

Chapter 1

Montreal and the Urban Moment

As a city located on an island at the confluence of the St Lawrence and Ottawa rivers, Montreal can become very hot and humid come summer. Parks fill up with people, many of them young adults, eager to escape the heat of apartments, meet up with friends, sit on the grass, chill out in the shade, play sports, have drinks, and follow the unfolding of the day wherever the fortuity of interactions may lead: a bike ride to a neighbourhood barbecue get-together, a microbrewery patio, a café, a basketball court, a back alley, an open-air music scene, or train tracks and open fields. With their song ‘Un été à Montréal’, the hip-hop group Dubmatique captured the electricity of a warm, humid day filled with such urban *flânerie*. There is sensuality, playfulness, a sense of networked open-ended space to the flow, lyrics, and beats of this song. Let us follow these artists’ invitation to spend a Sunday in the Parc Jeanne-Mance with them. This park is located on the foothills of the Mount Royal, the iconic mountain at the centre of the city. It is there that, since the 1990s, Montrealers have spontaneously met up for the Tamtams, an open-air gathering where they come to jam with tamtams and various other kinds of musical instruments, dance, and relax. OTMC (Ousmane Traoré), a Senegalese-born Montrealer who lived in Paris before co-founding Dubmatique with his friends, raps over the beats: *‘I invite you to spend a Sunday in Parc Jeanne-Mance / Wandering around in this ambiance where people mix / And the Possee sits on the grass, “chilling” tranquil / The atmosphere is festive, dressed in my most beautiful musical phrasing / Let me introduce myself within the magmatic mass / With a trick of “pass me the mic” / Smash the ice and make the different classes melt.*¹

We use this example to highlight a kind of public sociability that builds on and constitutes the aesthetic political relations that shape urban politics and consciousness in Montreal. As Laurent Vernet (2017, p. 44; our translation) has argued in a study of the Tamtams and Piknic Électronik, two

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open-air gatherings taking place every week as soon as the air warms up, ‘to join the tamtams or the Piknic Electronik is not ... synonymous with connecting with the strangers who make up the crowd. It is probably a “taste for others” [*goût des autres*], a mutual appreciation of the presence of others in very special circumstances.’² In Parc Jeanne-Mance and on the foothills of Parc du Mont-Royal, people of diverse cultural backgrounds and social classes mix and mingle (*les gens se mêlangent*), creating an aesthetic appearance where interactions are self-regulatory, negotiated intuitively but also in relation to municipal authorities, with whom a pact regarding the shared use of public spaces was reached in 1994 – a pact which still holds today, without the need for institutional enforcement. The lyrics to ‘Un été à Montréal’ nonetheless underline the visibility of class-based differences and make it clear that possibilities for taking part in such spontaneous gatherings are not equally distributed. OTMC seems to suggest that the seductive spell of this aesthetic appearance simultaneously creates the possibility for taking the mic (or rather, being handed the mic) and making utterance through the noise of the city, motivated by the desire to make such class-based differences melt. This desire and the youthful platform from which it emerges and is sustained resonate with the urban political consciousness and subjectivity that became increasingly audible and visible through the affirmation of urban movements in 1960s and 1970s Montreal. The playful aesthetic relations that unfold via public sociability sustained by this sensual ‘taste for others’ (*goût des autres*, in Laurent Vernet’s words) sharpen trust in the knowledge that come from such sensorial engagement, and inform political consciousness and aesthetic modes of political action.

We start this chapter with reference to the iconic mountain and two rivers that are distinctive geographical features of this city because they are not only significant to the contemporary urbanization of consciousness and formation of urban political subjectivities, as we have just briefly discussed, but are also inextricably linked to the imperial, settler-colonial networks and the urbanization of capital that have given shape to the urban space we move through today. As Victoria Dickenson (2011, p. 38) has written, ‘these two geographical features – mountain and river – have shaped settlement patterns and land use by both Aboriginal and European inhabitants’, thereby contributing to defining ‘human experience in this place’. The meeting of the St Lawrence and Ottawa rivers has long provided access to sacred meeting grounds and gathering, trapping, and hunting territories for multiple and diverse Indigenous nations around the area, including the Anishinaabeg Omàmìwini (Algonquin), Kanien’kehà:ka (Mohawk), Atikamekw, and Wendat (Huron). Still resonating today, ‘Hochelega’, ‘Moneyang’ (Thumbadoo 2017, p. 124), and ‘Tiohtià:ke’ are Indigenous toponyms given to the Island of

Montreal, which is known as a ‘millennial political, diplomatic, economic and cultural hub’ (Ville de Montréal 2017). A gathering and trading place, it was a metropolis long before the first French settlements that led to the establishment of Ville-Marie (Fennario 2017). The Ottawa and St Lawrence rivers provided access to the Great Lakes and western areas of the continent, and later strategically connected Montreal to trade networks with Europe and other places along slave trade routes from the West African continent to the West Indies (Castonguay and Dagenais 2011; Nelson 2016). Over time, it became strategically positioned as ‘Canada’s leading city’, from the mid-eighteenth century to the 1970s.

In a convincing analysis of the corporeal representations of Montreal by middle and merchant classes in the city’s period of rapid industrialization, Nicolas Kenny (2011) demonstrates that the urbanization of imperial and settler-colonial capital producing the industrial and modern city was also a deeply embodied experience. More specifically, he argues that ‘[t]he work done on nature to create the modern city had given rise to novel corporeal experiences that reshaped perceptions of the body itself. And as the environment was transformed to meet the imperatives of modern industrialization, so was the body – through which that environment was lived – re-imagined, seen as a fragile organism whose welfare depended on a degree of closeness to the natural world that spawned it’ (Kenny 2011, p. 66). His analysis is insightful for its account of the ways in which the body mediated the industrial city through processes which in turn transformed perceptual fields and representations associated with the experience of a modern, industrial urbanity. In our exploration of the contemporary experience of urbanity from this place shaped by two major riverways and an iconic mountain, we also argue that to think, feel, move, and do research through urban worlds is inextricable from the condition of being affected by this environment.

We should pause here to note that while ‘Montreal’ has come to qualify a city, an island, an urban agglomeration, and broader metropolitan region surrounding the archipelago of the island, we contend, following Castonguay and Dagenais (2011, p. 2), that it is important to keep ‘this plurality of spatial frames’ in mind as we explore the urban youth worlds discussed in the ethnographies that follow this chapter. These diverse and not mutually exclusive spatial frames reflect and inform various realities, mobility practices, environments, and spatial imaginaries that are unbound to contained scales, whether those are institutionally defined or shaped by geographical features of the land.

In order to better locate the milieu in which political action unfolds in these ethnographies, we need to provide a larger context to the elements that feed into the urban experience, reciprocally affecting politics and urban youth

worlds. Thus, in this chapter on Montreal and the urban moment, we strive to first provide a larger and more detailed rendering of Montreal's urban feel.

We then contextualize the significance of this case study to an examination of the transformation of the political process in a world of cities. Montreal, as we will see, is a useful site for understanding how we act politically in such a world. This, we argue, is partly due to its youthful population and the ways in which youthfulness has historically shaped urban culture by being used as a location from which to experiment sociopolitical change, particularly with the affirmation of urban movements connecting Montreal to networks of youthful countercultural ideologies, contestations, and protests in the urban political moment of the 1960s and 1970s. The history of sociopolitical urban movements help us understand how aesthetic appearances shape and transform subjectivities, as well as the narratives that come to give meaning to political actions.

Thus, in the final section of this chapter, by drawing from scholars who have written on sociopolitical actions and literary expressions of 1960s and 1970s Montreal, we will explore how this urban political moment reveals changing relations to time, space, and alternative rationalities that contribute to the affirmation of ways of acting through aesthetics, and of urbanity and youthfulness to experiment sociopolitical change. It is important to look at this historically situated (yet globally connected) political moment because Montreal's place in the global urban cultures of the 1960s and 1970s has had deep and lasting influences on the shapes and narratives of the Montreal urban youth worlds that we will enter in subsequent chapters. This political moment, and the nationalist, sovereignist, state-centred project that it generated in the decades that followed (in spite of the urbanity characterizing it), also sheds light on politics in excess of the conceptual and administrative apparatus of the nation-state or the municipal government. But, to be able to sense and conceptualize these political processes, we must first adjust our perceptual and ontological filters at the level of the street. Let us explore a selection of key elements that feed into the urban experience here. What's the sense and feel of things shaping Montreal's politics?

