



**SAMUEL CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL
CONNECTEDNESS**

Permanent Impermanence:

Building Social Connectedness and Stronger Communities in
Montréal

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Executive Summary

In 1986, 500 vacant, burnt down or boarded-up buildings were recorded in Montréal. 30 years later in 2016, *La Conseil Jeunesse de Montréal* identified nearly 900. Dotting Montréal's urban landscape, these disused and misused spaces are the physical result of frenetic economic expansion and subsequent contraction. These spaces are prone to arson, delinquency and violent crimes; and, they are reflective of disinterest and disinvestment in the surrounding community. Similarly, the rates of those suffering from social isolation have grown significantly since the 1980s. The research demonstrates that social isolation can lead to higher incidences of premature death, depression and dementia. These symptoms are, in part, due to the absence of a supportive community.

Accordingly, to curb the rise of social isolation and to build for a more equitable and participatory future, the 'temporary use' of space has been identified as an effective tool in repurposing vacant space to facilitate more inclusive development and to build stronger, more connected communities. Likewise, policy recommendations have been made to direct key actors in effecting this change.

Key policy recommendations are:

To facilitate more inclusive development in cities:

- 1) **Local Government:** Must incentivize the employment of temporary use in development, redevelop land-use policies and create a city-wide database of vacancies.
- 2) **Developers and Coordinators:** Must proceed with a mandate of serving the community and filling local service gaps. They should consider providing their space to the people who can benefit the most.
- 3) **Residents:** Must take a more active role in shaping their city. They must fight for more equitable land-use, and embrace and help manage their communities.

To create stronger, more connected communities:

- 1) **Local Government:** Must commit to working with developers and coordinators, to be less stringent in the permitting processes, and to incorporate temporary use into its future.
- 2) **Developers and Coordinators:** Must adhere to a mandate of building community capacity and must recognize and call for the input and support of residents.
- 3) **Residents:** Must engage and take pride in their neighbourhood and their city. They must take ownership of the streets and spaces and be constantly on the lookout for ways to improve their neighbourhood and their city.

Introduction

Roughly 83 million people are added to the world's population every year.¹ That is 227,397 people every day, 9,474 people every hour, or 158 people every minute. Likewise, by 2100, provided demographic predictions hold true, the world's population is expected to reach 11.2 billion people (up from 7.6 billion in 2018).² In 2100, the world's population will be nearly two times larger than the 6.1 billion at the turn of the millennia.³ Moreover, to realize the benefits of our increasingly amenity-laden cities, more-and-more of the world's population is moving to urban areas; a process termed urbanization. Accordingly, due to urbanization, it is estimated that by 2030, sixty-eight percent of the world's population will live in a city.⁴ In comparison, 80 years earlier in 1950, only thirty percent of the world's population lived in a city.⁵ Never has the world seen this many people live in such proximity to one another.

Paradoxically, alongside this rapid growth and increased densification, cities have become sites of social isolation and disconnect. In many instances, cities have become concrete labyrinths in which inhabitants produce, reproduce and consume alongside one another as strangers. These are places which have become increasingly homogenized, where people are skeptical of others' kindness, keeping the world at arm's length, divided by screens. Alas, planners, programmers and local officials are tasked with reconciling these issues. Amidst sustainability concerns, they must find space for these new inhabitants and ensure that their

¹ United Nations, *World Population Prospects: Key Findings & Advance Tables*, report (UNDESA, 2017), Page 12.

² Ibid., Page 2.

³ "Population, Total," The World Bank | Data, 2017, accessed August 08, 2018, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>.

⁴ *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision, Key Facts*, report (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018), Page 2.

⁵ Ibid.

addition does not cause rifts in the closely woven fabric of the world's cities. Therefore, as cities grow denser and as sustainability concerns force settlements upwards instead of outwards, urbanity is tasked with allocating increasingly scarce space to support these new inhabitants. A problem which ironically persists, is that large swaths of vacant, disused and misused space dot the landscape in many cities globally – Montréal being no exception.

In 1986, 500 vacant, burnt down or boarded-up buildings were recorded in Montréal. 30 years later in 2016, *La Conseil Jeunesse de Montréal* identified nearly 900.⁶ Moreover, Montréal's Lande recently found that there now exists more than 25 sq. km of vacant land within Montréal proper;



a total combined landmass nearly 350 times larger than Montréal's Bell Center.⁷ Once an industrial powerhouse and the driver of the Canadian economy, Montréal has since taken a backseat to neighbouring Toronto. Likewise, due to the widespread outsourcing of old, space-consuming production methods, Montréal's urban center has been left with many unused and run-down factories, industrial yards, garages, and parking lots. However, instead of reflecting disinterest and disinvestment to residents and visitors alike, what if these vacant spaces could

⁶ "Opinion Paper on the Use of Vacant Space in Montréal: A Youth Perspective," *Conseil Jeunesse De Montréal*, June 20, 2017, Page xix.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Page xxx.

be leveraged to build a more inclusive future for Montréal's residents, where ephemerality and fluidity are embraced?

Accordingly, under the general theme of 'temporality,' this report seeks to answer two key questions:

- 1. How can developers cut social isolation out of their design schemes in the long term?**
- 2. How can we get people to connect and create stronger communities?**

This report ultimately contends that: for redesign development projects to mitigate social isolation, Montréal must employ the temporary use of vacant space to further participatory and consultative development. Likewise, to build stronger, more connected communities, Montréal must recognize the potential of vacant space as a valuable, evolving entity, which can invoke curiosity and provide a canvas for social expression and connectedness.

