Sound, Deindustrialization, and Gentrification:
The Changing Aural Landscape of Pointe-Saint-Charles

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Abstract

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The development of the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada during the 1850s established Pointe-Saint-Charles as a critical rail hub and positioned Montreal as the nexus for Canada's growing railway system. The rail yards and surrounding industries attracted thousands of workers and their families. The sounds of engines, factory whistles, and the shunting noises of train cars being latched together formed a distinctive new soundscape that would come to define Pointe-Saint-Charles. This blue-collar community would continue to thrive as a seat of industrial activity in Montreal until the Saint Lawrence Seaway opened in 1959, which allowed much commercial traffic to bypass Pointe-Saint-Charles.

The ensuing years were a time of change in this area as the neighborhood transitioned from an almost exclusively working-class enclave to a mixed, low-income and middle-class population. In 2015, in response to perceived demands from local residents, the Agence métropolitaine de transport announced that it would build a sound berm along rue de Sébastopol to dampen the sound of train traffic. This proposal was met with confusion by many long-time residents who felt that the train sounds were a vestige of Pointe-Saint-Charles' working-class past and a defining part of the neighborhood. The berm, a large and imposing physical barrier, has profoundly altered the landscape of rue de Sébastopol. Its physical presence is in conflict with the existing architecture and cultural landscape of the street and the neighborhood. In this thesis, I explore the spatial, sensorial (the importance of engaging the senses within a broad consideration of a place), and symbolic effect of the berm on the community and aural landscape of Pointe-Saint-Charles as a window into the profound impact of the aural landscape on its environment.

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I am very grateful to architect Michael Fish, who told me so much about the importance of preserving the architecture of the workers' houses on rue de Sébastopol. I also extend my thanks to author Dave Flavell for introducing me to residents who grew up in Pointe-Saint-Charles.

I owe much to several residents of Pointe-Saint-Charles who agreed to meet me over the phone or in person, to speak about their experiences as residents of this vibrant post-industrial neighborhood. Their vivid and spontaneous testimonies helped me better understand the dynamics and diverse character of Pointe-Saint-Charles. My heartfelt thanks to Carl Dettman for providing me with important sources of information, which were essential for my research. Lastly, a warm thank you to Sylvie Bertrand for a glorious evening spent in conversation in the "Jardin des Voisins", on rue de Sébastopol.

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Introduction

> From the 1850s on the rattling, whistling, and screeching of brakes of the growing number of trains converging in Montreal set up new dissonances, as the expanding network of railroads linked the city to hinterlands in the West and East as well as southward to the United States. Such new sounds recomposed the symphony of the streets, merging and competing with the older score of clacking horses' hooves, street vendors' cries, and the sounds of construction work. (Bradbury 38)

Rue de Sébastopol is located in Pointe-Saint-Charles, in Southwest Montreal (see fig. 1 to 4), and runs along the vast Canadian National (CN) yards in the southeast corner of the neighborhood (see fig. 5). I spent much time on rue de Sébastopol during the summer months of 2016 watching the construction of a tall sound berm that is, as of this writing, nearing completion along the street's northern boundary. The berm, which looked like a massive pile of black dirt in the early stages of its construction (see fig. 6), eventually took the shape of an imposing and steep slope of patched sod (see fig. 7). The berm is intended to block the sound of trains coming from the adjacent CN yards and the Agence métropolitaine de transport's new maintenance center. Interestingly, the berm has not abated the sound of trains. Instead it effectively blocked a sweeping view of the CN yards and downtown Montreal. More importantly, the barrier has taken away rue de Sébastopol's direct access to the sight of trains and to the source of labor that once characterized the community living in Pointe-Saint-Charles.

I walked along rue de Sébastopol for the first time in the fall of 2014. The street's row of identical and modest houses, abutting what looked like a secret garden, and the breathtaking view of downtown Montreal, via the train yards, stopped me in my tracks. I looked at the trains, the massive grain elevators, and the skyline of downtown Montreal rising behind the CN yards (see fig. 8). I listened for a long time to the resonant parade of locomotives and rail cars rolling by on the other side of a light, chain-link fence. I felt as if the entire historical landscape of Montreal was unfolding in front of my eyes: I was taking in the timeline of the great Quebec metropolis, where visual and aural landscapes combine to reveal a picture of the central position Pointe-Saint-Charles occupied during the years of intense industrial production (1850-1950). Rue de Sébastopol's row of small workers' houses, coupled with the large CN yards and soaring

skyscrapers, was a humbling sight as it pointed to the modest means with which workers, and their families, built Canada's wealth.

This particular site much reminded me of the Fulton Ferry Historic District in Brooklyn, where I lived for over fifteen years, from 1980 to 1997. During those years, I never tired of watching the shipping activities on the East River. I learned to love the continuous buzz of the Brooklyn Bridge overhead. More significantly, the scenery of the river and the sound of the bridge provided a new storyline of New York, a glimpse into the past of a neighborhood that was once a bustling, industrial harbor. My decades-long attraction to post-industrial sites contributed to my decision to select rue de Sébastopol as the ideal site for the creation of an urban intervention for my fall 2014 graduate seminar, "Industrialization and the Built Environment," which explored the urban morphology and spatial politics of the built environment of Pointe-Saint-Charles.[1]

For my intervention, I placed chairs against the chain-link fence that separated rue de Sébastopol from the CN yards (see fig. 9). Inspired by urbanist William Whyte's statement that the most popular urban sites are those that provide a place for people to sit (Whyte 28), I invited my classmates to sit and reflect on life in Pointe-Saint-Charles. Leaning on philosopher Walter Benjamin's concept of the dialectical image,[2] I asked my classmates to contemplate their immediate surroundings as a "moment where the past is recognized in the present" and to try to relate "what has been to the now" (Rendell 77).[3] This experience inspired me to learn more about Pointe-Saint-Charles and better understand its transition from a working-class industrial neighborhood to a post-industrial urban residential site.

Thesis Methodology

The sound berm on rue de Sébastopol is a piece of new urban infrastructure that has changed the built environment and cultural landscape of its surroundings. In this thesis, I question the effect of this newly built barrier on its neighborhood by analyzing what the berm

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[1] To obtain a full description of the course, go to: http://righttothecity.atwaterlibrary.ca

[2] In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin writes, "it's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather [dialectical] image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation" (Benjamin 462).

[3] To find out more about the actual intervention, go to: http://righttothecity.atwaterlibrary.ca/sittalk-an-intervention-by-muriel-luderowski/

has achieved spatially, sensorially, and symbolically. My intellectual debt in writing this thesis is vast, and I owe much to the distinguished scholars who guided me in my research. The first chapter of my thesis addresses how the physical presence of the berm is in conflict with the existing architecture and cultural landscape of rue de Sébastopol. I analyze the morphological transformation of rue de Sébastopol following the construction of the sound barrier, and how the berm has changed the identity of this architecturally and historically significant street. David B. Hanna's 1986 dissertation *Montreal, A City Built by Small Builders, 1867-1880*, provided me with a wealth of information about Sebastopol Row's architecture and workers' housing in late 19th century Montreal. In the second chapter, I explore why the berm was built, and review diverse responses from the local population, as well as an ongoing concern with train noise and safety in the neighborhood. I then briefly discuss the potential health issues resulting from excessive noise. The second chapter closes with a discussion of the importance of engaging all the senses within a broad consideration of "place", considering how both aural and visual references tell us much about the history of a place. Nicolas Kenny's 2014 book *The Feel of the City*, introduced me to the living conditions of Montreal city dwellers in modern times, when sights, sounds, and smells flooded their senses. Environmentalist Murray Schafer's 1977 oeuvre, *The Soundscape*, helped me grasp the significance of our urban, sonic environment, and the meaning of the incessant range of noises with which we live. Emily Thompson's 2004 book *The Soundscape of Modernity*, informed me about the differences in people's perception of their aural environment in the early 20th century. In the third and final chapter, I analyze how the berm has symbolically separated a residential space from its traditional source of labor and subsistence, thus challenging the neighborhood's identity as a working-class landscape. In my analysis, I leaned on Christine Leuenberger's writings collected in *After The Berlin Wall* (published in 2011), in which Leuenberger posits that walls, fences, and barriers often foster feelings of cultural differences. I was further inspired by Dolores Hayden's argument, related in *The Power of Place* (published in 1997), that urban landscape history is connected to memory rooted in a given place. In closing, I argue that the berm is a barrier rather than a threshold to the history of a thriving, blue-collar neighborhood that was central to the industrial heyday of Montreal and Canada.

My thesis also benefited from extensive personal interviews and oral history research. Personal interviews with representatives of local community groups and Pointe-Saint-Charles

residents, whose testimonies significantly complemented my intellectual analysis, were crucial to completing this thesis. Interviewees' points of view, pauses mid-sentence, or insistence on a particular aspect of a story accurately captured the nuances of individual narratives. The multi-faceted and spontaneous comments of the interviewees helped me understand people's concern and tolerance of train sound in a neighborhood whose history is indelibly tied to the Canadian railroad. I spoke at great length with ten individuals, either in person or over the phone, over a six-month period. The interviewees all had strong opinions about train sound, and were eager to share personal anecdotes or memories related to the railroad. Dave Flavell, author of *Community and the Human Spirit,* introduced me to individuals who grew up in Pointe-Saint-Charles, people whose testimonies revealed much about the quality of life in the neighborhood in the early to mid-20th century. Friends and acquaintances referred me to current residents, who explained how the construction of the sound berm had radically changed the character of rue de Sébastopol. During each personal interview, I sought to create a collaborative space where both the interviewer and the interviewee understood that a successful collaboration required the cultivation of trust that would result in a process of dialogue and sharing (MacKinnon 23). This collaboration made it possible for me to contact some individuals several times, and to continue the dialogue in my quest for further clarification or additional information. Concordia University's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling provided me with numerous interviews collected for the "From Balconville to Condoville? The Politics of Urban Change in Post-Industrial Montreal" project, which analyzes the changes in Southwest Montreal since 1945. The interviews revealed how historical memory contains personal and subjective dimensions, and were a unique opportunity to better understand how people define their neighborhood and their identities within it.

Terminology

The terms "deindustrialization," "post-industrial," and "gentrification" are mentioned in several places in my thesis, and need to be briefly defined for the reader's ease of reference. Political Economy professors Dr. Barry Bluestone and Dr. Bennett Harrison introduced the word "deindustrialization" to the scholarly lexicon in the early 1980s, and defined it as the "widespread, systematic disinvestment in the nation's productive capacity" (qtd. in Cowie and Heathcott 6). They describe deindustrialization as an economic process involving the closure of

industrial plants, the stripping of a basic industry, and the abandonment of communities. In their 2003 anthology *Beyond The Ruins: The Meaning of Deindustrialization*, History and Urban Studies professors Dr. Jefferson Cowie and Dr. Joseph Heathcott argue that deindustrialization is also a cultural process that impacts the geographical and socio-political dynamics of the post-industrial society. In his essay, "Deindustrialization and the Reality of the Post-industrial City", Urban Studies professor Dr. William F. Lever argues that the post-industrial society emerges from the process of deindustrialization or the transition from manufacturing as a major source of employment to services, and from the shift of residential and employment location from urban areas to smaller towns (Lever 983).

Urban Planning professor emeritus Dr. Peter Marcuse defines gentrification as a movement into a former working-class area by upper-income households – generally professional, technical and managerial workers with higher education and income levels – resulting in the displacement of the previous lower-income residents (Marcuse 198). Geography professor Dr. David Ley associates the process of gentrification with the "resettlement by the middle class of older inner-city districts" (Ley 54). Ley observes that, among six Canadian metropolitan areas (Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa, Edmonton and Halifax), professionals in the arts, media, teaching, social sciences and related occupations consistently represented the most concentrated of occupational categories in central city neighborhoods that underwent social upgrading in the 1980s (Ley 57).

