Body Territory: Mending the divided city
FEMALE URBANISM IN POINTE-SAINT-CHARLES

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Abstract

Conventional urban planning neglects the female point of view, and cities, and neighbourhoods in Canada continue to be built according to dominant positions. The thesis considers the less visible members of a society, and more specifically, lower income women, and will explore the need for connectivity through safe and inclusive design strategies in Pointe Saint-Charles (Montreal).

The thesis accepts a soon-to-be-developed site on the Wellington basin as a starting point, and designs several “routes of connectivity” from established neighbourhoods to this site, with a view to sewing it into the broader city, and thus, to nurturing access and inclusion in the future new development.

Employing a poetic language of stems, the routes traverse adjacent neighbourhoods and touch down in significant locations including spaces of female memory like the nearby Five Flowers silos, before arriving at the Wellington basin development.

By rooting the new development in the community via small interventions scaled to the human person, these paths of remembrance reconcile women’s bodies with the territory. This thesis’ female-centered urbanism strategy celebrates women’s role in Montreal’s economic development and industrial history while safeguarding their inclusion in the fabric of the city.
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Growing up in the Montréal environs, I was constantly faced with the obstacles of getting from point A to point B in an efficient and safe manner. Montréal used to be the ideal picture of a desirable city in which to reside. With a number of transportation options -- the metro, buses, trains, electric trains, Bixies, taxis, and Ubers – the city is conveniently accessible. However, the reality is that accessibility and transit options vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

My brother has lived in Pointe-Saint-Charles, near Centre Street, for a few years. While there are bus lines in the neighbourhood, I’ve always found walking down the street and waiting at the bus stop after visiting my brother frightening. The inherent issue, I’ve discovered, is that the neighbourhood hasn’t changed much since its industrial growth, and no meaningful attempt has been made to improve of its urban and public places. The streets are difficult to cross and parks all feel disconnected from each other. The residential area feels detached from the Lachine Canal the newly built condominiums in Griffintown. Furthermore, the growing cost of living and the recent revitalization of the Canal Lachine have increased the appeal of living in Pointe-Saint-Charles. The time is ripe to address the need for inclusive and inviting spaces.
Montreal is a city in flux and is one that provides a rich platform upon which to imagine the future city. The borough of Southwest Montreal is an especially fertile ground for design speculation because it is so powerfully “incomplete.” A surreal mix of industrial, infrastructural, railways and highways and container fields, factories and small houses — the area poses poignant questions about urbanism, and more specifically, about what constitutes inclusive urbanism.

What is more, for many historical reasons, this part of Montreal could be called “female.” This thesis embarks upon a reflection on speculative female urban strategies. The thesis revolves around the finer grain and the relationship of human bodies to space, defining, and proposing three scales of interventions to guide a proposal for a better city for women: the scale pertaining to, firstly, the relationship between the body and streets and public spaces; secondly, the relationship of body to built environment and architecture; and finally, that which relates the body to the larger scheme of the city.

Introduction

Inclusion is about designing for members of a society whose needs have not been met. Urban planners have long neglected designing cities and urban spaces for the more vulnerable and less visible populations, and more specifically, for women. Cities and neighbourhoods in Canada continue to be built according to dominant positions. Increased land-values contribute to the problem, and development that is not profit-driven receives little attention.

By taking a female perspective as a starting point, and exploring design from a non-dominant standpoint, this thesis aims to uncover inclusive urban strategies that will resonate with all women, and especially economically marginalized ones. This thesis explores an empathic way of designing an urban matrix in a changing part of Montreal, in which all citizens, visitors, and dwellers can feel seen, secure, and connected to the community. Thus, while I’m proposing a speculative strategy for designing a city for women, I’ve put a lot of thoughts into anchoring this proposal into the community and the neighborhood.
This mural is on the side of an elementary school in the neighborhood of Pointe-Saint-Charles. Even young children are made aware of Pointe-Saint-Charles' role in Montreal’s industrial industry.
A site named “The Pointe”

A HISTORIC AND MORPHOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION
The torn landscape of the Pointe

This thesis explores an expanded site situated on a residual piece of land sited between the residential neighbourhood of Pointe-Saint-Charles (PSC) and the Bridge-Bonaventure area. This working-class neighbourhood is in the borough of Montreal Southwest, bordered by the Lachine Canal, the Wellington Basin, and the Saint-Laurent River, and located near Griffintown. A large deployment of train tracks traverses the site, severing it into two parts. These railways are a symbol of Pointe-Saint-Charles’ role in industrialization, a role in which the community takes pride.

This thesis’ expanded site and land mass holds the CN as well as the RTM networks, which, paired with the residual lands, total more than ninety thousand square meters (90 000 m²) of unoccupied space. It is useful to explain that the so-called “Bridge-Bonaventure area” includes highways, residual lands, the “parc des entreprises, la Cité du Havre, Habitat 67, industrial lands and train tracks, and the Peel and Wellington Basins. Zoned commercial and industrial, this non-residential zone is understood to be in need of attention.

It is also helpful to clarify that this thesis considered taking on the Wellington Basin site as its design topic, but, in the end, accepted the premise that the site would be developed according to a now-in-the-works official design. The thesis reflects on the built environment that leads up to, and connects with, this site. The design work for this thesis deals with connective gestures to lead to this site, and are located beyond the Bridge-Bonaventure area.

