

For a 21st Century Metropolis

Sustainable Development – Migratory Dynamics



MAY – JUNE 2011

What does Union Montréal want?

We wish to demystify for our militants the concept of sustainable development by uncovering all its features. The term “sustainable development” has been circulating since 1987, the year that saw the publication of the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development entitled “*Our Common Future*.” Experts agree that the expression is now exhausted. Yet, sustainable development isn’t that hard to grasp. We need only take a closer look to realize that, already, we carry out certain daily gestures that fall in line with the steps necessary to making our lives, both now and in the future, healthier and much more mindful of our resources.

This workshop ought to help us realize, each in our own region, that our lifestyles affect society as a whole and, more pointedly, affect our community. We also wish to cull your recommendations so that the projects that most concern you as Montréalers represent your true needs. These recommendations will be tabled at the General Council on November 5th later this year.

In order to achieve the goals outlined above we will explore, over the course of these conferences, two great themes relating to sustainable development:

- **Towards a better management of our resources**
- **Migratory dynamics and urban planning**

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

These days, there is much talk of sustainable development. But what is going on, exactly? For most people, it simply means that we must protect the environment. While this may be true, the notion of sustainable development encompasses much more than this single ecological ideal.

To act with a view to sustainable development entails that we be willing “to take the decisions needed to secure the resources to sustain this and coming generations.”¹ This definition hints at two key concepts; namely, the absolute necessity of answering to the needs of the impoverished and the taking into account of our technological advances and of their limits in relation to the environment’s ability to meet the needs of everyone, both now and in the future.

Sustainable development henceforth encompasses four spheres of activity that are part and parcel of the concept itself, and those are the economic, social, cultural, and environmental spheres of society. These four facets of sustainable development are inherently interconnected and it is on all four, together, that the stakes will rest. It must be understood that the links between economic growth, social issues, cultural diversity, and the environment are inseparable. Trade-offs are less and less desirable or even possible.

In reality, “in order to be considered sustainable, development must create wealth, meet the social needs of the community, and be respectful of the carrying capacity of ecosystems so as to safeguard resources and the quality of the environment for the benefit of future generations.”²

“We may add that Montréal is the seat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, signed in Rio in 1992 and implemented the following year.”³

¹ Brundtland Report

² *Sustainable development reference framework*. Arrondissement Saint-Laurent. July 2009. p. 3

³ Mathieu-Robert Sauvé, *Le futur prêt-à-porter : Comment la science va changer nos vies*.

Sustainable Development, Strong and Weak: What is the difference?

There exist two types of sustainable development, one strong (radical) and one weak (progressive). The first type, strong (radical), pleads for the integral preservation of our remaining natural capital and for ceasing its exploitation by relying instead upon the interests of our current natural capital. The second type, weak (progressive), relies upon investment in new technologies in order to remedy the loss of natural capital. In the latter view, new technologies serve as substitutes. **We must create living spaces, cultural spaces, knowledge spaces, and transportation modes that suit the needs of individuals and contribute to economic growth while reducing the size of their ecological footprint.** Technology must contribute to the replacement of the natural resources we consume.

According to Pierre-Olivier Pineau, Associate Professor at the HEC's Department of Management Science, **it is important to find a balance between these two views.** Neither option is tenable in its extreme version:

If, hypothetically, we want to commit to strong sustainable development, to this idea of a strong durability where we never touch our natural capital, we have to admit that, given the situation we're in, we must first go through a period of weak sustainable development because, as things now stand, we're not even able to compensate for our current impact on nature. **The West, indeed the entire world, is gnawing away at its natural capital.** Thus, our ecological footprint is such that the capacity of our ecosystems to provide breathable air, drinking water, nutritional bounty, and arable land is diminishing. **We must first reach that point where we can prevent our ecosystem's ability to provide life's essentials from declining.** This will require us to go through a weak sustainable development phase, that is, one where we lessen our squandering of natural capital and increase our ability to provide for ourselves through technological means, **thus implying a greater investment in human and technological capital and a gradual path to**

ecosystem preservation. This is urgent. We must act very quickly but **setting for ourselves an unattainable goal, one that we must reach right now, well, that's a bit discouraging and impossible to achieve anyway, so let's go step by step but let's start right now.**⁴

⁴ Pierre-Olivier Pineau, in conversation at his HEC offices.

