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'Social Mix' and Neighbourhood Revitalization in a Transatlantic Perspective: Comparing Local Policy Discourses and Expectations in Paris (France), Bristol (UK) and Montréal (Canada)

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Abstract

The longstanding debate around the merits of promoting social class mix in urban neighbourhoods has taken a new twist in recent times. A transatlantic and neoliberal convergence of policy advice, supported by the 'neighbourhood effects' thesis, makes a case for addressing deep poverty by spatially deconcentrating it, inter alia*, by gentrification. While developing trenchant critiques of this approach, critical urban scholarship has tended to take a 'top-down' view of urban neoliberalism, giving insufficient consideration to the agency of local governance actors in policy design and implementation, as well as to differences in national and local reference points with regard to what social mix connotes. We present findings of a comparative study of the meanings and effects attributed to social mix by key local policy actors across three 'distressed' neighbourhoods: in inner-city Paris (France), Bristol (UK) and Montréal (Canada), targeted for neighbourhood revitalization involving planned residential social mix in two cases and diversification of local retailing and its consumer base in all three. We find that while local actors' rationales for social mix do reflect a neoliberal turn, this is not embraced unequivocally and a strong home-grown element, drawing on national or local 'myths', persists. Our study sheds light on the expectations that local policy actors have on the incoming middle classes to make the mix 'work' by supporting community; pointing to the paradoxes and limitations of such a perspective.*

Introduction

Interest in and experimentation with urban policy and planning interventions that promote 'socially-mixed' residential neighbourhoods and housing developments, thus going against the powerful currents of spatial sorting produced by market forces and

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discriminatory practices, have waxed and waned over more than a century in much of what we now call the global North. Debates about the merits and feasibility of this idea of social mix continue to capture attention among critical urban scholars, not least because it defies simple categorization in terms of clearly demarcated binaries between left- and right-wing politics and policy (Rose, 2004; DeFilippis and Fraser, 2010). The current wave of popularity for social mix is associated with strong national and transnational policy discourses against social exclusion but there is a mounting body of critique which sees this as an aspect of urban liberalism absolving the state from responsibilities for tackling poverty and advancing a pro-gentrification agenda (Lees *et al.*, 2011). While our own research is situated in this critical current, in this article we seek to bring nuance to interpretations that see contemporary social mix policies in terms of a neoliberal consensus, by using findings from a tri-city, tri-country study of the discourses of local rather than national policy actors concerning the issue of social mix. Our focus is on old low-income inner-city neighbourhoods in Paris (France), Bristol (England) and Montréal (Canada) where gentrification is as yet only incipient.

Social mix in historical perspective – an idea claimed by different ideologies

As Sarkissian (1976) has pointed out, the idea of 'social mix' originated in the old style liberalism of English utopian experiments seeking to reverse the class-based spatial segregation produced by capitalist urbanization and to restore certain elements of an idealized pre-industrial community, based on a shared moral order. Their model neighbourhood and small town blueprints embraced the principle of spatial propinquity of a range of social classes while assuring the legibility of status hierarchies: the belief being that the better-off would take more of an interest in the problems of the poor while the poor would be encouraged to emulate 'respectable working-class' behaviours. However, Anglo American bourgeois reformers, while broadly sharing these objectives, placed more emphasis on the socializing influences of different social classes sharing public spaces such as large urban parks, on the basis of common codes of conduct and also on middle-class outreach to poor neighbourhoods through the settlement house movement.

The early twentieth century garden city prototypes, while drawing on the utopian 'social unity through diversity' concept, espoused a more egalitarian vision in which the rationale for social mix was essentially to grant people of backgrounds from the poor to the middle classes equality of access to decent housing and good quality urban amenities when opportunities arose for new urban developments. This argument was seized on at the time by socialist advocates of public housing, notably in the case of Paris, France (Lelévrier, 2005), and echoed 50 years later by social democratic housing activists in Canada's three major cities who fought successfully to obtain a high percentage of non-profit rental housing in amenity rich, large brownfield redevelopments on prime inner- city land (Germain *et al.*, 2010; Ley, 2011). Generally, however, planned new developments based on design ideas from the garden city movements have catered at best for a very limited range of socioeconomic mix, indeed often on the basis of neighbourhood units aimed at a particular class or demographic segment (Simpson, 1985; Cole and Goodchild, 2001; Harris, 2004). In the social housing sector, even in countries where social housing was not from the outset based on a residual social welfare model, building design and allocation policies created class differentiation between estates and between buildings. In France for instance, different providers tended to cater for different income segments (Sintomer and Bacqué, 2002).

Since the mid-1990s, neighbourhood-scale social mix has resurged as an objective in larger and older cities all over the global North, this time with a new twist. A remarkable transatlantic and pan-European policy consensus seems to have been forged at the level of national government decision-making, to the effect that 'social exclusion' in

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neighbourhoods of social housing or in deindustrialized inner-city districts should best be tackled by *diluting* spatial concentrations of long-term poverty and increasing the social mix exogenously via the creation of housing and services to draw higher income people to these neighbourhoods. The primary justification invoked for this policy turn is the 'neighbourhood effects' thesis, which postulates that the spatial concentration of poverty, especially persistent poverty, is a major causal factor of social exclusion, diminishing individual life chances in various ways. The corollary is that a greater middle-class presence will have a beneficent influence. This thesis has become extraordinarily influential on both sides of the Atlantic, in spite of the weak (and USA-centric) evidence base for its claims (Andersson and Musterd, 2005; Van Ham and Manley, 2010). International think-tanks and consultants have no doubt contributed to the wide diffusion of this 'mobile urban policy' (Baillergeau *et al*., 2005; Lees, 2008; see also McCann and Ward, 2010).

This new incarnation of 'social mix' has been increasingly critiqued as a symptom of the neoliberalization of urban social policy, in that poverty and exclusion are seen in terms of individual inadequacies and the failure of family and community supports; an analysis that obfuscates structural mechanisms. Moreover, inner-city neighbourhoods that have not 'revitalized' even though located in cities that have successfully revamped their economies are seen as insufficiently 'competitive' or even as cases of market failure (Blomley, 2004). This discourse displaces left-wing visions of social mix in terms of fairness of access to urban resources, and poverty dilution becomes a substitute for the *in situ* anti-poverty and local economic development programs associated with the welfare state and urban social movements of the 1960s–70s, which fostered a more endogenous kind of social mix (Donzelot, 2006; Lupton and Fuller, 2009).