Historically called “The Pointe,” Pointe-Saint-Charles, is divided between a residential area mainly composed of typical Montréal duplexes and triplexes, and an industrial and commercial sector that will be described in more detail further on. The Pointe has a low-density urban fabric with basic amenities, parks, and a main street, the Rue Centre.
The Bonaventure-Bridge area is an economically attractive location that includes the industrio-commercial section of Pointe-Saint-Charles and portions of the Old Port and of Griffintown, and that the city has identified as a redevelopment area. The site that this thesis is located within the Bonaventure-Bridge area notably identified by the land use map as an employment area and an industrial district. It has been defined as an area lacking in public spaces, with a low implantation rate. The large infrastructures that divide the Bridge-Bonaventure sector isolate the site and cause the urban fabric to be disjointed. These also produce a very mineralized morphology replete with parking lots and vacant industrial spaces. Train tracks divide the site and create many residual spaces that aren’t occupied or optimized. This land is therefore not only of exceptional value but also of great complexity.

The Wellington Basin site offers interesting and attractive features: a Costco store, well-established neighbourhoods nearby, places of work including the milling factory, Hydro-Quebec and the MELS film production headquarters; leisure spaces including parks, water-edge bicycle paths, outdoor activity, historical sites, and an observation point, among others. The Lachine Canal offers proximity to the downtown and is part of the urban network. What is more, the Wellington Basin is close to Montreal’s centre and, thus, to vital social supports and resources.
The cradle of industrialization

The Lachine Canal is a waterway that crosses the southwestern part of the island of Montréal and was originally used to transport maritime trade. It is partly thanks to this canal that Montréal made its mark as a commercial and industrial city in the 19th century.

While the Port of Montréal has since replaced the Lachine Canal, the latter nevertheless remains an important part of Montréal’s historic heritage. To this day, important traces of the past – the grain silos, the Five Rose Factory, and several canal basins, among others – can still be seen in the Lachine Canal area. The site in question is located on the lands surrounding the Wellington Basin where disused factories and silos are currently located. As the cradle of industrialization in Montreal, Pointe-Saint-Charles is a layered territory in which numerous traces of the city’s industrial and labour history – including women’s involvement in the city’s urban development – can be found.

This site is itself on the verge, or margins, of the city of Montreal: it is not associated with traditional tourism in the way that is Old Montreal, nor is it tied to the central business district. On the other hand, it does possess a fascinating infrastructure, including significant industrial sites and the historical Lachine Canal itself – now an expansive outdoor leisure realm fitted with bicycle paths. Access to the latter and proximity to the downtown are selling points for Pointe-Saint-Charles. All that is missing to make of Pointe-Saint-Charles an ideal neighbourhood are increased connections.
Female spaces and Female engagement

Women have played an important role in the economic and social development of Montreal. At the start of the 20th century, Montréal was in the throes of the industrial revolution. During the First World War, women of Montréal played an important role in maintaining the production in factories by replacing the men who had left for the front. Indeed, thousands of women entered the workforce as a result of labour shortages, poverty, and the war effort. They primarily worked in the garment, textile, leather, and tobacco industries, but they also worked in typography, chemicals, and electrical appliances. During WW1, the factories along the Lachine Canal quickly became important on the industrial front due to their size and diversity, and they were largely female landscapes.

Women are also responsible for the community-based development of the Pointe-Saint-Charles neighbourhood through the creation of many non-profit organisations which are still active today. Pointe-Saint-Charles has been a stakeholder in the Southwest culture of collaboration. Women have played a role in “the neighbourhood’s efforts to create public spaces, decent housing, health and social services, popular education, initiatives to revive the local economy, the emergence of the women’s movement, the establishment and hard work to ensure the survival of a community health clinic, and more.”

Endnotes


Today, Montreal is growing and new territories are being developed all around. And PSC is one of them. Pointe-Saint-Charles is a very intimate well-established family-friendly neighborhood with a small grain, with charming brick buildings, two-three stories high. And meanwhile a new Montreal is growing on post-industrial sites. A deeply rooted sense of community solidarity characterizes Pointe-Saint-Charles. Its citizens are very engaged in municipal politics and decisions, and have a higher degree of engagement and awareness of community economic development than in many other places:

“There’s no question but that the Southwest today features more economic players who are aware of their social responsibilities and more social players conscious of their economic role.”

The residents’ groups of Pointe-Saint-Charles possess the ability to influence the acceptance or rejection of a project at the city’s planning and administrative board. New project proposals submitted to the city should comply with the guidelines and vision of the community.
A well-established family-friendly neighborhood

On the other side of the Lachine Canal
Understanding a contested site

The Wellington Basin is part of the land that the large real estate developer, Groupe Devimco, owns in the Wellington-Bridge sector. Groupe Devimco is a very influential and well-known developer in Montréal that has built a number of skyscrapers and high-rise residential buildings in the city, including more recently, in Griffintown. In collaboration with Cycle Capital, Groupe Immobilier Broccolini, Groupe MACH and the architecture firms of Provencher_Roy, Lemay, ACDF architecture and Neuf architectes, Devimco has submitted a proposal to develop the site in question to the city of Montreal. The proposal has been under consideration for the past two years. The latter includes apartment buildings that are higher than permitted by the city’s regulations and density map. Devimco cites the need to produce additional housing like condos as justification for their design, while at the same time, excluding affordable housing typologies. They make claims the city’s demands are unrealistic because it is not profitable. The city appears to be in dialogue with Devimco and their associate partners, but it has not yet taken a stance on the proposal. In the meantime, the city of Montréal has prepared a development plan for the future of the Bridge-Bonaventure sector following the citizens concerns and economical vision of the municipality. This proposal was not widely welcomed in the community because it did not address any of the genuine concerns around affordable housing and integration into the existing fabric of the neighbourhood of Pointe-Saint-Charles. Within the community, some believe that Devimco will not build anything other than tall towers. Further, some hope that Devimco — who is running out of patience with the city of Montréal and the community and its delay-incurring input gathering — will sell and walk away.
To bridge the divided city
A modified proposition: complying with Pointe-Saint-Charles’ vision

