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CLAIMING RIGHTS TO MOBILITY THROUGH THE RIGHT TO INHABITANCE: Discursive Articulations from Civic Actors in Montreal

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Abstract

How do claims for rights to mobility intersect with grievances pertaining to spatial justice in the city? This article addresses the issue by studying the concrete connections made by activists promoting car alternatives in Montreal. The activists' discursive categories point to the centrality of their conditions of inhabitance in their claims for certain rights to mobility. The discourses are analysed in the context of demands for safe spaces to walk and cycle in Montreal, and in the context of opposition to the rebuilding of the Turcot highway interchange. The article discusses internal dynamics of collective action, as well as the external influences and controls on activists contesting automobility to various degrees and with different spatially grounded priorities. The claims for rights to mobility rely on locally articulated priorities for better conditions of inhabitance, yet with a transversal reliance on a shared sense of threat and vulnerability, and on the representations of a community (whether local or multi-scalar), enabling changes in the physical framing of mobility.

Intersecting spatial justice and mobility

From 2006 to 2011, 165 local organizations in Montreal were engaged in programmes demanding traffic calming and more space for walking and cycling. Simultaneously, broad coalitions were opposing highway infrastructure projects in Montreal. In both instances, spatial justice was the principal frame used by activists—emphasizing primarily the urban conditions of inhabitance rather than more abstract environmental or social justice issues. This article examines discursive chains of equivalence as elaborated by civic actors, chains associating better conditions of inhabitance with rights to mobility. If tensions between residential location and mobility choices are already known in the literature on mobility, the question here is how mobilization and discursive political work can and do transform these tensions into effective objects of collective action and urban policy. In considering this, we pay attention to the elaboration of discourses by civic collectives, and to the external influences and controls (from public and private actors) to which they are subjected. Both processes challenged activists to retain their chain of equivalence in their politicized context.

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Rights to mobility

Drawing on Cresswell (2006; 2010), we define mobility as ‘socially produced motion’. The production, organizing and ‘encoding’ of movement constitute the politics of mobility; it produces and is produced by disparities in privileges and social power (Cresswell, 2010: 22). In the daily experience of urban space, we can experience several aspects of this politics of mobility: ‘How fast does a person or thing move?’; ‘What route does it take?’; ‘How does it feel?’; and ‘When and how does it stop?’ (ibid.: 22–6). In the making of the city, the politics of mobility is thus not only about modal choices, but also about how the making of urban space conditions what mobilities are possible. Each mode has its own requirements for urban space and its own set of infrastructures needed to sustain it: trains need stations and railways, cars need parking spaces, walking and cycling need calmer streets with mixed and dense urban environments (Henderson, 2009; Urry, 2011). Public authorities at different scales as well as disparate private actors can frame mobility for individuals by encouraging certain locations and densities (by land-use planning) and through investments in infrastructure for cars, public transit or slow modes, i.e. walking or cycling (Grengs, 2005; Jones and Lucas, 2012). In addition, the dominance of cars brings its particular socio-spatial problems (Sheller and Urry, 2000; Henderson, 2013). Many social movements are founded on the narrative that ‘infrastructure of mobility consumes space’ and that streets should be reclaimed (Mohl, 2004; Furness, 2010). A critical literature on auto mobility considers the ideological, political and technical regimes supporting the dominance of cars in our (urban) lifestyles (Bohm et al., 2006; Conley and McLaren, 2009; Henderson, 2013). The framing of mobility—in particular here through the infrastructures and the making of urban space—is linked to a realm of ideas, cultures and discourses, with justifications related to issues of accessibility, competitiveness, social inequalities, sustainability, etc. (Gay et al., 2011). This article looks in particular at the discursive constructions elaborated by civic collectives as to what would constitute their basic rights to mobility beyond automobility.

This type of investigation was undertaken in the iconic case of the Bus Riders Union in Los Angeles (Grengs, 2005, Creswell, 2006, Soja, 2010). Drawing on the civil rights movement tradition, a coalition in Los Angeles was contesting discrimination

with regard to public investment in transport. While low-income and minority popu lations were concentrated in the inner city, they needed to access jobs scattered across the LA metropolitan region. Yet public transit investment was channeled into fast light-rail projects serving predominantly wealthy and white populations, and hence not responding to the needs of low-income inhabitants (Cresswell, 2006: 167–9; Soja, 2010: x–xi). Cresswell describes the LA situation as a 'channeling' of mobility privileging certain routes and populations in their access to opportunities. The case shows the social construction of mobility, primarily by powerful institutions producing social and racial discrimination, and then by a social movement institutionalizing through litigation an alternative view, a new articulation of what moving from A to B implies in the city (involvement of bus riders, improvement of the bus system, reduction in fares) (Grengs, 2005). The alternative view defined rights to mobility in relation to spatial justice.

This article seeks to follow the same analytical route, bringing to the fore discursive connections made in the framing of activists demanding greater investment in mobility, and going further by analysing the spatial imaginations deployed by the actors—their discourses on the spatiality of the injustice they face and the ways to spatially resolve it.