Critical urban scholars have increasingly zoomed in on the ways that the current incarnation of social mix as policy objective, helps to legitimize pro-gentrification agendas of local states (Lees *et al*., 2011). State supported gentrification has been on the increase since the mid-1990s as local state actors seek to boost the competitiveness of their city's economy and their flagging tax bases, which are further stretched in some cases by retrenchment in national state assistance to cities for infrastructure and social welfare programs (Lees, 2008; Rose, 2010). Critics have pointed to the rehabilitation of the very term 'gentrification' as a positive policy tool (Rose, 2004; Slater, 2006; Walks, 2008; Bolt, 2010). The types of programs that have attracted the greatest research attention are those involving the demolition of entire low-income social housing complexes on land with the potential to dramatically escalate in value, in favour of higher income or mixed-income/mixed-tenure development in which the returning low-income tenants are selected on the basis of their 'compatibility' with the newcomers and their demonstrated capacity to escape economic dependency on social welfare payments (Chaskin and Joseph, 2011). Less studied are smaller scale but locally important interventions designed to reshape and change the image of particular 'problem' neighbourhoods by residential intensification, creating pockets of higher income housing, and rebranding local commercial streets so as to consolidate the appeal of these areas to middle-class in-movers and consumers (Hackworth and Rekers, 2005; Ward, 2007). Such measures are supported by increased regulation and policing to deter incivilities and unauthorized behaviours in public space, but they do not always involve the direct displacement of existing residents and indeed are at times coupled with pre-existing or compensatory policies to maintain or create a certain proportion of social housing (Germain *et al*., 2010; Bacqué *et al*., 2011).

There are, nonetheless, grounds for not taking for granted the depth and the scalar reach of such unequivocally neoliberal visions of social mix as a tool of neighbourhood revitalization. To what extent does the transnational policy vocabulary actually connote common goals among urban policy actors in different local and national contexts? Might it not mask significant differences in underlying historical and cultural reference points and values (Andersson and Musterd, 2005; Atkinson, 2008)? We know little about the nature and scaling of the influences shaping the meanings and goals with which *local*

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policy actors and other local stakeholders in 'neighbourhood revitalization' invest the idea of social mix (or related terms), but two recent UK studies suggest that these should not be assumed to be mere reflections of national, let alone international, policy thinking (Lupton and Fuller, 2009; Manzi, 2010). Monolithic and top-down accounts of urban neoliberalism are also inadequate when understanding the social mix in specific local contexts, because neoliberal thought also embraces 'community as policy' via a downscaling of social and economic responsibilities at a local level. This tends to generate multi-actor forms of local governance, thus providing the conditions for significant local contingency in policy implementation (Larner and Craig, 2005; Fontan *et al.*, 2009); as found in an in-depth study of the Hope VI implementation process in four different local contexts in the USA (Chaskin and Joseph, 2010). Consequently, even where broad centralized policy orientations exist (which is not always the case), locally grounded agendas can shape policies in different ways in different places, and the interplay of dynamics set in motion by local systems of actors can create varied and not always predictable outcomes.

Framing a transatlantic study of local policy discourses on social mix

In light of such questioning, we undertook a transatlantic, tri-country, tri-city comparison of how the concept of 'social mix' was being mobilized by local policy actors and other key stakeholders in relation to 'neighbourhood revitalization'. Using the same set of qualitative research instruments in each case,[1] we conducted case studies of the inner-city neighbourhoods of La Goutte d'Or (Paris, France), Hochelaga (Montréal, Quebec, Canada) and Easton (Bristol, UK). Our approach was what Tilly (1984: 82) called 'individualizing comparisons', where the goal is 'to contrast specific instances of a given phenomenon [social mix] as a means of grasping the peculiarities of each case'. For Robinson (2011: 6), this approach is productive because it will 'bring the experiences of different case-study cities into careful conversation with one another in order to reflect critically on extant theory, to raise questions about one city through attending to related dynamics in other contexts, or to point to limitations or omissions in existing accounts'. The shared characteristics of each study site included very low-income status, high scores on standard measures of personal and neighbourhood-level deprivation, and priority targeting for various poverty remediation and physical improvement initiatives. All had been subjected in the recent past to powerful 'discourses of decline' (Beauregard, 1994) that local actors mobilized in support of image-changing measures. All also had strong traditions of local neighbourhood/community organizations experienced in obtaining funding for and input into shaping and managing programs tailored to pressing local needs. All were anchored by significant commercial arteries that had experienced *déclassement*. All already had a mix of housing tenures. All had incipient but not rapidly-advancing gentrification at the time of our study (2006–08). Consequently, all have been actively targeted for neighbourhood revitalization in recent years. Planned residential social mix was integral to this in two of the study areas, while diversification of local retailing and its consumer base was a key policy tool for revitalization of all three neighbourhoods. In this article, we compare across the three case studies the meanings and effects (in theory and in practice) that local policy actors attributed to both residential social mix and to the changing retail mix.

Developing protocols for fieldwork and analysis for this comparative study necessitated grounding the current academic debates and policy discourses about

1 We were also very attentive to the challenges of comparing discourses around concepts such as 'community', 'neighbourhood' and even 'social', which can have very different connotations in different national contexts and intellectual traditions.

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social mix within understandings of the historical lineage of the concept within each national context. Since a comparative history of 'social mix' in France, England and Canada/Quebec would amount to an article in its own right, we refer here only to key points of convergence and divergence essential for framing this study.

Concerns about the residualization of public housing accelerated in all three countries from the 1970s, but in the context of different empirical realities and political discourses. In England, with the sociospatial polarizing effects of the Conservative's 'Right to Buy' policy becoming evident, magnified by those of deindustrialization, New Labour adopted EU-influence 'social exclusion' perspectives, and USA-inflected 'underclass' discourse gained ascendancy (Atkinson, 2000; Power and Wilson, 2000). In France, the middle classes increasingly abandoned social housing as more socially (and ethnically) homogeneous options became available with the expansion of suburban homeownership (Blanc, 2004). In Canada, public housing never comprised more than about 3% of the housing stock and is generally targeted to those in deepest housing need; there is a similar amount of cooperative and non-profit rental housing based on income mixing within a limited range (Harris, 1993). Since the 1970s all three countries have experimented with a variety of area-based anti-poverty and neighbourhood improvement initiatives. In the Canadian case the focus has been on old inner-city sectors of mostly private housing whereas in France and England declining suburban housing estates have been targeted as well, reflecting differences in the distribution of high-poverty neighbourhoods. In Canada, it is only in its largest city, Toronto, that large-scale public housing complexes (i.e. those whose residents can be counted in the thousands) were built, and these are now being subjected to mixed-income/mixed-tenure redevelopments inspired by American and European policies (Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009).

In both France and England, national governments have adopted proactive 'spatial rebalancing' measures seeking to ensure that when new social housing is created it has to be located in areas where private-sector housing predominates. In France, where such measures are part of a much broader *Politique de la ville* that has existed in various forms for over two decades under governments of various stripes (Bacqué *et al*., 2011), the policy justifications are cast in anti-ghetto, anti-segregation language that invokes republican values of social cohesion and, conversely, the spectre of 'communitarianism' building to the point of 'social separatism'. This discourse has coded, never explicit, ethno-racial undertones which became increasingly present after the mid-1990s (Dikeç, 2007). The middle classes are seen as holding the key to and the responsibility for countering these trends via social mix in neighbourhoods, including local public schools (Raveaud and van Zanten, 2007). In England, the discourse is one of 'sustainability' but here again the onus is placed on fractions of the middle classes to guarantee it through their co-presence in — and commitment to — some of the same neighbourhoods as disadvantaged groups. In typically neoliberal terms, it stresses the local community's responsibility to rein in 'anti-social behaviour' through both educative and coercive mechanisms (Manzi, 2010). This is codified in the 2005 Mixed Communities Initiative, heavily influenced by the neighbourhood effects thesis (Lupton and Fuller, 2009). It is also important to note the geographical differences in the UK. The effect of social mix policies have been seen most starkly in northern cities where declines in house prices in certain working-class neighbourhoods prompted a policy response involving wholesale demolition, redevelopment and insertion of middle-class residents through housing renewal pathfinder programmes (for a case-study based critique see Allen, 2008).

