July 2021

Spatial Stigmatization in Montreal-North: Urban Revitalization and the Invisibilization of Race

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Abstract

By addressing the concept of spatial stigmatization, this article intends to demonstrate the dynamic nature of this process of marking and marginalization of certain urban territories and their inhabitants. In a context such as Montréal-Nord which accumulates social vulnerabilities and has a very high concentration of racialized populations, it is necessary to question the link between race and space in the stigmatization process. Our analysis, which is based on empirical data collected between 2016 and 2019, highlights the role of public policies in the marginalization of the Northeast District. It demonstrates in particular the denial of local governments in the face of sociospatial inequalities and thus the intentional nature of the marginalization of racialized populations. While racial discrimination remains an unthought-of issue in Québec's policies to fight inequality, it seems important to question the way in which urban revitalization policy and forms of public action apply to a district of Montréal-Nord borough after consultation with the inhabitants but without giving themselves the means to integrate their demands or uses of the neighbourhood. Our hypothesis is that the revitalization policy, thought of as participatory, essentially approaches the neighbourhood as a neutral support on which to act, emptying the space of its lived dimension and thus invisibilizing the relations of domination on the basis of its stigmatization. In the case of Montréal-Nord, the revitalization of the neighbourhood and the fight against its stigmatization by local policies contribute to normalizing the practices of public space and to erasing the issue of racial and social inequalities in

favour of developments that promote an ideal of integration of immigrant communities.

Keywords: Stigmatization, Revitalization policy, Race, Public Space, Youth

Résumé

En abordant le concept de stigmatisation par l'espace, cet article entend démontrer le caractère dynamique de ce processus de marquage et de mise à la marge de certains territoires urbains et de leurs habitants. Dans un contexte comme celui de Montréal-Nord qui cumule les vulnérabilités sociales et affiche une très forte concentration de populations racisées, il est important d'interroger le lien entre race et espace dans le processus de stigmatisation. Notre analyse, qui s'appuie sur des données empiriques récoltées entre 2016 et 2019, souligne le rôle des politiques publiques dans la marginalisation du secteur nord-est. Elle dévoile notamment un déni des gouvernements locaux face à des inégalités sociospatiales et, par là même, le caractère intentionnel de la mise à l'écart des populations racisées. Alors que les discriminations raciales restent un impensé des politiques de lutte contre les inégalités au Québec, il semble essentiel d'interroger la façon dont la politique de revitalisation urbaine et les formes de l'action publique s'appliquent sur un secteur de l'arrondissement nord-montréalais sans se donner les moyens d'intégrer leurs revendications ou usages du quartier malgré les consultations proposées aux habitants. Notre hypothèse est que la politique de revitalisation, conçue de manière participative, aborde le quartier comme un support neutre sur lequel il faut agir, vidant l'espace de sa dimension vécue et invisibilisant les rapports de domination au fondement de sa stigmatisation. La revitalisation du quartier et la lutte contre sa stigmatisation par les politiques locales contribuent, dans le cas de Montréal-Nord, à soumettre les pratiques de l'espace public à des normes et à gommer l'enjeu des inégalités raciales et sociales au profit d'aménagements valorisant un idéal d'intégration des communautés issues de l'immigration.

Mots-clés : stigmatisation, politique de revitalisation, race, espace public, jeune

Introduction

Since the late 1970s and even more so since the 1990s, activist collectives, researchers and community groups[1] have condemned the persistence of inequalities

1. Community-based groups conducting non-profit social service activities.

in access to employment, education and political representation for racialized communities[2] in Montreal. There has also been condemnation for the perpetuation of racial profiling by police services and authorities in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods directed at Black, Latin American, Arab and Muslim communities (CDPDJ, 2011; Livingstone et al., 2018; Armony et al., 2019; Rutland, 2020). However, until recently, the Quebec metropolitan region has tended to be analyzed as an exception among the major Canadian and more broadly North American metropolitan regions with respect to the socio-spatial exclusion of immigrants and/or racialized communities. The segregation of immigrants and visible minorities is reported to be less pronounced (Apparicio et al., 2007; 2008) and qualitative research highlights the existence of "fluid territories" of immigration and the multi-ethnic or mixed character of the metropolis's immigration neighbourhoods (Germain and Poirier, 2007, p. 107). The issue of the stigmatization and spatial segregation of racialized populations in Quebec and Montreal studies has received little scholarly attention. And this, despite the existence of significant studies on the Haitian community in Montreal (Mills, 2016; Potvin, 2007) or on the notions of "blackness" and systemic racism (Mugabo, 2018; Khalil and Rutland, 2019; Austin, 2013), as well as testimonies from activists or community groups documenting the differences in treatment and the negative representations experienced by Quebec's racialized populations (Zaazaa and Nadeau, 2019; Tannouche Bennani and Touré Kapo, 2019). This article hopes to contribute to the visibility of these issues at a time when the Quebec government refuses to acknowledge the widespread systemic racism in its institutions and the resulting spatial injustices.

Our case study is located in Montreal-North, a borough of over 84,000 inhabitants, whose population is particularly exposed to stigmatizing representations. More than 22% of households live below the poverty line, the under-25s make up more than 30% of the population, 9% of the neighbourhood's residents are newcomer immigrants, and 67% were either born abroad or have at least one parent who was born abroad. The main countries of origin of immigrants are, in order: Haiti, Algeria, Italy, Morocco and Lebanon (census 2016). These sociodemographic characteristics are particularly concentrated in the Northeast district, which is where our case study was conducted.