<u>Historical Contexts</u>

This section provides background historical information that establishes the important place Pointe-Saint-Charles occupies in the history of Montreal and Canada, from the 17th century to the present. The name "Pointe-Saint-Charles" first appeared in the text of a land grant, dated July 23, 1654, extended to Charles Lemoyne and Catherine Primot (Sicotte 440). At that time, the Kanien'kehá:ka Indigenous nations occupied the area later named Pointe-Saint-Charles (*La Pointe* II). Moreover, the 1842 census registered eight native families or thirty-one individuals in the sector, thus confirming the presence of Indigenous nations in Pointe-Saint-Charles as late as the mid-19th century (Lauzon 17). By the end of the 19th century, Montreal's need for a transportation infrastructure, and the construction of railways and bridges on Mohawk land against Mohawk wishes, disrupted the lives of First Nations communities established along the

Saint Lawrence River. For example, the 1887 construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway Bridge (and rail line) – spanning the River from Lachine to Kahnawake – had devastating effects on Kahnawake territory. It caused floods, and damaged local farmers' crops (Rueck 229-235).

Prior to 1840, during its pre-industrial years, Pointe-Saint-Charles was mostly rural and its landscape dotted with large agricultural farms run by religious institutions. In 1660, Marguerite Bourgeoys, founder of the Congregation of Notre-Dame of Montreal, started a farm in the southwestern tip of the area, which was then operated for 300 years by the Sisters of the Congregation. Bourgeoys's mission was not solely to run a farm, but also to educate the poor so that they could earn a decent living. From its founding, the Congregation dedicated itself not only to the religious education of the settlers but also "to provide them with skills they needed to make a contribution to the society to which they belonged" (Simpson 25). Although no firm evidence has been found, it appears that Bourgeoys opened up the farm to some of the filles du roi,[4] and offered to "prepare them for the roles they would play as spouses and mothers in pioneer households" (Simpson 24). A second farm, Saint-Gabriel Farm, located on the site of the former Redpath Sugar House near the Lachine Canal, was founded in 1650 and run by the Sulpician Priests for over 200 years (*Les Cahiers* 3).

In 1843, the enlargement of the Lachine Canal to allow for increased commercial traffic led to the hiring of hundreds of workers, many of them Irish immigrants (Lauzon 19). During that period, the United States had expanded its railroad network from Boston to the Saint Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. By the middle of the 19th century, Canadians had developed a railway vision that motivated them to build a railway across Canada that would not only protect them from United States annexationists, but also "build a sense of solidarity and confidence in their own abilities" (Den Otter 12). The Grand Trunk Railway system would serve the provinces of Ontario and Quebec and be part of the "visionary ocean-to-ocean scheme" (Den Otter 99). Lacking domestic capital, Canada sought and secured financing from Baring Brothers, and Glyn, Mills and Company, two prominent London banks. Peto, Brassey, Jackson & Betts, a large British construction firm, agreed to build the railway (den Otter 100). In 1845, John Young,

[4] The filles du roi, or King's Daughters, were some 770 women who arrived in the colony of New France (Canada) between 1663 and 1673, under the financial sponsorship of King Louis XIV of France. The filles du roi were part of King Louis XIV's program to promote the settlement of his colony in Canada (King's Daughters).

a Montreal tradesman and president of the Montreal & Atlantic Railway company, publicly proposed to build a bridge between Pointe-Saint-Charles and the Saint Lawrence south shore (Lauzon 23). A bridge would make it possible for trains to run from Montreal to the mainland and from there to the United States.[5] This led to the construction of the Victoria Bridge (1854-1859), which together with the development of the Grand Trunk Railway (1853-1860) positioned Pointe-Saint-Charles at the center of the industrialization of Montreal. In his 1986 Master's thesis about Pointe-Saint-Charles Shops, Ralph Hoskins presented Montreal as "the largest and most important city in Canada for much of the country's history which always had a special relationship with the Canadian railway system" (*A Study of the Point St. Charles Shops* 2).

Between 1850 and 1900, Pointe-Saint-Charles became a major industrial hub within the city of Montreal. In November 1852, the Grand Trunk Railway Company of Canada (GTR) was officially incorporated. By early 1853, legislation authorized the expansion of the Company's mandate to include the construction of the Victoria Bridge project, which substantiated John Young's vision to link Montreal and Canada with the United States. The location of Pointe-Saint-Charles was ideal for the construction of the bridge because of its proximity to the harbor, warehouses, and factories (Triggs et al. 23).

By early 1860, 3,320 kilometers of railroad tracks had been laid in Canada, of which 1,400 kilometers belonged to the GTR (Lauzon 28). This rapid rail growth was mirrored by the population: Montreal's population grew from 48,200 people in 1850 to 90,300 in 1861 (Lauzon 28). The GTR project included the construction of the Victoria Bridge, which began in the spring of 1854. By June of that year, 1,152 workers had been hired to build the bridge. By the summer of 1858, 3,040 workers were employed to complete the Victoria Bridge, a project slated for completion by December, 1859 (Lauzon 30). A good number of workers came from Great Britain and were hired by Peto, Brassey, Jackson & Betts, the British engineering company that won the bid for the project (Lauzon 29). By the end of the 19th century, the GTR Shops covered a sprawling thirty acres with an iron foundry, rolling mill, wheel mill, and over 2,500 employees (MacKay 84). Hoskins writes: "In their 65 years of ownership by the GTR, the Pointe-Saint-Charles Shops produced in excess of 400 locomotives, many passenger cars and some thousands

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[5] By the middle of the 19th century, transcontinental railroads had become a Gilded Age extravagance in the United States. Progress was the theme of the century, and American railroad owners ran highly leveraged corporations to finance their risky endeavors (White 508-510).

of freight cars" (*A Study of the Point St. Charles Shops* 2). In 1859, the first locomotive built in Pointe-Sainte-Charles rolled out of the magnificent GTR Shops (see fig. 10).

The GTR Shops had an important impact on the economy of Montreal: employment grew from approximately 400 workers in 1860 to a crew of 2,525 by 1910 (*A Study of the Point St. Charles Shops* 2). Between 1880 and 1917, the majority of skilled metal-working tradesmen such as boilermakers, blacksmiths, machinists and brass finishers were Anglophones, whereas the carpenters, painters and moulders were predominantly Francophones (Hoskins, "An Analysis of the Payrolls" 343). Gilles Lauzon's census data analysis indicates that between 1881 and 1901, a majority of Francophones lived north of the tracks and most Anglophones lived south of the railroad (Lauzon 60). As the map in Figure 11 indicates, the railway tracks – shown as red lines – traverse Pointe-Saint-Charles. In 1890, districts 1, 2, and 6 were generally inhabited by Anglophones while districts 3, 3a, 4, 4a, and 5, were largely home to Francophones. Because these communities lived on opposing sides of the rail tracks, the location of the tracks served as the vocational, linguistic, and cultural divide in Pointe-Saint-Charles. Despite this division, many families established roots in the neighborhood, remaining for generations, as described by Robert Lewis: "In 1929, almost two hundred workers in the locomotive power shops were second, third, and fourth generation" (Lewis 249).

By the height of the industrial revolution, Canada had built a transcontinental railway, but soon the situation changed from "moderate expansion to over-extension and confusion" (Mackay 21). As a result, on January 30, 1923, Parliament approved amalgamation of the GTR with CN Railways in order to protect Canada's credit and ensure the economic stability of the nation's railways (MacKay 43).

Historically, women held varying roles within the railway service industry and manufacturing sectors. In his book, *The City Below the Hill,* urban reformer Herbert Ames indicates that by 1896, approximately 3,300 women – representing twenty percent of the total workforce – were employed in the southwestern district of Montreal (Lauzon 50). At the outbreak of the Second World War, a quarter of CN's male work force joined the army, and CN hired women to fill positions traditionally held by men. By 1944, several hundred women held blue-collar jobs at CN. For example, National Railways Munitions LTD., a CN subsidiary that built naval guns at a new factory in Pointe-Saint-Charles, employed 1,350 people, nearly 900 of them women (MacKay, 135). Although the industrial demands of the Second World War had

prompted the entry of women into the workforce, most were asked to leave the company when the men returned from the front.

Having been given the opportunity to work alongside men during the war years, women in Pointe-Saint-Charles were reluctant to relinquish access to the industrial world. During the post-war years, the women of Pointe-Saint-Charles became increasingly vocal in their demands for autonomy and gender equality. The 1970s saw a growing mobilization of women demanding equal treatment, with the establishment of organizations like Mouvement de Libération des Femmes and the Front de Libération des Femmes du Québec. Such feminist initiatives had strong counterparts in the neighborhood of Pointe-Saint-Charles, which was at that time undergoing intense economic struggle. As described by members of The CourtePointe Collective, "Women were the ones who answered the call when organizers, animators and progressive priests came to Pointe-Saint-Charles to change things" (Kruzynski et al. 58). Women-led activism has continued in Pointe-Saint-Charles. Since its founding in 1978, Madame Prend Congé continues to be a very active support group to women in the neighborhood. In 1989, Judy Stevens and Linda Hodes created the Share the Warmth foundation, located in Pointe-Saint-Charles, whose mission is to help members reach their full potential through work training programs, and tutoring services (Haskell et al. 7).

Although the GTR represented a major industry in Pointe-Saint-Charles, the industrial expansion of the neighborhood was not limited to the railroad sector. Starting in the early 1850s, the Lachine Canal rapidly developed into a major industrial waterway with several factories in operation on either side of the Canal. In 1856, three major sawmills, Shearer's sash and door factory, Allan's chair factory, and Ostell's sawmill lined the banks of the Canal. A ropery, J.A. Converse, and Redpath Sugar refinery were the factories that anchored the southern half of the Lachine Canal. A few years later, Belding Paul & Co., Phillips Electrical Works, and Pillow & Hersey joined the roster of many manufacturers located along the Canal (Lauzon 44).

At the height of its industrial development, the aural landscape of Pointe-Saint-Charles – from its riverbank to the train yards – echoed loudly with river and road traffic, trains rolling and shunting, and factory whistles blowing intermittently. In 1868, a commercial sketch of Montreal and its importance as a wholesale market exuberantly described the industrial sound of the times: "The whirr of machinery and the booming noise of a thousand hammers echo on every side, we are within a very hive of human industry" (qtd. in Lewis 100).

The industrial heyday of Southwest Montreal came to a grinding halt, however, with the opening of the Saint Lawrence Seaway in 1959, whose operation led to the dramatic decline of the Lachine Canal.[6] Factories in Pointe-Saint-Charles closed, jobs dried up, and the population dropped drastically. These changes were described in a 2014 issue of the newspaper *La Pointe:*

> In 1959, with the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Lachine Canal was deemed obsolete. As factories began to close, the Point experienced a drastic population drop, to 24,000 by 1960 and 13,000 by 2000. From the 1970s, deindustrialization and a global recession led to the implementation of neoliberal policies of austerity, resulting in the slow dismantling of welfare state measures which would have cushioned the hard times. (*La Pointe III*)

Community and local support groups in Pointe-Saint-Charles put measures in place that helped the local unemployed remain in their neighborhood despite the gentrification that gradually followed the deindustrialization of Pointe-Saint-Charles. In 1968, local citizens founded the Clinique Communautaire de Pointe-Saint-Charles. In 1984, local community groups founded the Regroupement économique et social du Sud-Ouest (RESO), the first economic development corporation in Montreal (*Portrait du quartier* 7). The founding of these organizations and others spawned a "golden age of place-based activism" in Pointe-Saint-Charles as residents took a stand against the rapid development of past industrial and low-income residential buildings into high-rent condominiums (*La Pointe* III). In the mid-1980s, a local organization named PROJET St-Charles introduced a plan to build 500 new low-income co-op housing units over the next three years. The plan was to slow down speculative development and to protect all Pointe-Saint-Charles residents from gentrification (Vickers 5).

