



HIGHLIGHTS

Reducing Territorial Inequalities and Preventing Urban Discrimination

A roadmap for transforming City of Montréal initiatives



The Policy Statement *Reducing Territorial Inequalities and Preventing Urban Discrimination* (hereafter “report”) was prepared between June 2022 and April 2023 and was adopted by the members of the Conseil interculturel de Montréal (CiM) at their Assembly on May 3, 2023.

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The Conseil interculturel de Montréal (CiM) is an advisory committee that was created in 2003 to advise the City of Montréal on intercultural relations. The CiM is made up of 15 volunteer members drawn from the Montréal population, who have experience and/or expertise in this area. CiM's membership reflects the city's population in terms of gender and age and is also representative of Montréal's cultural, linguistic, social and geographic diversity.

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Introduction

Cities have long been studied as spaces that act as both producers and transmitters of inequality and oppression. Because they are ideal places in which to observe social relations, they are also the best place to witness unequal and discriminatory relations¹. Yet they can also be places where people assert their right to the city, and where new ways of reducing territorial inequalities and promoting social justice are developed.

When trying to understand urban inequalities, we must look at the city's political, economic and social history. Starting in the 1940s and 1950s, Montréal's immigrant and racialized populations began to settle in the city's more outlying and industrialized neighbourhoods, resulting in territorial inequalities that still exist today. But differences between neighbourhoods are also the result of political and urban planning choices. In fact, governments largely abandoned outlying neighbourhoods with a high percentage of immigrant and racialized residents, particularly from 1970 to 1990. Then, in the 1990s and 2000s, inequalities between neighbourhoods were exacerbated, as urban policies were adopted to renew the downtown core and convert industrial areas, in a broader context of urbanization that encouraged cities to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset in order to stay competitive with other major cities². This meant that, for many years, Montréal was thought of in terms of competitiveness and attractiveness rather than in terms of equality and social justice.

Today, the City of Montréal recognizes the territorial inequalities within its jurisdiction and is looking for

ways to reduce them and to prevent discrimination in the areas of mobility, housing and urban health. As part of this pursuit of equality, the city must ensure fair treatment for all its citizens and guarantee adequate services (including transportation, housing, health, and education) throughout the city.

The first objective of this report is to outline Montréal's territorial inequalities and the City's approach to the issue, which lies at the heart of municipal government action. Following a review of the scientific and grey literature, the CiM selected five major areas of focus in order to study territorial inequalities and municipal initiatives in Montréal: mobility; housing; public facilities, services and spaces; citizen participation and the socio-ecological transition.

The second objective is to work with immigrant and racialized residents of previously neglected neighbourhoods to identify the challenges they face in accessing local resources on a day-to-day basis.

This report makes recommendations to the City of Montréal on ways to reduce territorial inequalities and prevent discrimination against immigrant and racialized populations. It encourages the City to do everything in its power to ensure that development across its territory is equitable, and that disadvantaged populations and neighbourhoods are not overlooked.

¹ Alessandrin, A. and Dagorn, J. (2020). Le rôle de la Ville dans la lutte contre les discriminations. *Maison des Sciences de l'Homme d'Aquitaine*.

² Harvey, D. (1989). *From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: The transformation in urban governance in late capitalism*. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 71(1), 3-17.

Method

This report continues the CiM’s work on territorial inequalities, one of the many forms of racism and discrimination that exist in Montréal. Its purpose is to provide a deeper understanding of territorial inequalities and discrimination in urban areas, and more specifically of how they are experienced by Montréal’s immigrant and racialized populations.

The research was carried out in three phases:

The first phase consisted of a review of the scientific literature on the concepts of territorial inequalities and discrimination, as well as a review of the grey literature comprised of the City of Montréal’s development plans and programs related to territorial inequalities. This phase helped define the terms of the topic and identify blind spots in the City’s actions in this area.

1

The second phase involved setting up focus groups to gather hard, site-specific data on territorial inequalities as experienced by immigrant and racialized people in three Montréal neighbourhoods with a large percentage of immigrant and racialized populations.

2

The third phase involved conducting a survey to generate additional data on territorial inequalities across Montréal.

3

Throughout the research process, CiM members met with City of Montréal elected officials and civil servants, as well as community organizations, in order to monitor the work already being done on these issues and integrate it into their work.