While the focus of territorial discrimination is primarily on differences in the treatment of neighbourhoods, particularly in terms of planning, accessibility and the denial of sociospatial differences in urban policies (Hancock et al., 2016), stigmatization—because of its focus on representations—permits us to reflect fully on the racial dimension of these inequalities. In Montreal, many neighbourhoods suffer

2. In this article, the term "racialized" is used in the sense defined by Sarah Mazouz (2020) who identifies people who self-identify as members of a group subject to a racializing power relationship.

from the pervasiveness of stereotypical perceptions that lead to the stigmatization of individuals and the neighbourhoods they live in. Montreal-North has been dubbed the Bronx of Montreal or Montreal-Noir (Touzin, 2009). Thus, despite a real diversity of sociodemographic profiles, Montreal's geographical imaginary quickly reduces Montreal-North to a "ghetto" marked by the presence of street gangs, especially since the urban uprisings that set the Northeast district of this borough ablaze following a police intervention that killed Fredy Villanueva.[3] Those 2008 uprisings, which left their mark on residents and the community, also reinforced the media coverage of the area, which tended to represent the entire borough as dangerous and criminal (Chevalier and Lebel, 2009). As a result of these events, 35% of the articles on Montreal-North in the Montreal print media focused on security-related subjects, be it crimes, arrests or street gangs, a phenomenon that on its own was the focus of nearly 11% of the articles (Vogler, 2020).[4] This stigmatization of the neighbourhood fosters a perception of Montreal-North's racialized youth as a homogeneous and transgressive group: "against the backdrop of a combined problematization of the themes of insecurity and of the integration of racialized minorities, the discursive and symbolic outlines of stereotypical constructs are taking shape" (Desage et al., 2015, p. 9). These processes whereby individual identity is essentialized are of interest to geographers "because social representations concerning individuals or groups are accompanied by spatial representations concerning the spaces and practices associated with these 'dominated' groups or individuals" (Hancock, 2008, p. 117).

In our analysis of the Northeast district of Montreal-North, the notion of stigmatization seemed a relevant prism through which to view our empirical data, because the symbolic denigration and marginalization of both the neighbourhood and its residents (especially young racialized men) are so pervasive. By employing the notion of spatial stigmatization rather than territorial stigmatization which is more used in the literature but where the adjective "'territorial' is either used synonymously with spatial or place-based" (Sisson, 2020, p. 8), our approach aims to highlight the relational dynamics between the production of space and the stigmatization of racialized populations. We thus we wish to emphasize how revitalization policies that act on neighbourhood space are inseparable from the social relations of domination that constitute that space (Veschambre, 2006). And this by demonstrating how the spatial dimension of race contributes to the stigmatization against which revitalization policies in Montreal-North claim to operate.

3. Fredy Alberto Villanueva was shot and killed by a Montreal Police officer in the parking lot of Montreal-North's Henri-Bourassa Arena on August 9, 2008. Villanueva's death led to protests in Montreal-Nord.
4. These analyses are based on the processing of a database of all articles containing the word Montréal-Nord in 7 Quebec newspapers from 2006 to 2016 in A. Vogler's M.A tesis (2020).

Stigmatization is approached here as a dynamic process that affects the inhabitants' capacity to appropriate space, and more particularly public space, understood as a space for gathering and social interaction, but also as a tool for local policies (Fleury, 2007). Our argument is that public revitalization mechanisms, because they do not attempt to modify the structural foundations of spatial and racial inequalities that go far beyond the municipal framework, become local instruments for anchoring stigma and relations of domination by space.

Out of a set of 50 interviews collected by the authors between 2016 and 2019[5], for this article we based our analysis on eleven semi-directive interviews with local actors: three with community stakeholders involved in local development in the Northeast district, four with institutional workers (district town hall, high school board, police departments and coordinator of Integrated Urban Revitalization zone [RUI])[6] and four with activists (Hoodstock and the Villanueva Family Support Committee). In addition, two interviews and five commented city walks were conducted with young people from the Northeast district (six men and one woman between the ages of 18 and 23, all racialized). The commented city walks were conducted during a piece of collaborative research[7] and followed monthly workshops on spatial practices and perceptions of their neighbourhood among youth living in the Northeast district. Secondary sources (development plan, statistical analyses, reports by researchers, community organizations and institutions, press articles and archives from the cities of Montreal and Montreal-North) were also analyzed to support our approach.

This article begins by presenting a theoretical framework for the notion of stigmatization by approaching it in its spatial dimension and by showing how the links between race and space are at the basis of this process. In a second step, it provides background to our neighbourhood case study by describing the stages of stigmatization in the Northeast district since its construction in the 1960s and 1970s and after the transformation of Montreal-North from a suburban municipality into a borough of Montreal in 2002. This contextualization enables us to reveal the forms in which this district was produced and marginalized through two municipal policies: the deployment of specialized police forces and the implementation of an RUI policy. In a

5. These interviews were conducted as part of Antoine Vogler's master's degree (2017-2020), Chakib Khelifi's PhD dissertation (2017-present) and Violaine Jolivet's research on Haitian-Montrealers' territorialities (2016-2018).
6. "The RUI is an intervention strategy that differs from sectoral strategies for urban, economic and social development, by its objectives and the concerted and participatory approach it favours. The ultimate objective of the approach is to significantly and sustainably improve the lives of residents of disadvantaged territories. Achieving this ultimate objective depends on the achievement of very diverse "intermediate" objectives that vary by territory." Source: Ville de Montréal (https://donnees.montreal.ca/ville-de-montreal/rui).
7. Collaborative research carried out within the research program TRYSPACES SSHRC 2017-2023 which explores in four cities the relationship between the presence of young people in public spaces and the way they experience this visibility. A case study conducted by Violaine Jolivet with Chakib Khelifi and Célia Bensiali-Hadaud focus on Montreal North.

third phase, specific aspects of this revitalization policy will be addressed. Through the analysis of the debates surrounding the creation of Place de l'Espoir, a city square inaugurated ten years after the death of Fredy Villanueva, on the one hand, and the stories of young residents of the area attending the maison culturelle et communautaire (Community Cultural Center, MCC), on the other hand, we will highlight the ambivalence of these developments which, while creating new spaces for the population, also contribute through the promotion of a depoliticized community building to the definition of practices and to the erasure of the experience of racism experienced by its inhabitants by promoting multiculturalism.

