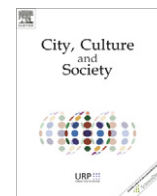Contents lists available at SciVerse ScienceDirect

# City, Culture and Society

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ccs

# Intercultural welcoming spaces in Montréal
# Harmonization drivers for a new sense of identity

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Collective spaces are the underlying armatures of societies, a physical, economic, social framework that supports the creation and growth of shared identities. Since antiquity, common spaces have been the connective textures of a community, contributing through distributions, dimensions, morphologies, to embody the local material culture, outlining the society's values, attitudes, and beliefs.

The paper takes into account three small scale outdoor collective spaces, leftover between buildings in Montréal, interested in recent years by active protection aimed at re-proposing the idea of common roots among inhabitants, creating a shared texture among different communities. Mediating the intercultural imperatives between the *roots recall* and the new immigrants *encounter*, Québec seems to have widened the vision that traditionally referred a country identity to its history, fastening its ethos to the environmental qualities of spaces. As at the time of the encounter between the Aboriginal first nations living the territories and the French colonists, even today, nature and culture are the two poles around which the dynamic interactions revolve, contributing in small inbuilt urban fragments, to the development and spreading of the sense of being Québecois. The paper, in line with the latest issue of the journal (2011), dedicated to creative cities, outlines the efforts pursued in Montreal to tie settled communities and nature in a new conception of public space.

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## Introduction

The acquisition and strengthening of principles of equality, democracy and freedom marked the approach of the Government of Canada towards the integration between settled communities, during the last decades. Several experiences have been carried on with the aim of promoting linguistic (Canada, Commission royale d'enquête sur le bilinguisme et le biculturalisme, 1965), economic, social (Rocher, Labelle, Field, & Icart, 2007), and cultural understanding and Canadian values sharing (Canada, 1988). With the objective of creating synergies strong enough to lead to a collective identity, natural and man-made environment[1]

have been assumed as an unaware driver of harmonization (Sassen, 2010). Often designed as to become common ground among individuals, space has been taken into account for its attitude to host people in productive harmony giving rise to a democratic and tolerant community (Canada, Patrimoine canadien, 2010).

Despite the ghettoization phenomena that characterized North American multiethnic cities in late '800 and '900, a pluralistic issue aims today the province of Québec's. Here, the stabilization of an inner identity, among all the naturalized groups, goes hand in hand with a shared cultural, linguistic and religious heritage, within a framework of common citizenship (Appadurai, 1990).

The study deals with small scale outdoor areas often leftover in the dynamic growth of city centres. Since 2002, the Municipality of Montréal (*Sommets des citoyen(ne)s*, 2002) adopted a protection and promotion approach towards leftover spaces. With the aim of creating a sense of community within an inter ethnic grouping, the City aimed at improving meeting places' security, accessibility and practicability with dignity and without undue effort or anxiety. Spaces have been taken into account for their vocation in working as repositories of

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[1] The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, recognizes that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future; it promotes the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation. Canada (1988), *Act for the Preservation and Enhancement of Multiculturalism in Canada*.

belonging and of sharing, managing diversities among individuals and encouraging mutual, harmonious relations between social groups.[2]

The paper, in accordance with the main objectives pursued by the journal (Sasaki, 2010; Stolarick, 2010) presents an interconnected view of the cultural, social and design commitments carried out in recent years (Colbert, 2011). For this purpose, it adopts an inductive research method, aimed at the analysis of interculturalism and public spaces management, referring of on one hand, to three small areas taken as case studies, and on the other, to the principles set out in technical documents produced by the Municipality of Montreal. The attitude of outdoor spaces to promote intercultural sharing, is reinterpreted through the discussion of needs and requirements that at a municipal level have informed the design choices, and the detailed analysis of the performances offered by spatial and constructive solutions.

## The role of outdoor collective places in an intercultural vision

Throughout the last 30 year, researchers, urban planners and designers, hotly debated, with different approaches, the concept of public environments in terms of places, giving new meanings, to people's environmental behaviour understanding. Moving from philosophical reflections on dwelling/buildings/spaces (Heidegger, 1971), the scientific community involved in the theoretical characterization of places, has been recognizing to outdoor collective environments the role of witness to memory and identity, linking distributive and constructive characters with qualities of life (Seamon, 1982). Assuming that the urban environment can reflect social ties (Altman & Chemers, 1980), several scholars have been gradually involved in investigating, spaces' attitudes in carrying values and meanings from one generation to the next. Critical reflections about the sense of places, as archives of cultural meanings (Norberg – Schulz, 1980), opened new horizons about the role that collective spaces could play as channels of communication among cultures (Pallasmaa, 1994), providing new ways of sharing identities (Cunningham, 2011).