Methodology

All report research and subsequent recommendations are made based on literature analysis, in-person interviews and on-the-ground field work in Montréal, CA, and London, UK. The literature analysis and findings were primarily derived from online sources by closely examining international, national, provincial, and municipal reports. The findings also include reference to data made available by large international organizations such as the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the World Bank. The outreach conducted for this report includes several in-person interviews were conducted in Montréal. These were largely informal, conversation-based interviews, which serve to supplement the

literature analysis and field work. On-the-ground field work was conducted in Montréal over a two-month period, and in London over a five-day period. In both cases, the metro, bus and bike share were used to reach and subsequently analyze spaces around each city. These modes of public transport proved to be an effective and efficient alternative to taxi or personal automobile. In each instance, photos were taken of various sites as case examples of current practices, and as supporting evidence for subsequent policy recommendations.

Key Definition: Temporary Use

Before delving into the interconnection between urban spaces and social isolation, the concept of ‘temporary use’ must be explained. According to Aurelie de Smet, “‘temporary use’ means the use – whether directed or planned – of an urban space, anticipating a ‘permanent’ use of the space in the medium or long term.”⁸ Examples of temporary use spaces include: abandoned buildings, factories, industrial yards, and parking lots, unused streets, and public squares. The intention is that these spaces are temporarily used as sites of innovation, expression, and connection. Author Rasmus Frisk contends that, “the temporary can help kick-start the transformation of a place – creating a living, creative and innovative urban environment ... giving a place new identity, [and] playing a new role in people’s mind.”⁹ Temporary use projects generally share four key characteristics: “(1) they are small in scale and can grow in stages; (2) their budgets can remain relatively modest, reducing financial risk; (3)

⁸ Aurelie De Smet, "The Role of Temporary Use in Urban (re)development: Examples from Brussels," *Brussels Studies*, 2013, Page 2, doi:10.4000/Brussels. 1196.

⁹ Rasmus Frisk, Jennifer Louie, and Jeanette Frisk, "Temporary Use 2.0: A Tool for Planning and Developing the New Urban Context," *Australasian Urban History / Planning History Group and Victoria University of Wellington*, 2014, Page 3, <http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30061653>.

they offer a great deal of involvement to users, inspiring change; and (4), [they] generally occur in what are called ‘informal structures.’”¹⁰ The temporary use of space is simple, flexible and exciting. These projects can evolve as they progress, incorporating different ideas and adapting to changing circumstances. Temporary use is, therefore, more than simply a way to ‘fill time’. For the purpose of this report, temporary use should be thought of as an opportunity for city developers to beneficially engage the community and residents during the development process.

Issues

It is important to note that the urban environment can act as both a facilitator and inhibitor of social connectedness. For those with vast social networks, the city can be a place of frequent connection. Around each corner, or at the end of each block, there could be someone to interact with; a waiting friend, family member, or potentially new acquaintance. In contrast, for other individuals, the urban environment can be highly impersonal. Locked away within a high-rise apartment, amidst suspicious, untrusting neighbours, the city can manifest into a lonely and isolating place. Unfortunately, in addition to the increasing isolation of urban residents, there are two compounding issues that could very well alter the future well-being of urban residents: population growth and urbanization, and vacant urban spaces.

¹⁰ Conseil Jeunesse de Montréal, *Opinion Paper*, Page 18.

Social Isolation

A simple way to define ‘social isolation’ is to say that it is, “a deprivation of social connectedness.”¹¹ More specifically, however, social isolation can be defined as, “the inadequate quality and quantity of social relations with other people at the different levels

“...those living alone, those 80 years or older, and those having compromised health status are most at risk of suffering from social isolation.”²³

where human interaction takes place (individual, group, community and the larger social environment).”¹²

Likewise, in its effects, “social isolation is multi-dimensional – it encompasses physical dimensions, mental health and psychological dimensions, as well as social dimensions. And, it can be severe, and has a temporal dimension; that is, it could be permanent,

periodic, or episodic if related to life cycles or life transition phases.”¹³ Also, although social isolation is indiscriminate in who it affects, it has been found that those living alone, those 80 years or older and those having compromised health status are most at risk of suffering from social isolation.¹⁴ In fact, in the aftermath of a recent, record-breaking heat-wave in Montréal which killed 74 (July 2018), it was discovered that the majority of the 74 casualties were

¹¹ Diego Zavaleta, Kim Samuel, and China Mills, *Social Isolation: A Conceptual and Measurement Proposal*, Working Paper no. 67, January 2014, Page 5, accessed November 22, 2016, <http://www.ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ophi-wp-67.pdf>.

¹² Ibid., Page 5.

¹³ Janice Keefe et al., *Final Report: A Profile of Social Isolation in Canada*, report no. 2006/491 (Halifax: Mount Saint Vincent University, 2006), Page 1.

¹⁴ *Who's at Risk and What Can Be Done About It?* report (Ottawa: National Seniors Council, 2017), Page 5.

disabled men, over 60 years of age, who lived alone.¹⁵ These are men (and some women) who were unable or unwilling to ask for help and who had no one in their lives to look out for them – no connections and no real support.

Furthermore, in addition to the individual consequences of social isolation, namely “...increased chance of premature death, reduced sense of well-being, more depression, dementia, and more susceptibility to chronic diseases,” there are also societal consequences.¹⁶ Being socially isolated from society detracts from the individual’s ability to fully engage with and participate in the local community, exacerbating service gaps and accentuating societal disconnect.

Thus, in understanding the far-reaching and deleterious effects of social isolation and its impact not just on individual well-being but on society’s as well, it becomes clear why action must be taken to prevent this phenomenon. Unfortunately, due to the multi-dimensional nature of social isolation, its negative effects can be induced and/or exacerbated by many different issues, even seemingly benign or unrelated ones, such as vacant urban space.

Population Growth and Urbanization

Although fertility rates have dropped by a factor of nearly two over the past 50 years, from 4.5 to 2.5 births per woman,¹⁷ the world’s population steadily increases by nearly 83

¹⁵ Charlie Fidelman, "As Second Heat Wave Gains Steam, 74 Deaths Are Linked to Quebec Weather," *Montreal Gazette*, July 10, 2018, <https://montrealgazette.com/news/quebec/montreal-heat-wave-more-searing-weather-in-the-forecast-next-weekend>.

