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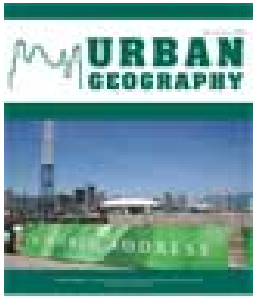


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Before displacement: studentification, campus-led gentrification and rental market transformation in a multiethnic neighborhood (Parc-Extension, Montréal)

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ABSTRACT

This article explores a case of campus-led neighborhood change that weaves together an analysis of gentrification, studentification and displacement. Contributing to the understanding of displacement pressure, this empirical study employs a temporal perspective and an innovative mixed method that captures the shifting state of the rental market and the perceptions of neighborhood change as understood by immigrant and low-income residents of Parc-Extension. We analyze how studentification is promoted in a campus-led gentrification case study, showing how both gentrification and studentification participate in the rise of evictions and displacement pressures for long term residents. By documenting the residential experience in rental housing through semi-structured interviews and data mining of rental listings on a popular platform in Canada (Kijiji), we propose an empirical perspective on displacement pressure and contribute to the development of this concept in gentrification and studentification studies. The article begins by reviewing the literature on gentrification-induced displacement, displacement pressure, state-led gentrification and studentification. This is followed by contextualizing our Montréal case study. We then outline our mixed methodologies and explain our data collection by web-scraping and fieldwork modalities. Finally, we discuss our results showing how the mechanism of displacement pressure can be linked with studentification and new-build, campus-led gentrification.

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Introduction

It's late September 2019. We are surrounded by luxury condominiums under construction and what generally feels like trendy urban design. Today is the inauguration of Université de Montréal's new science campus, the MIL, where the four of us will work as members of the geography department. "Rarely do we have the chance to inaugurate a brand new neighborhood [...] we can now celebrate one of the largest transformation projects in Montréal," claims Valérie Plante, the current mayor of Montréal. During the

two days of festivities that follow, residents from Parc-Extension and community organizers mobilize to protest the opening of the campus, which they fear will put disproportionate pressure on the fragile community and its tight rental market in the midst of a housing crisis. Indeed, while Montréal was until recently described as an exception inside the Canadian context, with affordable housing, a large share of renters (70%) and Québec's housing legislation that provides relatively good protection for tenants compared to other Canadian provinces, the city is experiencing an unprecedented phenomenon of property price catch-up, submitting the rental market to predation by investors and speculators (Gaudreau et al., 2020).

The MIL project, led by the city of Montréal through a partnership with the Université de Montréal (UdeM) supports the re-urbanization of a brownfield. The site, whose name stands for “Montréal Innovative Lab” and “Middle of the Island,” is located in Outremont, one of the wealthiest boroughs in Montréal, and is separated by a railroad from Parc-Extension (Figure 1), one of the poorest and more ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Canada. Combined with the 1300 units of new condominiums and green spaces under construction around the campus, the project has already begun to transform the adjacent immigrant neighborhood of Parc-Extension into a coveted area, setting the stage for the in-migration of new, predominantly white residents, especially students and creative workers employed in the new cluster of artificial intelligence (AI) companies nearby (PEAEMP, 2020; Sprague & Rantisi, 2019).

The MIL project thus represents a major redevelopment orientation for the city, promoting sustainable urbanism and the knowledge economy (PDUES, 2013). Nevertheless,

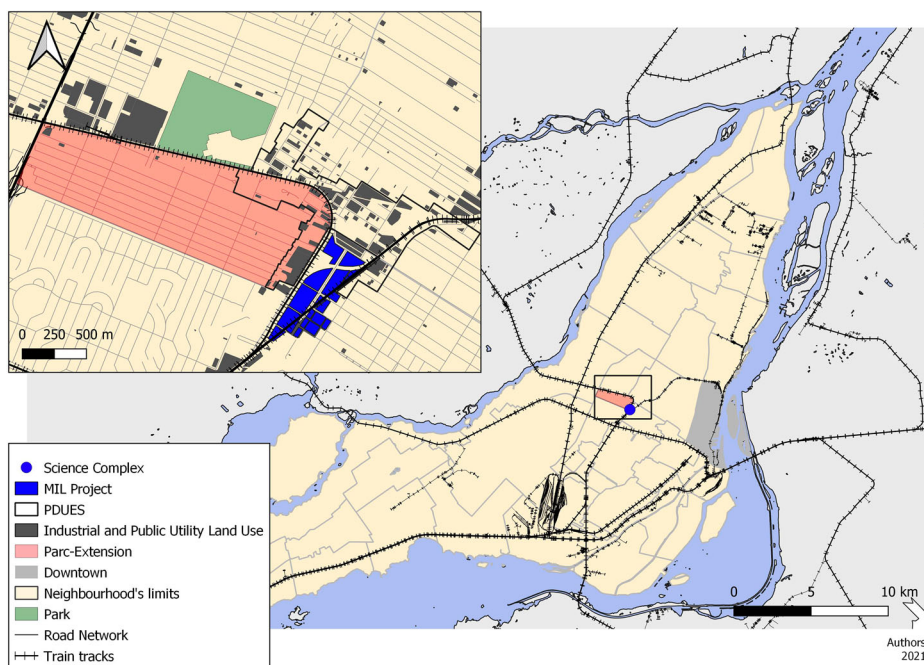


Figure 1. The “Middle of the Island” urban campus project. Source: Authors, produced by Yannick Baumann.

it is considered to be the cause of the acceleration of gentrification in Parc-Extension, using a land upzoning strategy and promoting centrality and infrastructure provisions that increase the rent gap (López-Morales et al., 2019). Echoing Gray's arguments about Glasgow, the state interventions and the construction of the MIL campus near Parc-Extension “de-risk development and create the conditions for potentially profitable private investment” (Gray, 2022, p. 75). For the housing stock in the immigrant neighborhood of Parc-Extension, the rapid transformation of the area also means that “it becomes rational and logical to ‘milk’ the property, extracting rent from the tenants yet spending the absolute minimum to maintain the structure” (Slater, 2017, p. 119). In addition to this economical perspective on gentrification, many fear that the symbolic and social transformation of the landscape caused by the re-location of the university science campus, the arrival of new students, and subsequent studentification will drive up the price of rent, and lead to the displacement of established low income immigrant families replacing them with young single persons (Smith, 2004).