This phenomenon makes Pointe-Saint-Charles unique compared to many post-industrial urban areas where gentrification often uproots the existing population and where, as historian Steven High expresses, "urban explorers value the intensity of emotion and sensation that abandoned or dilapidated sites afford them, and for whom these buildings are little more than post-industrial playgrounds" (*Corporate Wasteland* 63). High elsewhere describes

[6] There had already been a diminishing of industrial activity in Pointe-Saint-Charles during the Great Depression (1930s) which only bounced back during the Second World War.

deindustrialization as a cultural, economic, and political process that, for some, has resulted in "smokestack nostalgia", in which images of deindustrialization romanticize the past, but might yet be a resource for imagining the future. According to High, "middle-class enthusiasts are drawn to transgression and danger as they journey across the social and geographic distance" (*Beyond Aesthetics* 147). High continues: "Ruin-gazing or 'ruin-porn' therefore has become more voyeuristic than nostalgic, as there is no lament for the loss of industry" (*Beyond Aesthetics* 140).

In 2002, the Lachine Canal reopened for pleasure boating ("Master Plan Lachine Canal"). By this point, ongoing residential development had resulted in the construction of condominiums, which lined what is now a much quieter waterfront. The whir of bicycles has replaced the loud clatter of industrial machinery. In an article written for *Continuité* in 2003, architectural historian Jean Bélisle observes that there is hardly a trace left from the industrial life of the neighborhood. Instead, much of the Lachine Canal riverfront has become the "far west" of real estate developers, while the vestiges of Montreal's industrial Southwest have disappeared (Bélisle 43). However, a couple of blocks away from the waterfront, freight and passenger trains continue to traverse the neighborhood, rattling along old overpasses, while the loud shunting activities in the CN yards have not stopped. To this day, trains continue to roll in and out of the CN yards, to the north of the sound berm on rue de Sébastopol.

Chapter 1: What has the sound berm produced spatially?

During a formal meeting on 4 November, 2015, representatives of the Agence métropolitaine de transport (AMT) informed Pointe-Saint-Charles residents that they planned to develop a 16-hectare site along rue de Sébastopol to accommodate a train maintenance center for both AMT and VIA trains. Because of the project's proximity to residential streets, AMT hired a reputed firm to perform an acoustic study to "establish that the maintenance center's activities would not exceed the municipal noise standards in effect" (Pointe-Saint-Charles Maintenance Centre). The study's conclusions led the AMT to put in place tangible measures, and to build a "noise-abatement berm, 300 metres long and 2 to 8 metres high, consisting of an acoustic wall and a landscaped berm with bike and pedestrian access at its summit to offer a view of downtown" (Pointe-Saint-Charles Maintenance Centre). The berm's design creates a separation between rue de Sébastopol and the immediately adjacent AMT site, which will include an administrative building, an inspection shop, a repair shop, a wheel profiling shop, and an automated train wash. To mimic the architectural vernacular, the exterior cladding of the main building will feature "most of the bricks recovered from the former main building, which was destroyed by a fire" (Pointe-Saint-Charles Maintenance Centre). A small interpretation center will be installed inside the administrative building to "honor the neighborhood's railroad history" (Pointe-Saint-Charles Maintenance Centre). The project will cost the AMT approximately $237 million and is slated for completion by 2018 (Agence métropolitaine de transport).

Local resident Carl Dettman attended the November 2015 meeting, and found the news of the berm rather puzzling, particularly since most residents living near or on rue de Sébastopol were either "resigned to hearing train sound, not bothered by it, or actually enjoyed the faint rumble of passing trains" (Dettman). With Dettman's observation in mind, it is important to consider what the berm was imagined to accomplish, and what it is accomplishing in the neighborhood, if not the abatement of noise that is its stated purpose.

The original renderings of the berm issued by the AMT showed a wide and gently sloping lawn that started invitingly at street level and rose to a rounded, grassy crest (see fig. 12). The completed berm looks quite different from what was proposed by the AMT. Instead, a much narrower grassy berm rises steeply from a relatively tall 4-foot stone wall (see fig. 13). An unsightly metal railing runs along the entire length of the berm, at the level of the second floor

windows of all the houses on rue de Sébastopol. The sound berm will feature a lookout, accessible via a stair built in the slope of the berm. A bird's-eye view of the berm (see fig. 14) shows the lookout and the stair visible at the center of the berm. The lookout will allow visitors to enjoy the view of downtown Montreal and feel the thrill of trains going by.

The berm has uprooted an abundance of self-seeded trees, weeds, shrubs, and wildflowers that grew against a chain-link fence that once separated the street from the CN yards (see fig. 15). The fence, which up until 2015 was covered with wild shrubs and plants, imbued rue de Sebastopol with "the dynamism of largely unplanned actions involving vegetation […] adding life and vitality" (Rendell 94) to this narrow street by the tracks. The vegetation's seasonal transformation tied the aesthetic of the street to the cyclical passage of the seasons, and emphasized "the impossibility of holding time still" (Rendell 96). Before the barrier's construction, the street scenery felt like an untended place, "a space of indecision, where the third or '*délaissé*' landscape was a living thing that occupied the space freely" (Clément 27). The feel of such a third landscape is still palpable in a small community garden, created in 1994 by local resident Sylvie Bertand and her neighbors, on a vacant lot of land adjacent to the existing workers' houses on rue de Sébastopol (see fig. 16). The garden abounds with a great variety of flowers, plants, and trees, including "a magnificent poplar tree, 14 feet in circumference at its base" (Fish 7).

Named the "Jardin des Voisins" by local environmental group Eco-Quartier, this collective garden represents a small haven of green space where people in the neighborhood come to enjoy a bit of quiet time, to meet neighbors, or to simply sit and – until construction on the berm began – to take in the view of Montreal from one of the garden benches. In 2014, local elected officials unanimously chose to protect the site and to declare it a green space, or "espace vert." This decision marked a significant turning point for the garden, a site that Habitat for Humanity briefly considered for the construction of low-income housing in 1995 (Polifroni).

Bertrand and I met in the Jardin des Voisins, on 8 August, 2016. While watching the sun disappear behind the berm, we talked for a long time about what the garden meant to her and her neighbors. She shared her recollection of a day in December 2015, when in a matter of a few hours, a handful of workers removed the chain-link fence, cut numerous trees, and uprooted hundreds of plants, which had grown undisturbed against the fence for the past 25 years (see fig. 17). The workers told Bertrand that the fence had to come down to make room for the future

sound berm. She intimated, “En quelques heures, tout avait été rasé: les deux pommiers dont un, symbole de résilience; rasée la soixantaine de thuyas de plus de cinq mètres de haut et qui en après-midi offrait hiver comme été des concerts d'oiseaux (Bertrand).[7] For Bertrand, the Jardin des Voisins remains an oasis of hope for humanity. She sees it in a small flower that grows outside the limits of the garden as if it wanted to join the place where the chain-link fence – lush with plants and weeds – once stood. As she puts it: “Je le vois dans une passerose qui pousse à l'extérieur des limites du jardin, dans un brin de myosotis… non, ne m'oubliez pas, dans une pensée dans la fente du trottoir (Bertrand).[8]

Bertrand was not the only one to mourn the disappearance of the green fence. Architect Michael Fish, who undertook the renovation of 422-436 rue de Sébastopol in 1995, was appalled at the uprooting of close to one hundred cedars he had planted at the foot of the fence a couple of years after the renovation of the buildings. Fish had other reasons to be interested in the fate of the fence, the *délaissé* landscape alongside it, and the view beyond it. In a conversation in July 2016, Fish explained that the cedar plants were intended to embellish the street and to act as an extension to the Jardin des Voisins, thus making the street more attractive to prospective buyers of the renovated workers' houses.

Abandoned for 20 years, the nineteenth-century row houses on rue de Sébastopol were in dismal condition when Fish purchased them in 1989 (see fig. 18). At the time, he was determined to save the buildings, as they were “all that remained from a historic explosion of energy and genius that transformed Montreal into what it is today and into what it will become” (Fish 8). Today, twelve homes in three attached buildings at street numbers 422-444 still stand on the northwestern end of rue de Sébastopol (see fig. 19). In true British railway tradition, the engineering firm Petro, Brassey, Betts & Jackson, which in 1854 was commissioned to build the Victoria Bridge and the GTR workshops (Hanna 69), also took on the construction of housing for the railroad labor force. As a result, in 1857, on a small parcel of land on the western side of the GTR Shops, Petro et al. built a row of duplexes, which they “named Sebastopol Row, to commemorate the 1855 fall of Sebastopol to French and British troops during the Crimean War”

[7] “In a matter of hours, everything was gone: the two apple trees, of which one was a symbol of resilience; gone about 60 cedars that were over five meters tall and which on summer and winter afternoons resonated with a symphony of birds.” Author's translation.
[8] “I see it in a hollyhock that grows outside the limits of the garden, in a small forget-me-not… no, do not forget me, in a pansy in a crack in the sidewalk.” Author's translation.

(Hanna 70). At the time, the Row consisted of six buildings, twenty-four flats, and one tenement block (see fig. 20). The fourplexes housed the increasing number of workers who came to Montreal to participate in the city's industrial growth and to be part of the rapid expansion of the Canadian railroad.

The terraced flats were modeled after existing workers' houses in Newcastle, England, "the birthplace of steam railways in Great Britain" (Hanna 70). The houses were functional, with each building housing four flats. Each downstairs apartment had its private entrance; the upstairs flats shared a doorway and an interior staircase, which made the design unique and different from the "Tyneside flats" that lined the River Tyne in northern England.[9] Hanna writes: "It appears that Sebastopol Row was one of the prototypes for Montreal's duplex type and, more specifically, the prototype for its classic fourplex grouping" (Hanna 70). The fourplex formula was an efficient solution for the growing Montreal working class population that seemed to overpopulate the old working class districts. Indeed, "construction boomed in Montreal between 1859 and 1866, to accommodate workers pouring into the city every week" (Hanna 84). Hanna continues:

> In adapting the duplex to a mass market, builders showed interesting skills. Because the native duplex required the sacrifice of part of the width or frontage of the lot to accommodate the outside stairways appended to the side or front walls of the structure, it was rapidly supplanted by the Sebastopol model, which internalized its stairways, combining them in the case of the fourplex. This increased the ground coverage of the lot for residential purposes. (Hanna 85)

Petro et al. owned the houses until 1868, when they agreed to sell them to J.S. Simpson, a motorman in the employment of the GTR, who had lived on rue de Sébastopol since 1861 (Lauzon 37). In 1857, half the occupants of Sebastopol Row were either engineers, motormen, or mechanics in the employment of the GTR. From 1857 to 1862, all occupants on rue de

[9] Like the flats on Sebastopol Row, Tyneside flats were built in rows, and were two stories high with separate entrance doors "punched out of a smooth facade" for flats on the first floor (Hanna 68). However, the Tyneside fourplexes did not appear to feature the intriguing use of a common door and inside stairway for two upper flats in Sebastopol Row (Hanna 74).

Sébastopol were of British origin and worked for the GTR (Lauzon 36). During those years, the lives of the residents on rue de Sébastopol were clearly linked to the livelihood of the Canadian railroad.

The long row of duplexes lends a distinctiveness to the city's streets that remains today. The houses "depict an idealized view of the area's industrial past" (*La Pointe* 21), as evidenced by the inscription of "GTR" and "CN" on the buildings' main mural on the eastern facade of Sebastopol Row (see fig. 21). The mural's colorful cityscape is bordered by portraits of leading figures involved in the construction of the Canadian railroad and the Victoria Bridge at the height of Montreal's industrial revolution.[10] A smaller mural above the 432-434 rue de Sébastopol entrance features locomotives built in the GTR Shops between 1861 and 1961 (see fig. 22a). Two English engineers and former residents of Sebastopol Row are depicted in a mural above the 440 rue de Sébastopol entrance (see fig. 22b). Fish explained why he chose to paint the murals in 1997, upon the completion of the row houses' renovation:

> The houses are different from all other homes in the area; they are unique, important. The mural subjects relate to the development of the city and the country and historic new technology; they honor the original builders and the modern preservationists. Without the murals, nobody would ever have visited the area, enjoyed its history, and learned something. The murals educate, they entertain and make the residents proud. (Fish)

Fish hoped that the murals would illustrate the direct connection between the workers' houses and the railroad. Little did he know how many local residents would visit rue de Sébastopol to enjoy a stroll down this narrow street that so distinctly recalled the industrial past of Pointe-Saint-Charles. There was something magical about watching and hearing the trains come and go behind the see-through fence; it was a scene unlike any other in the neighborhood.