Montreal's Politico-Sensuous Feel

As banal as it may seem, Montreal's politics is shaped by its long winters, but also by its tensed and spatialized linguistic and racialized differences, by its history of nationalism framed as a Third World decolonizing struggle, by its youthfulness, and by its persistently visible punk culture. What do these elements have in common? The body and its senses.

When, almost half the year, people walk on snow, political action on the streets takes a different feel. When at last the snow starts to melt and the sun begins to warm bodies, social relations become effervescent. Consider Victor's account of the beginnings of the student strike at Concordia University in February 2012: *'It was really warm over the course of that week, so like, really warm, it was really weird in February or something. And, then at the University level people shut down de Maisonneuve [Boulevard] ... It was very much a scene and people like couldn't just wear one red square, but had to cover their entire body in red ... How much were you able to exude your implication aesthetically. And it just turned into kind of a party on the street, which was fine, I wasn't against that, but it just kind of made me uncomfortable cause I have a hard time mixing these things, like ... eh, it just seems like a very privileged way to protest. Let's have a party in the streets!'* (Victor, student who participated in the 2012 strikes). In this description, Victor, who spent part of his childhood in the United States, highlights Montreal's 'privilege' in being able to demonstrate with fun and through aesthetics, unlike in other cities where demonstration inevitably leads to police violence. He also alludes to the importance of the exceptionally warm weather during that week in February 2012. He further emphasizes the embodiment of people's commitment to the cause: *'cover[ing] their entire body in red'*. 'Fun', 'warmth', 'aesthetics', and 'embodiment' are terms we will recurrently use in the following pages. As we will see, demonstrating with fun and through aesthetics is rather deeply rooted in Montreal youth political worlds. Writing about 1970s politics and the rise of the Montreal Citizen's Movements, Timothy Lloyd Thomas (1997, p. 150) points out that '[d]espite the often bitter politics of language and secession, on the street Montrealers do better than survive, they party and they flourish'. Despite his seemingly overly enthusiastic tone, Thomas' interpretation and understanding of the specificity of how political action unfolds in this place resonate with Victor's words.

Importantly, as we have already alluded to, political action in Montreal is coloured by its youthful population. As the largest city of the province, it welcomes many postsecondary students from other regions and countries. In 2010, it hosted 57% of Quebec's students: 264 805 individuals total. Not all young Montrealers are students, of course. While the province of Quebec counted 19% of its population at between 15 and 29 years old in 2011, Montreal counted 20.7% in this age group. There are thus more young people in Montreal as compared to other cities in Quebec. And, as we discussed in the Introduction, beyond these statistics, Montreal is a youthful city because of its lifestyle. Youthfulness, for us, is not determined by biological criteria. It is a state of mind and a way of acting. Montreal's punk scene, for instance, is vibrant. A punk scene is not a prerequisite for youthful political action, but when visible, it is generally associated with youthfulness. Punk (along

with hip-hop, perhaps) is the quintessential urban culture. Its closeness with anarchism makes it a particularly important aesthetic trend in activist milieus around the world (Marcus 1989). The fact that many Montreal youngsters adopt punk lifestyles or simply punk looks colours the city's streets with a rebellious feel.

This echoes an observation made by Thomas (1997, p. 150) in reference to the context of 1970s Montreal, where 'social ecologists and anarchists ... were far more numerous and influential than in any other Canadian city'. Significantly, the first punk bar in Montreal was opened in 1977 by youngsters who felt excluded from the francophone Québécois nationalist scene and its music (Lamarque 2016). Rather than Québécois hippie culture, industrial London became the cultural reference for these young Montrealers. In the 1980s, with the opening of the bar Foufounes Électriques, a second wave of punk music production emerged, in both English and French. The scene is still very lively today.³ Lamarque's ethnography emphasizes that because of its bilingualism, the Montreal punk scene is distinct from the New York and London scenes. On the other hand, with its do-it-yourself (DIY) philosophy, punk culture shares affinities with many contemporary youthful political movements (Holloway 2002; see Figure 1.1). One of Lamarque's informants



FIGURE 1.1 Punk culture. In a demonstration against police brutality, a woman carries artwork saying, 'Service porcin violent de Montréal' ('Violent Pig Service of Montreal') – a play on the acronym of the Montreal Police Service (SPVM). *Source:* photo by Marilena Liguori.

notes, ‘Today, while this [punk] spirit still exists, during the student strikes for instance, we see that there is resistance, not quite cultural, but an articulated resistance, a vision for another kind of society’⁴ (F. Anderson, 26 March 2015, cited in Lamarque 2016, p. 86).

The development of the Montreal punk scene, somewhere in between Québécois francophone hippie culture and the influences of industrial London, is also evocative of the ‘sensations of living among competing codes’ (Simon 2006). Montreal politics and culture are influenced by the intermingling of linguistic communities and the spatialization of linguistic differences which have historically been used as markers of racial hierarchies – something that we will elaborate on in the next section.

Historically, the St Laurent Boulevard has played the mythical role of dividing French and English zones. ‘The Main’ or ‘*la Main*’, as anglophones and francophones would respectively call it, is also characteristically known for the ways in which segments of its built environment along a south–north axis have come to mark the successive waves of newer immigrant communities and their patterns of settlement (see Figure 1.2). Sherry Simon (2006, p. xi)

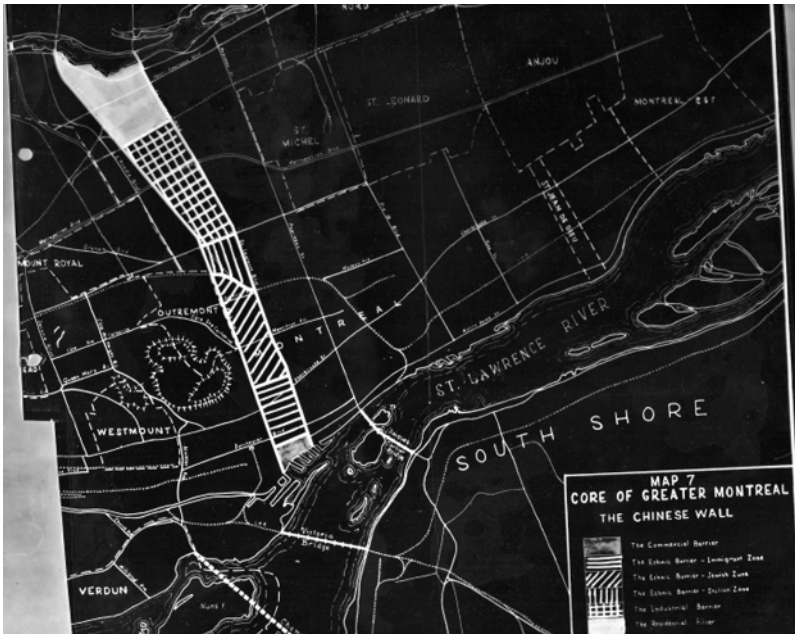


FIGURE 1.2 Map depicting zones divided along the St Laurent Boulevard. Source: retrieved from the archives of the Institut national de la recherche scientifique – Centre Urbanisation Culture Société in Montreal. Date and author unknown.

has written about the ‘sensibility of the divided city’, where linguistic and cultural communities are ‘physically close but culturally distant.’ In her study of translation practices in Montreal, she attends to the aesthetic difference that living in a city where ‘two languages mingle relentlessly’ makes. ‘Translation is put to the test’, she writes, ‘it becomes a *condition* – the condition of living in a city with a double history, located somewhere between Paris and New York, and between Iqaluit and Miami’ (Simon 2006, p. xi; emphasis in original). Furthermore, she argues that ‘[w]hat makes Montreal different from other global cities is that immigrant [or Indigenous] languages enter the city’s conversations as a 3rd partner, in an always-triangular configuration ... Montreal’s double language ground, formed of languages unequal in history and authority, is not always an easy space for newcomers to manoeuvre in’.