Poddubiu Archi’s proposal for mixed-use development on the Wellington Basin, among the many unique propositions to the site, presents a wide range of housing possibilities, from multi-unit to single residences. The scheme also locates a centre of excellence, a sports centre, and a high school, as well as green areas, parks, shared gardens, and common outdoor places. The project envisions reopening the Wellington Basin and maintaining the existing grain silo and the waterside cycling path. The outcome is a diverse development that seems to heed the community’s key values: a space providing learning opportunities, community inclusion, and historical integration.
Addressing the thesis

The Wellington Basin is a site with great potential, and the Pointe-Saint-Charles community has a clear vision for it: the community desires a medium-to low-rise development with mixed-use and social housing, that places little emphasis on car mobility, that supports and present and remembers the past. Any future project must adhere to the community’s development plan and guidelines.\(^5\) Because the scheme produced by Poddubiuk Architect does all these things, the thesis accepts it as a given.

However, we are aware that isolated neighbourhoods cannot develop in a manner that is accessible to marginalised populations. This is especially true for economically marginalised women. The wealthy car owner can enjoy the solitude and peace proffered by a disconnected neighbourhood, but the person who relies on public transportation cannot thrive in an area with inadequate services. For the development of Wellington Basin as a medium-density residential area to be economically viable, it must be anchored in the existing urban fabric of the surrounding area.

This thesis begins by accepting a proposition that is aligned with Pointe-Saint-Charles’ community vision. The thesis focuses on establishing links between the Wellington Basin and the surrounding city, considering the spaces leading to the site, and not the site itself (the assumption being that the Poddubiuk design will be realized there). Thus, more than proposing a comprehensive new neighbourhood for this large post-industrial site, this thesis delves into the question of connecting this future neighbourhood to the established ones that surround it.

Endnotes

3 French expression that means: “something that is too obvious not to be visible; extremely predictable.”


6 Direction de l’urbanisme, Service de la mise en valeur du territoire, Ville de Montréal. ”Montréal Urban agglomeration land use and development plan”


8 Idem
Female Urbanism

TIRER SON ÉPINOLE DE JEU: THE GENDER—BIAS

Cities are not designed to accommodate women’s bodies or needs. They have been built on values from the past and centered around a society that no longer exists. A pro-male gender bias has been very prominent in architecture and urban planning, to the detriment of women’s quality of life. Fortunately, inclusion has become more common in modern architectural design. In urban planning, however, neutral design is not sufficient to ensure that the experience of urban spaces is equal for all, as women live under different conditions that make them vulnerable. Female urbanism addresses the social, historical, and built environment and its direct impact on women’s autonomy, safety, mental and physical health, and daily responsibilities.

“While the typical urban citizen for urban planning has been narrowed down as a white cis-gendered, middle-class, able-bodied heterosexual man, when it comes to designing for “women” we are faced with the same overgeneralized issue: the white, middle-class, able-bodied wife. When it come to gender-sensitive planning, the approach should de sensible to all kind of women.”

Individual characteristics of city users have a significant impact on the perceived level of pedestrian-friendliness of streets and public spaces. The typical approach to walkability would be to think of the need to ensure accessibility to essential and diverse services within a comfortable walking distance at the neighbourhood scale. Women experience the city differently than men, as they are more concerned with safety issues related to aggression and harassment as well as accessibility. Male experience is universal in architecture and urban design, whereas the female perspective is more of a niche subject. In this regard, it is critical to recognize that the inclusion of women’s perspectives does not preclude the inclusion of men’s experiences, which are already prevalent in our practice.

Endnotes

9 French expressions that means: To deftly escape a tricky situation before it worsens
"A feminist city must be one where barriers – physical and social – are dismantled, where all bodies are welcome and accommodated."

In the context of targeting women, walkability factors impact the sense of security, the feeling of vulnerability, the avoidance of certain spaces or times of the day, and the adapted behaviour (change of route, fast-paced walk) that affects women's mobility in a city. These factors are comparable to those specific to those with mobility impairments, the elderly, children (to name a few), and other people and groups on the margins.

"Poorly illuminated streets, lack of public bus services to remote areas and the poor security conditions of existing ones prevent women from exercising their freedom of travel which is one of their fundamental rights. Overpasses and high pavements make it hard for women to use city streets with strollers."

In a few words, designing for women entails making women's daily lives easier in all aspects of social and personal life. This includes the promise of safety and well-being in the public sphere, access to social services, basic amenities (such as grocery stores and pharmacies), the ability to achieve a work-life balance, making public space accessible and democratic, and ensuring a wider range of housing options while also providing an inclusive community. Finally, designing for women is to provide women with spaces that are inherently inviting, inclusive, and flexible. These criteria can translate into physical realities such as a well-lit space, an enlarged sidewalk, a well-designed and thoughtfully located crosswalk, ramps, unrestricted visibility in all directions, and eyes on the street.
Jane Jacobs’ developed the now well-known concept of “eyes on the street” whereby proximity of buildings to street edge and fenestration organically create a surveillance mechanism of public places. It can be expressed by cameras and by the presence of other people. Persons would be able to react and call for help were they to witness a criminal act. This collaborative and interconnected setup creates a sense of security. Apartments and stores, for example, would offer surveillance. “Fear for safety deters women from walking. Personal safety is another key concern, which prevents many young women from walking in public places after dark or alone.” Fear of being attacked has been identified as a prevailing source of anxiety among women. Research has also determined that visual openness, light sources, and occupied spaces, create a sense of security.