Stigmatization by Space, Theoretical Framework

The concept of stigmatization in its spatial dimension refers to the mechanisms that promote the denigration of poor and racialized neighbourhoods in post-industrial metropolises and contributes to the analysis of the processes of urban marginalization whereby the unequal development of urban capitalism downgrades certain spaces, affects public policies and dissolves social ties (Wacquant, 2006; 2007). Wacquant proposes the notion of territorial stigmatization, a concept forged from two prior notions: the first is that of stigma, developed by Erving Goffman (1975), which refers to an attribute that modifies the way individuals interact and are socially perceived; the second is Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power, which refers to "the power to constitute the given through enunciation and thus to transform the vision of the world and, by so doing, the action on the world" (1977, p. 410). With the notion of territorial stigmatization, Loïc Wacquant adds a spatial dimension to Erving Goffman's analyses of identity and stigma, drawing in particular on Pierre Bourdieu's analyses of site effects (*effets de lieux*). He demonstrates that a "spatial taint is then superimposed on the stigmas already in operation, traditionally tied to poverty and ethnicity or to postcolonial immigrant status" (Wacquant, 2007, p. 19). The territory is then seen as a new dimension of stigma, an attribute whereby residents can be categorized and marginalized. Yet, spatialization in the stigmatization process is much more than a factor of demarcation; it is a relationship of power and domination through space (Raffestin, 1980) that depends on multiple spatial configurations ranging from the space of representations to physical or institutional space (Orfeuil and Ripoll, 2015). The spatialization of stigma is part of the dynamics of the racial segregation and economic fragmentation of urban space that precedes or acts in concert with the disparagement of place. As Jean-Charles Depaule reminds us, stigmatization is not a static condition, it operates "from the spatial to the social and vice versa [...] and concerns places marked by poverty, degradation or even 'exoticism' on which an

anxious gaze is cast from the outside and from above" (2006, p. 1). If we subscribe to the idea of a reciprocal relationship between the stigmatization of the place and its inhabitants, the multiple othering processes mentioned by the author are in our view central to the forms whereby space is used to exclude racialized populations.

Several studies in Europe and North America have focused on changes in the capitalist system and the new forms of neoliberal governance of cities in order to analyze how the stigmatization of certain neighbourhoods occurs. The production of urban margins and the demarcation of "disadvantaged or dangerous" areas by anti-poverty and anti-crime programs are often raised to show how the neighbourhood of origin becomes a source of stigma for its inhabitants (Wacquant, 2007; Wacquant et al., 2014; Tissot, 2007; Auclair, 2007; Slater, 2015). Since the 1980s, priority urban planning policies have notably spread the idea that certain urban neighbourhoods are "sick", the cause and not the consequence of their marginality (Sedel, 2007).

In Montreal, these urban policies almost invariably target areas where newcomers, immigrants, racialized and/or poor populations are concentrated. Identifying neighbourhoods as being "in crisis" without specifying the processes of exclusion that have led to this situation obscures the role of public policies in the production of marginalized spaces where racialized populations are assigned to live. Thus, as Kornberg notes, "Once spaces instead of groups become identified as dangerous, criminal or disorderly, the social origins of the stigma are obfuscated, and euphemisms allowing for claims of colour blindness can proliferate while hiding their origins" (Kornberg, 2016, p. 265). This analysis of Detroit resonates with the example of Montreal-North's Northeast district, where euphemisms abound to avoid suggesting the racial underpinnings of stigma through space. For example, a female community officer attached to the police station said in an interview, "Most of the time when they talk about youth, they're not talking about youth as such. They talk about youth to hide the racism. [...] We know that when they talk about street gangs, it's black." (July 2018)

The denial of racial discrimination by public authorities is embedded in space, both symbolic and material, "depriving [racialized populations] of their recognition as physical people with territorial belonging" (Khalil and Rutland, 2019, p. 54). Through our study of the Northeast district of Montreal-North, we adhere to the idea that "those who use their own space as they please, a space that they have produced, or have had produced, in their image and to their measure, differ diametrically from those who can only be content with the spaces produced for them, according to the image that others have of their needs, their criteria, their very value, one might say, not to mention those

who are not wanted. Appropriation is therefore opposed to both allocation and expropriation" (Ripoll and Veschambre, 2005, p. 7).

How Montreal-North became Montreal-Noir: austerity and the stigmatization of the "Other" in a post-war suburb

A rural village founded in 1915, Montreal-North became an important town during the wave of industrialization in Montreal at the beginning of the century, which transformed it into a production hub. In 1950, the population was barely 12,000, mostly working middle-class (Linteau, 2007). After the war, Montreal-North became an inner suburb and, starting in the 1970s, underwent profound changes, growing from 67,806 inhabitants in 1966 to 97,250 in 1976. Its trajectory resembles that of many inner suburbs: general economic decline, impoverishment and racialization of the population (Short et al., 2007; Hanlon, 2009).