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Spatial justice and conditions of inhabitance

Spatial justice is far from being a clear concept with a consensual definition. Dikeç (2001) and Soja (2010) observe that the use of the term is very recent, scholars having previously used the concepts of territorial justice (Harvey, 1973) or urbanization of injustice (Merrifield et al., 1997). There are two related tensions in the literature (besides the debate on the causal role of the 'spatial', see Iveson, 2011): first, whether the definition of (spatial) justice is universal or situated; and second, whether it concerns distributive issues alone (Dikeç, 2001). An understanding of spatial justice as a right to inhabitance is both committed to the situatedness of injustice claims and to their content going beyond distributive issues.

Soja (2010) describes spatial justice as a process and outcome, visible in the dis advantages of being at a certain location in place, taking into account the uneven geog

raphies of development. This uneven geography can be produced by exogenous factors, such as the 'drawing of territorial boundaries and the imposition of hierarchical power (ibid.: 47). Uneven geographies are also produced by endogenous factors, i.e. 'locational decision making and the aggregate distributional effects that arise from them' (ibid., e.g. segregation and localization of schools). Soja hence describes the injustice of certain locations as constructed by structural and micro forces. Dikeç (2001: 1793) also argues that spatial justice as a process concerns how existing structures allow or eliminate 'the possibilities for the formation of political response'.

Soja and Dikeç build, among the other authors they cite, on the work of David Harvey, specifically on his liberal and socialist discussions of territorial justice in Social Justice and the City (Harvey, 1973). In his liberal definition of territorial justice, Harvey comments on and spatializes the work of Rawls. He describes territorial justice as weighing the needs of the population in certain territories and the contribution that fulfilling these needs bring to the 'common good' (the spill-over effects on the wider population). The goal—which is far from easy and straightforward—is a 'just distribu tion justly arrived at', emphasizing that the processes to achieve it should pay particu lar attention to the voices emanating from, and outcomes for, the least fortunate areas (ibid.: 101–18). The literature on environmental justice has considered the unfair effects of resource allocation, looking at proximity of infrastructure to disadvantaged populations and the necessary processes of recognition (Scholsberg, 2007). In this defi nition of territorial justice, Harvey emphasizes the spatial distributive impacts and the mechanisms of recognition in the allocation of resources between different territories.

In his socialist formulation, Harvey emphasizes the urban processes under capitalism generating injustice. The accumulation of capital requires physical infra structure that becomes outdated with the passage of time, yet retains a certain fixity. In the analysis of Harvey, the modification and destruction of these landscapes for capitalist purposes (in search of a new 'spatial fix') exacerbate the unjust distribution of resources, with, for example, destruction of valued places of inhabitance and dis placement of the poor. The emphasis is on structural causes to urban injustice: the production of space for capitalism creates and reproduces injustice.

Although Soja and Dikeç include in their definition of spatial justice the dis advantages of certain spatial locations, and the structural constraints on its production, reproduction and resolution, they wish to widen the scope of spatial justice beyond class issues and economic exploitation. Soja (2010: 109) presents the right to inhab itance from Purcell (2008) as an important step towards this. Purcell (ibid.: 94–5) defines the right to inhabitance as including: (1) the right of appropriation of already existing material space; (2) the fulfilment of the needs of inhabitants; and (3) the right to participation in decision making over all processes producing urban space. Purcell explains that the right to inhabit is 'conceived not just as the right to be physically present in existing urban space, but the right to a city that fully meets, above all other considerations, the needs of inhabitants' (ibid.: 95, emphasis added). The examples he gives of conditions of inhabitance involve resources and opportunities that one would intuitively include in a spatial justice framework: employment, shelter and groceries, but also daycare services, parks, public transit, etc. Purcell uses this framework to study the constitution of urban coalitions and their ability to organize claims around inhabitance, against either undemocratic or neoliberal projects of urban renewal.

The right to inhabitance is one understanding of the right to the city. This concept can be traced back to the work of Henri Lefebvre, who formulated it as a right to enjoy urban life (including all its opportunities and encounters), but also as a right to participate politically in conceiving one's own city, as citadin (Lefebvre, 1968 [2009]; 1974 [2000]). Lefebvre speaks of the struggle to prioritize the use value of urban space over its exchange value, speaking of the conflict between space for daily routines and space as propriety (1974 [2000]: 190–3, 411–20). This has been used in the literature to present the right to the city within the fight against neoliberal dominance in the shaping of the city (Marcuse, 2009). But Lefebvre found something else in the right to the city other than class struggle. Daily routines, appropriation and the politics of everyday life can be oppressed by processes other than economic exploitation. His focus on the experts' conceived spaces contrasting with the different forms of l'habité shows constraints to daily routines brought about by architects, planners or state authorities formatting living environments (Lefebvre, 1974 [2000]; Segaud, 2009). Iveson (2013: 945) argues also that, indeed, in Lefebvre's work, 'inhabitance' is 'another "universal" at play in the politics of urban transformation'. In his book, Purcell (2008: 180) discusses how civic

coalitions concretely constructed their discourses using various demands linked to inhabitance, including but not limited to the discursive equivalence of inhabitance 'as different-from-ownership'. He thus calls for a broad conceptualization of inhabitance, open to how it is advocated in place.