Defined by Marcuse as “the dispossession suffered by poor and working-class families during the transformation of the neighborhoods where they live” (1985, p. 207), the notion of displacement pressure is central to our analysis, since it aims to show how the opening of the MIL campus impacted Parc-Extension residents and increased their feelings “of being supplanted even while remaining in place” (Atkinson, 2015, p. 376). In this article, we attempt to respond empirically to the request formulated by several recent studies (Easton et al., 2020; Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020) to better understand holistically the implications and temporalities of displacement. We analyze the changing state of the rental market in Parc-Extension, triggered by this state-led, large-scale university expansion project, in order to analyze how displacement pressure is generated. Using innovative mixed methods on a case of state/campus-led gentrification stimulating studentification, we contribute to better define and measure displacement pressure. For this, we address a specific time window of the gentrification process – *before displacement* – which is less studied in the literature (Zhang & He, 2018) since the “relationship between a moment of displacement and the moment of upgrading or intervention in the built environment is not always clear or unidirectional, which in turn makes it difficult to denounce public authorities and galvanize resistance” (González, 2016, p. 1248).

On gentrification-induced displacement and studentification: intertwined pressures on the rental market

As remarked by Newman and Wyly (2006), the notion of displacement is at the forefront of the debate on gentrification and, more generally, on urban transformation since the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, “residential displacement is one of the primary dangers cited by those concerned about the exclusionary effects of market- as well as state-driven gentrification. Residents may be displaced as a result of housing demolition, ownership conversion of rental units, increased housing costs (rent, taxes), landlord harassment and evictions” (2006, p. 27). However more recent studies (Easton et al., 2020; Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020; Hyra, 2015) call for diversifying and actualizing the way scholars theorize displacements in order to understand it more globally beyond the out-migration trend, insisting on the multiple facets through which gentrification alters the way people dwell and belong to a place.

Before displacement: measures and definitions of a crucial concept

Methodologically, numerous studies in the Global North have attempted to quantify displacement through census-based analysis (Atkinson et al., 2011; Van Criekingen, 2008; Wyly et al., 2010) or longitudinal housing survey (Freeman, 2006; Newman & Wyly, 2006). Analyzing several variables such as change in income, race/ethnicity or mode of tenure (Zuk et al., 2018), these studies have tried to model housing mobilities or identify neighborhood changes. But as Easton et al. (2020) point out, the choice of variables and the different methods used to identify gentrified or gentrifying neighborhoods are just as debatable as the ways studies measure displacement. Studies also tend to equate displacement with direct or physical displacement (Davidson & Lees, 2010; Easton et al., 2020; Newman & Wyly, 2006; Slater, 2009). The notion has therefore remained under-theorized for several years, contributing to the eviction of critical perspectives (Slater, 2006), and benefiting academics' conclusions that downplay the violent process of displacement and those that treat it as an organic replacement and necessary phenomenon (Freeman, 2006). As noted by Easton et al. (2020): "In many ways, this has allowed governments, policy-makers and planners to pursue strategies of gentrification unchallenged by statistical evidence" (p. 287). By using web-scraping and mixed methods, we want to explore new ways of producing data on displacement as well as give evidence of displacement pressure occurring in Parc-Extension, Montréal.

Building upon the definition Grier and Grier (1980) gave of direct displacement – water cuts and gas cuts leading to *physical displacement* or rent increases leading to *economic displacement* – Marcuse (1985) is the first to expand the notion by theorizing the concepts of exclusionary displacement and displacement pressure. On the one hand, *exclusionary displacement* occurs when households cannot access a dwelling because it has been gentrified through changes in conditions or prices (2016, p. 206). On the other hand, *displacement pressure* refers to the many forms of dispossession suffered by poor and working-class families during the transformation of their neighborhood – "beyond those currently displaced" (1985, p. 207). Following this influential work, numerous scholars have developed a large literature on gentrification-induced displacement, particularly to challenge the idea of social mixing leading to a just city (Addie & Fraser, 2019; Rose et al., 2013; Walks & August, 2008) and to give evidence of the violence of displacement caused by gentrification and neoliberal urban policies (Kern, 2016; Slater, 2009). Several studies have thus focused not only on residents' out-migration, but also on the social, cultural, political and symbolic reconfiguration of gentrifying neighborhoods in order to both complexify the discussion on displacement and to produce case studies about the ways communities and residents experience displacement pressure (Hyra, 2015). For instance, Zukin and Braslow (2011) showed how cultural displacement can occur for long-term residents of new creative districts in New York when new residents' culture and norms become predominant in the neighborhood, without anyone being pushed out of their home physically. Davidson (2008) brings the notion of "neighborhood resource displacement" to show that the displacement pressure goes beyond changes of neighborhood social balance, but also concerns changes of the local shops and services and the disappearance of meeting places that result in the "out-of-placeness" of existing residents (p. 2392). Indirect displacement is also compared to a process of un-homing (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020; Westin, 2021). Atkinson shows how

evicted tenants in Melbourne and Sydney became *dis-located* or *dis-placed* by the physical and social changes in neighborhoods *while still residing in them*. The proposed notions of un-homing and symbolic displacement underline that displacement can already occurred for low-income tenants *prior to moving out of the neighborhood* as “the sense of their general precariousness was fueled not only by gentrification per se, but also by a combination of tenurial insecurity and the kinds of changes in the physical and social environment around them which revealed a new language and structure of place that no longer included them or their perceived reference groups” (Atkinson, 2015, p. 382).

Therefore, our focus on “before displacement” seeks to look at both rent-value and experiences of un-homing in Parc-Extension to show how the conversion of a brownfield into a new university district creates both indirect displacement (Davidson & Lees, 2005), and studentification that foreshadows gentrification. Following Elliott-Cooper et al. (2020), we agree that research about gentrification-induced displacement needs to go beyond Marcuse’s contributions.