In the 1970s-1980s, the existing population of primarily Italian and Haitian descent was joined by a second, larger wave of Haitian workers, making people of Haitian descent the largest group in the borough today (census 2016). This population is anchored in Montreal-North in a context of deindustrialization and job losses in public services and transportation brought about by the restructuring of the metropolitan economy (Coffey et al., 2000; DDEUVM, 2011). In parallel with these economic shifts, Montreal-North is also becoming a place where the principles of neoliberal governance observed throughout North American metropolises are being applied, leading to the disengagement of public authorities from urban services, increases in public-private partnerships, and reinforced marginalization and surveillance processes (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Wacquant, 2007; González Castillo, 2015).

The transition to an entrepreneurial urbanism (Harvey, 1989) began with the arrival of Mayor Yves Ryan, who headed the municipality from 1963 to 2001. His administration was responsible for the urbanization of the Northeast district, using a policy of tax incentives to encourage rapid construction and making the area five times denser than the rest of the city. Consisting essentially of private rental housing and a few social housing units, where new arrivals were concentrated, the Northeast district resembles an enclave within the urban landscape of Montreal-North (see figure 1). The municipality's desire to lower taxes and public debt rather than acknowledge the rise in racialized populations, poverty and unemployment in the Northeast district (Heck et al., 2015) exacerbated the area's marginalization. The underfunding of public services that began in the Ryan era reinforced the confinement of vulnerable populations

(asylum seekers, allophone immigrants, disadvantaged households) within Montreal-North and contributed to the presence of a limited community network (Tichit, 2011). As one community worker recalled during the years of the Ryan administration, "a certain reality of Montreal-North was hidden, or even denied. So, at a certain point, we saw the symptoms and these symptoms were often associated with people of Haitian or Latin American origin, which caused people to start perceiving Montreal-North in a negative way, both outside and to some degree within the area." (December 2018)

Figure 1: Montreal-North in 1978, Northeast district
(Source: City of Montreal Archives)

When Montreal-North was absorbed into the City of Montreal in 2002, the suburban town became a borough subject to city policies and regulations. Since the 1970s, Montreal-North had belonged to the Montreal Urban Community Police Department (SPCUM), but now it came under the control of the Montreal Police Department (SPVM) (Rutland, 2020). The deployment of several specialized police squads to combat gang membership (SPVM, 2010a) increased the number of police interventions in the borough and raised tensions with racialized youth in the neighbourhood, according to research on racial profiling in Montreal (Livingstone et al., 2018). The latter cites the Charest Report (2009) which revealed that "the higher stop and arrest rates for Black youth in Montreal reflect, at least in part, the disproportionate investment of police resources committed to the neighbourhoods

where these youths live [...] In the Montreal-North neighbourhood, the monthly frequency of stops of Black people rose by 126% from 2005 to 2007, compared with 40% for Whites" (Livingstone et al., 2018, p. 18). While many other areas of Montreal have similar crime rates to Montreal-North (SPVM, 2010b), it is primarily "the fabricated profile of young Black people as possible dangerous gang members [which] allowed for entire Black neighbourhoods to be militarized by near-constant police surveillance" (Maynard, 2017, p. 91). A community worker with a 40-year history of working in a halfway house in the Northeast district reported how this territorial approach to crime and gangs led to the stigmatization of residents: "For the police, the 11,000 people [in the Northeast district] became gang members by saying, 'anyone in that neighbourhood is a suspect from the start.' That is a big distortion. It created a sense of fear, which may have played into the feeling of the police officer who shot [Fredy Villanueva]." (December 2018) On August 9, 2008, during an intervention, Officer Lapointe fired four shots, two of which caused the death of Fredy Villanueva, a young man of Honduran origin with no prior criminal record. The next day, the Northeast district rose up in revolt, reinforcing the negative image of Montreal-North, which was already widely publicized.

To counter this image of a dangerous neighbourhood in crisis, political measures would be taken to bring Montreal-North "up to standard". With a combination of vulnerabilities—unemployment, single-parent households, precarious migration status and employability (census 2016—the Northeast district became a priority target area for the municipal strategy known as RUI, which was initiated in several of the city's boroughs in the 2000s (see figure 2). RUI is a set of intervention measures that target areas of poverty in order to bring them into alignment "with other neighbourhoods in terms of social composition, building quality, commercial vitality [...] it is no longer a matter of modifying only the social composition and physical appearance of these neighbourhoods as in the case of an urban renewal; it is not enough to stimulate their economic growth [...] the neighbourhood must also take charge of itself" (Séguin and Divay, 2004, p. 69). In this sense, the RUI strategy implemented by the city of Montreal was somewhat novel by comparison with previous municipal actions in that it encouraged the involvement of local actors (boroughs, neighbourhood tables[8] and community groups) and residents in deciding the strategies to be adopted to revitalize their neighbourhood. RUI also allowed a planning component to be incorporated into the project to combat inequalities in the Northeast district. "The measures prioritized for implementation are the residential renovation or upgrading program, enhanced public domain development, the creation of new parks,

8. A group of actors in a neighbourhood whose objective is to contribute to the improvement of the local population's living conditions and environment.

the creation of a neighbourhood commercial sector [public food market], the construction of the maison culturelle et communautaire (MCC)" (RUI-Démarche-action Montréal-Nord, 2013, p. 36). The RUI mechanism is therefore unique in that it defines a priority development zone within the borough and assigns a central role to participatory practices. However, as authors who have analyzed urban revitalization policies from a comparative perspective have pointed out (Bacqué et al., 2003), the objective of this requirement that the neighbourhood should take charge of itself is primarily to make citizens the entrepreneurs of their own socio-economic integration according to the principles advocated by neoliberalism.