Finally, in France there is more scope for local (municipal) adaptation and adjustment of national urban policies than in England, whereas the decentralized Canadian federation has no national urban policies but a tradition of multilevel policy development and implementation. Social policy consultants (e.g. Bradford, 2008) have raised the profile of 'place-based poverty' and sociospatial polarizations and their impacts on 'social cohesion' in federal government circles, drawing on an eclectic mixture of neighbourhood effects, 'social inclusion' and 'spatial equity' discourses. A further

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key contextual element for understanding local policy actors' positioning with regards to social mix in Canadian cities is the exceptionally high fiscal dependency of municipalities on locally generated property taxes, compared to other OECD countries (Rose, 2010).

Meanings and goals of residential social mix for local policy actors in Paris – La Goutte d'Or

The Goutte d'Or sector of the 18th *arrondissement* of north-central Paris grew up in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a very densely populated and diversified working-class and immigrant neighbourhood. Degradation and overcrowding in its poor quality stock of cheap private rented apartments and rooming houses led the City of Paris to embark in the 1980s on major drives to eliminate unsanitary dwellings through code enforcement and urban renewal as well as 'reclaiming' local public spaces in the face of delinquency, prostitution and other illegal practices; hygienist and social pathology discourses were deployed to justify such measures (Bacqué and Fijalkow, 2006). However, a local alliance of working-class associations, middle-class activists and people from the Catholic social action tradition, promoting the positive qualities of the neighbourhood's multi-ethnic and 'village' character, successfully opposed municipal plans for dispersal of the poor and encouraged urban heritage, leading to an approach based more on rehabilitation and the re-housing of a portion of existing residents locally in the newly built social housing. In 1983, the Goutte d'Or was the first of 22 such neighbourhoods in France to be designated as a 'sensitive zone', a standard that later became incorporated into the broader *Politique de la ville*.[2] Under these initiatives, the local associations, which had grown out of the urban social movements tradition, would become increasingly institutionalized as the delegated providers of specialized social services and as coordinators of the local participatory democracy process. The middle-class activists formed a small core of 'early-stage' gentrifiers in the Goutte d'Or. They would later be joined by more established, higher income professionals. While still identifying with the left, they were more interested in controlling the social and cultural trajectory of the neighbourhood and were very critical vis-à-vis the associations' activities, calling instead for stronger public interventions. They became impatient at the slow pace of change, especially with regard to the visibility of drug-related activity, the 'nuisances' associated with some of the area's minority ethnic businesses, especially an African market that attracted a city-wide clientele, and the lack of local shops catering to their own tastes and self-image (Bacqué and Fijalkow, 2006).

Increasing the middle-class presence in the Goutte d'Or became explicit municipal policy after the city-wide election of the leftist coalition in 2001 (it was already in power in the 18th and other low-income *arrondissements* of eastern and north-eastern Paris). Local state support for 'building social mix' strengthened, across a fairly wide political spectrum. This was due both to a dovetailing of the national preoccupation with eliminating poverty concentration, and to the concern about the growing affordable housing shortage in the City of Paris for middle-income households led by those considered to be indispensable members of the labour force in the city's key industries and services (Launay, 2010). The real estate context had inflated rapidly over the previous 15 years or so (due in part to foreign investment) to the point where living in Paris was becoming more and more difficult for the middle classes. Raising the spectre of the 'dual city', Paris was seen to be increasingly polarized between very wealthy and very poor districts. Indeed, the issue of how to deal with the departure of the middle

2 A City report summarizes the goals of the *Politique de la Ville* in relation to the designated Paris neighbourhoods in terms of 'tying . . . abandoned' sectors 'in the very midst of our country's most prosperous cities . . . into the [dynamics of the] agglomeration' (authors' translation) (Mairie de Paris, 2006: 24–5).

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classes was central to the 2001 municipal election. The winning leftist coalition promised an expanded social housing construction program aimed at a broad income spectrum. They pledged to use this as an instrument of increasing the social mix in both poor and wealthy districts (Bacqué *et al*., 2011). Consequently, the City and 18th *arrondissement* administrations reserved a third of the area's social housing allocation for middle-income households.

The meanings that the civil servants and local elected officials we interviewed give to 'social mix', and the rationales they proffer for the proactive policy being pursued in the Goutte d'Or, reflect this dovetailing of the anti-ghetto discourse with the pragmatic goal of 'recapturing' strategic fractions of the middle class for the City of Paris. However, we found variations and ambiguities in terms of which fractions of the middle class are deemed desirable, how they are expected to benefit a poor neighbourhood and how 'social mix' articulates ethnicity. Although these key informants play down the influence of international experiences and debates, some do make implicit reference to the neighbourhood effects thesis, be it in terms of a 'vicious phenomenon that we have decided to break up' or in terms of the aspirational role model that could be provided 'when we put a black doctor in a milieu of blacks [living on income support (RMI)]'. Another informant places a distinctly French-republican slant on the role model concept, seeing social mix, at the scale of the apartment building and in schools, as helping working-class immigrant families familiarize themselves with the building blocks of French culture while orienting their material ambitions to the French middle-class mainstream. Yet the anti-segregation sentiment of other policy level informants is streaked with a more traditional and abstract ethical justice: no neighbourhood should be the exclusive preserve of the wealthy or a place relegated only to the poorest. One informant optimistically believes that social mix policies can help dissolve stereotypes held by the wealthy about the poor; revealingly, the example she gives is cast in ethnic terms. Others downplay the social engineering angle, 'we want to see peaceful coexistence, with some interactions' between newcomers and existing residents. For this to work, the former must feel that they have the right to move into the area, while the latter must feel that they have the right to remain in place.

A key reason for wanting more middle-class residents in the Goutte d'Or is their economic capital and its multiplier effects in the neighbourhood's commercial landscape (see below). However, policy actors also place great expectations on in-movers to deploy their cultural capital to contribute to the collective wellbeing of the neighbourhood (in keeping with the often noted and perhaps idealized representations of 'early-wave' gentrifiers found in the academic literature). One elected official, who, significantly, came to this position via a background in the neighbourhood associational movement, is very explicit that the *arrondissement* wants to attract people in 'socially useful' professions, which includes not only key workers (medical, municipal and so on) but also people whose motivation and expertise can renew the leadership of the neighbourhood associations and thus, help make social mix work out 'in terms of the shared areas of everyday life'. One policy official summarized the aim of social mix in the Goutte d'Or in terms of 'modernizing without excluding'.