New build, state-led: relocating centrality – dis-locating neighborhood

Several gentrification studies after Marcuse have tended to focus on indirect displacement produced by urban revitalization policies, urban renewal discourses and the role of the state (Hackworth & Smith, 2001). Drawing on third-wave gentrification literature, and attempting to define indirect displacement more precisely by elaborating a typology, Davidson is one of the first scholars to expand the notions of indirect and exclusionary displacement, and to show how a new-build project like the London River redevelopment of an old industrial space does not directly displace inhabitants, but “it is the adjacent attraction generated by a variety of development that creates displacement” (2008, p. 2390). In turn, many studies show that revitalization policies often boil down to state-supported, market-oriented urban strategies that reinvest in working-class neighborhoods, re-creating centrality in formerly abandoned industrial districts and displacing the low-income and racialized residents (Davidson & Lees, 2010; Lees, 2008; Rose et al., 2013). As such, both large-scale projects and investment in public sector infrastructure can play an important role in closing the rent-gap or securing private investment, and underline how state policy interacts with the market and its principal actors (Gray, 2022; López-Morales et al., 2019; Padeiro et al., 2019).

Although the wave chronology of gentrification might not be altogether applicable to the Global East and South (Lees et al., 2016; Wyly, 2019), several studies showed how state intervention leads to displacement in these contexts and strengthens the reflections on the notion of indirect displacement and state-led new-build gentrification (He, 2007; López-Morales et al., 2019; Lukens, 2020). In their Shenzhen case study, Liu et al. (2017) confirm the indirect displacement at stake in neighborhoods bordering redevelopment projects led by the state, and described the price-shadowing effect (i.e. value assigned differing from market price) faced by some sectors located near those projects. New large-scale projects or revitalization plans have also been studied with regard to the pressure they exert on the inhabitants of the districts concerned. For instance, in Istanbul, Sakizlioğlu (2014) show how the municipality facilitated the eviction of most residents in Tarlabaşı not only by targeting the neighborhood for a large urban renewal project,

but also because it was able to control this specific temporality by “withholding information, changing plans and delaying or pushing plans” (p. 218). This example highlights how the violent process of un-homing driven by the local state scared and pushed out residents before any demolition took place.

Campus-led gentrification

Urban campuses are a specific case of infrastructural investment, as universities have become public or private partners of municipalities in the economic transition toward knowledge and creative economies, and have embraced the discourses of urban innovation (Addie et al., 2015). As such, they have become key players in revitalization strategies (Ehlenz, 2019). The construction of new university campuses, especially in the Canadian and Québec contexts where the financing of higher education institutions is largely dependent on state contributions, can therefore be analyzed in the context of state-led and new-build gentrification. Lopez-Morales and collaborators (2019) highlight four principles of state-led gentrification (SLG) which can be applied to our case study in order to show how the implantation of the MIL campus contributes to it: “(1) policy instruments used by state apparatuses to encourage gentrification in places that appeared unattractive to profit-seeking capital, (2) discursive strategies used to legitimize SLG processes, (3) possible outcomes such as direct and exclusionary displacement, (4) locally emerging forms of contestation and protest” (p. 2).

As Addie et al. (2015) noticed, the relocation and expansion of new-build urban campuses within Canadian cities offered municipalities laudable reasons – education and knowledge – “to increase land values and local tax bases while boosting surrounding retailing” (2015, p. 42). As they put it: “these spatial strategies amount to no less than deliberate physical, social and symbolic place-making in a rapidly changing metropolitan environment. Indeed, they are targeted at both gentrifying inner city ‘bohemian’ neighborhoods, and new immigrant ethnoburbs and technoburbs in the outer periphery of the urban region” (2015, p. 42). Some examples of downtown university-led gentrification in Montréal, Vancouver or Kitchener are cited by Moos et al. (2019), but they also mention that other outcomes of university expansion and new campus development should be analyzed through studentification and youthification, where “studentification refers to the influx of post-secondary students to a neighborhood, often related to increased enrolment at a nearby institution, and all its attendant effects, including social, cultural, physical and economic changes to the area” (p. 1078). Even if this quantitative study about studentification, youthification and gentrification shows how these phenomena overlap, making the distinction between students and young gentrifiers almost redundant in some cases, the next section will focus on how studentification has to be understood as an additional form of displacement pressure concomitant with the state/campus-led gentrification induced displacement.

Studentification and displacement

Studentification describes the process and consequences of students migrating into established residential neighborhoods. Despite the variegated forms of studentification, ranging from the appearance of condos or Purpose-Built Student Accommodation

(PBSA) in or outside of campuses (Revington, 2021) to processes exclusively affecting the private rental market with the increase in shared accommodation where students compete with other social groups for housing (Miessner, 2021), the phenomenon seems largely connected to forms of indirect displacement provoked by rapid urban transformations.

The literature on studentification sheds a specific light on the displacement pressures felt by nearby residents in our case study. Nakazawa (2017) defines studentification as “the social, cultural, economic, and physical transformations of urban spaces resulting from increases in and concentrations of student populations” (p. 1). Building on this definition, Gu and Smith (2020) highlight three global features of studentification across a range of national contexts: (1) student populations will seek accommodation within relative walking/cycling or short-commuting distance of their place of study and campus; (2) student populations tend to reside in off-campus shared accommodation, rented from private landlords; (3) studentification accelerates urban changes which are “exacerbated by the displacement of settled populations due to changing economic conditions in the local land and housing market, and feelings of dispossession and loss linked to neighborhood change” (p. 207).

Studentification *per se* is not the same as gentrification, but what intertwines those two processes is how they swiftly refashion the area, and both result in inflation of rents, displacement of former residents, rise of new culture and lifestyle as well as the transformation of the environment. Revington’s recent study on Waterloo (2021) demonstrates how studentification is connected to the development of “generationed” housing sub-markets, and notes that: “as students concentrate within a neighborhood, households with children, older adults, and other residents often experience displacement pressures” (p. 2).

