Executive summary :
Constructing youth citizenship
in Montreal and Mexico City:
The examples of youth-police relations
in Saint-Michel and Iztapalapa

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Abstract

This report is the result of a short but intense comparative research project that took place in parallel in the neighbourhood of Saint-Michel in Montreal and the seven barrios of Iztapalapa in Mexico City. The idea for this comparison came from previous team member collaborations within the framework of the *Réseau continental de recherche sur l'informalité dans les métropoles* (RECIM). The project was financed by the Quebec Metropolis Center and the Canada Research Chair in Urbanity, Insecurity, and Political Action. Research objectives and questions were discussed with our partners, the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC) and the National Crime Prevention Centre of Canada (NCPC). Any remaining inaccuracies that may exist are, of course, the sole responsibility of the authors of this report.

The research had two objectives: 1) understanding the relation between informal milieus and the construction of citizenship, and 2) understanding why urban fears continue to focus on youth despite the implementation of prevention programs.

This executive summary begins by synthesizing the main demographic, criminal, and institutional characteristics of Saint-Michel in Montreal. Then follows an overview of our results, first from the point of view of youth, then from the point of view of police officers, before turning to other local actors and more importantly to the interactive dynamics between youth and police. The Mexico City case study is structured similarly.

In Part III, we synthesize the lessons learned from the comparison of two very different cases. We specifically highlight the importance of building trust and the relationship between structural and conjunctural trust. Moreover, the research shows that youth do act as citizens, but that we must enlarge our understanding of citizenship to include inter-subjective, or relational, aspects of political recognition and action in order to understand these actions.

The research further points to a typology of modalities through which youth and police interact on the street. We often assume that such interactions unfold as confrontations, or perhaps avoidance. But our results suggest that negotiation is a primary mode of interaction, both in Montreal and Mexico City. Negotiation operates on a continuum from the illicit (in the case of corruption) to the licit (in the case of personalized trust-building relations). If set against the background of a minimum of structural trust in the legitimacy of the political order, the rule of law, and the police, negotiation between police and youth can help building conjunctural trust and tends to have the indirect

effect of also linking youth to the rule of law and the political order. This is turn strengthens or at least acknowledges youth citizenship.

Finally, this executive summary ends by outlining the needs for further research and ideas for action.

This executive summary is available in French and English, but the full report (ISBN 978-2-89575-267-7) is only available in English (www.labovespa.ca). We worked in French in Montreal and Spanish in Mexico City, the common language of all team members was English.

Content

Introduction

In Montreal, gang prevention programs are generously financed by the Quebec Government and the Government of Canada. The money is channelled in priority boroughs selected on the basis of their scoring on a set of risk factors (such as household socio-economic status, school dropout rates, number of single-parent households, proportion of immigrants, general state of the built environment, the presence of gang activities in the borough, etc.). In Mexico City, particularly under the mayorship of Lopez Obrador (2000-2005), police reforms focused on community-run policing programs. Notably, the *Policía Sectorial*, which is centrally overseen by the City, manages an outreach program for youth in schools that attempts to connect youth and police in a non-threatening environment. In addition to the citywide effort, Iztapalapa, the only borough in Mexico City with Auxiliary police directly under its command, also has a small team of Auxiliary police officers that implement similar efforts within the *delegación*.

By comparing dynamics of youth-police interaction in two politically and institutionally different contexts, we are trying in this research to do more than simply compare prevention programs and evaluate their local results. We also seek to generate new analytic insight about what works in what context and why. By zooming in on everyday interactions between youth and police, we seek to bring a fresh set of ideas about the nature of everyday relations between police and youth and when they seem to work best, information that will hopefully be reproducible in future program design.

1.1 Research objectives

1.1.1 OBJECTIVE 1: UNDERSTANDING THE RELATION BETWEEN INFORMAL MILIEUS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CITIZENSHIP

The two places compared in this project were selected because they are targeted by gang prevention programs for "at-risk" youths and they are known for their histories of informality (undocumented immigrant networks or street vending for instance). "At-risk" youths are categorized as vulnerable, implicitly because of their positioning in such social and physical spaces with histories of informality. Does this mean, however, that they are not political and social actors? *In order to find elements of the answer, this research seeks to better understand the mechanisms behind youth action that may be influenced by their milieu and other structural factors. The intuition was that "at-risk" youths do not see themselves as social and political outsiders (Becker 1963), but try to act politically as citizens, even if they may sometimes use illicit means.*

The kinds of relations existing between youths and police in the two neighbourhoods studied may vary from conflict to avoidance and all the nuances in-between. In the exacerbated context of police corruption in Mexico, for instance, negotiation may be a dominant mode of relation between youths and police (Davis 2006; Castillo Berthier and Jones 2009), but our intuition was that we could also find negotiated relationships in Montreal. We are used to speaking of negotiated relationships in the context of corruption, but our comparative research demonstrates that negotiated relationships occur on a continuum from the illicit (in the case of corruption) to the licit (in the case of trust-building actions at the local scale). These licit forms of negotiation on the part of the police may sometimes help legitimize the rule of law and the political system, rather than undermine it as in the case of corruption. Our research shows that prevention programs sometimes offer new (and safer) venues for interpersonal negotiation. These negotiating practices link police and youth to each other in an interpersonal relationship that tends to have the indirect effect of also linking youth to the rule of law and the political order. This is turn strengthens or at least acknowledges youth citizenship.

1.1.2 OBJECTIVE 2: UNDERSTANDING WHY URBAN FEARS CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON YOUTH DESPITE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Most studies on street gangs assume that they are urban (the city is their scene), but rarely do they reflect on this urban-ness and its impact on gang's logic of action. We wonder if this urban milieu affects the way they act. Processes of urbanization bring new sets of economic, social, political, and cultural conditions that affect how people act and interact (Boudreau 2010). Urbanization brings more needs for mobility, changing the area-based logic of action prevailing in the modern state system. It requires being able to act rapidly and swiftly as urban rhythms accelerate. It creates complex situations entangled with one another. This makes evaluating the future consequences of an act more difficult. The complexity, fluidity, and rapidity of urban life pose challenges to how people plan and strategize. As more and more people live in urban settings, these characteristics of social, economic, and cultural life come to define the contemporary period. Pedrazzini and his colleagues (1994) suggests that youth in neighbourhoods marked by histories of informality have understood these transformations more than state actors. His work shows how "at-risk" youths in Caracas construct a "culture of emergency" and ruse. They know how to act not only strategically (preventively), but tactically (reactively). This points to a logic of action very different from what putatively drives state action. When youths in Parisian *banlieues* are said to perpetrate "incivilities" or when youths in street gangs are said to be "a-social", the underlying discourse is that they act in a way that is difficult to understand from a modern rational perspective.