¹⁶ Penny MacCourt, comp., "Understanding the Issue and Finding Solutions," *Social Isolation of Seniors* (2012).

¹⁷ United Nations, *World Fertility Patterns 2015*, report (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015), Page 6.

million a year.¹⁸ This constant growth is largely the result of twentieth-century advances in medical technologies and understanding. Advances in pre- and post-natal care, the development of procedures like epidurals, and the evolution of birth practices have all made childbirth immensely safer for both the child and the mother. Also, advanced monitoring practices and widespread vaccination practices have enabled more children to make it past their fifth birthday – the global under-five mortality rate dropped from 93 percent in 1990 to forty-one percent in 2016.¹⁹ Despite this incredible achievement in decreasing infant mortality rates, there remains cause for concern. Our population may be growing, but the earth's livable land mass is not. In fact, due to climate change and associated sea-level rise, the earth is losing livable landmass. From 1996 to 2011, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency found that "...roughly 20 square miles of dry land and wetland were converted to open water along the [U.S.] Atlantic coast."²⁰ Moreover, scientist and author Jonathan Gregory, working in consortium with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), has predicted that by the end of the 21st century, the world's oceans will have risen by nearly one full meter.²¹ Every year, the earth's livable landmass grows a bit smaller, while the global population grows larger. In addition, instead of moving outwards, to less populated areas, the number of people living in cities is growing exponentially.

¹⁸ United Nations, *World Population Prospect*, Page 12.

¹⁹ Lucia Hug, David Sharrow, and Danzhen You, *Levels & Trends in Child Mortality*, report (New York: UNICEF, 2017), Page 3.

²⁰ "Evaluating Land Loss from Sea Level Rise along the Atlantic Coast," NOAA Office for Coastal Management, August 21, 2017, accessed August 10, 2018, <https://coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/stories/atlantic-epa.html>.

²¹ Jonathan Gregory, *Projections of Sea Level Rise*, report (IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, 2013), Page 7.

In a 2018 report by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, it was mentioned that, “globally, more people live in urban areas than in rural areas, with fifty-five percent of the world’s population [now] residing in urban areas.”²² Furthermore, by 2050, “...humanity is expected to have developed into an almost exclusively urban species with eighty to ninety percent of people living in cities.”²³ In consequence, this densification raises concerns surrounding sustainable

by 2050, “...humanity is expected to have developed into an almost exclusively urban species with 80%-90% of people living in cities.”¹⁷

development, the crowding and pricing out of less affluent residents, and facilitating social connectedness and cohesiveness amongst increasingly diverse and heterogeneous populations. As people pour into the world’s cities, seeking amenities and greater job prospects, the less affluent will be forced to the periphery by those who can afford to pay high prices to live more central. In effect, by accessing social connection to others, to municipal services, and to the conveniences of urban life, those who stand to benefit the most, those whose lives necessitate the convenience of nearby health and social services, may very well be forced outside the city. As noted, climate change and the resultant future decline of livable land mass, means that if cities are not built with space efficiency in mind, they run the risk of becoming chaotic, sprawling and unwelcoming. Lastly, as urbanization is hardly uniform, and the bulk of migrants

²² *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision, Key Facts*, report (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018), Page 2.

²³ John Vidal, "The 100 Million City: Is 21st Century Urbanization out of Control?" *The Guardian*, March 19, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/mar/19/urban-explosion-kinshasa-el-alto-growth-mexico-city-bangalore-lagos>.

are uniquely diverse in ethnicity, occupation, and origin, divides can easily form between any group, making urbanites that much more susceptible to social isolation.

Vacant Space

As mentioned earlier, in 2016, *La Conseil Jeunesse de Montréal* identified nearly 900 vacant, burnt down or boarded-up buildings in Montréal.²⁴ These vacant, disused and misused spaces are largely a product of the cyclical nature of capitalism and its tethering to the consumption of physical space; the result of frenetic economic expansion and subsequent contraction.²⁵ Moreover, in addition to their unsightliness, these vacant, disused and misused spaces have a negative impact on their environment.²⁶



Objectively, these spaces attract many undesirable activities and a wide array of criminality. Vacant or disused spaces are often the sites of illegal dumping, vandalism, drug use, arson,²⁷ and “... are more often the scene of

²⁴ Opinion Paper, *Conseil Jeunesse De Montréal*, Page xix.

²⁵ Ali Madanipour, "Temporary Use of Space: Urban Processes between Flexibility, Opportunity and Precarity," *Urban Studies* 55, no. 5 (2017): Page 1094, doi:10.1177/0042098017705546.

²⁶ Aurelie De Smet, “*The Role of Temporary Use in Urban (re)development*”, Page 1.

²⁷ Ibid.

violent crimes such as murder and sexual violence.”²⁸ They even present a danger to young people, being that “vacant buildings can serve as a refuge for runaway youth and are attractive for children who do not benefit from active parental protection.”²⁹

Likewise, regarding the community and neighbourhood implications, “the vacancy problem is complex because its effects are cumulative. The more time passes, the more buildings and land which are not maintained deteriorate. This deterioration brings danger, hazards and high costs for landlords and the Montréal community.”³⁰ These high costs are not only financial but also social.

Vacant space leaves people feeling “... stigmatized, and neglected by the government; inducing depression, anxiety, stress, and fear;”³¹ and conveys to residents and visitors alike a level of disinterest and disinvestment in the community. Disinterest and disinvestment lead to loss of pride-in-place, which in turn leads to people leaving their neighbourhoods to produce, consume and experience elsewhere – in effect, inducing further disinvestment and the widespread loss of social vitality. Furthermore, as residents become more transient in their own neighbourhoods, they take less ownership of public space – leading to even further deterioration. Thus, commercial and public resources will cease to establish themselves in the area and those who need them most, the socially isolated, will be deserted within the city. Perhaps unable to afford to travel to other parts of the city, or immobile and unable to travel even relatively short distances, the most disenfranchised residents will undoubtedly suffer the

²⁸ Catherine E. Ross and John Mirowsky, "Neighborhood Disadvantage, Disorder, and Health," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 42, no. 3 (2001): Page 4, doi:10.2307/3090214.

