

**Urban Conflicts and Socio-Territorial Cohesion: Consensus Building and
Compromise in the Saint-Michel Neighbourhood in Montreal**

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Abstract

Our research highlights the structuring effect of initiatives that mobilize social economy and community action resources with the aim of promoting the conversion of local spaces and the implementation of a dynamic of local development and socio-territorial inclusion. Using the case study of the establishment of La TOHU in the Saint-Michel neighbourhood in Montreal (Quebec, Canada), for which we conducted a literature review and an interview survey, we show how urban conflicts contributed to the construction of a cohesive environment. In the path taken by Saint-Michel, one of the most sensitive neighbourhoods in Canada, our conflict analysis sheds light on (1) the relationship between urban conflicts and legitimate representation for sites of consensus-building, (2) the importance of the instances allowing for debate and discussion between the various types of actors (social, business community, public) such as to generate strong coalitions centered on the social development of the local community and the improvement of the quality of life for citizens, and (3) the relationship between consensus-building among the actors and the development of compromises for the territory under study. The debates provoked by the conflicts thus allowed for the social construction of rallying points, which in turn promoted the reaching of compromises, in this case, the one leading to the establishment of La

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TOHU. However, although La TOHU was a success as a strategy of integration and socio-territorial connectivity, the roots of the borough's socio-economic problems have not been resolved: Saint-Michel is still a poor neighbourhood in which socio-territorial exclusion has not disappeared. Finally, the 2008 riots which took place in Montreal-North, an adjacent neighbourhood, point to an important direction to pursue in our continuing research on the role and place of conflicts in socio-territorial regulation: the analysis of ethnic riots and conflicts related to social integration.

Keywords: Urban conflicts, consensus-building, compromise, socioterritorial innovation, socioterritorial inclusion, social cohesion

Résumé

Nos travaux mettent en lumière l'effet structurant des initiatives qui mobilisent des ressources de l'économie sociale et de l'action communautaire en vue d'assurer une reconversion des espaces locaux et de mettre en place des dynamiques de développement local et d'inclusion socioterritoriale. À l'aide de l'étude de cas de l'établissement de la TOHU (1999) dans le quartier Saint-Michel à Montréal, pour laquelle nous avons mené une recension des écrits et une enquête par entrevues, nous montrons comment les conflits urbains ont participé à la construction d'un milieu cohésif. Dans la trajectoire de développement de Saint-Michel, l'un des quartiers les plus sensibles au Canada, l'analyse des conflits donne à voir (1) le rapport entre conflits urbains et légitimation de la représentativité dans les lieux de concertation, (2) l'importance des instances permettant le débat et la discussion entre les divers types d'acteurs (sociaux, milieux des affaires, publics) de façon à générer des coalitions fortes centrées sur le développement social de la collectivité locale et sur l'amélioration de la qualité de vie des citoyens et (3) le rapport entre la concertation entre les acteurs et le développement de compromis sur le territoire à l'étude, car les débats provoqués par les conflits permettent la construction sociale de points de ralliement, lesquels favorisent le développement de compromis tel celui ayant conduit à l'établissement de la TOHU. Cependant, même si en tant que stratégie d'intégration et de connectivité socioterritoriale, la TOHU est une réussite, il n'en demeure pas moins que les problèmes socioéconomiques ne sont pas résolus à la base : Saint-Michel demeure un quartier pauvre d'où l'exclusion socioterritoriale n'est pas disparue. Enfin, à la lumière des émeutes de Montréal-Nord (2008), quartier adjacent, une piste de recherche importante se dégage de nos travaux pour continuer notre réflexion sur le rôle et la place des conflits dans la régulation socioterritoriale : l'analyse des luttes autour d'enjeux ethniques et des conflits liés à l'intégration sociale.

Mots clés: conflits urbains, consensus, compromis, innovation socioterritoriale, inclusion, cohésion sociale

Introduction

In the context of social diversification and of restructuring of urban spaces, the relationships between civil society and the government evolve continually, as demonstrated by the experiences of local collectivities adapting to globalization (Fontan et al. 2005). Social inequalities and increasingly complex territorial dynamics lead to more frequent conflicts. These conflicts often become particularly intense in the metropolitan areas, due to the diverging interests and values of the diversity of actors there.

However, in certain circumstances, urban conflicts contribute to the implementation of place-specific forms of conflict resolution and to the creation of compromises and local governance. Our research highlights the structuring effect of initiatives that promote the conversion of local spaces and a dynamic of local development and socio-territorial inclusion through the mobilization of resources from the social economy and community action¹ (Tremblay et al. 2009; Klein et al. 2009a). Using the case study of the Saint-Michel neighbourhood in Montreal (Quebec, Canada), we show how urban conflicts contributed to the construction of an inclusive local governance.

We will further demonstrate that this reconfiguration of regulatory measures at the local scale draws from two main types of actions. The first is linked to collective conflict actions opposing a local population to public and private bodies. The second is linked to land revitalization actions that rally a variety of internal and external actors of the territory. The case study of the establishment of the Cité des arts du Cirque (or La TOHU)² in Montreal's Saint-Michel neighbourhood allows us to understand the role played by conflicts in a phase of identity reconstruction of the territory. We shall see that the integration of La TOHU, in fact an external project, into the social fabric of the neighbourhood demonstrates the capacity of the actors to adopt a project and to turn it into an asset for the local community. As we shall see, this capacity is the result of a decade of conflict and collective learning.

