relative decline. This has not been because

---

[281] Action Gardien and Regroupement De Information Logement, *Living in the Pointe: More and More Expensive and Difficult to Afford*, 1.

[282] The Index Linked Mortgage Co-op Program was instituted in 1986 and involved initial subsidies but were subject to rent increases that followed inflation.

[283] Roberto Leone and Barbara W. Carroll, "Decentralisation and Devolution in Canadian Social Housing Policy," *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 28, no. 3 (2010) And Jeanne M. Wolfe, "Canadian Housing Policy In The Nineties," *Housing Studies* 13, no. 1 (1998)

of the destruction of social housing, but rather the massive increase of new condominium complexes.[284] To date, most of the large-scale condo development has been located along the periphery of the neighbourhood on former industrial lands, especially along the Lachine Canal. According to a recent report on housing in Point St-Charles, this boom in condo development constituted ninety-four percent of new housing built between 2000 and 2010, prompting local organizations to label it the "decade of condos."[285]

In the midst of these changes, David Fennario opened a new play at the Centaur Theatre called *Condoville*. *Condoville* revisited the lives of the characters of *Balconville*, who had since formed a housing co-op in response to rising rent costs brought on by new condo development. The characters in Fennario's play, however, had not escaped the menace of displacement, as external developments threatened the government subsidies that kept their rent low. In order to protest their impending eviction, the residents occupied their building. The forces of Condoville were, however, too strong, and the occupiers were forcibly removed by the police and their building turned into condos.[286]

Like in *Balconville*, Fennario's *Condoville* reflected real anxieties amongst local residents about the future of Point St-Charles. In the same housing report that termed "the decade of condos," the two contributing organizations, Action Gardien and RIL, published a map of the neighbourhood with re-defined borders that excluded sections of the north, east and southern parts of the neighbourhood. The map depicted a battle field where outside commercial forces have pushed back neighbourhood defences, particularly

---

[284] Action Gardien and Regroupement De Information Logement, *Living in the Pointe,* 4.
[285] Ibid, 2.
[286] The script of Condoville has never been published. This information was gathered from a collection of play reviews: Jodi Essery, "Condoville: Movin' on up," review of *Condoville*, *Hour Community*, October 20, 2005, pg. #, http://hour.ca/2005/10/20/movin-on-up-2/. And: Sean Mills, "Fennario's Art and Politics in the Pointe," review of *Condoville*, *Rabble.ca*, November 22, 2005, pg. #, http://rabble.ca/news/fennarios-art-and-politics-pointe.

in the eastern sector of the neighbourhood. The authors of the report clearly aimed to

mount a counter-offensive, calling for the need to institute a "global planning process"

for the entire eastern part of the neighbourhood.[287]
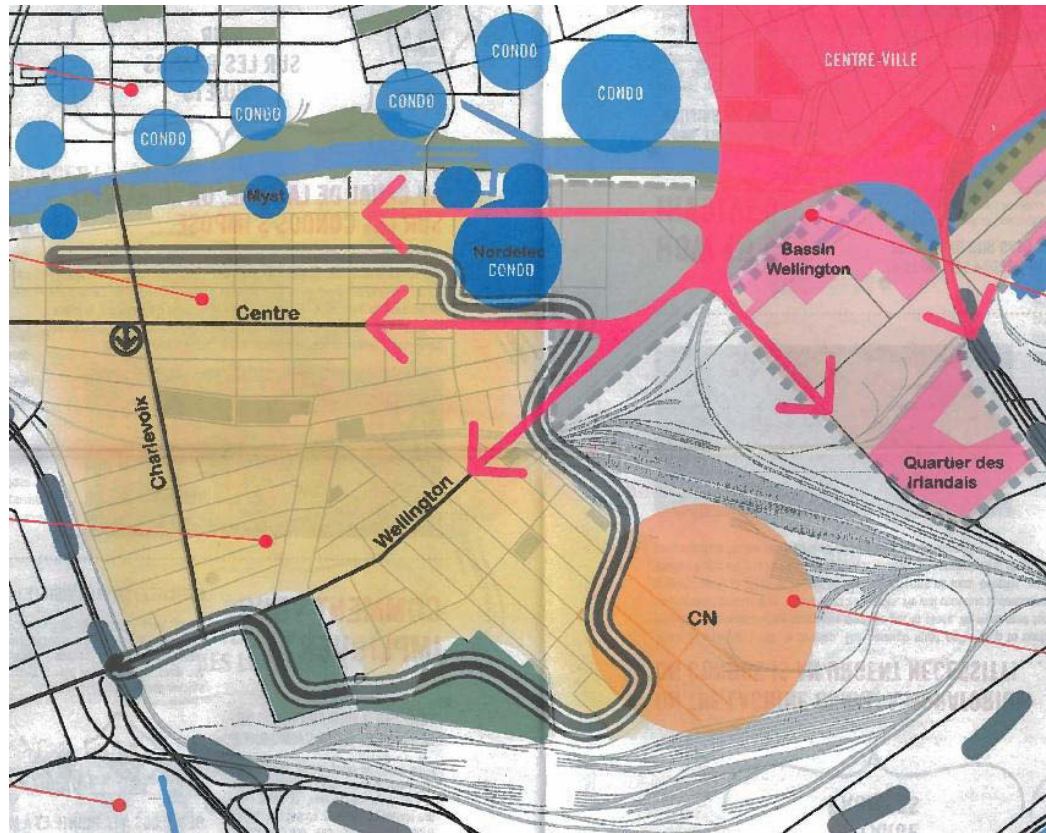
Map 4.1: Map of Point St-Charles defending against Condos and the Centre-Ville.[288]

These high profile condo developments, however, were not the only signs of

gentrification in the neighbourhood. Between 2001 and 2006 average rent prices have

increased at a higher rate than the city as a whole (17.7% compared to 16.5%).[289] The

pervasive renovation and conversion of existing housing throughout the neighbourhood

---

[287] Action Gardien and Regroupement De Information Logement, *Living in the Pointe*, 8.
[288] Ibid
[289] Clinique communautaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, *Portrait de la population de Pointe-Saint-Charles,* report, June 2010.
http://ccpsc.qc.ca/sites/ccpsc.qc.ca/files/Portrait%20de%20la%20population%20de%20Pointe_PAL_recens
ement%202006.d%E2%80%A6.pdf.