In light of this, we suggest considering spatial justice as a discursive articula tion of the equitable fulfilment of 'claimed' conditions of inhabitance across space, including the right to participate in the production of these conditions of inhabitance. The claimed conditions of inhabitance are discursively constructed, from the point of view of users of the urban space, within processes of space production (Lefebvre, 1974 [2000]).

Discourse methods, corpus and agency

To identify the frames of activists, we relied on the method of discursive chains of equivalence forming part of the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (2001). Within discursive struggles, there are attempts to change the meaning of a nodal point 1 by defining it in relation to other entities, within a web of significations, in order to establish a chain of equivalence. Equivalence consists in the linkage of different particularities in a common identity, a resemblance giving it a joint political meaning to structure a discourse. Articulation is the process of negotiating equivalences and differences, giving meaning to nodal points. There is a constant tension in this. Each element of the equivalence can be contested if the denial of difference becomes too strong for an actor, who may break the chain of equivalence and rearticulate the discursive formation. For Laclau and Mouffe, discursive formations are constituted together with political actors, i.e. the groups enacting and producing the discourse. 2 In addition to identifying the discursive chains of equivalence, we located, in concrete situations of conflict, the tensions in these chains of equivalence and the consequences they had for the collectives.

The Montreal mobilization for car alternatives occurred in two instances, both of which we analyse. The first case concerns the projects for safe spaces for walking and cycling—here we focus in particular on the Villeray neighbourhood. The second concerns highway projects—in this case we analyse opposition to the rebuilding of

the Turcot highway complex as proposed by the Ministry of Transport. The corpus to identify the chains of equivalence was limited to the analysis of the discourses pro duced by leaders and brokers (identified in terms of their centrality in coalitions and collaborative projects, as shown in Table 1). 3 The corpus analysed comprised the docu ments produced to present the civic projects and coalitions' positions, and the counter-arguments put to the Ministry of Transport, formulated within and outside public hearings, complemented by interviews. 4 The documents were at first thematically and relationally coded, 5 and then coded in terms of recurring chains of equivalence. To follow their elaboration and interpretation in concrete situations, we relied on further docu mentary research, 30 semi-structured interviews and direct observation of participa tory events.

Our analysis focuses on discursive chains of equivalence involving civic actors and on their elaboration within a field of constraints. We define 'civic actors' as the broad category of non-governmental organizations, local community service associa tions and residents' committees.

Civic actors' porous and flexible relations with state authorities are related to different ways of conceptualizing the agency of civil society actors, which has been a matter of debate. In the planning literature, such as in the work of Healey (2006), the contribution of civic actors is considered within the theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1987). Discussions about tensions and differing interests are therefore conducted rationally and take place in a process of collective deliberation arising out of the interplay of communication, mutual influence and joint understanding. This can lead to a shared consensus. Communicative reason would ensure that the exchange of ideas, reactions and arguments inject collective and ethical concerns into the debate. Moreover, by referring to Giddens' (1984: xxv–xxvi) concept of regionalization, actors occupy a specific territorial position and embeddedness, giving further legitimacy to their expressed points of view. The actor is a witness to the current state of affairs, the experienced stresses and disparities found within a given context. But the commu nicative turn has been criticized for limiting the focus to procedural aspects at the expense of content, for neglecting the power structures, for sticking to narratives emanating from just one institutionalized debate, and finally for reproducing social

inequalities that determine controversial and conflict situations common in planning. Such critiques were driven by the critical theory inspired by Foucault, which emphasized the institutional systems of standardization and control (Flyvbjerg, 2003; Fainstein, 2005). Civic actors can (sometimes in severely regulated contexts) contribute to the public sphere, as defined by Habermas, and to the establishment of a consensus that is to a certain extent socially acceptable. They could also still retain their autonomy and capacity to oppose and engage in support of an alternative project, such as counter-planning projects, particularly if their lived space is at the centre of debate. We argue that actors are not one-dimensional. Indeed, they adopt various stances, according to the evolution of the situation (Sénécal, 2012). Strategic, communicative and oppositional stances coexist and do not cancel each other out.

Institutional, associational and discursive fields

The metropolitan highway network is the responsibility of the provincial Ministry of Transport (MTQ) which has over the last decade made a number of proposals for highway upgrades and extensions, some of them in the inner city of Montreal. In parallel to the environmental impact assessment procedure, highway projects have to go through a participatory public hearing. Often the arena of polarized opinions, public hearings have triggered much media coverage of transport and mobility issues, providing a place for interaction and the constitution of alliances (Sénécal and Harou, 2005; Van Neste and Bherer, 2014).

Along with these collectives, the City of Montreal also pleaded publicly for more public transit and for a reduced role for cars within the metropolitan area. The City explicitly allied itself (for some time at least) with the claims of civic coalitions critical of the MTQ's highway projects. With its 2008 transportation plan, the City announced that it wanted to play a leading role in the metropolitan area to promote car alternatives, with greater emphasis on walking, cycling and public transit (VdM, 2008a). The boroughs were asked to elaborate mobility plans favourable to these alternative modes, especially within residential neighbourhoods (VdM, 2010a; 2010b). The City of Montreal also adopted a 'family policy' to keep young families in the city, which included in its key objectives traffic-calmed alleys and streets, as well as ready access to public transit (VdM, 2008b).