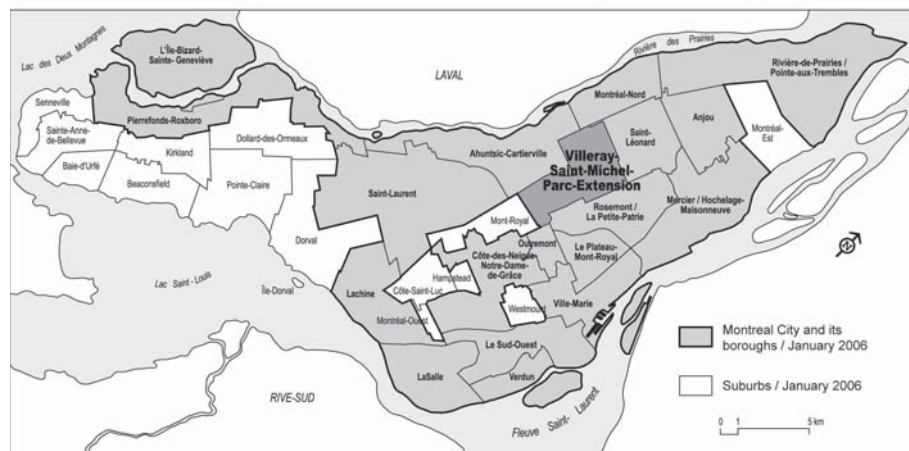
Our article unfolds in three stages. First, we describe our case study and specify our sources of theoretical inspiration, namely, urban regimes, collective action, and neo-institutionalism. We show that the combination of those approaches allows for an adequate reading of the conflicts marking the formation of this neighbourhood at the institutional level, including its capacity to generate regulatory schemes for strengthening the local community. Second, we present the methodology. In a third step, we examine, for the neighbourhood under study, the evolution of the different waves of conflicts that allowed for the creation of an environment amenable to the establishment of a major cultural project. In particular, we show that social conflicts have contributed to the cohesion and the development of partnerships between the local actors and the external actors, but that consensus-building does not come about on its own, requiring, rather, constant pressure and involvement from the representatives of the Saint-Michel community.

The effects of conflict on urban governance

The long process that shaped the social environment leading to the integration of La TOHU into the Saint-Michel neighbourhood was marked by conflicts and compro-

mises (Figure 1). Our analysis of this process is based on a paradigm that sees power as a set of complex power relations in which public, private, and social actors form alliances or confront each other as they define strategic orientations that represent the interests of the coalitions and the compromises resulting therefrom. Here, confrontation leads to compromises which (re)build themselves from within the organizations constituting the environment as well as from the relations between those organizations. Moreover, compromise here refers to a macro-sociological regulation, both in its social and, in particular, its political dimension. Compromise is seen as linked to the co-existence of actors as well as the forms of exchange and social transactions. Lastly, as a keystone of community life, compromise can be understood as a practice that is normal, regular, and likely to prevent or end conflict and disagreement (Nachi 2004) as the actors agree to meet somewhere in the middle. Given these characteristics, compromises could facilitate the implementation of territorialized forms of governance. The different social groups and interest groups each carve out a place for themselves in order to take part in decision-making concerning the management and development of territories before the territorial administrative bodies (cities, boroughs), including spaces they feel personally attached to (e.g., a neighbourhood or living environment). Social conflicts are often coupled with territorial conflicts, and sometimes with ethnic conflicts, which then leads to disputes over the legitimacy of a territorial claim.

Figure 1. Location of Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension borough in Montreal City.



Source : Geography department, UQAM.

Governance can be regarded as the social dimension of regulation in the sense of the “regulation school,” whose systems theory approach is inclusive of all actors and is not limited to the formal government sphere (Boyer and Saillard 2002). Governance includes the contribution of civil society to the definition of development strategies and the overall steering of society. While other approaches contribute to the understanding of urban, political economics and social dynamics, urban regime theory appears to be the most appropriate method for analyzing the role of many stakeholders participating

in governance. According to Jouve (2003), the theory offers effective concepts for the analysis of local governance and the forging of coalitions aimed at settling conflicts between actors locally.

The urban regime approach was developed for the analysis of conflicts and their impacts on governance (Stone 1989). Although initially developed for the North American context, it has also proven effective for the analysis of some European cases.³ Nevertheless, some researchers, such as Pierre (2011) and Mossberg (2009), question the validity of applying the urban regime approach beyond its originally intended scope of application, thereby invalidating its usefulness in any comparative research design that includes a non-North American country. That said, the urban regime approach does facilitate the setting up of bodies in which power conflicts are settled locally between actors and which allow for the expression of political and economic interests (Stone et al. 2001). At the heart of the urban regime approach lies the concept of the “growth coalition,” understood as a set of formal and informal networks of public and private actors (Stone 1989). According to the approach, the economic development path followed by the different territorial collectivities depends on the coalitions which the private and public actors manage to build, as well as the place occupied by each actor in those coalitions (Kantor et al. 1997). Often, growth coalitions take on a corporatist and elitist form that excludes, from the start or during the course, the social actors, in particular representatives of the most disadvantaged sectors of society (Deitrick 1999). Favoured above all deregulation, competitiveness, and prestige (Markusen and Schrock 2006) as ways to make a territory more attractive to investors, these coalitions establish an entrepreneurial form of governance (Harvey 1999) that subordinates a territory to the rules imposed by those who favour globalization and without concern for the effects that those changes and investments may have on the different social strata. This way of demarcating and managing spaces at the local level constitutes a neoliberal agenda that allows globalization to flourish (Sparke 2005). Yet, on the other end of the spectrum, coalitions form to counteract this regime, namely through networks of social actors representing civil society, community sectors, and grassroots movements (Stone 2005). Their common ground is the desire to promote inclusive governance (meaning that the social actors should not be excluded from meaningful decision-making processes, and that broader community views should not go unconsidered) as well as optimal (from a community standpoint) policy choices (Moulaert et al. 2007; Klein and Tremblay 2010). Also, and very importantly, the constitution of coalesced structures anchored in civil society allows for mediation with the instances of power, in turn allowing for the emergence of more sustainable compromises.