²⁹ Opinion Paper, *Conseil Jeunesse De Montréal*, Page 2.

³⁰ Ibid., Page xli.

³¹ Linda Poon, "The Healing Potential of Turning Vacant Lots Green," City Lab, July 30, 2018, <https://www.citylab.com/environment/2018/07/the-healing-potential-of-turning-vacant-lots-green/566066/>.

most. On top of this, as more people flood into the city to use its amenities, those who need them most will be forced farther afield. Therefore, something must be done to facilitate more inclusive development, to build stronger, more connected communities.

Vacant Space: The Solution

Vacant space does not have to sit empty and purposeless to the residents of cities. By implementing temporary use techniques, vacant space can be utilized to facilitate more inclusive development and to build stronger, more connected communities.

In designing future development projects, social isolation can be mitigated by employing temporary use on vacant lots and in abandoned buildings slated for redevelopment. As the development process is often lengthy and compounded by the approval process and municipal bureaucracy, temporary use techniques could make use of the vacant space in the interim and bridge community-service gaps. These spaces could be temporarily transformed into: affordable housing; workspaces for young start-up companies; creative incubators and artistic space; or even for the provision of public services missing or in-demand in the community. Additionally, offering their sites slated for redevelopment to the community, developers might be able to curate advanced interest in the development and possibly stimulate increased economic and social interest in the area. Furthermore, in the interim period, developers could affect more participatory and consultative development in the time afforded to them by the success of temporary projects and uses. Developers could canvass the surrounding community to critically identify and fill the real needs of the area instead of imposing what they think is necessary. Ultimately, this would spur more successful development for all parties.

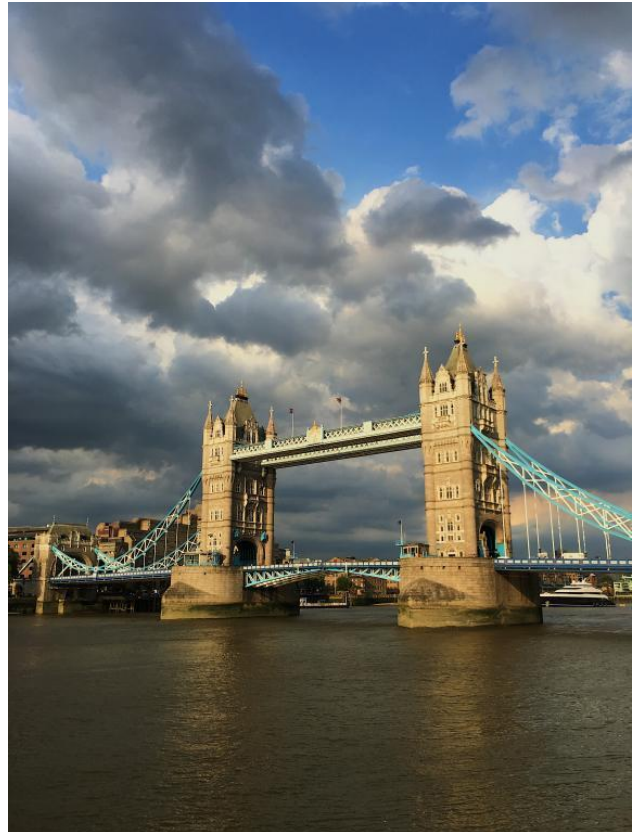
Secondly, in looking to connect people and create stronger communities, temporary projects can be employed to bring vibrancy to otherwise stagnant areas. Slated for weeks, months, or even years, these temporary projects are light and flexible. They require no foundation, no rebar, and no expensive materials; they simply require inexpensive materials and creative, inspired minds. Likewise, not having to plan for permanence means that these spaces can be flexible in their design. They can be grounds for experimentation that can easily be re-worked. Also, it is most often the case that vacant spaces are often prevalent in areas which have not been subject to much investment; when temporary use is employed, the case is often that the popularity of these areas increase.

In the following section, this report provides examples of temporary use projects in both London, UK and Montréal. When assessing inclusive development, London is a good model as it has a longer and more prolific history of unused space being utilized during the development process. Also, when building stronger, more connected communities, Montréal is a good model as its climate has necessitated temporary seasonal spaces for decades. Thus, in presenting contemporary examples from both London and Montréal, this report builds a foundation for proposed policy recommendations which are grounded and reflect their environment.

Findings

How developers can cut social isolation out of their design schemes in the long term?

Through research and fieldwork, this report identified London as a progressive model for the use of vacant space in facilitating inclusive development. Compared to Montréal, which is younger, smaller and newer to temporary use, London is bigger, denser and has undergone many more economic evolutions. As such, London can take advantage of these spaces and has become a leader in temporary use in development. The report highlights several examples from London and one from Montréal to show where Montréal is and where it can go regarding temporary use.



Example 1: “Pop Brixton”, Brixton, London, United Kingdom



Located in Brixton in the south of London, Pop Brixton “... is a community-led initiative that has transformed a disused plot of land into a pioneering space that showcases the most exciting independent businesses from Brixton and Lambeth, providing a new destination that supports them to

set up shop and share space, skills and ideas.”³² Delivered by ‘Make Shift’ and in partnership with Lambeth Council, Pop Brixton is a public-private project which is to remain in place until 2020.



Pop Brixton helps facilitate inclusive development as it focalizes Brixton within the larger urban landscape. It brings vibrancy, creativity and diversity to the area. Moreover, it provides

³² "Pop Brixton," Pop Brixton, 2018, About Us, accessed August 14, 2018, <https://www.popbrixton.org/about/>.

10 heavily discounted units to social enterprises and local start-ups who otherwise cannot afford space in other parts of London; it allows its space to be used for free by the community; and, it requires each member to give back one hour of their time each week to the local community.