The definition of what constitutes legitimate needs of mobility (especially the mode of transport used) has been at the core of the debates. Among those in opposition to highway development, it was claimed that the MTQ's plans did not respond to mobility needs, but rather to the perceived needs of motor vehicle transport (in par ticular the private automobile). Our respondents, both from the MTQ and the City of Montreal, have commented that this is embedded in the institution of the MTQ, whose mission is not perceived to include planning for public transit, as demanded by civic actors. This should be done by the metropolitan arm of the MTQ, the Metropolitan Transit Agency (AMT). But the AMT has not been given the autonomy (politically or financially) to present public transit as a competitive alternative to car infrastructure at the metropolitan scale.

With regard to the design of highway projects, the City of Montreal was dis cursively trying to distance itself from the position of the MTQ. This became even more evident when the leader of the second opposition party, Projet Montréal, joined the executive committee of the City (to participate in designing an alternative Turcot project) in 2010. The political platform of Projet Montréal gives priority to the reduc tion of the space devoted to cars and to further investment in public transit.
The public health authorities also became involved in the debates and projects linking the conditions of inhabitance with practices of mobility. This happened par ticularly when a new team was created within the Montreal Public Health Agency (DSP-M), which focused on the determinants of health within the built environment. In 2006, it published an annual report on transport (DSP-M, 2006); this has been up-dated in subsequent years, in other documents and in the press. The report stated that traffic problems were one of the major health hazards in Montreal. The geographic dis tribution of these effects was documented: more risks of collisions on arterial roads and measurable impact through greater exposure to air pollution on people living within 200 metres of highways (more premature births, asthma, etc.). In sum, car mobility pat terns further exacerbate social inequalities in Montreal, through spatialized nuisance detrimental to the health and quality of life of urban residents.

In addition to this new DSP-M initiative (considered by some, for better or

worse, as constituting a new advocacy), the public health sector also played a role via a new large private philanthropy actor in Quebec. A partnership initiative between the new Chagnon Foundation and the Ministry of Health and Social Services, the non-profit organization Québec en Forme ('Quebec in good shape') was created in 2002 to promote healthier lifestyles among young people. Seeking to alleviate poverty (through a focus on education), this foundation has significantly increased the funding available to NGOs and neighbourhood community organizations since 2002 (CDN $400 million over 10 years), directing investment towards healthy-living activities such as walking and cycling (Ducharme and Lesemann, 2011; Chagnon Foundation, 2013).

Between Québec en Forme and local civic actors, there existed environmental and urban mobility organizations acting as 'brokers' (Van Neste and Bherer, 2014). These brokers had hitherto been active primarily on the national and regional scenes (e.g. in highway debates), but also showed interest in the impact of transportation projects at local level. Listed in Table 1, these brokers acted as intermediaries in the drafting of programmes eligible to receive health sector funding. Within these programmes of participatory planning, the brokers provided expertise on the design of streets for car alternatives, but it was community organizations on the ground which implemented the campaigns locally.

Articulations of rights to mobility with conditions of inhabitance

In sum, projects for traffic calming and opposition to highway developments have resulted in the forging of new alliances, and have been subject to influence from municipal and public health authorities (in a context of antagonism with the Ministry of Transport). We will see how the collectives constituted, in this context, chains of equiv alence articulating certain rights to mobility in relation to conditions of inhabitance.

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The right to safe spaces for walking and cycling: the environs of schools in Villeray

As explained, the programmes of participatory planning promoting walking and cycling were funded by the health sector, organized by the brokers and justified by the data of DSP-M as well as by demands from local residents, the dynamics of which we consider below. Although there were variations in local mobilization, the pro

grammes promoting safe spaces for walking and cycling converged in the same chain of equivalence, comprising the following nodes: (1) vulnerability; (2) street design; and (3) a community enabling walking and cycling. In the first node, vulnerable popula tions, active transport and traffic safety are linked together discursively. Vulnerable populations comprise either children and the elderly, or more generally pedestrians and cyclists. They are more vulnerable because of their use of the street and the risk of collision with cars, and because of feeling unsafe and lacking in autonomy (in the case of children and the elderly). This aspect of vulnerability was highlighted by the Public Health Agency, which the brokers cite in their documents, often including its maps detailing the geography of collisions. The question of traffic safety is thus seen from the perspective of these vulnerable populations, which may be defined in different ways, but share a universal status: anybody wanting to walk or cycle. Active transportation is dependent on greater traffic safety.

This leads us to the second node. Traffic safety is linked discursively with street design. Better street design and more general improvements to the built environment (density, greening, etc.) lead to better traffic safety. This is the key argument for traf fic calming: 'The street, by its design, dictates to the drivers what behavior he must adopt' (CRE-Mtl, 2007). This environmental strategy contrasts with strategies working on behavioural norms like speed limits or the use of cell phones, or public education to improve road users' 'behaviour', emanating from the MTQ.