The detailed report on the 2010-2013 three-year RUI du Nord-Est plan reveals two things. On the one hand, citizen participation is very low and the involvement of local people in the RUI program takes place downstream of development decisions and not in the upstream phase (RUI-Démarche-action Montréal-Nord, 2013). On the other hand, that the financial inputs into RUI[9] were insufficient and essentially used in the coordination of the partners (45% of the budget). In 2018, the RUI coordinator spoke of the effect of this lack of funding on actions in the target territory. Projects are essentially limited to youth employability and the shortage of public investment—which contributes to the underfunding of community organizations in Montreal-North compared with other boroughs (Shaw and Godin, 2019)—forces community organizations to seek money where they can: "from public security at the provincial level, which has funding programs for fighting crime. It is not widely known, but a lot of organizations in Montreal-North apply and get that funding" (RUI coordinator, August 2018). Hence, one of the only ways for the actors on the ground to increase their budgets is to apply for grants directed at fighting youth crime, which further entrenches the stigma and disproportionate levels of surveillance associated with the area. Controlling gang activity then becomes central to revitalization efforts, as one of the young men in our research lamented with regard to the redevelopment of a park labelled as a gang-controlled space: "It seems like the people who have ideas for this project, they don't consult with us. They set up things that are not designed for us. For example Carignan Park, where they installed a lot of stuff, like benches for the kids. It didn't work and people don't use it, and it doesn't work with reality. Maybe they should have come to us. I've never seen anybody talk to us, or ask us questions." (Youth 1, June 2019)

9. From 2010 to 2013, RUI's stable recurrent funding was $106,400 a year, of which $81,400 came from the RUI program and $25,000 from the policy to fight poverty and social exclusion (MESS-Ville) (Source: http://www.arrondissement.com/userImgs/gallery/DIRF/117.pdf).

Revitalize the neighbourhood for whom?

An analysis of two developments carried out in or near the perimeter of the program (see figure 2) raises the question of what population is the intended beneficiary of the spaces that represent the revitalization of the neighbourhood. As indicated in the interview above, it is legitimate to wonder whether these developments are not a preventative ordering of space (Franzén, 2001) that does not take into account the uses and practices of city dwellers but is primarily intended to alter the representation of the neighbourhood, i.e. its association with street gangs. This vague notion of street gangs, which refers to young racialized men occupying public space, has emerged in our research as a central principle of territorial action (Rutland, 2020).

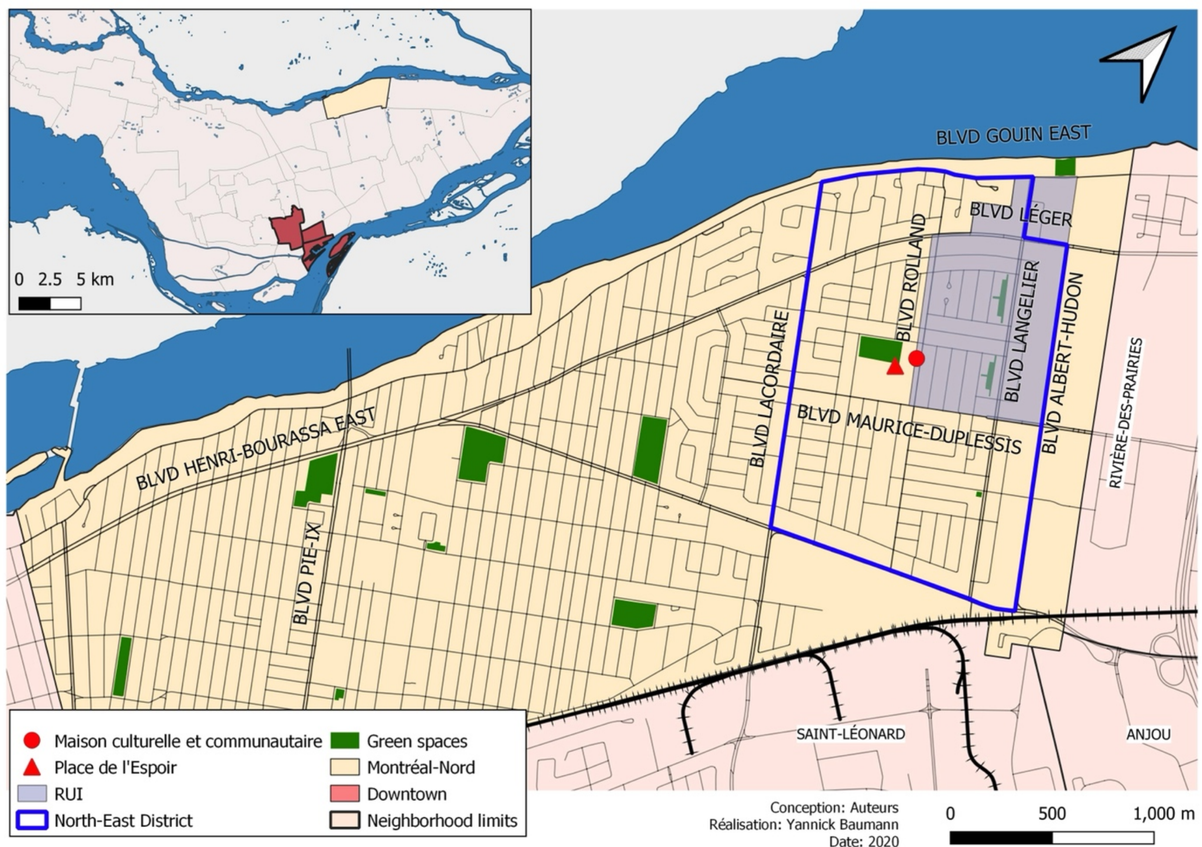

Figure 2: Northeast district revitalization map

La Place de l'Espoir: Appropriation under constraint in a context of spatial stigmatization