While the St Laurent Boulevard has historically been the middle ground for the ‘divided city’, youth urban culture and politics are today characterized by bilingualism and cultural diversity. Here, ‘multilingualism, mixed languages, and code-switching are preferred modes of communication, forms of translation specific to its polyglot sensibility’ (Simon 2006, p. 10). Research on hip-hop language practices provide interesting windows to see this polyglot sensibility at work. For instance, a research project analysing Quebec rap lyrics used nine distinct linguistic categories for analysis, ‘including three varieties of French, three of English, Haitian, and Jamaican creoles, and Spanish’ (Sarkar and Allen 2007).

One could argue that living in ‘one of the oldest North American urban settings’ (Castonguay and Dagenais 2011, p. 2) gives a certain weight to power hierarchies materially inscribed in time and space. Indeed, the urban experience in Montreal is also shaped, in part, by layers of colonization, industrialization, deindustrialization, and brownfield (re)developments, all stratified in the built and unbuilt environment. These layers create stark aesthetic contrasts when one travels through the streets: from the colonial and imperial depot buildings of the old port to the glass, steel, and old grey-stone commercial buildings and skyscrapers of the downtown area; from the upper-class houses and high-rise apartments of the west, to the working-class elongated duplexes and triplexes of the east, to the postwar former suburbs of the north. The weight of the colonial and capitalist historical processes that have produced and are producing this urban space are easily perceived, as they are inscribed in the landscape.

To this day, infrastructure built for the efficient transportation of goods and resources constrains the movement of people across the city: overpasses, highways, railroads, the port, and the St Lawrence Seaway all crisscross space, blocking pathways and forcing people to take detours. From the experience of moving through (above, under, and alongside) this infrastructure, one

can sense the supremacy of economic interests and the decision to ensure the efficiency of economic flows over and above concerns for the quality of life of individuals and communities – freight has priority. The ordered displacement of racialized communities to make way for the construction of this infrastructure has deeply shaped the urban space and influenced the political process and formation of political subjectivities in Montreal – not only in the urban political moment of the 1960s and 1970s, where citizen groups formed to protest against the construction of metropolitan highways and private housing developments that destroyed entire neighbourhoods (Hamel 1991; Douay 2012; Economides and MacWirth 2017), but also in the nineteenth-century Kanien'kehà:ka (Mohawk) opposition to railroads passing through the community of Kahnawake (Alfred 1995). We can also see it echoed in Kabisha's words opening the Introduction.

While the temporality of cycles and boom and burst displaces peoples, neighbourhood cultures, and hangout joints (Boileau 1991; Douay 2012; Harel 2014), it also opens fields of possibilities for the rearrangement and creative prefigurations of sociopolitical and sociospatial relations (Lévesque 1999; Sarrasin et al. 2012). The *Champs des possibles*, located in the Mile-End neighbourhood, is a good example. Now an urban park co-managed by the municipal administration and citizens, this area located in between old manufactures and train tracks had been reclaimed by citizen groups through their use of it for a wide range of activities, including urban agriculture and non-institutionalized forms of environmental education (Douay 2012).

This case is also telling of a libertarian culture that shapes Montreal politics and urban youth worlds. Writing in 1997, Thomas argued that 'Montreal's civic culture lends itself to libertarian, even anarchistic, solutions to its current political and economic malaise. Montrealers have learned that if any good is to come to their city they must find their own solutions' (Thomas 1997, p. 150). This attitude is still vibrant today. The active presence of many groups operating on the basis of *autogestion* (self-management) principles attests to it (see Douay 2012; but also Lambert-Pilotte, Drapeau, and Kruzynsky 2007; Sarrasin et al. 2012). They constitute and make visible alternative templates for the organization of professional relations and everyday life, beyond their mediation by the state and municipal bureaucracies.

Montreal's politics and culture are also shaped by the city's tensed racialized spatializations. These are deeply rooted in the political geography and history of settler-colonization. Charmaine Nelson (2016), for instance, notes that the walls enclosing the settlement have historically served to keep the racialized and feared Others out (most notably, Indigenous populations), while keeping the domesticated, contained Others in – those who contributed to the city's economic development through slave labour (Black

and Indigenous slaves, mostly). Even if the walls have now been put down, racialized neighbourhoods are still markers of segments of youth populations targeted as being ‘at risk’ of illicit or illegal activities (Manai and Touré Kapo 2017) and concentrate immigrant communities facing disproportionately higher rates of unemployment or underemployment – a symptom of systemic racial discrimination.

If fights for language rights moved Montrealers out on the streets in the 1960s and 1970s, for the contemporary generations of young Montrealers, tensions are more visible when it comes to racialization and the complex imbrications of intersectionality. ‘Under sexual nationalism’s current influence across the West,’ writes Bilge (2012, p. 309), ‘Quebec’s linguistic worries seem to be out-staged (if only temporarily) by gender-justice-oriented ones.’ By ‘sexual nationalism’, Bilge means ‘the incorporation of gender-and-sexual normativities into the governmentality of migrant/Muslim integration and the politics of the nation’ (Bilge 2012, p. 304). In her analysis of the ‘reasonable accommodation crisis’ in 2006–07,⁵ she brilliantly shows how Quebec’s mainstream feminism has become a core civilizational value protecting against ‘barbaric’ religion, most notably Islam. ‘These “other men,”’ she pursues, ‘not only stand for their alien (and barbaric) religion, but also act as ghostly apparitions capable of drawing Quebec back into horrendous times of pre-modernity, the *Grande Noirceur* (Great Darkness)’ (Bilge 2012, p. 310). Bilge reminds us here of the non-urban Quebec of the 1930s to 1950s, home to despotism, anti-urbanism, and domination by the Catholic Church.

The Quiet Revolution (*la Révolution tranquille*), a period of rapid cultural mutations, socioeconomic transformations, and political changes that took place in the Province of Quebec in the 1960s and 1970s, threw away such anti-urbanism and favoured the rise of feminism. The Quiet Revolution’s fundamentally *urban* history shapes Montreal’s political culture today. It digs racialized, gendered, and generational divisions among feminists and in everyday spaces. It further makes some forms of political action more hearable and visible than others.

In 2016, when an advertising campaign announcing the celebration of Montreal’s 375th anniversary included only members of the White, francophone artistic community and star system, it spurred wide protests and denunciations by Montrealers excluded once again from such representations, as well as those shocked by the lack of acknowledgement of the city’s diversity (CBC 2017a).

‘Race’ is a difficult term to utter in Montreal, as elsewhere – but perhaps more so than in Chicago or Los Angeles, for instance. Up until some very recent and highly publicized controversies,⁶ it was conspicuously absent from the public debate – although not entirely, as the formation of the Student

of Colour Montreal collective demonstrates (Hampton 2012). The city's engagement in organizing a public consultation on systemic racism, called for by citizens through their 'Right of Initiative',⁷ also attests to the vibrancy of popular mobilizations and organizations committed to shedding light on the insidious logics of racism (Barbeau 2017). With an ethnography of aesthetic political action sensitive to bodies and nonverbal communication, 'race' is something we need to say out loud.

In the context of the following ethnographies, which cover the first half of the 2010s, we note that while feminism was loudly debated and affirmed within the student movement (Surprenant and Bigaouette 2013), to take one example, racism was mostly absent from the debates that we were aware of. In our interviews with students, however, some mentioned having been shocked by the staging of a giant papier-mâché puppet representing then Quebec Prime Minister Jean Charest (identified by a tag under its head that read 'Sir John James Charest'), carried by students wearing business suits, their faces painted in black.