Example 2: “Peckham Levels”, Peckham, London, United Kingdom

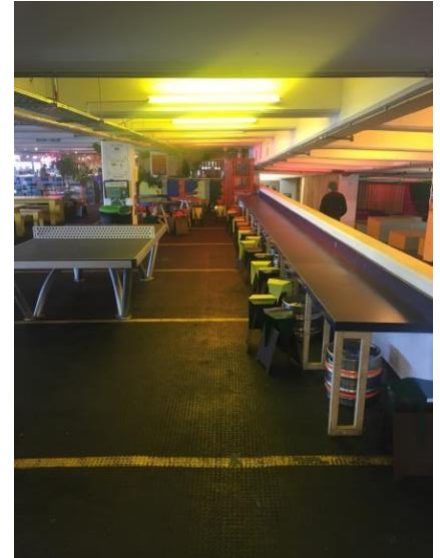
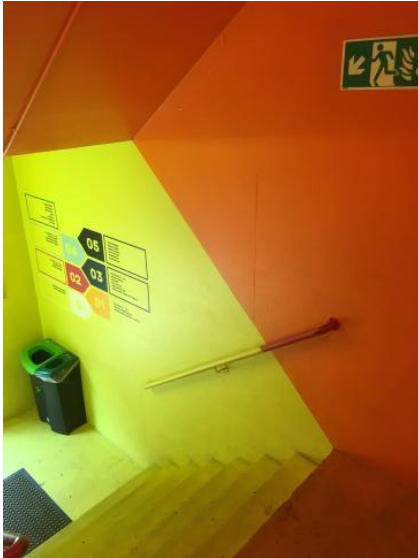
Located in Peckham in the south-east of London, Peckham Levels is a 7-storey parking garage that was temporarily converted into a multi-use community space for independent businesses, artists and local entrepreneurs. Slated to run for the next six years, Peckham Levels was launched in 2017 by Make Shift, in partnership with Southwark Council.



(Source: The Resident Magazine, *Peckham Levels*, Accessed August 2018,
<https://www.theresident.co.uk/london-culture-events/peckham-levels-to-open-august-2017/>)

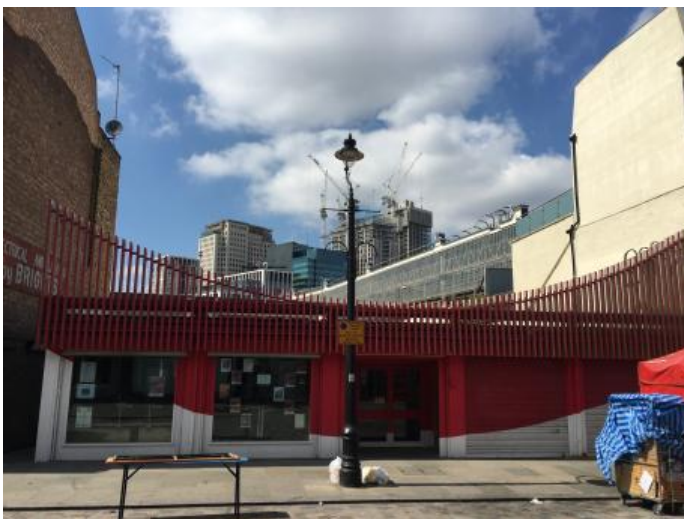
Peckham Levels helps facilitate inclusive development as it gives space to independent business, entrepreneurs, and local artists to pursue their crafts and ultimately give back to the

local community. The co-option of the parking garage affords the Council of Southwark the opportunity to consult on the appropriate long-term use of the space, instead of leaving it to sit empty and deteriorate for the next 6-10 years.



Example 3: “Granby Space”, Lambeth, London, United Kingdom

Located in Lambeth in Central London, Granby Space Creative Work Hub is a temporary creative space “designed to support local startups, grow independent enterprises...” and “...



harness the creativity, knowledge, and entrepreneurial talent of the local community.”³³ It features a retail unit, desks for freelancers and small teams and studio spaces for 2-5 people. Delivered by Meanwhile Space CIC, in partnership with the London Borough of Lambeth, Granby Space is slated to run until 2019.³⁴

“The interim use of the building, while the future development plans on the site are realized, provides the opportunity to test the model of a flexible retail/workspace hub on Lower Marsh which will inform more permanent premises in the future.”³⁵

Example 4: “Project Young Laboratoire Transitoire”, Montréal, Canada



(Source: Project Young Laboratoire Transitoire, *Entremise*, Accessed August 2018, <http://www.entremise.ca/laboratoiretransitoire/>)

(Second Photo Source: Project Young Laboratoire Transitoire, *Entremise*, Accessed August 2018, <http://www.entremise.ca/laboratoiretransitoire/>)

Located in Griffintown in Montréal, Project Young is a temporary use project, which brought together 20 cultural and community organizations, artists and entrepreneurs into a

³³ "Granby Space," Experimental Spaces | London | Meanwhile Space CIC, 2017, accessed August 14, 2018, <https://www.meanwhilespace.com/single-post/GranbySpace>.

³⁴ Ibid.

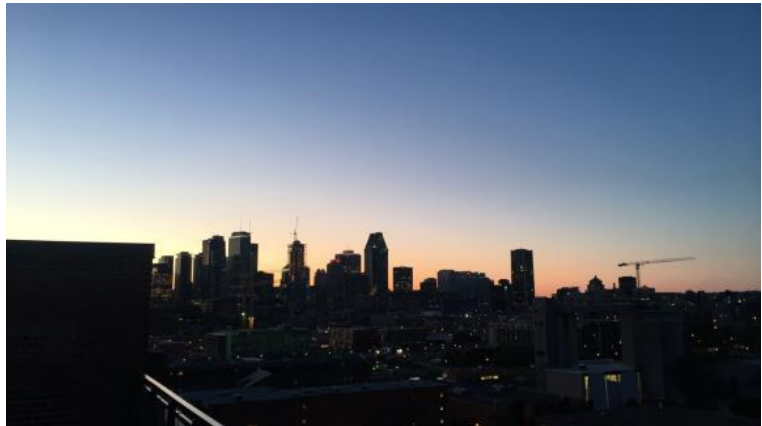
³⁵ Ibid.

shared space in a once vacant industrial building. Delivered by a public-private-philanthropic partnership between the City of Montréal, the McConnell Foundation, *Maison de L'Innovation Sociale*, and *Entremise*, Project Young is slated to run for 22 months.³⁶

Project Young helps facilitate inclusive development in that the pilot project aims to set the foundation for the new practices of temporary use to take hold in Montréal, and to allow the frameworks and processes involved in creating the project to develop and eventually help facilitate the multiplication of such projects.³⁷

How can we get people to connect and create strong communities?