113

has greatly contributed to rising rents. As the map below demonstrates, property values have increased the most on the south side of the railway tracks in the formerly Anglophone half of the neighbourhood. This is particularly the case in the area bordered by Wellington, Sebastopol, Le Ber and Ash at the bottom right corner of the map. Interestingly, however, the areas with the highest increase in value have tended to be located the furthest from the large-scale condo developments along the canal.
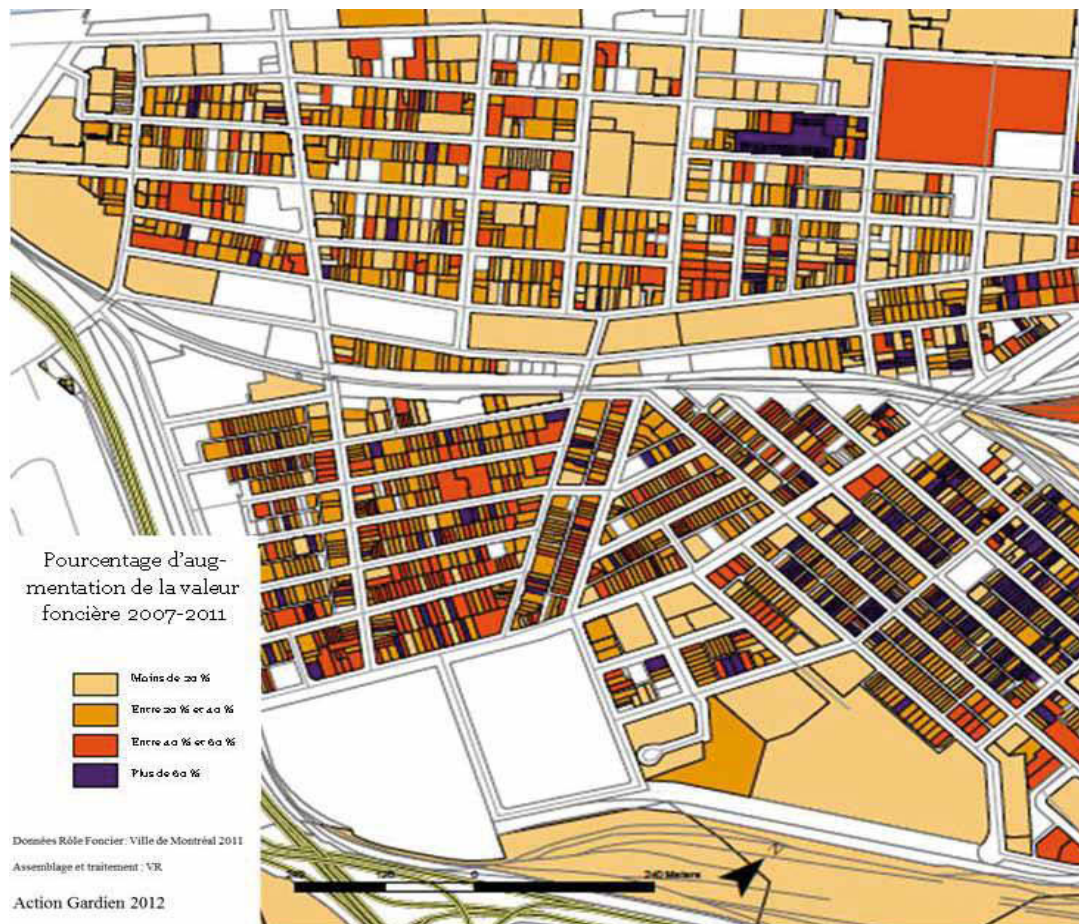
Map 4.2, Map showing the rate of value increase of properties between 2007-2011 in percentage. The rates of increase are difficult to see but from lightest to darkest they are Less than 20%, Between 20% and 40%, between 40% and 60%, and more than 60%.[290]

---

[290] Action Gardien and Regroupement De Information Logement, *Living in the Pointe*, 3.

With few exceptions, house values north of Centre St have only marginally increased. From this data it would appear that while the new condo development along the Lachine Canal is almost exclusively for the middle or upper middle-class, they have so far have not spilled over into immediately adjacent areas. [291]

There are several possible reasons why property values have increased more rapidly in the areas furthest from the canal. When Ames defined the city below the hill in 1897, he excluded most of Point St-Charles because he believed it was populated by the more affluent employees of the Canadian National yards. The legacy of this 19th century class dynamic can still be seen in the higher number single family homes south of the railway tracks. On rue Sebastopol in the south-western part of the neighbourhood, the Grand Trunk railway constructed the first worker housing in Canada for its skilled and semi-skilled labourers, most of which now stands as modest two story homes.[292] The decorative single family wood houses on Wellington Street known as Doctors' Row have also been fixed up and suggest a wealthier class of resident.[293] North of the tracks, there is a higher concentration of larger apartment buildings, evidenced in the map by the division of land ownership into large plots compared to the dense narrow plots south of the tracks. Many of these single family homes have been renovated in recent years and likely account for much of the increase in value.

[291] Ibid, 3.
[292] "Fiche de secteur de Sébastopol," Grand répatoire du patrimoine batî de Montreal, May 18, 2012. http://patrimoine.ville.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiche_zone.php?affichage=fiche&civique=&voie=0&est_o uest=&appellation=&arrondissement=9&protection=0&batiment=oui&zone=oui&lignes=25&type_requete =simple&id=1175.
[293] QAHN, "Griffintown and Point St. Charles Heritage Trail," *Montreal Mosaic Web Magazine*, http://montrealmosaic.com/attraction/griffintown-and-point-st-charles-heritage-trail.