Bristol – Easton

With a consistently high score on English indices of 'multiple deprivation', the densely populated and ethnically diverse Easton neighbourhood in the eastern part of Bristol's inner city has been targeted simultaneously over the past decade by a plethora of area-based 'urban regeneration' initiatives. From the 1960s, deindustrialization, combined with deleterious impacts of a 1970s motorway project, led to disinvestment in its (mostly private sector) housing stock and to a decaying local infrastructure. A 'discourse of decline' hyped by the media and major national political figures also helped focus both

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national and local policy attention on one of its local commercial streets as having become, by 2002, 'the most dangerous street in Britain', a regional hub of prostitution, drug-dealing and youth crime. Its relatively inexpensive private rental housing stock — devalued to some extent by the neighbourhood's stigmatization — led to its becoming a reception area for Somali and other refugees and a plethora of local organizations sprang up to service these and other high-needs groups. The district maintained a substantial stable population of upper working-class and lower middle-class homeowners as well as social renters, including some from long-established minority ethnic groups. Its 'cosmopolitan' ambience and affordable housing also sparked a modest gentrification movement. The scale of gentrification was curbed by the perceived poor quality of local schools (Bridge, 2003). Nevertheless, these 'early-wave' gentrifiers — some with left-leaning activist roots — made their mark on Easton in terms of both their active involvement in neighbourhood associations and in their consumer practices.

Easton is a case that demonstrates the sheer range of the uncoordinated nature of policies that try to alleviate deprivation and manage existing social mix. Under the auspices of the central government's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and various multilevel funding partnerships, Easton became the theatre of a multitude of small-scale and disparate revitalization and social development projects. These ranged from local economic development and skills development programs to housing renovation; neighbourhood infrastructure improvement as well as — increasingly — 'green' initiatives. A 2007 Bristol City policy statement presented a 'balanced and sustainable communities vision' in terms of seeking to diminish high spatial concentrations both of affluence and poverty. Although official documents pertaining to the Easton neighbourhood make little explicit reference to creating a 'social mix', they do display a strong desire to *sustain* the existing diversity and 'balance' of land uses, and a strong 'liveability' orientation striated with a discourse about the collective roles and responsibilities of the 'community' in the prevention of 'antisocial behaviours' and environmental nuisances.

In strong contrast to Paris, policy level informants associated with Neighbourhood Renewal are highly reticent to speak of social mix in terms of engineering the population composition in a particular area: 'we wouldn't have a view on what sort of people would be in a neighbourhood . . . how are you going to define people?' For one elected official, the issue of mix 'is about helping people to live together but . . . it is not about creating those [mixed] communities in the first place'. The acceptable discourse is one couched in terms of a mix of housing tenures and types in different price ranges from which 'social mix' will follow, so as to provide 'choice' for different demographic and socioeconomic groups at the scale of the neighbourhood. Tenure mix is to be supported by land use (functional mix), enabling a range of services (and in some cases local employment) so as to create 'sustainable neighbourhoods'. The elected city councillors also define social mix primarily with reference to housing tenure but additionally, stress ethno-cultural dimensions. Avoiding or breaking up of high spatial concentrations of poverty is a high priority, because of concerns about neighbourhood effects in a context of lack of 'connectivity' with the city as a whole. For one policy-level informant the existing housing stock was an obstacle to implementing a mixed community policy that was much needed:

> the housing to buy . . . will pretty much be low cost. . . . A lot of the social housing will . . . tend to be occupied by people with high support needs. . . . So you won't get businesses coming in . . . so you kind of get a visible downward spiral . . . So I think it is a combination of market forces, . . . of housing policy that has inadvertently caused certain neighbourhoods to become extremely unbalanced . . . — I would call it demographic mix — . . . in terms of economic mix.

A contrasting viewpoint was that there was no need to apply the national 'Mixed and sustainable communities' policy as such in the case of Easton, as the issue was more one of ensuring that the existing social (including ethnic) diversity is maintained by

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keeping the area's crime problems under control and ensuring quality services for a variety of needs and tastes, including middle-class ones. As we shall see further on, the City does have a proactive policy concerning the 'mix' of the neighbourhood's commercial streets.

We also encountered overt criticism of the national Mixed Communities Initiative (Lupton and Fuller, 2009) within the local Neighbourhood Renewal policy milieu: 'it is just about the moving about and the dilution of statistics . . . it doesn't actually change individual people's lives in any way'. Whether or not they supported the national initiative in principle, the residential intensification pressures it created on existing built-up neighbourhoods like Easton were not necessarily welcomed by the policy officials we interviewed. The initiative was seen as creating local market pressure to convert non-residential uses and large dwellings to small flats for sale, development which would drive up property values to the detriment of existing businesses and the affordable housing supply, whereas for a 'balanced and sustainable community to happen you need more employment, or community centres'. While our research was under way, public hearings on the conversion of a former chocolate factory in the neighbourhood to 100% residential use culminated in the city planning department deviating from its usual housing supply emphasis and heeding the views of the vast majority of local organizations (including the Neighbourhood Renewal office) in refusing the project on the grounds that the new space should have a functional mix, for local employment as well as housing.[3]

Montréal – Hochelaga

The working-class neighbourhood of Hochelaga, in the heart of French-Canadian east-end Montréal, was hard hit from the 1960s to the 1980s by deindustrialization, depopulation and impoverishment. As upwardly mobile renters were drawn to owner-occupation in the suburbs, local retailing strips stagnated. Highway construction and urban renewal projects fragmented the urban fabric. By the early 1990s the Montréal media were stigmatizing Hochelaga in terms of welfare dependency, poor school performance, prostitution, drug-related crime and the infiltration of criminal gangs. Consequently — and in a context of rising policy concern about the persistence of intense pockets of poverty concentration amidst a turnaround in the City's long depressed economy and housing market — Hochelaga was targeted under two new municipal provincial initiatives which were modest in scope: an anti-poverty program (borrowing the French terminology of 'sensitive zones'), and a revitalization program for central neighbourhoods, focusing on housing and physical infrastructure. Hochelaga already had a strong tradition of community organizations, rooted in religious and labour traditions, that promoted residential rehabilitation, non-profit housing and local economic development. As in our other case study neighbourhoods, over time some of these became increasingly institutionalized.

In the mid-1990s, an 'urban planning collective' — led by local activists turned community development professionals — successfully lobbied the City and the Province for special consideration in urban revitalization initiatives. They pushed for rental rehabilitation and better community infrastructure, seeking to rebuild a positive image of Hochelaga. But they also called for 'rebalancing' the area's socioeconomic composition by attracting people who would buy and rehabilitate some of the existing rental stock for owner-occupation, and also by creating new owner-occupied housing.

3 A new proposal was eventually approved (2009) for a 'green' development, promising both space for small start-up industries and housing for a variety of household types and income groups. Its emphasis on 'bicycle-friendly' housing is nonetheless indicative of a subtle neighbourhood rebranding in the image of ecogentrifiers.