Could the gap between the socially expected logic of action and the way youths act in relation to their urban milieu be a more profound source of discomfort than the violence they may perpetrate? On the ground, studies have shown how police officers often act with less precaution or less "rationality" than is expected of them (see particularly Brodeur 2003; Klinger 1997). This project seeks to better understand these dynamics interactively with youth. By analyzing how (inter)action unfolds in concrete situations, we produced a typology of modalities and logics of action that may inspire how intervention programs can be designed differently.

1.2 Research questions

Most socio-anthropological approaches look at gangs from the inside, as a form of social organization that is seductive and attractive, and is in search of recognition and legitimacy. Yet, not much attention has been given to externally-oriented or relational gestures: how do they enter in contact or interface with the state (most specifically the police)? How do they constitute themselves as actors in their neighbourhood, in the city at large, in society? The micro-unfolding of interactions between youth and police is rarely examined, the assumption being that such interactions are conflicting, repressive, or dominating. In this project, we wish to zoom in on these "street-level" interactions in order to better understand

1) Whether and how "at-risk" youths constitute themselves as individual and collective social and political actors? What image of themselves do they seek to project? What means do they develop to act?

2) Whether and how police officers recognize "at-risk" youths' subjectivity and capacity to act socially and politically (are they seen as vulnerable, dangerous, annoying, lucrative, collaborative, innovative, etc.)? This question is about police perceptions. We have also been concerned with a sub-question: how do police officers enable or constrain youths' subjectivity and capacity to act socially and politically?

3) How and where specifically do youths and police interact in everyday neighbourhood situations? On what modes are these interactions unfolding (conflict, domination, negotiation, accommodation, etc.)?

4) What are, comparatively, the underlying logics of action guiding youths and police? Is there a predominance of strategizing (anticipating consequences, projecting an act into the future) or more insistence on tactical reactive and often unpredictable movements? Is their logic of action motivated by conflict,

cooperation, negotiation, etc.? Do they think of their space of action on a territorial (area-based) or fluid and mobile basis? We have sought to be attentive to both motivations and logics of action (how action unfolds). It might be that what one party identifies as domination (youths), another would identify as negotiation (police), for example, owing to the status, power, or territoriality ascribed to the interaction. We have paid special attention to theorizing the role of mobilities and youth/police relationships to territory in the construction of citizenship.

5) What other social actors (families, political leaders (formal and informal), merchants, and miscellaneous other adults – with attention paid to gender patterns) mediate these interactions, in what ways (and spaces), how and why? It may be that the presence or absence of mediating actors in the police-youth relation is what determines a) the nature of citizenship or b) the extent to which residents still associate youths with fear and crime.

1.3 Methodology

In Montreal and Mexico City, we used the following broad criteria for selecting the neighbourhoods in which fieldwork was conducted:

- The neighbourhood has active prevention programs

- The neighbourhood has a history of informal activities because this is implicitly why they have been identified as concentrations of risk factors. It is important to better understand street culture/life, where interactions are more likely to take place

In both places, the data collection consisted of:

- More than 30 in-depth interviews with youths, police, and local actors for each case

- Systematic observations in the selected public sites, as well as participation in community activities with the police

- A policy review of youth policing and urban insecurity in each city

PART I: THE CASE OF SAINT-MICHEL IN MONTREAL

1. THE SAINT-MICHEL NEIGHBOURHOOD

Saint-Michel is a neighbourhood situated in the northern central part of the Island of Montreal, in the Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension borough.

1.1 Population and economic marginalization

- Population stable with 55,029 inhabitants (2006)

- Gained 11% more youths between 10 and 14 years old between 1996 and 2001

- Proportion of single-parent families is 19.9% (the Montreal average is 11.4%)

- Ranked fifth (out of 29) regarding the number of cases reported by the Direction de la Protection de la Jeunesse (DPJ)

- Almost half of the inhabitants are immigrants (46.8%, the Montreal average is 30%) coming mainly from Italy, Haiti, Latin America and North Africa

- 50% are visible minorities (against an average of 24.4% in Montreal)

- Ranked third in Montreal for its unemployment rate (7.6% in 2006)

- 17.5% unskilled labour (i.e. one worker out of six), against an average of 7.3%

- 29.9% of the 25 to 64 years old population lacking a high school diploma (13.5% in Montreal), and only 18.4% have a university degree (40.9% in Montreal)

- One household out of four reports low income (Côté 2009), that is a household that dedicates 64% or more of its income to food, housing and clothing

1.2 Criminality

Before the 1980s, the only criminalized groups were White gangs, mainly outlaw motorcycle gangs (Hell's Angels). As the Haitian population grew in Saint-Michel in the 1980s, they became victims of the biker gangs and other groups of young white neo-Nazis. To defend themselves against violent racism, young black Haitians formed youth gangs; at the beginning of the 1980s, the predominant gangs were the Bélanger and

Master B. Gangs went to war with each other. Between 1990 and 2005, gangs were responsible for two attempted murders weekly and seven murders annually in Montreal, with an average of four murders per year in Saint-Michel alone.

At the beginning of the 1990s, gangs' main objective was territorial conquest, either to defend themselves against other gangs, or for the prestige of the conquest. They survived thanks to bullying, petty thefts, and the sale of drugs at a local scale. But from the mid-1990s, their level of organization increased and above all, they forged closer alliances with organized crime. This radicalization of street gangs and the evolution of their activities, notably in the 2000s, was also a consequence of the arrest of the main characters of the Hell's Angels during spring 2001, thus leaving a free space on the fields owned by the street gangs. As gangs became more radicalized, richer, and more involved in organized crime, criminality rates dropped from the 2000s and a certain peace began to settle in the neighbourhood. Between 2005 and 2008, there was a reduction in the infractions to the Criminal Code of 12.5%, while the average for Montreal was a drop of just 4.6%.

2. INSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS AND PROGRAMS FOR GANG PREVENTION IN SAINT-MICHEL

Since March 1999, crime prevention programs have been financed jointly by the federal and the provincial governments. Indeed, the signing of an agreement (renewed in 2008) between the provincial Ministry of Public Safety and the federal government established joint management through the National Strategy for Crime Prevention, under the responsibility of the NCPC.

2.1 Federal programs

In the years 2008 to 2009, the federal Government of Canada gave the provincial Government of Quebec a fund of $92.3 M spread over a period of five years. Four priorities were chosen: the fight against street gangs, the war on drugs, cyber-crime and isolated crimes. For our purposes here, $13.6 M was designated to the war on street gangs in Quebec, including $7.5 M for Montreal the first year.

2.2 Provincial programs

In addition to federal funds, $34 M was invested by the Government of Quebec for the period of 2008 to 2010 to fight street gangs. The funds were administered by the Ministry of Public Safety. Two areas of action were prioritized: repression ($16.8 M) and prevention ($17.6 M). Between 2008 and 2011, particular attention was paid to the prevention of recruitment of youths for the purpose of sexual exploitation by street gangs.

2.3 Municipal and borough programs

Municipal priorities are responding to government funding. Programs are implemented in the districts by different stakeholders from the community or the institutional level. The City of Montreal initially identified five priority districts to which resources are allocated to prevention, to which three new districts were added in 2009. These boroughs show a certain density of risk factors such as the socio-economic status of households, the number of single-parent households, school dropout rates, gang activities in the area, a high proportion of immigrants, a large population turnover, and the overall condition of the built environment.

2.4   The structure of the municipal police service in Montreal (SPVM)

The Police Service of the City of Montreal, with its 7,197 civilian employees and police officers, serves the whole territory of the island of Montreal. The SPVM works with a total of 33 neighbourhood quarters. The post of district 30 (PDQ 30), serving Saint-Michel, has a staff of 68 including two community relations police officers and a *conseiller en concertation* (civil employee facilitating communication with ethnic communities and community organisations). Each PDQ has specific objectives relative to the needs of the neighbourhood and its residents.

2.5   Community and local stakeholders

Community life in the neighbourhood is largely influenced by the consultation group (*table de concertation*) Vivre Saint-Michel en santé (VSMS). This group is funded by the Foundation McConnel as part of its "vibrant communities" program and by a tripartite agreement between Centraide of Greater Montreal, the Public Health division and the Ville-Centre. This round table acts as a catalyst for financial resources in order to support the actions included in its action plan for urban and social revitalization. Today, VSMS has a workforce of about a dozen professionals, who are seeking to manage 12 consultative bodies. The organization has a budget of $1.2 M to carry out its activities. This figure contrasts with the year of its first strategic planning in 2004, when the funds mobilized were $180,000. VSMS includes a section on urban social security in its social and urban revitalization plan. This section of the action plan is concretized through the **Safety Club** within the consultation group VSMS. Its area of action extends to the whole neighbourhood and involves the following actors: Action Saint-Michel Est (community organization), the borough offices, Les Monarques (community sports project), La Maison d'Haïti (community organization), Mon resto Saint-Michel (food security and insertion), PACT de rue (youth workers), Tandem (a city program delegated to a community organization), the PDQ 30 (police), and Maison des jeunes par la grand' porte (community organization). Finally, the consultation group VSMS also includes another party called **Groupe Action Jeunesse** (GAJ). This is a specialized group for youth issues (6-25 years old). Its themes of action touch health, recreation, culture, employability and school dropout, as well as crime prevention and adherence to street gangs.

3. YOUTHS AS ACTORS IN SAINT-MICHEL

Most youths affirm that they feel discriminated (by the police, by other Montrealers) because of their skin color. When asked how they think the police see them, they respond: "threatening", "elements of perturbation" or "a Black that smokes dope; that hangs out on the street and does things to drink and smoke." The general perception that youths have of police officers is negative, but for many it is an ambiguous negativity. Indeed, it seems that expressing a negative opinion towards police officers is part of a social role (not only in Montreal, but in many places of the world).

They have a very negative image of politicians as corrupted. We have, however, seen interest in more informal forms of politics, whether in the formulation of critical opinions on social problems or curiosity towards social issues. Their rebellion against their stigmatization and certain police practices is an example of political action. In response to our questions: "Do you think it is necessary to have rules and laws? Do we always need to respect them?", youths responded that we need laws to "maintain order," to "live together," or to keep a good level of "morality." They generally equated being a good citizen with respecting laws and staying informed to make sure there are no injustices. But beyond this institutional understanding of citizenship, many youths equated citizenship with more interactive advantages like the recognition of their being, of their action.

4. THE ROLE OF THE POLICE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF YOUTH CITIZENSHIP IN SAINT-MICHEL

We sought to better understand how police officers recognize youth subjectivity and capacity to act in a targeted "at-risk" neighbourhood such as Saint-Michel. What predominates in the risk factor approach is probabilistic thinking, and thus youths are conceived as statistical aggregates; their behaviour is "predicted" by their concentration of risk factors. This leaves them very little autonomous individuality and capacity to act. We sought to empirically see whether police officers do work with this preventive logic in mind by asking them whether they see youths as "vulnerable" or "at-risk".

What comes out forcefully from our data is a clear distinction between discourses and practices at various levels. The prevention framework in Quebec (and Canada) does clearly speak in terms of risk factors. Because these framing policies come with money, the "risk factor" approach poses a real constraint on practices on the ground, because actors receiving the money (from the central city, to the boroughs, and to community organizations) need to justify its use according to this framework. In our interviews, we constantly heard local actors appropriating the risk factor discourse to describe the neighbourhood or their own social work, but often hesitating to actually use the words "at-risk" or "vulnerable." They speak less in terms of vulnerability and more in terms of empowerment, although this distinction is more or less intense according to who is speaking.