Another possibility is that the gentrifying potential of the condo development along the canal has been off-set by co-op, non-profit and public housing development. If this were the case, one would suspect that the majority of social housing to have been
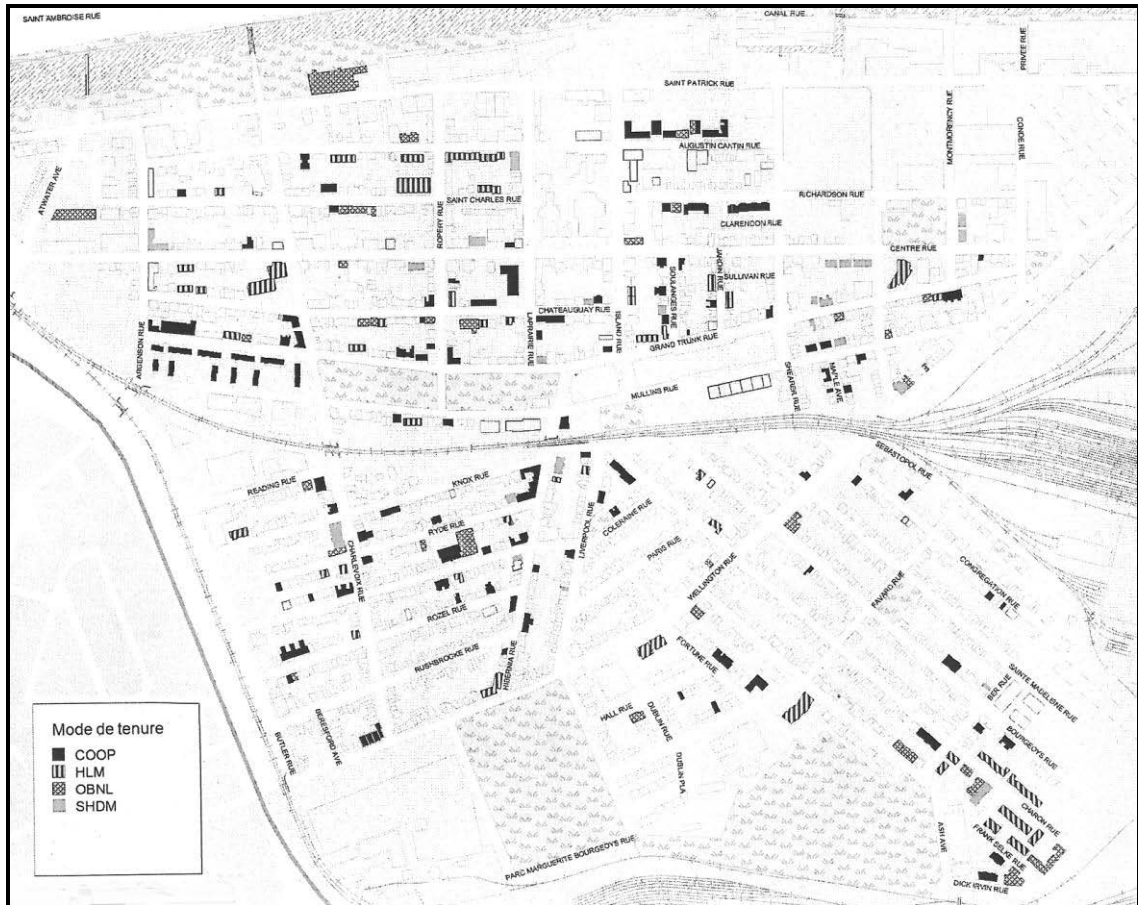
Map 4.3, Map depicting the location of social and community housing in Point St-Charles.[294]

developed near the Canal rather than in the southern part of the neighbourhood where housing prices have increased more rapidly. This, however, is not the case, as the majority of the social housing north of the train tracks has been built in the segment furthest from the canal between Centre Street and the railway tracks. The area south of the train tracks contains a similar proportion of social housing, including a particularly

---

[294] Acquired from RIL

116

high density of public and non-profit housing near the area in the extreme south-west corner of the neighbourhood.

Even though this data suggests that the large condo complexes along the Lachine Canal have not produced significant property value increases, many residents continue to link these large developments with gentrification. This has been supported through the oral history interviews that I have had access to through my involvement in the "From Balconville to Condoville" public history project. Almost all interviewees who have not lived in a condo (and even some who have) saw condos as the enemy. Not all condo owners were, however, included in this othering. Most interviewees restricted their criticism to the residents of the large-scale condo developments on the outer fringes of the neighbourhood: "Mais malheureusement y a les... les condos, les condos pour moi c'est les dortoirs, puis c'est pas des gens qui s'impliquent en général, c'est pas des gens qui s'impliquent dans le quartier, qui s'intègrent dans le quartier.''[295] Vivianne, a homeowner who moved to the Point in the 1980s, went on to discuss the condo problem in terms of how their presence might increase her own property tax. Later, however, she seemed much less concerned with the process of gentrification, focusing instead on the physical structure of the condo buildings and how that structure prevented participation in the street life that she saw as the soul of the neighbourhood:

> Y'a une piscine, y a un jardin intérieur... et y a pas de raisons pour ce personne de sortir de... de chez elle pour aller... côtoyer les gens des autres immeubles!.......si on commence à construire que des condos dans le quartier, on est en train- et des grands immeubles- on commence a détruit... le...l'âme du quartier.[296]

---

[295] "Vivianne Freedman." Interview by Sophie Desjardins. October 25, 2012, 00:08:30.
[296] Ibid, 01:49:35.

This sort of critique about the physical structure of the condo was mirrored in other interviews. Inward looking condo buildings were perceived as upper-class islands in which the residents did not need to engage in the hustle and bustle of the neighbourhood outside. The emphasis on this isolation as being perpetuated through the structure of these big buildings is reminiscent of Jane Jacobs's "structural determinist" critique of modernist urban planning. The interviewees' biggest concern was the authentic "soul" of the neighbourhood. Local organizations have also commented on how the individual condo units had been built with single people in mind, violating the familial nature of Point Saint-Charles. In the 2013 report "Living in the Pointe," the authors pointed out that condos were "too small for families," a fact that could be linked to the exodus of 245 families between 2006 and 2011.[297]

For many of our interviewees, other kinds of possible gentrifiers were left alone. Artists and families who knew their neighbours and participated in street life, but might also raise rents through home renovation, could still reflect "l'âme du quartier." Parents, like the urban activist Jane Jacobs, were more likely to embody this soul by spending more time outside with their children and using the services offered within the neighbourhood. Relatively wealthy artists and artisans could also fit into the neighbourhood by becoming implicated. One interviewee named Nathatcha, who was otherwise against condo development, even applauded a very expensive, but eco-friendly condo complex called the Maison productive for its commitment to working together in their use of artisanal resources and their communal lawn.[298]

---

[297] Action Gardien and Regroupement De Information Logement, *Living in the Pointe*, 3.
[298] "Nathatcha Alexandroff," interview by Eve-Lyne Cayouette, February 14, 2013, 1:06:00.

While the co-operatives in Point St-Charles are far more affordable than the Maison Productive, to many of those who do not live in co-ops they served a similar purpose. Earlier in her interview, Nathatcha compared co-ops to HLM's, which she saw as an inferior alternative because the building was owned by the state. Since residents were likely to feel alienated from their living space they were less apt to care about their home, and perhaps by extension, their neighbourhood. Nathatcha lamented how HLM's had taken the form of poor "ghetto en habitation" which has caused a "façon de penser different."[299] She then went on to say that "quand on dit qu'on veut des logements a mette en location, c'est pas des HLM qu'on veut c'est quel-que chose qui… qui mais qui est fait pour tous le monde. Puis selon sa capacité à payer, puis qui mélange… mélangeons les gens."[300] Co-ops, by contrast, represented the spirit of the neighbourhood: "Pointe Saint Charles, c'est le quartier en Amerique du nord ou il a le plus de de co-operatives d'habitations. Et c'est ça qui actuellement sauve l'esprit."[301] By reflecting the communal spirit of the Balconville-esque street culture, these interviews suggest that, to some, co-ops reflected values that were seen as intrinsic to Point St-Charles.