The alternative built environment is made possible by a community with cer tain characteristics, which will enable walking and cycling (this is the third node). The equivalence here is between quality of life and convivial and safe public spaces, prox imity in a local way of life and local political participation. The argument is that citizens participating in local life through their daily practices within a dense and mixed envi ronment (local school community, shopping locally, using public spaces) will contribute to the dynamism of the community and engage politically to ensure the quality and safety of their living environment. The whole chain of equivalence thus links protection of the most vulnerable, street design and local political participation. This chain of equivalence is embedded within neighbourhoods' concrete participatory planning programmes for traffic calming. It clearly identifies a series of intertwined conditions of

inhabitance linked with the right to walk and cycle.

This discursive chain of equivalence also emerged through local mobilization. In the four Montreal neighbourhoods (Villeray, Plateau-East, NDG East and Mercier East) we studied in more depth as part of a broader research project, our interviews and observations confirmed that this was not always a natural or easy topic for social justice community organizations (usually focusing on fighting poverty, access to pub lic services and the protection of rights such as housing) to tackle, but was insist ently demanded by residents through arguments for a better quality of life within neighbourhood social forums. This local demand converged with the available fund ing and the programmes from brokers, leading to an explosion in the number of traffic-calming projects: 165 between 2007 and 2011, with over 70 in the environs of schools, thanks to the Vélo Québec programme. Looking at the development of this story in our case study of Villeray, we seek to show what social and spatial forms civic action for spatial justice and mobility took. Our objective is also to show that interpretations of the chain of equivalence into precise claims are contingent upon the local system of actors and are thus place specific.

A local participatory forum was established in the Villeray neighbourhood around mobility issues as part of a neighbourhood social forum. Located in the north-central area of Montreal, Villeray has various social problems, notably chronic poverty, slum housing and environmental stress (heavy traffic on main arterial roads). Con versely, it benefits from a very dense network of community groups, including human rights groups, social services and support providers, and planning and development bodies. Several organizations are involved in active partnerships with public institu tions such as the borough authorities or the local health and social services centre (CSSS). These organizations participate in what is known as a 'table de concertation' (an inter-sectoral discussion forum), addressing social and urban problems (Sénécal et al., 2008), which is sponsored by the City and the Public Health Agency.
In the fall of 2006, the Table de Quartier Villeray began working on an action plan to be launched in 2009. A participatory process was put in place (the Forum Social —FS) to mobilize all the community groups and various authorities and bodies in the neighbourhood. The FS was widely covered by local media. Independent citizens and

actors, less institutionalized in community networks, became involved. In doing so, they increased the scope of concerns identified in the initial programme, which touched on themes of social development and the fight against poverty. The proceedings of the public meeting included 50 proposals for action, beginning with the most traditional community demands: access to social housing, increased social assistance and free transit services. But it also contained additional demands made by residents: green design, pedestrian safety (especially around schools), bicycle paths and a community-run health clinic.

It is striking that a greener and safer walking and cycling environment was a strong demand voiced by ordinary citizens who participated in the open forum activities, emphasizing these conditions for their quality of life. At first, these environmental issues were not well received by the FS organizers and even less so by the institutional partners. The borough was unhappy, for example, that the FS was involving itself in areas constituting the borough's own core mandate: greening and traffic regulations. The FS community organizers were also hesitant to go beyond social issues such as housing and the fight against poverty. But the pressure from citizens was such that it became imperative to back up these proposals for action. Furthermore, the goal of developing green pedestrian routes seemed easier to achieve than the broader social objectives seeking elimination of poverty. The shift to a green FS was possible thanks to an extension of the networks of community and institutional actors. The communicational turn made it possible to develop a kind of community utopia by overlapping themes of citizen participation, greening, active transportation and the right to traffic safety around schools: the FS resulted in a collective project prioritizing wellbeing, social justice and quality of the urban environment.

This emerging utopian movement remained embryonic. When considering action, the FS organizers became more pragmatic. From 2008 to 2012, five priority areas thus became the focus for action: three concerned environmental aspects, namely greening, active transport facilities and safety around schools. The two others were the renovation of slum housing and setting up a health cooperative. But in the wake of the FS, traffic calming around schools became the main project. This was facilitated by the fact that civic participatory programmes from regional brokers, namely Urban Ecology

Center and Vélo Québec, were developed within the borough. In response to these civic initiatives, the borough became involved by offering a grant permitting each school to benefit from a (community-formulated) traffic-calming plan, to be implemented by the borough. This meant a considerable amount of money dedicated to traffic calming by comparison to such spending in other boroughs, and the community actors and regional brokers were proud of this gain.

A follow-up committee was mandated with reporting on progress. This closed forum marked a break from hitherto open communications; the only groups remaining engaged at this point were the parents' committees of the schools concerned. The purpose of this kind of discussion was to obtain information and technical solutions, concerning things such as additional stop signs, an increase in pedestrian crossing time or widened sidewalks at intersections. On no account could traffic flows be diverted or prohibited. The solutions found were not comprehensive: they did not reduce the volume of through traffic in the neighbourhood using the arterial roads. But at a local level, especially around schools, these solutions could bring real changes. According to the statements made by the project coordinators, they would decrease the risk of collisions, which brought satisfaction to the parents involved.