We would suggest two interrelated elements of explanation for this distinction between official policy framing and actual practices:

1. **The neighbourhood scale offers possibilities for informal deal-making** that cannot be present at larger scales (the City, the province, or the country). By deal-making, we do not mean illegal, back-door deals. Instead, we mean the possibility of going beyond abstract risk-factor discourse, to constantly adjusting, in a relational manner, to the context of concrete local situations. This is possible, we would argue, only if there is a shared sense of the territory in which the "deal" is active.

2. **There is a relational potential opened by proximity**. The preventive approach at the neighbourhood scale allows police officers to work closely with youths. They constantly speak of human-to-human relations that developed over the long term. Their logic of action is marked by personalized (rather than institutionalized) relations. This entails experiential, tactical, affect-driven and sensual action, more so than strategic thinking or statistical calculations and ensuing profiling practices.

5. OTHER ACTORS IN THE SAINT-MICHEL NEIGHBOURHOOD

Depending on their institutional context, local actors will show different types of attitudes towards youths. Elected officials have to navigate with pressures from higher levels of government, competition with other boroughs for resources, and electoral imperatives in relation to citizens. Community organizers tend to adopt an empathic discourse tinted with references to empowerment. Business owners (in the Little Maghreb) seek to protect the sector's reputation in the face of citizens from other ethnic origins and of elected officials and the police. Police officers speak more in terms of mutual respect, as if they are engaged in a relation between equal forces. But what comes out of our conversations with various local actors is the need to continuously work on trust relationships with youths and between partners.

6. YOUTH-POLICE INTERACTIONS IN SAINT-MICHEL

There is very little evidence in our interviews of direct dominating interactions between youth and police. But youths do complain about difficulties with the police when they are in group in public spaces. They globally see the police institution as a "pain in the neck". Even if youth-police interactions are not openly in conflict, police officers tend to show that they legitimately control the situation. In this context, youths tend to accommodate. But this does not mean that conflict is inexistent, it tends to be latent and as one youth told us: "a spark could blow up the shed." In our interviews and mostly through our field observations, we sought to highlight how and where youths and police interact in everyday neighbourhood situations. On what modes are these interactions unfolding? We noticed three main modes of interaction (in order of importance): negotiation, avoidance, and confrontation.

6.1 Negotiation

Negotiation does not have a pejorative connotation, nor does it refer to illegal or illicit forms of deal-making. It is a concept central to democratic theory, based on the assumption that conflict can be channelled through negotiation. If so, it becomes socially productive (learning, innovating, communicatively determining the common good, coexisting). We have seen how local practices sometimes differ from the preventive logic of policy documents, and that Saint-Michel has developed its own locally-specific ways of interacting with youths. For police officers, indeed, negotiation is presented as the channel through which they achieved pacification in the neighbourhood with the help of all local partners. In their case, negotiation was about building trust in the long-term. It began as a trial-and-error tactic that then transformed itself into a planned strategy, later politically "exported" as a best practice for the rest of the city and even the world. For (non-gang) youths, however, negotiation is more of a reactive act in a specific situation. It pays on an ad-hoc basis more than in the long-term. Youths do not perceive negotiation as a long-term trust-building process. Instead, they see it as a way to become empowered as an actor in the situations they encounter.

6.2 Avoidance and confrontation

Youths expressed that police officers invade their space. We observed such annoyance and avoidance in the field many times. Confrontation was also present but not the most significant mode of interaction we observed. Further research is needed to better understand the reasons why. Moreover, the motives behind the choice of one mode of interaction over another require further reflection.

PART II: THE CASE OF THE SEVEN BARRIOS IN IZTAPALAPA, MEXICO CITY

7. THE SEVEN BARRIOS OF IZTAPALAPA, MEXICO CITY

Research for this project was conducted in seven adjoining neighbourhoods (*barrios*) in the Mexico City borough of Iztapalapa (Barrio San Pablo, Barrio San José, Barrio San Pedro, Barrio San Ignacio, Barrio Santa Barbara, Barrio San Lucas, and Barrio La Asunción). Mexico City is comprised of 16 boroughs (*delegaciones*).

7.1 Population and economic marginalization

- Population in Iztapalapa is approximately 1.85 million residents (close to 21% of the City's population)

- With an area of 73 square km, the *delegación* is the Federal District's second largest in size and has the third highest population density

- Home to the largest population of youth in all of Mexico City (close to 600,000 individuals between the ages of X and Y)

- Highest rates of marginalization in Mexico City (54.5% of the *delegación's* population lives in a condition of very high or high social marginality)

- 23.6% of a barrio's population over the age of 15 in 2000 had completed middle school education

- (Formal) employment is limited for youth aged 15-29; between the ages of 24 and 29, youth tend to move towards formal employment in significant numbers

- Of those formally employed, between 50% and 60% per barrio made equal to or less than roughly ten dollars per day.[1]

7.2 Criminality

Iztapalapa is infamous for being one of the most violent and criminally inclined *delegaciones* in Mexico City. The most recent data published by the *Procuradoría General de Justicia del Distrito Federal* signals that Iztapalapa topped the list in the number of delinquency investigations per year with 30,083 in 2011 (or 82.4 per day). It

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[1] In Mexico, the minimum daily wage allowed by law is approximately five dollars. Therefore, residents make equal to or less than the minimum daily salary in Mexico.

is important to highlight, however, that when accounting for the population density of the *delegación*, its ranking drops significantly to 12th out of 16. While this signals that compared to other *delegaciones* crimes committed within Iztapalapa accounting for population size are relatively low, this does not mean that criminality is not highly engrained in the *delegación*. Iztapalapa residents often travel to other *delegaciones* to conduct criminal activity, for example car theft. Drug trade in Iztapalapa has grown significantly, particularly given the *delegación's* border with municipalities from El Estado de Mexico (Yáñez Romero, 2005).

In terms of the gangs in the seven barrios, traditionally there have been ongoing feuds between the different barrios, led by their respective gangs that often lead to violence. According to informal interviews conducted with residents of the barrios, compared to past decades the area has been relatively calmer in terms of inter-barrio violence given that many gang leaders were either killed or put in jail.