By positioning co-op housing as the soul or spirit of Point St-Charles in opposition to condo development, the map that depicts the battle lines of Point St-Charles begins to make more sense. Even though these large condo developments do not seem to have contributed significantly to increasing nearby rents, they and the amorphous blob of the "centre ville" seek to destroy the uniqueness of Point St-Charles. While HLM's may do a better job than co-ops at protecting residents from gentrification by providing more

---

[299] Ibid, 00:39:15
[300] Ibid, 00:41:10.
[301] Ibid, 00:38:50.

in rent subsidies, they were seen as undesirable because they did not represent the unique spirit of the neighbourhood and have become ghettoized and isolated. Building more co-ops, therefore, has become not just about protecting residents from gentrification, but protecting the spirit of the neighbourhood as a whole.

To both Vivianne and Nathatcha, co-ops represented one of the "signs and symbols"[302] that gave imagined meaning to their spatial community. In constructing these signs, however, these two interviewees inevitably participated in "the process of "constructing" difference."[303] Imagining co-ops as the spirit or soul of their neighbourhood may act as a unifying symbol of resistance against large scale condo development for some, but by excluding HLM's these interviewees excluded poorer residents from their imagined community.

This exclusion of HLM's may also have a racial dimension. Almost every interviewee remarked that the population of non-European immigrants had increased drastically in recent years. Between 2001 and 2006 the Allophone population rose from 8% to 16.7% of the neighbourhood, a number that did not include immigrants with French or English as a first language. [304] While not all of these new immigrants live in social housing, those who do need social assistance would be more likely to live in HLM's than co-ops. Since HLM's are managed by the state rather than the neighbourhood, they are more likely to pull in new immigrants who are not yet attached to any one place. Also, as we have seen in the previous chapter, moving into a co-op was easier said than done, and getting past selection committees often required the expression of certain traits that depended on local knowledge. People who spoke neither English nor

---

[302] Walsh and High. "Rethinking the concept of community," 272.
[303] Ibid, 272.
[304] Clinique communautaire, *Portrait de la population*.

French might also be rejected for their inability to participate in co-op governance. Furthermore, some residents who moved in after their co-ops were released from their contract with the PROJET were pulled in through friends and family members, a practise that would have favoured people with longer histories in the neighbourhood.[305] The formation of these HLM ghettos could, therefore, also be dependant on the exclusionary process of co-op selection.

In addition to the recent spike in immigrant populations, the village-like street culture as imagined by Nathatcha and Vivianne has attracted a new generation of young migrants to the neighbourhood. One young woman named Geneviève described how she was attracted to the south-west of Montreal because she saw it as an expression of "la vie peut être plus simple."[306] Eventually, Geneviève bought and renovated an apartment that had been converted into a condo. She had since become implicated in the neighbourhood through her participation in several local organizations as well as a community garden. Despite differentiating herself from her neighbours that have lived in the area for long period of time and admitting her role as a gentrifier, Geneviève felt a part of the neighbourhood compared to the other of new condo development along the Lachine Canal. After having her first child, however, Geneviève and her partner moved off of the Island of Montreal and have sold their condo to new owners.[307]

Not all citizens of Point St-Charles have welcomed these new residents. Micheline Cromp, who unlike Nathatcha and Vivianne spent her entire life in Point St-Charles, felt that many of these newcomers did not participate in ways that represented

---

[305] One interviewee who had spent her whole life in the neighbourhood described how she joined a co-op through word of mouth and never passed through any central body like the PROJET: "Johanne Mayer." Interview by Simon Vickers. October 22, 2012, 00:45:30.

[306] "Geneviève Michaud." Interview by Sophie Desjardins. October 22, 2012, 00:02:00.

[307] Ibid, whole interview.

the neighbourhood's working-class origins. Cromp has been involved in many different

neighbourhood organizations and has recently participated in a group that fights for food

security called the Club populaire de consomateurs. Although she felt that the Club was

working well, Cromp lamented the influence of a "nouvelle population qui veut pousser

vers le bio."[308] According to Cromp, this younger generation were working in community

gardens for fun rather than to produce food for poorer residents. She used the example of

how they plant ten different types of tomatoes rather than the types of food that people

from the neighbourhood are accustomed to.[309] Cromp also criticized the appearance of

exotic and expensive produce at a local grocery store, indicating that the same type of

people who had been growing the multiple types of tomatoes were having a profound

effect on the character of the neighbourhood as a whole.[310]

In spite of these changes, Cromp felt that the spirit of neighbourhood organizing

was still alive in the neighbourhood. She, however, worried that new residents of Point

St-Charles did not take the time to understand their working-class history and culture.

Unlike Nathatcha and Vivianne, who saw the soul of the neighbourhood in its active

street culture, Cromp saw the essence of Point St-Charles primarily in its working-class

history. Near the end of her interview Cromp synthesized her feelings about

neighbourhood organizing in Point Saint Charles: "j'adore mon quartier pis j'y reste pis

j'vais la defender… tous l'temps. Pas l'qua… pas juste le quartier, moi j'aime mieux

defendre le monde que l'quartier là."[311] While the neighbourhood was important to

---

[308] "Micheline Cromp." Interview by Marie-Hélène Sauvé. November 16, 2012, 01:06:48.
[309] Ibid, 01:07:30.
[310] Ibid, 01:12:50
[311] Ibid, 01:32:50.

Cromp, its importance did not lie as much in the space, but rather the disenfranchised residents who populated it.

While Micheline Cromp seemed confident in her criticism of new wealthier residents, she seemed more conflicted about how to deal with the influx of recent immigrants. Her anxiety regarding the exotic produce at her grocery store could just as easily have applied to the wave of new immigrants who had moved to Point St-Charles. At one point in her interview, Cromp expressed the wish that these immigrants would make more effort to learn about and integrate into the culture of the neighbourhood, using the example of how if she went to France she would do so because she was curious about their culture. She then went on to say that when new immigrants move into the neighbourhood she invites them over, hoping to make a good impression so that they would "accepter de vivre comme on vit."[312] If Cromp were to visit France, however, she would still enjoy the benefit of being a Francophone of European descent. Many new immigrants to Canada have been subject to broader systems of power dictated by race and colonial legacy. Also, not all recent immigrants who have moved to Canada or Point St-Charles have done so by choice; many have ended up there because of dangerous conditions in their native country or through economic necessity.