In the development of Place de l'Espoir (Hope Square literally) in Henri-Bourassa Park, where the Villanueva "affair" left a powerful imprint on the memory of the area

(see figure 2), we can explore the ways in which the inhabitants of the neighbourhood appropriate space in a place which—for the elected officials—symbolizes revitalization. Since the events of 2008, demands through open letters or demonstrations to create a mural with the image of Fredy Villanueva or to name the park after him have all been refused. The development of the square thus raises questions about how the perception of the Northeast district from above and from outside contributes to the marking of the space by public power (Bulot and Veschambre, 2006) and therefore, far from combating the stigma, profoundly reaffirms it.

In June 2018, ten years after the events of August 2008, the Montreal-North borough council announced its intention to build a public square "in honour of the hope of the residents". Neither the name nor the face of Fredy Villanueva was to appear on the square. This decision was not well received by groups involved in the consultation process and active on issues of racial discrimination in the neighbourhood, such as the Hoodstock collective, which organizes the Montreal-North social forum, a body that aims to "channel the popular anger caused by the assassination of Fredy Villanueva into a constructive and emancipatory project" (Hébert et al., 2018), or the Villanueva Family Support Committee. According to members of these collectives, the borough's goal was to find a unifying project that would bring closure to the debate and say, as we heard from elected officials at the borough hall, "that [the events of 2008] have now been resolved. This situation, we lived through it, we accepted what happened, we put it in the past. You see, this is not the present anymore, I think." (December, 2018)

Several steps in the creation of Place de l'Espoir were criticized by these collectives for the way in which the square deflects the racial issue, if only in its name [Hope Square], and seeks to minimize the gravity of the events of 2008. For example, there were questions about the therapeutic writing workshops offered to city residents to put messages in a time capsule buried under the square, particularly because of the lengthy 47 years memorial process until the exhumation of the capsule. As one member of the Villanueva Family Support Committee put it, "It's another generation entirely, it loses touch with the extremely complex current issues surrounding the incident. Like systemic racism, racial and social discrimination, racial profiling, police brutality." (December 2018) Some of the community actors involved also lamented the rushed, sloppy work: "my first impression was, it reminded me of a cemetery. It's not really a place to gather, to look forward to the future." (November 2018) The design, described as "cold" by the respondent, is consistent with the idea of a territory emptied of any semiotic other than that of power. The main purpose of Place de l'Espoir seemed to be to show that the municipality is acting to revitalize the area, as the borough council implied: "Greened up, developed, it's certain that in this context, it will make

the area more attractive, and make it much more interesting." (December 2018) But the complaint voiced by some members of the group is the denial of their right to give the place another meaning: "what we were trying to ask the mayor is why do you want to create a commemorative space? Especially if you can't even name the causes that made you want to create a Place de l'Espoir. You could see a gap with these people, who are supposed to be there for the population, who are completely disconnected from reality" (Hoodstock member, December 2018).

Following the numerous critiques around Place de l'Espoir, the borough council, certain community organizations and activist collectives tried to debate the significance of this place by creating a discussion space called "Panser les plaies."[10] Hoodstock's willingness to discuss issues of racialization within "Panser les plaies" destabilized some of the community organizations involved, as well as the borough council, which perceived inequalities in economic rather than racial terms. On this subject, an employee of an organization involved in "Panser les plaies" confided: "They have been asking for a mural, a plaque, something commemorative, for a long time. And we worked to find somewhere, something that would make the city feel comfortable [...] a text was written, which I think is correct, but just spending so much time to find the right words, it gives you an idea of the tension." (October 2018)

The borough council's difficulty in acknowledging the racial nature of the events of August 2008 in the very space of commemoration is also reflected in the plan to add "des gens d'ici" ("people from here") after the name "place de l'Espoir". The words "people from here" requested by the community organizations involved is a weak concession, more like a euphemism to avoid linking the names of the three young people targeted by the police and to prevent recognition of the racial character of these events, which would be reflected in the names of the individuals involved. The quotations from Nelson Mandela, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and Gabrielle Roy on the memorial plaque also illustrate the inhabitants' dispossession of their own narratives in the unhistorical nature of the references. These quotations, with their focus on a common future, demonstrate the borough's refusal to recognize the racial issue for the people "from here" at the root of the stigmatization of their neighbourhood.

Despite these many criticisms, Place de l'Espoir was inaugurated on September 21, 2018, on International Day of Peace. Under stormy skies, borough hall released butterflies as a city councilwoman performed Jacques Brel songs in a mezzo-soprano version. When the green ribbon—to symbolize hope—was cut, a crowd of political dignitaries jostled for position in the press photographers' lenses, leaving little

10. In French, *panser* sounds like both verbs "to heal" and "to think".

room for Fredy Villanueva's mother and sister, who had to elbow their way to the front of the ceremony.

