Humility and Audacity: Vivre Saint-Michel en Santé
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What is unique about this case?

- The *process* of stimulating and supporting citizen-led development
- How to work with diverse populations in urban settings
- Example that supports and challenges the literature on the social economy
- How to move from horizontal forms of organizing to vertical and back again
- “X factor”
Where?
St. Michel: from 6000-60 000 in 20 years
What was the problem?

- Poverty
- Transient population
- Street gangs
- Lack of urban planning
- Quarries becomes public dumps and snow removal
- The landfill should become a large park...but
When?

- 2003-2013

- Timing is the essence: Right people at the right time
What did we do?

- **Audacity** to tackle and transform complex issues (poverty, integration, housing)

- **Humility** to listen, learn, and support citizen initiatives and work with numerous partners

- A poll, a forum of citizens, community organizations, political and economic leaders.
What emerged from the forum in 2005?

- A vision
- 3 priorities: employment, housing, access to services (commercial, cultural, sports & leisure)
- 2 strategies:
  - working on many issues simultaneously, in concerted roundtables and forum (VSMS)
  - empowerment: individual, organizational, community, through citizen participation
VSMS vision

St. Michel: a pleasant neighbourhood within which to live, supportive of family life and multicultural exchanges, an active and unified community, which takes charge of its affairs and also contributes to the vigour of Montreal.
How: citizen participation (mobilization)

- Create citizen «spaces»
- 1. Outreach in isolated poor sectors of 300-1000 households: door to door, festive events (potluck, music, dance, theatre, outdoor cinema…)
- 2. Collective information: cultural, political, formal, informal, participatory, fun….
- 3. Support collective citizen initiatives to improve the neighborhood…
- 4. Support citizen leadership….
1. Outreach: The beginning of the ‘I’
2. Collective information: The beginning of the ‘Us’

- Light events: Coffees, neighbourhood parties, evening discussions, conferences

- Culture was often used as a medium (music, drama, cinema, etc.) for relaying information and expressing opinions.
3. Support collective citizen initiatives: The beginning of the ‘We’

- Housing coops
- Tenants associations
- Citizens committee to improve safety, traffic, parks, sports venues, cleanliness, public transportation
4. Support, coach citizen leadership

- Creation of citizen leadership laboratory and recognition ceremonies

- March 8th: recognizing achievements of women in the neighbourhood

- Coaching to address political democratic structures: borough council, city council, MNA, MP
...and bring them (slowly)

- To address broader (whole neighbourhood) issues with others: the vision, the issues (composting factory) and the events (Festival of Nations)

The beginning of ‘Together’
PAS D'USINE DANS MON PARC
Coalition «NON» à l'usine de compostage à Saint-Michel
À ST-MICHEL ON VEUT UN PARC PAS UNE USINE!
The ‘theory’ behind the mobilization

- Push of the problem

- Pull of the hope of change: ‘yes we can’…

- The quality of the organization: open, learning, participatory, fun, well-supported, and democratic
Before and after: Levels of Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2004</th>
<th>2012</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proximity of day cares and schools</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational activities for children and youth</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational activities for adults</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of people who felt unsafe to go out at night</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary reason for residing in Saint-Michel</td>
<td>Low cost of rent, availability of housing</td>
<td>Ease of integration, family connections, availability of services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intention to relocate</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intention to relocate outside of St. Michel</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
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What is the innovation?

“Yes, it’s hard to mobilize a diverse group of immigrants, but you’ll be hard pressed to find a group who **wants** a better life and who **wants** to integrate **more**. Immigrants are on the move and they want life to improve as fast as possible.

“**I**”

“**Us**”

“**We**”

“**Together**”
What were the key challenges?

- Professionalizing a grassroots movement?
- Empowering and/or offloading?
- Compromising collaboration?