Current tensions over how to define the soul or identity of Point St-Charles resemble the debates that emerged thirty years earlier over how to define their co-operative movement. In 1983, the activists who launched the PROJET St-Charles defined co-operative housing in a way that reflected what they felt the neighbourhood should be. Co-opville should, they believed, be made to facilitate a movement in which the people could seize decision-making power from the corrupt alliance of electoral

---

[312] Ibid, 01:08:15

politics and capital. While those who sought to build Co-opville dreamt of an oasis of

neighbourhood control, they did so from a relatively privileged position that left very

little room for consultation. They assumed that working-class citizens would naturally

gravitate toward a strategy that favoured a broad political stance, when in reality, many

people just wanted to stay in the neighbourhood.

Even after housing need was given precedence over a broad co-operative

movement, the members of the Comité continued to govern neighbourhood identity

through their power over co-op selection criteria. Under the auspices of the PROJET as

something both for and by the neighbourhood, the Comité, and later individual co-op

selection committees, chose residents based on signs and symbols that they felt

represented Point St-Charles. In doing so, the Comité set a standard for neighbourhood

identity that would be carried on in co-ops. While the founders of PROJET St-Charles

initially imagined co-ops as a base for a movement toward inclusivity and citizen power,

over time it became more about protecting the neighbourhood. In other words, Co-

opville became more place bound than place based.[313]

The current tensions over how to define the neighbourhood reveal that, both then

and now, Point St-Charles was not and is not any one single homogenous place. The

imagined community of Point Saint Charles did not emerge from nothing; it was

constructed (and is always in the process of being re-constructed) in relation to broader

systems of power that have existed beyond the frame of the neighbourhood. The Point

may have been working class compared to other places in 1980s Montreal, but

perceptions of the neighbourhood were also influenced by more complex class relations

---

[313] David Harvey believes that this is inevitable in any local movement: Massey, "Places and their Pasts,"
184.

124

as well as inequalities based on gender, race, and language, all of which were born out of other places and times.[314] It is important to recognize these external influences because otherwise we are likely to lose sight of the broad structural inequalities which have dictated our perceptions of places. A "truly "radical history' of a place" as Doreen Massey describes would be one "which recognised that what has come together, in this place, now, is a conjunction of many histories and many spaces."[315]

The importance of recognising the layers of social relations that have influenced the construction of places can also be extended to the constructed of meaning of co-op housing. In order to resist against speculators or condo developers, residents of Point St-Charles have imagined an essence of Point St-Charles that is in need of defence. Since the beginnings of PROJET St-Charles, this essence has become embodied in co-operatives, currently evidenced through the many slogans spray painted around the Point pitting co-ops against condos. While co-ops may be a powerful symbol for framing a place of resistance, they are also exclusive, both structurally and for the type of innate neighbourhood character that they have come to represent.

This is not to say that co-ops have had a negative effect on Point St-Charles; the 2,360 social and community housing units in Point St-Charles, of which about 35% are co-ops, have sheltered a huge number of poorer residents who would otherwise be lost to market forces.[316] It is important, however, to work toward a conception of co-ops that strips them of any fixed meaning. Co-operative housing did not naturally emerge in Point St-Charles from a more organic form of village-like co-operation. As symbolic of

---

[314] For more on the ways that different layers of social/economic relations contribute to place making, especially regarding uneven capitalist development between spatial regions, see: Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour*.
[315] Massey, "Places and their Pasts," 191.
[316] Action Gardien, RIL, *Living in the Pointe*, 4

place (in this case Point St-Charles), co-operatives are "always constructed out of articulations of social relations (trading connections, the unequal links of colonialism, thoughts of home) which are not only internal to that locale but which link them elsewhere."[317] The meaning of co-operative housing has been constructed in different ways over a broad range of spatial frames. These conceptions of co-ops have also been subject to various sets of power relations, and have been imposed on potential co-op residents through the provision of government subsidies.

The problem with co-op housing is the common illusion that it is entirely inclusive. This illusion has been perpetuated by groups with interests in co-op development as well as authors who have propped up co-operatives as entirely good. While non-market co-operatives can provide a basis for mobilization toward inclusivity, this mobilization can only be truly progressive if it recognizes the layers of power that have underwritten co-op development. Not everyone had access to co-operatives, and by giving them a privileged symbolic position over other forms of social housing the makers of Co-opville reinforced the internal power dynamics of the neighbourhood.   As historians, it is important contest the myth of co-op inclusivity and work toward a perception that does not situate them as superior to other forms of low-income housing. It is through this process of de-romanticizing co-operative housing that they can become part of a truly inclusive housing movement.

---

[317] Massey, "Places and their Pasts," 183.

Bibliography

Archival Sources

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

Citizens of Point St-Charles. *Initial Demands*. Fonds St-Columba House, P611 2007-07-001/1, 003.02.

Weiner, Alex. *Point St. Charles: Preliminary Economic Report*. Report. Montreal: Parallel Institute for Community and Regional Development, 1970. Fonds St-Columba House, P611 2007-07-001/1, 003.01.

Mcgill University Archives

Comité St-Charles. "Des Logement Pour les Gens Du Quartier," July 1984. Archive Populaire de Pointe-Saint-Charles, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.17.

———. "Ebauche pou un Bilan," April 1985, 10. Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.14.

———. "Les Grandes Lignes du Plan de Travail du Projet Saint-Charles pour L'Année 1985-1986," September 7, 1986. Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.13.

———. "Lettre de Comité St-Charles au C.A. de RIL," April 4, 1984. Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.20.

———. "Processus de Selection pour Co-opératives ou O.S.B.L. qui on signé le contrat du Projet Saint-Charles, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.327.

———. Reviews of General Assemblies (1988-1992). Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.43.

Comité St-Charles and SARP. "Réunion Spécial de Coordination sur la Processus de Selection a Venir," May 30, 1989. Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.336.

Conseil Administration de RIL. "Lettre de C.A. de RIL au Comité St-Charles, " April 5, 1984. Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.20.

Co-op Selection Committees. "Co-op Application Forms" (1988-1992). Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.318- MUA 2008-0024.01.05.342.

Meeting Minutes for the Comité St-Charles (1983-1992). Archive Populaire de Pointe
    Saint-Charles,

"Plan de Travail Rattache au Projet St-Charles: Presente par le Comité Provisoire au
    C.A. du R.I.L., " le 5 Decembre 1983, Achive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles,
    MUA 2008-0024.01.05.17.

Pointe St-Charles Economic Program, "Situation Socio-Économique Quartier Pointe
    Saint-Charles." December 1, 1984. Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles,
    Mcgill University Archives, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.21.