“Research repeatedly shows that well being is found in walkable human-scaled streets and places which connect individuals to their environment, their city, and especially to other people. These spaces should also strengthen a sense of place among residents, drawing diverse people together and anchoring them with a feeling of connection.”

A human-scale architecture and urbanism may have a similar positive influence on a person’s sense of safety. The pedestrian-friendliness of streets and public places must incorporate not just the street’s pre-defined limits, but also the built environment that surrounds it. In this sense, the thesis scope is broad and diverse, and includes the street, the sidewalk, bike lanes, parks, neighbouring buildings, but also, urban installations such as bus stops and bike racks, to name a few.

Women frequently take on multiple roles simultaneously: parent, lover, worker, student, friend, and caregiver. The process of reconciling the obligations of motherhood and family life with the necessities of life and the desire to be a full participant in the city and in society can bring women to a point of breakage and stress. Studies have shown that commutes cause stress and limit women considerably compared to men: “women feel the psychological impact of commuting four times as strongly as men.” Women are more likely than males to commute daily. They prefer to work near to home due to other commitments. Long transportation times also has a greater psychological impact on them: “Rather women’s greater sensitivity to commuting time seems to be a result of their larger responsibility for day-to-day household tasks, including childcare.” Beyond fulfilling their quotidian obligations, these women must also have moments to relax, recreate, and dream. The gendered expectations in households’ task and domestic demands can also mean that women often find their rest outside of the house itself, where fewer responsibilities are expected of them, and where they tend not to feel as much pressure.
Feminist urban scholar from Toronto, Leslie Kern, discovered that women experience the city differently according on the role they play in that city. Kern labeled some of those experiences “the city of moms,” “the city of friends,” and “the city of one.” While the first titles are self-explanatory, the last one is the most complex and interesting. The city of one refers to the right to be alone in a city and to be free of discrimination, harassment, and undesired interaction. Kern opposes the right to navigate the public sphere alone as a woman with the measures and precautions many must adopt in order to enjoy the public realm and have their personal space respected. Women may seek to adjust their behaviors or their appearance by shielding themselves, displaying qualities of independence, or performing actions or adopting styles to make themselves unnoticeable and anonymous. Kern has interviewed women who have admitted to using earplugs in public settings or public transit in an attempt to appears less “approachable.” The author even goes as far as claiming that being alone as a woman is a luxury. It is distressing to think that Kern not far off the mark…

At its core, this thesis focuses on women’s commutes, and on strategies to improve them experientially and practically. For a city to be well-adapted for women, it must not only provide safety and inclusivity in the public sphere, but it must also offer ways to alleviate the invisible mental charge these women carry. Architecture and urbanism can play important roles in helping these women in their roles of parent, caretaker, worker, student, etc. More specifically, since women are more likely to commute than men per day, at the end of the day, they are likely to be more strained, both physically and mentally. By reducing the number of commutes these women have to do, we can help effectively alleviate some of their stress.

Some pointers on how to improve women’s commutes include;
- Shared spaces for the division/delegation of house chores/tasks
- On-hand services
- Accessible spaces
- Efficient public transportation

A Female urbanism, in the context of this thesis, is focused on commuting ease and stress relieving measures in the built environment. The thesis will more specifically propose a way to facilitate safe, accessible, and democratised routes for the daily practices and to reduce the number of commutes of women in Pointe-Saint-Charles through the implementation of small-scale installations and urban solutions.

Endnotes
9 French expressions that means: To deftly escape a tricky situation before it worsens
11 Expressions: the process of going one step at a time
Vienna is one of the most gender-sensitive cities in the world. As a case study, the city of Vienna has made a concerted effort to privilege a female-oriented approach to design has been made. A study trip to Vienna last January provided me with a very valuable way to study how public spaces and buildings can be more inclusive, and to observe in what ways a female-oriented approach to design contrasts with conventional developments.

There, the municipal government has undertaken many urban projects to address the safety and inclusion of women in primary ways. There have been real efforts in that city to improve pedestrian mobility and public transportation by incorporating a female perspective. Many newer Viennese neighbourhoods such as Seestadt Aspern were conceived around female sensibilities and concerns for cooperative living and sense of safety. To address gender biases and celebrate female actors in Austrian history, the majority of the district’s streets and public areas were given female names. Vienna also demonstrates a very sensitive and delicate approach to public installations and street integration. Finally, Vienna has succeeded in integrating new development with older and finer-grained historical fabrics. For all of these reasons, Vienna provides valuable precedents for my thesis.

Endnotes
21 French expression that means: by continuing from one thing to the next; to continue
Sewing mends the soul: A Design Proposition for Pointe-Saint-Charles

The need for connection; A pattern of connectivity

The project developed in this thesis aims to explore and develop urban strategies that facilitate women’s full participation in a new neighbourhood. This thesis investigates “integration” from two perspectives: socially and as urban form. We ask: “Can new neighbourhood design in the Wellington Basin area integrate women and caregivers successfully?”

The site, which is at the junctions of the highway 10, and the new electric train can welcome a large development that could extend the very lively corridor of the Lachine Canal as a “green street.” The project is intended to be sensitive and empathetic, but it must also have the capacity to structure and cover a large territory. The challenge will be to develop an urban and architectural strategy that makes sense of the site at a territorial scale while nurturing a sense of security and comfort at the scale of the body.