Since the beginning of the 2000s, these common features have favored some analysis of the phenomena of studentification and youthification within the gentrification discussion (Smith, 2004, p. 2008; Revington, 2021). Students have even been described as “apprentice” gentrifiers in a comparative study that suggested that “the expansion of higher education is a key component for the (re)production of a pool of gentrifiers within the third wave of gentrification” (Smith & Holt, 2007, p. 157). In the context of Goettingen, a medium-sized German city with a housing market similar to that of Montréal, Miessner (2021) shows how the strategies of small-scale landlords were of special interest for understanding studentification and subsequent displacement. While we believe that studentification affecting immigrant and racialized neighborhoods shares common characteristics with gentrification including forms of colonialism and racism intrinsic to urban capitalism (Addie & Fraser, 2019; Lees, 2016), it seems important not to reduce students to yuppies or to an homogeneous, white, privileged group. However in a city with four universities like Montréal where there are few PBSA, students are targeted by landlords as they can pay higher rent than migrant and vulnerable families by splitting the rent between roommates or by accepting shorter contracts, increasing discrimination and eviction of racialized tenants.

New Urban campus next to a disadvantaged and racialized neighborhood

Although the first signs of gentrification in Parc-Extension appeared prior to the opening of the MIL campus, the process remained a sporadic trend for more than a decade. Until

recently, gentrification was still in the early stage where the reinvestment cycle had not yet begun (Smith, 1996). Today, Parc-Extension has become representative of the spreading of gentrification from Montréal's central districts to pericentral neighborhoods since the 2000s (Twigge-Molecey, 2014).

Parc-Ex, a stigmatized immigrant neighborhood being rediscovered

Formerly an inner suburb of Montréal's northern central area and characterized by a majority of low-income immigrant workers (Leloup et al., 2016), Parc-Extension has welcomed many newcomers since the 1950s, making it one of the most multi-ethnic areas on the island of Montréal and in Canada. In 2016, according to the census, immigrants make up 61% of the neighborhood's population, while 56.5% of households report to be part of a visible minority.

After a long period of downgrading and marginalization in the 1980–1990s due to the degradation of the housing stock and the influx of newcomers, public stakeholders and real estate developers have recently begun reinvesting in the neighborhood. Coupled with its central location (two metro stations and multiple bus lines), housing market prices have become an argument of choice for realtors, advertising the potential profit of investments (rent-gap) in this devalued area surrounded by gentrified districts. Since the 2010s, Parc-Extension seems on the edge of a socio-economic transition from a neighborhood left behind to a new hotspot for developers.

The average rent price in the neighborhood is actually difficult to ascertain as the official data published each year by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) does not illustrate the rapid inflation of the rental market. Indeed, the low price of rental housing often seems to be underestimated (RCLAQ, 2020). Yet, the impact of rental price inflation is particularly acute in this neighborhood of racialized poor tenants, where the median annual income per household is far below that of surrounding neighborhoods and more than 43% of households spend 30% or more of their income on rent. It is also exacerbated by low vacancy rates, especially in large multi-unit properties, and few social and community options for low-income households available in the neighborhood (only 5.2% of the housing stock is subsidized according to CMHC, 2019).

These new dynamics of reinvestment have already affected the social stratification of the neighborhood. For instance, according to census data, between 2006 (when the site was purchased by the University) and 2016 (when the construction of the campus started), the rate of people holding a Bachelor's degree or higher in the neighborhood rose from 15% to 21% (compared to 31.3% in the city of Montréal in 2016); the percentage of renters in Parc-Extension decreased from 82% to 74% (compared to 63% in the city of Montréal) as new buyers were attracted to the neighborhood and often merged duplexes; and the percentage of people born outside of Canada in the neighborhood declined from 62% to 51% (compared to 38% of Montréal's population in 2016). Additionally, during the same period, the percentage of workers in the creative class¹ rose from 6.8% to 20.3% in census blocks close to the campus area and from 8.8% to 15.8% in the whole neighborhood.

In this context, the MIL project, which represents a major urban development, has sped up the dynamics of gentrification.

The Middle of the Island project: placemaking in partnership between the university and the state

The MIL campus's imposing glass building stands out like a monolith in the landscape of Parc Extension's low-quality brick duplexes and triplexes.

Paradigmatic of Montréal's post-industrial strategy to move toward a creative and knowledge economy, the MIL project is managed by UdeM as a developer, with grants from the city, the provincial and the federal governments which support the project costs. The municipality contributed 174.2 M\$ (CAD) for roads, parks and water and electricity networks, while 120 M\$ came from provincial and federal sources for soil decontamination. The project started in 2006 when the university acquired the former rail yard from the Canadian Pacific company for 18M\$. At the city level, the construction of this 350 M\$ science campus and the upzoning of the surrounding areas were part of a wider urban regeneration plan (already outlined in Montréal's, 2004 Master Plan) in which the requalification of the industrial corridor was described as a pan-Montréal planning project: "it has high reuse and improvement potential, especially in light of its central location and the ready availability of land and buildings. An eloquent example is the [CP] railyard, which offers excellent potential for reuse as residential space" (City of Montréal, 2004, p. 219).

Yet, as early as 2007, community organizations from Parc-Extension were already concerned about the effects of the MIL campus on the neighborhood. A group composed of approximately twenty organizations working together on planning and community development in the neighborhood warned about the impacts of such a development: "the project will add value to the metropolitan area and the area surrounding the yard site, but we must consider the opportunities and potential threats that a project of this size poses to an urban neighborhood like ours." (RAMPE, 2007, p. 2). Indeed, as a developer, UdeM didn't take into account the impacts of the project on rent increases in Parc-Extension, and project managers refused to engage with local communities to find a mitigation strategy (PEAEMP, 2020). As told by a university spokesperson for the MIL project during an interview conducted in 2019, while the first project presented by the university in 2006 promised 1,058 beds in PBSA for the 2,000 students expected on the new campus, the plan was modified because "student housing was judged not profitable."