What were these students trying to say? We did not speak to all of those who took part in this particular demonstration, so we can only extrapolate. As one informant told us, this staging took place in the aftermath of the infamous P-6 ruling (adopted 18 May 2012), which prohibited students from wearing masks in demonstrations (see Chapter 2). Painting one's face in a dark colour was an act of defiance and a political statement regarding tools of surveillance and policing using facial recognition (on a similar use of masks in other contexts of political protest, see Rosi Braidotti's (2015) remarkable analysis of 'the Pussy Riot project' and feminist politics). An informant told us that any dark colouring could have been chosen. The political effects of choosing black, while eluding this person at the time, were shocking to others. They may have been perceived and interpreted through the prism of the cultural artefacts of the Quiet Revolution.

In 1969, Pierre Vallières published *Nègres blancs d'Amérique: Autobiographie précoce d'un terroriste québécois*,⁸ describing the plight of French-Canadians within Canada. The Quiet Revolution was also a nationalist revolution, through which the urban Left positioned Quebec as a Third World country to be decolonized from British and American domination. In 2012, this performance referred to Charest as 'British', hence the puppet's highly visible nametag. The intent may have been to refer to him as a dominating colonizer. Beneath him, the students could easily be seen as playing the role of 'White niggers', slaving to transport His Highness. It seems that the students wanted to show how they could resist such domination by referring to *James Cross*, the British diplomat who was killed by the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) in October 1970. Racism, domination, and colonization are complex

forces of biopolitics (Foucault 1978). They involve disciplining the body, sensual restraint, performative narratives, ‘floating signifiers’ (Hall 2012), and the aestheticization of difference. The pervasive persistence of racism, the manipulation of affects related to fear of the Other, and the attraction and appropriation of markers of racial difference all influence Montreal’s politics and the intersectionality of oppression.

Montreal’s Place in the Global Urban Cultures of the 1960s and 1970s

As we can see, it is important to attend to the deep and lasting influences of Montreal’s place in the global urban cultures of the 1960s and 1970s on the shapes and narratives of Montreal urban youth worlds throughout contemporary history.

In recent years, a significant body of literature has emerged on the urban and countercultural movements in Montreal in the 1960s and 1970s (Hamel 1991; Thomas 1997; Warren 2008, 2012; Mills 2011; Austin 2013; Ross 2016; Tayler 2018). Along with this scholarship, Literature scholars have examined the forms of literary expression that emerged over the same period (Coleman 2018). Their studies shed light not only on the spatial imagination of novelists, poets, and their contemporaries, but also on national and urban narratives prevalent at the time, and the ways in which they affected the transformation of political subjectivities. Such scholarship provides relevant insights allowing us to better understand why and how young Montrealers have mobilized to act politically, and how these mobilizations have influenced urban politics and urban youth cultures.

Reading these works through one another, we contend that the affirmation of urban movements connecting Montreal to networks of youthful countercultural ideologies, contestations, and protests in the political moment of the 1960s and 1970s brings to the fore the salience of an urban logic of political action alongside a modern state-centred logic of political action. This, we argue, is partly due to Montreal’s youthful population and the ways in which youthfulness has historically shaped urban culture by being used as a location from which to experiment sociopolitical change and create aesthetic appearances, particularly in the urban political moment of the 1960s and 1970s.

Some context: this period was one of imposing state interventions in the establishment of a welfare nation-state that was considered the main tool for the creation of social and economic possibilities for French-Canadians living in the Province of Quebec (who would progressively come to understand themselves as Québécois and Québécoises). The election of the Liberal government

of Jean Lesage in 1960 and its successive four-year rule of power marked an acceleration of the pace of state reforms and sociopolitical and socioeconomic transformations, as this government engaged on an agenda of political modernization to ‘catch up’ economically and socially with ‘North American modernity’.

The discourse of modernization was also informing development projects led by the administration of the City of Montreal under the leadership of Jean Drapeau.⁹ This was a municipal administration characterized by an authoritarian style of governance seeking to maintain a firm, centralizing grip on power along with a closed-door political culture (Ross 2016, p. 130). Even though Montreal was losing its status as economical capital of Canada to Toronto, large-scale redevelopment projects, led by public and private interests, were conceived as vast operations of urban renovation aimed at building a modern, world-class metropolis, and adapting its infrastructure accordingly (Hamel 1991, p. 121). It is in this context that the first skyscrapers, eleven new bridges, the subway system, the ‘Expo 67’¹⁰ pavilions on the Île Sainte-Hélène (see the cover of this book), and the metropolitan highway system were set in place to adapt the urban environment to the demands of mass consumption. ‘City planners anticipated a city of seven million by 2000, and built (and demolished) accordingly’, underscores Sherry Simon (2006, p. 34). Pierre Hamel (1991, p. 122; our translation) further notes that ‘the imperatives of profitability and economic efficiency guided this new modernization of urban space, undeniably giving priority to the one-dimensional logic of capital’.

The language of modernization illustrates well how, during this period dominated by the formation of strong national and municipal states, time was understood in a linear manner, with a clear direction: progress. At the provincial level, the strategic goal was to close the gap between francophones (who had limited opportunities for professional advancement) and anglophones, by developing means to seize control over economic and cultural productions dominated by English-Canadian and American interests.

In the course of only six years, from 1960 to 1966, six new ministries were created, eight state-owned companies were established, and close to 13 000 employees were hired in the provincial public sector (Mills 2011, p. 41). Urban ways of life, rather than rural ones, provided renewed energies and templates for the formation of a modern nation-state. As mentioned earlier, this marked a profound contrast to the anti-statist and anti-urban stance of the Duplessis governments.¹¹

What spurred such contrasted political transformations with the turning of governmental administration and governing political party? Keeping the analytical gaze on state-oriented political action, seen and understood through the perceptual fields of party politics, is to tell only part of the story. Distinctive of this period

in Quebec (as elsewhere across the Americas and Europe) is a demographic and spatial increase in populations living in urban areas (Pelletier 1992, p. 5). In the period that we today call the *Trente glorieuses* (from the end of the 1940s to the end of the 1970s), Montreal's metropolitan region expanded as a result of increased migrations from the countryside and growing numbers of immigrants diversifying the cultural composition of the population; by the beginning of the 1970s, 45.5% of the Quebec population lived in Montreal's metropolitan region (Pelletier 1992, p. 5). Among them were Caribbean immigrants, bringing new perspectives 'to a long-standing Black Canadian community that during that period amounted to somewhere between 10 000 and 15 000' (Austin 2013, p. 31).

The presence of the Black community is most notable in La Petite Bourgogne ('Little Burgundy'). This neighbourhood, however, soon becomes targeted for sustained urban renovation (demolition) projects, along with other parts of the city where socioeconomically disadvantaged and racialized communities were living. In Little Burgundy alone, a population of 20 000 residents in 1966 dropped to just 8000 by 1976 (Douay 2012, p. 85). All in all, from 1965 to 1975, 140 000 Montrealers were forced to move from their homes due to urban renovation or demolition projects. Such projects spurred the creation of citizens' committees exasperated by the narrow and municipally controlled opportunities for participation offered in planning schemes; matters had to be taken into their own hands. The emergence of these committees marks the rise of urban movements in Montreal (Hamel 1991).

We must also note that between 1968 and 1969, *for the first time*, the majority of the Quebec population under the age of 20 was in school (Mills 2011, p. 171). And, of all university students in Quebec, 60% were studying in Montreal (Warren 2008). In colleges and universities, it was the social sciences and humanities departments that most attracted youth (Warren 2008, p. 241). Students read authors like Marx, who had previously been prohibited in francophone institutions governed by Catholic authorities. They studied key figures of the Frankfurt and Althusserian Schools, as well as French existentialists, but also Mao and Lenin, Fanon, Césaire, Berque, and Memmi. A diversity of theoretical frameworks, schools of thought, and worldviews gradually opened up novel analytical toolboxes for reading the world.