The affirmation of spatial justice, both in terms of conditions of inhabitance and a right to mobility, occurred in the identification of defined spaces where traffic-calming interventions were seen to be both necessary and consensual for a children's right to walk and cycle safely, in the environs of schools, on local residential streets. The equivalence between vulnerability and street design was especially stressed and celebrated, with a technical (but participatory) forum in which parents were involved. With regard to the 'community enabling walking and cycling' node, civic actors adopted a consensual geography of responsibility, focusing on a 'school community' organizing a halo of protection in the direct environs of all the borough's schools. The physical intervention in space was thus both limited yet broad in scope. Spaces where parents were dropping off their children for school were subject to motorized traffic which should be slowed down—precisely for the safety of these children. In this partnership with the borough, it was made very clear that these interventions were not meant to alter regional mobility on arterial roads. Boroughs have no jurisdiction over traffic on

arterial roads, which is retained by the City authorities. Furthermore, the metropolitan actors were absent from the initiative.

This differs from similar processes (involving the same brokers but different local constellations of actors) in other boroughs, where external public actors were integrated in the process and in which the situation on arterial roads was taken into consideration: the 'community enabling walking and cycling' consisted there in the inhabitants and users of the arterial roads having to reconcile car mobility with vulner ability. In many of the Urban Ecology Center projects, de-structured neighbourhoods (e.g. near underpasses or highway entrances, or those bisected by arterial roads), with attendant low-income populations and a sense of feeling unsafe in the urban environ ment, were identified as urban sites 'vulnerable' to car collisions. The broker wished to influence the City of Montreal on the choice of low-income neighbourhoods for 'green and traffic-calmed neighbourhood' funding (CEUM, 2009b). In Villeray, the protected spaces shared a universal character, setting new standards of street design around schools, enhancing the conditions in which to walk and cycle to school. Yet there was no specific focus on disadvantaged populations and their conditions of mobility in other spaces.

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Public transit as a multi-scalar claim for inhabitance

The Turcot interchange is the most recent car infrastructure project to have triggered significant debate, mobilization and the creation of alliances in Montreal. Located in the Southwest borough of Montreal, it forms the junction of two major road systems, the north–south axis (highway 15) and east–west axis (highway 20). It had to be rebuilt because of advanced and potentially dangerous age-related deterioration. The Turcot interchange was presented in debates as an issue of major economic importance, the key nodal-mobility point of Quebec's economy. The needs of mobility were thus defined at the regional and metropolitan levels, and beyond (especially for freight transport). Considering its strategic importance in the traffic network, the interchange would have had to be rebuilt with at least its current, or additional, vehicle capacity. From the beginning of the project in 2007, local neighbourhood community actors were involved in opposition strategies: demonstrations in the neighbourhood, at the interchange, in front of the mayor's house and occupying the Montreal office of

the Ministry of Transport. At stake were more than just transport issues and utopian notions regarding a new paradigm of mobility: this rebuilding project brought with it numerous local consequences.

In the opposition to Turcot, the chain of equivalence advocated is similar to the one in the traffic calming projects, but within the specificities of a car infrastructure project. It includes the following elements: (1) unjust conditions of inhabitance; (2) design of the infrastructure; and (3) the regional community enabling public transit. The local conditions of inhabitance are discursively linked to the spatialized effects of the infrastructure on the local population, which are historically situated by civic actors in relation to the construction of the highway interchange in the 1960s (Mobilisation Turcot, 2009b; Negley, 2009; 2010; Solidarité Saint-Henri, 2009). The neighbourhoods were then partly destroyed—physically segmented—hence socially and aesthetically affected by the car infrastructure. Residents' committees and community organizations have been working ever since on social cohesion and social services to alleviate the inhabitants' difficult living conditions (Solidarité Saint-Henri, 2009; Negley, 2010). The volume of traffic on the highway also means a concentration of certain pollutants in the neighbourhood. Air quality, housing and community cohesiveness are expected to be adversely affected by the new MTQ project. The issue of air pollution, and all of its potential detrimental effects on the community, is a particular concern voiced in the public hearings. Residents' associations fear the closure of two schools, a daycare facility and a sports centre located within 200 metres of the highway, because of the deterioration in air quality (Mobilisation Turcot, 2009b; Negley, 2009; Thiébaut, 2009). In the words of the Village des Tanneries residents' association: 'It takes a village to raise a child' (Negley, 2009).