However, when trying to understand how these more social coalitions evolve, the urban regime approach is clearly insufficient, as it focuses primarily on interests that are already converging and not on mediating between conflicting orientations. Here, the collective action and resource mobilization approach, as defined in classic works in the sociology on social movements (Tilly 1984; Tarrow and Tilly 2006; and that integrated notions of identity in a context of socio-territorial change (Melucci 1997; Della Porta and Tarrow 2005), turns out to be more appropriate. In this approach, sectorial and territorial networks are seen to develop between actors from a wide spectrum of cultural identities, spanning from the work environment to the living environ-

ment, from the local to the global, and from the social to the territorial. The approach complements the urban regime approach in that it analyzes not only the conflict opposing the actors to the instances of power but also the conflicts between the actors. Nevertheless, the collective action approach does not account for how institutional frameworks are able to, or not, represent the interests and identities of the wide array of actors. For that, we resort to the neoinstitutionalist approach, and here more specifically to “historical institutionalism” (Steinmo 1992), which is one school of thought in neoinstitutionalism (Hall and Taylor 1996).

The neoinstitutionalist approach provides tools for analyzing the “institutional capacity” of collective actions (Sen 1987), in other words, their capacity to influence the institutional framework (Hollingsworth 2000) and to innovate socially (Klein and Harrisson 2007). The approach is interested, in particular, in the resolution of conflicts between actors and the regulatory schemes set up following compromises and specific institutional arrangements. According to the approach, actors operate in an environment comprised of formal and informal institutions that condition the development of collectivities (DiMaggio and Powell 1991) and that shape the path dependencies giving the territories their distinct character (Amin 1999).

In our study, we refer to these three approaches—neoinstitutionalist approach, urban regime approach, collective action and resource mobilization approach—in an operational perspective to structure our argument and also to verify the following hypothesis: The confrontations and conflict negotiations between actors, representing diverse types of social groups (business environment, inhabitants, ethnic groups) and diverse levels (government, city, neighbourhoods), allowed for the construction of a cohesive environment in the Saint-Michel borough. The emphasis in this notion of cohesive environment does not lie on eradicating conflict or on getting a clearly defined result; instead, it lies on a establishing a process by which to mediate conflicts and negotiate compromises on a continuous basis. In this way, it aims for a kind of social cohesion founded on (1) convergences between actors on the basis of projects, initiatives, and negotiations, (2) the linking up of the various groups that constitute the neighbourhood and that give voice to the diverse claims of the actors, and (3) the setting up of local forums for the expression and resolution of conflicts. In such a cohesive environment, “territory” is understood as a political arena (Palard 2003) in which to discuss conflicts and to build consensus (Borja 2001) that are more inclusive, informed and sustainable. Also, according to our hypothesis, a conflictual process may actually be essential, healthy and therefore helpful in achieving compromises or agreements, as evidenced in the case of the Saint-Michel neighbourhood. Thus, at the local level, large coalitions of actors are formed who mobilize internal and external resources and who build new institutional paths.

Methodology

In 2009, we conducted 10 face-to-face interviews ranging between 30 minutes and 1h30 in length with key resource people (Table 1). In a first exploratory interview, held in June 2009, we spoke with a founding member of La TOHU, who helped us to identify the main stages of the project, and with several other actors involved in the organization. Finally, other participants were identified through a review of both the

literature and a local newspaper, for which we consulted the archives from 1960 to 2000. Thus, in addition to giving us the information about conflicts that occurred in the Saint-Michel neighbourhood during our study period, our content analysis of print media allowed us to identify the key actors to interview. The 10 interviews were semi-structured, using open-ended questions, and followed an interview guide to assist us in adapting certain questions to the respondent. This allowed us to maintain sufficiently flexible and interactive interviews in which the participants, all volunteers, could clearly state their views and express their experience of the situation in their own way. Through these interviews, we obtained original information on the implementation process of La TOHU, including on the actors' experiences and perceptions about local governance in the neighbourhood, the social cohesion, and the scope of the project. The interviews were held at the interviewees' place of work and were recorded with their permission. All interviews were recorded, transcribed (resulting in 10 complete transcripts) and coded according to themes. Data were analyzed with a content analysis grid that was specially created for this study. We did not use any software to analyze the content of the interviews.