Figure 3: Jostling on the day of the inauguration of the Place de l'Espoir, the mayor and a fellow councillor in the foreground
(Source: Antoine Vogler)

Thus, the development of Place de l'Espoir was an opportunity to create the illusion of "community" under the pretext of a shared interest in the goal of keeping any form of stigmatization at bay, in the process avoiding racial issues deemed detrimental to reconciliation. The goal of producing a neutral space, one emptied of all asperities, makes Place de l'Espoir a place where the stories and marks (Bulot and Veschambre, 2006) that have shaped this neighbourhood are buried.

This raises the question of who this square is intended for: the residents of the Northeast district, the young racialized people who were poorly represented at the commemoration, or the dominant mass of Montreal-North taxpayers who see the Northeast district as a bastion of "street gangs"? Going back over the process of developing Place de l'Espoir, another actor on the Villanueva Family Support Committee summarized how this project as a whole is representative of what Montreal-North is: "For me, Montreal-North represents the neighbourhood where racialized communities are under surveillance. So, in a way, we don't want them politicized, we want them … in a certain notion of civility. We want them … with the most predictable

behaviours possible." (July 2018) The second case study goes on to question how forms of categorization of spaces and practices shape these "predictable behaviours".

MCC: "getting our youth off the streets", chilling under supervision

The MCC was built in 2006 at a cost of $12 million (see figure 2). When it was inaugurated, the building was welcomed with some anticipation by both community actors and the population, who saw it as the end of an "omission". "At that time, there was nothing in the neighbourhood. There was the Bourassa arena. Other than that, there was nothing… For example, there were almost no buses here because he [Mayor Ryan] wouldn't accept their point of service. The bus routes you see, it's been the same deal since the 1980s" (a community group *Un itinéraire pour tous*—a path for everyone—[UIPT]) stakeholder and Northeast district resident, July 2018). As a result, through the many public services it provides (daycare, cafeteria, library, computer room, event rooms and dedicated spaces for youth and community groups), the MCC has achieved a high degree of legitimacy within the Northeast district, which was previously considered to be "underprivileged in terms of public services" (arrondissement de Montréal-Nord, 2011). The MCC also offers a response to the lack of spaces dedicated to young residents. "We don't have anywhere else, the rest of the places are either extremely far outside of Montreal-North, or [else] the places inside cost a lot of money" (Youth 2, September 2019). The construction of the MCC thus performs several public action roles, notably compensating for the poor resources of the borough and keeping young people away from crime. For the staff working for the community group UIPT, the manager and main service provider for the centre, the MCC is needed to fill a gap, but is also intended to "protect our young people from the streets" (July 2018). This ambivalence between the goal of providing the neighbourhood with cultural services, especially for young people, and the goal of protecting them entails, as we shall see, the exercise of control and discipline over bodies in the neighbourhood space.

For the young people surveyed, who are aged between 18 and 23, the structure they have been using since childhood appears to be a safe and appreciated space. "It is a place where, instead of hanging out in the street, young people come to gather. And it's also a place where I built my identity, because there were Arabic classes […] and it's where I learned to write Arabic and everything. That place means a lot to me" (Youth 1, June 2019)[11]. Another respondent added, "If I was at MCC late, like, I wouldn't be bothered by people outside, [or] some police or stuff like that. So I feel a lot safer at MCC than when I'm just hanging out in certain places in the daytime or in the

11. Youth interviews dates are always the same thereafter.

evening" (Youth 2, September 2019). These two excerpts clearly show how the MCC performs its function as a safe haven against the threat represented by the street. Nevertheless, the reference to the police in the second excerpt decries a kind of profiling that also contributes to a feeling of insecurity fuelled by the fear of street gangs. The young people interviewed rarely use the term "gangs" and tend to use vague terms like "outsiders," "those who hang around," or else "the *tontons*" [uncles] mentioned in three of our verbatim reports. These choices underline the difficulty of precisely identifying the source of threatening representations of the street and contrasts with the unvarying use of the term "street gang" by institutions.

These young men of North African and Haitian origin present the MCC as a closed space that protects them from the street and from places such as parks and the local business zone, which are often presented as "dangerous."[12] Sometimes, the entire neighbourhood becomes a danger area. "Everyone knows that the north end is a 'red' place [referring to the street gang the Bloods]. I find it dangerous. I don't like walking around there on my own" (Youth 3, June 2019). In this context of an outdoor space perceived as threatening, the MCC becomes a more accessible public space for youth, although it is not without its critics. "It's a place where I feel more comfortable. Compared to Pascal [a shopping street just two blocks from MCC] where every day I see at least one police car and often feel watched. But now that they put guards in the libraries, I feel watched there too… And I think… The library is not a place where you should feel watched… It's precisely somewhere you should feel safe and comfortable…" (Youth 4, July 2019). This last excerpt qualifies a categorization of space in which a dangerous exterior is contrasted with a reassuring interior. Here, the mention of the police shows that the control and the surveillance conducted within the structure blur the separation between two public spaces set in opposition to each other. In this case, what generates a feeling of insecurity in the respondents is not necessarily linked to the threat of gangs, but to the extension of police surveillance in a place that was initially protected from it. Several of them noted, for example, that "the police have gotten into the habit of always going into the MCC or the library to watch the kids" (Youth 2).