The intellectual and cultural life emerging with new energies in the universities, colleges, associations, cafes, and streets of Montreal led to the formation of politicized and socially involved students, 'an exceptional basin of activism,' as Warren (2008, p. 241) notes. Their role within citizens' committees grew towards the end of the 1960s, increasing the committees' volumes in urban struggles, broadening their reach, and leading them to formulate new ideological and political orientations (Hamel 1991, p. 108).

As many analysts have argued, the Quiet Revolution has a deeply urban history, one that *stems from Montreal's streets* and which continues to shape the



FIGURE 1.3 “For a not so quiet revolution”: Recycling advertisement referring to the broad sweeping changes brought by the Quiet Revolution, June 2013. *Source:* photo by J.A. Boudreau.

city’s political culture to this day (Figure 1.3). What might we learn from and about this urban political moment if we decentre the gaze of political analysis from state-based reforms and political actions?

In what follows, we present a portrait of the Quiet Revolution that reveals changing relations to time, space, and alternative rationalities affecting the formation of political subjectivities and forms of action.

Changing Relations to Time

In the musical environment of the 1960s, increased speed was noticeable not only in the tempo of the music, but also in the circulation of sound, images, and ideas across space. New media made massive entrances in homes, universities, and store windows. The same is true of television sets, but also of print technologies, which become more accessible and – significantly so – operated by youths.

On the pages of countercultural and underground print media produced by youngsters in Montreal and destined for counterpublics located across Quebec and around the world, collages became prominent. The juxtaposition of images and texts, of both original and massively reproduced content, was evocative of new patterns of rhythmic structures, creative (re)appropriations, and simultaneous temporalities.

In recent years, research has examined the role and influence of Montreal-based countercultural and alternative print magazines on the circulation of ideas and identities that came to give sense to globally connected urban youth worlds in Quebec¹² and elsewhere. In her study of *Mainmise*, Felicity Tayler (2018, p. 2) claims that it ‘activated transpositions of identity-based political positions between English and francophone transnational countercultural movements’. She makes the compelling argument that it ‘enabled to imagine Quebec as a space within alternative/utopian planetary geographies’ (Tayler 2018, p. 2). Her analysis points towards the distinctive aestheticization of difference that could be found in *Mainmise*’s pages: ‘within this imaginary state, ethnicity was uncoupled from national identity, just as minoritarian identity categories imposed through the liberal discourse of representational politics were destabilized’ (Tayler 2018, pp. 2–3). *Mainmise*’s editors’ vision of the future is telling of an urban consciousness sensing the limits of a world of nation-states (Figure 1.4). Tayler (2018, p. 17) writes that



FIGURE 1.4 Issues 7 and 10 of *Mainmise*, used bookstore on Ontario Street, June 2014. Source: photo by J.A. Boudreau.

they envisioned ‘[t]he political geography of the twentieth century [as being] replaced by a “global village” of media-enabled transnational affinity groups [and that] within this new arrangement, print media that emulated electronic effects could produce a counter-environment to the nation-state’.

The countercultural press connected urban youth worlds and provided resources which Montreal youths could draw upon to articulate their situated worldviews. Indeed, for \$25, member publications of the Underground Press Syndicate had access to a vast bank of images, texts, and publications they could reproduce freely (Warren 2012). As was frequently the case for Montreal alternative publications, these could be translated and recontextualized through the process (Tayler 2018).

Daniel Ross (2016) similarly evokes the role of printed newsletters in connecting urban movements more specifically, and draws attention to cyclist organizations in this regard. In his study of Montreal’s Citizens on Cycles (*Le Monde à Bicyclette*, MAB), a group founded in 1975, he underscores the significance of newsletter sections dedicated to international cycling news: ‘These international influences reflected the fact that the MAB saw the *vélorévolution* [a resistance to car culture and consumer capitalism through bicycle practice grounded in a critique of urban everyday life] as something larger than their own local struggle, consistently linking their own actions to the work of cycling organizations around the world’ (Ross 2016, p. 140).

Changing Relations to Space

A changing relation to space also marks the ways in which Left intellectuals and militants were inspired by the geopolitical changes that occurred across the world in the post-Second World War period. They saw great similarities between their living conditions, their sense of cultural and economic alienation, and their feelings of linguistic dispossession and those of Third World countries.

In 1961, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism revealed that in the Montreal metropolitan area, 56% of workers with higher incomes were anglophones, although this linguistic group accounted for only 24% of the total workforce (Mills 2011, p. 34). There was a 35% gap between the average incomes of francophones and anglophones. This proportion was very similar to the difference between the average income of White and ‘coloured’ people in the United States (Warren 2008, p. 184). Another study conducted in 1965 revealed that one-third of the population lived in poverty and that about the same proportion lived in substandard housing (Mills 2011, p. 34). Furthermore, the rate of child mortality in francophone working-class neighbourhoods was much higher than in anglophone neighbourhoods

on the West Island or in the rest of Canada (Mills 2011, p. 34). The built environment reflected these unequal living conditions, so much so that the municipal administration set up panels to hide the 'slums' of working-class neighbourhoods when world travellers came to visit Montreal for Expo 67.

But the city's uneven geographies remained visible. Separated by the St Laurent Boulevard were lower-income working-class neighbourhoods to the east and higher-income anglophone neighbourhoods to the west. Montreal's Black populations were living for the most part south of the train tracks that link the city along an east–west axis. 'This de facto segregation,' writes Austin (2013, p. 33), 'served as an invisible barrier to social mobility and to the city's more public places. Although these divisions were not absolute, they served to remind people of their place in society, particularly given that English-Canadians largely controlled business in Montreal and their office buildings dominated the downtown landscape.'

Italians and Indigenous peoples were facing living and working conditions worse than those of French-Canadians. Despite these conditions, 'in the minds of many, linguistic dispossession and class alienation amalgamated, giving an enormous intensity to the revolts of the 1960s and 1970s' (Mills 2011, p. 34). For many, these statistics shockingly revealed that institutional reforms to secure greater access to postsecondary education for francophones would never be enough and that structural, material, and countercultural transformations were necessary for the 'liberation' of the oppressed (Warren 2008, pp. 182–183).

As Mills (2011, p. 56) writes, 'given that cultural alienation and marginalisation are embedded in Montreal's urban landscape, one of the most important goals for the urban Left is to transform the city. They think that they will thus be able to transform the whole society. To attain this goal, they will attempt to build a mass movement of political resistance.' Indeed, Donald McGraw (cited in Hamel 1991, p. 109; our translation) observes the emergence of 'new types of citizen associations' from the beginning of 1968 onwards: 'They do not aim so much to claim services from institutions rather than implement groups that seek to solve by themselves problems felt collectively at the neighbourhood level.'

Hamel's history of urban movements demonstrates that citizens' committees did not merely concern themselves with the ideological reinterpretation of their living conditions, but did so by identifying, very concretely, 'new perspectives of action' both within and outside of municipal politics (Hamel 1991, p. 109; our translation). The numerous citizen groups that emerge over the late 1960s and all through the 1970s self-organized to provide community services where the state proved to be inefficient in doing so. Food depots, medical clinics, and tenants' associations were created (Hamel 1991, p. 109). They relied

on autogestion or self-management principles and did not tend to target or act upon a limited set of issues of urban struggles (Hamel 1991, p. 103).

Reflecting back on his first encounters with these citizens' organizations and associations in the 1970s, the English-Canadian journalist Malcolm Reid, now known for his ethnographic and literary studies on the period of urban and national revolts that animated Montreal youth in the 1960s and 1970s, mentions that such organizations then appeared to him as 'the local prolongation of *Parti pris* ideas' (quoted in Boutin 2009; our translation). *Parti pris* influentially 'articulated a vision of Quebec's oppression as colonialism, arguing for "independence, socialism, secularism"', as Simon (2006, pp. 28–29) reminds us.