Through research and field-work, this report identified Montréal as a definitive leader in temporarily leveraging vacant space to promote inclusivity and connectedness. Montréal demonstrated how it used vacant space to build interest in less-frequented areas, and to invoke a sense-of-place and pride-in-place unique to the city. Accordingly, this report identified temporary use in three different space typologies which lend themselves to the cultivation of inclusivity and connectedness. These spaces are street spaces, urban park spaces and cultural-commons space.



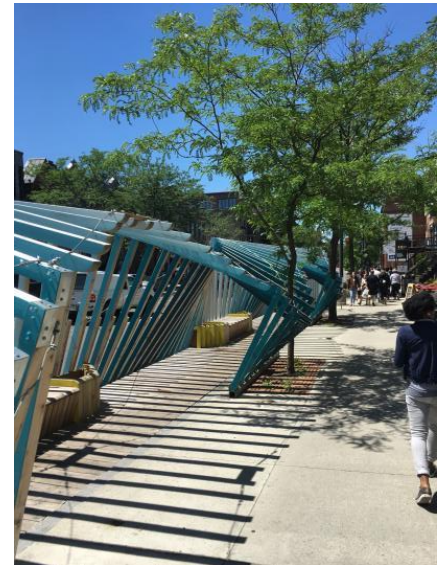
³⁶ "Project Young Laboratoire Transitoire," Entremise, 2018, accessed August 15, 2018, <http://www.entremise.ca/laboratoiretransitoire/>.

³⁷ Ibid.

Street Space

In looking at street-space it became evident that due to its many different uses it ought to be divided into two categories: Off-Street and On-Street. Off-Street is space use that only occupies sidewalks and parking lanes and On-Street is space use such as partial- and/or full-pedestrianization.

Off-Street Space – Example 5: “Public Seating”, Montréal, Canada



In various spots around Montréal, brightly coloured public seating areas can be found on sidewalks, extending onto street-side parking spots. These vibrant and unique seating areas can act as gathering places, resting places and even way-finders.

These eye-catching public-seating areas help facilitate inclusivity and connectedness by conveying interest and investment to residents. They provide a setting in which people can step back from the hustle-and-bustle of city life and enjoy their surroundings, and where they can

interact with others or even just be amidst others. These public-seating areas are easily installed, easily manipulate and easily removed and as such, they promote a constant reimagining of the cityscape. They cultivate a unique sense-of-place and emit a curiousness likely to draw people's attention.

On-Street Space – Example 6: “Terrasses Roy”, Montréal, Canada

Located in Montréal's Lower Plateau, *Terrasses Roy* is a pedestrianized section of Rue Roy Est.



Its goal, as cited by the City of Montréal website is “to provide a green, inclusive and innovative public place for and by the people of the neighbourhood, which rallies the community around the benefits of urban agriculture.”³⁸ Featuring four colourful wooden terraces and a bicycle-repair station the space sees 4,100 pedestrian crossings per day. Delivered by the City of Montréal this temporary project is intended to run for the next three years.³⁹

³⁸ "Terrasses Roy," Ville De Montreal, 2018, accessed August 15, 2018, <https://ville.montreal.qc.ca/ruespietonnees/rue/terrasses-roy>.

³⁹ Ibid.

This bright and colourful public space helps facilitate inclusivity and connectedness by breaking up the road network, slowing down traffic and being a place in which residents can relax and give back. Slated to evolve over the next three years, this vibrant community focal point is revisitable and presents residents the opportunity to get involved in their community.



On-Street Space – Example 7: McCord Museum Urban Forest, Montréal, Canada

Located beside Montréal's McCord Museum, the McCord Urban Forest is made possible by the pedestrianisation of Rue Victoria. Simple yet vibrant in design, the McCord Urban Forest features many picnic tables and several colourful 'trees'. Running for its 8th summer, the Urban Forest is delivered by the McCord Museum in partnership with the City of Montréal.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ "The Urban Forest – McCord Museum," Musée McCord, 2018, accessed August 15, 2018, <http://www.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/the-urban-forest/>.



This simple, centrally-located, space helps facilitate inclusivity and connectedness by bringing life back to an otherwise bleak and monotonous area. It is a space where office workers can eat their lunches and enjoy the summer weather, a place where people can meet afterwork or even just a pleasant place to sit. Moreover, it demonstrates to both locals and passerby that the area is more than just business.

Urban Park Space

Another method in which vacant space is used to build connectedness is in creating temporary urban-park space. In each of the following examples off-road space was co-opted to create communal areas. In one instance an old gas station



lot was transformed into an urban park and in the other, unused space along Lachine Canal was brought to life through temporary use.

Example 8: “Rue Mentana Park”, Montréal, Canada

Found on the corner of Rue Mentana and Rue Mont-Royal, this urban pocket park is located on the site of a now defunct gas station. Colourful and geometric, this pocket park has plenty of seating, greenery and even ‘mist-sprayers’ to help combat the summer heat. As a temporary installation in 2018, this pocket park makes good use of an otherwise empty lot.



