THE STORY OF MONTREAL: A COSMOPOLITAN METROPOLIS WITHOUT A MUNICIPAL POLICY?

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THE CITY: A PERFECT ENGINE FOR INTEGRATION

Although both the selection of immigrants and initial settlement programs have traditionally been the responsibility of central governments, the management of the resulting cultural diversity is generally left to local communities and municipal governments. Faced with rapidly changing urban realities due to the increase of international immigration, as well as to numerous political reorientations imposed by higher levels of government, some municipalities have adopted very general policy guidelines. However, most are struggling with the daily management of challenges posed by the recognition of cultural diversity. City life implies a particular kind of society, even more so in a metropolis with unique means for integrating newcomers. It is therefore important to understand these means and the particular flavour attached to each city. Given that each city has its own structure and history, each needs a unique strategy for encountering diversity.

Immigration and the metropolis have been linked for a long time. No one has better explored this link than Berlin sociologist Georg Simmel in *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903). For Simmel, *The Stranger* (1908) is not reduced to the immigrant, but is more broadly defined as somebody from outside. This is an experience shared by many inhabitants of a metropolis. A century later, *La métropole des individus*, written by one of the most renowned French urban sociologists, Alain Bourdin, opens by revisiting Simmel, whose writing inspires this eminently modern reflection: "The metropolis is simultaneously a social organisation, an everyday individual experience and a codified set of ways of living and thinking" (Bourdin, 2005, p. 22). The typical cultural form of the metropolis is cosmopolitanism, which involves an exposure to a mix of cultural and social frames of reference, giving the individual the simultaneous experience of both proximity and distance from others. As we see below, both of these frameworks are important for living together harmoniously in urban settings.

Immigration and the metropolis have also inspired another philosophical trend, around the idea of the fragmented city. In this narrative, attention is focused on social and ethnic divisions and segregation, betraying a strong sense of nostalgia for a lost social cohesion (often a utopian ideal). This narrative is anchored in urban experiences in countries like France and the United States, but it is debatable if it fits the experiential past of Canadian cities. The three largest gateway cities for immigrants, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, do not share the same history of urban development. When Europe dominated the affairs of the world, Montreal topped the Canadian urban hierarchy. However, with the ascendance of the United States, Toronto surpassed Montreal both demographically and economically. The more recent rise of the Asian economies has contributed to rapid economic growth in Vancouver. The specific characteristics of these three metropolises have shaped different stories of immigration. Understanding these stories helps to establish the role of urban fabric and sociability in building a cosmopolitan city.

Montreal has many distinguishing features. It is an "in-between" city, torn between two philosophies regarding the integration of immigrants. On one hand stands the federal model of multiculturalism. On the other stands the Quebec model of inter-culturalism, which recognizes diversity while emphasizing exchange and integration within a shared culture marked by the French language. My hypothesis is that inter-ethnic "living together" owes very little to either of these policies, but a great deal to the daily experience of Montrealers. This experience is deeply grounded in the neighbourhood life.

Montrealers originate from a wide variety of countries. The weight given to the French language in Quebec's immigration policy has encouraged an important flow of migrants from Haiti, Algeria, Morocco and France. The city also lacks large ethnic enclaves, which are flourishing in Toronto and Vancouver. Finally, recent immigration, for

example by North Africans, is dispersed across the island of Montreal, even much more than earlier waves of European immigrants. We now turn to the history of immigration in Montreal from an urban perspective, before returning to the challenges of municipal policies in the 21st century.

A FORGOTTEN FIRST CHAPTER?

Today, religious pluralism seems to make the immigration question much more complex than it was before Quebecers rather recently discovered secularism, and came to adhere to what the French call laïcité. The founding narrative of the metropolis seems to have been largely forgotten. The city began with a missionary project that pushed a handful of French devotees who landed on the island in 1642 to "convert the savages," as the Iroquois were known by the settlers. A few years after this, the Priests Society of the Saint-Sulpice Seminary sent four missionaries to create the ideal Catholic society, a Christian city to be built on the island. Today, the Sulpician Seminary still houses missionaries in the shadow of Notre-Dame Basilica, in what is now called Old Montreal. Another distinguishing feature of early Montreal was the cadastral survey, a way of dividing land to give all early inhabitants access to the river. It created a series of *côtes*, which began as portions of land divided into plots that were bisected along their length by a road (Marsan, 1981). These territories were important for social cohesion and they structured neighbourhood life in particular ways. The resulting neighbourhoods coincided first with parishes, and later with suburbs. This urban form was later perpetuated by immigrants who developed "ethnic villages" at the turn of the 20th century. Nevertheless, throughout the French regime, Montreal remained a very small and quite homogeneous city, albeit one from which expeditions were launched that swept across a good part of the continent.