For the development of the Wellington Basin as a medium-low residential area to be viable, it needs to be anchored in the existing surrounding urban fabric. More specifically, the new residential district will need to be connected to the older and established residential district of Pointe-Saint-Charles. Through the creation of a pattern of connectivity, women will be encouraged to participate in a communal journey centered around their needs.
The thesis adopts a language of connection to express a proposed insertion in the urban fabric. The project begins by drawing routes and paths on a map. These join nodes of historical significance to do with women’s contributions and achievements in Montreal’s Southwest, including Pointe-Saint-Charles, Verdun, and Griffintown. Through the exercise of mapping, I’ve outlined the social and economical organisms of female involvement in Pointe-Saint-Charles’ history:

- Pointe-Saint-Charles Community Clinic
- Economic and social recovery of the Southwest - Regroupement communautaire et sociale du Sud-Ouest de Montréal
- Community Legal Services of Pointe Saint-Charles
- Maison de Mère-D’Youville – home for single mothers created by nuns or of the registered nursing school of Montreal
- Madame Prend Congé – Women’s centre
- Share the Warmth – a non-profit organization against poverty, offering youth development services, children with disability tutoring, music programs and cooking workshops.
- First CLSC (local community services center) - Public clinic with social services
- The CourtePointe collective - Centre for vulnerable women and children devoted to documenting the history of community mobilization and anti-poverty work in Pointe Saint Charles.
- Archives populaires de Pointe-Saint-Charles – a public archive of which the dual mission is (1) to preserve and transmit the collective memory of community experiences that have shaped the recent history of the neighbourhood, and (2) support the work of the CourtePointe collective.

Thus, mapping has revealed areas of condensed community engagement throughout Montreal’s Southwest. The result of women’s involvement can be seen in the creation of many co-ops and the first “centre local de services communautaires” (CLSC) in the Pointe-Saint-Charles neighbourhood, as well as many non-profit organisations. These paths of remembrance, like stems, aim to reconcile women’s bodies with the territory by creating interventions that will embody a female urbanism strategy. This means that women’s inclusion in the urban fabric of Montréal will celebrate women’s role in Montreal’s economic development.
The four paths of connectivity branch out from the site and connect other existing communities in the Southwest borough: Atwater, Quartier Concordia, Centertown, and Old Port to Pointe-Saint-Charles. The thesis names these:

- Route of Reminiscence
- Route of Reconciliation
- Route of Abundance
- Route of Wonder

The project’s scope will not be restricted to a specified location. To blur the boundaries, the design places certain elements that facilitate walkability -- like lighting or furniture installations -- on sites located beyond the site, across the city of Montreal. More specifically, a series of interventions would be scattered throughout the four pathways. These will serve as driving threads of connections. Some interventions follow the streets and lead to the Wellington Basin site, while others are tucked into sites within existing neighbourhoods. On a poetic note, the paths aim to sow hope in the form of small-scale interventions to revive the collective memory of the role played by women in the history of Pointe-Saint-Charles and to give visibility to this invisible group. It is with this first approach that the thesis hopes to lay the groundwork for improving the experience of the city for women.

Endnotes
22 Expression: There are substantial benefits to sewing
**Developing the bridge: Stitching the divided city**

*Making visible: Route of Wonder*

The first route, “Route of Wonder,” aims to connect Pointe Saint-Charles’ well-developed neighbourhood with the Wellington Basin. To make this possible, the Route of Wonder bridges over the railway tracks to the residential area on the other site. As a green bridge, this route offers a series of pedestrian pathways and bicycle paths dotted with spaces to dwell, rest, play and share. In fact, the green bridge will be an outdoor attraction by itself. It will connect Pointe-Saint-Charles to the already established ‘green street’ surrounding the Lachine Canal and to the green space of Park Canada surrounding the Wellington Basin.
On an urban scale, this elevated green bridge will be planted with lush vegetation and parks, greening the mineral landscape. It is meant to mend the divided land, occupy the residual space, and give a new use to a space that is now occupied and unusable by the citizens and the community. The design strategy will strive to tread lightly on the site to preserve its inherent sense of openness and its historical value. This proposition is an attempt to revitalize the space without destroying the existing train tracks that are part of Pointe-Saint-Charles’s identity as the cradle of industrialisation.

The idea of a green bridge came from the idea of working with (instead of working against) the already existing bridges that forms the highway and the REM electric train. In this sense, as a statement, the elevated green bridge echoes the elevated REM platform, the Victoria Bridge, and the Highway 10 interchange in the airspace. The routes aim to claim a space for pedestrians in the same proportion as automobiles and trains occupy the land.
Mending the divided city

FEMALE URBANISM IN POINTE-SAINT-CHARLES
Routes of Abundance, of reconciliation and of Reminiscence

Each branch forming the green bridge has its own purpose and characteristics. They are named routes of Wonder, Abundance, Reconciliation and Reminiscence and they are all meant to propose a unique experience from one another to the pedestrians and cyclists. As one paths brings to life outdoor recreational spaces such as a skateboard park and basketball court, another provides spaces for community creativity and expression, and a third branch provides space for shared gardens and communal gardening. The fourth and final branch expland one of the main roads (Centre Street) and will feature stores and shops to promote the community’s local and circular economy.
Mending the divided city
FEMALE URBANISM IN POINTE-SAINT-CHARLES

Communal gardens
Commercial strip
Public washroom
Green houses
Roofs terrasses
Covered bicycle and pedestrian lane made of fabric
Space dedicated to public art and expression made of fabric
Water playground

Extension of the main street Centre St.
Creation of a pedestrian street only
Outdoor market
Promenade with indigenous vegetation
Outdoor local market
Pop-up shop in recycled container
Bicycle path that connects the Lachine Canal to the Wellington Basin
Extend the very lively green street of the Lachine Canal to the Park Ber