Summary

This report by the Conseil interculturel de Montréal (CiM) focuses on territorial inequalities, a key concern for government action within the context of a socio-ecological transition. Developed as part of the city's updated Land Use and Mobility Plan (PUM), the goal of the report is to support the City of Montréal in its decision-making to reduce territorial inequalities and prevent discrimination, by taking into account the opinions of immigrant and racialized populations. The document is based on a review of academic literature and primary scientific data, three focus groups with residents of the chosen boroughs (Saint-Léonard, Saint-Laurent and Montréal-Nord), and an online survey of Montréalers.

The findings focused on five issues:

- 1 Mobility
- 2 Housing
- 3 Public facilities, services and spaces
- 4 Citizen participation
- 5 Socio-ecological transition

The findings led to 13 recommendations addressed to the City of Montréal, designed to help the City better address territorial challenges and population diversity in Montréal's urban planning for 2050.

ISSUE 1

MOBILITY



Public and active transportation are less accessible, and transportation infrastructures are of inferior quality in Montréal's outlying neighbourhoods, where immigrant and racialized populations heavily rely on these modes of transport. Current fare structures disadvantage these populations, and instances of discrimination, often not recorded in official statistics, create a feeling of insecurity and exclusion, which affects their mobility and integration into Montréal society.

Given the above, the CiM makes three recommendations; specific actions to achieve them are outlined in the full version of the Report:

1

That the City of Montréal work with the Société de transport de Montréal (STM) to develop public and active transportation and promote these new initiatives by targeting the under-served neighbourhoods where a majority of immigrants and racialized people live.

2

That the City of Montréal work with the Société de transport de Montréal (STM), boroughs and community organizations to improve the quality of public transit services and active transportation infrastructure in outlying neighbourhoods, where immigrant and racialized people primarily live.

3

That the City of Montréal work with the ARTM (Agence régionale de transport métropolitain), the STM (Société de transport de Montréal) and the SPVM (Service de police de la Ville de Montréal) to provide new reduced fare options for vulnerable households, continue discrimination training for transit employees, and simplify the complaints process to prevent discriminatory treatment of immigrant and racialized transit users.

ISSUE 2

HOUSING



Outlying neighbourhoods with a high percentage of immigrant and racialized residents, such as Montréal-Nord, Saint-Léonard and Saint-Laurent, suffer from a lack of social and community housing, low vacancy rates for affordable housing, and long processing times for social housing applications. Housing available to low-income immigrants and racialized people is often unsanitary, not adapted to household size, and in areas that are far from services. Moreover, in Montréal, housing-related discrimination is disproportionately experienced by immigrants and racialized people.

Given the above, the CiM makes three recommendations; specific actions to achieve them are outlined in the full version of the Report:

4 That the City of Montréal purchase land and buildings in neighbourhoods with the lowest levels of social and community housing and high numbers of immigrant and racialized residents, in order to increase its real estate holdings and encourage a more equitable development of social and community housing within its jurisdiction.

5 That the City of Montréal monitor the *By-law concerning the sanitation, maintenance and safety of dwelling units* more closely, and increase the funding and human resources devoted to inspecting and renovating buildings that are unsanitary and in poor condition, particularly in neighbourhoods with a high percentage of immigrant and racialized people.

6 That the City of Montréal work with the CDPDJ (Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse), the BINAM (Bureau d'intégration des nouveaux arrivants à Montréal / Montréal Newcomer Office), relevant provincial authorities and tenants' rights associations to better regulate the practices of building owners and managers in the private rental sector, and also develop new by-laws governing the social housing sector, in order to prevent any form of housing discrimination or unfair treatment.

ISSUE 3

PUBLIC FACILITIES, SERVICES AND SPACES



The distribution of public spaces and facilities throughout Montréal, especially in neighbourhoods such as Saint-Laurent, Montréal-Nord and Saint-Léonard, is highly uneven, limiting access to services, recreation and culture for area residents. Moreover, the diversity and accessibility of the available activities, both in physical and monetary terms, fail to meet the residents' needs. Survey respondents expressed dissatisfaction with street maintenance, garbage collection and snow removal, and immigrant and racialized residents expressed a sense of insecurity and said they felt discriminated against in public spaces.

Given the above, the CiM makes three recommendations; specific actions to achieve them are outlined in the full version of the Report:

7

That the City of Montréal work with the boroughs to make targeted investments in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in order to balance the availability of sports and cultural facilities and activities throughout its territory, to ensure that they are of appropriate quality and quantity, and that they take into account the diversity of local needs.