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This would enable Hochelaga to 'regain' a former social diversity that, they argued, had been lost due to the suburban exodus. This represented a major departure from the traditional pro-renter stance of local community activism. As one of the protagonists recounted to us, 'we said in jest that our neighbourhood also wanted its share of gentrification!', meaning that a 'small dose' of gentrification would provide an antidote to the 'ghettoization' (this term being used without any racial overtones) and social pathologies that they saw as impeding investment in the neighbourhood and inhibiting the wellbeing and upward mobility of current inhabitants. Nonetheless, by the early 2000s, market forces were beginning to change the neighbourhood image: young, educated people discovered its affordable rental housing and a few developers ventured into loft conversions.

Above all, the Collective's efforts, supported by municipal officials and a local merchants' association, culminated in a brownfield redevelopment project for residential use (completed in 2006), after using public funds to relocate the 'Lavo' bleach factory to a suburban site. This was achieved by cooperation of municipal and provincial actors, non-profit housing developers, a private condominium developer and a protracted consultation process. The outcome was a near consensus for a development of some 200 units, 60% being social housing for low and modest income households and 40% low-end-of-market condominiums. This was more social housing than the private (and some municipal) actors wanted, but far from the 100% called for by some housing activist groups who vehemently rejected the case for 'controlled gentrification'. The policy officials we interviewed saw this experience, although small in scale, as important, indeed 'emblematic' for the City, such that it came to serve as a pilot for the process of implementing the new municipal Strategy for Inclusion of Affordable Housing in New Residential Projects.[4] In their view, the Collective's position, combined with the thoroughness of the local consultation process, helped the City to get community groups to accept the principle that mixed-income/mixed-tenure targets should henceforth be a key part of neighbourhood revitalization policies. This project thus, has some echoes of the locally negotiated real estate compromises that characterized socially-mixed redevelopment projects in Montréal and other Canadian cities in the 1970s and 1980s (Germain *et al.*, 2010). However, the discourse and processes leading to this outcome contrasted with those of the earlier period where community actors had invoked an unequivocal spatial equity discourse. A senior policy level informant stressed how unusual it was for a community-based actor to be 'inviting' even a modest degree of gentrification.

The meanings and rationale for residential social mix proffered by the policy level actors and non-profit developers active in promoting the Lavo project, ranged across virtually all the arguments invoked in the policy literature. They saw social mix primarily in socioeconomic terms, with tenure mix being the main vehicle,[5] although the non-profit developers also lauded the internal socioeconomic diversity inherent in the housing cooperative form of social housing. Social mix should mean that all types of households have a place in the neighbourhood, a 'right to the city' position that the social housing developers claimed should also be implemented in wealthy neighbourhoods. Although role models were mentioned by some, more emphasis was placed on vaguer notions of social cohesion but without necessarily taking a moral position: 'a mix of population groups that we have forgotten to have meet each other', and 'inclusion . . . more than just housing, it is inclusion in life, day to day', as one elected official (a former cooperative

4 This was modelled on 'inclusionary zoning' bylaws in place elsewhere (especially those of Vancouver and Washington DC) but with the difference that the ratios of social to market housing would be negotiated case-by-case rather than legislated across the board.

5 Their support for homeownership was based on conventional Anglo-American urban-sociological wisdom as to homeowners' supposedly greater neighbourhood attachment and commitment to lobbying for enhanced local public services. Nevertheless, they did not cast aspersions on low-income renters as advocates of social mix via gentrification are wont to do (Blomley, 2004).

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housing activist) put it. Overall though, the idea of 'rebalancing' or 'regaining a lost equilibrium' stands out as a common thread, with the argument that building new market-sector housing was not only about inviting gentrification but also about giving upwardly mobile incumbent residents the choice of remaining in the neighbourhood, providing a comforting and unifying myth — even though members of the Collective recognized from the outset that the new middle-income housing developments would not only or even mainly be, for local residents. Abstractly, mix was counterposed to segregation and 'ghettoization'. Concretely, this meant the infusion of new residents with 'slightly' higher incomes, would break the area's stigma and generate economic spin-offs. In sum, the belief that such 'controlled' gentrification would have multiple benefits for a poor neighbourhood was widespread, although as in the other study areas and as we will discuss further on, informants did not rule out the possibility of certain 'conflicts of cohabitation'.

How local retail landscapes are seen to contribute to social mix

While the synergistic links between residential and commercial gentrification have been underlined in several recent research contributions (Charmes, 2006; Ward, 2007; Zukin *et al*., 2009), case studies of how neighbourhood revitalization strategies articulate and seek to mobilize these synergies are rare. In all three of our study areas, the decay of the local retail fabric was integral to the discourses of decline that legitimated neighbourhood revitalization policies. Local state actors saw the social dynamics of neighbourhood commercial streets, the injection of particular types of new retail capital and the associated re-imaging of local retailing as integral to the goals of social mix (Paris and Montréal) and neighbourhood sustainability (Bristol). They adopted proactive measures to simultaneously 'normalize' these streets and develop their cachet for new local and regional consumer clienteles. The commercial sectors of both the Easton and the Goutte d'Or were singled out for intensified and specialized police surveillance aimed at prevention or reduction of crime and 'anti-social behaviour' so as to improve the comfort levels of merchants, consumers and nearby residents. All the same, at the time of our study, concerns about illicit activities and property crime persisted, according to both the policy level informants and the business owners we interviewed. In all the study sites, recently established merchants catering to local gentrifiers or to affluent consumers from a wider catchment area saw themselves as active participants in changing the mix of the area. Some of the long-established storeowners interviewed embraced the opportunity to cater to groups with more spending power, although reservations were expressed about high turnover which they counterposed to the loyalty of their traditional if low spending customers. No doubt tellingly, it proved difficult to reach long-established storeowners catering essentially to a low-income clientele, but those we did speak to felt they faced an uncertain future.

It is in the Goutte d'Or that we find the most interventionist local state policies, referred to by one policy official as 'counter-programming' compared to what market forces were tending to produce. These policies gave city agencies room to manipulate the supply and tenancy of commercial space through their presence as public landlords, as well as via their powers of expropriation and the buying back of commercial leases. One of the first initiatives (predating the election of the leftist coalition but pursued by the new administration), was to build on the heritage of the clothing industry in the area to create a new fashion hub showcasing the work of young local artisanal designers. A key priority was the 'taming' and/or dispersal of ethnically marked businesses whose 'disorderly' aspects exceeded the comfort level of current and potential Caucasian middle-class residents, even those to whom a certain degree of ethnic diversity and 'exoticism' was appealing. At the time of our case study the City had not succeeded in moving the major 'irritant', an African market (attracting a Paris-wide clientèle), to a peripheral location.

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However, a programme of replacing ethnic businesses on the ground floor of social housing buildings by *'commerces de proximité'* (meaning grocery and other local stores where people shop frequently and that target 'mainstream' tastes) was well underway, in reaction to the vociferous complaints of non-immigrant residents (especially new middle-class arrivals) about the dearth of everyday European products in the neighbourhood. As one policy informant explained:

> If we hadn't done anything, we'd only have had African wigs, African fabrics and spices, which is . . . not exactly what you'd call mix . . . At the same time, we're not making war on ethnic business . . . we have to have the right proportions . . . we don't want to make it into an ordinary place; on the contrary, to have a few Oriental pastry shops, a few spice merchants, that's part of the Goutte d'Or's charm and we must let it keep this aspect (authors' translation).