Finally, the interviewees were carefully selected to reflect the diversity of the actors involved in or concerned by the implementation of La TOHU in the Saint-Michel neighbourhood. Indeed, the 10 respondents are representative of all the stakeholders involved in the process. The quotations included in his paper demonstrate the prevalence of certain concerns, or themes. Incidentally, the same set of themes was also identified as being the most prevalent by our content analysis of print media and of the activity reports of organizations involved in the implementation of La TOHU, as well as by a study conducted by Leslie and Rantisi (2010: 1773) on the Cirque du Soleil.

Table 1. Actors interviewed

Actors met	Duration of interview	Date of interview
Founding member of La TOHU, founder of En piste	1h30	06-22-2009
Director, Chantier d'économie sociale	1h00	07-02-2009
Employee from Chantier d'économie sociale, assigned to La TOHU	30 min	07-02-2009
Economic development agent of the CDEC	30 min	07-14-2009
Director of the CDEC and former president of Vivre Saint-Michel en Santé (VSMS)	1h00	07-17-2009
Executive (director of community services), Cirque du Soleil	1h00	08-09-2009
Project manager of La TOHU	30 min	09-02-2009
Cultural mediator at La TOHU	1h30	10-02-2009
Program director, community organization	1h30	11-24-2009
Development advisor, City of Montreal	30 min	10-27-2009

A rich history marked by conflicts and compromises

The history of Saint-Michel is intimately linked to the exploitation of its two quarries, Miron and Francon, which occupy 42% of its territory and which constitute the structuring elements of the neighbourhood's territorial identity.

After the Second World War, the neighbourhood—then its own city, Ville Saint-Michel—experienced strong demographic growth, its population passing from 6,000 to 68,000 inhabitants between 1946 and 1964. This rapid population growth, driven mainly by immigration, accompanied by the economic boom led to an anarchic urbanization of the territory that, still today, presents a great mix of functions. In 1968, after a referendum, Ville Saint-Michel was annexed to the City of Montreal, thereby becoming the Saint-Michel borough, later to be integrated into the borough Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension at the end of the 1980s.

During the economic crisis of the 1980s, the neighbourhood saw an accelerated decline and the emergence of acute problems linked to poverty and exclusion. Today, although still characterized by poverty and exclusion, the neighbourhood has nevertheless undergone a certain urban revitalization. The arrival of the Cirque du Soleil in 1994, followed by the creation of the Cité des arts du Cirque in 1999, were key elements of this socio-territorial renewal.

The evolution of conflict activity in the Saint-Michel neighbourhood passed through three important periods.

1. Up until the end of the 1980s, conflicts emerged between the actors on the topic of two productive activities considered as harmful by the community: quarrying and the landfilling of waste. The main actors of the conflict were the citizens, the company Miron, and the City of Montreal.
2. In the 1990s, conflicts emerged relating to the legitimacy of the actors. For example, many community organizations had spawned, yet, operating at different territorial scales, proposed different options for replacing the above-mentioned activities.
3. The 2000s saw consensus-building and the establishment of solid partnerships between different types of actors. The Quebec Model, introduced in the 1980s, is based largely on a consensus-building process that leads social and community organizations, private entrepreneurs, and public actors to cooperate in certain fields. At the local level, certain organizations assumed a key role in the mediation and intermediation between the actors. Among these was the Corporation de développement économique communautaire (CDEC), a network of community economic development corporations promoting cooperation, mobilization, and the participation of all community actors. This constituted a significant milestone in establishing a system based on consensus-building (Klein et al. 2009b). During the 2000s, new actors thus appeared, and with them, new ways of doing. However, although local governance was established, certain groups remained excluded, even to this day. For example, new immigrants are still largely excluded from economic activity in general (high rates of unemployment and social assistance) and from the socio-economic activity of the neighbourhood in particular—and

this despite different levels of governmental (provincial and municipal) efforts to bridge this gap and to integrate and include these populations.

From 1960 to 1990: a territorial identity in protest mode

The anger of the citizens about the quarry operations goes back to the beginning of the 1960s, during which they organized protests, in the form of complaints and petitions, against everything from noise, to tremors from explosions, quarrying at night, dust, air pollution, and fly rocks from blasting. In 1971, STOP, an organization dedicated to combat all forms of pollution began supporting the citizens. That same year, the Miron quarry became a landfilled site, giving rise to yet another set of citizen complaints.

The fight led by the citizens against Miron and the City of Montreal intensified in 1979, when an agreement allowed the company to resume with the extraction of stones in the northern part of the quarry. This bred widespread discontent among the population, leading to the founding of the Association de défense des droits des Michélois (ADDM), a group dedicated to defending the rights of the citizens of the Saint-Michel neighbourhood. Subsequent to pressure from the ADDM, Miron then saw itself obliged to comply with the *Environment Act* and announced an investment of C\$13 million to meet its responsibilities. By the year 1983, a new organization committed to combat pollution, the Comité de sauvegarde de Saint-Michel (Saint-Michel rescue committee), for the first time called for the closing of the quarries. The following year, the City of Montreal bought off the land used by Miron for C\$45 million. This was cause for great relief to the population, which had already begun to embrace plans for an immense park on the site.