8

That the City of Montréal develop and implement common standards for all boroughs regarding essential municipal services such as street maintenance, garbage collection and snow removal.

9

That the City of Montréal work with the BRDS (Office of the commissioner against racism and systemic discrimination), the SPVM (Service de police de la Ville de Montréal), the boroughs, and community and private partners to implement measures focusing on prevention and community outreach in order to strengthen the sense of safety and reduce discrimination against immigrant and racialized people in public spaces in the outlying neighbourhoods mentioned in this report.

ISSUE 4

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION



Citizen participation varies from one neighbourhood to another in Montréal, and certain specific barriers, such as a lack of information and language barriers, prevent immigrant and racialized people from getting involved. Lack of communication and poor access to information on citizen participation are major problems that affect newcomers in particular, and require the city to make greater efforts to share information on relevant services and organizations. Another important finding is the need to vary the kinds of participation and ways in which people can get involved, in order to promote inclusion: provide childcare, take into account different schedules, go to the neighbourhoods where participation is lowest, but also offer a range of incentives.

Given the above, the CiM makes three recommendations; specific actions to achieve them are outlined in the full version of the Report:

10

That the City work with the BINAM and local community organizations serving immigrant and racialized populations to tailor the ways it communicates information on citizen consultation and municipal services to the diverse nature of the groups and neighbourhoods in question.

11

That the City adapt the procedures for taking part in public urban planning consultations to the needs and limitations of the target groups, and that it financially compensate³ the expertise and involvement of immigrant and racialized people.

³ The issue of financially compensating people from certain neighbourhoods to get involved in their community was discussed during a panel on social and environmental transition organized by the Conseil interculturel de Montréal on April 30, 2022.

ISSUE 5

SOCIO- ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION



Montréal neighbourhoods with a significant percentage of immigrant and racialized populations lack green spaces and suffer from environmental inequalities, making them more vulnerable to climate change and the urban heat island effect. A more equitable distribution of green spaces, designed with the local population in mind, would limit the risks of eco-gentrification and offer co-benefits.⁴ Immigrants and racialized people living in outlying neighbourhoods may want to get involved in environmental initiatives, but they don't necessarily have the time, means or information to do so.

Given the above, the CiM makes three recommendations; specific actions to achieve them are outlined in the full version of the Report:

12

That the City of Montréal work with neighbourhood round tables and community organizations to involve immigrant and racialized populations in choosing the areas to be greened and in deciding which types of green spaces and landscaping should be prioritized in neighbourhoods with little greenery, which could potentially lead to a genuine socio-ecological transition based on local needs.

13

That the City work with local community organizations to fund environmental awareness-raising and training events for immigrant and racialized residents, and strengthen social cohesion in order to encourage them to get involved in environmental projects in their neighbourhoods.

⁴ Co-benefits can be defined as the positive effects that a policy or measure aimed at one objective might have on other objectives.

Conclusion

In this report, the Conseil interculturel de Montréal (CiM) hopes to highlight the key role municipalities play in helping to reduce social inequalities between neighbourhoods and combat discrimination against immigrants and racialized people. Although the City of Montréal has recently factored territorial inequalities into its urban planning policies, more work needs to be done to transform this recognition into targeted action, that would lead to the genuine inclusion of all Montréal's immigrant and racialized communities. This is especially important for long-term planning, given projected demographic changes.

The report contains 13 recommendations that address five key planning issues: mobility; housing; public facilities, services and spaces; citizen participation; and the socio-ecological transition. It urges the City of Montréal to work with boroughs, local authorities, consensus-building organizations – especially neighbourhood round tables, which act as a link between all local and regional players – and community groups to address the concrete needs of citizens. It shows that transversal actions and cross-sector collaborations are also crucial to tackling priority issues in an integrated way, especially from a socio-ecological transition perspective. Finally, the report highlights the need to take a participatory

approach that involves citizens in shaping the future of Montréal, while reducing inequalities and combating discrimination.

By working together to implement these recommendations, the City of Montréal and its partners will be contributing to a fairer and more inclusive urban society for all, one that provides better access to services, more equal opportunities and a better quality of life for immigrants and racialized people. This process will also strengthen social cohesion and ensure that the needs and concerns of all Montréalers are taken into account, thereby helping to build a more equitable, united and mutually supportive future for all residents, regardless of the neighbourhood in which they live.

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FULL REPORT**