A RISING METROPOLIS: A MOSAIC OF NEIGHBOURHOODS, YET NOT QUITE COSMOPOLITAN

After the British Conquest of 1759, settlers of French, Scottish, Irish, American and British descent built a mosaic of neighbourhoods, and the urban landscape became increasingly segmented along ethnic lines, with linguistic, religious, and cultural divisions. Separate networks of cultural, charitable, and economic organizations were set up in each neighbourhood. This served to minimize tensions between diverse groups (McNicoll, 1993). This socio-spatial segregation was in response to the need for cultural well-being, and it facilitated coexistence between different groups. This model of integration by way of segmentation was imitated by immigrants arriving from other parts of the world from the turn of the 20th century onwards. However, in 1901 less than 5% of Montreal's population was composed of immigrants, which led historian Paul-André Linteau to argue that Montreal was hardly a cosmopolitan city at that time (Linteau, 1982). A few groups of newcomers were nevertheless in the process of laying the foundations of a new geography of immigration. Jews, Chinese migrants of Cantonese background, and African-Americans settled in different districts of the city, beginning to build what are still considered today their "founding neighbourhoods." This concept draws on the work of Belgian sociologist Jean Remy (1990), who discusses the processes and spaces that construct the cosmopolitan city. He focuses on cities in the Mediterranean basin between the late middle Ages and the end of the 19th century, revealing that the cosmopolitan city is first built on a combination of homogeneous neighbourhoods and central public places. Rather than framed by imposed norms of integration, city life in such places thrives on social interactions between different groups. These are based on the translation of codes of behaviour from one vocabulary to another within those interstitial spaces where exchanges can take place freely. The ease of interacting with people from the same cultural background, and the comfort of being able to take one's distance from city life, are as important to the overall cosmopolitan dynamic as inter-cultural exchanges in public places. A founding neighbourhood can grow even when residential trajectories take immigrants elsewhere. It operates as a compromise between home country and host country, but typically becomes a distinctive urban form and even an attractive destination for others in the contemporary city. A good example is Montreal's Chinatown, located at the end of the traditional immigrant corridor of Boulevard Saint-Laurent. A more recent one is Little Maghreb on Jean-Talon Street. However, founding neighbourhoods can also be contested places, inciting negotiation and sometimes even conflicts, as in the case of the Petite-Bourgogne, the neighbourhood where African Americans settled and which was, in the 1990s, supposed to be the founding neighbourhood of Black communities.

FROM THE GOLDEN AGE OF LITTLE HOMELANDS TO MULTI-ETHNIC NEIGHBOURHOODS

The mid-20th century brought significant waves of primarily European immigrants. First Italians arrived, then Greeks and Portuguese. These immigrants, often from rural backgrounds and with little education, not only quickly made a place for themselves in the city, but they also changed the architectural and culinary landscape of Montreal. The Italians produced their own version of the Montreal "duplex," row or terraced housing made up of two apartments, one directly on top of the other. The Greeks made their mark in the restaurant business, and

the Portuguese played a decisive role in the re-conquest of central neighbourhoods. Despite arriving with little money and earning low wages, the Portuguese managed to buy and renovate old housing that, until then, native Montrealers had regarded with disdain as dilapidated working-class housing. Painting façades in bright colours, the Portuguese took over part of a district that would become one of the hippest in the metropolis, the Plateau Mont-Royal. This Montreal of "little homelands" inspired the novelist Claude Jasmin (1972), and became a campaign slogan for municipal elections in the 1970s. Montrealers began to jump onto the band-wagon of cosmopolitanism, with its hedonistic variety of gastronomic and other consumer choices. Continued immigration made a deep and lasting impression on the lifestyle of Montrealers, particularly those living in the central districts, where the high concentration of immigrants offered a partial buffer against a demographic decline caused by an exodus to the rapidly-growing suburbs.