"Reglements de Regie Interne du Regroupement Information Logement de Pointe St-
    Charles," 1980, Archive Populaire de Pointe-Saint-Charles, MUA 2008-
    0024.01.05.553.

Reunion de Projet Saint Charles, (1982-1992), Archive Populaire de Pointe-Saint-
    Charles, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.

Sévigny, Marcel. "Analyse de la Situation (Bilan Partiel)," February 10, 1985, Archive
    Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, MUA 2008-0024.01.05.561.

Villeneuve, Yollande. "Compte rendu de comité de selection pour l'octroi des logement
    disponible, May 23, 1989. Archive Populaire de Pointe Saint-Charles, MUA
    2008-0024.01.05.336.

Interviews

**All interviews are from the "From Balconville to Condoville" project at the Center
for Oral History and Digital Storytelling.**

Alexandra, Nathatcha. Interview by Eve-Lyne Cayouette, February 14, 2013
Cromp, Micheline. Interview by Marie-Hélène Sauvé. November 16
Dutil, Jean-Guy. Interview by Marie-Hélène Sauvé. December 4, 2012
Freedman, Vivianne. Interview by Sophie Desjardins. October 25, 2012
Mayer, Johanne." Interview by Simon Vickers. October 22, 2012
Michaud, Geneviève. Interview by Sophie Desjardins. October 22, 2012

Newspapers

Les Groupes De Resources Techniques De Montréal. "Pourquoi Appuyer Les
    Coopératives D'habitation." *Le Devoir* (Montréal), March 13, 1979.

Online Sources

Action Gardien De La Pointe. Histoire De La Table De Concertation Communautaire.

1981. Directed by Leïla Brener. Performed by Suzanne Laferrière, Jean-Guy Dutil, Lise Ferland Et Charles Guindon. 30 Ans D'histoire Communautaire. 2011. http://actiongardien.org/node/1246. (accessed, 20 June, 2013)

Assemblée Provinciale Des Coopératives D'habitation à Sherbrooke, Mars 1977. "Manifeste Des Coopératives D'habitation." News release. Confédération Québecoise Des Coopératives D'habitation. http://www.cooperativehabitation.coop/site.asp?page=element&nIDElement=22. (accessed, 4 March, 2013)

City of Montreal, Election Results, 1833-2005, Http://www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/archives/democratie/democratie_fr/media/documents/expo/resultats_electoraux_1833_2005.pdf. (accessed, 4 June, 2013)

Clinique Communautaire De Pointe Saint-Charles. *Portrait De La Population De Pointe-Saint-Charles.* Report. June 2010. http://ccpsc.qc.ca/sites/ccpsc.qc.ca/files/Portrait%20de%20la%20population%20de%20Pointe_PAL_recensement%202006.d%E2%80%A6.pdf. (accessed, 2 June, 2013)

David Fennario's Banana Boots. Directed by Alec Macleod. Performed by David Fennario. Nationa Film Board, 1998. NFB Website. http://www.nfb.ca/film/david_fennarios_banana_boots (accessed, 10 October, 2012)

Essery, Jodi. "Condoville: Movin' on up." Review of *Condoville*. *Hour Community*, October 20, 2005. http://hour.ca/2005/10/20/movin-on-up-2/. (accessed, 22 June, 2013)

Laferrière, Suzanne. "La Pointe Saint-Charles: Un Quartier Au Aguets." In *On Reste Ici! : La Lutte Pour Sauver Nos Logements Et Nos Quartiers*, 45-47. Montreal: Front D'Action Populaire En Réménagement Urbain, 1989. http://bv.cdeacf.ca/EA_PDF/2004_11_0550.pdf (accessed, 15 June, 2013)

Mills, Sean. "Fennario's Art and Politics in the Pointe." Review of *Condoville*. *Rabble.ca*, November 22, 2005. http://rabble.ca/news/fennarios-art-and-politics-pointe. (accessed, 22 June, 2013)

QAHN. "Griffintown and Point St. Charles Heritage Trail." *Montreal Mosaic Web Magazine*. http://montrealmosaic.com/attraction/griffintown-and-point-st-charles-heritage-trail. (accessed, 20 June, 2013)

Published Primary Sources

Action Gardien, and Regroupement De Information Logement. *Living in the Pointe: More and More Expensive and Difficult to Afford*. 2013.

Comité Pour La Relancement Économique Et De L'Emploi Du Sud-Ouest De Montreal. *Sud-Ouest Diagnostic*. Report. Montreal: CREESOM, 1989.

Conseil De La Coopération Du Québec. *Habitation Coopérative: Rapport Du Comité D'Étude*. Report. 1976.

———. *Les Coopératives D'habitation Au Québec*. Québec, 1968.

The Cooperative Union of Canada. *Brief on Housing Presented to the Federal Minister of Transport and the Task Force on Housing*. Report. Ottawa, 1968.

Fennario, David. *Balconville: A Play*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1980.

Groupes De Ressources Techniques En Habitation De Montréal "C'est Une Bonne Idée." Comic strip. Montréal,1980.

Hebdo Coop (March 1979-December 1982).

Hellyer, Paul. *Report of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development.* Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969.

Hoffman, Andre. *Arrondissement Sud-Ouest: Dossier Urbain*. Report. Montreal: Service De L'Habitation Et Du Dévéloppement Urbain, 1990.

Lanoue, Roger. *Sud-Ouest: Diagnostic*. Montréal: Comité Pour La Relance De L'économie Et De L'emploi Du Sud-Ouest De Montréal, 1989.

McKnight, William. *A National Direction for Housing Solutions*. [Ottawa]: CMHC, 1986.

Parti Québécois. *Le Programme Électoral Du Parti Québécois*. 1976.

Rapport Annuel. Québec: Société D'habitation Du Québec, (1977-1980).

Regroupement Information Logement De Pointe-Saint-Charles, Groupe De Ressources Techniques Bâtir Son Quartier, and Société D'Habitation De Québec. *Le Logement Social à Pointe-Saint-Charles Bilan Et Perspective*. Report. 1999.

A Review of Canadian Social Housing Policy. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, 1977.

Sévigny, Marcel. *Et Nous Serions Paresseux?: Résistance Populaire Et Autogestion Libertaire*. Montréal: Éditions Écosociété, 2009.

———. *Trente Ans De Politique Municipale: Plaidoyer Pour Une Citoyenneté Active*. Montréal: Editions Ecosociété, 2001.

Sévigny, Marcel, and Denis Tremblay. "Les Coopératives D'Habitation (Locatives)." *Vie Ouvrière* 31 (April 1981): 16-17.