The ideological and interpretive frameworks of the Third World national liberation discourses and anti-imperialism and decolonization theories which travelled across globally connected urban youth worlds found significant echoes in Montreal. In the minds and bodies of many militants and intellectuals, everyday urban experiences became meaningful 'as part of a global scheme of oppression' that connected Montreal in the 'political economy of Empire', as Sean Mills (2011, p. 18) so convincingly argues in *The Empire Within: Post-colonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal*. This argument is important to explore further as it reveals a networked conception of space that influences rationalities and modes of political action while transforming political subjectivities. Montreal intellectuals of all ethnic origins were significantly influenced by artists and scholars who had come from Third World countries themselves or who were familiar with the works of Fanon, Césaire, and Memmi. Their lived environments reflected relations of subordination, sociospatial exclusion, and dispossession.

Students from the West Indies brought anticolonial ideas to the Montreal Black community (Austin 2013). They invested already established associations with their thoughts and energies or created new organizations. One of these, the Caribbean Conference Committee on West Indian Affairs, had great influence in studying and producing analyses of structural racism and economic exploitation. It set the groundwork for the emergence of Black social consciousness and the Black Power movement in Montreal (Austin 2013). This movement significantly enriched liberation and anticolonial discourses from Black community members' points of view, revealing the contours and extent of racial oppression and experimenting with new forms of resistance and dissent.

In the aftermath of Martin Luther King's assassination, a march that started at Sir George Williams University (now Concordia University) with 600 people ended at Dominion Square with 2000. The outrage at racist power structures was apparent, vocalized and written out on banners. A few

months later, in October 1968, key intellectuals, militants, and community organizers of the global Black Power movement met for the Congress of Black Writers at McGill University (among the speakers were Stokely Carmichael, Alvin Poussaint, Walter Rodney, James Forman, Rocky Jones, and C.L.R. James) – all of them men, even though women had been actively involved in the organization of the Congress, which is illustrative of some of the contradictions of the period (Austin 2013). These leaders had been invited by students and ‘discussed problems of everyday life pertaining to discrimination in housing and employment, the lack of possibilities for marginalized people and the social and cultural alienation of Blacks in Canada’ (Mills 2011, p. 118). The audience was packed for Stokely Carmichael’s speech and the ambiance was electric, the crowd cheering and interrupting him. Many Black militants later affirmed that it was one of the most empowering events of their life, a moment of great emotional intensity and affirmative power, allowing them to understand themselves as political subjects making history (Mills 2011).

Third World national liberation discourses and anti-imperialism and decolonization theories gave meaning to differently perceived experiences of subordination and exclusion. This political climate led to a culture of dissent among urban movements which both questioned and influenced the shape and reach of public and urban policies. Throughout the Quiet Revolution, the urban Left positioned Quebec as a colony. At the beginning of the 1960s, this colonial condition was first conceived and understood in relation to the Conquest of 1759, with the rule and seizing of power of the British people over French-Canadians, who were, as the story goes, relegated to second-class citizenship. As Mills (2011, p. 44) notes, the fact that French-Canadians had themselves colonized Indigenous lands was a ‘contradiction that had little weight in the minds of the first architects of Quebec’s decolonization’.

Another interpretation of Quebec’s colonial condition took shape in the mid-1960s through the prisms of American imperialism’s reach over Quebec’s natural resources, cultural products, and economy, understood in relation to sociopolitical movements taking place outside of Quebec which were fighting against imperialism and capitalism. Through these lenses, according to Mills (2011, p. 83), ‘Quebecers fe[lt] that they [were] participating in a movement with global dimensions ... the ultimate goals and objectives of the movement [were] not merely for Quebecers to establish their cultural affirmation but to liberate Quebec in a quest for universal emancipation’. While such narrative speaks to the intellect, it forcefully plays out on precognitive registers to mobilize and appeal to the affects and sensations of dispossession, marginalization, otherness, and freedom. The seductive effect was felt by the anglophone journalist Malcolm Reid, who, at the time, was stimulated to translate for English-Canadians what appeared to him as ‘the most exciting

cultural-political movement imaginable at the time' (Simon 2006, p. 28). His book, titled *The Shouting Signpainters: A Literary and Political Account of Quebec Revolutionary Nationalism*¹³ (1972) is a story about youth writing for *Parti pris* (Simon 2006, p. 28). 'For Reid, these poets and novelists occupy their moment in history to the full', writes Simon (2006, p. 29). A youthful aesthetic effervescence perceived in and through pregnant moments infuse Reid's writing.

Vallières's (1969) essay, written while he was in prison in Manhattan, had a profound impact in shaping political thoughts and transforming political subjectivities in militant, intellectual, and artistic circles. After its publication by *Parti pris*, many understood themselves as 'white niggers'. Vallières was himself influenced by the concept and movement of *négritude*, having read Fanon and Césaire. He was also highly stimulated by the thoughts of Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael and by the Black Power movement in the United States. In 1966, he was arrested by US Immigration, along with his comrade Charles Gagnon, for their month-long hunger strike in front of the United Nations headquarters. They were striking for the recognition of political prisoner status for their imprisoned comrades and attempting to solidify the foundations of a multinational liberation front with revolutionary organizations in the United States.¹⁴ According to Vallières, as Mills (2011, p. 102) mentions, 'just like Black Americans, Quebecers have been brought in America as "valets of the imperialists", "imported to serve as cheap labor", and excepted for their skin, "kept the same conditions"'. Their understanding of *négritude* consisted in a 'strategic anti-essentialism on the questions of race, by giving to the term "Black" a relational political meaning (not a racial meaning)' (Mills 2011). They used the term 'nigger' as a flexible metaphor that spoke to a borderless class and national consciousness (Mills 2011).

This is very explicit in Charles Gagnon's manifesto, *Feu sur l'Amérique. Propositions pour la révolution nord-américaine*, which connects 'the slums of Mexico, the ghettos of Watts and of Harlem, the hellholes of Saint-Henri and Mile-End' (Gagnon 1968, cited in Mills 2011, p. 102). For Gagnon, the oppressed must recognise themselves as a 'Third World within the empire' (Mills 2011, p. 102) and organise around national liberation movements that were supportive of one another (Carel 2006). The discursive resources of Third World liberation movements and decolonization theories gave Quebecers access to a universal idea of suffering and resistance distinct from that available through the Catholic Church. It played on affective, precognitive registers to provoke, outrage, and harness militant energies.

By employing and adapting the term 'nigger', however, Vallières and Gagnon appropriated for themselves – and the White working-class population of Quebec – Blacks' lived experiences, and thereby marginalized

other oppressed groups. They silenced and ignored Indigenous resistance movements and negated structural racism affecting Black populations in Quebec. The contradictions of a movement that aimed at the liberation of all the masses yet relied on patriarchal structures and masculinist cultures led by White intellectuals from the *petite-bourgeoisie* (Hamel 1991, p. 101) were raised forcefully by feminist groups and Black and Indigenous organizations. Québécois intellectuals were more likely to forge alliances with national liberation movements outside of the province rather than seek alliances across oppressed, subaltern groups in Montreal and elsewhere in Quebec. This, according to Austin (2013), was due to the persistence of racism and the fear of becoming a ‘Black nation’ through interracial relationships.

The quest for national liberation that took shape in Quebec was inextricably interwoven with the goal of constructing a national, but also an urban identity. The most prominent intellectuals of the time amalgamated language (French) and subordinated social class in a way that blindfolded many to the intersectionality of discrimination and oppression. This is particularly visible in Michèle Lalonde’s ‘Speak White’ poem, which had a profound resonance and agentic capacity to move crowds, harnessing energies. For Lalonde, French language is akin to Quebecers’ black skin. This resonated at the time because, as critical race scholar Joséé Maropoulos (cited in Tayler 2018, p. 13) has argued, ‘some francophones were asked why they did not speak the “White people language”, or were simply told to “Speak White”’, thereby making language use a marker of racial hierarchy which ‘reinforced English as the legitimate “voice” of whiteness in Canada’. The decolonization project was considered one way of overcoming the injustices that were felt in everyday life. Urban Left intellectuals adapted anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism discursive resources to their situations.