However, in 1986, the neighbourhood was again challenged. This time, in an effort to prevent the loss of 600 jobs, the City of Montreal accepted to rent (at C\$2M per year) land to Miron for the manufacturing of concrete. The local community reacted very strongly. To compound matters, the municipal administration in 1989 announced plans for a composting project. Despite opposition from the ADDM and PARI Saint-Michel (Projet d'Aménagement Résidentiel et Industriel), a residential and industrial development group, the project was nevertheless realized. This gave added impetus to the citizens' protest movement, which then became more radical. In 1991, more than 200 citizens and representatives of community organizations of the neighbourhood rallied together at a forum that was informally referred to as the "Rendez-vous de la dernière chance," evidently seeing it as their last chance to change things. The aim was to mobilize the neighbourhood to reflect on the means of getting Saint-Michel out of poverty and exclusion. This event also gave rise to Vivre Saint-Michel en Santé (VSMS), an organization that promotes cross-sector consensus-building among multiple networks structured around 11 working committees. Together, the citizens' groups advocated and gained approval for a major redevelopment project, to be commenced in 1994.

Then, in 1992, the City announced that the quarry was deemed insufficiently filled in to allow for the start of the redevelopment in 1994. A great wave of protests followed, whereby PARI and VSMS diverged for several months as to the positions to take in this matter. VSMS wanted to organize public hearings to which the municipal administration would be invited to defend the redevelopment project. PARI, for its

part, took a more radical position against the City and demanded the definitive closing of the Centre de Tri et d'Élimination des Déchets (waste sorting and disposal center), located in the quarry, for 1994.

After several months of negotiation, PARI and VSMS joined forces and organized, in early 1993, a public assembly gathering more than 200 citizens at which the city was forced to justify itself. Many complaints written by organizations of Saint-Michel were filed at this event. The commissioners then wrote a report to the municipal administration recommending (1) a stop to the landfilling and waste sorting by 1994, (2) the acceleration of the filling of the "hole," and (3) the redevelopment of the site, in planning since 1989. By the end of 1993, the CDEC had declared its support of this motion. However, despite these efforts, the City rejected those recommendations.

Revitalization of the social environment from the mid-1990s to today: an analysis of La TOHU

In June 1994, the local community then learned about the project of setting up the Cirque du Soleil (CdS) in Saint-Michel on the land of the former quarries. An investment of C\$14.8 million had already been made: C\$4.8 million from the provincial government, C\$4.8 million from the federal government, and C\$5.2 million from the CdS.

But it is only in 1999 that Montreal embarked on a major scale project: the concentration in one and the same place of a critical mass of creation, training, production, and dissemination facilities for the circus arts, thereby providing the conditions to make this Quebec city into a world capital of the circus arts. This project results from the convergence, during the 1990s, of various territorial actors from the public and the private sectors, such as the Saint-Michel local community, civil society and the circus movement" (Tremblay and Pilati 2007:342). La TOHU was created in 2003 to oversee the realization of this project at the heart of the Saint-Michel neighbourhood. The Cité des arts du Cirque houses the international headquarters of the Cirque du Soleil (CdS) as well as its artist housing complex, the National Circus School⁴, the offices of En Piste,⁵ and the Green Pavilion of La TOHU.

Although La TOHU is a geographical agglomeration that includes various companies (CdS, En Piste, and a residential centre for artists), the CdS, a private company, was the incubator of La TOHU, giving it significant support both at the financial and logistical levels. However, apart from having the CdS as its major partner, La TOHU, a non-profit organization, has many other partners from different areas: government (municipal, provincial, and federal), associative, community, and the media. The mission of La TOHU is threefold: cultural, environmental, and community. With regard to the community component, La TOHU commits to participating in the economic, social, and cultural development of Saint-Michel. As expressed by a CdS executive: "A major criterion was that the implementation of the CdS had real repercussions on the chosen location, and that the CdS supports a community experiencing many difficulties. This oriented us toward the Saint-Michel neighbourhood" (Interviews 2009).

The implementation of the CdS headquarters in Saint-Michel in 1994 was then the predominant factor in the selection of that neighbourhood for La TOHU. CdS being the first project sponsor, it strongly advocated that La TOHU be built near the

CdS headquarters. “It all began with the fact that the Cirque du Soleil set foot in Saint-Michel in the early 1990s. The City was the owner of the land, and the CdS quickly saw its opportunity. Saint-Michel looked favourably to the arrival of the CdS,” explained a development advisor (Interviews 2009). The founders recounted that one condition for the project was that it was structuring for the community receiving it—and Saint-Michel lent itself perfectly for that mission (Interviews 2009). The CdS moreover invested C\$1M in La TOHU before obtaining public financing.

Plans of the CdS and the National Circus School to be located in one complex thus date back to the early 1990s:

In 1989, there were the first negotiations with the Cirque du Soleil to be located on a same complex, a project called the “Square des Arts du Cirque.” At the time, that project didn’t get off the ground, mainly for financial reasons. It was considered eccentric as there were very few circus businesses at the time, and the circus environment was not seen as very serious.

A founding member of La TOHU (Interviews 2009)

When the National Circus School then set itself up in the Old Port, the CdS looked for a place for its headquarters and its training halls, which were dispersed in 16 different spaces in Montreal.