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[10] Featured on the mural are: Benjamin Chaffey (inventor of the steam-powered boom derrick), Robert Stephenson (railway and civil engineer), Thomas Keefer (civil engineer and surveyor for the Victoria Bridge), Alexander Ross (chief engineer for the GTR and the Victoria Bridge), James Hodges (chief engineer for the Victoria Bridge), John Young (Commissioner of Public Works and Harbor Master), and Samuel Morton Peto (civil engineer and builder of the Victoria Bridge and Sebastopol Row) (Triggs et al. 37-74).

The Jardin des Voisins with its uninterrupted view on the CN yards invited me and others to reflect on the industrial heritage of the neighborhood.

Today, the sound berm is radically changing the street's character. Rising in a mass along the entire length of the street, it dwarfs Sebastopol Row and the adjacent garden. Fish's murals do not make immediate sense now that the CN yards are hidden behind the wall. The residents of Sebastopol Row who loved to stand outside of their front doors to see the show of colorful engines passing near their homes now face a wall. Likewise, the residents on adjacent rue de la Congrégation can no longer enjoy this scenery from their backyards. The berm has blocked their access to the sight of trains, a view that represented a critical element of labor that characterized Pointe-Saint-Charles.

Chapter 2: What has the sound berm produced sensorially?

Residents living on rue de Sébastopol point out that the berm has not succeeded in silencing the sound of trains. Why then did the AMT make the decision to build the sound berm? What motivations could have led the AMT to take on this $237 million project? This chapter explores various actors' positions in the struggle over industrial sound in present-day Pointe-Saint-Charles, including the company that manages corporate-community relations, a local group that is protesting what they see to be excessive train sound, and research about the effects of excessive sound on inner-city populations.

The AMT's website includes a full page dedicated to the construction of their new maintenance center and the "noise-abatement" berm along rue de Sébastopol. This page expresses the company's desire to maintain good neighborly relations with the residents of Pointe-Saint-Charles, and positions this dynamic as the prompt that led the AMT to engage an acoustic firm to calculate noise levels caused by the future maintenance center (Pointe-Saint-Charles Maintenance Centre). The acoustic firm's results led to the AMT's decision to build a sound barrier, whose purpose is to keep the noise levels between 41 and 53 decibels, from 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM. According to the AMT report, no train maintenance activity would take place after 4:00 PM. The new, improved decibel levels would fall within the World Health Organization's guidelines, which assert that urban noise should not exceed 55 dB(A) or 55 decibels (Price and Perron 15). Perhaps not coincidentally, in September 2015, a few months prior to the AMT's November 4 community meeting, the National Institute of Public Health in Quebec identified Pointe-Saint-Charles, Outremont, and Charny, in the province of Quebec, as critical locations where train shunting resulted in high levels of noise during nighttime hours (Martin et al. 31).

The AMT's proactive move to build a berm may also have been a response to Pointe-Saint-Charles residents' complaints about train noise, received over the past fifteen years. On 27 September, 2015, I attended a public assembly organized by the local community group, Action-Gardien, which takes an active role in organizing neighborhood initiatives. In 1999, Action-Gardien created Le comité Nous et les trains (NTU), a special interest committee, whose objective is to represent Pointe-Saint-Charles' citizens in their communications with CN. During the assembly, attendees not only raised their concern about train noise, but also about the risk of

train accidents. These fears were particularly poignant in the wake of the 2015 derailment and explosion of a freight train pulling seventy-two oil tankers in Lac Mégantic, Quebec, which caused the death of forty-seven people and destroyed several buildings in the center of town ("Lac Mégantic Derailment"). Two relatively recent train derailments in Montreal's Southwest could have had tragic consequences. On February 23, 2014, a CN train derailed and spilled 3,500 liters of fuel near homes, a community center, and a school in Saint-Henri, a residential neighborhood adjacent to Pointe-Saint-Charles. A similar accident without serious consequences happened two years earlier, on 24 September, 2011, in the heart of Pointe-Saint-Charles, again near homes, a community center, a school and a library (When It Comes to Railway Safety). Residents are rightfully worried and continue to call on CN to take people's concerns seriously. Throughout the meeting, I gained insight into the attendees' growing frustration with CN, whose response to the community's complaints appears to have been uneven at best.

In November 2015, NTU submitted a formal complaint with the Canada Office of Transportation (COT). The complaint included an exhaustive list of previous proposals to CN asking for the construction of a sound barrier, the relocation of train shunting to areas outside the residential areas, a change of working schedules, train speed reduction, and generally, more open communication between CN and the residents of Pointe-Saint-Charles. CN ignored most proposals, with the exception of the company's agreement to install train wheel lubricators and to limit shunting activities to trains with a maximum of 20 carriages. However, as stipulated in NLT's document, neither solution has been effective in reducing train sound (Le comité 3).

The November complaint again requested that shunting activities be relocated away from residential areas, and included a noise study completed in 2014 by Stantec, an environmental consulting firm. Stantec measured noise levels over a 24-hour period at four specific locations in Pointe-Saint-Charles, near the railroad tracks and shunting stations (see fig. 23). The study compared the combined ambient noise levels produced by freight and passenger trains, freight operations, and general urban noise to those noise levels exclusively contributed by CN (see fig. 24). Stantec demonstrated that in all four locations the ambient noise levels consistently exceeded 55 decibels (the maximum noise level recommended by the World Health Organization), and that noise contributed by CN alone amounted to over 93% of the combined ambient noise levels (see fig. 21). The COT responded without delay and agreed to hold a mediation session on 16 February, 2016.

Following the February mediation, Marie-Josée Béliveau, a representative of NTU, indicated that she was encouraged by the session, and hoped that a second mediation meeting scheduled for 14 April, 2016, would produce specific results.[11] My conversations with Béliveau helped me to develop a thorough appreciation for the community's tangible initiatives, strong sense of solidarity, and genuine intent to engage the private, public, and community groups in finding a mutually acceptable solution. It was evident that community members had pooled their interests, and jointly were working towards a solution to the issues of sound and noise that affect their revitalizing neighborhood.

The testimonies about the deleterious effects of train sounds by the assembly participants prompted me to learn more about the effects of noise on health. I was intrigued to read that research about the effects of environmental noise on the non-auditory aspects of health in urban settings concluded that most individuals who were exposed to chronic noise learned to tolerate it, and that the "effects of noise were strongest for outcomes that, like annoyance, could be classified under 'quality of life' rather than illness" (Stansfeld et al. 72). This statement contradicts a recent study undertaken by Public Health Ontario, which estimates that one in ten cases of Alzheimer's among those living by busy roads could be linked to air and noise pollution (Living near Heavy Traffic).

While Stansfeld et al. posit that most individuals who are exposed to chronic noise seem to tolerate it, annoyance does not decline over time. Furthermore, the authors point to the possibility that coping with adapting to noise is achieved at some cost to health: "McEwen coined the term 'allostasis' to describe the body's response to chronic stress, in which there is a patho-physiological cost to maintaining health" (Stansfeld et al. 72). Undoubtedly further research is needed to clarify this complex and vast area.

Undesirable sound, however, should not simply be linked to the scientific study of decibel levels; instead the significance of sound should be considered in its economic, social, cultural, and historical context. Historian Mark Smith suggests that while it is theoretically possible to demonstrate that "North America became louder as it modernized – by measuring increases in decibel levels – such an emphasis deafens us to the social and historical implications of the heard world" (Smith 365). Railroad and factory workers who relied on their jobs for

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[11] In September 2016, Béliveau reported back that although discussions with the COT were continuing, she was not in a position to disclose any detail from their negotiations.

survival tolerated the often-deafening sound of machinery and hammering inside their working places by necessity, making them perhaps "less inclined to protest than someone employed in an office and residing in a quiet district" (Kenny 88). In his discussion about the working conditions in urban factories, Nicolas Kenny quotes social historian Dr. Christophe Verbruggen, who justly points out that workers "had other priorities in life: surviving" (Kenny 89).

Verbruggen's observations seem to apply exclusively to workers who are concerned about keeping their jobs. For this thesis it was necessary to broaden my inquiry and to seek the opinion of a more diverse group of people, and to understand their respective perception of train sound. I interviewed ten individuals who fitted in four distinct groups: two Pointe-Saint-Charles residents and one former resident whose relatives worked as CN machinists and welders; three individuals unaffiliated with CN who were directly involved with the restoration of Sebastopol Row and the creation (and upkeep) of its adjacent garden; two professionals unaffiliated with CN who live on rue de Sébastopol; and two individuals unaffiliated with CN who oppose and combat train noise in Pointe-Saint-Charles. I was not privy to my interviewees' income and did not categorize them as blue- or white-collar workers. From our conversations, it became clear that the relatives of former CN workers considered train sound to be part of the fabric of Pointe-Saint-Charles, and delighted in sharing memories about what they called their blue-collar neighborhood. The individuals who chose to live on rue de Sébastopol, and those who were responsible for the restoration of the street's row houses and garden all labeled train sound as the vestige of the history of labor in the area. The interviewees without any affiliation with CN differed in their definition of noise, with two individuals being more vocal in expressing their dislike for excessive urban sound.

Architectural historian Annelies Jacobs posits that arguments about sound always involve issues of power and social distinction, and that "Western elites continually thought of noise as a sign of a deliberate disruption of societal order, often by those lower in hierarchy" (qtd. in Jacobs 311). This thought is much in line with Emily Thompson's definition of soundscape, which states that "like a landscape, a soundscape is simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment; it is both a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world" (*The Soundscape of Modernity* 2). I therefore believe it is crucial to consider the cultural aspects that are hidden behind a particular soundscape, and to identify the relationship of the listeners to their aural environment as well as the "social circumstances that dictate who gets to

hear what" (*The Soundscape of Modernity* 2). As such a soundscape has less to do with nature than with civilization, and therefore it is constantly changing.

Mary Duffy grew up on rue de Sébastopol. In her testimony, she brought up the train whistle, the chuffing of the engine, the squeaking of the wheels, and the clatter of the tracks as she reminisced about her life on the street:

> I lived on Sebastopol for twenty-one years, and fell asleep to the sound of trains. I liked looking at the trains passing by. My father and my grandfather worked for CN. My grandfather was a brakeman. That was the life we knew well. (Duffy)

Carl Dettman has lived on rue de Sébastopol since 1997, in one of the houses renovated by Michael Fish. He bought his apartment for a good price and enjoys the sound of train. He does not have any past affiliation with CN, but he is fascinated by the history of the Canadian railroad:

> I find it peaceful hearing the hum of a train going by. I like to look at the trains moving along the tracks. The sound berm has taken away this dimension, to be able to see and hear the trains. The sound is not the real issue. The greater concern is the safety of the trains, particularly in the wake of the recent disaster in Lac Mégantic. (Dettman)

A local resident who wished to remain anonymous intimated that train sound was not truly an issue on rue de Sébastopol:

> Here on Sebastopol I do not hear the trains much; the people living near the tracks in Pointe-Saint-Charles proper are more exposed to the trains rolling through – both VIA and freight – approximately every 15 minutes. (Anonymous)

In a 2012 interview for the "From Balconville to Condoville" oral history series, long-time Pointe-Saint-Charles resident Donna Leduc proudly associated her neighborhood with the passage of trains:

> [We] grew up here and we always had the trains. That is the tradition of our community. [Trains] were very noisy, especially if you lived near them. But we felt that was part of the community. So to come in, from outside, and wanting to change that, [means] taking away something that is traditionally of the area. (Leduc)

Reflecting on his conversations with people growing up from childhood in Pointe-Saint-Charles between the 1930s and 1960s, author Dave Flavell routinely asked those he met about the sights and sounds of their industrial neighborhood. He observed that his interviewees often mentioned the train tracks that cut through the middle of Pointe-Saint-Charles, as well as other examples such as the factories, the stockyards, the Lachine Canal, the ships coming and going, the streetcars, and the ongoing sounds of clusters of children in the streets. For example, during an interview, Bertrand Bégin, who lived in the neighborhood from 1937 until the late 1960s, reminisced about the sound of streetcars right outside his house:

> I will always remember […] the streetcar would reverse direction and go back the other way […]. The tracks would spring loudly into position […]. The loud clanging noise would wake us up if the windows were open in the summer. (Flavell 318)

Flavell indicated to me in discussion that he felt that past residents reflecting on the sights and sounds of the neighborhood did so from the standpoint of looking back at what was simply a normal part of growing up in Pointe-Saint-Charles. His observation brings to mind the argument of urban sociologist Talja Blokland who presents the concept of nostalgia as selectively remembering the past in a way that "supports a negative evaluation of the present situation, and positions the past as a coherent, comprehensible era" (Blokland 272). Perhaps Leduc and Bégin's collective memory is an act, or a process that enables them to make sense of their changing environment in the contemporary world.