In Bristol, attracting new retail investment and changing the negative public image of Easton's two commercial arteries was a cornerstone of Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy implementation. The City obtained funding from national government and European Union programs for intensified policing and to support retail investment and rebranding schemes on the basis of ethnic entrepreneurialism (Shaw *et al.*, 2004; Hackworth and Rekers, 2005), under the coordination of a merchants' association whose offices were intentionally co-located within the local Neighbourhood Renewal office. Lacking the statutory powers used in the Paris case to reshape the mix of stores, this association sought to work by negotiation and persuasion to promote the renovation of existing food stores catering primarily to minority ethnic clienteles (from the neighbourhood or drawn from the entire Greater Bristol region) and their diversification to offer products catering for a wider clientele. In contrast to the Paris case, it was not felt necessary to reinstate 'English shops' as long as there is 'a whole range . . . fresh fruit and vegetables, English breads, and naans'. As in other contexts of commercial gentrification, the City initiatives also supported 'ethnic' restaurants, thus promoting a mildly 'exotic' commodified form of cosmopolitanism without overtly displacing more 'traditional' ethnic businesses. Thus, the formerly notorious Stapleton Road was re-launched under the marketing slogan 'A World of Difference', pitched to both a local and a city-wide middle class. One informant (involved in implementing Neighbourhood Management) stressed that the retail environment was crucial to implementing the national balanced and sustainable communities goal, in that 'a mix of uses, retail shops and services and locally provided, provides the mechanisms for community to come together [which is] because the mixed communities is not just about people living side by side . . . it is about interaction . . . about social mixing'. It seems then, that while policy officials eschew social engineering connotations of policy for residential social mix, they seek to foster a retail environment propitious to everyday interactions that help to tame the sense of difference.

In the Hochelaga case, changing the retail mix on the section of Ontario Street close to the Lavo redevelopment was integral to the municipal vision of an 'emblematic' revitalization for the sector. The local merchants' association had been among the active supporters of the project in the hopes of bringing new spending money into the area. A longstanding City-wide program for the revitalization of commercial arteries provided funds to support this association and embellishments such as street furniture and assistance for storefront improvements. More unusual — going beyond such standard forms of support to a microlocal growth coalition — was the development by the City of an adjacent retail plaza on land forming part of a railway spur that had serviced the Lavo factory (the City had acquired this land along with the rest of the site). The plaza was constructed in the same timeframe as the residential development, as part of an overall revitalization plan. So as to attract new and more upscale retail investment, the City required that new storefronts be created at the street level of a private condominium development flanking the rear of the plaza. The hope was to draw 'boutique' style (Zukin *et al.*, 2009) food stores and restaurants to the new plaza and eventually to existing retail

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units as they became available through market driven turnover, in the hopes of encouraging the new condo dwellers to spend more of their food budget locally. Borough officials hoped the plaza would not only be a space for sidewalk cafés but also for local cultural activities.[6] The plaza was also to provide retail continuity with the more prosperous section of the street leading to a previously revamped public market. The community based urban planning collective supported this plan for its economic leveraging potential, although it generated militant opposition from an anti-gentrification group fearful of what Zukin (1995: xiv; 28) has famously called 'pacification by cappuccino'. At the time of our interviews, one of the new tenants was a bakery-cum-café whose name (*ArHoMa*) brilliantly represented the neighbourhood rebranding process underway, while, to the surprise and pleasure of the borough officials interviewed, a fairly upscale restaurant had opened up, drawing its clientele substantially from other neighbourhoods.

Representations of social mix in practice: coexistence, cohabitation, gentrification . . .

We turn finally to the perceptions of our policy level informants as to how social mix is playing out in practice. A first set of questions concerns the perceived nature of the coexistence or 'cohabitation'. Overall, do they see the social dynamics in the neighbourhood in terms of parallel lives, perhaps with the potential for occasional 'tectonic' clashes, or as one in where constructive social interactions actually take place? And what do they see as the power dynamics involved in the coexistence/cohabitation process?

The Paris policy informants (excluding the elected officials who were reticent to discuss the results of mix policy) had few illusions as to the extent of actual social *mixing* in daily life. They (as well as the school principals interviewed, who saw themselves as key actors in implementing the social mix 'project' locally) underscored that social mix 'stops at the gate' of the public elementary school, due to the overwhelming tendency of middle-class Parisian parents to avoid schools with high concentrations of low-income and/or minority ethnic children (Raveaud and van Zanten, 2007). For one *arrondissement* councillor (a former neighbourhood housing activist), 'real' social mix should involve opportunities to break negative middle-class stereotypes of the poor, which was not achieved in that the 'intermediate' social housing (targeting middle-class in-movers) was in separate buildings from those housing welfare-dependent households, perpetuating the better-off residents' tendency to 'fence themselves off' from and cast aspersions on the poor (Mairie de Paris, 2008: 40). A more optimistic tone was struck by informants involved in small-scale neighbourhood based projects specifically aimed at fostering non-threatening and non-hierarchical intergroup encounters (including community gardening and various activities involving mothers and pre-school children). Most informants perceived the neighbourhood's different minority ethnic people as keeping themselves to themselves, although opinions were divided as to whether this raised the spectre of 'communitarianism', anathema to republican ideology.[7]

In the case of Bristol's Easton neighbourhood, contrasting views emerge as to how the current social mix of the area and the changes being spurred by the re-branding of its commercial streets, are working out in practice. Informants tend to emphasize

6 Notwithstanding that such public spaces were totally out-of-keeping with the traditional morphology of French Canadian working-class neighbourhoods!

7 Ironically, a *multi-ethnic* support organization for immigrant women's housing rights was sidelined from local public debates around housing issues (including questioning the fairness of the pro-social mix social housing allocation policies).

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ethno-racial more than class-based dimensions. They perceive on the whole, a continuing dynamic of peaceful but distant coexistence, but their cautious optimism is tempered by concerns about the inadequacy of local vehicles for negotiated conflict resolution. For in spite of the emphasis on local partnerships in state urban regeneration policy, there are inadequate arrangements to facilitate networking and negotiation among the numerous local organizations to whom major responsibilities for social development and 'community cohesion' have been devolved. Thus, informants from local organizations and representatives of residents' committees refer to tensions between old established minority ethnic communities and newer arrivals, including the ethnicization of wider societal problems (drug trafficking in particular), as well as significant departures from accepted codes of conduct in public space. As in the Paris cases, both community and municipal informants involved in local implementation of Neighbourhood Renewal or social mix, referred to the increased responsibility placed on their shoulders for day-to-day management of issues stemming from social and ethnic mix/diversity. In the words of one interviewee: 'people who say isn't it lovely to be living in a multicultural place . . . are those who don't have the grief'. The merchants' association is perceived, however, as a successful vehicle in pre-empting and working out conflicts between established businesses and newcomers. One retailer also sees the commercial mix fostering what Radice (2009) calls 'everyday cosmopolitanism': 'You can get a Somali buying Italian food . . . a guy from Middle East wouldn't want to know Indian rice . . . we have all English people buying Mediterranean food now . . . we have found a change'.