TOPIC

MIGRATORY DYNAMICS

INTRODUCTION

Migratory dynamics refers to the movement of people coming to establish themselves in Montréal or leaving it in favour of the suburbs. Currently, a greater number of people choose to leave Montréal than do to come live here.

The phenomenon is not new but is, today, more worrisome because the migration rate is at its highest since the early 1990s. Ultimately, the agglomeration of Montréal loses out in these migratory exchanges with its four neighbouring regions and displays a negative annual balance sheet.

The goal of this discussion is to try to understand why people, young families in particular, choose to leave Montréal in order to establish themselves in suburban areas, and to explore concrete ways in which to reduce this migratory deficit.

The image of the City in our collective consciousness no longer reflects reality. It is derived primarily from foregone judgments (city of concrete) and family traditions (a return to roots). The aim is thus to see how we could best change this image so that it take the true state of things into account, that state being that Montréal provides enticements (green spaces, cultural venues and institutions, proximity services) which are as interesting as, if not more so than, those found in the suburbs.

BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE SUBURBS

When people think of the suburbs, they often think of the peace and quiet associated with low population density, of wide open spaces, of easy access to nature and greenery, of safety. Yet suburban dwellers are obviously dependent upon the car.

The city is often seen as a dangerous and noisy concrete-grey expanse (the locus of crime, drug use, theft, homicide) that is diametrically opposed to the image we have of the suburbs. Yet the agglomeration of Montréal provides quick and easy access to many parks where families love to dawdle with their children. As to safety, Montréal is not any less safe than the suburbs. The city offers its inhabitants proximity services, including a host of cultural spaces, which are congenial to pedestrians and cyclists. The mobility cities provide encourages social interaction.

Individuals define themselves by the places they live in and, especially, in which they grew up. Rootedness, attachment, and appropriation of space are the three key factors that will ensure that people continue to live where they are or to return where they came from.⁵

Individuals build for themselves a residential identity that may be defined as “a pattern of ideas and associations, feelings, beliefs, preferences, values, conscious and subconscious motivations, and behavioural attitudes and abilities, a pattern that links personal identity to a given type of inhabitancy and that predisposes individuals to opt for similar environments if and when they move away.”⁶ This complex mixture of factors will determine whether or not someone chooses to live in urban spaces or in suburban ones.

One of the stated goals in Montréal’s Sustainable Development Plan is to reduce by 25%, by the year 2012, the migratory deficit between Montréal and the suburbs by targeting residents between the ages of 25 and 44, who tend to be the ones to leave Montréal every year. Let us be clear: there exist many types of

⁵ cf. *La Banlieue revisitée*, sous la direction de Andrée Fortin, Carole Després et Geneviève Vachon, Éditions Nota Bene, 2002.

⁶ *La Banlieue revisitée*, sous la direction de Andrée Fortin, Carole Després et Geneviève Vachon. Éditions Nota Bene, 2002, p. 153

suburbs but when we speak of the suburbs here, in this presentation, we are referring to the periphery, that is, to the cities north and south of the island of Montréal. **When we speak of the City, we include the first and second suburbs that form a part of the agglomeration of Montréal.**

The facts

2009-2010 portrait: “[...] the births-over-deaths surplus brings natural growth to 8,166 individuals over the course of this period. The intraprovincial migratory balance sheet displays a deficit of 23,640 persons, as the number of people having left the agglomeration territory is greater than that of those who have come to live on the island.”⁷

“Thus, 64,080 Montréalers went to live elsewhere in Québec while 40,440 inhabitants from other regions established themselves in the Montréal agglomeration. This volume has been fairly stable since 2007 and counts as among the lowest since the early 90s.”⁸

“Between 2001 and 2010, the agglomeration recorded an average annual deficit of 22,200 inhabitants. The period 2009-2010 thus exhibits a loss slightly higher than average.”⁹

“The cost of houses and joint-ownership properties in Montréal rose by 98% between early 2000 and the first quarter of 2006. In this context, it appears difficult for young families to gain access to property at a reasonable cost, one that is compatible with a young professional’s or worker’s income. Moreover, new housing development is almost exclusively focused on small units not well suited to the needs of families.”¹⁰