7.3   Physical characteristics of the seven barrios

The most important layout characteristic within the barrios is the maze of alleyways and closed streets that stem from secondary streets. Alleyways can be extremely narrow (some to the point that a moped can barely go through) and cannot be appropriately perceived on general maps of the area. This makes it difficult for police to patrol neighbourhoods by car. Moreover, without knowledge of how to navigate the maze, it is easy to find oneself travelling deeper into the maze instead of making one's way out, especially at night. It is within this maze that nightlife, especially for youth, takes place.

Figure 1: The maze of alleyways in the seven barrios

7.4 Community actors and tradition

The seven barrios, together with Barrio San Miguel are considered the cultural heart of Iztapalapa. The names of the barrios, which can be traced back to 1898, reflect their Catholic traditions. Families can trace their family lineage and residency in the seven barrios at times more than a hundred years back. It can be generalized based on interviews and participant observation that non-*nativos* are considered outsiders. *Nativos* highlight that actors, in particular those associated with the government, need to respect their traditions and way of life.

8. INSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS AND PROGRAMS FOR GANG PREVENTION IN IZTAPALAPA

8.1 Structure of policing in Iztapalapa and the seven barrios

There are two types of police actors responsible for security and public safety in the seven barrios: the Metropolitan Police (*Policía Sectorial*) and the Auxiliary Police, or *Auxiliares* (*Policía Auxiliar*) Sector 56. The territorial boundaries of Metropolitan and Auxiliary Police across Iztapalapa intersect. Interviews with police highlighted that there exists significant tension between the two police forces.

8.1.1 POLICÍA SECTORIAL

There are a total of 3,700 Metropolitan police officers serving Iztapalapa, who are recruited, trained, and overseen by the *Secretaría de Seguridad Publica del DF* (SSP or Secretaría of Public Security). These officers are split into ten sectors that cover the entire metropolitan area. The sector corresponding to the seven barrios is called Reforma. Metropolitan police are typically seen driving the beat around the perimeter or parked on certain intersections. It is rare to see a Metropolitan police officer walking the beat, particularly within the barrios themselves.

8.1.2 POLICÍA AUXILIAR SECTOR 56

Delegaciones and private businesses may contract *Auxiliares* from the SSP, making them a public police force with quasi-private functions. Typically, *Auxiliares* are responsible for protecting government (or private) offices and establishments. In Iztapalapa, however, Auxiliary police contracted by the *delegación*, numbering 1,170, act as fully operational police units charged with protecting the public. This means that they partake in beats, and work in day-to-day and special operations. Moreover, these officers (which together comprise sector 56 of the Auxiliary Police) are overseen directly by the *delegación* through the General Coordinator for Public Security. In the seven barrios, Auxiliary police both walk and drive cars (typically pick-ups) and Segways, to better cover the alleyways and narrow secondary streets of the neighbourhoods, which are difficult to access with a car. At night, Auxiliary police no longer enter the barrios, limiting their presence to the perimeter.

8.1.3 OTHER POLICE ACTORS

In Iztapalapa the other actors engaged in crime prevention and safety are the *Policía Judicial* (Judicial Police) and the *Policía Federal* (Federal Police). These police actors do not generally coordinate activities with the Metropolitan or Auxiliary Police. The

Judicial Police are in charge of criminal investigations. Meanwhile, the Federal Police presence in Iztapalapa is typically related to drug trafficking and large scale criminal networks.

8.2 Youth crime prevention programs operating in Iztapalapa

Two ongoing programs focused specifically on youth crime prevention are active in Iztapalapa. The first is conducted by a special unit within the Metropolitan Police, and the second by a special unit within the *delegación's* Auxiliary Police. Note that while the programs are similar in their aims and approaches, the two have not successfully collaborated or coordinated efforts.

8.2.1 UNIDAD DE SEGURIDAD ESCOLAR (USE)

The USE is a branch of SSP in Mexico City dedicated to crime prevention for youths in school. The USE was created in 2004 and today there are 870 USE police officers that receive special training regarding youth crime prevention. Note that 800 of the 870 are dedicated solely to working in schools in two other *delegaciones*. The remaining 70 officers cover the rest of the City. As can readily be ascertained, 70 officers covering all of the schools in 14 *delegaciones*, including Iztapalapa, leads to an under-supply of USE services. For over a year Iztapalapa has requested an entire USE unit dedicated solely to the *delegación*. The request has not been approved as of yet; unsurprisingly, funding is a principal roadblock.

USE officers visit and conduct talks related to youth violence, inter-family violence, drug addictions and body modifications, among others. The discussions tend to be through the medium of Microsoft PowerPoint, though recently they have begun to add socio-dramas (dramatizations of scenarios related to drug addiction and violence). Additionally, USE offers students special activities including bringing a rappel line to schools and summer field trips. The objective of these efforts is to alert youth to the consequences of violent actions, and to offer them opportunities to experience high adrenaline thrills without the need for violence.

8.2.2 UNIDAD ESPECIAL DE COMBATE AL DELITO DE LA PA 56

In 2009 Iztapalapa created a special unit consisting of a handful of Auxiliary police officers to conduct presentations at schools located in Iztapalapa on issues related to violence and drug addiction prevention. Compared to the USE presentations, this group is quite theatrical and engages youth through lengthy, yet quite powerful, socio-dramas that play out the realities and consequences of issues from bullying to drugs. They are much more violent and realistic when performed for middle and high-school students.

Students seem generally engaged during the socio-dramas and often come to speak to the officers before and after the performance.

The officers volunteered to be part of the special unit (and were chosen through auditions). In July 2010, this special unit was made full-time, meaning that today their day-to-day responsibilities are largely limited to conducting presentations at schools throughout the *delegación*, preparing new material, and being coached by theatre, music, literature and other experts that donate their time to the unit. The team is also engaged in most public events hosted by the *delegación*. In cases where manpower is needed for certain operations, these officers may be called into regular duty. As an example, the unit assisted in the clearing of an area of informal vendors in March 2011.