The 1980s and 1990s saw another transformation in Montreal's landscape, as Canada's immigration policy was overhauled. This opened the country to migrants from so-called "Third World" countries in the wake of the Geneva Convention. The country adopted a point system to attract immigrants based on their human capital. Family reunification policies were deracialized, and the target numbers of immigrants for Canada and Quebec were repeatedly raised. These new waves of immigrants came from more urban areas and from a wider range of countries. They were also better educated than the native-born population. Former ethnic villages became markedly multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. Immigrants also settled for the first time in neighbourhoods situated further from the city centre. An extensive study of community life on inter-ethnic "living together" shows that public sociability was certainly detached, but relatively peaceful. Immigrants tended to be deeply involved in community life, and the most multi-ethnic neighbourhoods seemed to have the least inter-ethnic tensions (Germain, 1995). The return of economic growth in the middle of the 1990s, as well as a relatively affordable housing market and new culinary traditions brought by recent immigrants seem to have done more to foster mutual concessions than any official integration policy. A sort of "soft cosmopolitanism" or "cosmopolitanism by default" was on the rise, in large part thanks to the spread of a particular kind of metropolitan mentality among many Montrealers (Germain & Radice, 2006). Damaris Rose found the seed of a discourse of cosmopolitanism in neighbourhoods such as Mile-End, where Anglophone students and marginal Francophone and European gentrifiers came to share the same public spaces in the middle of an immigrant corridor (Rose, 1995). While the adjacent neighbourhood of Petit-Plateau became the heartland of a Francophone cultural avant-garde, inspired by the Quiet Revolution, the Mile-End remained an in-between space. It was a little haven of peace in a city often troubled by linguistic and political tensions, where a number of very diverse groups found themselves embracing a cosmopolitan indeterminacy and a sense of multiple commitments. However, the idea of cosmopolitanism has also, on occasion, triggered resistance in the context of a minority society such as Quebec, embroiled in debates over national sovereignty. Daniel Latouche highlights this in his discussion of Montreal's cosmopolitanism of the bazaar (Latouche, 1990), in which hypersensitivity leads to the perception that diversity poses a threat to Québécois identity, which risks being defined only in terms of a common French-Canadian culture.

At the turn of the 21st century, territories of immigration became more fluid. Neighbourhoods that were formerly bastions of Francophone of European descent began to be settled by new immigrants. Numbers of recent immigrants also rose in the West Island, traditionally home to long-established Anglophones. The spread of immigrants to the outer suburbs is still limited compared to the geography of immigration in Toronto or Vancouver, but it is growing. On the island of Montreal, many middle-class suburbs are quite multi-ethnic, which is less common beyond the island. One major exception is Brossard, on the south shore of Montreal. With the establishment of immigrants from Hong Kong since the 1980s, a very multi-ethnic and wealthy suburb has developed there. Dansereau *et al.* demonstrate that immigrants are living in much diversified urban milieus, from downtown to the suburbs, from poor areas to upper middle class sectors of the city (Dansereau *et al.*, 2012).

A STORY WITHOUT A MUNICIPAL POLICY?

It would be unfair to end this story without a short word about the multi-dimensional role of municipalities on the island of Montreal. Two of these dimensions are worth highlighting here. One is symbolic, and significant for appreciating a local culture of hospitality towards newcomers. For example, in 2004 the City of Montreal adopted the *Déclaration de Montréal pour la diversité culturelle et l'inclusion*, and more recently the city was recognized as *Cité interculturelle* by the Council of Europe. Early on, Montreal's was among the first municipalities to express concern for welcoming diversity and recognizing the legacies of previous waves of immigrants within public places, such as with the former Place du Portugal. Mayor Bourque (1994-2001) was particularly devoted to that goal, and regularly conveyed a cosmopolitan vision for the city. The mayor of Brossard since 2009, Paul Leduc, is also proud

to underline the multiethnic quality of his wealthy suburb. The other dimension worth noting is more pragmatic, and has taken very different forms in municipalities of the Montreal region. It is highlighted in a study we conducted in 2001-2003, concerning management practices in social housing, sports and leisure facilities, and in the zoning of places of worship, three municipal domains important for new and old Montrealers alike (Poirier *et al.*, 2006). While municipal actors have often been caught off-guard by matters of religion, interesting learning and negotiation opportunities at the local level have happened in *ad hoc*, but effective ways. This demonstrates an ability to arrive at "compromises of co-existence," even on sensitive questions such as religion (Germain & Gagnon, 2003). On housing issues, municipal responsibilities will be crucial in the future, with the dramatic shortage of sufficient and affordable rental housing. The city is still a strong engine for integration, but municipal policies will be required to help new immigrants facing ever greater difficulties in finding affordable homes. This seems to be one of the new challenges that need to be resolved for the sake of a happy cosmopolitan metropolis.

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L'HISTOIRE DE MONTRÉAL: UNE MÉTROPOLE COSMOPOLITE DÉPOURVUE D'UNE POLITIQUE MUNICIPALE ?