Some more recent residents who live in what is now post-industrial Pointe-Saint-Charles consider train shunting that takes place in the immediate vicinity of their homes a true nuisance. In an interview with CBC reporter, Shawn Apel, on October 2, 2013, residents Peter King, Eugene Nicolov, and Vera Granikov expressed their opinion about train shunting:

> You get afraid, you know, when your heart starts pounding because you think something is happening. That's the worst. (Nicolov)

It booms. (King)

> It's like thunder. (Granikov)

It is evident that the interpretation of train sound by the residents of Pointe-Saint-Charles is highly subjective. For those who lived in the neighborhood during its industrial heyday, the trains and the tracks mean a job at CN, a linguistic divide, or simply the acoustic background of the place of their childhood. Remarkably, not a single person I interviewed who had lived in Pointe-Saint-Charles since its industrial days minded the sounds of the trains. There are also newer residents who attribute the sound of trains to the neighborhood's working class heritage, and who recognize that sound is part of the urban acoustic environment. However, to some newer residents, train sound means noise that interferes with their quality of life, as noted by Chatterjee and High:

> New residents are particularly insistent that trains have no place in such close proximity to what they perceive to be a "residential neighborhood." They have met resistance, however, from those who point to the neighborhood's historic relationship to trains and industry. (Chatterjee and High 9)

Deindustrialization has silenced most factory sounds locally. In addition, this historical process not only changed the nature of sound but also the culture of listening. By the 1970s, a new environmental consciousness motivated men and women in their effort to abate urban noise. Emily Thompson posits that by the 1970s, "the problem of noise was recast as noise pollution, and a solution was sought through grass-roots organizations" ("Noise and Noise Abatement" 197). NTU is an excellent example of such an organization, in which a number of local residents organized themselves to combat train noise in Pointe-Saint-Charles. While NTU's co-leader Peter King admits that trains are part of Pointe-Saint-Charles, he complains about the increasing noise produced by trains, and states that "sound pollution has increased since the end of the

1990s" (Chatterjee and High 11). A survey circulated by NTU in the fall of 2015, asked local residents to document the nature of train sound and vibration, as well as the impact of train noise on their lives. Interestingly, the survey form did not reserve a space for residents to express "their disagreement with the underlying assumptions about trains and the noises that they produce" (Chatterjee and High 11).

The sense of hearing was once vital to communities in their identification of place and time. Church bells called people to prayer, town criers informed the local population of the latest community news, and train whistles warned of approaching freight or passenger cars. In his 1977 book *The Soundscape,* composer and environmentalist Murray Schafer describes a soundscape as the ever-present noises with which we live. He identifies three distinct characteristics within a soundscape, namely: keynote sounds, signals, and soundmarks. "Keynote sounds," Schafer explains, "are those which are heard by a particular society continuously or frequently enough to form the background against which other sounds are perceived" (Schafer 272). The background noise of trains and factories in Pointe-Saint-Charles during the industrial period thus constituted the keynote sounds of modern life. Signals, in contrast, are foreground sounds and "constitute acoustic warning devices: bells, whistles, horns and sirens" (Schafer 10). The train whistle in Pointe-Saint-Charles functioned as "a stop clock of the community, and was as predictable as a church bell" (Schafer 81). The train whistle also had its own characteristic: the old steam whistle produced a cluster of frequencies while the modern diesel engine whistle is a single tone (Schafer 82). Schafer's third theme, the soundmark, is derived from the term "landmark" and refers to "a community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially noticed by the people in that community" (Schafer 274). Schafer argues that "once a soundmark has been identified, it deserves to be protected, for soundmarks make the acoustic life of the community unique" (Schafer 10). While in Pointe-Saint-Charles train sound does not exactly need to be protected (because it is in no danger of disappearing), its unique soundmark deserves to be part of the neighborhood's history because, like a landmark, it has etched its signature over the entire working-class cultural landscape of Pointe-Saint-Charles. For Schafer, "soundmarks reflect the character of the community, even though they may not always be beautiful" (Schafer 239).

Historian Richard Rath takes Schafer's argument a step further by suggesting that "not only sound but also vision is a necessary component of any culture's perceptual field" (Rath

174). Rath claims that together the aural and visual fields are fundamental to the identity and culture of an urban environment. The regular passage of trains in Pointe-Saint-Charles converges with the geographic identity of the "place", where the train tracks and the overpasses are part of the neighborhood's visual character.

McGill University professor emeritus and local resident Pieter Sijpkes is a staunch critic of train noise and shunting in Pointe-Saint-Charles. To protect himself from train sound, he sleeps inside the vault of a former bank building, which is now his residence. However, he finds that he is more tolerant of train noise when he can see where it is coming from:

> I actually managed to doze off one evening while watching the motion of trains from the top of my building. I admit that I cannot live in isolation in the city, and although I consider shunting to be a brutal sound, I have generally developed a sense of humility vis-à-vis train noise. (Sijpkes)

As an extension to Schafer's interpretation of sound, I support Mirko Zardini's proposal, to take into consideration the "full spectrum of perceptual phenomena that make up the sensorial dimension beyond the regime of the visual" (Zardini 19). Zardini, Director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, observes that:

> Alongside the traditional notion of a visual landscape, we have begun to recognize the identity of individual cities by their unique sounds. You need only to look at the recent increase of recorded soundscapes as a form of guide to cities around the world, or the insightful installations and "walks" of Canadian artist Janet Cardiff, to grasp the importance of this new alertness to sounds and noises in our urban environment. (Zardini 22)

In her urban installations and walks, Cardiff allows the sensorial qualities of sound to be an integral part of the definition of a public and urban space. Anthropologist David Howes suggests that we let all our senses participate in the exploration of a place's history, as "sensory history seeks to enliven the dry bones of history and puts us in touch with the past through the analysis

of the sensory practices that produced the distinctive sensibilities of historical periods" (Howes 324).

When in the late 1950s the village of Iroquois, Ontario, was moved 1.6 kilometer north of its original riverbank location to accommodate the widening of the Saint Lawrence Seaway, the newly built damn drowned the rapids and subdued the currents. The movement and sounds of the river were silenced. The uprooted residents missed the comforting roar of the river, the soundmark of the town. The relocated villagers had "grown and thrived as sensing beings by actively living amid the sights and the sounds of the river, and had made sense of themselves through their sensing bodies" (Parr 101). Their bodies effectively acted like archives of sensory knowledge that helped them recognize their home and, by association, who they were.

Nevertheless, as Emily Thompson points out, post-modern times are characterized by the need to control the environment, and to be able to choose a preferred sound. Thompson writes, "Post-modern engineering is all about manipulating and channeling the silent streams of digital data, whose content has the power to take us wherever we want to be" ("Noise and Noise Abatement" 198). I admit that I eagerly insert my earbuds and select my favorite soundtrack to accompany me on my urban walks. I effectively tune out the sounds of the city and detach myself from the past and present sounds of the streets, only to withdraw into the temporary comfort of my preferred musical selection. My acoustic horizon has therefore shrunk, and isolates me from the acoustic community that surrounds me, and distances me aurally from the past.

The gentrification of Pointe-Saint-Charles has had an impact on some residents' perception of train sound in a neighborhood where, many years ago, life noisily spilled into the streets, and where today a new tranquility resides except for the ongoing train sounds and construction on some streets. The passing trains and the crashing sound of coupling railcars cause irritation as well as a link to the area's industrial past. Based on my interviews, the residents who chose to live on or near rue de Sébastopol seem to have accepted or even embraced the soundmark of trains moving within their acoustic environment. Interestingly, the AMT did not assess the closest residents' tolerance for train noise; they simply went ahead and built a wall based on their assumption that the local population found train sound undesirable. The berm has been built but according to residents it does not silence train sound nor does it

address the critical safety issues related to a potential train derailment. What then has the sound berm accomplished? The third chapter of this thesis seeks to address this question.

Chapter 3: What has the sound berm produced symbolically?

The sound berm on rue de Sébastopol has separated the street's residential housing stock from its traditional basis in the working yards of the CN Railway. It thus functions as a barrier to understanding the heritage of the neighborhood as a working-class landscape. The barrier divides rue de Sébastopol from its history, which is indelibly linked to the story of the Canadian railroad. Rue de Sébastopol finds its true voice when it is "at the heart of the urban landscape history, where the architectural and aesthetic qualities of the place need to be understood as inseparable from the environment in which it is situated" (Hayden, "Urban Landscape History" 18). Dolores Hayden likens urban landscapes to "storehouses for social memories, because […] streets, buildings and patterns of settlement, frame the lives of many people and often outlast many lifetimes" ("Contested Terrain" 9). Rue de Sébastopol frames the lives of people who once worked for the railroad, and whose lives were inextricably linked to the GTR and CN in later years. Rue de Sébastopol is the storehouse, as it were, for many tales related to the railroad.

Mary Duffy lived on rue de Sébastopol from the day she was born in 1934 until she got married at the age of twenty-one. She vividly remembers playing on the street as a child, and greeting the CN workers as they walked along rue de Sébastopol on their way home:

> Our house was a two-minute walk from the entrance of the CN yards. Every day, when the workers from CN finished their shifts, they would come streaming up our street and joke with us as we all played and watched them go past. (Flavell 237)

Local resident Frederick Lear brings to life the culture of the blue-collar workers who on paydays would charge down rue de Sébastopol, on their way to the bank to cash their checks. He tells a story about a weekly event called the "Grand Trunk Races".

> On paydays, at the sound of the closing shop whistle, the men would literally run up Sebastopol, along Favard Street and past our house to the bank. The younger men and those in good physical condition would outrun the older men, and often there would be some pushing and shoving as they tried to break into the line entering the bank. It was quite a sight and we looked forward to it. (qtd. in Mills 78)

The historicity of the street location, its workers' flats, and the residents' testimonies about the railroad and the sound of trains underscore the relationship that rue de Sébastopol once had with the GTR and CN. The sound barrier built by the AMT has interrupted the dialogue between the homes of the CN labor force and their worksite across the street.

The berm effaces the cultural landscape of Southwest Montreal, which is so well captured in Gabrielle Roy's 1945 novel *Bonheur d'occasion.* An abridged version of the original novel was translated into English in 1980, and named *The Tin Flute*. In her book, Roy gives the reader a "powerful portrait of […] urban life, of the […] existence in overcrowded rooms and streets filled with the cacophony of railroad crossings and factory whistles" (Stouck 146). The novel poignantly relays the lives of the poor and the workers who lived in the district of Saint-Henri, where the "assault of howling locomotives, the peal of the great bells, the raucous streetcar gong" enveloped the neighborhood (Roy 33). The characters in Roy's novel lived in an urban and harsh industrial community; they were concerned about making a living during the years of the Depression and the Second World War.