This leads us to the second node: that the solution lies in the design of the infrastructure and its role in the mobility regime. The design of the infrastructure is reconsidered in terms of its ability to reduce urban disintegration and the community sense of 'enclave': the elevated structure and 'walls' should be removed or better in tegrated, and there should be no expropriations (BAPE, 2009a; Mobilisation Turcot, 2009b). With regard to air pollution, activists fear that either the health of children, or access to the above-mentioned community services (daycare, school, sports centre),

might be sacrificed (BAPE, 2009a; 2009b). Only a redesigned infrastructure, favouring public transit and reducing car capacity, can resolve this issue by reducing air pollution. This solution is envisioned by means of a regional or metropolitan community making it possible (the third node). Contrary to the practices of the MTQ (considering bounded segments of infrastructure in isolation), GRUHM instead proposed consid ering the metropolitan community of people who commute daily through the Turcot interchange on the east–west highway axis (this had not been explicitly done by the MTQ or AMT). Their commuting could be by public transit. Taking the east–west road axis as the territory for planning mobility would make it possible to plan not just for cars but also for efficient public transit services for commuters. This demand discursively connects the improvement of local conditions of inhabitance with metropolitan-wide conditions through public transit. Local conditions of inhabitance would be improved, and the metropolitan region would not take any further steps to implement a 'car-dependent' mobility system that is detrimental to the whole region in terms of air quality and the quality of urban spaces. This territorial (re)construction was supported by more than 50 actors who jointly asked for it to form the basis for debate in the 2009 public hearings, instead of the strict infrastructure of the Turcot interchange (Van Neste and Bherer, 2014). This chain of equivalence thus links vulnerability to health and social problems, the design of a highway infrastructure and a 'metropolitan' (or at least Montreal east–west) community enabling public transit.

This chain of equivalence emerged within a set of new alliances and mobilizing structures. The multifaceted spatial injustice, visible in the first node of the equivalence, is claimed by a diversity of local actors who converged to work together because of this generalized sense of threat. The housing and tenants' association became heavily involved in the issue of expropriations; the Village des Tanneries neighbourhood association (representing the area directly adjacent to the interchange) mobilized on the social cohesion aspect which they perceived to be most threatening (helped by Soli darité Saint-Henri). The leader of the Opération Galt urban revitalization committee denounced the impact on air pollution and quality of life. Thus, there were three strong leaders reaching out to other local partners, and inviting expert contributions from the Public Health Agency, university professors and the Environmental Regional Council. A broad collective, Mobilisation Turcot, was formed by these local actors to exchange

information and oppose the project. A strong feeling of local spatial injustice, supported by regional 'experts' (as perceived locally), was the catalyst for collaboration and strong mobilization.

At that stage, two regional brokers also became heavily involved: GRUHM, which had been a leading 'citizen expert' in a previous highway debate (Notre-Dame); and the Environmental Regional Council of Montreal (CRE-Mtl). Leadership of the mobilization was, however, in the hands of local actors. When the time came in 2008 to draft a 'declaration of principles' for the new Mobilisation Turcot coalition group, CRE-Mtl's suggestion to include public transit and less car capacity was decisive, and came to seal a local–regional alliance between different organizations.

We had nothing but problems. We had received analyses from experts showing that the project brought us more and more trouble. But as to how to act to resolve matters, we had no idea at all ... to demonstrate that with a massive public transit offer you could reduce the need for this highway to zero, was a way to see this movement otherwise. It was like: wow! (interview with a leader of Mobilisation Turcot, 21 September 2011).

A new articulation of the problems and solutions emerged. The transit solu tion became a goal for regional and local actors alike. The projected new Turcot inter change was pictured as having direct multi-scalar consequences on the conditions of inhabitance. The 2009 public hearings strengthened these alliances; as stated above, actors converged in demanding consideration of the whole east–west axis as the basis for planning public transit (which was not accepted, but it still framed much of the debate in the hearings). The outcome of the public hearings did not reduce the mobilization. The end report recommended the reduction of negative impact on the neighbourhoods (reducing expropriations) but did not take a position regarding the car versus public transit capacity of the Turcot interchange (BAPE, 2009b).

In 2010, civic actors (in particular GRUHM, Forum Urba and Gauthier, sup ported by the large civic alliance) and the City each proposed their 'alternative Turcot' to the Ministry of Transport, both following the chain of equivalence explained above (with east–west public transit to reduce negative impact on the local population). The

City further saw a more compact Turcot interchange as a possibility for urban devel opment. But a day after the presentation of the City's alternative project, the Ministry of Transport commented that the evaluated costs of this alternative would be CDN $6 billion (double the cost of their own project), making it totally unfeasible. Virtually no modifications were ultimately made to the Turcot interchange when presented again in the fall of 2010. The number of expropriations were reduced, but in terms of mobility, the decision was taken to marginally increase highway capacity. The Ministry of Transport presented a Turcot interchange with enticing images of what the neighbourhood could look like, including tramways (the vision had been under stood by the communications department!). But what was agreed on was actually a (partially) dedicated lane for buses, without any funds or plans made available for a transit system (train, tram, LRT) along this complete axis.

Within the City of Montreal (and especially for Projet Montréal), the unrevised project was unacceptable. The leader of Projet Montréal immediately resigned from his position in the City's executive committee. In contrast, the environmental brokers CRE-Montreal and Équiterre saw this as the only chance to negotiate improvements. Instead of opposing, they thus pursued a new collaborative strategy with the Ministry of Transport under a joint body (Comité Vigilence Turcot) which rallied several other regional (environmental, transport and university) actors. A majority of the local actors from Mobilisation Turcot viewed this as an act of treachery.