A CdS executive (Interviews 2009)

The CdS benefited from the tripartite support (municipal, provincial, federal) of an infrastructure program (Table 2). At the time, the acquired land had a market value of about C\$2.5 million. The City of Montreal transferred the land for C\$1.5 million, in exchange for which the CdS committed to install a security system to capture biogas and leachate released from the waste. The federal and provincial governments each offered C\$4.8 million to the CdS. The total investment for phase 1 (headquarters and training halls) was C\$15.2 million; yet the amount actually invested by the CdS was only C\$5.2 million. Settling in Saint-Michel thus became very attractive for the company as, given the public support, the cost of the transaction was very low. Moreover, by choosing Saint-Michel as a location, the CdS was able to fulfill the social mission it had taken on by participating in the revitalization of that neighbourhood. The City and the federal and provincial governments saw things the same way: welcoming the CdS to Saint-Michel would trigger a process of revitalization. Between 1998 and 2002, the CdS invested nearly C\$30 million in the construction of residences for artists and the expansion of its headquarters.

In the mid-1990s, the CdS released a budget of C\$300,000 to study the possibility of founding the Cité des arts du Cirque in partnership with two other organizations, which, as explained a manager of La TOHU, provoked certain resistances (Interviews 2009). In fact, there were three waves of resistance. The first came from the circus field itself, with artists fearing a monopoly on the part of the CdS (Interviews 2009). However, that resistance was overcome fairly quickly when the organizations working in the circus profession understood that La TOHU would not constitute a takeover

by the CdS of the circus world, but rather a project aimed to help the entire circus environment by offering a show hall for different circuses and for themselves.

We toured Quebec meeting with those working in the circus field and took stock of the needs with regard to training, in terms of spaces for artistic creation, so as to build a critical mass that would respond to those needs.

A manager of La TOHU (Interviews 2009)

Table 2. Investments realized and subsidies obtained by the Cirque du Soleil.

Cité des arts du Cirque	Total investment	Cost of the land	Public support
Cirque du Soleil (headquarters and training halls)	C\$15.2M	C\$1.5M	C\$4.8M (federal govt.) C\$4.8M (provincial govt.)
Cirque du Soleil (expansion and residences)	C\$14.8M	*	*
La TOHU (show hall and Maison de la Culture)	C\$35M	Rental C\$1M/year	C\$34M (federal govt.) Annual subsidy (City of Montreal)
National Circus School	About C\$8M	*	C\$2M (federal govt.) C\$3M (provincial govt.)

(*Means that the amount is not known; \$M means million dollars)

The project promoters held many negotiations with the public authorities with the goal of winning over as many departments as possible for the project. This worked well and gave rise to an interministerial committee. “The different ministries eventually embraced the project, unblocking C\$35M in cash—which is extremely rare because in general budget funds are never immediately accessible in their full amount—for the construction of La TOHU,” explained a founding member of La TOHU (Interviews 2009).

The second wave of resistance came from the City of Montreal, which, as initiator of the project to transform the former quarry into a park, did not like to see La TOHU placing itself at the entry of that park. To overcome that resistance “there was the creation of 15 committees: a programming committee, a committee on the urban aspects, a committee on environmental stakes, a committee on social development. [...] La TOHU project was thus managed with the contribution of all those committees,” affirmed a manager of La TOHU (Interviews 2009).

Lastly, the actors associated with La TOHU mention that the final resistance came from the neighbourhood: “There was the VSMS and it was clear from the start that there were fears that the money reserved for social development would go to La TOHU at the expense of the people of the neighbourhood” (Interviews 2009). “There was tension. La TOHU was actually accused of having ‘stolen’ C\$15 million

from the neighbourhood [...] The point was to show that La TOHU belonged to the neighbourhood, that that budget wouldn't be there in the first place without La TOHU," explained a representative of the Chantier de l'économie sociale (Interviews 2009). To conquer this last wave of resistance, the local actors were invited to participate in the development of La TOHU. "We thus began to work with the community of Saint-Michel, including the VSMS, elected officials, the Haitian community, and the CDEC, to discuss the approaches to take for the revitalization of the neighbourhood and to make them understand and accept our project," said a founding member of La TOHU (Interviews 2009). Many actors also participated actively in the development of La TOHU. As expressed by an executive of a community organization: "We were all for the project from the start. We thought that it was fantastic and realized right away that it would be a great boost for the neighbourhood" (Interviews 2009).

For the CdS, having its headquarters in Saint-Michel provided it with a socially equitable and environmentally-friendly image, which functioned as a type of branding. However, unlike charity, this kind of investment was a compromise from which both the CdS and the community actors could benefit.

The goal was to introduce the circus world to the young people and to attract a certain clientele to the shows. Now, some five years later, it's beautiful to see teenagers buying their tickets and to know that the shows interest them.

A cultural mediator⁶ of La TOHU (Interviews 2009)

The setting up of the CdS and then of La TOHU in Saint-Michel undeniably constitutes a major revitalization of the neighbourhood. This revitalization has three components. The first is economic: The thousands of employees working at CdS and La TOHU have brought new business to the stores in Saint-Michel. The local hiring and professional reintegration programs of La TOHU made efforts to integrate the local community. And La TOHU made a point of staffing its customer service with youth from the neighbourhood, most of whom hired on a part-time basis. In 2009, according to spokespersons from La TOHU, 75 young people were participating in the local employment program. Three were permanent and the others worked part-time on an event basis (Interviews 2009). The second type of revitalization is environmental: La TOHU is the first step in the realization of the Saint-Michel Environmental Complex, which represents the end of the polluting activities that took place in the neighbourhood over the many decades. Finally, the third type of revitalization is cultural; after its establishment, La TOHU became an official Maison de la Culture financed by the City.