“We cannot help but conclude that the current real estate market is detrimental to young families and only hastens the flight towards the suburbs of those households unable to acquire a first property in Montréal.”¹¹

“The Master Plan thus sets the objective of building between 60,000 and 75,000 housing units in Montréal between 2004 and 2014. Eager to meet the current

⁷ *Portraits démographiques. La dynamique migratoire de l’agglomération de Montréal – 2009-2010.* January 2011. p. 4

⁸ *Portraits démographiques. La dynamique migratoire de l’agglomération de Montréal – 2009-2010.* January 2011. p. 6

⁹ *Portraits démographiques. La dynamique migratoire de l’agglomération de Montréal – 2009-2010.* January 2011. p. 9

¹⁰ *Montréal Family Action Plan*, p. 6

¹¹ *Montréal Family Action Plan*, p. 6

and emergent needs of all households, the City requires that 30% of new residential developments in Montréal be allocated to affordable housing accessible to low- or moderate-income households.”¹²

According to Annick Germain, professor at the INRS, three factors influence decisions:

✓ **Cost of housing or of access to property ownership:**

Yet, when people evaluate the price of a house they intend to purchase, they fail to compare the global costs of living in the city *versus* those of living in the suburbs.

✓ **The matter of lifestyle:**

To live in the city or in the suburbs? We will choose one over the other based on the image of the city or suburbs we hold or have kept alive (childhood or teenage memories). Young families believe that raising a family requires both living space and a house and, especially, that these are easier to obtain in the suburbs.

✓ **Family habits (a return to sources):**

It is a matter of family traditions, of what is known. People base their housing choices on their residential history. If they have lived in the suburbs, they will choose to stay there or to return there should they had once left. Mostly, this has to do with the sense of security arising out of a familiarity with landmarks.

Ethnic origins also play a part: increasingly, immigrants are urbanites used to living in densely populated environments. They will thus prefer to establish themselves in the city because, contrary to many Quebeckers, they do not tend to dream of owning a suburban bungalow. When immigrants opt for suburbia, they never live very far from the city. They prefer keeping close ties to the city.

¹² *Montréal Master Plan-Summary*

Some communities will seek to remain grouped together (the Haitian community, for instance) while others, such as those of Maghrebin origin (who come to Québec in ever greater numbers), will choose dispersal. Perhaps the latter will opt for the suburbs in order to unbind themselves from their original moorings.

We can see a general tendency whereby ethnic communities are starting to leave the island. This process, though slow, is nevertheless real.

The City of Montréal, in its efforts to stem off-island migration, reimburses the Welcome Tax to first-home buyers, at a rate of 100% for households with children and 40% for those without. Eligible households with children can also receive a public transit pass valid for six months when they also purchase a regularly-priced annual OPUS card (one free pass per household) as well as two Accès-Montréal cards.

Do you notice a migratory flow (inbound or outbound) in your area?

How would you propose to counter the outbound migration of young households, youth, and the elderly from your area towards the suburbs?

The needs of families

Following a study conducted by the architects of the Groupe Cardinal Hardy on urban dwellings for households with children, **six criteria were selected to meet “the needs of the majority of families:**

- a larger dwelling (with a greater number of rooms),
- access to private, ground-level, outdoor space
- a sense of belonging and of sharing living space with other families,
- adequate soundproofing of the dwelling,
- proximity of installations and services tied to the activities of children,
- proximity of collective outdoor spaces (parks, shared yards, etc.)”¹³

People are increasingly seeking opportunities to spend time with family and friends, to participate in the life of the community. This quest for the Other is in line with a change in lifestyles and a wish to enjoy open spaces where each can partake in household activities. Experts call this “hiving,” that is, a way “to make our home the focus of shared activities for family, friends, and neighbours.”¹⁴ Families need both amenities and familial territory, meaning a neighbourhood living space.

Generally, families think affordable dwellings in Montréal are too small to accommodate the presence of children. Indeed, two bedrooms no longer seem sufficient for a family. We must diversify the offer. The boroughs already impose upon real estate promoters criteria regarding both the size of dwellings as well as the number of dwellings meant for families.