9. YOUTHS AS ACTORS IN THE SEVEN BARRIOS OF IZTAPALAPA

Invariably, every youth interviewed had a negative perception of the police. Their perceptions are built around personal experiences or the experiences of family members or close friends that have had direct interactions with police. The most common description of police is that they are corrupt, aggressive, discriminative, do nothing to prevent crime, and are often conspirators in crimes. Youth often refer to the infamous "*mordida*" or pay-off that officers request in return for not taking them to jail or a civic judge. Youth feel powerless overall to stop this type of action from police, which in some cases threaten to plant evidence on them and make their problems worse if they do not cooperate with a *mordida*. However, fees for misdemeanours at the civic judge are usually higher than those requested by police, thus making it a "rational" decision for youths to choose the *mordida*. Many youths feel that officers go after the most vulnerable youths, the ones they can extort, and leave alone the more dangerous ones, who are in fact the ones they should be questioning and detaining.

Youth responded with ease to questions regarding the main challenges they perceive the city to have. Most highlighted corruption, violence, and drug use as the most prevalent problems. Some noted lack of water and the environment as main concerns. When asked how these issues could be resolved, most stated that these problems are very complicated and that it is those in power, i.e. "those on top," that can make changes, not them as individuals. A sense of how to engage with this figurative elite so as to change this larger context is not present in their discourse. In other words, they operate in a world that they feel is largely beyond their control, thus perhaps explaining the energy invested in keeping the community and their families as their allies. This could perhaps also be explained by the lack of democratic channels for grievance and dispute resolution (i.e. a working justice system). The barrio itself is the only channel available for informal protection and conflict resolution, which is what gives it its importance.

10. THE ROLE OF THE POLICE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF YOUTH CITIZENSHIP IN THE SEVEN BARRIOS OF IZTAPALAPA

The police perception of youths in the seven barrios is by and large very negative: youths in the seven barrios are very aggressive, defiant towards authority, and largely view police as the enemy. Police feel that youths are likely to routinely partake in activities such as getting drunk and doing drugs. They also suggest that youths feel entitled, and are allowed to behave this way by their families and community, who protect them from facing the consequences of their actions. Police are concerned that youths ultimately fall prey to imitating the negative behaviours of community members, most of all those associated with their peers. In regard to the latter point, officers do hold the perception that youths tend to imitate their surroundings, and as such, it can be said that officers also view youths as highly vulnerable.

We find that police officers tend to act in a relatively rational manner, given the context in which they work. The context includes a cohesive community that protects youths and a legal system that takes a long time to navigate and typically ends in minors being released or let go with a slap on the wrist. Thus, officers make decisions about when to approach and/or pursue groups of youths and when to take them into custody, accounting for both procedural hurdles and their own safety.

11. YOUTH-POLICE INTERACTIONS IN THE SEVEN BARRIOS OF IZTAPALAPA

Our results suggest that creating opportunities for more youth-police interactions, in the current context of profound mistrust, might not empower youths to feel agency in those interactions. The lack of trust is a barrier to creating sympathy through more interactions. It seems that a double strategy of creating trust and more opportunities to interact are necessary.

A challenge for both prevention programs studied is not only finding ways to reach more youths, but also to multiply the training they offer to participating officers to police on the beat. It was, for example, surprising that none of the beat Auxiliary police knew about the Auxiliary special crime prevention unit. Moreover, programs that reach youths in the classroom may well have positive effects; but against an entrenched negative perception between police and youths and their communities, such programs may be but a match lighting up a small portion of a dark room, and under constant threat of being put out by the lightest breeze.

PART III: LESSONS FROM THE COMPARISON OF MONTREAL AND MEXICO CITY

The two cases chosen for this study share more differences than similarities. Firstly, police institutions in both settings have a very different history. In Saint-Michel, the PDQ 30 has a monopoly over its district territory, whereas Iztapalapa is characterized by a fragmentation of police corps, which traces back to a complex institutional history and overlapping jurisdictions resulting from more than 70 years of one-party rule.

Moreover, Mexico is currently living through a period of highly-mediatized insecurity related to drug-trafficking and an unstable political climate as the July 2012 presidential elections are approaching. Such insecurity and instability is far from the current Canadian reality. However, the issue of racial discrimination, which came through forcefully in Montreal, is absent from the reality of Iztapalapa.

In socio-economic terms, both case studies are characterized by high marginalization both in absolute terms and relative to their broader environment. They are both suffering stigmatization due to past or present gang violence activities. Both Saint-Michel and the seven barrios are facing the problems of intergenerational gang activities, but this is more pronounced in the Mexican case, whereas in Saint-Michel, the second generation is still too young to be active in criminalized activities (although they are currently the target of prevention work). Drug use is more visible in the seven barrios than in Saint-Michel, where we did not witness any use in public spaces, nor was it identified as a problem by the police, youths, or other local actors.

The seven barrios of Iztapalapa face much higher physical enclosure than Saint-Michel, due to their street and alley layout. However, the northern part of Saint-Michel is less accessible than the southern part of the neighbourhood close to the subway station, and traveling east-west is difficult given the two quarries traversing the neighbourhood. But these physical constraints do not prevent police officers from patrolling all sectors, day and night.

The contrast between our two cases makes the comparison difficult, but also highlights a central mechanism facilitating the construction of youth citizenship: building trust, both structural and conjunctural.

12. THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING TRUST

A striking element of success in Saint-Michel is the level of trust expressed by all actors towards each other. Trust is never acquired forever and mistrust is expressed by certain youths. But compared to Mexico City, where the level of mistrust is so high that it seems impossible to find any elements to the contrary, Saint-Michel has developed interesting ways to build trust. The most important characterizing element of this "Saint-Michel model" are:

1. **Long temporalities**. Local actors, from police officers to community organizers and social workers have been around for a long time. Most of them are not from the neighbourhood, they are not *nativos* as we saw in Iztapalapa, but they have worked there for over ten years at least. The maximum length of stay of police officers in the seven barrios is six years, and this is an exception.

2. **Human-to-human, personalized relations over institutionalized relations**. Police officers invest in the neighbourhood beyond their formal police work, through community activities. As a result, youths trust them more. They call them by their first name and see them as human beings who go to the barbershop like everyone else. Police officers repeated several times that youths tend to forget their uniform. This is not true, however, of police officers outside the neighbourhood. Trust is given to individuals, not the police institution. Given the long history of historical mistrust of the police institution in Mexico City generally and in Iztapalapa particularly, such relations seem impossible. However, police officers participating in the school awareness programs do speak forcefully about how this work has changed both how youths and their families perceive them and how they themselves perceive youths.