La TOHU thus served as a stepping stone to a major neighbourhood revitalization and a trigger for new projects. Sensing that this socio-territorial transformation of one of the poorest neighbourhoods of Montreal (and of Canada) was actually feasible and in reach, all levels of government made an effort to provide the needed boost. "By choosing to locate here, we're sending a message. We're not setting foot here for nothing. We want to get a ball rolling so that other organizations can get subsidies and realize other projects," said a cultural mediator of La TOHU (Interviews 2009).

LaTOHU participated in the social cohesion of the neighbourhood and contributed to the development of a strong territorial identity. However, major challenges remain to be overcome to ensure the inclusion of all sectors of the population.

We're finding that the mobilization comes above all from the white and francophone community. By working only with organizations such as the CDEC or VSMS, we aren't reaching the entire population of Saint-Michel. Yet our goal was to reach the entire community; that's why we worked directly with certain communities such as the Haitian community. We also tried to exert some pressure so that the organizations would represent all inhabitants of the neighbourhood as best as possible.

CdS executive (Interviews 2009)

I think the Asian population is the one that's the most difficult to reach. However, I do think that there's a big openness on the part of the Latino-American and Maghreb population [...]. In a neighbourhood as disparate as Saint-Michel, it's difficult to get everyone to develop a feeling of attachment for La TOHU. But I think that good proof for the fact that this place has been well integrated is the fact that La TOHU has never been vandalized;⁷ there's no graffiti. In a way, the community protects La TOHU!

Executive of a community organization (Interviews 2009)

Within five years, the neighbourhood changed a lot and the people are now identifying themselves with our activities and shows. La TOHU is not exclusive; it won't make anyone feel like a stranger. For this reason, people now feel comfortable coming here and have developed "a cultural appetite."

Cultural mediator of La TOHU (Interviews 2009)

On the other hand, not everyone finds the involvement of La TOHU as positive as the actors associated with the CdS. For some community representatives, for example, the involvement of La TOHU is largely the result of pressure exerted by local community organizations.

La TOHU participates because we insist. [...]. If we weren't there kind of like watch dogs to insist that La TOHU opens the doors and gives access to shows that would interest everybody [...]. There's also the fact that emerging artists can use La TOHU as a stepping stone, as a vehicle. We insist a lot on that. We have to work really hard to continually remind them of this.

Director of a community organization (Interviews 2009)

Until the 1990s, the community organizations worked mainly without consulting each other, and in opposition to each other. The Saint-Michel community then became

much stronger in the 1980s and 1990s through its fights against the operations of the quarries and the landfill. This strong citizen participation in conflict events then conferred legitimacy to the neighbourhood organizations.

A progressive institutionalization of the community took place in the 1990s with the creation of different community committees (e.g., VSMS). We point out that even though consultation committees have no decision-making power, they can wield considerable influence on certain operations and decisions. They develop strategies and actions linked to the local development and quality of life of the community; they are the sites for negotiation and consensus-building. La TOHU and the CdS play a major role in these committees, where they seek to demonstrate “active corporate citizenship,” according to a manager of La TOHU (Interviews 2009). Moreover, the local organizations became specialized in different fields. They also began working in partnership, facilitated in particular by the consultation committees. The end of the 1990s then saw the arrival of new actors in the Saint-Michel redevelopment arena, prompting La TOHU and the CdS to become involved in several other urban redevelopment projects in the neighbourhood.

Today, the various development actors no longer work in isolation; instead, they collaborate to define the objectives of the neighbourhood revitalization and redevelopment. In this way, a shared development vision has evolved over the years. All the interviewees affirmed that they were working in partnership: “We transitioned into a mode of consensus-building and co-management, thereby overcoming the stage of open conflict”—executive of a community organization; “Situations that could turn into conflicts no longer do so thanks to consensus-building”—community development agent; and “Everything is done in consultation”—cultural mediator of La TOHU (Interviews 2009).

We thus found confirmation for our hypothesis, as we demonstrated that the structuring of a cohesive environment—the establishment of La TOHU and its acceptance by a great part of the Saint-Michel community—resulted from the many conflicts that have marked the history of that neighbourhood, and further, that the management of La TOHU permitted the development of a dynamic of consensus-building between the actors. The process of conflict thus allowed to develop exchanges and compromises and explains the social cohesion which the Saint-Michel neighbourhood exhibits today.

What stands out is that compromises arise from conflict management. Our analyses identified three levels of compromises, which may well intersect and overlap.

1. A vertical compromise between the local actors and the public instances in the form of a major reinvestment by the Quebec and Canadian governments in the neighbourhood. This type of compromise is well established and gives rise to many projects.
2. A territorial compromise at the local scale that involves a change of position on the part of the social actors, in this case, a repositioning of the actors with regard to the Cité des arts du Cirque. There was a willingness to rehabilitate the site and to revitalize the neighbourhood, and that willingness

was the connecting link for all the actors. The arrival of external actors who did not operate at the local scale forced the other actors to reconsider their positions—the whole without destroying the cohesion of the environment, on the contrary. However, this compromise is more fragile given that it is an ongoing work in progress, the interaction being dependent on the pressure of the local organizations.

3. A social compromise incorporating the ethnic diversity beginning with ethno-cultural networking and the reframing of the ethnic and the territorial identity. Alliances were forged between the National Circus School, La TOHU, the CdS, and the youth of the ethnic communities with regard to recruiting staff as well as artists for the circus. That compromise is still in its infancy, with certain ethno-cultural groups maintaining a distance and choosing not to participate in activities offered by La TOHU.