This theoretical framework has been assumed as the basis of the assumption that the design of outdoor public spaces, may be a precondition for the creation of an intercultural dialogue.[3] Spaces shaping, morphology design, constructions are the shared complex among individuals, groups and communities (Gifford, 1987), that can convey messages of coexistence and dialogue supported by technical solutions compatible with local conditions (Butina & Bentley, 2007). This hypothesis assumes a particular meaning in Quebec, where a new cultural awareness distinguishes contemporary architecture (Zardini, 2005). As part of the great Canada, Quebec leads the deep marks of a long process of negotiations between the search for ways to respectful coexistence and the affirmation of logics of domain. The ideals of acceptance, and accommodation, governing social and environmental relationships in the culture of First Nations, are put in ongoing discussion since the arrival of the French settlers, with repercussions on the characterization of urban spaces and users behaviors.[4] Urbanization proceeds by a sequence of acceptance and rejection of principles, alternating actions aimed at subtraction of spaces to nature, contrast against the forces of climate, and subsequent return to the logic of appeasement of the circle of life (Delange, 1991). Built environments are configured through the conflicting discussion of the Aboriginal vision of interaction with/ through others and nature. The dynamics of the conquest overlap with those of the alliance, impacting on the relationships between different communities that gradually settle on the territory and the growth of built space, significantly affecting the identity of being Quebecois. After centuries of wars, and socio-cultural compromises, at the end of the Second World War, Quebec (Anctil, 2005), begins to think about the possibility to put in place strategies of economic development supported by the ancient principles, never forgotten, of coexistence and interaction.[5] Since the end of the '60s, a

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[2] The journal had already dealt with issues related to the need of cities to affirm the role of public spaces as repositories of past values, describing the experience of Toronto "History can be a tool for social change. It is often said that the victors of history write the history books in their favor. Some stories are promoted, and others are left to dwindle in obscurity. The Missing Plaque Project tries to stand as a force to stop this from happening, by shedding light on the hidden histories." Michael Ripmeester (2010), "Missing memories, missing spaces: The Missing Plaques Project and Toronto's public past", City, Culture and Society, Volume 1, Issue 4, pages 185–191.

[3] "According to research, a vast majority of Canadians (85%) agree that multiculturalism is important to Canadian identity (Environics, Focus Canada, 2003); 82% agree that Canada's multicultural society is a source of pride for Canadians (Environics, Focus Canada, 2002); 81% of Canadians agree that multiculturalism has contributed positively to Canadian Identity (Environics, Focus Canada, 2003); a majority of Canadians (54%) disagree with the suggestion that there is too much immigration; in addition, Canadians almost unanimously (93%) oppose the suggestion that Canada should ban the immigration of visible minorities (2006); the vast majority of Canadians (68%) disagree with the notion that people who want to immigrate to Canada should have their religious beliefs and values screened and approved before they are allowed in (Environics 2006); 79% of Canadians agree that: "immigration enriches Canada because immigrants contribute their know-how and culture to Canada", Dib K., Donaldson I. , Turcotte B., "Integration and identity in Canada: the importance of multicultural common spaces", Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal, 2008.

[4] "La naissance d'une identité canadienne résulte donc de l'implantation d'immigrants dans une terre nouvelle parmi des peuples non européens." Delage (1991), page 21.

[5] "The approach that Québec has developed to deal with interethnic relations includes a widespread practice of « reasonable accommodations," which consists of changing not the law but some modalities of its application, when the result does not entail undue or excessive hardships in terms of cost, administrative burden, and so forth. The goals of "reasonable accommodations" are to better realize the ideal of equality and to avoid discrimination against individuals possessed of a distinctive condition that sets them apart from the mainstream population (it can be a physical handicap, a linguistic trait, a particular religious belief, etc). It is worth noting that those accommodation demands always arise in situations where two fundamental rights, two laws, or bylaws come into conflict in their application: for instance, should a Sikh motorcyclist be obliged to wear a helmet (for security) or not (in the name of freedom of religion)? As we know, no right, even a fundamental one, is absolute or unlimited. Therefore, according to the basic principle of accommodation, a true universality of rights requires flexibility in their application in order to resolve situations of conflict. Those situations can be difficult to handle since a formal or pre-established hierarchy between rights does not exist in the Western legal tradition." , Bouchard (2009), "Ethnic Tensions and Interculturalism in Québec", Newsletter of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Vol. 23 Num. 2, Spring.

process for recovery of sedimented identities starts off slowly, driven by the need to create new answers to the instances of accommodation of work forces, returning to nature and culture, the role of catalysts for identity and social cohesion. Based on these principles, the Province has been strongly working for a pluralistic integration, developing a model of interconnected society (Corbeil, 2007) in opposition to the globalized idea of the city as an addition of ethnic groups[6] (Germain, Contin, Liégeois, & et Radice, 2008). Outdoor places are called to take both, theoretically and in practice, the role of harmonization levers supporting the nurturing of shared values and attitudes in a sustainable vision.