Vienney, Claude. *Analyse Socio-économique Comparée Des Coopératives D'habitation En France Et Au Québec: Rapport De Recherche*. Chicoutimi: Groupe De Recherche Et D'intervention Régionales (GRIR), Université Du Québec À Chicoutimi, 1985.

Secondary Sources

Alexiou, Alice Sparberg. *Jane Jacobs: Urban Visionary*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006.

Ames, Herbert Brown. *The City below the Hill; a Sociological Study of a Portion of the City of Montreal, Canada.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. New York: Verso, 1991.

Austin, David. *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex and Security in Sixties Montreal*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012.

Azzi, Stephen. *Walter Gordon and the Rise of Canadian Nationlism*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1999.

Bacher, John C. *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993.

Bélanger, Guy. *Alphonse Desjardins: 1854-1920*. Québec: Septentrion, 2012.

Bélanger, Paul R., and Benoît Lévesque. "Le Mouvement Populaire Et Communautaire: De La Revendication Au Partenariat (1963-1992)." In *Le Québec En Jeu. Comprendre Les Grands Défis*, edited by Gérard Daigle and Guy Rocher. Montréal: Les Presses De L'Université De Montréal, 1992.

Birchall, Johnston. *Co-op: The People's Business*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1994.

Bliek, Desmond, and Pierre Gauthier. "Understanding the Built Form of Industrialization along the Lachine Canal in Montreal." *Urban History Review* 35, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 3-17.

Bonner, Arnold. *British Co-operation*. Manchester, 1961.

Bouchard, Marie J., and Marcellin Hudon. *Se Loger Autrement Au Québec: Le Mouvement De L'habitat Communautaire, Un Acteur Du Développement Social Et Économique*. Anjou, Québec: Éditions Saint-Martin, 2008.

Bouchard, Marie J. "Social Innovation, an Analytical Grid for Understanding the Social Economy: The Example of the Québec Housing Sector." December 6, 2011. http://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs11628-011-0123-9.pdf

Brushett, Kevin. ""People and Government Travelling Together": Community Organization, Urban Planning and the Politics of Post-war Reconstruction in Toronto, 1943-1953." *Urban History Review / Revue D'histoire Urbaine* 27, no. 2 (March 1999): 44-58.

Calhoun, Craig J. *The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism during the Industrial Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Carter, Tom. "Current Practices for Procuring Affordable Housing: The Canadian Context." *Housing Policy Debate* 8, no. 3 (1997): 593-630.

Choko, Marc H. "La Clinique D'Aménagement De L'École D'Architecture De L'Université De Montreal." In *Aménagement Et Développement: Vers Un Nouvelles Practiques?* Québec: Les Presses De L'Université Du Québec, 1986.

Choko, Marc H. and Richard Harris. "The Local Culture of Property: A Comparative History of Housing Tenure in Montreal and Toronto." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80, no. 1 (1990): 73-95.

Cole, G. D. H. *A Century of Co-operation*. London: G. Allen & Unwin for the Co-operative Union, 1944.

Cole, Leslie. *Under Construction: A History of Co-operative Housing in Canada*. Ottawa: Borealis Press, 2008.

Collin, Jean-Pierre. "Crise Du Logement Et Action Catholique à Montréal, 1940-1960." *Revue D'Histoire De L'Amérique Française* 41, no. 2 (1987): 179-203.

Cooper, Matthew, and Margaret Critchlow Rodman. *New Neighbours: A Case Study of Cooperative Housing in Toronto*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.

CourtePointe Collective. *The Point Is-- Grassroots Organizing Works: Women from Point St. Charles Sharing Stories of Solidarity*. Montréal: Éditions Du Remue-ménage, 2006.

DeFilippis, James. "The Myth of Social Capital in Community Development." *Housing Policy Debate* 12, no. 4 (2001): 781-806.

Dodaro, Santo, and Leonard Pluta. *The Big Picture: The Antigonish Movement of Eastern Nova Scotia*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012.

Doré, Gérald. "L'Organization Communautaire Et Les Mutations Dans Les Services Sociaux Au Québec, 1961-1991. La Marge Et Le Mouvement Comme Lieux De L'Identité." *Service Social* 41, no. 2 (1992): 131-162.

Drouin, Martin. "De La Démolition Des Taudis à La Sauvegarde Du Patrimoine Bâti (Montréal, 1954-1973)." *Urban History Review / Revue D'histoire Urbaine* 41, no. 1 (2012): 22-36.

———. *Le Combat Du Patrimoine à Montréal*. Montréal: Presse De L'Université De Québec, 2005.

Fairbairn, Brett, Ian MacPherson, and Nora Russell. *Canadian Co-operatives in the Year 2000: Memory, Mutual Aid, and the Millennium*. Saskatoon: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, 2000.

Fairbairn, Brett. "The Meaning of Rochdale: The Rochdale Pioneers and the Co-operative Principles." *Occasional Paper*, 1994, 62.

Fincher, Ruth, and Susan Ruddick. "Transformation Possibilities Within the Capitalist State." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 7, no. 1 (March 1983): 44-71.

Finkel, Alvin. *Social Policy and Practice in Canada: A History*. Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006.

Flint, Anthony. *Wrestling with Moses: How Jane Jacobs Took on New York's Master Builder and Transformed the American City*. New York: Random House, 2009.

Grant, George P. *Lament for a Nation*. 2nd ed. Carleton: Carleton University Press, 1970.

Gratz, Roberta Brandes. *The Battle for Gotham: New York in the Shadow of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs*. New York: Nation Books, 2010.

Harris, Richard. *Democracy in Kingston: A Social Movement in Urban Politics, 1965-1970*. Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988.

———. "More American than the United States: Housing in Urban Canada in the Twentieth Century." *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 4 (2000): 456-78.

———. "A Social Movement in Urban Politics: A Reinterpretation of Urban Reform in

Canada." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 11, no. 3 (October 14, 2009): 363-381.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1990.

Helman, Claire. *The Milton-Park Affair: Canada's Largest Citizen-developer Confrontation*. Montréal: Véhicule Press, 1987.

Henderson, Stuart. "Off the Streets and into the Fortress: Experiments in Hip Separatism at Toronto's Rochdale College." *The Canadian Historical Review* 92, no. 1 (March 2011): 107-133.

———. *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.

High, Steven. "Capital and Community Reconsidered: The Politics and Meaning of Deindustrialization." *Labour/Le Travail* 55 (Spring 2005): 187-96.

———. *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.

Horn, Michiel. *The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada, 1930-1942*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980.