Mixed methods: examination of "displacement pressure"

The originality of our mixed methods lies in the chronology of its development. Contrary to many studies, our qualitative approach precedes and informs our data collection and spatial analysis, and interviews were not only used to confirm or refute the results obtained from the quantitative data we collected. Indeed, our research project started with two qualitative data collection initiatives conducted in Parc-Extension between 2016 and 2019. One of these focused on the impacts of the MIL campus on the surrounding neighborhoods and was achieved by interviewing 12 local actors such as urbanists, university representatives, architects, activists and a local mayor (Jolivet, 2019), while the other one focused on the housing trajectories and strategies of 27 migrant tenant families and their perceptions of the ongoing transformations of the rental market in the neighborhood (Reiser, 2021). While local actors often mentioned the construction of the MIL campus as

an element of major transformation that will accelerate the gentrification of Parc-Extension, few migrant residents were actually aware of the arrival and potential impact of the campus when data collection began two years before the campus opening. However, when the campus opened in late 2019, the housing sector in Parc-Extension was undergoing radical changes: renovations (renovation – evictions) and unjustified rent increases became more and more frequent in this formerly disinvested and stigmatized neighborhood (PEAEMP, 2020), and many residents began to fear possible displacement. We therefore attempted to document the changes that interviews with community-based tenants' rights organizations, local stakeholders or real-estate agents highlighted by examining the evolution of the rental market in this neighborhood.

In order to evaluate the pressure that the new MIL campus district is putting on local residents, we opted for an approach based on a spatio-temporal analysis of a dataset we collected on Montréal's most popular classified rent listings website (Kijiji) between 2019 and 2021. We developed a web scraper specifically for this project, monitored the "apartment for rent in Montréal" section of Kijiji's platform and recorded the date the listing was posted, its title, its description, its price (in CAD per month) as a proxy of rental market prices, and its location. Between April 2019 and December 2021, we gathered 230,000 individual listings located on the entire island of Montréal. This analysis of the Kijiji database was prompted by the increasing digitization of the housing market and the need for critical housing studies scholars to analyze it (Arribas-Bel, 2014; Boeing, 2019).

A series of post-processes was then applied to our database in order to verify its validity as well as to infer extra information necessary to our analyses. Post-processes included the detection of (1) duplicates and reposts, (2) the number of rooms, a commonly accepted proxy for the size of apartments, (3) the address and (4) mentions of specific lexical fields of interest within the descriptions of the listing. The latter made use of a word similarity algorithm to find variations of words we identified as belonging to one lexical category of interest, with terms related to the lexical field of "university" (including "Université de Montréal," "university," "campus" and "student"). Every listing was then given a score between 0 and 1 reflecting how well their descriptions matched terms within this lexical field. Scores close to 0 meant that there was almost certainly no mention of the university, while scores closer to 1 indicated that there was almost certainly a mention of it. After manually checking random ads against the automated scores, we decided on a threshold of 0.85 above which we were confident an ad fell into this lexical field.

Finally, it must be stated that the number of ads published in Parc-Extension remains much lower than in the central districts. As Boeing (2019) observed, information on online rental platforms tends to underrepresent certain communities. Combined with the fact that a significant part of Parc-Extension's rental housing market still exists offline, this should serve as a cautionary reminder of some pitfalls of this study as well as of most studies dealing with big data and the housing market.

Rental market and displacement pressure: a socio-spatial analysis

Daily life under displacement pressure

While most studies draw attention to the experiences of displaced households (Atkinson, 2015; Desmond et al., 2015), few studies interviewed tenants or local actors before or

during the reinvestment of their neighborhood, as temporality has generally been given little emphasis in gentrification studies (Kern, 2016). In the following section, we want to discuss the displacement pressures or fears of displacement brought about by the symbolic and socioeconomic transformations of the neighborhood triggered by the MIL project through the immigrant families' feelings and community organizers' representations.

When we started conducting research circa 2016, the gentrification of Parc-Extension still seemed improbable to most people. Yet, several residents had already noticed some transformations in the rental market. Answering a question about her perceived changes of the housing market in 2018, Priya², who has lived in Parc-Extension since her arrival from Bangladesh in 1997, noticed the decrease in the number of offers posted on the street, indicative of the declining vacancy rate in the neighborhood: "Yes, it has changed a lot recently compared to what it used to be. Before, you could see everywhere in Parc-Ex 'for rent.' But not this year, I don't see any more of those signs." Selim, an Algerian father of four children renting a two-bedroom apartment, told us about the rent increase his landlord wants to set if he ever left: "Yes, it's very expensive now! Here, I pay only \$550. But the owner told me he will put my apartment at \$800 or \$900 when we move!" Tanvi, a single mother from India, also commented on rising rents in 2018 and explained the implications in terms of residential strategies, with immigrants practising doubling-up, a strategy of cohabiting with another household to pay less housing costs (Ghosh, 2015): "The prices have really gone up! For an apartment, it's ... I don't know, twice or three times more expensive! The newcomers and immigrants and refugees coming in, they don't know there's a shortage of housing. So, sometimes there are three or four families sharing the same apartment."

But, the link between a lower vacancy rate, price inflation, and the opening of the MIL campus or student in-migration was not always made by families at this time, which testifies to the rapidity and the violence of the ongoing changes, but also to the lack of public consultation throughout the project (PEAEMP, 2020). Indeed, if some immigrant families commented on the arrival of students in the neighborhood like Ali, a resident from Pakistan "It's becoming another neighborhood now, since the new campus. There are more and more students ...", some others did not even know a year before the opening that a new campus was being built a few hundred meters from their home. This is especially striking with Naoual, a Moroccan woman living in the southern part of the neighborhood. When we asked her in 2018 why she thought prices had increased so much in the neighborhood, she answered: "When you talk to landlords, they complain 'It's the taxes, we have a lot to pay!'. But I don't understand. Have taxes gone up that much? It's crazy, because they are old houses, there are no renovations and they are increasing a lot!" Drawing on Kern's work on rhythms of gentrification and the temporal power (2016), it can be said that the lack of awareness and thus the exclusion of residents from this new temporality of campus transformations is a barrier to recognition, belonging and representation, which "both hides and enables the slow violence gentrification" (p. 442).