Connect to the Pointe-St-Charles Observatory and extend over the train track to create another viewpoint of St Lawrence River and Farine Five Roses
Connect Point-St-Charles residential area to the affordable housings at the crossing of the route of Reminiscence
Provide the perfect ground for stargazing over the river
Lights projection of women’s historic heritage, as part of Montréal en Lumière(tourism).
Space dedicated to public art and expression made of fabric

Connect Poddubiuk Architect’s master plan to the bridge and to Pointe-St-Charles
Natural path with indigenous vegetation for water management
Picnic tables, colorful playground and training ground
Sensorial park, with textile and smelling flowers
Access to a covered basketball ground
Under-bridge skatepark

The need for connection: A pattern of connectivity

Routes

1 Route of Wonder
- Connect to the Pointe-St-Charles Observatory and extend over the train track to create another viewpoint of St Lawrence River and Farine Five Rose
- Connect Point-St-Charles residential area to the affordable housings at the crossing of the route of Reminiscence
- Provide the perfect ground for stargazing over the river
- Lights projection of women’s historic heritage, as part of Montréal en Lumière(tourism).
- Space dedicated to public art and expression made of fabric

2 Route of Abundance
- Communal gardens
- Commercial strip
- Public washroom
- Green houses
- Roofs terrasses
- Covered bicycle and pedestrian lane made of fabric
- Space dedicated to public art and expression made of fabric
- Water playground

3 Route of Reconciliation
- Extension of the main street Centre St.
- Creation of a pedestrian street only
- Outdoor market
- Promenade with indigenous vegetation
- Outdoor local market
- Pop-up shop in recycled container
- Bicycle path that connects the Lachine Canal to the Wellington Basin
- Extend the very lively green street of the Lachine Canal to the Park Ber

4 Route of Reminiscence
- Connect Poddubiuk Architect’s master plan to the bridge and to Pointe-St-Charles
- Natural path with indigenous vegetation for water management
- Picnic tables, colorful playground and training ground
- Sensorial park, with textile and smelling flowers
- Access to a covered basketball ground
- Under-bridge skatepark
Moments along the route – To weave-in through the existing fabric

At a human scale, the thesis seeks to improve the everyday lives of women by proposing delicate interventions in order to minimise the number of daily commutes. The scale of interventions includes spaces of circulation (walk and bike), places to linger or rest, places to shop, dine and socialize. The thesis gives its attention to the intricate details of how these human-scale interventions integrate the cultural and social spheres.

Typologies to facilitate women’s daily work and commutes may include twenty-four hour access to washrooms, public lockers, services to rent a stroller, public showers, children’s playgrounds, car-go bicycles and covered safe spaces, among others. The routes will facilitate women’s commutes and access to amenities and daily activities by providing safe and large pathways, public lighting, and open spaces.

The thesis also considers programs and spaces that are only for women. For example, dedicated outdoor and indoor breast-feeding areas help deconstruct the stigma of breastfeeding. Changing rooms where the lounging table is adapted for the height of women on wheelchair and that offer extra seating, would be welcoming to women who are accompanied by children. Other ideas include public sinks with potable water for those moments when a mother needs to wash their hands or rinse a bottle of milk, or even clean their child’s face. These typologies aim to provide women with supports that they might need along their way, without having to interrupt their itinerary to have access to them. These interventions are placed on the routes that were defined previously.
Experimentation of a language of small-scale interventions as integrated "installation" for a women-oriented city.
Experimentation of a language of small-scale interventions as integrated "installation" for a women-oriented city.

Covered space for local market

Regular beam/post structure

Covered spaces

Modular awning canvas fabric

Seating varying in heights

Kid's playground

Girl's spaces of expression

Sensorial park

Experimentation of a language of small-scale interventions as integrated "installation" for a women-oriented city.
Mending the divided city

FEMALE URBANISM IN POINTE-SAINT-CHARLES

The need for connection: A pattern of connectivity

Experimentation in a language of small-scale interventions as integrated translation for a women-oriented city

Shelter-stair to access the elevated green bridge
Building the feminist city: A multi-tiered task

The feminist city cannot be achieved solely with urban strategies, nor with specific buildings nor with architectural styles: the task must be resolved via interventions at different scales simultaneously. I identified three scales of intervention on which the proposal for a better city for women depends: the fabric of the detail; the architectural scale; and finally, the urban scale. The proposed interventions can be further categorized in terms of three distinct natures: (1) street-life solutions, (2) social solutions, and (3) architectural/built solutions. The first includes all things to do with the street as a habitable and welcoming realm. The second includes symbolic and spatial solutions that empower women. The third includes solutions that require built strategies. The three scales listed above -- detail, architectural, and urban -- inevitably slide between the three natures. The female-centred approach is often a hybrid one, after all.