3. **Experiential, affect-driven logic of action**. What motivates police work is moral outrage more than detached and calculative, strategic thinking. This does not mean they act irrationally (they do follow strict protocols and make rational judgement calls like any police officer), but it illustrates how they let their experience guide them, how they improvise and believe in small gestures more than grand strategies. In contrast, the Mexican case demonstrates a strictly rational and institutionally-driven logic of action on the part of police officers. Faced with a dysfunctional civic justice system, a dire lack of personal and institutional resources and legitimacy, and real dangers for their personal safety given the cohesiveness of the local community, police officers constantly make rational judgement calls on whether to bring a youth to jail, whether to ask for

the *mordida*, or whether to call upon the most dangerous gang members. In this context of structural mistrust between police and society, police officers do not have much margin of manoeuvre for trial-and-error, moral outrage, and empathy-driven action.

4. **Common space of action**. There is a shared sense of belonging to the neighbourhood in Saint-Michel. This was quite clear on the part of the youths, who are attached to their neighbourhood. But police officers also feel strongly about the PDQ 30 culture and the "Saint-Michel model". In the seven barrios, we witnessed exactly the opposite. The community, the *nativos*, share a strong sense of belonging and a desire to protect their homes and neighbourhoods against outside "intruders." Police officers, for their part, feel and recognize that this is not their territory; they are not "at home" and are far from welcomed. For precisely these reasons, there is no similar sense of pride in their police district, as we can see in Saint-Michel, although this is to be nuanced because the local PA 56 police is more active locally than the Metropolitan Police.

There are sometimes structural constraints that get in the way of "conjunctural" changes in the relationships between police and youths. This is particularly evident when one compares the legitimacy of law enforcement institutions in Canada and Mexico, and understands how larger societal perceptions of police authority enable or constrain police's capacities to generate trust vis-a-vis youth. Any efforts to build youth trust in police would have to be embedded in a much larger political and transformational objective in Mexico City, as compared to Montreal, and different strategies that work on both the structural and the conjunctural levels simultaneously might be necessary in order for some headway to be achieved. Along these lines, experiments in other countries with similar histories of distrust of police, like Brazil, have shown that programs oriented towards **breaking down the clear lines of authority** between police and youths by fostering shared activities and interests through arts and music projects have helped generate a new micro-climate of trust that bridges both structural and conjunctural domains.

13. CONSTRUCTING CITIZENSHIP

Our fieldwork in Saint-Michel shows many instances where youth constructed themselves as citizen-actors, even if they would not name their practices as citizenship acts. They generally do not trust formal politics, but are quite active in terms of inter-subjective citizenship. Just as in Iztapalapa, they are very articulate in formulating critical opinions and staying informed to make sure there is no abuse of power, and they show curiosity for social or city-wide problems beyond their daily routine. In Montreal, they speak of their willingness to be included in public debates and to think for themselves. In Iztapalapa, however, the general sense of overwhelming-ness in the face of drug-related violence and insecurity nationwide affects youth discourse on political action. They tend to defer more to elites, to the government. This discourse, which probably predates the current situation of national insecurity, is also present in our interviews with police officers. In both cities, however, youths do actively fight the stigma that weighs on their neighbourhood by trying to project a positive image. Their individual searches for recognition and respect will, they hope, trickle down to a collective recognition and respect for their neighbourhood.

These examples illustrate that youths do construct themselves as socio-political actors, much more so than policy frameworks based on vulnerability would have us believe. But in order to detect these forms of citizenship practices, we need to adopt a broader conception of the term, a conception based on inter-subjective relations rather than institutionalized and formal mechanisms to voice claims. Likewise, we need to have a better understanding of the potential discourses *available* for claiming agency and thus constructing citizenship, and of the fact that the same discourses may not be relevant in all contexts. The adoption or reference to human rights discourses by youths in Mexico City is a case in point. In an environment where formal political institutions associated with the state and abusive legacies of one-party rule are generally suspect, youths have adopted languages that have been introduced by NGOs and other leading institutions of change – perhaps because these allow a potentially powerful, or at least "safe" space for challenging abusive authority and claiming citizenship. In Montreal, youths refer to a language of racial discrimination, in the context of a mediatized public debate on racial profiling. They speak of citizenship rights and the need to be recognized in their difference. This language of cultural diversity provides frames of reference for challenging power inequalities and claiming a space of action.

14. NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This final observation suggests that future research might be well-served by constructing **comparisons both within and between two urban contexts**. In particular, while we have seen that the larger structural context of Canadian or Mexican policing, law enforcement, and democracy have had a bearing on the degrees of success of police-youth interactions through crime prevention programs, we have not examined whether these differences could also be affected by the history and nature of the neighbourhoods under study. For example, would we see the same youth responses in Montreal North as in Saint-Michel? What about Mexico City's historic centre in comparison with Iztapalapa?

A second line of thinking that could be explored in a new set of comparisons would relate to the question of **critical mediating actors and institutions**. In Mexico, we saw that NGOs and other independent organizations who take on advocacy and accountability tasks so as to protect youths from the vagaries associated with an unresponsive and untrustworthy political system seem to influence how youths construct their rights vis-à-vis the police. In addition to determining whether these patterns vary by neighbourhood (and if so, why), we might also look for other relevant organizations or actors that play this mediating role. Moreover, in the case of Montreal, it would be interesting to look at other representatives of the state, such as social workers. The long history of this profession in Quebec, and the close relationship between the construction of the welfare state and the development of a socially-oriented model of governance, call for a closer look at this profession, with social workers being located on the blurred line between the state and the community.

Finally, this small research project enabled us to identify two **modes of interaction** between youth and police beyond the usually-suspected confrontation: negotiation and avoidance. More research is now needed to better understand why youth choose the mechanisms they choose and/or avoid others. Moreover, we would need to know more about the structural and conjunctural mechanisms that prefigure one or the other mode of interaction.