The proximity of work and home in Pointe-Saint-Charles is often mentioned in the interviews I have undertaken or consulted for this thesis. Sebastopol Row and its location near the tracks are often inseparable in interviewees' memories and stories. Resident June O'Donnell refers to rue de Sébastopol as the "street down by the yards." In a 2013 interview led by Steven High for the "From Balconville to Condoville" oral history series, O'Donnell exclaimed: "Ever go on Sebastopol Street? See how close those trains are?" (O'Donnell). Rue de Sébastopol was home to several employees of the railroad; according to Thomas Demick, a long-term Sebastopol Row resident, the houses' fourplex design made it possible for the so-called "callboy" to reach four worker families in one round (Hanna 75). Hanna describes the callboy system below:

> Freight trains were dispatched as traffic demanded from the Pointe-Saint-Charles yard adjacent. The railway could call on a train crew at any time of day or night. Railways traditionally relied upon the callboy system where, as soon as the train crew requirements were drawn up, callboys were dispatched a few hours ahead of departure time to a series of addresses to call, and wake up if necessary, the crew members from a priority list and back-up list. (Hanna 75)

During a personal interview I conducted in July 2016, long-time Pointe-Saint-Charles resident Cindy Day described rue de Sébastopol as a paragon of working-class culture. She mentioned the horse stables that stood on the corner of rue de Sébastopol and rue Favard, the visual access to the CN yards, and the general feeling of the old neighborhood. She expressed her disappointment about the construction of the berm: "Sebastopol Street has been closed off and the old view is gone. The trains were part of Sebastopol Street's landscape, its culture. The trains are part of the history of Pointe- Saint-Charles" (Day).

The berm has reframed the cultural landscape of Pointe-Saint-Charles, and has removed direct access to that which makes a local and distinctive sound: the trains that are culturally and historically inseparable from the workers' houses on rue de Sébastopol. As such, it has fenced off and disavows the cultural landscape of labor that is integral to this neighborhood's past. As Christine Leuenberger writes: "Historically, [...] fences have always served as cognitive tools that could unintentionally be used to sediment notions of cultural homogeneity within a border and signify incompatibility across borders" (Leuenberger 64). The rue de Sébastopol barrier creates a presumed incompatibility between the workers' houses and the railroad on the other side. The barrier "solidifies and enforces cultural differences within communities with walls in the midst" (Leuenberger 74). The wall creates a disconnect between the Pointe-Saint-Charles community and the railroad. It epitomizes a presumed distinction between the CN yards, a space of work, and the adjacent streets, a space of residence.

The berm makes it difficult to imagine that which was accessible before its existence, which was access to the element of labor that completes the story of rue de Sébastopol and Pointe-Saint-Charles. In *After the Berlin Wall: Germany and Beyond,* historians discuss the cultural politics of a wall that is present and absent at the same time. "The idea of an invisible wall […] stands for more complex reflections about our ability (or inability) to imagine something that once was but no longer physically exists" (Gerstenberger and Braziel 6). While the Berlin Wall has been dismantled, the concept of a "mental wall" persists in cultural memory long after its disappearance. Although the Berlin Wall is associated with a traumatic history, Gerstengerger and Braziel's quote is relevant to our discussion in that the existence of the berm may make it difficult for the visitor to imagine the history of labor in the neighborhood. If the sound berm serves to blur the connection that existed between rue de Sébastopol, Pointe-Saint-

Charles, and the railroad, how will it affect visitors' ability to imagine the place that labor once occupied in the history of Pointe-Saint-Charles?

The berm's design aims to create a perfectly clean and conditional viewing. The berm now makes it hard to imagine the significance of the close-knit, family-oriented Goose Village, which was located north of the tracks and near the base of the Victoria Bridge (see fig. 1). Goose Village is one of the many "quartiers disparus" that the City of Montreal destroyed to make room for the grand modern projects in Montreal during the 1950s and 1960s. City planners embarked on a decade-long sanitization crusade to facilitate the creation of a modern downtown core, and modern modes of access – highways – to that core. The need for urban renewal and the pursuit of a global economy led to the mega-scale transformation of downtown Montreal. Immense projects transformed the city's central business district. Place Ville-Marie, a massive cruciform office complex, and Place Bonaventure, a multi-purpose concrete monolith represent two of the many developments that completely modernized Montreal's downtown area during the 1960s (Lortie 95-98). In the case of Goose Village, an entire residential area was torn down in 1964, as part of a major urban renovation plan aimed at eradicating unsightly slums in preparation for the Expo '67 (Charlebois and Linteau 174-175). The berm makes invisible the memory of Goose Village – the primary place of residence of GTR and CN workers – and whose history is directly linked to that of Pointe-Saint-Charles. What the berm makes visible, instead, is a magnificent view of downtown Montreal.

The banal-looking berm offers visitors a sanitized spectacle of downtown Montreal. A visitors' bench placed near the lookout invites the passerby to sit down, and to look straight ahead at the splendid view of the CN yards and downtown Montreal. Crucially, in order to attain this view, the spectator must ascend above the row houses along the street, and turn their back to rue de Sébastopol, and indeed to all of residential Pointe-Saint-Charles. From the heights of the berm, the spectator can of course turn around and look down at rue de Sébastopol. But in doing so, will they immediately associate Sebastopol Row with the CN yards? Or will they simply be entertained by the well-preserved, vernacular row houses down below? Or will the new luxury infill houses, adjacent to Sebastopol Row, make more evident the recent changes that occurred along the street? I believe that looking at the neighborhood streets from above will further enhance the stage-like setting created by the berm, and widen the separation of Pointe-Saint-Charles from its source of labor. If the berm's purpose is to entertain, then its effect is to enable

the forgetting of the recent past by integrating the visitor into the act of separation between working yards and living memory. And while it has not shut off the train sound, the barrier wall has effectively shut the lid on a chapter of history in Pointe Saint-Charles. The berm creates a sensational visual experience, separate from the workers' houses on rue de Sébastopol, one that eradicates the narrative of the city below the hill.

Conclusion

The AMT built a "noise-abatement" berm working under the assumption that most residents on rue de Sébastopol and on adjacent streets did not like train sounds. Intriguingly, the AMT did not hold a general community meeting prior to their decision to build a sound berm. Such an assembly would have been an opportunity for nearest residents to voice their opinions and to explain their reasons for choosing to live near the tracks. Instead, the AMT held a brief information meeting one month before the construction start date. They left no written information, and discouraged questions from attendees. Carl Dettman, who was present at the meeting, described it as short and perfunctory: "Some people asked detailed questions about construction noise, but the AMT dodged them" (Dettman).

As of this writing, the Pointe-Saint-Charles sound berm is slated to open to public access in the spring of 2017. Despite its stated purpose, the structure has not stopped sound at all. Instead it has created a large barrier whose purpose would appear to be essentially symbolic: it is a large, expensive gesture that demonstrates the corporation's willingness to resolve community-corporation disputes. If the berm has failed to change sound levels in the neighborhood, it has, however, changed the morphology and directly intervened in the cultural landscape of rue de Sébastopol. The "improvements" to the area, including a sloped, grassy wall that is accessible via a ramp to walkers and cyclists, serves as an outdoor stage for a unique spectacle exposing the view of downtown Montreal. But the story behind the spectacle is absent.

Throughout my research, I have privileged the voices of local residents, allowing them to collide and differ in their storytelling about Pointe-Saint-Charles. I asked interviewees to speak about their perception of train sound in the place they all call home. While all agreed that trains are part of the daily soundscape of Montreal, points of view differed widely. Some admitted to liking the hum of the trains and consider that sound to be part of the texture and legacy of what was, once, a blue-collar neighborhood. Others have learned to live with it, while residents who are kept awake by train noise, find this sound to be a major inconvenience.

Following my interviews with local residents, I observe that train sound today is often a site of conflict and is not always associated positively with working-class heritage, labor, and knowledge in Pointe-Saint-Charles. While to my ears the regular passing of trains sounds a link

to Pointe-Saint-Charles' industrial past, the significance and relationship of this sound to Pointe-Saint-Charles for some of its residents at least, have changed.

An older generation remembers Pointe-Saint-Charles as a vibrant community during Montreal's industrial heyday. Such individuals make up a substantial part of the living memory of the neighborhood. But this generation is aging and their memories will not always be accessible. With their passing, the historical connection between labor and the neighborhood of Pointe-Saint-Charles will disappear. Concordia University's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling[12] keeps numerous recordings of stories told by the older generation. The tales and anecdotes provide crucial testimony about the history of labor in Pointe-Saint-Charles. But not everyone may have the time to visit the Centre to consult the vivid testimonies related to this neighborhood. The berm should therefore provide some narrative about the locale to the public that visits the berm. As such it could and should become a platform for informing the public about the history of the neighborhood and its connection to the railroad.

The stories of the past, now stored at the Centre, could be transcribed and incorporated in didactic panels placed along the ramp. Better yet, they could act as a link to the soundscape that the berm would otherwise aim to obscure. The voices of the older generation could again tell stories about life in Pointe-Saint-Charles, and inform the visitor of the significance of the working class heritage of the neighborhood, and the meaning of train sound in such a place. Still photographs taken from scenes of Canadian films or documentaries related to CN would provide vivid illustrations to the written stories of the past. I am thinking more particularly of Fergus McDonell's 1958 National Film Board film, *Train 406,* which documents CN's operations in Montreal. The AMT's future information center, which will be located inside the company's administrative building, will be too far away from the berm to achieve this direct link between Pointe-Saint-Charles and the CN yards. It could, however, be the perfect site for the viewing of the 30-minute long *Train 406* documentary film, which shows how trains are linked to Canadian nation building through visual culture and films.

In my Brooklyn riverfront neighborhood, the ferry landing that faces Lower Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty features poetry by Walt Whitman. The poem is a ballad about East River crossings. Visitors often read Whitman's verses, question what the words mean, and how

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[12] For more information about the Centre, go to: http://storytelling.concordia.ca

they relate to the history of the locale. Likewise, the berm on rue de Sébastopol could be more than a stage with a spectacular view, and serve as a threshold rather than a barrier to the history of labor in Pointe-Saint-Charles.

As it exists today, the newly built sound berm on rue de Sébastopol has screened out the cultural tableau of trains rolling along a back street lined with modest houses that were built for railroad workers during the industrial heyday of Montreal. The barrier wall has orphaned rue de Sébastopol and has weaned it from its industrial context. Yet, the barrier wall has not succeeded in hushing the whistle and clatter of the trains that continue to resonate like a language that carries its own mystery code along rue de Sébastopol and Pointe-Saint-Charles.