Breaking up the commercial facade of Rue Mont-Royal, Rue Mentana Park helps facilitate inclusivity and connectedness by creating a unique focal point in the area. It is a place where people can meet, can rest, or can simply enjoy the summer weather – it’s a place people can be proud of. Despite its simple design, the park manages to convey an interest and investment in the community, where the city has more than just commercial interests in mind.

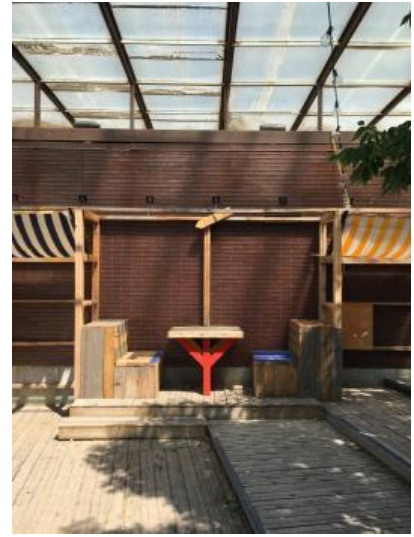


Example 9: “Place du Marché”, Montréal, Canada

Found near Atwater Market, Place du Marché is located on a vacant space alongside Lachine Canal. Featuring various creative seating areas, an outdoor library, an ice cream shop and a communal barbeque, the space offers residents and patrons of Atwater Market a place to relax along Montréal’s historic Lachine Canal. Delivered by *La Pépinière Espaces Collectifs* in partnership with Parks Canada and the City of Montréal, the space is slated to run until 2019.⁴¹

Place du Marché helps facilitate inclusivity and connectedness in creating a vibrant, multi-use communal space. Aesthetically pleasing and filled with curiosities, the space is relaxing and brings life to the canal-side.

⁴¹ "La Place Du Marché," La Pépinière, 2018, accessed August 15, 2018, <https://www.pepiniere.co/la-place-du-marche/>.



Cultural-Commons Space

Lastly, this report identified many different ‘cultural-commons’ spaces around Montréal. These are temporary spaces which, like urban parks, are located on vacant lots, but have full-time programming and are built with a theme that culturally embodies Montréal. Although there are many different cultural-commons spaces around Montréal, there is one that particularly stood out for being unique to the city.

Example 10: “Le Station F-MR”, Montréal, Canada

Located at Place des Bassins of the Lachine Canal Historic Site, Le Station F-MR is public space made up of four converted MR-63 metro cars. Converted into an art gallery, a café, a design boutique, a stage, a studio, and a backstage area, the space “... offers a multi-disciplinary cultural program driven by local talents with activities, such as art exhibitions, film screenings,

creative workshops, concerts, shows and local products markets.”⁴² Delivered by Desjardins and in partnership with Parks Canada, the South-West Borough, Loto-Québec, Moog Audio, and Hydro-Québec, the project is slated to run from May to September 2018. The intent of the project is to better inform the development of a permanent project to open in 2020.⁴³



Le Station F-MR helps facilitate inclusivity and connectedness by creating a safe, friendly and vibrant space rife with things to discover and places to explore. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming, encouraging visitors to return multiple times. Additionally, the use of the metro cars gives the space a unique Montréal feel, generating pride-in-place for residents. It invites visitors to re-imagine how their world might be constructed, all the while stressing the importance of sustainability and neighbourliness.

⁴² "The Station F-MR," Station F-MR, 2018, accessed August 15, 2018, <http://stationfmr.ca/en/about-us/the-station-f-mr/>.

⁴³ Ibid.

Policy Recommendations

Both London and Montréal have their own strengths and weaknesses regarding the employment of temporary use. London is far more advanced in understanding and temporarily leveraging the potential of vacant space to effect more thought-out and consultative development. As briefly seen above, London does a good job of allocating space to the people, projects, and organizations that need them most. Making space for social enterprise, art, and local groups will be increasingly important as the world becomes more global. Also, as seen in the case of Granby Space, its temporary use will help inform more permanent premises in the future.⁴⁴ While Montréal is still new to temporary use, *Project Young Laboratoire Transitoire* is a great example of temporary use helping to fill local service gaps and providing affordable space to young companies and social enterprises, which often hold specific mandates to address societal issues.

However, in getting people to connect and creating stronger communities, we see a role-reversal. Montréal is the leader in temporarily leveraging vacant space to promote connectedness and community engagement. As seen in various cases of off-street public seating and on-street pedestrianization, there is great emphasis placed on bringing the city back to the human scale, making the urban environment a place to enjoy and explore as opposed to consume and commute. A mandate that celebrates the urban city spaces will be increasingly important as not only Montréal, but all our world's cities grow denser.

This report has identified three key sets of stakeholders that are integral to realizing the benefits of temporary use, and in turn, for creating more inclusive development and building

⁴⁴ Meanwhile Space CIC, *Granby Space*, 2017.

stronger, more connected communities. These key stakeholders are: **local government, developers and coordinators** and **residents**. As such, in addressing each key question policy recommendations will be directed toward each set of stakeholders, outlining actions they should take to build a future rich in connectedness and inclusivity.

Policy Recommendations: Inclusive Development

If Montréal is to successfully design future development projects that mitigate social isolation, it must employ a more sustainable and participatory development process. In using a more consultative approach to development, residents can have a say in what they want as opposed to being told what they need; in turn, effecting the most efficient use-of-space possible. As such, to ensure that more inclusive development occurs, each of the three key stakeholders must play their part.