Montréal informants were cautious in expressing views about social mix in practice in the area around the Lavo redevelopment. The recency of its completion — only a few months before we conducted our fieldwork — was no doubt a factor here. The highly pragmatic legacy of planned social mix projects in the Canadian and Montréal contexts, where strong discourses about the cohabitation of difference as a means to social cohesion have been eschewed (Germain *et al*., 2010), may also come into play, in that, from a policy perspective, achieving 'peaceful but distant coexistence' is an indicator of success. Tellingly, in their marketing strategies for the condominiums in the Lavo project, the City of Montréal and the private developer of the condominiums made no mention of its being part of a larger tenure-mixed development. Regardless of whether there was class-mixing in daily life, policy informants saw the arrival of new lifestyles and associated new retail services as beneficial to existing residents on account of their de-stigmatizing effects on the area. One saw 'a new reality' of the district being forged, but one that was still 'bound up with the people who are from here', due to the continuing influence of community organizations. One elected councillor went so far as to argue that the changing retail character could have an 'inclusionary' and 'mobilizing' effect on traditional residents who up until now could not have imagined themselves feeling comfortable 'having a little coffee at a sidewalk café' (a perspective contrasting sharply with the 'it's not for us' sentiment of non-gentrifiers noted in research in Edinburgh, Scotland (Doucet, 2009). Nevertheless, while one retailer commented on the juxtaposition of buildings, housing respectively the condominiums and the housing cooperative, as being a success story of social mix; one of the community sector interviewees saw this more in terms of social polarization in terms of both social class and demographics, the condo residents mainly being households without children while the coop housed many young low-income families. This stands in ironic contrast to the desire of members of the Collective to achieve positive 'neighbourhood effects' in the local schools through the arrival of middle-class populations.

Due to its population being overwhelmingly Caucasian, the ethnic dimension of cohabitation was largely absent in our interviewees' representations. The one halal butcher on Ontario Street seemed to be accepted with equanimity and even held up as an example of successful social mix by one of the elected officials. Nevertheless, the intersection of ethnic, socioeconomic and tenure mix is an emerging issue in the residential landscape since the older public housing as well as the subsidized units in

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the new social housing stock (including the cooperative on the Lavo site) are home to increasing concentrations of recent immigrants with high needs, leading to growing responsibilities being placed on the shoulders of community organizations and social housing managers.

Finally, how do our informants perceive the relationship between social mix and gentrification over time in the three neighbourhoods, and in particular, what do the policy level actors see as their role in managing this balance?

In the Goutte d'Or, the dominant narrative among policy officials is that their social housing and retail strategy work in favour of a controlled, managed gentrification that will not exclude lower income households, and will actually help to limit 'extreme' forms of gentrification that could be produced if housing supply was left entirely to the private market. They see little risk that their actions will stimulate 'galloping' gentrification as likely in the foreseeable future, since the neighbourhood's reputation and issues of crime and 'nuisances' are still far from being reversed. In Easton, in contrast, policy and program officials represent residential gentrification as an unintended consequence of the City's assistance to the economic renewal of the local commercial arteries. There is some concern about resultant future increases in economic polarization and their consequences for the crime rate. Not all are convinced, however, that gentrification will be the dominant trend, since a City-wide strategy favouring residential intensification is leading to an increase in small flats that end up being rented out to people who 'can't get on the housing ladder . . . who are hanging on the edge . . . and may not be the people who are going to buy beautiful organic vegetables and all that'. In Hochelaga, local policy officials argue that since the neighbourhood had fallen so far behind in terms of poverty and economic development, they have no choice but to rely mainly on the private sector both for economic stimulus and for shouldering part of the costs of getting new affordable housing built (via negotiations for 'inclusionary' housing developments). As in the Paris case, however, gentrification is presented as a risk under control.[8] Policy level informants believe that the area's socioeconomic and lifestyle diversity, and housing affordability, will be preserved, contrasting it to another emblematic Montréal neighbourhood, the Plateau Mont-Royal, where they see gentrification as having reached the point of creating an undesirable cultural homogeneity. Nevertheless, both policy and community level informants recognize the fragility of the line between a re-established socioeconomic diversity and a major gentrification: 'we have to make sure that the new arrivals don't consider the neighbourhood as being like the Plateau or a future Plateau'.

Even though informants claim that gentrification is not rampant, issues of representation in the context of local democracy loom large for informants in our Paris and Bristol cases. In the Goutte d'Or, the older associations which were founded by the first wave of middle-class in-movers and were in due course coopted by the local state into helping 'manage' the social mix, have increasingly seen their legitimacy challenged by informal but well organized networks of the higher income professionals that had moved to the area more recently and who seek to remake the neighbourhood in their own image. In one policy official's view, the growing influence of this group was increasing the challenges of 'organizing the cohabitation' of different social and ethnic groups compared to the earlier period where it had been working out quite well, because it was creating 'a socially-hierarchical relationship, one of domination . . . we know very well that this cohabitation of social groups is also in fact, a symbolic violence'. In Bristol, one of the elected councillors interviewed found that the influx of 'young trendy residents' and more established middle-class professionals is creating a widening gulf between the

8 We do not know whether the anti-gentrification graffiti that we observed in the vicinity of the Lavo project before it was even finished was the work of the activists that had previously employed direct action tactics to convey their opposition to the condominium development and the retail plaza, or the expression of more localized 'tectonic' stresses.

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expectations and demands of different groups with respect to local services, creating concerns about representation such that one longstanding local councillor was concerned that 'they [gentrifiers] don't think I'm representing the community'. Similar to our Paris example, a distinction was made between phases of gentrification and what they meant for cohabitation issues. As one elected representative put it:

> Those communities that we had before will be pushed out, and we are going to have new communities, but the transitional period is with us . . . [now] you have a mix of people, of businesses, you have people getting on with each other, where they are talking about things. I think that is very positive. In the next 10 years everything will change.

Conclusion

Our analysis of the discourses and practices of policy actors around the question of 'social mix' in all three of our local case studies does provide considerable evidence in support of the general thesis of a drift toward a neoliberal paradigm of social mix, as postulated in the critical urban literature referred to in the introduction. This does indeed seem to be eroding the rights based, 'spatial equity' vision of social mix that gained some currency in the 1960s and 1970s. Hence, for example, the idea (prevalent among policy actors in the Montréal and Bristol cases) that social mix policies are largely about fostering individual choice — a rhetoric that seems to have displaced a more collective vision of social justice (Brodie, 2007). The Montréal case exemplifies a trend toward increases to the social and affordable housing supply becoming conditional on private sector support negotiated on a case-by-case basis, rather than their being fully funded by the collective redistributive mechanisms of the welfare state. Moreover, all three cases are marked by concerted strategies to transform 'non-competitive' commercial spaces via various re-branding strategies to help local entrepreneurs draw in consumer segments with more disposable income. Our findings thus underline the need for further research exploring the connections between commercial and residential mix policies.