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Figures

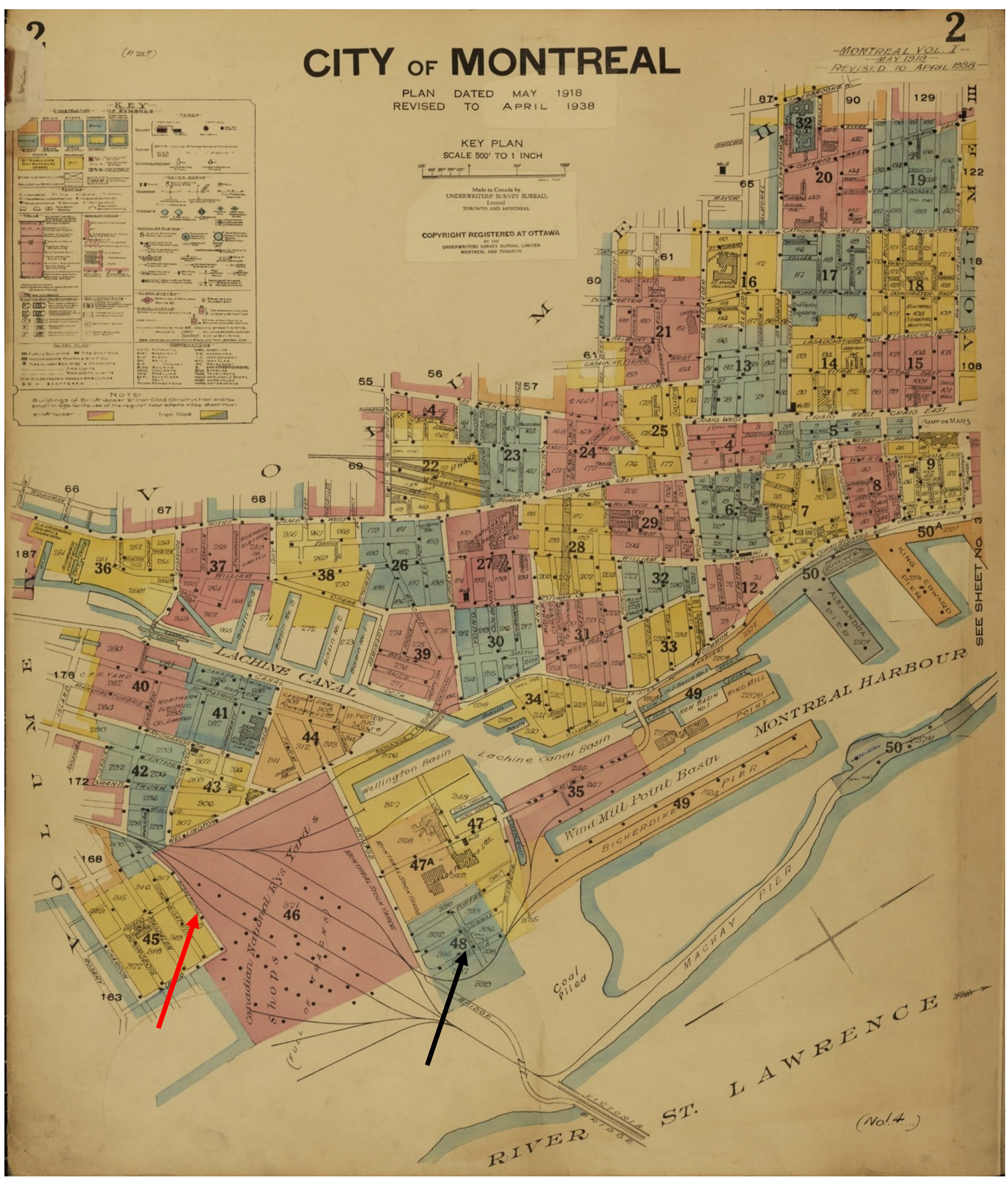

Fig. 1. Index map of City of Montreal. Insurance plan of City of Montreal, Quebec, Canada, vol. I (1918, revised in 1938), plate 2. Red arrow indicates rue de Sébastopol in Pointe-Saint-Charles; black arrow indicates Goose Village.

Fig. 2. 1949 Montreal Land Use Map, plate 52-76. Courtesy of Ville de Montréal, Gestion de Documents et Archives. Detail of rue de Sébastopol and adjacent streets (left), the CN Yards (middle), and Goose Village (right).

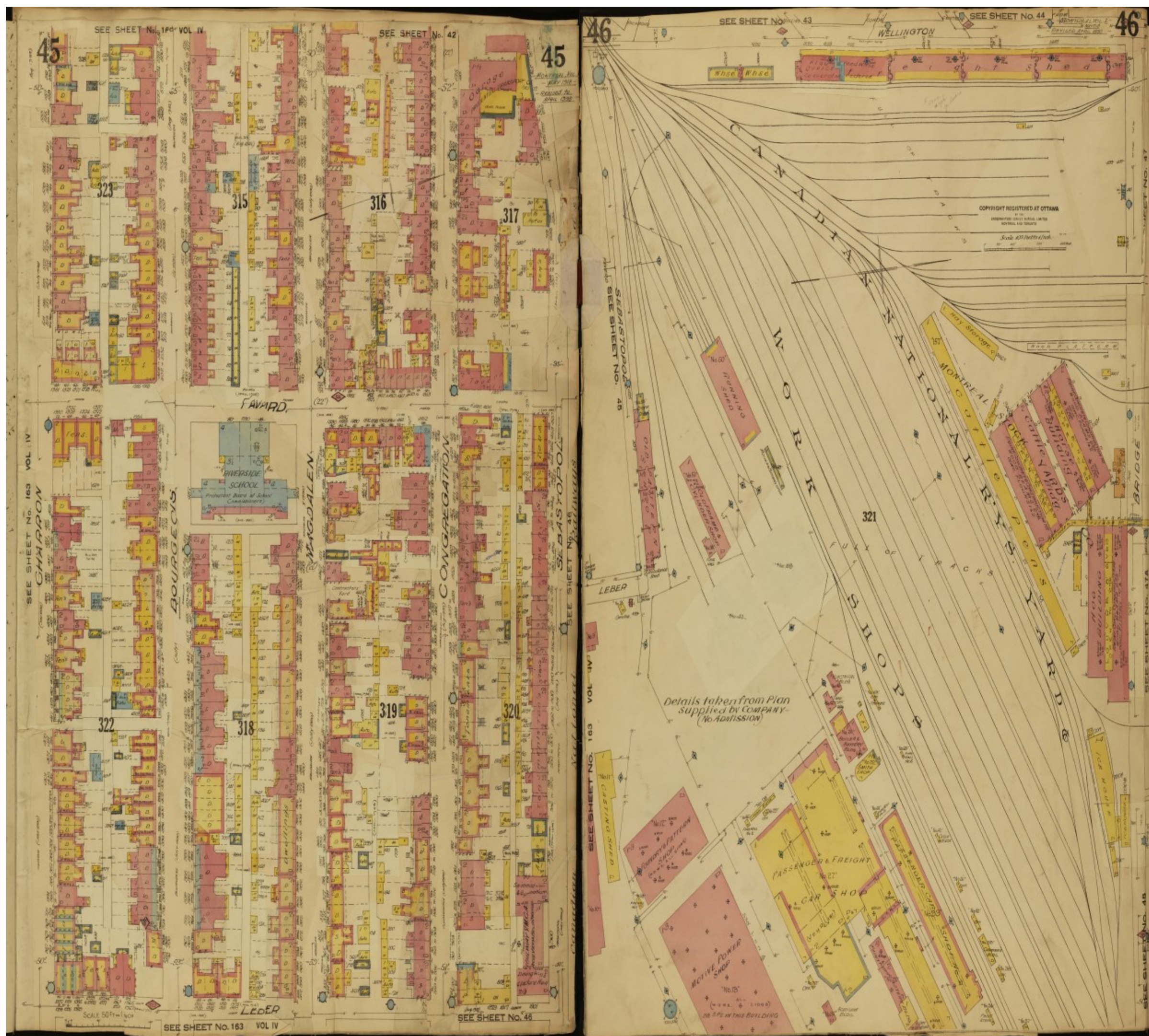

Fig. 3. (Left) Insurance Plan of City of Montreal, Quebec, Canada, vol. I (1918, revised in 1938), plate 45. Detail of rue de Sébastopol and adjacent streets.

Fig. 4. (Right) Insurance Plan of City of Montreal, Quebec, Canada, vol. I (1918, revised in 1938), plate 46. Detail of Canadian National yards.

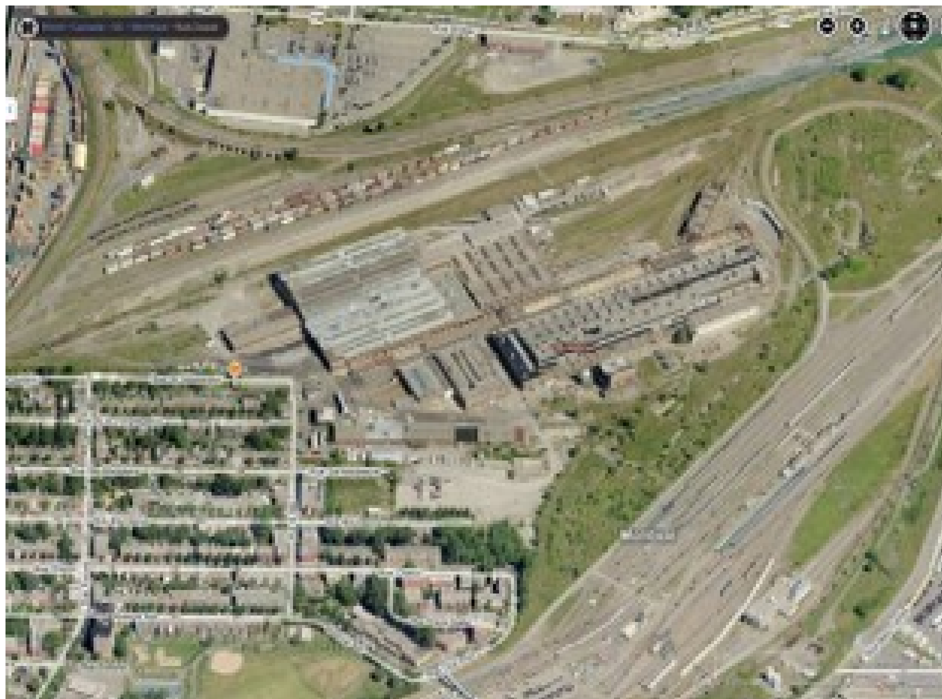

Fig. 5. Aerial view of rue de Sébastopol and Canadian National yards. Date unknown. Private collection of Carl Dettman.

Fig. 6. Sound berm on rue de Sébastopol. 19 July 2016. Muriel Luderowski.

Fig. 7. Sound berm on rue de Sébastopol. 8 August 2016. Muriel Luderowski.

Fig. 8. View of downtown Montreal from rue de Sébastopol. Date unknown. Private collection of Carl Dettman.

Fig. 9. Urban intervention on rue de Sébastopol. November 2014. ©David Ward.

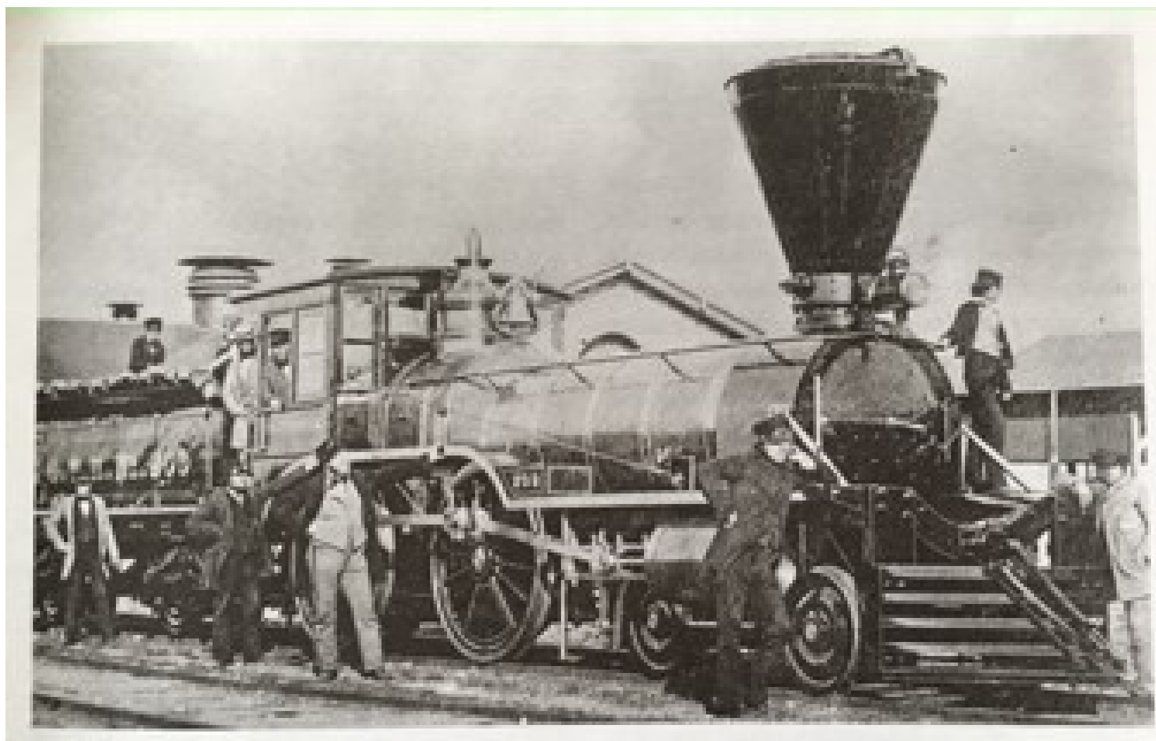

Fig. 10. *Locomotive nr. 209*. 1859. Canadian National Photography Archives, CP-6513.