Conclusion

The diversity of the conflicts in which the Saint-Michel neighbourhood organizations confronted the different instances of power, in addition to their vying with each other for leadership in that protest, was ultimately the basis of certain compromises that allowed a cohesive dimension of governance to take shape in Saint-Michel over the course of those four decades. The conflicts and the compromises to which they led created a social environment in which the actors developed solid links and strong networks, both between the community organizations and to organizations that are neither of a public nor social type. They also created an environment likely to generate internal projects and to attract external projects. In this way, Saint-Michel was well positioned as a location for the mega-project La TOHU begun by the Cirque du Soleil. Although the project was met with resistance at first, it was eventually accepted and well integrated into the neighbourhood, the whole without adverse effects on the development dynamic already underway; on the contrary, the project served as a catalyst.

The main objective of this article was to show that conflicts can be structuring for the local development of a neighbourhood in a big city. The analysis of the conflict dynamic that took place in the Saint-Michel neighbourhood revealed the role played by conflict in the participation of local actors, namely, (1) the construction of local governance, (2) the location-finding and development of a major project for Montreal; here, the Cité des arts du Cirque, and (3) the establishment of local organizations where differences are expressed and settled. In the Saint-Michel case, conflicts and their management led to the construction of a strong community environment that is favourable to giving a voice to the identities of its multiple actors (territorial, social, cultural, etc.).

The study of conflict in Saint-Michel indicates that conflict situations can generate socio-territorial innovation and socio-economic conversion. That said, conflict by itself cannot lead to these results and must be accompanied with deliberate efforts on the part of the neighbourhood to attract and integrate structuring projects.

Our conflict analysis of the Saint-Michel case confirms the importance of the instances allowing for debate and discussion between the various types of actors (social, business community, public), in turn generating strong coalitions centered on the social development of the local community and the improvement of the quality of life for citizens. The debates provoked by the conflicts led to the social construction of rallying points, which then promoted the reaching of compromises, in this case, the consent for the establishment of La TOHU. In Saint-Michel, the succession of local oppositions to outside capital and political interventions considered negative for the community eventually engendered a social learning process. The latter then transformed the borough into a more cohesive environment and also facilitated the attraction of an external project that was, this time, considered positive for the community.

Moreover, the Saint-Michel case, beyond serving as an example of cohesive development at the neighbourhood level, also supported a land development vision promoted at the provincial level. The Saint-Michel borough evolved in the context of the Quebec development model, implemented from the early 1980s on, in which communities play an important role (Klein et al. 2009b) and which likewise builds on partnership and consensus-building to resolve problems related to land development.

The Saint-Michel case is also testimony to an increasingly strong consensus to spur Montreal's economic growth by means of cultural projects. We point to the role which Culture Montréal plays in the City's governance, for example. In that sense, La TOHU could thus be seen as participating in consensus-building at the metropolitan scale around the importance of the cultural sector for Montreal (Klein and Tremblay 2010). In turn, it is this identification with visions that go beyond the immediate neighbourhood level that allowed the actors of Saint-Michel to attract outside resources, both public and private.

Compromise is a fundamental element of social life. It can be understood as a regular normal practice, likely to reach and to end the conflict and disagreement (Roy 1990). Our conclusions underline some of the results that operated at different levels: the level of Quebec, the level of Montreal's economic development focusing on culture and cultural activities, and finally, the level of the neighbourhood of Saint-Michel.

That said, Saint-Michel is still a poor neighbourhood in which socio-territorial exclusion has not disappeared. Our study revealed that the roots of the socio-economic problems have not been resolved: the poor remain poor. As a strategy of integration and socio-territorial connectivity, La TOHU was a success. However, its spin-offs in terms of income were not evenly distributed among the population of the neighbourhood—on the contrary. Finally, ethnic conflicts and challenges with regard to social integration were not discussed in this study, as they are not directly linked to La TOHU. However, in light of riots that took place more recently in Montreal-Nord, an adjacent neighbourhood, these important aspects certainly merit examination in further research on the role and place of conflicts in socio-territorial regulation. Conflict is too often seen as a one-time phenomenon, whereas it should be analyzed over a substantial period of time in order to understand its place in neighbourhood governance.

Notes

- ¹ In other words, activities realized by non-profit organizations that produce goods or services with a social perspective rather than for profit (Vaillancourt and Favreau 2000).
- ² Sometimes called Circus Arts City or Tohu, both names are correct.
- ³ See, for example, the case of Barcelona analyzed by Casellas (2006) or the article by Kantor et al., 1997.
- ⁴ National Circus school is the only institution in Canada for a higher and college education specialized in the circus arts.
- ⁵ En Piste is a non-profit national association of circus arts professional, companies, and institutions. Its goals relate to promoting, developing cohesion, and creating initiatives in the circus arts community (Tremblay and Pilatti 2007: 343).
- ⁶ The cultural mediator at La TOHU is the person in charge of establishing links between the projects created at La TOHU and the Saint-Michel community.
- ⁷ We point out that the La TOHU building has no fence around it and only one security guard. The site has never been vandalized. According to many of our interviewees, this indicates that the population of the neighbourhood has truly accepted and identified with La TOHU.

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