These interpretive lenses were not necessarily shared by all Montreal urban movements, even if Extreme Left partisans and sympathizers were to be found among many citizen groups and associations, and attempted to influence political actions in alignment with their assessments of political struggles (Hamel 1991, p. 105). This created sharp ideological debates and dissension on the finalities and appropriate strategies for collective action and nurtured deep, long-standing reflections on the forms, modes, and meanings of activism (Hamel 1991, p. 117).

Nevertheless, such narratives had deep influences on Montreal urban youth worlds during the Quiet Revolution. Aesthetic relations perceived in everyday life transformed political subjectivities and modes of political action. Liberation discourses and strategies evolved in paradoxical, contested, and deeply embodied relationships with the state and its apparatuses, perceived representations, and spatial configurations (Hamel 1991).

This is perhaps no more explicit than in the events of October 1970, when members of the Front de Liberation du Quebec (FLQ) kidnapped the provincial Deputy Premier Pierre Laporte and British diplomat James Cross, leading to the deployment of the Canadian Armed Forces on Montreal streets and the introduction of the War Measures Act. Under martial law, hundreds of Montreal citizens involved in community organizations were imprisoned and their offices, apartments, and gathering places were searched by the police.

Direct action was a mode of organization among many others sharing a repertoire of actions in the globally connected urban youthful movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In Montreal as elsewhere, these included marches and public protests, sit-ins, bed-ins, die-ins, and artistic interventions. These are modes of action that involve the body in urban public spaces, the re-configuration of sensory dispositions, and the circulation of affect and artefacts through the creation of aesthetic appearances that produce political effects in the here and now.

Consider, for instance, David Ross's (2016, p. 143) account of the mass die-in organized on Ste-Catherine Street by members of *Le Monde à Bicyclette* (MAB) in 1976: 'At the largest demonstrations, dozens of cyclists covered in ketchup and bandages halted traffic by sprawling across an intersection beside their bikes ... Onlookers were encouraged to lie down and participate in five minutes of silence, and some did.' According to one of MAB's key leaders, 'the main goal of these dramas was to show observers an alternative to the current reality; for a few minutes, cars would stop, silence would reign, and cyclists and pedestrians owned the road' (Ross 2016, p. 144). Through such aesthetic appearance that disrupts perceptual fields and sensations by imposing silence and stopping traffic, youth were modifying the perceptual fields of urban rhythms. They acted in deeply embodied ways, putting their ketchup-covered bodies in the middle of the street, to provoke (and seduce, depending on political sensibilities) through a politics of sensations.

Over the urban political moment of the 1960s and 1970s, youthfulness became a position from which to experiment sociopolitical change and sense its intensity, its potentialities. A strong tenet of the Quiet Revolution was the need for all to take part in the modernization of society. The social experimentations and prefigurations of Montreal citizens' committees and urban movements constituted 'fields of experimentations deemed valid' for this purpose (Hamel 1991, p. 107; our translation).

For Hamel (1991, p. 118; our translation), Montreal urban movements allowed 'a new kind of political exploration to take place – on the fringes of political parties and traditional progressive organizations such as labour unions'. We have argued that this marked the affirmation of an urban logic of political action that took shape in relation to changing perceptions of time,

space, and alternative rationalities. In the urban moment of the 1960s and 1970s, it was unfolding alongside a state-centred logic of political action. These were not mutually exclusive, but were held in tension: influencing, if not defining, urban and public policies while also, paradoxically, critiquing the class interests defended by the state (Hamel 1991, p. 99).

At the municipal level, urban movements contributed to the creation of opposition parties. One of these, the Montreal Citizen Movement (MCM), won one-third of city council seats in the 1974 municipal elections and would later win the 1986 ones. This party allied a broad and culturally diverse coalition of social actors and movement leaders. It proposed ‘libertarian solutions to the urban crisis’, local control, and political representation at the neighbourhood scale – something that positioned Montreal municipal party platforms uniquely in the Canadian municipal landscape and is clearly influenced by Montreal’s urban culture and politics (Thomas 1997, p. 149). In his study of the MCM, Thomas (1997, p. 30) argues that the party’s success was partly a result of the ‘unresponsiveness of existing partisan institutions’, but also of the ‘movement’s ability to raise just the kinds of crucial issues that people in cities, not only in Quebec, but elsewhere in North America, are starting to confront: crucial questions having to do with the kind of life that we are to live in our communities and in relation to our fellow citizens’.

The 1970s were also a significant decade for the consolidation of a welfare nation-state at the scale of the Quebec provincial government. Thus, another way of overcoming the injustices of everyday life took shape and affirmed itself increasingly strongly, becoming dominant: it was a neonationalist project that aimed to fill the gaps between francophones and anglophones by using the provincial state as a lever for collective emancipation. Through this project, administrative and political powers were fused together, thereby centralizing interventions within the state apparatus. It was this second venue that came to dominate in the following decades, generating a state-centred logic of political action at the expense of the Quiet Revolution’s urbanity. But then came the 2010s...

Conclusion

There are many similarities between the youth urban worlds of the 1960s and the 2010s. Young people were and are facing rapid processes of urbanization and globalization. They were and are finding themselves facing failed democratic processes, despotic regimes, and a crisis of legitimacy regarding their governments’ rule of law. They were and are facing sharp discrimination across racial, gendered, class, and linguistic lines of social differentiation. They were and are

appropriating novel means of intellectual and cultural production, making artefacts that circulate rapidly and shape global youth cultures. They were and are adapting to local contexts and discursive resources emanating from and giving shape to a 'common grammar of contestation' (Mills 2011) that echoes and echoed among, across, and between urban youth worlds from the Global South to the Global North. They were and are constructing a clear generational rupture, dreaming of and embodying a 'cultural revolution'. Their mode of urban political action was and is deeply aesthetic. These similarities must not overshadow the sharp differences that are also to be found when we compare the two contexts, however. The most important of these differences is the political economic reality in which these youthful movements operated and operate: the construction of a welfare state in a period of economic boom in the 1960s, and a neoliberal state in a period of severe economic crisis in the 2010s. These differences colour, enable, and constrain aesthetic political action and its multiple potentialities and directions.

With Hamel (1991, p. 94), we note that Montreal urban movements have influenced the expression and contemporary understanding of urban problems. These movements were more numerous, and mobilized more citizens, than in any other cities in Quebec or in Canada. Since the 1960s, thousands of associations, organizations, and groups have been created. They redefined relations between the state and civil society and shed light on the limits to the welfare state's 'mechanical solidarity' through their critiques of bureaucratic management and the approaches that they proposed in substitution of state activities or as an alternative configuration of sociospatial relations (Hamel 1991). It is such a legacy of urban activism that divided the historical imaginary of many French- and English-speaking students during the 2012 strikes (see Chapter 3); the former expressed a sense of grounding and continuity, while the latter often spoke of an anxious strangeness to this legacy. Yet, these libertarian and self-management networks also make themselves visible in the contemporary world of English- and French-speaking urban farmers, as we will see in Chapter 4.

Thomas argues that the history of urban politics in Montreal has given shape to a distinct civic culture. He highlights the frustration that has influenced it:

More than any city in North America, Montreal has earned the right to be tired of institutionalized politics. It has observed two levels of government, federal and provincial, bickering endlessly with each other at the city's expense. It has lived through the October Crisis, the War Measures Act, two referendums, the Richard and Stanley Cup riots, ever increasing poverty, large language and illegal Canadian unity rallies,

and, recently, electoral fraud. It has also developed as a region unique to Quebec, where, on its streets and in its cafés, anglophones and francophones ignore it all and co-exist happily with mutual respect. (Thomas 1997, p. 159)

The contemporary history and experience of urban politics in Montreal is expressive of an urban logic of political action which can be sensed if we decentre our perceptual and ontological filters from the conventional objects of political analysis.