Hulchanski, David. "The Evolution of Property Rights and Housing Tenure in Postwar Canada: Implicaions for Housing Policy." *Urban Law and Policy* 9 (1988): 135-56.

———. "The Role of Nonprofit Housing in Canada and the United States: Some Comparisons." *Housing Policy Debate* 4, no. 1, (1993): 43-80.

Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* [New York]: Random House, 1961.

Joseph, Miranda. *Against the Romance of Community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Kealey, Gregory S., Lara Campbell, and Dominique Clément. *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.

Klemek, Christopher. *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Kruzynski, Anna K., and Eric Shragge. "Getting Organized: Anti-Poverty Organizing and

Social Citizenship in the Seventies." *Community Development Journal* 34, no. 4 (October 1999): 328-339.

Léonard, Jean-Franc☐ois, and Jacques Léveillée. *Montréal--after Drapeau*. Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1986.

Leone, Roberto, and Barbara W. Carroll. "Decentralisation and Devolution in Canadian Social Housing Policy." *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 28, no. 3 (2010): 389-404.

Lévesque, Benoît. "State Intervention and the Development of Cooperatives (Old and New) in Quebec, 1968-1988." *Studies in Political Economy*, 1990.

Levitt, Cyril. *Children of Privilege: Student Revolt in the Sixties : A Study of Student Movements in Canada, the United States, and West Germany*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.

Levitt, Kari. *Silent Surrender; the Multinational Corporation in Canada.* Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1970.

Lewis, Robert D. *Manufacturing Montreal: The Making of an Industrial Landscape, 1850 to 1930*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

Ley, David. *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Lotz, Jim, and Michael Robert Welton. "Knowledge for the People: The Origins and Development of the Antigonish Movement." In *Knowledge for the People: The Struggle for Adult Learning in English-speaking Canada, 1828-1973*, by Michael Robert Welton. Toronto, Ont.: OISE Press, 1987.

Lustiger-Thaler, Henri, and Eric Shragge. "The New Urban Left: Parties Without Actors." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 22, no. 2 (1998): 233-44.

MacPherson, Ian. *Building and Protecting the Co-operative Movement: A Brief History of the Co-operative Union of Canada, 1909-1984*. Ottawa, Ont.: Co-operative Union of Canada, 1984.

———. *A Century of Co-operation*. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Co-operative Association, 2009.

———. *Each for All: A History of the Co-operative Movement in English Canada, 1900-1945*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada in Association with the Institute of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, 1979.

MacSween, Roderick Joseph. *A History of Nova Scotia Cooperatives*. [Truro]: Nova Scotia Dept. of Agriculture and Marketing, 1985.

Marcuse, Peter. "Housing Movements in the USA." *Housing, Theory and Society* 16, no. 2 (1999): 67-86.

Massey, Doreen. "Flexible Sexism." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no. 1 (1991): 31-57.

———. "Places and Their Pasts." *History Workshop Journal* 39, no. 1 (1995): 182-92.

———. *Spatial Divisions of Labor: Social Structures and the Geography of Production*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1995.

McGraw, Donald. *Le Developpement Des Groupes Populaires a Montreal (1963-1973)*. Montreal: UQAM, 1978.

McKay, Ian. *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History*. Toronto, Ont.: Between the Lines, 2005.

Meyerson, Debra, and Joanne Martin. "Cultural Change: An Integration Of Three Different Views." *Journal of Management Studies* 24, no. 6 (1987): 623-47.

Mills, Charles Wright. "Letter to the New Left." *New Left Review* 5 (September/October 1960).

Mills, Jessica J. *What's the Point?: The Meaning of Place, Memory, and Community in Point Saint Charles, Quebec*. Thesis, Montreal, Concordia University, 2011.

Mills, Sean. *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010.

Page, Max, and Timothy Mennel. *Reconsidering Jane Jacobs*. Chicago: American Planning Association, 2011.

Poulin, Pierre. *Histoire Du Mouvement Desjardins*. Montréal: Québec/Amérique, 1990.

Purdy, Sean. ""Ripped Off" by the System: Housing Policy, Poverty, and Territorial Stigmatization in Regent Park Housing Project, 1951-1991." *Labour/Le Travail* 52 (Fall 2003): 45-108.

Putnam, Robert. "Forward." *Housing Policy Debate* 9, no. 1 (1998): v-viii

Roby, Yves. *Alphonse Desjardins ; Les Caisses Populaires, 1900-1920*. Lévis, Qué.: La Fédération De Québec Des Caisses Populaires Desjardins, 1975.

Roussopoulos, Dimitrios I. *The City and Radical Social Change*. Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1982.

Rudin, Ronald. *In Whose Interest?: Quebec's Caisses Populaires, 1900-1945*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990.

Sacouman, R. James. "Underdevelopment and the Structural Origins of Antigonish Movement Co-Operatives in Eastern Nova Scotia." In *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada*, by Robert J. Brym and R. James Sacouman. Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1979.

Sewell, John. *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

Silver, Erin. ""Hope. Effort. Family." The Benny Farm Community Then ... and Now?" April 18, 2008. http://cityaspalimpsest.concordia.ca/conf08_palimpsest/papers/Erin_Silver.pdf.

Taksa, Lucy. "Like a Bicycle, Forever Teetering Between Individualism and Collectivism." *Labour History* 78 (May 2000): 7-32.

Thomas, Timothy. "New Forms of Political Representation: European Ecological Politics and the Montreal Citizen's Movement." *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne De Science Politique* 28, no. 3 (September 1995).

Wade, Jill. *Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994.

Walsh, John C., and Steven High. "Rethinking the concept of community." *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 32, no. 64 (1999).

Wolfe, Jeanne M. "Canadian Housing Policy In The Nineties." *Housing Studies* 13, no. 1 (1998): 121-34.

Zukin, Sharon. *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Theses and Dissertations

Bélanger, Yves. *Genese Du Developpement De L'Entiprise Quebecoise, 1850-1950: Essai Sur L'Évolution De La Bourgeoisie Quebecoise*. Thesis, UQAM, 1984.

DeVerteuil, Geoffrey P. *Evolution and Impacts of Public Policy on the Changing Canadian Inner City: Case Study of Southwest Montreal 1960-1990*. Thesis, The University of British Columbia, 1993.

Lacroix, Benoît. *Analyze De L'Opération 20000 Logements*. Thesis, Mcgill University, 1989.

Lyons, Christopher M. *Battles on the Homes Front: Montreal's Response to Federal Housing Initiatives, 1941-1947*. Thesis, Concordia University, Montreal, 2002.

Macor, Yvonne M. *Revitalization of the Montreal Urban Environment*. Thesis, Mcgill University, 1982.