Local community organizations like the Action Committee of Parc-Extension (CAPE), which advocates for tenants' rights, were also concerned by the changes before the opening. They witnessed rapid changes in the nature of tenants' complaints, evolving from complaints about housing conditions to complaints about threats of

eviction: “In the last two years, we have seen a real change in the claims made by the tenants we receive. Before, insalubrity was our emergency in terms of mobilization [...] this summer, we received 89 residents who were facing evictions”. They also noticed a recent increase in discriminatory practices by landlords toward racialized tenants and immigrants with precarious statuses that clearly reinforced the fear of (exclusionary) displacement by affecting the “normal movements” of households in the housing market (Marcuse, 1985, p. 206): “I would also argue that many low-income racialized immigrant tenants have tremendous problems finding other decent and affordable housing in the neighborhood when they are evicted, because of the low vacancy rate and also because of discrimination ... There are many landlords who are now saying that they only want to only rent to students.” These behaviors correspond to other scholars’ conclusions about class and race displacement, where gentrification processes tend to gradually replace racialized tenants with more affluent white people (Anderson, 2021) and students have been described as apprentice gentrifiers (Smith & Holt, 2007), leading to physical dislocation and increasing “out of place-ness” for existing residents (Atkinson, 2015; Davidson, 2008).

Also, as CAPE told us in 2018, they feared what Davidson (2008) called “neighborhood resource displacement,” not only demographic changes, but the loss of essential community resources for immigrant families: “While it’s one of the poorest neighborhoods in Montréal, even in Canada, at the same time, it’s also a neighborhood that has a huge mutual aid network. It’s something that deserves to be preserved and what worries me a lot is that this social network and community will be destroyed which will dis-locate the community.” Indeed, this increase in housing rents is also accompanied by an increase in commercial rents, the latter having a definite impact on the commercial offer of the district, as the mayor of the borough pointed out in 2019: “we also have the problem of the increase in commercial rent prices. It affects businesses, grocery stores, restaurants ... In the district, you have to know that Indian restaurants have a very strong social vocation, they make meals at special prices for the workers, the farm workers leaving very early in the morning. With the new arrivals in the neighborhood, we risk losing this social vocation. Not only will this increase the price of food, but it also means that the residents of the neighborhood will no longer have the shops they are used to going to.” This fear of community resource displacement is also shared by the residents of Parc-Ex. In the following quote, Ali emphasizes the importance of community resources beyond housing affordability and expresses concern about losing his access to community resources if he cannot stay: “This is where I know. The school is next door, everywhere, there is all the stuff nearby. I moved five times and always in the same area, in the same neighborhood. You see, it’s not just housing. Even for food it’s cheaper. Grocery stores, community organizations, you can find cheap food there. In other neighborhoods, there are no such initiatives! That’s why it’s good for families here, I don’t want to go anywhere else.”

As a result, immigrant families encounter increasing difficulties to find adequate housing in Parc-Extension and feel forced to stay in inappropriate dwellings. As CAPE explains: “There are still a lot of people who are experiencing problems of substandard housing, and the transformations in the neighborhood often put more and more pressure on people to tolerate really difficult housing conditions in their flats, because they feel that there are no other options.” The example of Marisol, a Guatemalan

single mother of five children in a three-bedroom apartment is representative of the situation of households making concessions and accepting substandard or overcrowded dwellings: “As I sleep on the living room couch, my daughters tell me: “Mom, we want you to have a room!” But I tell them I’ll never find another apartment at the same price here. I can’t leave Parc-Extension, Parc-Extension is stuck with me.” We argue that this forced residential immobility constitutes another form of displacement pressure as residents find themselves “stuck in place” (Sharkey, 2013). This situation is a cause of housing insecurity and increases the risks of direct displacement over longer distances (Desmond et al., 2015).

“Housing market displacement” un-homing in Parc-Extension

Based on these stories of “dis-place-ment” (Davidson, 2009), we decided to have a closer look at the transformations of the rental market in Parc-Extension. With the data gathered through our web scraper, we first set out to estimate the impact of the MIL campus on Parc-Extension’s rental market.

As Figure 2 demonstrates, the distribution of rental prices on the island of Montréal has shifted globally to higher values over the 2019–2021 period. Data from 2019 show at least two main classes of prices for the whole island of Montréal: one around 800\$/month and another one around 1200\$/month. In the three-year period of our data collection, the class of prices around 800\$/month has shifted towards 950\$, and the density around the 1200\$/month class has increased. In Parc-Extension, a transformation of the rental market is also noticeable in our data: while the data from 2019 showed only one clear class of prices around 750\$/month, data from 2021 show that not only has this class slightly shifted to around 800\$/month, but a new class of prices has quickly emerged around 1250\$/month. This points towards the emergence of a new category of accommodations that didn’t exist in Parc-Extension until very recent years.

There are reasons to believe that this transformation of the rental market in Parc-Extension, which, once again, our analyses don’t detect in the whole city, could be linked to the presence of the MIL campus in the area, and to the fact that landlords increasingly use the proximity of the campus as an argument to increase rent. For instance, our data suggest that ads that made use of terms related to the lexical field of “University” vary in price and in location relative to the MIL campus. While the difference between location and price per room for ads that made use of such terms and those that didn’t is not remarkable in wealthy or gentrified neighborhoods, in Parc-Extension the former had an average price per room of 374\$ and were on average located at 720 meters from the MIL campus while the latter had an average price per room of 330\$ and were on average located at 1,040 meters from the MIL campus. Although less clearly than in Parc-Extension, the same thing seems to be happening in Petite-Patrie, another neighborhood bordering the MIL campus. Even though this could clearly fit Liu et al.’s (2017, p. 38) remarks that “the price-shadowing effect is closely related to the nature of property-led redevelopment projects”. We believe it can also be attributed to the introduction of new condo units in the vicinity of the campus. For instance, during our study period, nine ads ranging from 2,225\$ for a two-bedroom apartment to 1,500\$ for a three-bedroom apartment concerned units located in a real estate development built in 2018 right next to the campus. An ad posted in May 2019 asked for 1,850\$ per month