Additionally, in all three cases, notwithstanding the weak evidence base for it, the 'neighbourhood effects' thesis has made considerable headway in our trio of studies as an argument for policies of promoting 'controlled gentrification' and neighbourhood re-branding, even among the neighbourhood based organizations involved in micro-local governance. It is important to note how elements of this thesis hark back to the nineteenth and early twentieth century ideas about social mix that we reviewed briefly at the beginning of this article. The latest incarnation of social mix 'confers on the middle classes the role of providing a social framework' for the poor (Bacqué *et al.*, 2011: 260), not only through role models and linking social capital, but also through demonstrated commitments to the neighbourhood as 'community', expressed through voluntary work, supporting the local public schools and the local economy, and so on. Two of the cases in our trio provide detailed insights into such *expectations* that advocates of 'controlled gentrification' place on the middle class, and highlight their paradoxes. In the Parisian example, officials involved in social mix policy hope to attract the type of gentrifiers willing to commit their cultural capital to the perpetuation of 1970s-style neighbourhood activism and participatory democracy. But a key difference from the middle-class involvement in community organizations in the 'social movements' period of the 1960s–1970s (including early wave gentrifiers) is that welfare state anti-poverty and anti-sociospatial polarization mechanisms have been severely eroded. As Bristol informants made clear, such neighbourhood based organizations are increasingly burdened by the tasks of 'managing diversity' and 'conflicts of coexistence' in local contexts where socioeconomic (and often also ethnic) polarizations are mounting due to more upscale gentrification alongside impoverishment.

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Furthermore, our findings support previous work as to the disinclination of middle-class parents to commit themselves to neighbourhoods whose public schools serve mainly poor (and often also minority ethnic) children, this being raised as an obstacle to achieving the objectives of social mix by both Easton and Goutte d'Or informants. Indeed, the 'ethnic' dimension of social mix was more present in our informants' representations in each city than we had expected, given that we were focusing on local policies that seemed related mainly to the socioeconomic dimensions of mix. In the Paris case, the usually unstated preoccupations about ethnic mix were often made quite explicit; in our multi-ethnic and mixed-class Bristol neighbourhood, the former dimension often seemed to overshadow the latter; while in the Montréal case study an ethnic dimension was beginning to preoccupy some informants in this traditionally homogeneous, Caucasian French-Canadian neighbourhood. Future comparative research on social mix in policy and practice is likely to face an increasingly complex challenge in coming to grips with intersectionalities of class and ethnicity (among other dimensions) whose geometry is likely to vary from country to country and city to city.

These findings thus give good reason to question both the supply of supposedly 'good gentrifiers' and the depth of their commitment to neighbourhood improvements whose benefits may cross class and ethnic lines. Also, whereas a prevailing Anglo-American myth (more recently imported into France) that adding more homeownership to the tenure mix generates an increase in residents with a commitment to improving a neighbourhood's public amenities, the new middle-class housing in our Montréal study consists of 'starter condos' for first time buyers, most of whom do not have children, and there is a high turnover in these kinds of housing units. Our informants, therefore, did not have the same kinds of expectations as to the community involvement of the newcomers as in the Paris and Bristol cases.

All this said, the degree of variation and local nuance in our findings leads us to conclude that with respect to social mix, the impacts of 'fast policy transfer' from one neoliberalizing state to another should not be overstated. We were surprised at the reluctance of most of our policy level interviewees to acknowledge being influenced by the policies of other countries, even when they indicated some knowledge of them and even though they referred to the neighbourhood effects thesis. Moreover, our hunch that top-down analyses of the impacts of neoliberalism on urban policy could conceal important dimensions of local variation turned out to be correct. With regard to the two cases of proactive policy for residential social mix in our study (Montréal and Paris), we are struck by the ways that longstanding national and city-specific guiding myths are mobilized to create rationales for social mix that, in order to be accepted, must above all resonate with key local actors, rather than be seen as ideas imported from elsewhere or imposed by another level of government. In the French case, the spectre of '*communautarisme*' leads to an almost constant elision and confusion between socioeconomic and ethnic mix. In our Montréal case, one guiding myth (which we find not only in regards to Hochelaga but more generally in the City's strategy for mixing market, social and affordable housing in new developments) is that of 'returning' to a lost tradition of fine grained socioeconomic mix in many of its inner-city and inner-suburban neighbourhoods, a quality that has historically contributed to the city's reputation for liveability. It is in these various senses, rather than only in the more obvious terms of the pragmatic interests of local growth coalitions, that we would endorse, with regard to the new-found appeal of social mix as a tool of neighbourhood revitalization, McCann and Ward's (2010: 1) point that 'while motion and relationality define contemporary policymaking, this is only half the picture. Policies and policymaking are also intensely and fundamentally local, grounded, and territorial'.

Finally, the local state policy actors in our study are not necessarily accepting the neoliberal paradigm of social mix with equanimity. Not surprisingly — and perhaps because, as Lupton and Fuller (2009) suggest with regard to some other UK contexts, the older community development initiatives had not yet been supplanted by the Mixed

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Communities initiative in our Bristol case study area — it is in the Bristol case that we find the most critical reflection about the impacts of 'controlled gentrification' on those with less market power and cultural capital. In Hochelaga, the overall optimism was tempered by caution about the fineness of the line between a neighbourhood shared between different social groups and one that could be remade in a way that would exclude culturally, if not physically, its traditional residents. Yet even in the highly interventionist context of the Goutte d'Or, we came across policy actors acutely aware of how the social mix policies reinforced class-based imbalances of power in public space.

Further study of the ways that social mix is pursued — and questioned — in neighbourhoods such as these, where gentrification is unlikely to be 'galloping' any time soon (even if it is not as 'controlled' as the local policy officials would like to believe) will thus need to pay much more attention to the microgovernance of 'cohabitation' and to 'who will control the language of the area?', as a local activist put it on the occasion of the opening of a mixed-income/mixed-use project in Canada's poorest neighbourhood (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2010; see also Ley, 2011). It is sobering to note that even in the case of 'community-minded' gentrifiers, one in-depth study (Tissot, 2009: 11) found that their 'taste for the coexistence of different groups' and involvement in voluntary anti-poverty work are paralleled by the urge to control the terms in which social mix is expressed in the spaces of the neighbourhood and its organizations. Our trio of case studies leads us to strongly endorse recent calls for critical gentrification researchers to pay more attention to how the power geometries of the latest incarnations of social mix will play out between the different groups in public space (Doucet, 2009; Davidson, 2010), especially since as long as neoliberal conditions prevail, social housing for low-income groups is only produced or maintained conditional on it being located in essentially middle-class surroundings. Indeed, our findings underline the extent to which, welcoming and holding onto the middle classes has become the central focus for the local policy actors involved in promoting or managing the social mix in the case study areas, and is consistent with the neighbourhood effects rhetoric. However, there are also limits of such an approach in the absence of redistributive measures to address the economic bases of persistent poverty and to counter rising income polarization in 'revitalized' cities.

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