In the year that followed, it was clear that the collaborative attitude would bear no fruit. This was a defeat in the struggle to include transit-oriented infrastructure and reduce the negative local impact of the Turcot infrastructure project. More public transport was integrated in the end, but limited to allowing more buses along a dedicated priority lane. Regional, and especially local, actors were disgruntled by this result: they had hoped for a structural change in the infrastructure, with trams or trains passing through, and reduced car capacity. The buses could use a priority lane only as far as the Southwest borough of Montréal, and not into the city centre. Buses would be then rerouted to the nearest subway station. Before reaching this subway station, hundreds of buses would cause disruption and pose a collision risk on local streets not designed to accommodate such traffic, as neighbourhood organizations pointed

out. Once again, local residents and neighbourhood groups felt that they would end up paying the price for increased regional traffic.

In limiting changes to the design and function of the Turcot infrastructure in the mobility system, while albeit allowing for more public transit (through funding more buses), the MTQ skilfully broke the will of a 'community' enabling public transit and the fulfilment of better conditions of inhabitance. Local and regional needs and impact were dislocated. The chain of equivalence, and the coalition which had advocated it, were broken. In sum, when the civic actors did define rights to mobility in terms of the conditions of inhabitance within a local–regional coalition, it could hold together only temporarily.

Conclusion

The civic collectives mobilized to transform norms and infrastructures of mobility in Montreal were involved in a dynamic process of claim making. Within this process, the civic actors relied heavily on claims regarding conditions of inhabitance to define what would be appropriate rights to mobility. In both cases studied, the right to inhabitance constituted a spatial justice frame to redefine mobility beyond automobility. It concerned a variety of issues associated with equity, health and the living environment, and the conditions of inhabitance chosen to define the rights to mobility depended on the specific constellations of actors and contexts of action. Yet in a transversal manner, the demands for mobility were justified by basic conditions of living for residents and not in more abstract distributive or environmental terms. The reliance on conditions of inhabitance to define new rights to mobility involved, in both cases, attempts by civic collectives to mobilize a sense of shared threat and vulnerability, which actors of different kinds imbued with meaning and grounded in space. In Villeray, the shared sense of vulnerability led to a focus on the environs of schools (which was a consensual geography of responsibility in their context). In the case of Turcot, the creative stroke consisted in the mobilization of a sense of shared threat at the local scale, linking it with living conditions and a right to public transit at the metro politan scale.

In the two cases, the discursive chains of equivalence were very similar in terms

of the nodes defined. Both of them make claims for inhabitance which utilize: (1) a sense of injustice in space; (2) a physical solution to the injustice which also defined rights to mobility (street design for walking and cycling rights or infrastructure design for access to public transit); and (3) community engagement enabling this solution. The claimed conditions of inhabitance relate to individual rights to mobility—access to safe spaces for walking and cycling, and to public transit enabling inhabitance in less polluted and de-structured living environments. But the rights are enabled by the ability of a spatialized community to put them in place (within neighbourhoods in the first case, and a metropolitan community in the second case). Such community enables a political response to the current injustice in the organization of space for car mobility. Yet this collective component—of a new political community enabling both claimed conditions of inhabitance and a certain right to mobility—is the node which is most pressurized in the chain of equivalence, and which has been subject to influence and control from external actors. The call for a dynamic, politically engaged and mixed local community to enable walking and cycling is no stranger to the funding conditions applied by the health foundation Québec en Forme, nor the City of Montreal's desire for attractive environments suitable for young families. Such external influences are not per se negative, although one might wonder if these walkable environments remain inclusive and accessible to all, and whether political regulation of car circulation can be effective if emanating from local community and borough actors alone. The actors involved—brokers and local actors—also had power regarding choice of the spaces tar geted for traffic calming: we saw influences on the choice of economically disadvan taged neighbourhoods benefiting from traffic calming investment; and Vélo Québec's project, demanding safety around all schools, which took effect in Villeray.

The call for a metropolitan community enabling public transit and better con ditions of inhabitance also received (for a time) the support of the City (seeing, among other motivations, an urban development opportunity offering a more compact infra structure) and the DSP-M (in light of data on air pollution), but was under much more pressure from the MTQ. The idea of a 'metropolitan' community, structured around an east–west public transit commuting axis, appeared a strong territorial discursive construction, but counter to current institutional norms regarding the planning of mobility. It was an attempt to articulate differently the right to mobility, structured

in terms of car mobility by the MTQ, within another chain of equivalence justifying public transit. But the MTQ retained control and eventually broke the chain of equivalence from activists, making improvements in public transit possible without important changes to infrastructure and car capacity, and in avoiding demands for greater political influence on the part of the City and the 'metropolitan community' on transportation policy.

The Montreal case studies exemplify discursive struggles for the right to car alternatives within the city, justified by their link with conditions of inhabitance. These discursive struggles participate in a production of space: traffic calming measures were implemented and cycling paths opened, and the Turcot interchange should eventually be rebuilt (it has been delayed). In order to have a say in this production of space, civic actors adopted various stances: communicational, strategic and oppo sitional, as a function of the field in which it was advocated. In Montreal, the discursive articulations linking rights to mobility to conditions of inhabitance are thus an ambig uous mix of the constitution of a counter-discourse to automobility and pragmatic situated discourses for the production of at least certain spaces of enhanced conditions of inhabitance, with alternative rights to mobility.

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233
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