First, local government needs to make it easier for temporary use to take place during the development process. If developers are discouraged by unfriendly policies, and/or long-winded bureaucratic processes, vacant space will undoubtedly sit empty. **Therefore, it is recommended that local government create incentives to promote temporary use and that they redevelop land-use policies to streamline temporary use projects. In addition, to maximize the application of temporary use, data on vacant, abandoned, and misused space should be routinely collected and catalogued and made available to the wider public, ensuring that all future opportunities are seized.**

Second, developers and coordinators must keep society's betterment in mind when thinking about temporarily using space. Because of its short time frame and the future

implications of poorly thought-out development, the onus is on developers and coordinators to use the space for the betterment of the city. They could install a high-class, big-brand ‘pop-up’, but what good does more designer clothing really do the world? **Therefore, it is recommended that in creating and running temporary spaces that developers and programmers proceed with a mandate of serving the community and filling local service gaps. Providing space to the people who need it most, whether it be through temporary affordable housing, affordable workspaces, artistic space, or even the provisioning of public services (healthcare, social services, etc.).**

Lastly, residents must take it into their own hands to push for sustainable land use. They must question empty space and advocate for its use. Especially as unaffordability becomes more-and-more of a constant in our lives. **Therefore, it is recommended that Montréal’s residents take a more active role in shaping their city. They must fight for more equitable land-use and take a proactive stance.**

Policy Recommendations: Building Connected and Strong Communities

If Montréal is to successfully create stronger and more connected communities, it must make a concerted effort across all the city’s stakeholders. It must create spaces for people – spaces where people can relax, interact, and feel welcome. Spaces which people can take pride in and get involved with; in effect, residents should be encouraged to help create their own vision of the city. However, for this to become a reality, all three levels of society must buy in.

First, local government must realize the benefits of temporarily leveraging vacant space for societal benefit. If developers and coordinators, and even engaged citizens are rebuffed by inflexible bureaucracy, they will be less willing to push for project creation. Even in Montréal, where they are doing a great job of facilitating and promoting temporary use in vacant space, more be done. **Therefore, it is recommended that local government commit to working together with developers and coordinators; that they make it easier to temporarily use vacant space via less stringent permitting processes; and, that the City recognize the power of temporary use and incorporate it into its future planning agenda.**

Secondly, to fully unlock the potential of rich, vibrant and revisitable space, developers and coordinators must look past their core networks. Although they are the experts, the key to building connectedness and stronger communities is to facilitate future capacity and participation. **Therefore, it is recommended that the developers and coordinators of temporary space adhere to a mandate of not only building great spaces, but of helping build the capacity of others by ensuring that these projects and spaces reach the entire community.** Also, getting residents involved in development and project evolution is integral to facilitating connectedness and building spaces that promote inclusivity. **Therefore, developers and coordinators should call for the input of neighbourhood residents.** In doing so, they will strengthen ties with the community and residents will feel like they have had an input into the development of their neighbourhood.

Lastly, for these temporary use projects to succeed, for streets like Rue Shamrock or places like *Le Station F-MR* to facilitate connectedness, the onus is ultimately on residents.

Connectedness cannot occur if these spaces sit empty. **Therefore, residents must engage with and take pride in their neighbourhood and their city. They must take ownership of the streets and spaces and constantly find ways to improve their city and neighbourhood; real change starts at the grassroots level.**

Impact

Looking ahead, how can these recommendations be taken from paper to practice? Personally, I believe it starts at the grassroots level. Preaching to committees, to assemblies, and to City Hall can be effective. Deploying statistics, reports, and salient quotes can help shift opinions. But to effect real change, for everyone to truly understand the benefits of temporary use, projects must continue to be pushed forward and residents must continue to support and participate in them. Then, once the connective power of these spaces is realized, policies will change and planning agendas will be updated. And in turn, temporary use projects will move toward becoming an immutable part of Montréal's urban landscape.

As such, the Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness (SCSC) could help bring policy to practice by creating a temporary use space of their own. All that is required is an empty space, some creative minds, and the willingness to effect positive change. The space could be designed and created via calls to the public, to partners and to current and past fellows, to facilitate diverse participation and connection. Likewise, thanks to the inherent impermanence of a temporary use project, it would be a low-cost and easily managed endeavor. Not to mention it could possibly be a valuable branding opportunity to raise SCSC's profile in the community.

As for myself, the researcher, in moving toward a career in Urban Planning, the importance of temporary use will undoubtedly shape the way I approach my career. More immediately, I find myself reimagining city spaces as I move through the city. Thinking about how spaces could be reworked or improved to make them more vibrant and welcoming. I have also contemplated creating my own small-scale temporary use project, as my research has uncovered many spaces around Montréal which could benefit from temporary use.

Conclusion

As the majority of humanity continues toward becoming nearly a completely urban species living in dense communities, cities need to do more to prevent social isolation. As unaffordability continues to plague cities where space sits empty, society is tasked with dealing with these realities and their associated consequences. This report, prompted by questions of how to mitigate social isolation from development projects and how to build stronger, more connected communities, identified the temporary use of vacant space as a viable method to reconciling the above three issues. It found that in London, temporary use is being employed to bid-time for more consultative and participatory development, and to temporarily fill public service gaps. In Montréal, it found that temporary use is being used to turn vacant space into vibrant and thought-provoking community spaces – spaces that facilitate inclusivity and connectedness via participation and collective re-imagining.

Accordingly, with the intent of effecting more sustainable land use and stimulating future inclusivity and connectedness in Montréal, this report laid out a series of policy recommendations directed at local government, developers and residents, outlining the actions

they must take to help build a more inclusive future. Thus, to realize the benefits of temporary use projects in the development process it was recommended that local government incentivize temporary use projects, streamline approval processes and collect data on vacant space. For developers and coordinators, it recommends that they adhere to a community-first mandate in provisioning temporary space. And, for residents it recommends that they take a more active role in shaping the city.

Also, for Montréal to realize the benefits of vibrant and thought-provoking temporary spaces, this report recommends that the local government works together with developers and coordinators to reduce barriers to creation, and to build temporary use into its future planning agenda. This report also recommends that developers and coordinators work to build the capacity of others as much as their own, and to call for and welcome residents' input. Lastly, this report challenges residents to take pride in their city, and to constantly seek out the ways in which they can improve it. The truth is: "we shape our buildings, and afterwards, our buildings shape us."⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Winston Churchill, "Churchill and the Commons Chamber, "UK Parliament, 2018, accessed August 17, 2018, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/building/palace/architecture/palacestructure/churchill/>.

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