Street life solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>Spaces of circulation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Lightning (lamp post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Large walkways</td>
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<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Accessible ramps</td>
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<tr>
<td>iv.</td>
<td>Bicycle paths</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>Handrails</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b.</th>
<th>Spaces to rest and linger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Green spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Covered resting areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Benches and tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv.</td>
<td>Adaptable furniture</td>
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<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>Stroller areas</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>c.</th>
<th>Spaces of activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Playgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Places for girls in parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Outdoor Barbecues (Park)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv.</td>
<td>Water Playgrounds (kinderfreibad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>Sports grounds</td>
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</tbody>
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Social solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>Visibility for women</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Equal female representation in the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Naming of areas with feminine names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Accommodation of women’s needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv.</td>
<td>Create markers honoring specific women</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>b.</th>
<th>Spaces of expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Represent arts and savoir-faire made by women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Create a playground for girls to express themselves</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>c.</th>
<th>Integration in the existing community</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Cohesiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Sensible framework</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Aesthetics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Values and meaning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Proportion in relation to existing fabric</td>
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<th>d.</th>
<th>Historical recognition of women</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Recognize their contributions in economic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Visual representations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Informative signage</td>
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<th>e.</th>
<th>Countering ignorance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Mixed-used spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Sharing of cultures and traditions practices</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bring people to look at things differently</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bring people to take apart their assumptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Raise awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Create opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The need for connection: A pattern of connectivity
The thesis addresses the above list of three scales and three natures through a language of stems, routes, and small-scale interventions that aim to revitalize the streets and buildings along Central Street, Wellington Street and Bridge Street. Wellington Street, for example, will be improved with a large sidewalk, a promenade and lighting while retaining the present vegetation. The containers that are currently on the vacant site along Wellington Street will be relocated and converted into a summer installation for markets and pop-up stores, similar to those found in Montreal’s Old Port. The objective is to allow women who live on the outskirts to participate in day-to-day activities alongside the established community of Pointe-Saint-Charles.

The thesis envisions a future for spaces with potential but have yet to be made walkable. The places subject to enhancement are identified on image 24. Along the previously traced routes of connectivity that celebrate women’s heritage in Montreal, I’ve identified moments where street corners are difficult to cross, underpasses are unlit, streets are not walkable-friendly, desolate spaces, inefficient “accessible” urban spaces, empty land, and unkempt park. Furthermore, I’ve identified the necessity for common outdoor areas and places of expression for the neighborhood’s strong-willed community. Sports grounds, communal gardens, outdoor water playgrounds, and a communal centre could all be simply integrated into the existing fabric or built on the green bridge.
- Lights projection of women’s historic heritage, as part of Montréal en Lumière
- Space dedicated to public art and expression made of fabric
- Covered bicycle and pedestrian lane made of fabric
- Combined bicycle rack, bench and planters
- Bike reparation station
- Adaptable furniture
- Stargazing viewpoint
- Green parks
- Bicycle-only path
- Public washrooms
- Public lockers
- Public showers
- Outdoor breast-feeding areas
- Public sinks with potable water
- Adult changing table and wheelchair accessible
- Ramp
- Wind-proof stairs
- Playgrounds
- Sports ground
- Covered resting areas
- Stroller areas
- Services to rent a stroller
- Cargo bicycles
- Public lockers
- Water fountain
- Extends the street
- Revitalizes the street
- Covered bicycle and pedestrian lane made of fabric
- Combined bicycle rack, bench and planters
- Bike reparation station
- Adaptable furniture
- Stargazing viewpoint
- Green parks
- Bicycle-only path
- Public washrooms
- Public lockers
- Public showers
- Outdoor breast-feeding areas
- Public sinks with potable water
- Adult changing table and wheelchair accessible
- Ramp
- Wind-proof stairs
- Playgrounds
- Sports ground
- Covered resting areas
- Stroller areas
- Services to rent a stroller
- Cargo bicycles
- Public lockers
- Water fountain
Mending the divided city

FEMALE URBANISM IN POINTE-SAINT-CHARLES

urban scale

fabric of details

the architectural scale

WELLINGTON BASIN

Triptych
Imagining the women-oriented city

Methods of visualisation

By focusing on problematic areas in Pointe-Saint-Charles, the project employs a speculative design approach to demonstrate the possibility of an alternative to mainstream urban planning: a woman-oriented city. The collage technique was used to portray the new suggestions for enhanced spaces around Pointe-Saint-Charles.

Using eye-level images acquired from the site during site studies, this method allows for the integration of novel concepts into the existing surroundings. Collage allows you to combine images of physical models, textures such as fabric textures, and built architectural elements. The goal is to create an atmosphere by superimposing an assortment of pictures to depict life on the street. Instead of a constrained scope of action, the collage allows for a speculative and inspirational portrayal.
As a result, the collage technique is used to depict a light and delicate architecture while simultaneously reintegrating textures from the surrounding environment. These comprise materials from the industrial architecture such as red brick, stones, concrete, and steel. Different scales of architectural elements can be easily illustrated in the same photo by collaging and superimposing. Since the picture is speculative, the point of view can be "tricked" to add more elements. For example, it’s possible to scale down an object that is, under normal circumstances, "larger than the frame of the picture" into the perspective collage.
ANCHORING TO NEIGHBOURHOOD

A stitch in time saves nine – The first step to feminist urbanism

Body territory is a concept created by Indigenous women to address the battle for land and women’s rights. It is a notion that advocates for women’s right to participate in local and urban planning decision-making and policies that will have a long-term influence on their lives and relationships with the built environment. This demand for community recognition is in reaction to the lack of acknowledgment for gender equality and the invisibility that women have faced through urbanisation and architecture.

The thesis draws some of its ideas for reclaiming the land from the concept of body territory without claiming ownership of the topic over Indigenous women. The thesis advocates for women’s empowerment through reclaiming the land and offering space and visibility to people on the margins of society. Central here are the connection between the female body and architecture, architectural proportions, and materiality. For the last topic, the textile arts offer a medium to address women’s work and new material surfaces at the same time.

The arts and means of representations in Pointe-Saint Charles

As the cradle of industrialisation, Pointe-Saint-Charles has always celebrated the arts and crafts of Québécois through representation and displays. There is a long tradition in this community of promoting the crafts (including metal work, glass work, woodwork, and textiles) and of developing craftsmanship, manual skills, and collaborative learning opportunities.