The history of sociopolitical urban movements is very useful in shedding light on key dimensions of the transformation of the political process. In the spatially and culturally divided city of the 1960s and 1970s, networked conceptions of space gave meaning to local struggles against imperialism, providing protest groups and movements with a shared grammar of contestation. Alternative rationalities, based on Third World liberation discourses, decolonization theories, and counterculture movements, shaped political subjectivities. The language of liberation, decolonization, victimhood, and marginality was shared among artists and intellectuals, uniting protesters in a mass movement (Tayler 2018, p. 72). Actions were embodied, emotional, and globally connected. They consisted in mass protests, occupations of diverse kinds (sit-ins, teach-ins, die-ins, etc.), artistic interventions, happenings – but also kidnappings. Youths were acting through their urbanity, acting through aesthetics. Their youthfulness was understood as a position from which to experiment sociopolitical change and sense its potentialities.

In a very compelling manner, Simon (2006, p. 7) evokes how in the 1980s, ‘the discrepancy between (national) ideology and (urban) daily life in Montreal became evident’. Many voices and communities that did not fit within strict linguistic or ethnic categories become increasingly visible and audible in Montreal, bearing on an urban consciousness that exceeded the standpoints of ‘francophone nationalists’ and ‘anglophone opposition’; a consciousness shaped by the historically situated experience of urban life. This was perhaps no more evident than during the unfolding of what became known as ‘the Oka crisis’, a 78-day standoff between the Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) nation, state police, and the army, after months of resistance for the recognition of inalienable, inherent land and self-government rights at Kanehsatake (for greater perspective, see the documentary film, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*; see also Boileau 1991). But it was also visible in the work of Haitian-born writer Danny Laferrière, who published numerous fiction work exploring the entangling of language and race relations in the 1980s and became a pillar of Québécois literature. In Chapter 2, we discuss his encounter with young writers from the Saint-Michel neighborhood.

In this regard, it became increasingly evident that, as Coleman puts it:

Montreal's urban stage is not simply a mirror of a 'national space', or what other theorists have called a 'territory': a land to be conquered, mastered and delimited by boundary markers, the objective correlative of a national identity in formation. The city is also and increasingly constitutes a node in a diverse global network of meanings and relationships. It is a decentered, shifting set of paths to be traversed rather than a site of permanent settlement. (Coleman 2018, p. 12)

With the following ethnographies, we propose to traverse some of those paths together and explore their significance in relation to the transformation of the political process. With an epistemology of Blackness grounded in describing the 'universe of operation' built over various generations that have moved, physically and virtually, across various worlds through art and travel, this chapter has discussed the emergence of a certain type of activism and aesthetic critique in which global liberation politics provided the forms through which young Montrealers culturally expressed their sense of dispossession and marginalization. And this, as we have insisted, was sometimes done through colonizing ways, invisibilizing other forms of exclusion.

Notes

1. 'Je vous convie à passer un dimanche au parc Jeanne-Mance / A errer dans cette ambiance où en plein air les gens se mélangent / Et le Possee est assis sur le gazon, en train de "chiller" tranquille / L'atmosphère est aux festivités, revêtu de mon plus beau phrasé / Laissez-moi m'introduire au sein de la masse magmatique / D'un tour de "passe-moi le mic" / Fracasser la glace et faire fondre les différentes classes.'
2. 'se joindre aux tamtams ou au Piknic Électronik n'est pas ... synonyme d'entrer en relation avec les inconnus qui constituent la foule. Il s'agit vraisemblablement d'un "gout de l'autre", d'une appréciation mutuelle de la présence d'autrui en des circonstances très particulières.'
3. Lamarque (2016, p. 79) notes that the Facebook page 'Montreal Punk Shows' has 5000 followers.
4. 'Aujourd'hui, pendant que cet esprit [punk] existe encore, à travers les grèves étudiantes par exemple, on voit qu'il y a une résistance, pas tout

à fait culturelle, mais une résistance articulée, une vision pour un autre genre de société.’

5. In March 2006, the Supreme Court of Canada allowed the wearing of kirpan under strict conditions in Quebec’s public schools. Heated public debate on ‘reasonable accommodations’ unfolded in the province as a result. The judicial term ‘reasonable accommodation’ refers to a legal obligation to accommodate certain minorities’ demands, going against the right to equality protected by the Canadian and Quebec Charters of Rights and Freedom. The ‘reasonable accommodation’ crisis ended with a provincially appointed public commission being set up to investigate the matter (the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, which ended its hearing in December 2007). In the fall of 2013, the newly elected nationalist Parti Québécois (PQ) set another fire with a proposed Charter for the protection of Quebec values, which would have prohibited the wearing of ‘conspicuous religious symbols’ in public buildings. Reactions were immediately hostile in Montreal, and the PQ lost the April 2014 provincial elections after less than two years in power. Nevertheless, in 2019, the government of the Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) was able to impose the Law on the Secularity of the State prohibiting public employees in a position of authority to wear religious signs. The law was being contested in court at the time of publication.
6. The opposition to a public consultation that was to be organized by the Quebec Human Rights Commission on systemic discrimination and racism is illustrative of the malaise that the word ‘racism’ evokes in the Quebec public sphere. In October 2017, the provincial government made the decision to change the mandate of the consultation as a result of several issues, including pressures from opposition parties (Parti Québécois, Coalition Avenir Québec) and voters who claimed that focusing on ‘racism’ would depict Quebecers as racists and xenophobic (Radio-Canada 2017; CBC 2017b). Public debates and protests took place throughout the controversy and gained renewed energy in the summer of 2018 when members and groups of the Montreal Black communities, along with allies, protested against a theatrical production spearheaded by Robert Lepage, called *SLAV: A Theatrical Odyssey Based on Slave Songs*. The Montreal Jazz Festival was to host the world premiere of this production, described as a journey ‘through traditional Afro-American songs, from cotton fields to construction sites, railroads, from slave songs to prison songs’ (The Canadian

Press 2018). Protesters publically raised the issue of the lack of Black artists among the show's cast and creative team. The protest spurred heated public debates in Montreal, Quebec, and beyond (Nevins 2018). The Jazz Festival decided to cancel the show in its original format. In the meantime, another theatrical production involving Robert Lepage and the Paris-based Théâtre du Soleil gained visibility in the media, this one entitled *Kanata*, which focused on the history of relationships between Whites and Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous groups and their allies raised concerns about the lack of meaningful consultations with the Indigenous nations and communities being represented in the show and, again, the lack of Indigenous representation in the artistic and creative teams responsible for the production (Hamilton 2018). These highly mediatized and debated events created a public conversation on racism, cultural appropriation, artistic freedom, White privilege, and censorship (for greater context, see Everett-Green 2018) which had far-reaching echoes and deeply uneven consequences for the minority groups involved.

7. The Right of Initiative (*droit d'initiative*) refers to a process and tool of participatory democracy enshrined in the Montreal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities by which any Montreal resident aged 15 or older can request a public consultation on 'any idea, orientation, or innovative project that's important to [them] and others' (Ville de Montréal 2011b). It was first used by citizens and groups requesting a public consultation on the state of urban agriculture in the city.
8. 'White Niggers of the Americas: Premature Autobiography of a Quebecois Terrorist.'
9. Drapeau was mayor during 1954–57 and 1960–86.
10. The 1967 International and Universal Exposition.
11. Duplessis ruled for fifteen years (1944–59), maintaining a firm grip on power through corruption, repression of workers' movement, and collusion with clerical authorities, foreign investors, and liberal professionals outside of Montreal (Mills 2011, p. 36).
12. Warren (2012) indicates that, historically, underground publications in Quebec have for the most part been 'a Montreal affair'. *Parti pris* (1963–68), *Socialisme* (1964–74), *Quebec Underground* (1962–72), and *Mainmise* (1970–78) are just a few of the alternative print magazines created over the period. They reached a wide audience: the distribution of *Mainmise*, for instance, surpassed 26 000 copies at its peak (Taylor 2018, p. 6).

13. It is relevant here to point out, with Simon (2006, p. 33), that '*The Shouting Signpainters* is named for one of Paul Chamberland's most famous long poems, "L'Afficheur hurle" – an angry cry of revolt.'
14. Ivan Carel (2006, pp. 150, 159) points out that Stokeley Carmichael sent out a message in solidarity with the pair while they were imprisoned in the United States, before their deportation to Montreal's Prison de Bordeaux in January 1967.