The target clientele: teens

Annick Germain, Professor at the INRS, believes that the City of Montréal ought to target suburban teenagers. The latter prefer the ease of public transit, as they can directly access a wide variety of socialization spaces where teens usually congregate;

¹³ Groupe Cardinal Hardy. *Habitation urbaines pour ménages avec enfants. Exploration sur les typologies et les critères architecturaux*. February 17th 2006, p. 54

¹⁴ Fournier, Lise. «Pour mieux fraterniser», article published in the Mon toit section of *La Presse*, Saturday, April 2nd 2011, p. 8.

Facebook and Twitter notwithstanding, teens love to meet up with other teens in popular spots such as cafés, bars, commerces, and restaurants. Suburban youth complain, feel trapped, and must find work and manage savings in order to buy an old car just to increase their level of mobility. Suburbia is hellish for teens.

Indeed, “[...] it is during adolescence that a need for movement, autonomy, and space makes itself known. This can be seen in a wish to go out with friends, to meet them in spaces outside the home and not under parental control.”¹⁵ **In the suburbs, parents play the taxi drivers. It’s their role. If they are not available, teens quickly feel confined and immobilized whereas, “in the core neighbourhoods, public transit coverage enhances the independent mobility of teenagers by allowing them to explore a fairly broad territory.”¹⁶ The high density of the city as well as its blend of services offer youth a host of activities within easy pedestrian, bicycle, or public transit reach.**

Do you believe that ad campaigns such as the one seen on television on behalf of the suburbs in the 450 are effective? Should the City of Montréal produce similar ads?

¹⁵ Fortin, Andrée. *Mobilité quotidienne dans la communauté métropolitaine de Québec d’adolescents résidant en territoires rurbains.*

¹⁶ Fortin, Andrée. *Mobilité quotidienne dans la communauté métropolitaine de Québec d’adolescents résidant en territoires rurbains.*

A healthy life in the city!

One of the benefits derived from living in a city such as Montréal is the ease of mobility granted not only by an efficient public transit system but also by the increasingly important role given to active transportation modes such as walking and biking. Families consider it important that travel between the workplace and home be convenient and quick. The trip ought to be easy, ought to give them more time to spend with their children, and ought to be free of traffic-related stress. Moreover, “people who use public transit walk, on average, 19 minutes a day and one out of three users walks more than 30 minutes a day.”¹⁷

According to Pierre-Olivier Pineau, Associate Professor at the Department of Management Science of the HEC, car use is a true waste of productivity, in the widest sense of the term. Traffic congestion generates a waste of time that could otherwise be spent on leisure, rest, or work. Parents are robbed of quality time they could be spending with their children. Public transit, on the other hand, if its services are well structured, allows people to spend more time together and to socialize with one another.

Obviously, public transit in Montréal does not yet meet the needs of the agglomeration as a whole but joint efforts between the STM, the AMT, and the City of Montréal have resulted in a series of projects, among them the prolongation of the metro lines and the East end and West end commuter train services, which ought to satisfy the needs of many Montréalers.

The City of Montréal aims to improve air quality in the interest of public health. Indeed, the Transportation, Sustainable Development, and Family Action Plans all call for a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2020. In order to achieve this, we have invested massively in public transit so as to reduce the number of cars on the road as well as in active transportation by designing more convivial streets and by increasing the number of bike paths. It is important to “exercise regularly [because doing so] improves both health and quality of life, reduces the risk of

¹⁷ *Projet de mémoire portant sur l'Avant-projet de Loi sur l'aménagement durable du territoire et l'urbanisme.*

chronic illness, and reinforces social cohesion.”¹⁸ Unfortunately, “recent Canadian data reveals that a mere 15% of adults and 7% of youth achieve the recommended levels of physical activity.”¹⁹

The City has invested many millions of dollars in its parks. These parks are numerous and proximate, within reasonable distance of a family’s home. They are easily accessible. This view of the city, however, is not held by many. Montréal is often thought of in terms of drab concrete, something that could not be further from the truth.

Are you familiar with Montréal’s large parks such as the ones found at Cap St-Jacques, on the banks of the Lachine Canal, or at l’Île-de-la-Visitation? What of the numerous neighbourhood parks especially designed with families in mind?

Should we do more to make people aware of these green spaces?