La sélection et l'établissement des immigrants relèvent des prérogatives des gouvernements d'instances supérieurs, laissant la gestion de la diversité culturelle aux instances locales et municipales. Toutes les municipalités n'adoptent pas nécessairement des politiques formelles à cet effet. Il faut dire que la ville, et a fortiori une métropole, est un corps social qui a des vertus particulières en matière d'intégration, comme l'avait bien montré Georg Simmel au début du XXe siècle. Un siècle plus tard, Alain Bourdin reprendra ses propos pour définir *La métropole des individus* comme une organisation sociale, une expérience individuelle quotidienne et un ensemble de codes de vie et de pensée. Le cosmopolitisme est alors la forme culturelle typique de la métropole ; l'individu y expérimente simultanément proximité et distance avec autrui, à l'occasion d'une exposition à une variété de cadres de références sociaux et culturels.

Comprendre l'histoire d'une métropole et ses vertus d'intégration devient donc une tâche importante, avant même qu'il soit question d'une politique municipale d'intégration. C'est donc cette histoire que l'on va retracer, en quelques étapes. Le premier chapitre, généralement oublié par les temps qui courent, des temps tourmentés par un débat sur la laïcité, nous rappelle pourtant la mission religieuse qui a présidé à sa fondation en 1642. Cette histoire est aussi d'emblée celle de quartiers correspondant à son cadastre et qui vont devenir des piliers dans la mosaïque montréalaise sur le mode de l'intégration par segmentation après la Conquête anglaise de 1759. Les premières vagues d'immigrants internationaux poursuivront ce modèle, avec les quartiers fondateurs des premières communautés juives, chinoises, et de Noirs américains au tournant du XXe siècle, alors que le cosmopolitisme de Montréal semble encore balbutiant. Le modèle se poursuit avec l'arrivée des premières vagues d'immigrants européens, quelques décennies plus tard. Mais ces immigrants italiens, grecs et portugais vont eux aussi transformer le paysage architectural… et culinaire de Montréal. Ces petites patries, pour reprendre l'expression de Claude Jasmin, consacrent le cosmopolitisme des Montréalais, version hédonique, mais contribuent aussi à endiguer le déclin démographique amorcé avec l'exode vers les banlieues. À partir des années 1980, le paysage montréalais se transforme à nouveau avec l'arrivée d'immigrants en provenance des pays du Tiers-Monde, pour reprendre l'expression de l'époque, et les petites patries ou villages ethniques deviennent des quartiers résolument multiethniques, comme le seront bientôt à peu près tous les quartiers montréalais. Le retour de la croissance économique au milieu des années 1990, un marché du logement relativement ouvert et les nouvelles habitudes culinaires apportées par les immigrants vont stimuler un apprivoisement de la diversité culturelle et une cohabitation certes distante, mais néanmoins harmonieuse de façon plus efficace que n'importe quelle politique interculturelle. Si on peut discuter de l'interprétation à donner à ce cosmopolitisme ambiant, on ne peut nier sa vigueur, notamment dans ce quartier interstitiel qu'est le Mile-End.

Aujourd'hui, les immigrants sont établis dans une grande diversité de milieux de vie, comme le montrent plusieurs études. Dans cette histoire de l'immigration à Montréal retracée à grand trait, il n'est pas fait mention du rôle des politiques municipales. Pourtant, elles interviennent à deux niveaux. Le premier, mais non le moindre peut être qualifié de symbolique. Il correspond par exemple à la *Déclaration de Montréal pour la diversité culturelle et l'inclusion*, adoptée par la Ville de Montréal en 2004. Ces gestes symboliques sont importants pour envoyer aux nouveaux Montréalais un message d'hospitalité. Sur un deuxième niveau, il faut situer les différentes pratiques de gestion municipale de la diversité dans des domaines aussi variés que les sports et loisirs ou l'aménagement des lieux de culte. Plusieurs recherches ont montré la diversité de ces pratiques dans la région montréalaise, mais aussi la capacité de faire des compromis de coexistence dont elles témoignent. Aujourd'hui, de nouveaux enjeux se dessinent pour l'instance municipale à Montréal dans le domaine du logement: de grands logements locatifs abordables étant devenus une denrée rare à Montréal, ce qui risque d'entraver la poursuite de la construction de la métropole cosmopolite. C'est à ce niveau que les municipalités pourront peut-être le plus efficacement accompagner le travail d'intégration opéré par ailleurs par la fabrique urbaine.