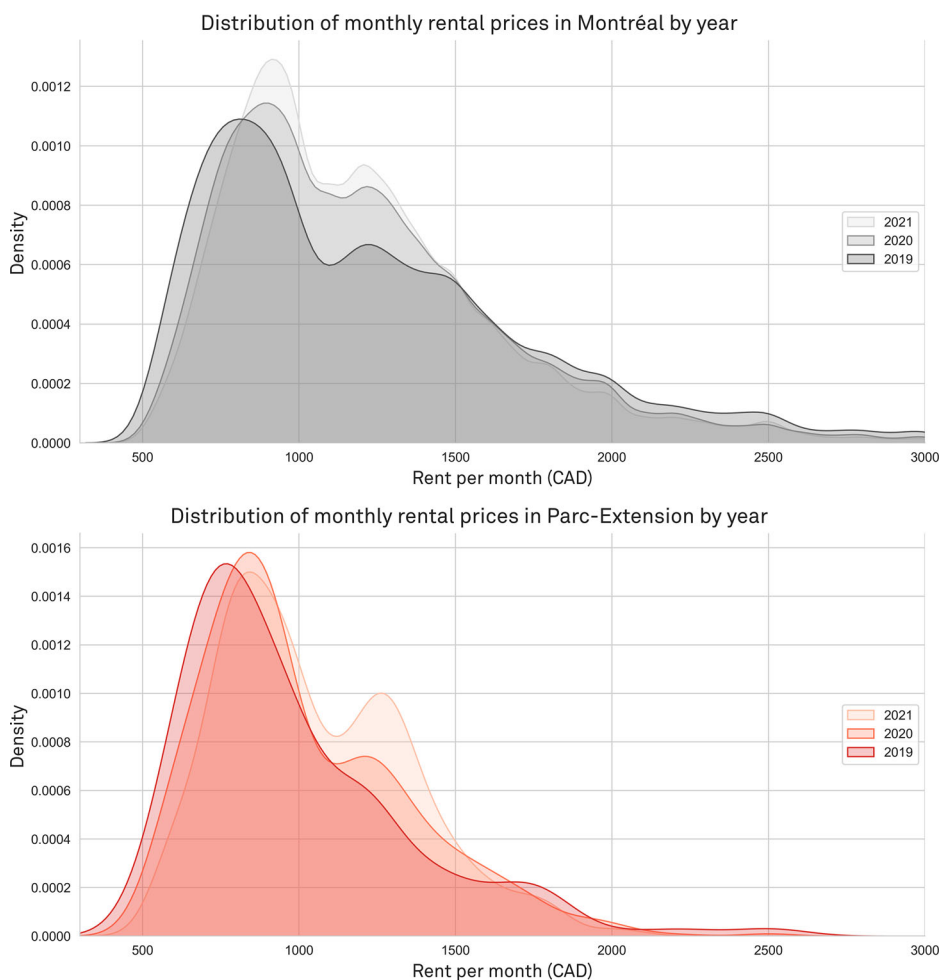


Figure 2. Rental market distribution (density) on the island of Montréal and in Parc-Extension (2019-2021). Source: Authors, produced by Rodolphe Gonzalès.

for a “splendid condo 5^{1/2} [3BR], a developing neighborhood. Near the metro station and the University of Montréal campus. New building. Be the first to live here!” Coupled with the new condo complexes about to hit the market in the MIL project area and on Beaumont Avenue – an industrial corridor –, this serves as a case in point of new-build gentrification (Davidson & Lees, 2005).

Moreover, a review of all the tenant complaints received by CAPE since 2017 clearly shows the growth in punctual cases of abusive rent increases. In a context where landlords are seeing more and more incentives to increase rents to catch up with the rest of the market, these trends clearly underline how the MIL project is putting pressure on Parc-Extension residents and refashioning the area. As several authors pointed out (Addie et al., 2015; Moos et al., 2019; Revington, 2021), higher education facilities have an important role in the transformation of cities. Through their capacity to refashion neighborhoods, university campuses act as powerful agents of placemaking that influence the socioeconomic evolution of surrounding areas (Ehlenz, 2019) and, in the

case of the MIL project, have an impact on rent increase. Following this partial conclusion about campus-led gentrification we want to highlight another aspect of the transformation of the rental market: the targeting of students by landlords encouraging the studentification of Parc-Extension in connection with the opening of the MIL campus.

Students as targeted newcomers in a campus-led revitalization plan

The arrival of a new student population in the area seems to be one of the principal pressures faced by Parc-Extension's tenants as Simon mentioned to us during summer 2019:

I attended the presentation of one of the new plans by the rector of UdeM, and the editor of a student newspaper asked why there was no more student housing in the plan. The rector replied, 'All you have to do is to buy a condo!' Of course, student housing is not profitable, but socially it is! And we need it, because without affordable student housing, we will be facing a real pressure on the local housing market.

In the following section we wish to link the arrival of students with the swift reconfiguration of the area and give evidence about how the targeting of students in the area plays on the displacement pressure experienced by local residents.

As we can see in [Figure 3](#), which represents clusters of listing that made use of terms related to the lexical field of "university," the southernmost part of Parc-Extension is part of this distinctive group of localities. As one would expect, those clusters are precisely located around Montréal's main university campuses. This can be explained by the fact that about 70% of student renters in Québec were renting from private landlords (UTILE, 2013). Contrary to Revington's observations in Ontario (2021), studentification in Parc-Extension and Montréal seems to be less a consequence of the rise in purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) near university campuses than a refashioning of the private rental market toward student populations.