TOWARDS CONCLUSIONS AND ACTION

Youth as citizen-actors

The first question we explored in this research aimed to better understand how youths in "at-risk" neighbourhoods constitute themselves as individual and collective social and political actors.[2] What image of themselves do they seek to project? What means do they develop to act? What preoccupies them and motivates their actions? In both Iztapalapa and Saint-Michel, stigmatization is an important issue. They described how they try to counter the stigma attached to their neighbourhood: they act positively, dress well. For them, citizenship has a broader meaning than a simple legal status; it means being recognized as citizen-actors by their neighbours first, then by authorities and other citizens outside of their neighbourhood. They formulated an inter-subjective understanding of citizenship.

The role of the police in the construction of youth citizenship

How do police officers recognize the subjectivity and capacity of "at-risk" youths to act socially and politically? In Mexico, the level of mistrust expressed by youths towards the police was shared by police officers towards youths. Yet, the police also portrayed youths as vulnerable because they are subject to the intergenerational influence of illicit behaviour in the barrios. In Montreal, police officers' discourse was more positive and empowering: youths want to be active, they are good people. Vulnerability was always present in the discourse: youths face difficult challenges. Not all officers readily used the policy language of risk factors; many hesitated in portraying youths in these terms. They made a clear distinction between the younger population which was portrayed as being more at-risk, and the gang veterans, for whom they spoke in terms of respect and balance of power. In both cases, however, officers on the street often demonstrate a more relational logic of action. This can be explained by two factors: 1) the neighbourhood scale of their work and longstanding familiarity with the community enables police to adjust to concrete situations and strike informal deals that would be impossible at larger scales; and 2) there are immense relational potentials opened by proximity. Because they know youths by name, they create personalized, rather than institutionalized relationships.

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[2] As a reminder, we worked with youths in the neighbourhoods, and not specifically with criminalized youths.

These factors were not found in Mexico City. In the seven barrios, Auxiliary police are the most active and typically work in the neighbourhoods for a short period of time before being transferred elsewhere or ending their careers. Moreover, the strong family (community) cohesion makes it much more difficult for officers to make headway in being viewed as "part of the community".

Youth-police interactions: a typology of mode of relation

Through field observations and interviews, we focused specifically on situations of interaction between youths and police in everyday neighbourhood situations. We asked: on what modes are these interactions unfolding? Our goal was to understand the nature of everyday relations between police and youths. In Saint-Michel and Iztapalapa, the most important mode of interaction is negotiation, followed by avoidance. We detected very little direct confrontation.

Negotiation has a different connotation in both cases. In Iztapalapa, it was expressed mostly concerning the *mordida*. The negotiated interaction is played out by both youths and police. The former attempt to negotiate the rate, while the latter negotiate with youths on whether they will formally arrest them and bring them to court. In Montreal, negotiation does not have a negative connotation. It was central to the process of pacification in Saint-Michel. It implies a mutual recognition of both parties – the gang veterans and the police. Police officers offer veterans "respect", and in return veterans ensure that the police can do their preventive work with the youngest (veterans "protect" them from other veterans, they control their members so that they do not disturb public events, etc.). Negotiation here is about building trust in the long-term. For (non-gang) youths, negotiation takes on a slightly different meaning. It focuses on ad-hoc situations of encounters with the police, and youths see negotiation as a means to become an actor in that situation. They will "be nice" and avoid being arrogant, etc., in order to obtain a second chance.

These results show that negotiation is a mode of interaction that can be deployed on a spectrum from backdoor deal-making to empowering encounters. Indeed, negotiation is not only associated with corruption, but is also a concept central to democratic theory. The premise of these reflections of democratic processes is that if conflict is channelled through negotiation, it becomes socially productive. Through the act of negotiating,

both parties are mutually recognized as legitimate actors. In the case of Saint-Michel, negotiation has had very positive impacts in terms of pacification and the empowerment of youths in situations of interaction with police officers. But against the backdrop of historically-entrenched mistrust in Iztapalapa, negotiation remains on the negative end of the spectrum.

Ideas for action

In this context, it seems that in the case of Iztapalapa, efforts should be concentrated both on **structural and conjunctural trust-building**. Building structural trust necessarily entails institutional reforms, while conjunctural trust can be constructed through the multiplication of situations of negotiated interaction between youths and police officers. In Iztapalapa, beyond engaging with outreach to youths, this also concerns the community as a whole. In the Montreal case, the police do not face such historically-entrenched mistrust, but continued debate and transparency is needed to maintain a good level of structural trust. The current dominance of the risk-factor logic of policy-making has led to well-identified stigmatization and discriminatory effects, particularly through area-based programs targeting stigmatized neighbourhoods and racial profiling practices. If these effects are not addressed, they will continue to undermine the level of structural trust that Montreal enjoys.

This study shows that **programs and policies that are closer to the relational logic of action may be more successful** than a constant emphasis on risk factors. Speaking the language of empowerment rather than vulnerability, seeing youths as citizen-actors rather than as a bundle of risks, these are the essential ingredients of a successful program. This means keeping existing good programs in sports, arts, and so on, but with a special objective of linking these youth worlds to other social worlds: public debates, the expression of social opinions, civic activities, and so on. It also means not only targeting at-risk youths, but youths in general, with an effort to de-stigmatize these recreational and arts programs. In the case of Iztapalapa, arts and sports programs would not be sufficient; bridges would be needed between the community as whole and the police, not just between various youth worlds. A starting point would be to deploy more efforts to bring citizens (not just youths) together with officers in neutral settings in which they can get to know each other as people and not just as one another's enemy.

Finally, our results confirm the **importance of the local scale of action**, if it is in a context of structural trust. The local scale of action is a common space of action for youth and police in Saint-Michel. This opens possibilities for relational and conjunctural trust to settle in, supported by the cohesiveness and effectiveness of local partnerships. In Iztapalapa, the Auxiliary Police, which is under the direct supervision of the *delegación*, is more active than the Metropolitan Police. However, recognizing the flexibilities that are possible locally does not mean developing programs with a rigid conception of the territory of action. Youths are mobile, their lives extend beyond the neighbourhood (more so in Montreal than Mexico City), and programs that build on this mobility would probably be more successful (Boudreau, Janni, and Chatel 2011).

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