Do you think the city projects an image in line with healthy lifestyles? If not, how can we enhance the perception of Montréal as a healthy place to live?

¹⁸ *Projet de mémoire portant sur l’Avant-projet de Loi sur l’aménagement durable du territoire et l’urbanisme.*

¹⁹ *Projet de mémoire portant sur l’Avant-projet de Loi sur l’aménagement durable du territoire et l’urbanisme.*

Universal Accessibility

The aim of universal accessibility is to foster personal autonomy and citizen participation. *La Ville de Montréal "souhaite que tous les utilisateurs, peu importe leurs capacités, puissent profiter, de manière comparable, des possibilités offertes par un bâtiment, un espace urbain, un programme, un service ou une information... Conséquemment la Ville de Montréal vise à réduire les obstacles, à les éliminer ou à offrir des alternatives facilitantes."*²⁰ ("The City of Montréal wants all users, regardless of functional ability, to enjoy equal opportunity access to buildings, public spaces, programs, services, and communications. Consequently, the City of Montréal intends to minimize or eliminate obstacles or to offer helpful alternatives.")

Here, we may call to mind the pedibus (pedestrian bus) for toddlers, elevator access to the metro for persons with reduced mobility, traffic-calming measures, the Montréal *Recreational Activities Assistance Program for persons living with a disability*, the Publiphone (a service broadcasting City press releases and municipal news over the phone), and more.

Moreover, in a city where the population is growing older, it is crucial to rethink urban planning so as to promote a better quality of life for the elderly. Traffic-calming measures near elderly care homes and facilities, longer street-crossing delays, and wider sidewalks are all deemed necessary steps in the integration of people of all ages into the life of the city.

Do you have any recommendations or suggestions?

²⁰ *L'accessibilité universelle : Un engagement de la Ville de Montréal*. 2010 edition, p. 7

Montréal, knowledge city

Students need to enjoy the urban experience, need to benefit from the proximity of cafés, restaurants, and businesses in order for them to view the metropolis as a place they can gladly consider their home.

The central campus of the Université de Montréal, for instance, is not convivial for students. The local lack of lively venues, eateries, and retail shops does nothing to encourage young adults to make the City their own.

On the other hand, anglophone institutions such as Concordia and McGill universities offer a stimulating urban environment to a youthful crowd. They are centrally located and everything is within walking distance.

The Université du Québec à Montréal's underground access points do not encourage the development of a local student life that significantly impacts the life of the City, simply because students come and go to class without ever setting foot outside. They do not go out on the streets.

Universities establishing themselves in the suburbs also discourage students from wanting to stay in the city. According to Annick Germain, Professor at the INRS, the new campus at Laval is an aberration, in that it will incite students to leave the Montréal agglomeration.

Montréal, cultural metropolis

Montréal is the embodiment of culture. We need only think of the numerous festivals occurring year-round, so many that we are hard-pressed to choose between them! Montréal's cultural offer is impressive. It also encompasses four universities and many specialized institutions and research centres across a spectrum of domains. But there is still work to be done for Montréal to further impose itself as a city of knowledge.

“Cities particularly compete with each other on three levels:

- The quality of local culture (cultural vitality of the city, authenticity and uniqueness of character, multi-ethnic richness, the welcoming of social diversity);
- The quality of the labour market (abundance of employment opportunities and lateral shifting for those working in the knowledge industry);
- The presence of local amenities and attractions highly prized by knowledge industry workers (such as access to outdoor activities and innovative artistic activities).”²¹

²¹ *Montréal, ville de savoir. Un projet du Sommet de Montréal.* June 2002, p. 16

CASE STUDY

A LIFE NEAR EVERYTHING

Buying a home in Montréal is more profitable



Contrary to popular belief, buying a single-family home in Montréal can be very profitable. Considering the indexed value of the property, a real-estate investment offers better performance for families who choose to live in Montréal.

Let's take as an example two families, each of whom buys a single-family home. Both families are composed of two working adults and a young child. They earn the average income of the greater Montréal area. However, each makes a choice that will have a major impact on its savings.

Let's compare...



The Beauséjour family bought a one-storey house on the South Shore for \$217,000. The Arsenault family decided to buy a cottage in Montréal for \$297,000. Over a 25-year period, which of the two homes will be the greater family asset?