The small architectures proposed in this thesis explore the utilisation of textiles and fabrics as a way of expressing women’s presence and inclusion in the urban fabric. Soft fibre materials both celebrate the textile factories that once operated along the Canal Lachine, and recall the longstanding cultural traditions of sewing and weaving in Québécois households of past generations.
Textiles as an element of identity - Female

Weaving, stitching, patching, and mending are all vital components of Quebec culture and intangible heritage. Quebec has a rich and thriving textile and quilting heritage that stems from the maternal practise of Québécois households. Quilts have long been a component of the wedding tradition. In Québécois households in the 1960s, it was traditional for women to bring a set of twelve quilts to the newlyweds’ new residence as a sign of prosperity and goodwill. The Filles du Roi’s trousseau, which they brought from France to Nouvelle-France with the intent to get married in the 17th century, may have been the origin of the tradition.

The bridal trousseau was also intended to serve as the cornerstone for establishing a house and family in a new environment. Months or even years before the wedding, young women would prepare their trousseau. To demonstrate a person’s capacity to take care of a household, it was traditional for the elements to be made by hand. The reality was that several French Québécois families in the 1960s couldn’t afford to buy a trousseau for their young daughters.

Because of the inexpensive nature, many people would knit and sew their own set. These pieces of fabrics would be with the young women for the duration of their lives, beginning the moment they left their parents’ home, continuing through the birth of numerous children, and were eventually passed down to their family. Therefore, as a result today, a significant sense of attachment and sentimental significance are given to these creations, and they are frequently regarded as family heirlooms.

This narrative of migration and custom is like many other stories of communities who have emigrated to Montreal. When it comes to culture, it’s critical to understand Montréal as a multi-ethnic and thus multi-cultural metropolis. Indeed, Indigenous communities, African communities, Arabic communities, and Chinese communities, all of which play a significant role in Montréal’s multicultural milieu, have beliefs about colour schemes, materials, and textile arts and crafts. Textile arts can serve as a common ground for women of many backgrounds and ethnicities to express their cultures. Inclusion of diversity has already been expressed through public art throughout Montréal; examples include colourful suspended bubbles in the Gay Village, a mural of a migrant woman holding fabrics of different cultures in Parc Extension but also through projections, light installations, flags, sculptures, and ephemeral installations, to name a few... Fabric art has yet to be truly explored, opening up the possibility of including a new style of public art in Montreal’s very lively streets.
Textile as an architectural tool

The usage of fabric in this thesis will be a means of empowerment for women who live on the margins to reclaim the city. The thesis draws a connection to the “trousseau”, which serves as the foundation for establishing a home and family and will employ textile and fabric art to integrate Montreal’s less visible communities and ultimately evoke the same warm welcoming feeling.
This thesis’s identity is formed using fabric and bright colours such as pink and orange, which aim to showcase women’s heritage and customs. The usage of fabric is intended to be a statement, as well as a physical response to the expression to the more vulnerable populations, like women, who struggle to have their voices heard. The vivid colors will highlight the reality of women’s experiences and difficulties.
Textiles are also very calming to the body: they are comforting and shape to the body, stimulating the sense of touch. Infants, for example, are lulled by blankets. Similarly, cloth may be utilised to soften the building by covering the hard surfaces, corners, and rather sharp edges. The late artist Christo, for example, draped the whole Arc de Triomphe in Paris in cloth. The cloth brought a new layer to the famous stone arch and because the wind and light operate differently upon it, new and unique interpretations were possible. In a similar mode, by softening the architecture, the propositions in this thesis will seek to open the city to new interpretations, and to make public places more welcoming to less visible groups and women who live on the fringes of society.
Additionally, textiles as art and textiles as architectural components are scalable materials. That is, a cloth pattern can be replicated and adjusted to fit the scale of the human body as well as be used for architectural element. For example, textile can be utilised for covered outdoor spaces such as pavilions, pergolas, sunshades, and roofs; they may also be used as protective barriers in guardrails, walls, and building components.
Fabrics, as a two-dimensional element, can thus be used in a variety of sizes, folded, cut, trimmed, stretched, held, glued, suspended, punctured, and stitched. This versatile material can be reinforced with steel cable, fibreglass, and constructed of natural or synthetic fibres, making it ideal for public places. This enables the thesis to apply its concepts in the same way regardless of the size of the intervention. Hence, the selection of fabric and textile arts is not restricted to the size of its primary usage, allowing smaller artists and individuals to participate in public art expression.
Conclusion: Tying up loose ends

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a framework for designing an adaptable city for women as members of the marginalised community. Utilizing a speculative design approach, the thesis illustrates how to incorporate techniques on three levels of intervention - human-scaled, urban, and architectural - into an existing urban fabric. Furthermore, the creation of routes seeks to reclaim the city of Pointe-Saint-Charles by adapting public space to the daily lives and commutes of women in vulnerable positions. By creating micro-interventions at the scale of the body, the project aims to reconcile women bodies with the territory by being inclusive, accessible, safe and engaged in the community.

Additionally, the thesis incorporates textiles as a mean to make women visible and to ground the project in the fabric of Pointe-Saint-Charles. Thus, the thesis is intended to highlight the need for female-oriented spaces while honouring the contributions of women in the public and historical sphere of Montréal.

Expression: If a problem is fixed quickly, it may save a lot of time and work in the future


Idem

See mural “Cent motifs, un paysage”.2010 - Annie Hamel


Endnotes

23 Expression: If a problem is fixed quickly, it may save a lot of time and work in the future
25 Idem
26 See mural “Cent motifs, un paysage”.2010 - Annie Hamel
28 Expression : To conclude
Bibliography


Figures:


