

Creative Neighborhoods

Introduction

The notion of *Creative Cities* is the most recent in a long line of planning paradigms that include *Smart Growth*, *Sustainable Cities*, *Healthy Cities* and *Quality of Life Measures*, as well as a host of approaches to local and regional economic development. Each of these paradigms has enjoyed a moment of fame during which researchers crunched vast quantities of data that planners packaged to focus the attention of politicians and other decision makers on critical social, economic and environmental issues. In effect, each has served as a lens that has allowed us to see urbanization patterns and their underlying processes from perspectives that emphasize a different balance between these critical issues and, for a few years at least, point to a brighter future.

Currently the notion of a *Creative City* which has been advanced by Richard Florida¹ enjoys central stage among a great number of politicians, planners and researchers. The essential argument underlying this paradigm is that the economy is increasingly being driven by people who are paid to think – ie work creatively - and that these people have sufficiently different life style preferences and shared values to be considered a “class”. Further, Florida argues that the decisions of individual members of the *creative class* about where they would like to live and work are of increasing importance in explaining urban economic growth. Diversity, tolerance and openness to new ideas are among the key urban characteristics that are attractive to the *creative class* and, therefore, increasingly underlie regional economic growth². Celebrated by some, denigrated by others, this argument has generated tremendous controversy among regional economic researchers³.

Despite the controversy, the paradigm is attractive as it provides a rationale to invest in urban infrastructure and facilities that are of particular interest to the *creative class*, a group that includes most of the city’s decision makers. However, while investment in education, art, culture and entertainment, as well as, the movement toward policies that promote diversity and tolerance are clearly welcome, it is important to examine how the perception of issues and solutions under a *Creative City* lens are complementary or contradictory to the issues and solutions that seemed especially salient using other paradigms that garnered similar levels of interest just a few years ago.

While Richard Florida’s research focuses on comparative analyses of the performance of metropolitan areas in attracting creative employees and generating economic growth, there has been substantially less attention to the location decisions of the creative class within metropolitan areas. In contrast, this paper leaves aside the economic arguments and reports on an analysis of neighborhoods in the Montreal Metropolitan Community where the creative class have chosen to live.

There are six main sections to this paper. First, an overview of Montreal’s place among creative cities will be presented. Second, an analysis of the location of neighborhoods with high levels of people in creative occupations is completed. Third, consideration is given to the extent to which creative neighborhoods meet selected sustainable development criteria. Fourth, a regression analysis identifies key explanatory socio-economic characteristics associated with creative neighborhoods. Fifth, the planning proposals in the City of Montreal’s Master Plan (December 2004) and the Montreal Metropolitan Community Plan (2005) that address creative city issues are reviewed. Finally, recommendations for the use of the creative city paradigm at the neighborhood level are offered.

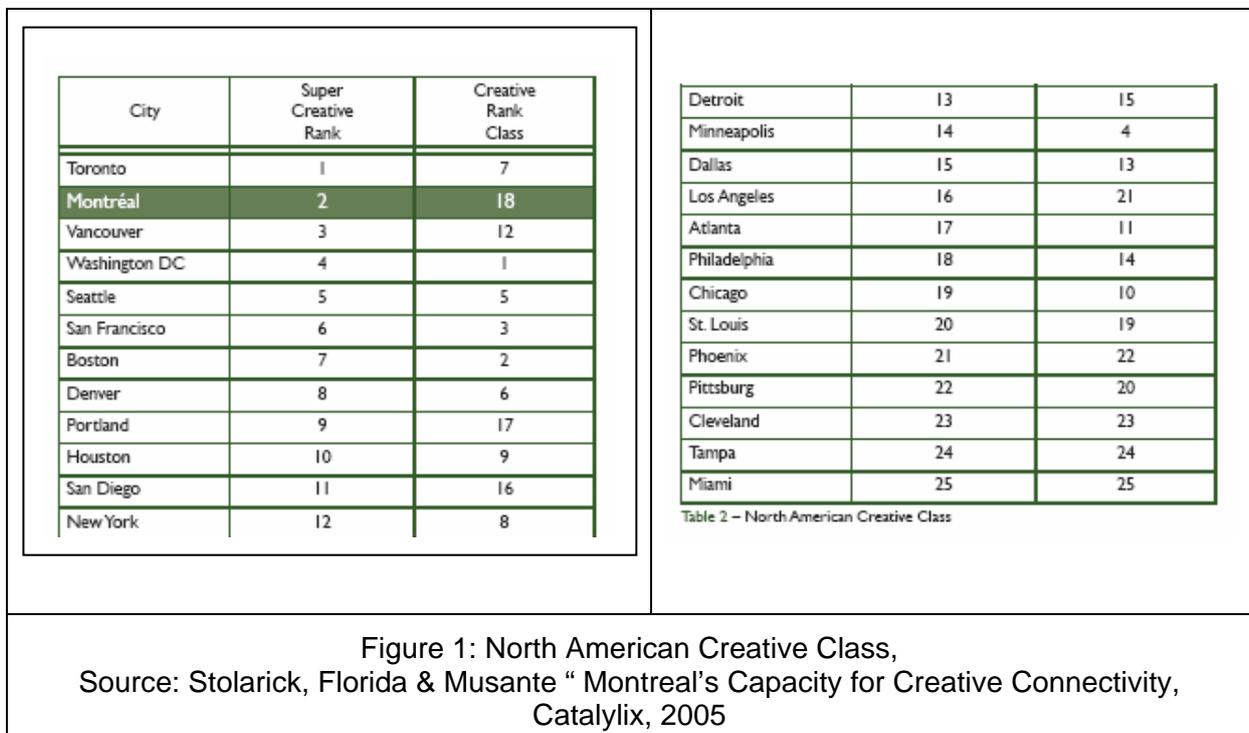
Montreal’s Place among Creative Cities

Richard Florida’s firm, Catalylix, recently completed a study of Montreal’s position within the creative sector economy based on focus group meetings, interviews with individuals in the business, education, arts and government sectors and comparative data for 24 other large

metropolitan areas in North America. The overall conclusion of their study was that the Montreal region is very well positioned despite below average population and economic growth rates. As Montreal scores well “in terms of technology, talent, and tolerance/diversity measures and does extremely well for selected territory assets/quality of place/regional amenity measures” it is considered to have the potential for strong future growth and, in fact, a recent upswing in population and job growth has been noted⁴.

In assessing the creative economy, Florida focuses on what people do rather than the economic sector in which they work. Creative occupations are considered to be those in four areas: technology and innovation, arts and culture, professional and managerial, and educating and training activities. Within this set Florida identifies a “super creative core” that consists of occupations in “computer-related fields, mathematics, architecture, engineering, life sciences, physical sciences, social sciences, education, training, library arts, design entertainment and media”.⁵

The Catalylix study found that 450,000 people or about 29% of the region’s workforce were employed within the creative sector. While this percentage is below average for North American metropolitan areas, the presence of a very strong academic and R&D base result in Montreal having the second highest percentage of its workforce in super creative occupations



Montreal scored especially well on Florida’s Tolerance and Territorial Asset benchmarks. As a cosmopolitan city with strong French and English roots the region’s residents have learned to celebrate diversity. Relatively low housing costs and crime rates coupled with a very active arts scene and high population density in a region rich in recreational opportunities contribute to Montreal’s attractiveness to people in creative occupations.

As is the case in many metropolitan areas throughout the world, Florida’s recipe for growth and prosperity has been widely accepted by the Montreal’s decision makers. It remains to be seen whether the policies and plans that have recently been prepared with this paradigm in mind will bear fruit.

Neighborhoods for the Creative Class

As the labor force statistics that Florida used for his comparison of metropolitan areas are not available at the census tract level, this study uses the occupational codes from the Profile

Tables for the 2001 Canadian Census to define super creative and creative occupations. Further, an additional sub-category that exclusively contains professionals employed in art and culture activities has been created using the same data source. These three groups provide the basis for a comparative analysis of the location and concentration of creative sector people within the Montreal region.

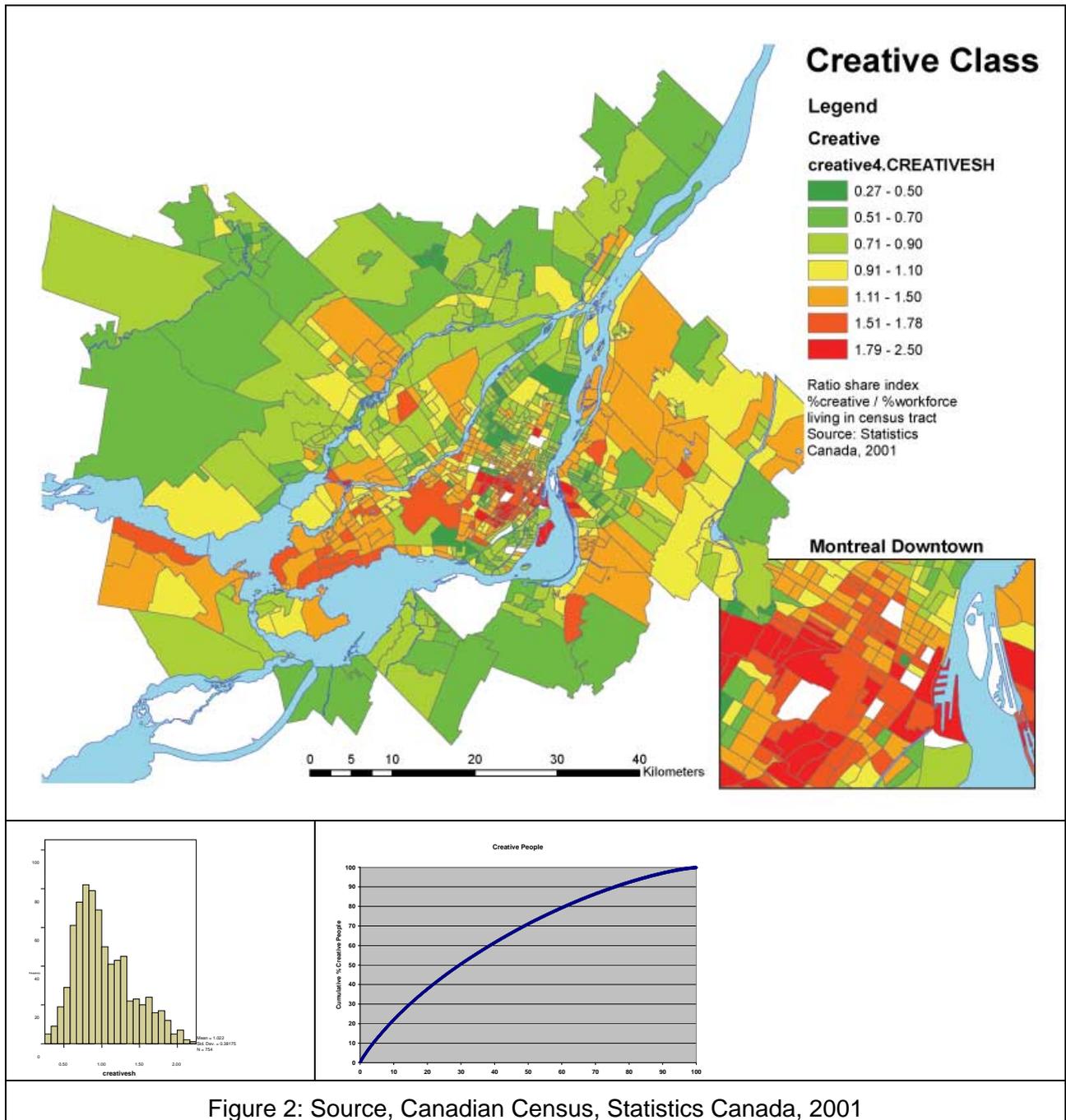
The Canadian census classifies occupations into 10 categories: (A) management; (B) business, finance and administration; (C) natural and applied sciences; (D) health; (E) social science, education, government service and religion; (F) art, culture, recreation and sport; (G) sales and service; (H) trades, transport and equipment operators; (I) primary industry; (J) processing, manufacturing and utilities – all of which have subcategories that are more specific about what people do in each of these activities. For the purposes of this study, creative occupations were considered to include all management occupations; professionals and technicians in categories B, C, D, E and F as well as sales and service supervisors. The super creative group included professionals in natural and applied sciences, health, art and culture as well as teachers and professors. The third group consisted exclusively of professionals in art and culture.

Indices were constructed to illustrate the location and concentration of residents in each of the three creative sector groups. These indices indicate the extent to which a given census tract houses more or less than its share creative people by calculating the ratio between the tract's share of the regional creative employment base and the tract's share of regional employment. A value of 1 indicates that the census tract houses exactly the same percentage of people in creative occupations as its share of overall employment. A value less than 1 indicates that fewer people in creative occupations live in the tract than would be expected based on the tract's share of total employment. Conversely, a value of 2 indicates that the tract houses twice the number of people in the creative sector than would be expected if the creative population was distributed proportional to the overall workforce.

Creative Neighborhoods

Figure 2 displays the concentration of people in creative occupations. As indicated by the relatively small number of tracts with values between 0.90 and 1.10, there is some degree of spatial polarization between people in creative and non-creative occupations.

The degree of exclusivity is not extreme as indicated by the histograms and cumulative percentages for the spatial distribution of people in creative occupations. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that tracts with values less than 1 tend to congregate just below that number while much greater variance is evident for tracts that attract more than their share of people in creative occupations. Some of these tracts house more than twice their share of the creative population. This is reflected in the cumulative percentage graph which shows a relatively rapid rise for the tracts with the greatest share of creative people and clearly differs from the straight diagonal line that would occur in the absence of differentiation between tracts.

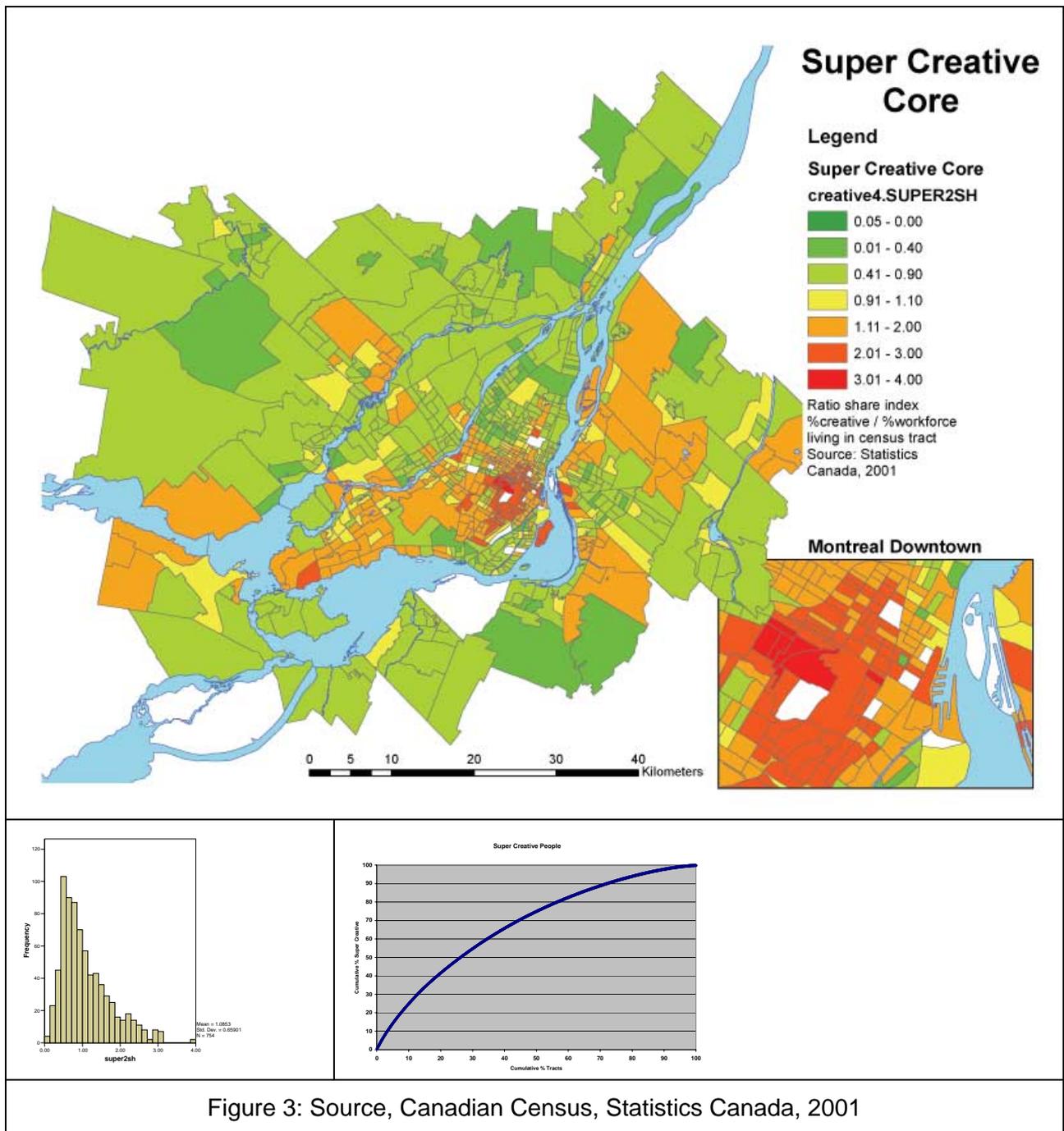


The map insert in Figure 2, which represents the central area of Montreal, indicates a very strong tendency to locate near to the CBD in well known communities such as Westmont, Outremont and Old Montreal where the business class and professionals have established elite neighborhoods. What is more surprising is the extent to which the concentration stretches eastward. Clearly, the Montreal creative class values an urban environment.

Super Creative Neighborhoods

A map of the residential location of the super creative core (Figure 3) shows a much stronger spatial concentration with many fewer tracts housing more than their share of this population. With the exclusion of people in management, financial services and technicians, who had represented a considerable number of the broader creative class definition, many of the suburban areas have switched colors as they house a smaller share of people in super creative occupations than expected based on their share of total employment.

The concentration of neighborhoods in or near the CBD is further strengthened, although the relative importance of Westmont whose creative class includes a much more significant percentage of managers and business people than the other areas in this zone, is considerably reduced.

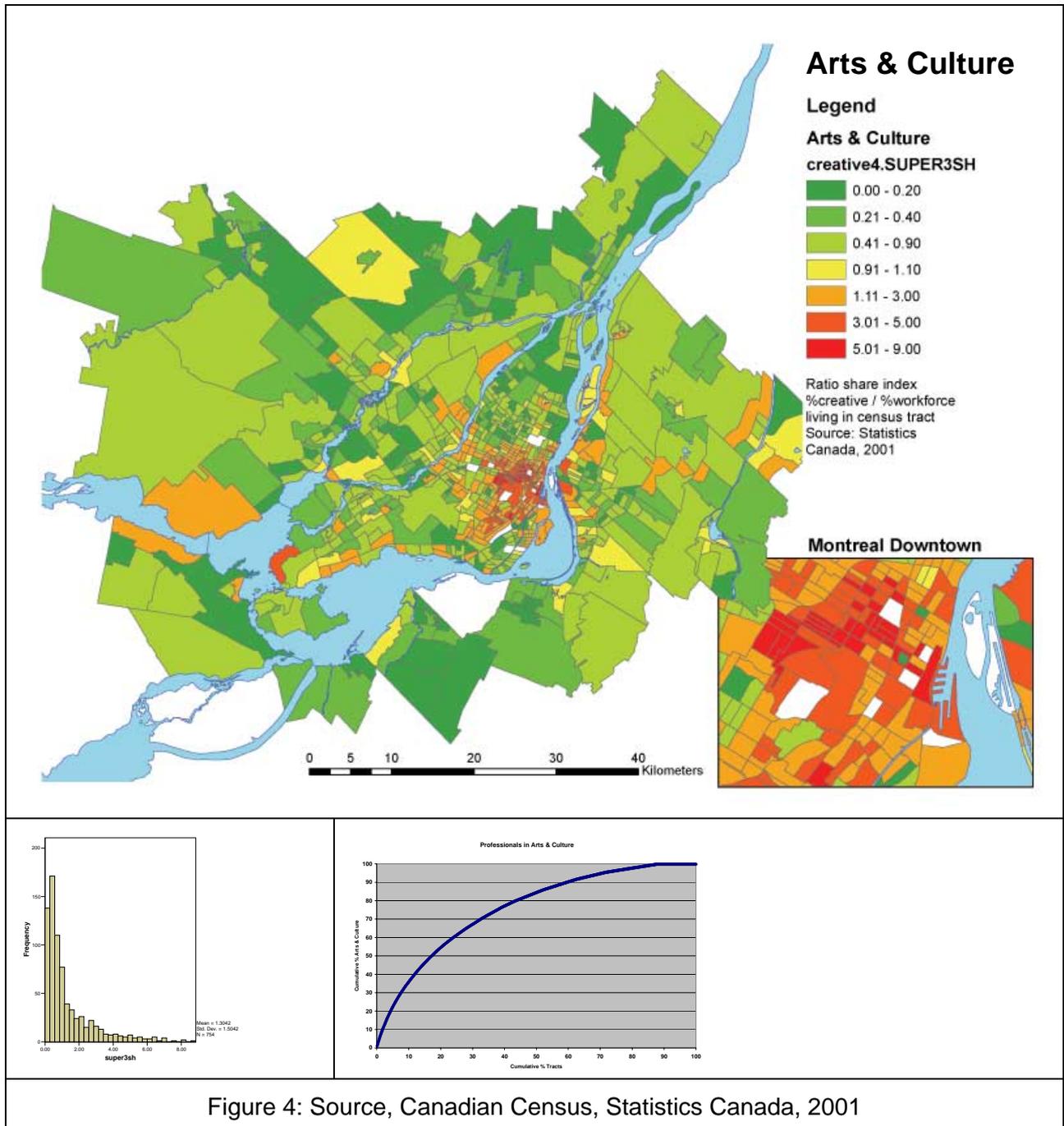


The right tail of the histogram distribution for the super creative core is still further extended, reaching a maximum of 4. This is reflected in the cumulative frequency graph which rises sharply and continues well above the diagonal line that would indicate a regular distribution.

Arts and Culture Neighborhoods

Finally, Figure 4 illustrates the location of professionals in arts and culture. While it may be argued that this group, by itself, is less important than the creative and super creative core in fostering regional economic development, these professionals play a vital role in the life of the city. In addition, the group is interesting as many of its members seek living

environments that will stimulate their artistic development. They are also more likely to have diverse backgrounds and less likely to follow the standard educational path cumulating with a university degree that is the gateway to many creative occupations on Florida's list.



True to form, Montreal's professionals in arts and culture show a still stronger tendency to concentrate in residential areas near the CBD. However, the importance of the Plateau which is located north and east of the center as a residential location of creative people is much more evident. Until the 1990s this area was predominately a receiving area for new immigrants with modest means. Since that time it has emerged as a vibrant 24 hour neighborhood with a wide mix of housing, ethnic groups, cultures, bars, restaurants of all sizes and proclivities, and street life, all within easy walking distance of the central area of Montreal and the residential location of choice for the arts and culture set.

This further degree of spatial concentration is evident in the very sharp decline in the right side of the histogram and the long tail that stretches to the right indicates that a small number of tracts are housing as many as 8 times the number of arts and culture professionals than would be expected if this group was distributed according to their share of the regional workforce.

Sustainable Neighborhood Indicators

The sustainable development paradigm that was articulated in the report of the UN's World Commission on Environment and Development entitled *Our Common Future* in 1987 is by now very familiar to most of the world's planners. Less familiar is a subtext that the task is not so much to achieve a steady state with respect to human-environment relations as to support a continuous process of change through which, in Kevin Lynch's words, individuals or small groups and their culture become "more complex, more richly connected, more competent, acquiring and realizing new powers – intellectual, emotional, social and physical."⁶ This qualitative rather than quantitative perspective on development is also reflected in the UNDP's series of Human Development Reports which argue that "the basic objective of development [is to enlarge] people's choices".⁷

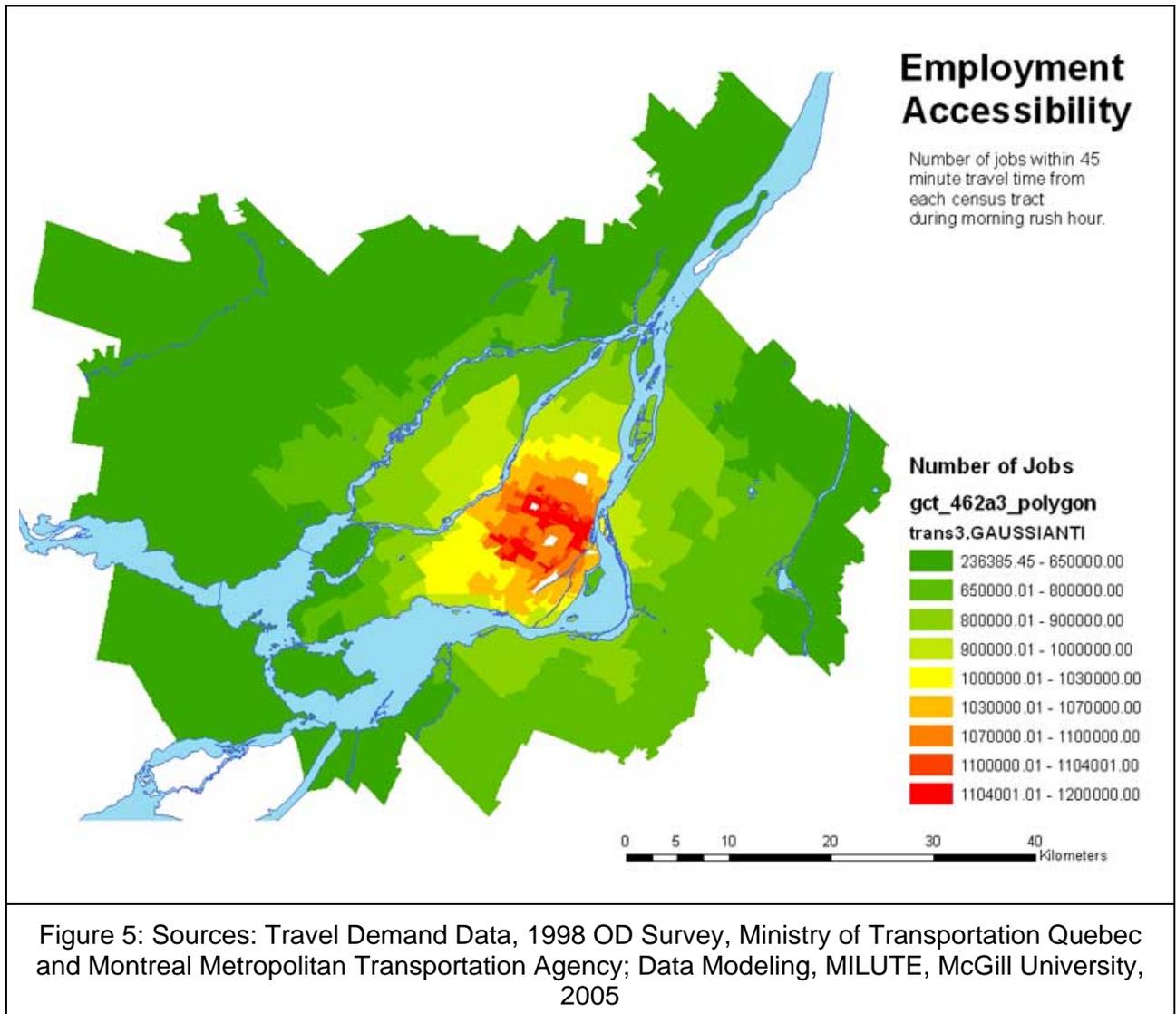
Consequently, in this paper, a sustainable neighborhood is one that facilitates the processes through which its residents become more complex, richly connected and competent while at the same time ensuring that the demands that are placed on ecological, economic and social capital resources can be sustained. This qualitative approach to development corresponds nicely with the notion of a creative society, although it clearly limits the overwhelming focus on economic growth that seems to be a central concern in much of the rhetoric concerning the emerging creative class.

Some of the key characteristics of a sustainable neighborhood include: a compact unit with sufficient density and land use mix to ensure that most people can walk, bike or take public transportation to reach a wide range of work, school and recreational activities; the involvement of local residents in decision making; plenty of opportunities to see and be seen; affordable housing; low energy requirements, water consumption and waste production; the absence of poverty; strong community pride that incorporates a respect for, or even a celebration of, differences; and so on. The extent to which these elements are present in the neighborhoods where people in creative occupations live is one measure of the compatibility between the two paradigms.

While a full assessment of the sustainability of creative neighborhoods in Montreal is clearly beyond the scope of this paper, attention is given to transportation demand, land use mix and selected socio-economic variables in the Canadian census. Observations with respect to the first of these components are based on Figure 5. The socio-economic characteristics of the creative neighborhoods are considered in the next section that makes use of a regression model.

Figure 5 presents a general accessibility model for vehicular travel in the entire Montreal region. The model is based on travel demand data for an Origin Destination Study that was conducted in 1998. McGill University's MILUTE⁸ urban systems laboratory used these data to simulate work trip distances and times for each census tract during the morning rush hour (6:00 to 8:59). In addition, a Gaussian function was used to calculate the number of work opportunities that can be accessed within 45 minutes from each census tract during the same morning rush hour period.

The results of the Gaussian function show that Montreal has retained a strong central core with an impressive concentration of employment opportunities. While the map would be somewhat different if travel along commuter rail and subway lines had been considered in the model, the main effects of these systems would be to extend the influence of the center along corridors to the east and west.



When the maps for creative neighborhoods are overlaid on Figure 5 it is evident that the census tracts that house significantly more than their share of the creative workforce are located in highly accessible areas. The lower transportation demand that results is one indication that these neighborhoods are sustainable.

Figure 6 illustrates the average time and distances traveled by resident in census tracts that are above the 75th and 90th percentiles in terms of their share of people in creative occupations. These data are based on the results of the 1998 OD survey. The results indicate that travel times and distances decrease as the share of people in creative occupations increases and that these differences are statistically significant.

Average Work Trip Travel Time (min) and Distance (km) 7 to 8AM Montreal CMA Census Tracts				
	75 th p	75 th p	90 th p	90 th p
Within percentile	20.2	12.2	18.1	10.8
Without percentile	23.1	14.0	22.8	13.9
Significance	t= -5.1 , p<.000	t=-4.3, p<.000	t=-5.6, p<.000	t=-4.9,p<.000

Figure 6: Source: MILUTE, McGill Univeristy, 2005

Regression Models

Three regression models were developed to examine the socio-economic characteristics of creative neighborhoods. The three dependent variables were the creative, super creative and arts and culture scores for each census tract. The independent variables included density, age structure, immigrants, visible minorities, education, income, language and housing expenses. All data were from the 2001 Canadian Census.

Scattergrams were produced for each variable with respect to each of the three dependent variables. Independent variables that did not have a linear relationship with the dependent variables were eliminated. Figure 7 indicates the results of the models.

<p>Dependent Variable: Creative Share R2= .911, F= 1424.7, Sig.< .000</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Independent</th> <th>Beta</th> <th>t</th> <th>Sig.</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>% university</td> <td>.892</td> <td>59.5</td> <td>.000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% visible minority</td> <td>-.171</td> <td>-10.4</td> <td>.000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Avg. income</td> <td>.230</td> <td>9.8</td> <td>.000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% bilingual first</td> <td>.113</td> <td>-6.3</td> <td>.000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Avg. dwelling</td> <td>.091</td> <td>5.6</td> <td>.000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Std. error of</td> <td>-.074</td> <td>-4.7</td> <td>.000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Independent	Beta	t	Sig.	% university	.892	59.5	.000	% visible minority	-.171	-10.4	.000	Avg. income	.230	9.8	.000	% bilingual first	.113	-6.3	.000	Avg. dwelling	.091	5.6	.000	Std. error of	-.074	-4.7	.000	<p>Dependent Variable: Super Creative Share R2= .879, F= 868.8, Sig.< .000</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Independent</th> <th>Beta</th> <th>t</th> <th>Sig.</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>% university</td> <td>1.02</td> <td>50.1</td> <td>.000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Avg. income</td> <td>-.100</td> <td>-4.3</td> <td>.000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% visible minority</td> <td>-.103</td> <td>-6.9</td> <td>.000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>%<15 years</td> <td>-.065</td> <td>-4.5</td> <td>.000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Density</td> <td>.083</td> <td>5.1</td> <td>.000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Avg. dwelling</td> <td>-.066</td> <td>-2.9</td> <td>.004</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Avg. owner exp.</td> <td>-.051</td> <td>-2.7</td> <td>.007</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Independent	Beta	t	Sig.	% university	1.02	50.1	.000	Avg. income	-.100	-4.3	.000	% visible minority	-.103	-6.9	.000	%<15 years	-.065	-4.5	.000	Density	.083	5.1	.000	Avg. dwelling	-.066	-2.9	.004	Avg. owner exp.	-.051	-2.7	.007
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Figure 7: Regression Models, Data Source: Canadian Census, Statistics Canada

All three of the regression models have strong R square values. In all cases, the percentage of people in the census tract with a university education was the most important explanatory variable. The standardized beta coefficients for this variable indicate that this variable was especially important in the super creative analysis, followed by the creative and arts and culture groups. This may be expected, as the super creative group was essentially composed of professionals in health, social and science occupations. The inclusion of technicians in the creative category, whose skills may not have been earned at a university, and the numerous routes into the arts and culture professions, many of which do not require a university degree result in slightly lower beta values for these groups.

The percentage of visible minorities was negatively related to all three creative groups. This is explained by the degree of polarization in residential location in Montreal. Some neighborhoods have much higher percentages of visible minorities and residents in these areas are less likely to have an occupation that is considered creative.

Average income values showed an interesting pattern, with a positive relationship to the creative group, a slightly negative relationship to the super creative group and a negative relationship with the arts and culture group. This is explained by the exclusion of managers and financial professionals in the latter two groups and the greater propensity for members of these groups to live in mixed inner city neighborhoods.

Language skills, as indicated by the percentage of people who were raised in a bilingual (French, English) household, showed a positive relationship with the creative group, was not relevant in the super creative category and was negatively related to the arts and culture group. The latter finding reflects the very strong prominence of French in census tracts that have emerged as popular places of residence for arts and culture professionals from all backgrounds.

Density showed slight and very positive relationships with the super creative and arts and culture groups respectively. It did not appear in the creative model which included a much greater variety of urban and suburban living environments.

These findings confirm the impressions gained from examining the maps that display the locations of concentrations of people in each of the three creative occupation groups. The movement from non-creative to creative, super creative and arts and culture populations is reflected in an increasingly urban environment, centrally located in higher density areas with mixed land use activities in close proximity.

Planning Interventions

The City of Montreal's most recent Master Plan came into force in January 2005. Inspired by the principles of sustainable development, coupled with a perceived need to accelerate economic growth, the plan advanced seven principal objectives:

- 1 High-quality, diversified and complete living environments
- 2 Structuring, efficient transportation networks fully integrated into the urban fabric
- 3 A prestigious, convivial and inhabited Centre
- 4 Dynamic, accessible and diversified employment areas
- 5 High quality architecture and urban landscapes
- 6 An enhanced built, archaeological and natural heritage
- 7 A healthy environment⁹

The new Master Plan has generally been extremely well-received and, in fact, won an award from the Canadian Institute of Planners in July 2005. The plan sets out a sound basis for the development of the city by providing much needed infrastructure, strengthening the urban centre, promoting high quality, mixed use residential areas and designating employment areas that are highly accessible and synergetic. A particularly welcome feature of the plan is the designation of 'ecoterritories' in critical natural environments. In these areas the development process is designed to ensure that the integrity of ecosystems is maintained.

The city-wide plan is accompanied by master plans for each of 27 boroughs and provides for the decentralization of significant planning and development authority. The decentralization policy came into being following the forced merger of 27 independent cities into an island-wide municipality and to some extent was an attempt to appease livid residents in municipalities where a majority of residents strongly opposed the merger. This situation resulted in the plan being essentially composed of nested systems which provide considerable local democratic control.¹⁰

While the plan does not offer specific recommendations to attract the creative class, many of the provisions are in line with the development paradigm advanced by Florida and none are in contradiction. It remains of-course, to see how effective the plan will be over time.