In other words, the young people interviewed recognize that the MCC provides access to a space that was previously absent from the neighbourhood, but it has also become a place where free bodies are disciplined (Foucault, 1975). Traffic is controlled. All the dedicated rooms in the basement for young people are locked outside scheduled times, including the toilets, which are only accessible on request with keys held by the staff. The basement also has no benches, unlike the building's other levels,

12. Pascal and Lapierre Streets, which surround the commercial area, are considered to be an area of gang activity where the police maintain daily patrols.

in order to prevent young people from "squatting" there, echoing the safe urbanism visible in the streets of the neighbourhood. The requirement to present a card on entering the library, which young people must leave at the counter, also operates a form of filtering. "If you want to borrow a document from the library, you have to go back to the counter and ask for your card so that you can go and get the document, so it's a lot of trouble" (Youth 2). And if "unregistered" young people[13] want to come to the library on an ad hoc basis (e.g. during video game nights) they cannot do so, as our observations of the place showed. The result is a system of controlled access that prevents open use of the place and that only makes sense in terms of the desire for greater control over "young people who are considered more disruptive. […] There are some who are known for doing bad shit, like serious shit. So some kids prefer to stay away from them. That's one of the reasons why we go to the MCC and the library. It's because the people who work there and the employees recognize them. They know that if we come to MCC, it's because we're trying to stay away from them" (Youth 2). The dynamics that drive the stigmatization of certain young people referred to here highlight the spatial stigmatization resulting from anti-crime measures. Indeed, while some young people are the targets of increased control on the street because of practices that are deemed deviant, others stand out because of their use of MCC. In order to avoid being stigmatized as a gang member and exposed to the risks of marginalization associated with street practice, they are forced to use the only structure capable of hiding the stigma they would bear on the street. However, the effect of the filtering device is not to eliminate the stigma but to evacuate the burden it represents to others. This raises the question of the objectives of this surveillance of the complex.

Beyond the library, it is the entire space of the MCC that is designed to control what young people do. In this case, the bylaw does stipulate that community organizations must "ensure that there is no loitering during or after the activities they organize" (arrondissement de Montréal-Nord, 2016). Montreal-North's public space (plazas, storefronts, lobbies) is covered with signs that stipulate the prohibition on loitering, and MCC is no exception to the rule.[14] Consequently, as a bulwark against an exterior that is categorized as threatening, the MCC becomes both a refuge facility and a control facility. The presence of cameras, guards and police officers is perceived by young users as an extension of police surveillance and gives them the sense that even when they use their own dedicated spaces, the ways in which they are able to appropriate those spaces are invariably restricted. More broadly, it highlights the entanglement between forms of control in open and enclosed spaces, which has the result that all racialized bodies tend to be implicated in the transgressive practice of

13. Registration is free for residents but requires proof of residency, an ID card, a phone number, and an email address. However, some of our respondents did not have a current ID card or phone number.
14. These signs were removed in the MCC due to user complaints in 2019-2020.

public space. As one police officer told us, “we'll talk about the youth on [streets] Pascal/Lapierre, but they're 35-40 years old. They are no longer young, but the term ‘kid’ is a shorthand for saying that they don't work for a living.” (July 2018) The interchangeability of the terms “youth” and “street gang” demonstrates how stigma travels through space by being attributed not only to places but to the bodies that occupy them. So the manufacture of a controlled public space in which the good youth is the one who uses MCC while the bad youth uses the street, underlines how stigmatization operates through space and demonstrates the relational character of the stigmatization process, a process for which space turns out to be more than just a medium.

Conclusion

We have used the examples of the MCC and Place de l'Espoir to show how the desire to revitalize a neighbourhood through public amenities and facilities operates by devices to discipline bodies and narratives about the neighbourhood. The attempt to combat stigmatization orchestrated by the borough and city government thus contributes to the use of space as a tool of dispossession for young racialized residents of the Northeast district (Khalil and Rutland, 2019). As a result, public spaces lose their character as open places of expression for minority communities and for place memory. The racial dimension of stigmatization is circumvented by locally developed revitalization strategies that are applied to space in a purportedly neutral way and, as a result, put up no effective resistance to mechanisms of systemic exclusion that have been at work for decades.

This review of the stages in the construction and demarcation of the Northeast district by political actors, as well as our field analyses, lead us to believe that the participatory process as applied to the integrated revitalization policy falls far short of enabling local people to appropriate the territory in which they live. Because the spatial dimension of race is still a blind spot in public policy, as the people we interviewed pointed out, it becomes illegitimate for certain voices and bodies to occupy space. Conditional access to public space thus prompts us to relate our discussion of spatial stigmatization to the more embodied and situated dimension of the effects of this stigmatization, which could be analyzed in terms of “assignment to territoriality” (Hancock, 2008, p. 117) for racialized bodies.

Nevertheless, while the staging of a revitalized territory imposes collective spatial representations from above and outside, it does not totally erase either the practices or the memory of the inhabitants who give these new places another

meaning, associated with the prevalence of stigma and racial discrimination: "We are on Place de l'Espoir, which was supposed to be called Place Fredy. [...] And that's one of the things that young people are going to remember, that you always have to be careful with authority and all that, because they [the police] are everywhere. With the fact that some kids have been profiled and stuff like that. It's a reminder that we have to be careful" (Youth 2).

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Ted Rutland and Béatrice Collignon for their proofreading and advice, as well as Yannick Baumann-Lapierre for the cartographic production.

To quote this article

Jolivet Violaine, **Khelifi** Chakib, **Vogler** Antoine, « Stigmatisation par l'espace à Montréal-Nord : revitalisation urbaine et invisibilisation de la race » [« Spatial Stigmatization in Montréal-Nord: Urban Revitalization and the Invisibilization of Race »], *Justice spatiale |Spatial Justice*, nº 16, 2021 (http://www.jssj.org/article/stigmatisation-par-lespace-a-montreal-nord-revitalisation-urbaine-et-invisibilisation-de-la-race/).

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