This targeting of students is also visible in the Kijiji listing's descriptions. While still an immigrant neighborhood in the midst of a housing crisis, it is now possible to read ads like "live in the most vibrant area of the city. Parc-extension is a colorful and cultural up-and-coming neighborhood in Montréal [...] Additionally, the new University of Montréal campus will be located in proximity to our building," or "located close to the future University Ideal for students or young workers." Indeed, as in many other ads, landlords insist explicitly on proximity to the new campus or indicate a clear preference for students or young professional tenants. This corroborates the conclusions made by Moos et al. (2019) about the overlapping processes of gentrification, youthification and studentification. Indeed, our analysis of ads' descriptions shows how a new branding for Parc-Extension is emerging and how it lets the property owners select the renters they want to attract in the neighborhood. It is also clear that targeting students is a way to increase rent, but also to install practices of gentrifiers (Smith & Holt, 2007) in a multi-ethnic neighborhood.

This rapid refashioning of the rental housing market toward students and young professionals (Moos et al., 2019; Smith, 2004) is also visible through the discourse of real estate developers. On a large site near the campus, the Montoni group demolished a former bakery to build 104 residential units. In July 2019, the promoter organized a public meeting to present its project to potential buyers. To the question: "Are you

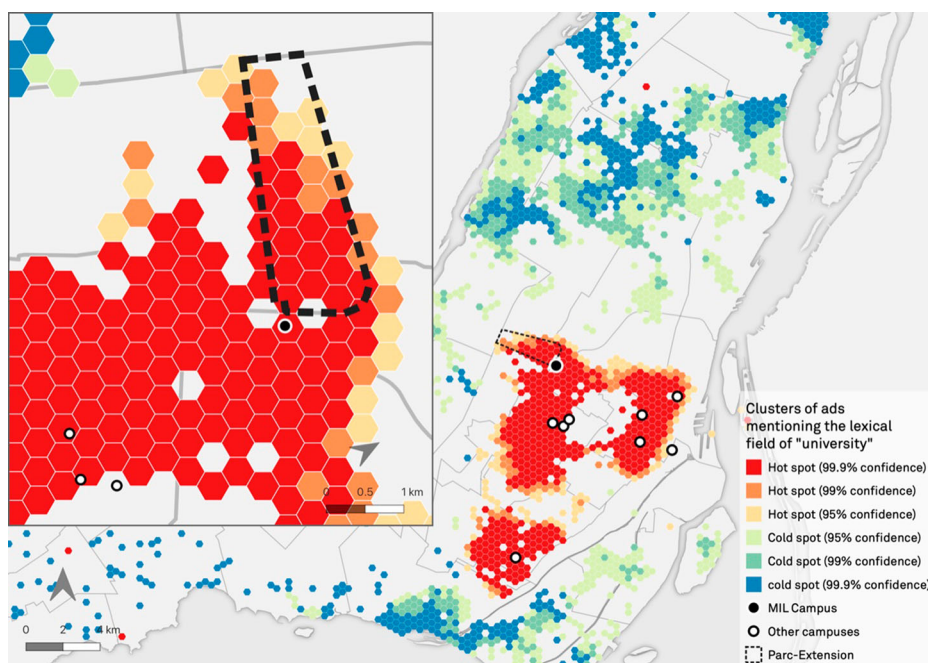


Figure 3. Campuses and student-oriented private rental market in Montréal. Source: Authors, produced by Rodolphe Gonzalès.

planning social housing units in your new project?” the development director of the company answered us with a cynical reinterpretation of Lefebvre’s “right to the city” (1968): “No, no social housing units are planned. Today, the greatest needs in Parc-Extension are for families and students who will arrive with the new campus. You know, the right to the city belongs to everyone, it is necessary to address the needs of all social classes, not just the most disadvantaged.”

Conclusion

A few months before the opening of the campus, we organized a field course with undergraduate students in Parc-Extension. On the third day, a resident and local activist was stunned by the sight of this group of predominantly white students, and a heated discussion followed:

Are universities good for us or not good for us? Are they just ways of getting rich people to put their money in real estate? Y’all gotta be asking these questions and if you go to school there, you’re publicizing it. People that move here, they’re participating in that! This community means a lot and there’s a lot of human beings that are getting kicked out of this community, have nowhere to go, have to move and their whole lives have been changed, their kids leave their schools, they lose all their friends. There’s a lot of things that are actually in effect because students are coming here.

The students were quite shaken by this exchange. They thought they were denouncing the arrival of the MIL campus with their field projects, but they were now aware of the

much bigger issue at stake: the programed displacement of poor and racialized families by the arrival of young, white middle- and upper-class people.

Our article highlights the strong impact of the opening of a new university campus on the rental market and on immigrant residential trajectories in Parc-Extension, and it documents how the displacement pressure of such campus-led gentrification functions. Our contribution is threefold. First, we were able to contribute empirically to the literature discussing the notion of displacement focusing on displacement pressure. By linking the concepts of studentification and campus-led gentrification, our findings show how both processes are woven together; both contribute to the quick recommodification of rental housing toward students and young professionals and to displacement pressures experienced by immigrant families. Our second contribution is methodological. In this regard, we took seriously the temporal and spatial relationship between urban redevelopment, rising housing prices and displacement pressures highlighted in the literature. By combining quantitative and qualitative strategies, we addressed shortcomings of both methodological approaches when analyzing gentrification-induced displacement. More importantly, we produced our own quantitative data to avoid the implicit limits of census-based analysis in order to confirm the fears and increasing pressures evoked by our interviewees. Our third contribution is a practical one. In a world increasingly centered around the power of data, community organizations as well as activists are in an ever-greater need for data and tools capable of identifying gentrifying areas and populations at risk of displacement. By contributing to critical data production with other local organizations such as Parc-Extension Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (PEAMP) and CAPE, we believe our tools and data will empower both activist and grassroots organizations to prove how the university and the local state are responsible for the violent wave of gentrification that is falling on the most vulnerable tenants who are losing not only an apartment, but their sense of place.

Notes

1. The definition of the creative class is based on the one given by the city of Montréal (2013). The job categories selected (information and cultural industries; finance and insurance; professional, scientific and technical services; management of companies and enterprises; educational services) are based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).
2. All names of survey participants have been changed to respect their anonymity and some interviews were translated from French.

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