In '80s, public opinion in Quebec slowly becomes the bearer of the idea of connecting the issues of landscape promotion and heritage protection with that of hospitality, through an intense process of identification of assets, according to the UNESCO *Recommendation concerning the safeguarding and historical role of historic areas*. In 1982, the *Charter for the preservation heritage*, identifies landscape and built heritage as a privileged opportunity to transfer a sense of belonging to a community.[7] Relating history and environment, the Charter set out the system of physical, social, economic indicators that can help in defining past identity, and guide the construction of a new sense of belonging.[8] Drawn upon previous experiences and international currents of thought, the Charter outlines some of the specificities of the Province, "harsh climate, a vast territory, the relatively recent establishment of a North American civilization that is European in origin, the French fact, Catholicism". It traces the identity of Quebec to the "combined creations and products of nature and man, in their entirety that made up the environment in which we live in space and time". These statements may be considered the origin of a series of redevelopment projects of great success in urban areas, involving outdoor squares and walkways, where, the sedimented culture becomes the common denominator for future uses.

In late 90's, the redevelopment of smaller and marginal urban spaces becomes a priority for a local response, compared to those provided by the logic of globalization.[9] The UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, in 2001, is the document that most impacts on these experiences,

motivating the assumption that diversity is *wealth*. The sites are able to interact with settled communities and contribute to their gradual renewal, through the values that express and transmit to future generations (Jébrak & Julien, 2008). Extending the concept of settlement to any endeavor resulting from the combined effects of nature and human activities, the instance of affirming the right to difference characterizes the design efforts for collective spaces, aimed at ensuring that individuals can start a creative process and develop a range of personal reflections within an institutional context.

The concepts proposed by the Vienna Memorandum[10] in 2005, further mark urban policies in Quebec, introducing the definition of *historic environment* as the result of urbanization, architectural growth, fielding environmental impacts and social values (UNESCO, 2009). Reciprocity and negotiations are assumed as the main commitment of society, where interaction is supposed to be a two-way process in a shared responsibility framework of the host society and the newcomers (Teixera & Halliday, 2010). During these years, the schools of architecture, the Quebec Order of Architects, Municipal offices, play an important contribution to the transfer of intercultural views and principles to urban planners and designers. Assuming the place making as the result of a dualistic tension between continuity and diversity, technical information and guidelines[11] support the professional practice, suggesting new visions of public space as a reminder of shared roots and place of encounters (Rocher et al., 2007). The idea behind these efforts is that cultural identities should be accommodated together in peaceful coexistence (Labelle, 2000), in a space that is the guarantor of fundamental values of host societies (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008).

## Montreal intercultural city: case histories

After years of development and growth of the underground city, the Municipality of Montréal, at the beginning of the new century, starts facing the questions related with outdoor design (Dunton & Malkin, 2008). The upgrading of roads, streets, squares, footpaths, is taken as an opportunity to activate a policy of *reasonable accommodation*, involving interstitial urban areas, working on a set of common denominator elements as instruments of negotiation, integration and acceptance (Labelle, 2008).

Beyond the best-known project experiences in Vieux Montréal and in surroundings areas (Morisset & Noppen, 2003), put in place by the City with celebratory intent (Gouvernment du Québéc, Ministere de la Culture et des Communications, 1996), three design experiences were realized in 2004 for outdoor space leftover between buildings. Despite the various destinations of the surrounding areas, these collective spaces have in common the purpose of accommodating specific communities (students or residents) resulting at the same time open to all citizens. Equally, these sites are historical, located in crowded areas, enjoyed every day by a high number of people, that express

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[6] Since the 1970s, Quebec has been interested by immigrating fluxes of visible minorities from the developing world, with slight fluctuations of 225000–275000 annually. Under the Canada-Quebec Accord, Quebec has sole responsibility for selecting most immigrants destined to the province. Statistics Canada projects that, by 2031, almost one-half of the population over the age of 15 will be foreign-born or have at least one foreign-born parent. The number of visible minorities will double and make up the majority of the population of cities in Canada.

[7] The ensemble of any group of buildings, structures and open spaces in their natural and ecological context, constitutes and characterizes human settlements over a relevant period of time. Among these "areas, which are very varied in nature, it is possible to distinguish the following in particular: prehistoric sites, historic towns, old urban quarters, villages and hamlets as well as homogeneous monumental groups, it being understood that the latter should as a rule be carefully preserved unchanged", UNESCO (1976), *Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas*, 26 November.

[8] From the *Venice Charter* (1964) that made reference to "monuments and sites" and dealt with architectural heritage, the concept of heritage has expanded to include the idea of cultural landscape highlighting the interpenetration of culture and nature. Referring to an anthropological approach, heritage has been identified with the social ensemble of many different, complex and interdependent manifestations.

[9] The community of Montreal notes the desirability of stimulating mini-urban projects, along with mega - projects, described by Lisa Bornstein (2010), "Megaprojects, city-building and community benefits", *City, Culture and Society*, Volume 1, Issue 4, pages 199–206.

[10] *Vienna Memorandum* adopted by the International Conference "World heritage and contemporary architecture – Managing the historic urban landscape" 12–14 may 2005 Vienna, under the Patronage of UNESCO 2005.

[11] Architecture Canada et les ordres d'architectes provinciaux (2010), *Manuel canadien de pratique de l'architecture, 2e édition*.

different accommodation requests, related to their linguistic, religious, ethnocultural diversities.

Conceiving culture as a pathway to encourage the sense of ownership to neighborhood and city, university campuses have been conceived as privileged places where to improve the liveability and integration issues, because of educational efforts in promoting social cohesion. The assumption that outdoor design can be an identity driver (Knez, 2005), is declined with different choices and final results, in the two major universities of Montreal.

This is the case of Marosi, Troy, Jodoin Lamarre Pratte et associés architectes' project for Tomlinson square at the University of McGill College, hosting each year an international student population of almost 20 percent of its entire student body.[12] The campus, located in a central area of the city, consists of 82 buildings constructed before 1940, with some of the largest areas of green space on the Island of Montreal.

Clear boundaries identifiable in old and new buildings, mark Tomlinson square, long considered as a residual area inside the prestigious and ancient campus, and upgraded by focusing on identity and recognition of characters on a mixture of cultural influences. Design recollects the constructive cultures testified by the pavilions facing this area, stressing spaces' qualities relied to accessibility and inbuilt areas' attitudes in being traversed are the design requirements. The final intent is to pursue a new quality of design to an abandoned and crowded space, lacking identity, overcoming a condition of marginality. Within a linguistic island, significantly increased in the last decade, thanks to the presence of foreign students, the McGill Anglophone College is today, both culturally and logistically, a strategic meeting place, mediating between different influences, in the heart Montreal. In the context of university education, the design of public spaces becomes a special opportunity to train anglophone generations, improving the welcoming capacity of those who are destined to remain in Quebec after graduation, as well as those who are called to export new models of living abroad. The space is shaped along an ancient service walk and arranged in order to be reached and passed through in respect of instances of intrusion protection that underlie the civil coexistence of communities. With the help of concrete pavers, granite, wild grasses, stone, metal, water, the square invites users to a cross walking experience. Turning physical constraints into assets, the roof of an existing "immovable" service tunnel, which partially surfaced along the main axis, becomes a ramp. Leaning a fountain against an existent wall that demarcated the tunnel, provides the opportunity to create a visual focus and a symbolic centre of the urban space. A strong recall to the power of nature is provided by the fountain with its stepped basins, and its reflections and sonority. The fountain acts as a spatial element that articulates movement and views throughout the collective area, with its trays that connect the terrace of the Genome building, the ramps over the service tunnel leading to the Square, and the terrace of the Trottier building. With the

adoption of finish materials, the designers express a desire of granting compatibility minimizing their presence in this urban significant gap adopting concrete, recycled limestone, COR-TEN steel, granite. In order to accommodate the university community, with the help of areas characterized by varied separations, services, furnish elements and greenery, as the magnolia grove promenade, the fountain court, and the garden court parterre (Fig. 1).

In different terms, the public French-language Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) in 2004, redesigned its outdoor collective spaces in the courtyards of the Complexe des science. Taking an active part in the social, economic and cultural advancement of society, the UQAM, created in 1969 as a fusion of the l'École des Beaux-Arts, Collège Sainte-Marie and three écoles normales, hosts every year, approximately 40,000 students. Among the objectives pursued by the Board, there is a specific desire to give priority to a model of coexistence between residents and foreign students, ensuring the liveliness of campus life.

Fulfilling the architectural complex, designed by Saia, Barbarese, Topouzanov, et associés, the courtyards were conceived as a flexible public landscape for downtown campus, an urban forest crisscrossed by pedestrian pathways. The design solution refers to the idea of university campus as a system of greeneries. Following the US universities' tradition, Claude Cormier stresses the ecological nets' continuity, conceiving the university site as an indistinct system of buildings and green spaces. Working around memory, the design aims to highlight links between the sense of community and the importance of natural environment for a feeling of well-being in a densely de-composed space coming out of buildings (Lo, Yiu, & Lo, 2003). A screen with leaves and trees gives partial shade to buildings in summer and allows light to penetrate in winter. The designer seems to pay new attention to the constructive and natural elements in order to promote mutual acceptance among users, through the affirmation of cultural individuality, focusing on students' ability to perceive and acquire local identities against any temptation of globalization. Green areas' quality is granted with the adoption of native essences and cultivations and a spe-



**Fig. 1.** (File number 2267), Tomlinson square at the University of McGill College. The aim to accommodate the community is achieved with the help of services, furnish elements, greenery.

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[12] Due to bilateral student exchange agreements the campus welcomes people from Australia, Austria, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

cial attention to compatibilities among ground, nature, light and air conditions. Pursuing continuity in the ecological nets means in this experience, providing opportunities for recognition throughout the settled community bringing back in the different areas of the campus, all the interaction dynamics that connote construction and nature in the immediate context at the heart of Montréal's historic arteries. Acknowledging the constructed nature of landscape in its truest form, is the key of this design experience. With an insistence, the designer peels back the historic, economic, botanical, ecological and socio-cultural aspects, working on each specific component and slowly intersecting them. The site's history is cleverly related to new uses to the west, where triangular gardens surround existing buildings (including industrial buildings that date back to 1911), which become pavilions in a garden of densely planted trees. Creating a series of campus shortcuts to the numerous access points for the city, interior paths are organized in an irregular way, setting against the formal disposition of the historical buildings on the site. Accessibility and space's attitude in being traversed is granted working on usable space and its attitude in being reached and passed through autonomously even by children or people with reduced mobility or with sensory deprivation. Observing in details the different areas that compose the campus, it is interesting to outline the solutions adopted for the court yard of the pavillon des Sciences biologiques, with a garden living laboratory for direct observations. Here, the magnolia flower becomes the inspiration idea: looking at this space from high, it is possible to guess two flowers on the floor. A Zen-inspired garden, in a third courtyard, creates a contemplative area used for official receptions. Bamboo plantings provide a semi-opaque border, distancing it from its built surroundings (Fig. 2).

The renewal of Dalhousie square in 2004, answers to the imperative of granting spaces' morphologic recognisability and environmental impact mitigation, re-building a collective space on historical intangible strata.

Once located outside the fortified boundary, the area was connected to the city centre after the taking down of fortifications that took 13 years, from 1804 to 1817. As



**Fig. 2.** (File number 2234), courtyard of the Complexe des Science, Université du Québec à Montréal. The design highlights links between the sense of community and natural environment.



**Fig. 3.** (File number 2243), courtyard of the Complexe des Science, Université du Québec à Montréal. The densely de-composed space.

many other sites, the place Dalhousie square was part of the faubourg Québec destroyed in 1852 due to a fire. At the end of the XIX century, the Municipality decided to build here the train railway station to Québec. The design solutions adopted in 2004, by the Parks and Green Spaces Department of the City of Montréal with the landscape architect Robert Desjardins, put forward again the history of the main components of the neighbourhood, and the factors that shaped it. The design refers to physic, economic, social transformations occurred to the ancient city since the destruction of the walls. On the north side, the square is set by the former Dalhousie station, restored in 1988 to house cultural institutions; on the other side, there are residential settlements. Common space becomes, in this experience, a revealing mirror of the intercultural society, where all elements contribute in defining the decisional and management processes. The design solution for Dalhousie square stresses the idea that past heritage is the base to build a future sense of belonging. Environmental impact mitigation, imposes to submit spatial irregularities and discontinuities to distributive, dimensional and material choices, with the support of traces of the ancient rail lines, separation, service, furnish elements and greeneries. Creating new welcoming conditions related to the presence of residences and cultural institutions, the square morphology and layout are dependent on the intercultural idea of mobility. Materials and their laying are the communication vehicle of these concepts (Fig. 4).

### Discussion: harmonizing the sense of identity

After 15 years of debate (Québec, 1977, 1984, 1986) the *Sommets des citoyen(ne)s* in 2002, is the first occasion for public discussion of an intercultural vision referred to built spaces, encouraging users' involvement in collective

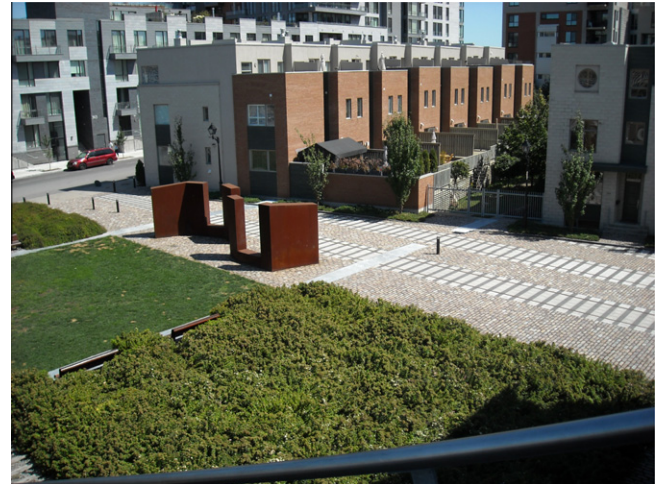**Fig. 4.** (File number 2291), Dalhousie square. The square morphology and layout are dependent on mobility.



**Fig. 5.** (File number 2293), the Jocelyne Alloucherie's "Porte de jour" in Dalhousie square.

management, and training designers to deal with new approaches[13]. Equity and identity preservation are assumed as the main objectives in order to fulfil the needs related to linguistic, religious and ethnocultural diversities of future generations. Promoting social mixing becomes an imperative in organizing and planning collective environments, on the assumption that putting in place strategies of interculturalism requires not only the satisfaction of housing needs, but also the redefinition of appropriate public services and facilities (stores, schools, libraries, sports and recreational facilities and green spaces).[14] In addressing the problems of the settlement of new arrivals and the interaction with the population already resident (Sénécal & Hamel, 2001), Montréal launches concerted design approaches for outdoor spaces, informed to the creation of common references between inhabitants, for a peaceful and respectful cohabitation, mediating local influences and ethnic presences.[15] Promote contact between settled communities assumes the role of key action to return to the quality urban environments.

The commitment to encourage social mixing in order to promote an intercultural concept of spaces (Labelle & Dionne, 2011), delineated in the *Sommets des citoyen(ne)s* (Ville de Montréal, 2003), unites the three redevelopment projects adopted as case studies. The idea behind these solutions is that well managed and animated public spaces can become beacons of the city's intercultural intentions.[16] The organization of a well-defined hierarchy between areas

is the key for helping users in identifying functions and performances by delineating sectors through natural, artificial, real or symbolic boundaries. In Marosi and Troy, project for Tomlinson square at the University of McGill College, in Claude Cormier Complexe des science, in Desjardins Dalhousie Square, security needs have been conveyed, fostering users' interaction, vigilance, and control. Surveillance requirements have been satisfied maximizing the ability to spot suspicious people and activities with the help of technological devices. Iintegrability and usability requirements are translated into actions aimed at encouraging the intended use of public space all day long. More specifically, Tomlinson square is conceived with the aim of stressing spaces' attitude to accommodate not only the cultural elite who attends the buildings of the faculties, but to open spaces to all citizens, in accordance with the University regulations (Fig. 3).

In the courtyards of the Complexe des science, Comier plays with nature's rules, and its attitude to support mixing, by exhibiting several landscapes chosen for their adaptability to urban climate, showing how nature, people and built can form a unique continuous. Remarking built environment texture, in Dalhousie square the attitude to accommodate different users is pursued with the help of contemporary forms as the Jocelyne Alloucherie's "Porte de jour", a Cor-Ten steel sculpture that introduces new relationships between past and present (Fig. 5).

In 2004, the Montreal Master Plan[17] officially states a direct link between flexibility in use of outdoor spaces and social cohesion. The request to ensure places specifically designed to accommodate diversity, leads to a planning process focused on accessibility, usability, safety and security. Outdoor structure, texture, and equipment are assumed as privileged chances for mediating multicultural presences, promoting elements attitude in coping with changes, favoring dialogue, identity respect, and the creation of common references (Ville de Montréal, 2004). In these perspectives, aarchitectural and urban arrangements, are bound together by the desire to keep undamaged the ecological and land-

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[13] Especially the *Sommets des citoyen(ne)s* in 2002 (Sommet de Montréal Bilan Juin 2003), has been the first occasion for outlining a cultural development policy as the main commitment for the Montreal society, aimed to reach a leader role in a worldwide developmental scenario.

[14] Service de la mise en valeur du territoire et du patrimoine, Direction du développement urbain, Division du patrimoine et de la toponymie Évaluation du patrimoine urbain, arrondissement de Ville-Marie.

[15] *Imagining – Building Montréal 2025*, is the document, published in 2006, with the aim of designing urban developmental scenarios after the Montréal Summit. It aims at an inclusive, equitable and coherent vision. Culture promotion has been assumed as the engine able to improve the City liveability and dynamism and to modify the standards of quality of life. Built environment quality is assumed as a fundamental condition and pursued through physical, social and economic actions. Transforming built environment is the key action for making of Montreal a pleasant and prosperous place to live.

[16] As recently outlined in the document of October 2011, *Results of the Intercultural Cities, A comparison between 40 cities*, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/cities/Index/Montreal_en.pdf.

[17] The Master Plan presents a planning and development vision for the City, as well as measures for implementing the goals and objectives resulting from that vision. The Master Plan was adopted by City Council on November 23, 2004. By-law, it came into force on December 10, 2004.

scape characters, integrating collective areas with the surroundings and protecting inner specificities of sites. This approach gives rise to flexible environments, viable under different microclimatic, safely, easily and with dignity (Ville de Montréal, 2007a, 2007b). Offering more than one solution to help balance everyone's needs and recognizing that any design scenario may not work for all, an intercultural commitment orientates the organization of transit and pause spaces – driveways, promenades, squares, seating areas... – adopting devoted separation, service, furnish elements, greenery (Manai, 2009).

The commitment of flexibility in use, set out in the Montreal Master Plan, is conveyed in the design of interstitial spaces for accommodating communities. In all the selected cases, not altering the landscape essential features, spaces are conceived with the aim of remarking flexibility, preserving and promoting historical traces, respecting paths and boundaries. The original genesis and consequent transformation of spaces are always respected, showing shapes and distributions coherent with initial features and formative rules. Spaces irregularities and discontinuities are submitted to distributive, dimensional and material choices. Design arrangements aim to grant compatibility between traditional performances and new vocations with the help of solutions that take into account the ground morphology and geometry. Image preservation and culture sharing is pursued for these collective spaces with solutions aimed at ensuring attractiveness. In Tomlinson square, working on an interstice and dense area, the design team offers a significant response to the request for flexibility: the space encounters with a mosaic of heritage testimonials as the Strathcona Hall and modern buildings – the Genome Building (2003), and the Trottier Building (2004). In the courtyards of the Complexe des science, a cross-cultural vision, promotes the protection of links between nature and built environment. The final solution, with 173 trees, chosen taking into account their different colours in seasons, emphasizes nature's changeability in terms of colors and settings opening to an idea of space that welcomes and accompanies through its changes, any type of user. In Dalhousie square the imperative of granting flexibility in uses is highlighted by the organization of differentiated paths for sedimented uses.

Despite the limitations of the theoretical contributions in the field of spaces design and architecture, a predominant role is taken in Montreal, from studies conducted by Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, leading to the publication in 2008 of the report Building the future, A Time for Reconciliation (2008) after their appointment as members of the one-year Quebec commission to examine the issue of "reasonable accommodation" for minorities in the province. The idea of harmonizing the sense of identity introducing the principle that "...if we were to cursorily define the notion of accommodation, we would have to speak of equality in difference". Space design has to anticipate and compensate for discrimination in the communities that occupy the public space and ensure equitable opportunities for enjoyment, to all the cultural elements present. In the broadest context, collective spaces are asked to play a role of harmonization drivers among communities, when they can support negotiation of adjustments aimed at resolving conflicts or the incompatibility of norms, values, beliefs, customs and traditions. The novelty, which can be seen from

this contribution, is due to a new attention to the issue of reciprocity. Considering the ethnic/cultural backgrounds of citizens, spaces are asked to respect the instances of interpersonal interaction, managing distribution, morphologies, constructive qualities. The need to comply with reciprocity expressed by settled communities, promoting or denying body contact, posture, visibility, silence, informs spaces, orienting the three selected case studies. Here, designers work on appropriate ways of access, crossing, stop, defining standards of visual, auditory, olfactory perception, adopting devoted separation, service, furnish elements, greenery (Manai, 2009). Spaces are thought taking into account the ecologic value of the respect areas and the road cross-section, mitigating the acoustic and environmental pollution, compensating the grounds' waterproofing and optimizing the meteoric capacity due to placer mining. Spaces are arranged granting naturalistic elements maintenance, native plant species conservation, and grounds' waterproofing, and water recycling (specifically detected in the case of Complexe des science de l'Uquàm). The design efforts are orientated to create penetrable spaces with attractive and safe surface routes for pedestrians. In Tomlinson square, sizing pathways supports instances of reciprocity: the definition of safety distances, let all users the freedom to move through the ramps, stairs and terraces, without invading the space of those who stop in one of the sitting areas. In the courtyards of the Complexe des science the idea that signs Cormier's approach is that nature can limit undesirable interactions: hedges and borders create green screens that hinder vision, and make it difficult to approach the buildings. In Dalhousie square, reciprocity becomes a need in an area traditionally devoted to railway traffic, hosting travellers and migrants now reconverted into dwellings: the design solution calls in cause the definition of a new physical organization, relating morphologies and distributions to social transformations. Despite the previous case, this project emphasizes the values of visibility and ease of movement, integrating the system of vertical and horizontal paths. Arrangements aim to reduce the impact of traffic intensity, regulating roads' sections, managing the caesura effect due pedestrianism (specifically detected in the case of Tomlinson square at the University of McGill College). Design solution tries to respond also to the population aging and the climate changes impact. The way citizens, workers, visitors, tourists, live sociality in, is directly influenced by environmental and technological qualities. Real or imaginary barriers are contrasted with the help of the shared values of natural landscape. Transparency and accountability become the main performance in the awareness raising initiatives not intended tot "freezing sites in time" applying a vision of in progress identity, ready for changes as time goes by.

## Conclusions

In addition to the suggestions contained in the technical documents of the City of Montreal, the observed small in-built urban fragments, contribute to uncover the logic that characterizes today the sense of being Québecois through a common denominator between cultures: nature, as universal value. Nature is given the power to reconstruct in a harmonious unity, the fundamental disorder of reality, making

it capable, so, to reveal an ultimate meaning beyond his own chaos. Public space serves to educate the community to a respectful coexistence, making the revealing nature of universally shared values, supreme expression of beauty, the new common denominator between settled communities.

Framing the experiences described in the vision set out for "creative cities" (Cohendet, Grandadam, & Simon, 2011) leftover collective spaces in Montreal, testify the overtaking of a preservation approach on the transformation supremacy, reproposing equilibrium conditions between nature and artifice (Bandarin, 2011), and designing new scenarios for the ancient metaphor of architecture as landscape mimesis, or *imitatio natura* (Frampton, 2007). Focusing on a small-scale observation, the selected areas, demonstrate the predominance of a new alliance between settled communities and nature (Héraud, 2011), an effort to return space to nature, a commitment to appease the forces of climate (Moore & Whelan, 2007). Nature or, rather, the enormity of nature and its attitude in permeating landscaped assets is the invariant element that constantly recurs in the illustrated design experience, as a unifying element creating communities. The power of bringing together the natural self-identity is an aspect that seems to have been shifted into the desire of manipulating outdoor space leftover between buildings. The wonder of nature is the strength of the sentiment shared by the newcomers in Quebec, taken by the Municipality and designers to make the community (Thui, 2010). In this effort, Montreal seems to have widened the vision that traditionally refers a country identity to its history, fastening its ethos to the environmental qualities of spaces. Ground, greenery, water, lights defining the shared texture of connective spaces, are proposed as common denominators among social groups, with the role of integrating lounges, to answer to people needs of residence. The power of a dominated nature discloses to individuals throughout paths, trees, fountains, pools, creating the sense of place with the help of key natural components able to define links between people. Their location and design have a profound effect on individuals, signing communities' attitudes and behaviour. The preponderance of nature can contrast real and imaginary barriers with the help of design, holding groups together. Creating collective spaces is assumed as an essential occasion for helping newcomers to build social networks inside the dominant culture, while enabling their participation in city life. In this vision, Montreal becomes a creative city, for its ability to promote conditions in which "people can play, plan and act with imagination" in full respect of an ecosystem in dynamic equilibrium, where it is possible to encourage the active protection of the enormity of spaces[18], the

integrity of natural settings, with all their diverse genetic inheritance intact for the benefit of all generations.

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[18] "Creativity and innovation are related. They connect but crucially they are not the same… Creativity is concerned with mindset and the overall operating environment, context or wider conditions." "A creative place is somewhere where people can express their talents which are harnessed, exploited and promoted for the common good… The physical environment functions well for its inhabitants, it is easy to move around and connect with each other." "A creative place has a clear identity which results from the dynamism of its culture." "A creative place is open minded and welcoming and as a result many people from a diversity of backgrounds have made it their home." "A creative place is well connected internally and externally, physically and virtually. It is easy to get around, it is walkable, places are accessible and communities are less ghettoized enabling chance encounter. Social mobility is more possible. There are high quality public transport systems." "A creative place has an exceptional quality of life." Landry C., (2011), "The Creativity City Index", *City, Culture and Society*, Volume 2, Issue 3, pages 173–176.

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