In contrast, the Economic Development Plan and the Schéma métropolitain d'aménagement et de développement that are presently undergoing public consultation, explicitly reference Florida's development paradigm. For example the Economic Development Plan states:

“People no longer move to find a job, firms now move to where they can find skilled employees and these people are drawn to dynamic metropolitan areas. The new economic geography depends on what Richard Florida calls the three Ts of development: technology, talent and tolerance. All three must be present to attract creative people, generate innovation and encourage growth.

The members of the new creative class want metropolitan areas that offer a wide variety of top-notch facilities. Their primary concern in the 'location quality': their city should be well-established, authentic, open to diversity, have many natural attractions, a vibrant cultural scene and a healthy economic, social and professional climate.”¹¹

Noting a positive change in the pace of economic growth during the 1990s that accompanied a shift toward an emphasis on high-tech industries, life sciences, and communications and information technologies, the plan proposes several innovative ways to support the development of economic clusters, including a 'competitiveness fund' that will be available to support 'bottom-up' initiatives by public and private partners. Both the economic and regional development plans follow up with a set of policies that are intended to attract the creative class while promoting social equity and protecting environmental quality.

Conclusion

While the jury is still out debating whether Richard Florida is right or wrong in arguing that the key to regional economic prosperity is the ability to attract loose-footed members of the 'creative class', it is apparent that this paradigm is not necessarily at odds with other paradigms, such as sustainable development. However, the effective integration of these perspectives requires ...

1. Embedding the economic development plan within a comprehensive sustainable development plan. This is necessary to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between economic, social and natural environment development objectives and that the demand on resources related to these three components is sustainable.
2. Recognizing that the gains from a shift toward a knowledge based, innovative economy will not be evenly distributed within the region either spatially or between social groups and developing plans to ensure that neighborhoods throughout the region are able to move forward.
3. Recognizing that there are significant differences among people in the creative class, with at minimum, fairly sharp differences in the criteria that people in creative, super creative core and arts and culture occupations use to select a residential environment. One size does not fit all.

4. Recognizing that many people among the creative class share values such as “creativity, individuality, difference and merit”¹². These values are not necessarily congruent with those that are required to build cohesive communities and a broad based civil society. Planners may need to adjust their ‘communicative practice’ to bring these individuals on board.
5. Recognizing that the primary function of urban planning is to foster processes that help individuals and small groups develop in qualitative ways towards an increasing sense of self-efficacy and purpose. This requires a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches.

This case study of the situation in Montreal indicates that the region is well-positioned to take up the new challenges posed by a knowledge-based economy. The positive economic development trends following a significant restructuring of the economy in the 1990s coupled with innovative plans at the regional and municipal level that take into account both economic and more comprehensive sustainable development objectives may well lead to a brighter future. Nonetheless, the analysis of the residential locations of the creative class in the region indicates considerable spatial polarization. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, as a network of diverse, cohesive neighborhoods may be highly desirable it is clear that social and spatial equity must be taken into account to ensure that all citizens benefit from regional development plans.

¹ Richard Florida’s two recent books, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) and *The Flight of the Creative Class* (2005) emphasize the role that cities play in attracting people who are engaged in creative occupations and, arguably, contribute to superior economic growth rates.

² Stolarick, Kevin, Richard Florida and Louis Musante (2005) “Montreal’s Capacity for Creative Connectivity: Outlook & Opportunities, Catalytix.

³ See for example Steven Malanga’s critique entitled “The Curse of the Creative Class - Richard Florida’s theories are all the rage worldwide. Trouble is, they’re plain wrong”. *The Manhattan Institute*, March 3, 2004 (<http://www.matr.net/print-10126.html>)

⁴ Stolarick, Kevin, Richard Florida and Louis Musante, *Montreal’s Capacity for Creative Connectivity: Outlook & Opportunities*, Catalytix, January 2005: p 2.

⁵ Stolarick, op.cit., p 4.

⁶ Lynch, Kevin, (1982) *A Theory of Good City Form*, Boston: MIT Press, p 116.

⁷ United Nations Development Programme (1995), *Human Development Report 1995*, New York: Oxford University Press, p 1.

⁸ MILUTE stands for Montreal Integrated Land Use Transportation Econometric Modeling. It is an urban systems laboratory within the School of Urban Planning and the Department of Civil Engineering at McGill University. Professor Murtaza Haider is in charge of this facility and his help with the transportation data and modeling used in this paper is greatly appreciated.

⁹ City of Montreal (2004) *Master Plan*

¹⁰ The administrative structure of Montreal, however, remains very tenuous. Following a change in government at the provincial level, the formerly independent municipalities were allowed to vote to reinstate their municipality. Fifteen municipalities on the island of Montreal were successful in their effort to de-merge and will be reconstituted on January 1, 2006. While the Master Plan prepared in 2004 will continue to provide a framework for island-wide planning, individual municipalities may well decide to strike a different path from that contemplated in the borough plans.

¹¹ Montreal Metropolitan Community (2005) *Charting Our International Future: A competitive metropolitan Montreal region*.

¹² Florida, Richard, (2002) “The Rise of the Creative Class”, *Washington Monthly*, May.