The Beauséjourns make yearly mortgage payments of \$14,400, while the Arsenaults' yearly mortgage

payments come to \$23,440.

Despite the apparent savings at the time of purchase, the Beauséjours spend \$31,421 annually on taxes, public transportation and the costs related to having two family cars. The Arsenaaults only spend \$23,783 for taxes, public transportation and the costs related to their single car.

The reality is that the two families' expenses end up being about the same, since each family is using the money in their own way, saving on certain expenses but spending more on others.

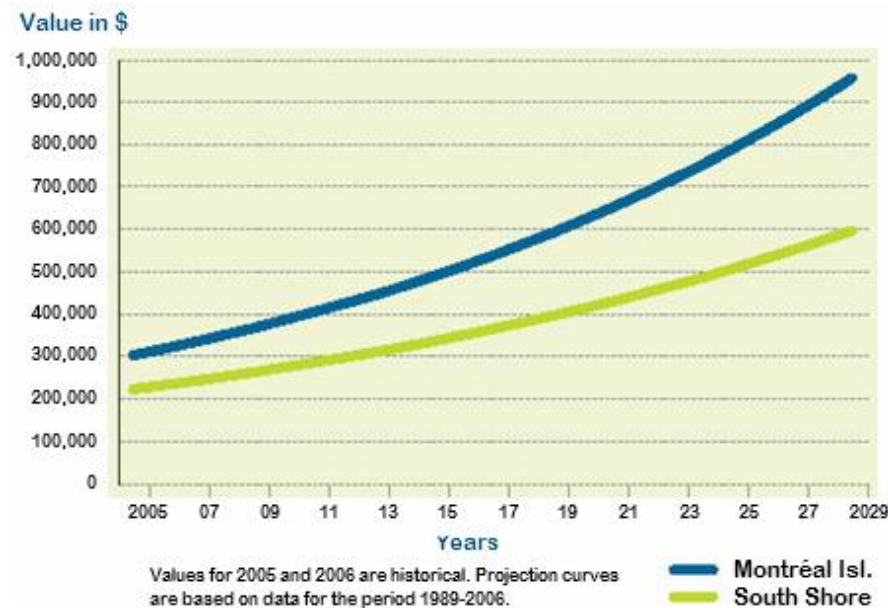
Favourable indexing



To get an idea of both families' assets, we must check the progressive value of their homes. The value of the Arsenaaults' home is likely to increase by 5 percent per year, while the Beauséjours' home will increase by 4.3 percent, using the average indexing rates registered over the past 15 years. These rates were calculated using data from the Greater Montréal Real Estate Board.

Considering the purchase value of both homes, the family asset of the Montréal family's home will be around \$380,000 greater than the home of the family living on the South Shore. The value of the Arsenaault family's home will be around \$995,000 in 2029. Living in Montréal is possible... and it pays!

Projected family asset value



ACHIEVEMENTS – INCENTIVES

- Montréal's asset: its parks. A \$21 million investment announced in the Sustainable Development Plan.

- Family Action Plan.

- Urban design Master Plan.

- Transportation Plan.

- A pedestrian-friendly city! Health benefits.

- Establishment of biomethanation and composting facilities scheduled for 2014.

- Montréal ranks 5th among North American cities in matters of personal safety.²²

- Greening of alleyways and backyards.

- Lowering of local speed limit to 40 km/h in residential neighbourhoods.

- Participation in Vélo Québec's *Mon école à pied, à vélo* program.

- Temporary, permanent, and seasonal pedestrian thoroughfares (Sainte-Catherine and Saint-Paul streets).

²² cf. *Montréal Family Action Plan*

- Fête des enfants, Jeux de Montréal, Fête des neiges, Montréal International Jazz Festival, FrancoFolies, Festival des nuits d'Afrique, and many other free and universally accessible public events.
- Réseau Accès-Montréal (phone number: 311).
- Reduced STM fares for children, students, and the elderly.
- Increased SPVM surveillance: foot, bike, and subway patrols.
- The "Activité famille" label.
- Bike path network totalling more than 500 kilometres.
- White network (winter bike paths).
- Golden Line (bus line for the elderly).