Fig. 11. Map of Pointe-Saint-Charles. Revised from Atlas Goad, vol. I (1881 revised in 1890) & vol. IV (1890). 2013. Gilles Lauzon and Denis Tremblay.

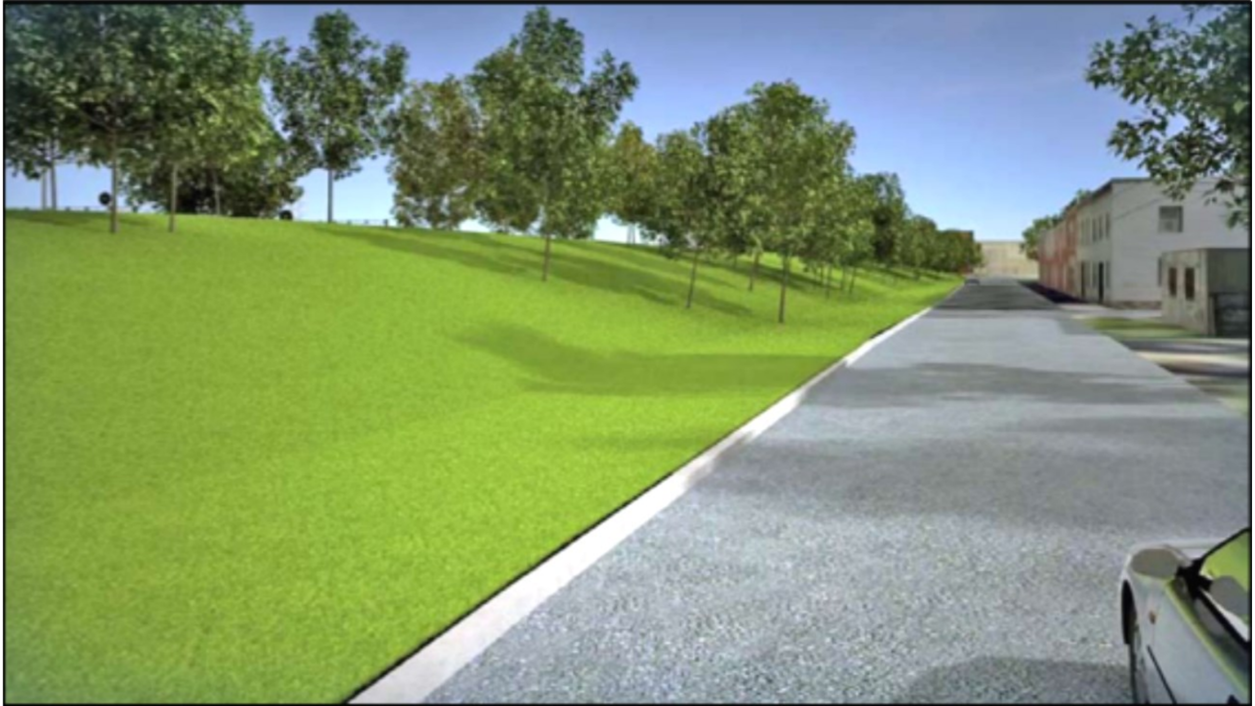

Fig. 12. Rendering of proposed sound berm on rue de Sébastopol. Date unknown. Private collection of Carl Dettman.

Fig. 13. Sound berm on rue de Sébastopol. 24 September 2016. Muriel Luderowski.

Fig. 14. Aerial view of rue de Sébastopol showing sound berm with central ramp and lookout. Date unknown. Private collection of Carl Dettman.

Fig. 15. Chain-link fence on rue de Sébastopol. Date unknown. Private collection of C. Dettman.

Fig. 16. Jardin des Voisins. August 2016. Muriel Luderowski.

Fig. 17. Sunflowers along the chain-link fence on rue de Sébastopol. Date unknown. Private collection of Sylvie Bertrand.

Fig. 18. Sebastopol Row. 1995. Sebastopol Row Condo Association. Michael Fish.

Fig. 19. Sebastopol Row. 1997. Sebastopol Row Condo Association. Michael Fish.

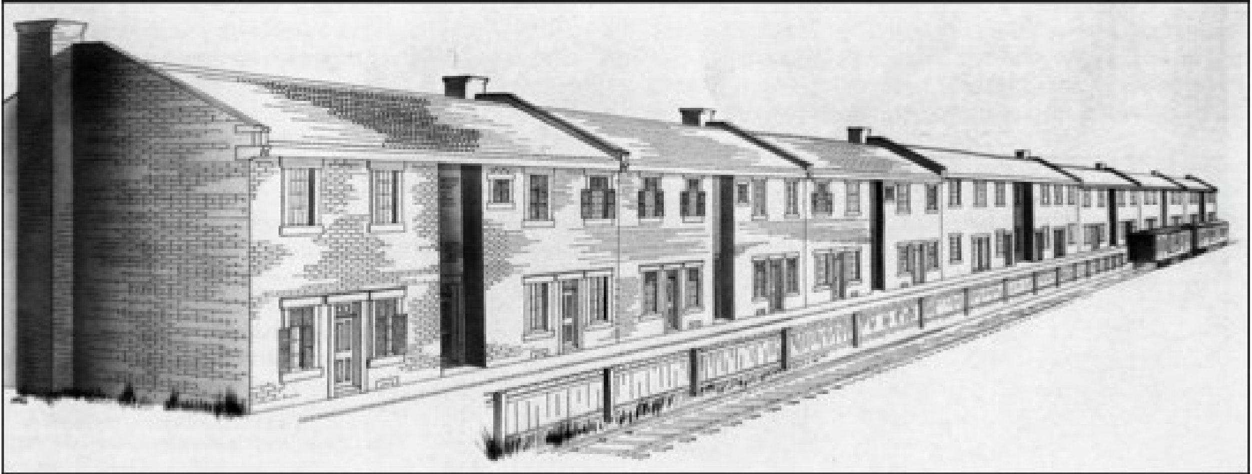

Fig. 20. Sebastopol Row. 1858. Sebastopol Row Condo Association.

Fig. 21. Sebastopol Row main mural. 2000. Sebastopol Row Condo Association. Michael Fish.

Fig. 22. (a) Mural with locomotives; (b) mural with engineers. 12 July 2016. Muriel Luderowski.

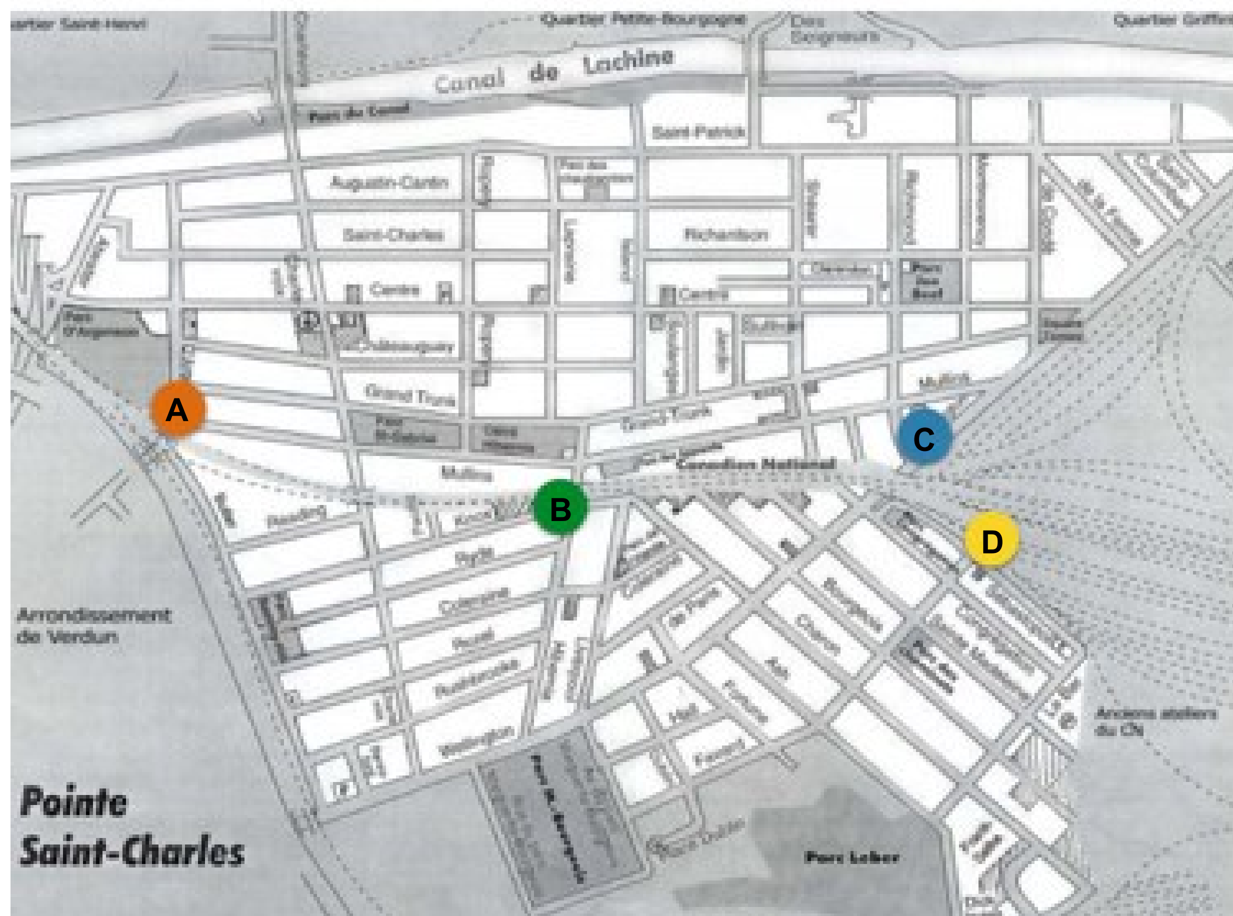

Fig. 23. Map of Pointe-Saint-Charles. Color dots refer to streets identified in Fig. 24. Accessed 1 May 2016. archive-lapointelibertaire.org.

		Ambient noise levels (LAeq-24h-dB(A))		
Map reference	Address	Ambient noise by all three sources*	Noise contributed by CN	Noise level recommended by WHO**
A	2761 Mullins	62	60	55
B	889 Hibernia	63	63	
C	604 Sucrerie	65	64	
D	448 Sebastopol	64	59	

Fig. 24. Noise levels measured by Stantec over 24-hour period in fall 2014. (*) Three sources included freight and passenger trains, freight operations, and general urban noise. (**) Nighttime noise level recommended by WHO is 40 dB(A), with an intermittent level of 55 dB(A) in urban areas where 40 dB(A) level is hard to achieve. Daytime noise leve recommended by WHO is 55 dB(A). Combined levels over 24-hour period therefore correspond to 55 dB(A). 12 March 2015. Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal.