Climate governance under the growth machine: a critical perspective on Montreal's climate politics

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Abstract

As nation-states and international bodies have lagged behind in implementing meaningful greenhouse gas mitigation strategies to minimize the impacts of climate change, it has been argued that the city has emerged as the social, political, and economic unit best adapted to respond to the need for emissions reduction and adaptation measures. Simultaneously, capital has surged into cities to fund this sustainable development turn at the local level, creating new industries and reorganizing the interests of existing stakeholders around the concept of green growth. In this paper, I examine the impact of this nascent green growth coalition on Montreal's climate policy through an analysis of two structures key to its climate governance: its recent climate action plan, the *Plan climat 2030-2030*, and the Montreal Climate Partnership. I argue that green growth actors, through extensive involvement in both structures, have succeeded in advancing an understanding of sustainability that considers growth and environmental protection to be compatible, potentially leading to consequences both for the fulfilment of emissions targets, and for equity. I further argue that this underscores the need to rethink our understanding of sustainability, and to challenge green development and policy which fails to adequately address equity, and which fails to engage the public.

Résumé

Les États-nations et les organismes internationaux ayant pris du retard dans la mise en œuvre de stratégies significatives de réduction des gaz à effet de serre afin de minimiser les impacts du changement climatique, il a été avancé que la ville s'est imposée comme l'unité sociale, politique et économique la mieux adaptée pour répondre à la nécessité de réduire les émissions et de prendre des mesures d'adaptation. Simultanément, les capitaux ont afflué dans les villes pour financer ce virage vers le développement durable au niveau local, créant de nouvelles industries et réorganisant les intérêts des parties prenantes existantes autour du concept de croissance verte. Dans cet article, j'examine l'impact de cette coalition naissante de croissance verte sur la politique climatique de Montréal à travers une analyse de deux structures clés de sa gouvernance climatique : son récent plan d'action climatique, le Plan climat 2030-2030, et le Partenariat climat Montréal. Je soutiens que les acteurs de la croissance verte, en s'impliquant dans ces deux structures, ont réussi à faire avancer une compréhension de la durabilité qui considère que la croissance et la protection de l'environnement sont compatibles, ce qui peut avoir des conséquences à la fois sur la réalisation des cibles d'émissions autant que sur l'équité. Je soutiens également que cela souligne la nécessité de repenser notre compréhension de la durabilité et de remettre en question le développement et les politiques vertes qui n'abordent pas de manière adéquate la question de l'équité et qui ne parviennent pas à impliquer le public.

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Introduction

In December of 2020, Montreal's municipal government unveiled a new climate action plan, the *Plan climat 2020-2030* (*Plan climat*). Proposing policies spanning citizen engagement, mobility, urban form, and governance, the plan promised to reduce community emissions by 55% under 1990 levels by 2030, and the achievement of complete carbon-neutrality by 2050. And Montreal is not alone: hundreds of global cities have released similar plans, promising to take leadership on the issue of climate change. The last two decades have seen the widespread failure of international agreements and nation-states to produce results in mitigating climate change. The resulting crisis of confidence in international and national-level climate policy has led to increased interest in the prospects of local governance solutions and non-state actors to fill policy gaps (Burch et al., 2014). In this context, cities have emerged as key sites of climate action uniquely positioned to 'save the world', due to their pragmatism, proximity to constituents, and increasing participation in international networks (Angelo & Wachsmuth, 2020; Barber, 2013; Hughes, 2019). As this movement has gained momentum, municipalities have increasingly touted their climate bonafides, boasting of car-free streets, innovative green tech sectors, parks and other green amenities, transit-oriented development policies, and dense urban forms. Municipalities have also cast themselves as fertile ground for rethinking institutional arrangements in the context of climate change, offering the promise of producing experimental governance arrangements, often blurring the lines between private and public authority in the process (Bulkeley & Castan-Broto, 2013). These measures, experiments, and promises are also often presented to underpin ambitious carbon neutrality timelines (City of Montreal, 2020), the potential for building a "greater, greener" city (New York City, 2011), or of making them the "greenest city" (City of Vancouver, 2010). Cities also attempt to attract investment from national governments, provincial governments (in the case of Canada), and membership in international networks, serving to grow the economy of the city in question, and increase its prestige on the world stage in order to attract further investment, both public and private. Within this framework of international competitive, entrepreneurial urbanism (Harvey, 1989), plans, governance experiments and policy orientations are framed as beneficial not only due to their impact on carbon emissions, air quality, and various metrics tied to sustainable development - they are almost always promoted as being economically beneficial and growth-promoting, and as necessary for a city's viability and vitality.

Further, action on climate change offers the promise to renegotiate the responsibility and purview of the municipal government, actors in the private sector, civil society, and individual citizens to limit their respective emissions, participate in, or profit from sustainable local development. Climate governance and policy therefore do not only codify and rationalize the rollout of climate policy and municipal improvements, but are also contested spaces in which different growth interests jockey for position in drawing profits from municipal action and subsidy. This can occur, to varying degrees, at the expense of 'good governance', public input, and other sectors of a city's growth machine.

This research project focuses on climate governance in the city of Montreal, and will specifically investigate the viability of the 'cities saving the world' narrative in the context of growth-driven green development. I will do so by examining two important structural elements within Montreal's climate governance: the *Plan climat*, and the Montreal Climate Partnership (MCP), an independent initiative bringing together private, institutional, and civic sector actors in supporting the implementation of the *Plan climat.* The *Plan climat* provides a look into the priorities of Montreal's municipal government, while the recent creation of the MCP offers an opportunity to explore the priorities and strategies of non-government actors most involved in these structures. Through a review of the *Plan climat*, the structure of the MCP as well as interviews with key actors and stakeholders in the MCP and Montreal's climate politics generally, this research examines the state of (Canadian) municipal governance in planning for climate change, and looks to elucidate the networks and interests underlying it.

The core questions investigated in this research project can be expressed as follows:
Recently, many cities including Montreal have seen the emergence of climate partnerships meant to coordinate non-public sector actors in pursuit of climate and emissions goals - typically those prescribed by their respective cities in climate action plans. The actor networks, objectives, and processes attached to these partnerships and plans allow a close look into a city's climate politics. How successful have the green growth-oriented networks that have coalesced around the *Plan climat* and MCP been at influencing Montreal's municipal climate policy? Further, what do these results signal about the potential of similar climate governance arrangements at the local level?

To address these questions, I begin with a review of the academic literature underpinning my analysis. This includes sections describing the city's evolution from a sustainability problem to a sustainability solution; the current state of local climate policy and the emergence of local climate

partnerships as tools to govern and coordinate green growth interests at the local level; and green growth and its material and ideological implications in the context of climate change and local climate planning. Next is a brief methods chapter in which I explain the process by which information on Montreal's climate governance apparatus was gathered through analysis of the *Plan climat*, as well as semi-structured interviews with local sustainable development experts, participants in the Montreal Climate partnership, and municipal officials. Case study overviews are then presented for both the *Plan climat* and the MCP. This is followed by an analysis section in which the *Plan climat*, and the interviews are unravelled to describe the current state of climate governance and planning in Montreal. The implications of these findings are then presented, and I propose potential directions for future research into the relationship between local-level climate governance and green growth.

Literature review

I will begin by presenting the state of the academic literature on key concepts relevant to the intersection of municipal governance, climate planning, and green growth. First, I examine the evolution of the role of the city, from being perceived as a sustainability problem to a solution. I then move onto urban growth machines, the emergence of green growth as a solution to the climate crisis, and how they have been shaped by the emergence of the sustainable city and vice-versa. I then explore local climate governance through two of its key structural elements: climate plans and climate partnerships.

From the city as a sustainability problem to the city as a sustainability solution

Cities have occupied a crucial position in global emissions mitigation efforts, though their role has not been stable over time. The 1987 Bruntland report identified 'the urban challenge' as the massive accumulation of population and capital in urban centers in both the developed and developing world. This, it argued, would push already-strained national economies and infrastructures to the brink of collapse and cause unacceptable impacts on the environment and human health (Brundtland, 1987). The city was framed as a problem that needed to be solved. Indeed, the same report counseled policymakers in developing countries to "[a]void policy interventions that increase the attractiveness of the major city, particularly subsidies on food and energy, overly generous provision of urban infrastructure and other services, and excessive concentration of administrative power in the capital" (Brundtland, 1987, 205).

In recent decades, perceptions of cities and their relationship to climate change and the environment have turned to be almost completely opposite to this view. Angelo and Wachsmuth (2020) identified this shift and attributed the city's new position as part of a global sustainability solution as being in large part due to their potential for ecologically-efficient development, and the management of core sustainability issues of capitalist urban development such as urban sprawl, informal settlements, and climate change more generally, through remedies such as smart city technology, energy-efficient building, development of mass transit systems, and densification of the urban fabric. Due to their flexible, responsive governance structures, municipal governments are also seen as being "willing and able" to act in their citizens' interests in mitigating climate change (Rosenzweig et al., 2010), as opposed to the gridlocked politics of higher-level governments. It has been suggested that, due to cities' interconnection, collaboration and pragmatism, creativity and multiculture, we should simply "let mayors rule the world", and do what

nation-states seem incapable of doing (Barber, 2013). In short, in the context of our current climate crisis, cities have been touted as having the solutions, as well as the political channels through which to apply them, allowing an increasingly urban future to also be a sustainable future (Castan-Broto, 2017).

Despite this shift in the perceived role of the city, the potential flexibility of municipal governance arrangements, and the deployment of innovative sustainability policies, there remains skepticism over cities' capacity to drive change (Burch et al., 2014). As they commit to reducing carbon emissions, and enter into globalized competition over green investment, the precise mechanisms through which cities might lead on climate change remain somewhat unclear, with the scientific literature replete with critiques of cities not sufficiently engaging with this new responsibility (Salvia et al., 2021). In some countries' multilevel governance structures, cities lack the jurisdiction to undertake the measures necessary to enact and follow through with meaningful climate policy, even if their stated intentions are ambitious (Laine et al., 2020). Canada is no exception, with cities having limited powers to tackle climate change directly (Deangelo & Harvey, 1998). Conflicting priorities, insufficient incentives and resource allocation at the municipal level can also stymie these initiatives (Hjerpe et al., 2015). Despite the ostensible flexibility of their governance arrangements, municipal governments are not independent actors, and local institutions are more likely to be influential if they align their priorities with those of higher level governance actors (Amundsen et al., 2018). Some scholars have argued that there are trends that run counter to this alignment between cities and higher levels of government, particularly as cities have positioned themselves to take on a more important role. Anguelovski and Carmin (2011, 169) posit that "the traditional view of climate governance is that local action is shaped by international agreements and national policies, the priorities of funders, and ideas advanced by nongovernmental organizations and transnational networks. Some cities take action in response to these actors and the pressures they exert. However, most are motivated by internal goals and are taking independent action to advance their climate agendas."

Ultimately, whether or not municipalities are truly effective as independent actors, evolution in the discourse around the role of municipalities in climate policy has been marked by a shift away from the "upward signals" towards national and international bodies that characterized an earlier era of climate policy (Aall et al., 2007). Today, municipalities are perceived as fully embodied actors, work with their own international networks, and are endowed with overall greater legitimacy to engage in their own agenda of climate governance.

Growth machine theory and green growth

As the city has evolved to be a key site of sustainable development, opportunities have been opened to grow local economies based on nominally sustainable principles. Even as different factions or actors within a city's power elite may disagree over specific policy directions, or may implement business models which may seem at odds, one overarching goal binds them together: growth. According to the growth machine theory of urban development, elite, land-based growth interests associate with each other, and form ties with local governments and institutions in order to intensify land use and maximise the exchange value of their land (Logan & Molotch, 1987). Municipal governments happily work with them, pushing growth-oriented goals in all sorts of projects, including climate policy and sustainable development. Indeed, "a clear majority (63%) of cities positioned economic development/growth as the "primary goal of their green policies", while nearly all the remainder (31%) saw economic development as a secondary objective of green policies" (London School of Economics, 2013). In the case of climate policy, climate planning as a centralized government project becomes in whole or in part subsumed by entrepreneurial motives and competitive logics, as environmental goals have to be made compatible with economic imperatives (Gordon, 2016).

This trend has largely been enabled by the neoliberal turn of the 1970s and 1980s, and the emergence of the 'entrepreneurial city' as a model of urban development defined by cities' increasing dependence on the attraction of mobile, global capital, and their need to prevent local capital from fleeing elsewhere (Harvey, 1989). Cutbacks to federal and provincial subsidies, as well the shrinking of the regulatory state have left cities on their own to compete regionally and internationally for mobile global capital and growth-oriented subsidies:

> "Loosened from the safety net of the post-war national (Fordist) social contract, urban leaders, the story goes, have little option but to sell their souls to global capital at the expense of broader social and ecological goals." (While et al., 2004, 550)

As it has turned out, the sustainable development turn has opened opportunities for a 'sustainability fix', which allows the selective incorporation of environmental goals into policy, while also enabling growth by injecting capital into green projects (While et al., 2004). In this way, the evolution of the city to become a sustainability solution is indissociable from the growth imperative, as green growth provides the justification for the particular state, or in this case,

municipal strategy which unites territorially-based class interests behind a coordinated line of action, similar to the function of a 'spatial fix', proposed by Harvey (1982) as a method of resolving tensions, and spurring economic development at the local scale. In the sustainability fix, we see the rearticulation of that process around nominally environmentally-friendly and 'green' solutions.

Growth and environmental imperatives have not always been enmeshed in this fashion, and have previously existed very much in tension with each other. Dilworth and Stokes (2012) point out that environmental concerns have historically been raised to contest growth processes. This has shifted in recent years as progrowth actors have been successful at integrating environmentalism into their strategies and rhetoric, positioning themselves to profit from cities as green investment pours into them from public, private, and international sources. This turn towards "green" growth occurred just as compound economic growth has begun to appear untenable even within mainstream economics, which have tended towards market and growth-based solutions. Over long periods, continued growth driven by extraction, we are told, will cause disruption of environmental systems, increases in the price of materials, and general economic volatility (United Nations Environment Program, 2014). Despite warnings about the dangers of compound economic growth as the essential capillary action of capitalist urban development - growth and the ideology surrounding it - these processes remained largely unscrutinized in the mainstream until the Club of Rome published *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972). The solution to this seeming contradiction to capitalist development proposed by the Club of Rome in 1972, and the solution still in vogue today is the decoupling of economic output from resource use. Processes of decoupling have been described as "green growth" (and sometimes "smart growth"), which Michael Jacobs (2012, 4) defines as "economic growth which also achieves significant environmental protection." This would come in the form of innovation leading to more efficient processes and less polluting products, and a gradual shift from manufacturing to a service economy (Jackson & Victor, 2019). As previously mentioned, the city itself has also been proposed as a sort of "sustainability fix", allowing more efficient economic growth through the application of expertise to the urban form, favouring dense living, public transportation, and economies of scale, very much in the same vein as decoupling.

Market demand for, and government subsidy of amenities such as urban greening, electric mobility, and building eco-certification (LEED, BOMA, etc.) has increased in parallel with optimistic assessments that decoupling is viable at large scales. In the long-term, this slate of green growth technologies and policies opens up horizons for a future techno-utopia of infinite

growth, fully (or near-fully) detached from the use of resources. In the short-term, and more importantly for our purposes, green growth offers governments at all levels the promise of reaching their economic targets and their climate targets simultaneously, appeasing moneyed stakeholders, while also allaying the fears of a public anxious about the coming consequences of climate change. For this reason, in much the same way that the city has shifted from a sustainability problem into a sustainability solution, so too has the concept of sustainability itself transformed from an economic burden on cities and their entrepreneurial stakeholders into a variety of potentially lucrative revenue streams and opportunities to maximize the value of land in the city.

As it resides in the realm of municipal politics, climate policy is subject to the same influences that hold sway over other processes of urban governance, including the pressure to maintain growth. As such, interpreting climate policy and climate action plans through the lens of "growth machine" theory can be a compelling exercise in determining the causal relationship between those influences and planning outcomes. In recent years, scholars have observed the emergence of new governance coalitions in urban growth machines particular to green growth (Dilworth & Stokes, 2012; DuPuis & Greenberg, 2019). Green growth machine interests operate the same as urban areas' classic growth interests, with the caveat that they seek to tap into economic sectors, revenue and subsidy streams that are exclusive to sustainable development, or to draw investment away from traditional growth concerns, and channel them into 'green' investment. Local green growth has increased in importance as more and more issues have fallen under the umbrella of climate and sustainability policy, including air quality, greening and food systems (McClintock, 2018), housing and the urban form (Dilworth & Stokes, 2012), placemaking (Greenberg, 2015) and mass transit projects (CPDQ Infra, 2022), among others. It has also increased as cities seek to distinguish themselves as the "greenest", most sustainable, or most resilient to attract subsidies, or national and international capital. Cities empower their elites to carry out a growth-oriented climate agenda due to their subscription to an environmentalism "predicated on the integration of economic or development imperatives with the objective of increased ecological sustainability. In other words, it leaves unquestioned the long-run viability or desirability of perpetual economic growth and productivity" (Gordon, 2016, 52). This outlook is further justified by the assumption that economic growth will catalyze technological and governance innovations that will provide the sought-after sustainability fix.

While sustainability criteria have been and, in many cases, continue to be seen as constraints on urban development and the economies of cities, the emergence of green growth sectors bypasses this perceived limitation on the implementation of sustainable development principles. Green growth posits that cities can have their cake and eat it too, and that growth is not just compatible with sustainability, but in fact enables it. This process, though, is not unproblematic. Green growth gives a new coat of paint to traditional forms of capitalist urban development in part due to its usefulness at reducing ecological externalities, as well as opening up new opportunities for maximizing property values through redevelopment and retrofitting, as well as the expansion of transportation infrastructure and greening programs. This greening of the growth machine opens up new contradictions which can be broadly described as the tension between market-driven climate-friendly urban lifestyles promoted by green growth, and the upward pressure on property values, subsequent displacement and green gentrification caused by the infrastructure and improvements that support those lifestyles (Lang & Rothenburg, 2016; Rice et al., 2019). A sustainable, green agenda may therefore not be an equitable one. Marcuse (1998) aptly explains the problematic nature of sustainable development without proper consideration for equity, stating that sustainability (such as that promoted by green growth) is not a viable end in itself, because it implies sustaining a fundamentally unjust social order, and that further justice-based considerations are necessary to any coherent vision for ecologically harmonious urbanism.

Climate governance structures

Climate governance can be generally described as the “mechanisms and measures aimed at steering social systems toward preventing, mitigating, or adapting to the risks posed by climate change” (Jagers & Stipple, 2003, 385). In this final section of the literature review, I summarize the current state of climate governance at the municipal scale by examining two of the main structures on which it is scaffolded at the local level: climate action plans and climate partnerships. Further, Castan-Broto (2017, 2) identifies two principal notions of climate governance. The first adopts a normative perspective and understands governance as a “process resulting from specific attempts to mobilize resources and actors to address climate change”, while the second, critical perspective presents governance as “a means to build authority and support actors’ attempts to gain control over different realms of urban life.” In this review, and by extension in this research as a whole, I mainly engage with the latter perspective by interrogating the structure of Montreal’s climate governance arrangements to determine how different actors have sought to integrate themselves into the city’s sustainable development space to gain authority or benefit materially. The accruing of authority over urban life is indissociable from the operation of a growth machine

and urban growth dynamics more generally. Climate plan creation and climate partnerships can present meaningful opportunities for different actors to jockey for position to determine which of them will have access to contracts, revenue streams, and the public goodwill and marketability associated with taking meaningful action against climate change at the corporate level. As such, this review of climate action plans and climate partnerships will mostly interrogate questions of participation and power, briefly touching on efficacy.

Climate action plans

Climate planning plays a crucial coordinating role for cities, given their governance apparatuses operate largely on systems of inducement, and mostly forgo the imposition of constraints (Bulkeley, 2015). Effective climate planning is contingent on addressing the variety of path dependencies that vitiate current plans, not necessarily a city's capacity and resources (Burch, 2010), hence the need to provide incentives to modify behaviour, and to attempt to lead by example by, for example greening municipal supply chains or increasing the energy efficiency of municipal buildings. Blame for the inability to address these path dependencies and produce effective plans is often cast at an overall lack of political leadership, and the reality that special interests are afforded significant latitude in planning processes due to the necessity of consensus-building (Burch, 2010). It has been observed that climate action plans can vary widely in scope and objectives, with some being limited to emissions reduction policies or adaptation infrastructure, others focusing largely or entirely on equity, and others including an array of mitigation, adaptation, and equity measures. Municipal plan content and objectives vary widely based on the political context of the city in question (Bassett & Shandas, 2010). This suggests that the internal goals of municipalities described by Anguelovski and Carmin (2011), including improvements to quality of life through reduction of congestion or air pollution or actions to position the municipality as a leader on the national or world stage, are significantly influenced by a wide variety of economic and political actors participating in a city's governance network.

It has been observed that professional planners have not always played a major role in shaping the content of climate action plans, and that city planning departments are not always a driving force behind moving planning activity forward (Bassett & Shandas, 2010). If planners have seen little inclusion in climate planning processes, the same can be said of the public. In evaluating climate planning processes in Norwegian cities, Aall et al. (2007, 88) observed that "half of the municipalities have not made any effort to inform the public about the planning process. A public hearing process was carried out only in 28 percent of the municipalities, while only 17 percent

have held a public information meeting.", and that "[i]n the most active municipalities, a consultative group has served as an important connecting link between the planning authority and different stakeholder groups. Energy companies, industry and NGOs were the most frequent actors represented in these consulting groups" (Aall et al., 2007, 88). A study of Dutch energy reforms found that processes and partnerships were "dominated by industry and government elites, at the expense of broader democratic engagement" (Hendriks, 2008, 1009). Similar observations have been made of the lack of public involvement in energy governance in Canada and the United States (Burke & Stephens, 2018).

Climate action plans provide some of the most obvious opportunities for public input into all forms of local climate policy and yet the vast majority of plans do not include even a superficial public consultation component. Indeed, less than 1% of climate initiatives identified by one study delegated any actual power to the public (Galende-Sánchez & Sorman, 2021). Even with climate planning co-production processes on the table, as was the case for Barcelona's recent climate plan, the involvement of lay citizens remained limited (Satorras et al., 2020). We can gather that opportunities to engage with climate action plans and climate initiatives at the municipal level have not been extended in a meaningful way to the public, and remain the domain of a cadre of insiders to local government (which may or may not include professional planners) and industry representatives, granting them meaningful control and authority over these processes.

Despite the accrued importance of the city as the scale at which to implement climate policy, and cities' increasing adoption of climate action plans, the influence of these plans on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and on the adoption of environmentally friendly policies remains very much in dispute. While over 60% of Covenant of Mayors cities in Europe are on track to reach their planned mitigation goals, there is limited evidence linking their planned strategies with emissions reduction (Hsu et al., 2020). It was observed that "more-ambitious climate commitments do not necessarily translate into steeper emissions reductions when controlling for factors such as the time frame of the commitment, GDP per capita and number of national-level climate policies" (Hsu et al., 2020, 1019). Studies of climate action plans adopted by cities in California found no causal link between them and the policies adopted by their respective cities (Millard-Ball, 2012; Millard-Ball, 2013). Even when policies from plans are implemented, they may underdeliver, as was the case for the implementation of green building norms in Scottish cities, which failed to deliver savings on emissions beyond low-hanging fruits (Onyango & Buford, 2020).

Climate Partnerships

Climate partnerships, structures gaining popularity among cities looking to implement climate action agendas, form the second piece of this climate governance framework. Attempts at advancing global climate governance have stalled out in no small part due to the complex array of institutions, businesses, and governments at varying scales, all of which need to cooperate and contribute. Because of this complexity, a down-scaling of climate governance to the local level appears an alluring solution, avoiding the coordination issues inherent to the global scale. However, local climate governance faces its own coordination problems due to differences in priorities between various actors and institutions. Municipalities lack the financial resources and regulatory authority to implement adequate measures on their own to overcome this coordination problem, or to impose a collective vision for a climate agenda, instead requiring multilevel governance solutions (Deangelo & Harvey, 1989). Local climate governance apparatuses have attempted to work around this problem by creating structures to bring together diverse actors and allow them to negotiate their interests and propose solutions without the need for the imposition of constraints on actors' behaviour and practices. Climate partnerships are formed to play this role. Climate partnerships can be defined as cross-sectoral partnership, bringing together actors from at least two sectors (private, public, nonprofit) "that have agreed to collectively address a mutually prioritized social problem," in this case, mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to climate change (Sun et al., 2020, 6172).

Some are created by municipal governments themselves, seeking to integrate actors from the private and nonprofits sectors into their formal climate response, others are formed independently by private, nonprofit, or philanthropic actors to advance goals alongside or independently of local government. They may seek to build consensus around existing climate planning and policy agendas, or to work independently and propose alternative solutions. This is part of a broad trend towards the institutionalization of climate governance, defined by the establishment of climate offices within the city, and the formalization of stakeholder networks to shore up the legitimacy and coordination of a climate program (Anguelovski & Carmin, 2011). Partnerships also address a perceived lack of engagement between municipalities and the private sector in planning for climate change. In the view of some scholars, there is significant efficiency to be found in working directly with the private sectors, which cities are not fully taking advantage of (Klein et al., 2018), and partnerships can structure that engagement. They are usually employed in a complementary role to a city's typical slate of market and regulatory approaches (Clarke et al. 2017).

Due to the significant involvement of the private sector in climate partnerships, and the enmeshment of these organizations with municipal government, they are an ideal container to make use of in studying the functioning of a city's growth coalition, as they allow actors involved in green growth to signal their position, intentions, and branding, and allow them to network with other such actors. In some cases, if a partnership is affiliated with the municipal government, members also gain access to representatives of the environmental and economic development offices and may be in favourable positions to negotiate the position of their business or nonprofit within the city's policy agenda. In the case of independent TMNs, we also see the proliferation of climate action in the absence of direct government participation, with private actors collaborating towards their own policy experiments and innovations, undertaken with private resources, though often with municipal imprimatur. If one sees entrepreneurial innovation as a way out of the climate crisis, then these partnerships are an exciting development. However, they are also indissocialble from the trend away from centralized government by municipal authorities and towards governance by a wider array of public, private and nonprofit actors in climate protection efforts at the local scale (Castan-Broto, 2017). Moreover, research on the role of climate partnerships is still in the early stages, and early investigation of these stakeholder-centered governance entities is yet to show definitively whether they are effective at tackling the issue of climate change (Bauer & Steurer, 2014).

In this literature review I began by describing the shift of the city from a sustainability problem to a sustainability solution in current discourse. This is due to cities' potential for dense, ecologically efficient development, as well as municipal governments' perceived responsiveness and proximity to the public, making the city the ideal scale at which to implement climate policy according to proponents of this local sustainability fix. I went on to describe green growth, and how climate policy at the local level is inextricable from a locality's potential for economic expansion through the maximization of property values, in line with Logan and Molotch's (1987) classic growth machine theory. I discussed how green growth opens new potential revenue streams for growth actors in a city, while attempting to minimize environmental externalities. I ended the literature review with overviews of structures on which a city's climate governance structures are scaffolded: climate action plans and climate partnerships. I engaged with these structures by looking at which actors have and have not been able to use them to integrate themselves into climate politics to gain authority or benefit materially. I found that climate action plans were predictably the domain of government actors, but their content could vary based on a city's political and economic context, suggesting some involvement on the part of elite

stakeholders. Meanwhile, the public are essentially fully excluded from plan creation and ideation processes. Climate partnerships, for their part, arise from the need to resolve coordination problems between the various actors and stakeholders involved in local climate politics without relying on constraints imposed from above, but rather horizontal consensus between actors. Partnerships also encourage a greater involvement of the private sector in climate governance, with this being touted as a major benefit, bringing in private actors compliment a municipality's slate of regulations. This makes them an ideal container to use in studying a city's green growth coalition, as the most important private and nonprofit actors in a city's sustainable development sphere will be drawn to participate in order to network with each other, stake out their position as leaders in their field, and they may gain access to municipal officials participating in or in communication with the partnership.

Methods

This paper focuses on investigating the impact of green growth actors on Montreal's climate policy and by extension the viability of the city as the social unit best suited to implementing meaningful climate policy. I do so by relating current academic literature on urban growth machines and climate governance with the content of the *Plan climat 2020-2030*, and one-hour semi-structured interviews with experts involved in Montreal's climate governance. In total, seven interviews were completed. The names and organizational affiliations of interviewees have been withheld from this paper in order to preserve their confidentiality. It must be noted that this research was initially aimed at understanding the drafting of the City of Montreal's climate plans by its Office for Ecological Transition and Resilience along with an advisory committee of 19 members from the nonprofit sector, the private sector, and academia. Ultimately, it became necessary to center the study of green growth interests in local climate governance on the Montreal Climate Partnership as it was impossible to discuss the activities of the advisory committee due to non-disclosure agreements signed by all committee participants. The MCP provides an adequate substitute for the participants on the advisory committee as it is articulated around similar networks of stakeholders, albeit operating outside of formal planning structures, instead focusing on coordinating action between stakeholders and the city, with the goals and priorities provided by existing planning documents.

Interview questions attempted to elucidate how subjects perceived the role of the Montreal Climate Partnership within Montreal's broader climate governance structure; how they understood the relationships between nonpublic actors involved in the Partnership; how they saw the relationship between these actors and the city in the context of initiatives suggested or undertaken by the partnership; tensions between Partnership initiatives and the priorities of the member organisations; the overall efficacy of the Partnership at implementing measures to curb emissions and in accomplishing its objectives, and their thoughts on the overall state of climate governance in Montreal. In this paper, the names and organizational affiliations of participants have been withheld to preserve confidentiality. Sections of certain interview excerpts have also been redacted or modified to preserve confidentiality. When sections of interview transcripts appear in this paper, a two-letter identifier is used for each speaker, with the researcher identified as "R". Because most interviews were performed in French, several needed to be translated from French to English for use in this research.

The analysis of the *Plan climat* is based on work undertaken during the summer of 2021, which attempted to categorize the policies within the plan, and to compare them to the City's previous plan from 2016, the *Plan Montréal durable* completed under the administration of former mayor Denis Coderre. Each document was coded, with individual policies identified and classified under 11 categories. For the purposes of this research, the analysis of the *Plan climat* has been simplified and I have opted for a summary within the case study overview followed by a broad overview of plan content in the analysis section, instead of itemizing all 111 pages of policies.

This research will draw on both the analysis of the *Plan climat*, and the semi-structured interviews, reviewing each individually, and then synthesizing the information from both in order to paint a picture of the state of climate governance in Montreal, first within the municipal government, and then among the variety of actors in the private, nonprofit, and institutional sectors that also engage with the City's climate plans and objectives.

Case study overviews

In the following section, I introduce the two main objects of study that this research is concerned with: the *Plan climat 2020-2030*, and the Montreal Climate Partnership. I will present the context in which each came about, provide an overview of their objectives, and establish, in basic terms, how both the *Plan climat* and the MCP involve green growth actors in Montreal's climate governance, and the relationships between stakeholders, municipal government, and international bodies that emerge in each case.

The *Plan climat*

The *Plan climat* is the product of the mayoral administration of Valérie Plante and Montreal's current ruling municipal political party, Projet Montréal. Plante has held power since 2017, when she was elected based on an ambitious grassroots campaign framed on addressing social inequality, as well as promises to undertake major improvements to the city's public transportation infrastructure. She ousted incumbent business-friendly mayor Denis Coderre and set about enacting her agenda. While climate action has become a ubiquitous element of mayors' visions for their cities as the issue has gained momentum in the 21st century, it was not until 2019 that Plante and Projet Montréal began work on their organizing vision for climate action in Montreal, and it was not until December of 2020 that it was finally made public as the *Plan climat 2020-2030.* The final plan could have been expected to be ambitious and at the cutting edge of climate planning in North America due to Projet Montréal's left-leaning, environmentally conscious rhetoric, and Montreal's local context. Montreal features an exceptionally high rate of recognition of anthropogenic climate change among its citizen body, with well over 70% of its population recognizing global warming as human-driven—among the highest rates in North America (Millenberger et al., 2016). It has also produced a corpus of climate action documents spanning nearly 20 years. Climate planning is therefore fully integrated into the city's practices. The importance of local-level climate governance is further reinforced by Canada's relatively weak national-level jurisdictional framework for the implementation of emissions reduction measures (Deangelo & Harvey, 1998).

While embedded in Montreal's local context, the *Plan climat* is also the result of international groups' vision for climate action and comes as a direct result of the City of Montreal's involvement in several transnational municipal networks (TMNs). Montreal is a participant in the C40, and is a signatory of the One Planet Charter, which set the emissions reduction objectives present in the

Plan climat. Montreal was also a member of the now-defunct 100 Resilient Cities network, funding from which was used to create the municipal resilience office which helped to draft the plan. And, far from being the product of centralized, municipal planning, the *Plan climat* was constructed through a stakeholder consultation process, with the City assembling a panel of 19 experts from business, academia, the nonprofit sector, and various public institutions in Montreal. Named the Climate Advisory Committee, this group provided outside expertise to the City on questions of public health, energy systems and energy efficiency, technology, and likely served to coordinate the various interests of committee members with the City's climate agenda. The incorporation of a significant private and institutional presence in designing the *Plan climat* is unsurprising, as municipal climate governance has tended towards the engagement of key stakeholders through committees and task forces over broader public engagement (Anguelovski & Carmin, 2011). Few attempts were made to engage Montreal's citizen body in its climate planning initiatives, and most attempts at outreach were directed at a stakeholders occupying key roles, particularly within the city's real estate community and its energy infrastructure. This has meant seats at the table for the likes of Ivanhoé-Cambridge, a major real estate management company, and Énergir, a major private natural gas utility, starting with the actual drafting of the plan, and continuing through to the follow-up and coordination processes, embodied by the MCP. While it is inevitable that private sector entities such as Énergir, a natural gas utility in Quebec, will be involved in climate policy due to their scale, importance, and the expertise they can provide with respect to energy systems (which they manage), the inclusion of these major stakeholders has not been accompanied by proportional increases in citizen involvement.

To briefly summarize the document, it is defined by key targets, the most important of which are its emissions reduction pledges. The *Plan climat* claims to provide a roadmap to reduce community emissions by 55% under 1990 levels by 2030, and to achieve full carbon-neutrality by 2050, in line with commitments taken by Montreal and other C40 member cities under the One Planet Charter. This is also in line with the commitments taken by many nation-states including Canada, the United States, and the European Union, all of which pledge to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, and incorporate an intermediate 2030 goal, in the order of 45% (Canada) to 55% (European Union) under 1990 levels. The plan focuses its immediate objectives (those due for completion by 2030) under two headings: emissions reduction, and adaptation. For emissions reduction, objectives include the aforementioned 55% decrease in emissions; a reduction (unspecified) in fossil fuel use; a 25% decrease in solo car trips; and 47% of registered cars in Montreal being electric. For adaptation, by 2030 the city is aiming to plant 500,000 trees; increase

its total protected [green space] area to 10% of its territory; reduce vulnerability to climate hazards; and reduce the area of heat islands. To accomplish these targets, it seeks to modify the municipal government's practices to reach operational carbon-neutrality ahead of the rest of the city, setting an example for the community. It seeks to intervene on the urban form through zoning modifications to allow the emergence of human-scale neighbourhoods and promote transit-oriented development. It proposes public outreach to inform citizens of the benefits of sustainable development, and to encourage them to undertake community projects targeted at greening and tackling community health issues. The energy efficiency of buildings was a major concern in the plan, with promised regulatory changes and subsidy programs for building owners wishing to make retrofits. The plan also incorporates notions of resilience and adaptation in a way that no previous document has, promising investment into resilient infrastructure and to build social capital among the public to respond to climate hazards as they arise.

The Montreal Climate Partnership

The Montreal Climate Partnership (MCP) is an independent initiative, supported by the city's philanthropic, nonprofit, and business communities in an attempt to coordinate their respective resources towards action on climate change. Its structure consists of a 20-member steering committee including representatives from a variety of sectors in Montreal's business, nonprofit, institutional, and government. This includes energy utilities such as Énergir, a major natural gas provider in Quebec, nonprofits such as the David Suzuki Foundation and the Montreal Regional Environmental Council, the Montreal Chamber of Commerce, and various major actors in Montreal's real estate and construction industries, among others.

The MCP's core objectives are straightforward. In its own words, it aims to: "Mobilize economic, philanthropic, institutional and community forces to accelerate the decarbonization of the metropolis and strengthen its resilience" (Montreal Climate Partnership, 2022a). An interview participant described the structure and approach of the MCP's steering committee at its formation as:

> KR: "We wanted to launch the partnership with a core group on the steering committee. What we wanted were influential actors - not necessarily those with the most to change, but heads of networks that are already leaders and influential in their sectors. After that we proposed to them: 'do you want to get on board?' [...] In our working groups, for each group there was a nonprofit that was designated

> to lead that group and member recruitment was done gradually - 'who do we want for the building group? We want private actors, developers, consultants, experts, residential, commercial' - all the way until we had about 20 members in each group."
>
> R: "So you're proposing exemplary measures that actors can apply in their businesses?"
>
> KR: "Yeah, that's it, we're trying to stay in our sandbox, and create action. We want things to happen, we leave mobilization to others, we leave lobbying to others, we're on the side of action."

As recently as 2016, climate action plans developed by the city of Montreal acknowledged the importance of private and nonprofit actors and provided public structures through which they could engage with the plan content and contribute to its goals. However, this was mostly accomplished, in the case of the 2016 *Plan Montréal durable*, through consultation during the planning process and a platform allowing partner organizations to select one or several commitments from a list of 20 drawn up by the city. The MCP represents a significant expansion and privatization of this engagement, as it operates independently of the city, and has taken on the tasks that fell under the City's purview for the 2016 plan: organizing non-state actors and allowing them to engage with the plan content, this time for the *Plan climat.*

This shifting of responsibilities from the city to an independent body has resulted in several initiatives, including the creation of working groups meant to develop solutions and increase engagement with the climate crisis within six different sectors of Montreal's economy and civil society. The working groups include: building, mobility, businesses, adaptation, citizen-led initiatives and projects, and finance. Each working group is composed of approximately 20 actors that are described as leaders in their field with respect to the implementation of sustainable development practices. To engage actors that are not on the steering committee or participating in the working groups, the MCP also set up an engagement platform on their website, allowing businesses of all scales to identify particular commitments that they can make to modify their practices to achieve emissions reduction. This platform is a simple web tool in which a participating business inputs various details about their practices, and is provided a list of commitments that it may undertake to reduce its carbon footprint. Examples of suggested commitments include locating or relocating to within 400m of a public transit hub, contributing to urban greening, giving employees time off to contribute to sustainability-oriented community

projects, and integrating climate-related criteria to the organization's investment portfolio. Finally, the MCP partnered with the city to organize the Montreal Climate Summit in May of 2022. This event promised to bring together stakeholders from Montreal's business, nonprofit, political, institutional, philanthropic, and cultural communities for a variety of panels and workshops meant to engage these key stakeholders in coordinated action on climate change.

Despite the MCP's independent status, the City has involved itself in the MCP's work and indeed, the relationship between the two is important to understanding the landscape of climate governance in Montreal. The City interacts with and is tied to the MCP through formal channels: the head of Montreal's sustainable development office, the *Bureau de la transition écologique et de la résilience* (BTER), sits on the board of the MCP. Beyond that, in order to better track developments within the working groups at the MCP, to open dialogue and provide information to the actors involved, the City has also placed representatives of the BTER and the economic development office within the groups. There is also major overlap in terms of the actors involved in the MCP, and those involved in the creation of the *Plan climat*. While there are differences, it becomes clear that there is a limited group of stakeholders who are especially influential on Montreal's sustainable development landscape.

By now I have established the political context for the *Plan climat* as one that is conducive to an ambitious slate of climate policies. I went on to describe the involvement of transnational municipal networks and the engagement of key private and nonprofit stakeholders as well as their key roles in determining plan content. I then described the MCP's structure and its mission to mobilize actors in the economic, philanthropic, institutional, and community spheres to spur the implementation of emissions reduction and adaptation measures. I also established that there is a close relationship between the MCP and its stakeholders and Montreal's municipal government, despite the MCP's status as an arm's length organization. In the following analysis section, we will explore the implications of this group of stakeholders' influence on Montreal's climate politics.

Analysis

In this chapter, I unfold the content of the *Plan climat*, and the interviews pertaining to the Montreal Climate Partnership and Montreal's sustainable development landscape. This will allow an analysis of Montreal's particular sustainability fix, elucidate the motivations of the actors involved in Montreal's climate governance, and allow us to understand how green growth actors have steered climate politics in Montreal through two key structures on which those politics are scaffolded.

Content of the *Plan climat*

The *Plan climat* is the key document to discuss when analyzing Montreal's municipal government's climate strategy. In this section I unpack the plan's contents beginning with its major objectives with a focus on its emissions targets. I discuss how the plan's content reflects disjunctures between priorities in local electoral politics and the international agreements in which Montreal is a partner. This is followed by the implications of the plan for equity and the mitigation of vulnerability, which underlines the difficulties in balancing green growth with justice-based planning principles. Next is a brief breakdown of the plan's measures relating to urban form, transportation, greening, and economic development and innovation. I conclude by describing how these fit in with broad trends in municipal climate planning with respect to its reliance on measures that are highly visible and have an immediate impact, as well as how the *Plan climat* steps out of that box with its self-governing measures aimed at greening municipal government practices.

When discussing the *Plan climat*, the first element to mention is its overarching emissions objective, which sets the tone for the entire document. While ambitious and laudable in the abstract, the *Plan climat*'s pledge to achieve net-zero community emissions by 2050 is difficult to take seriously as presented, as the document does little to rationally connect its policies to the emissions reduction that they may bring about. Bulkeley and Betsill (2013) discuss the creation of goals for simple political ends as being one of the key dilemmas in current climate governance, and this seems to be the case for the *Plan climat.* Its lofty objectives are in tension with strategies that are either insufficient to see those objectives achieved, or sufficiently vague that their emissions impact is impossible to calculate. This incoherence seems to have arisen from disjunctures between local and transnational pressures that influenced the plan's content. In a radio interview shortly after the release of the *Plan climat*, Luc Ferrandez, a former borough mayor

and member of Projet Montréal, voiced disappointment about this tension between objectives and proposed policies:

> "The subtitle for the plan should have been: 'I'm (Valérie Plante) not an idiot, I saw how much trouble I got into because of my bike path policies. There's no way I'm releasing a real plan with real constraints one year before an election.' [...] There are good ideas here, many of them mine, but everyone has good ideas. The difference between good ideas and a plan is in schedules, targets, methods, and there's none of that [in the *Plan climat*]." (98.5 FM, 2020).

Plante herself stated in an interview that, despite the plan being the "most ambitious in the nation", they "did not want to highlight it during the election." (Meunier, 2021). However, the incoherence between objectives and strategies did not emerge exclusively from local electoral pressures, but from international networks, and the need for Montreal's policies to match those of other global cities. It is no secret that the plan's emissions targets are set by the One Planet Charter of which Montreal is a signatory. Moreover, the plan content was inevitably influenced by several TMNs of which Montreal is a member - in particular the C40, which is named specifically as an influence on the *Plan climat*, and 100 Resilient Cities, which established the municipal department that co-wrote the document. Membership in these networks and engagement with their recommendations and policies is not always rationally connected to the implementation of a policy agenda that is best-adapted to the local context in question. A sustainability expert interviewed as part of this research explained that this was often an action for municipalities to position themselves within a club of local governments taking the issue of climate change seriously:

> JV : "Often, participation in large networks is for cities to position themselves. You want to have, for your territory, plans, strategies with a certain degree of ambition. I can't say that [policies result from network membership, or vice-versa]. When we were working on the plans, and we had just adopted ours, we thought that we should join ICLEI to show that we were part of the circle of cities taking local sustainable development planning seriously."
> R: "And how can Montreal benefit from that international positioning?"
> JV: "For me, it has to do with recognition. I like to be naive sometimes… we are in a crisis, and Ban Ki-Moon, the secretary general of the United Nations has said that sustainable development is going to be implemented through cities. It's the

scale nearest to the public. Like I said, I like to be naïve, so maybe it's because it's the right thing to do."

Another interviewee remarked on the consequences of the reliance on one-size-fits-all international targets like those used in the *Plan climat*, how they lead to carbon accounting issues, and how they might obscure more potentially beneficial policy orientations that could be undertaken by the city:

> CS: "The whole subject of "*Plan climat*" in Montreal… it's full of errors. In other words, COP 21 and COP 26 are based on a worldwide effort to address carbon, and they have very little capacity to change the rules locally, [...] so you end up with cities wanting to prove that they hit these international standards, and yet they might be ignoring or causing more damage locally than they are benefitting. [...] I'm not sure if you're aware, but the City of Montreal, they promised in this plan to get to 55% reductions compared to 1990, by 2030, they were already at 28% better than 1990, and that [remaining] 27% is actually a weird thing, because a: embodied energy is not counted in this calculation, which in our context is huge, and b: resilience is not counted in this calculation [...] so the calculation is really fraught with an incomplete picture of the situation. The second issue is that there is no social equity element to this equation. So you might end up with people getting electric cars that are going to help the air quality in the city, but from a carbon perspective, the embodied energy in an electric car and throwing away your current car makes non sense if you were to count the carbon outside the boundaries of Montreal. [...] You're aware that a lot of the cuts are related to the fact that we cut down our petroleum industry on the Island [of Montreal] and this gave a big kick in by losing jobs, and if you move them to Laval, somehow this is an increase."

As a result of this mix of perceived electoral constraints, and the need to follow up on transnational commitments, the *Plan climat* presents ambitious targets and an interesting policy agenda, but lacks a schedule for implementation and indicators tracking the impact of the policies, should they eventually be put into place. Instead, the reader is treated to a line graph showing the gradual decline of emissions, until they eventually reach zero in 2050, without demonstrating the relationship between proposed policies and the reductions demonstrated in the graph (figure 1). One interview participant remarked on this and the problems that can arise from unclear implementation schedules and ambiguous policies:

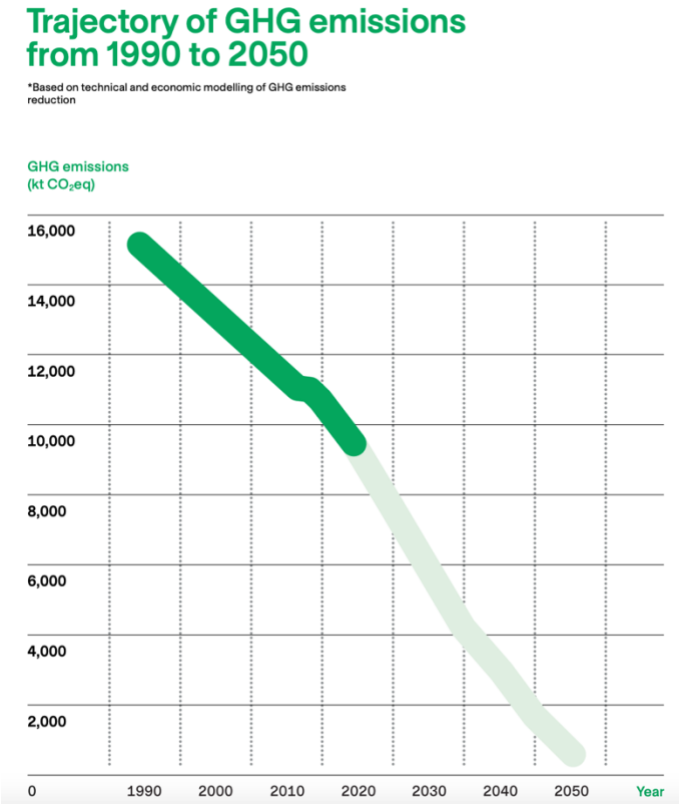

Figure 1: Plan climat 2020-2030, p. 43

> FS: "When you look at the *Plan climat* [...] it isn't itemized, and there's no roadmap, so we have targets… such and such reduction in GHG… but how do we get there? I found that was missing, because when you're forming working groups to undertake concrete actions I need to know where my actions will have the greatest impact."

The relationship of the *Plan climat* to vulnerability and equity in the context of climate change is also of interest. A plan and climate governance structure which are premised on the idea that economic growth as prima facie necessary to the vitality of their locality will, of necessity, jettison social goals in service of pragmatically-coded growth solutions, the benefits of which are unevenly distributed. As such, little mention is made of targeting interventions at groups most at risk of suffering from climate hazards, and of distributing burdens. While there is mention of integrating vulnerability analyses into future planning documents (Ville de Montréal, 2022, 68), targeting tree planting in areas vulnerable to heat island effects (Ville de Montréal, 2022, 71), and mentions a commitment to preserving housing affordability for rental units (Ville de Montréal, 2022, 84), there

is an overall lack of concrete action concerning the fundamental drivers of vulnerability, which could be a cause for concern. Several policies in the plan, particularly those related to greening, the urban form and transportation are subject to a set of contradictions inherent to climate-friendly development, as presented by Rice et al., (2019). The sort of green growth promoted by Montreal's climate governance network demands the remaking of the urban form in a sustainable direction. While densification, public transport and greening should all be part of any viable emissions reduction and adaptation strategy, the process of implementing these changes also provides an opportunity to greatly increase property values throughout the city, trading off a growing interest in low-carbon lifestyles by members of the middle and upper-middle class. These changes can therefore attract wealthier residents to low-income neighbourhoods in the process of being greened and contributing to a process of "carbon gentrification", defined as "middle- and upper income residents' preference for neighborhoods that offer the opportunity to walk, bike and ride transit in a mixed-use, dense urban environment, as a means to lower their carbon footprint, which are often, but not always, centrally located in urban areas, leading to a rise in housing prices for those areas" (Rice et al., 2019, 150). Bouzarovski et al. (2018, 2) further describe this process as a politically-driven process "changing the social and spatial composition of urban quarters under the pretext of climate change and energy efficiency imperatives." The overall vagueness of the plan with respect to its objectives, as well as its focus on policies that will likely encourage increases in property values in particular locations through greening (tree planting), placemaking (emissions-free downtown and innovation hubs), and various programs to encourage this carbon gentrification. A lack of clear emissions accounting and clear equity-oriented policies to counterbalance gentrification effects reduces the onus on the city to provide a slate of climate policies that work for everyone by reducing harms on the population, but instead motivates highly place-specific interventions that benefit the already-comfortable, while still being able to claim an overarching goal of carbon-neutrality.

This lack of an equity orientation is felt when looking through the *Plan climat*'s actual proposed policies. Besides its pledge to universalize sustainable mobility, to reduce fares for children and elders, and to base tree planting on heat vulnerability indices, the *Plan climat* is tight-lipped about how its promised equity agenda might actually manifest in policy. It is a vocally community-focused plan stressing shared responsibility in responding to climate change. It favours public consultation, increasing residents' social capital and the emergence of community-based climate resiliency. The public are described as 'stakeholders' and are assigned significant agency in taking action against climate change as a community, but also as individuals. However, this

agency is limited by the plan's minimal outreach components which include 'awareness-raising' targeted at the public who, as the plan states, need an example to follow and towards 'vulnerable groups' who must be made fully aware of the benefits of an ecological transition. This lack of engagement with vulnerability, and the substitution of information campaigns for substantive action on vulnerability may come as a result of the failure of the City to involve the public in plan production processes. It is fair to say that the *Plan climat* was the result of a process of co-production, but co-production between the city and a group of major stakeholders. Because the plan engages with stakeholders who can propose technological and technocratic fixes to the climate crisis, the realities of climate change are largely addressed at this level, with little consideration for the impact of widespread public mobilization behind the issue. One interviewee who participated on the Climate Advisory Committee described the issues that this may cause, particularly with respect to the carbon accounting used for the *Plan climat*:

> CS: "The problem with the report, is that it counts on no behavioural change. It's 100% 'if you put in heat pumps everywhere you'll get these reductions.' And of course, we're never going to be able to afford either the 55% reduction or the 90% reduction by 2050 without behavioural change. [...] One of the problems I have is that there is a hidden cost in carbon inside technological solutions, outside of embodied energy, even. [...] right now if you're downtown and you're in the middle of one of these heat island problems and you put on the air conditioning, even if you're using a heat pump instead of an air conditioner, you're reducing your electrical energy, but you're actually overheating the environment outside, which means that anybody who's homeless or who has to live outdoors, or lives in a very small apartment, and they don't have enough trees and shade and other measures, those areas of the city could be five to ten degrees celsius hotter than other cool, suburban contexts, and these heat pumps are in fact causing more damage - they may help the people inside those units that have the heat pumps, but they're actually doing damage."

The *Plan climat* proposes modifications to the city's land use practices encouraging denser urban form, reduced automobile use, public transport use and taking into account climate hazards, though is short on details about the specific changes that the city is seeking to implement. This wishlist for Montreal's neighbourhoods of the future incorporating mixed uses, resiliency, greenery, active mobility and access to services and work may be the most influential aspect of

the plan, if implemented. These land use policy modifications are complemented by the ambitious public transportation infrastructure projects promised by the Plante administration, many of which have been completed, or are in progress. The *Plan climat* also promises “universal sustainable mobility” and reduced fares for children and the elderly. It also favours improving electric vehicle infrastructure through measures such as a downtown zero-emissions zone adapted to electric mobility, and additional charging stations throughout the city. The *Plan climat* says little about pedestrian mobility, instead focusing on electric vehicles and mass public transit. Though it could be inferred that if modifications to land use practices deliver denser neighbourhoods, pedestrian mobility would improve.

As previously mentioned, the *Plan climat*’s goal for carbon neutrality is the result of Montreal’s signature of the One Planet Charter, drafted collaboratively by the C40, the Global Covenant of Mayors, and ICLEI, three of the most influential transnational networks in the governance of climate change. Possibly influenced by Montreal’s recent membership in the 100 Resilient Cities Network (100 RC) and its 2018 resiliency plan, the Plan climat 2020-2030 contains more adaptation and resilience strategies than any previous Montreal climate action plan. This is unsurprising as the department that emerged from Montreal’s involvement in 100 RC, the Municipal Resilience Office, was quickly renamed to the Office of Ecological Transition and Resilience and played a significant role in the drafting of the *Plan climat*; the director of ecological transition and resilience, Sidney Ribaux, was a key contributor. Adaptation and resilience are now receiving significant direct funding while being directly applied to the built environment and community, instead of being implemented as a patchwork by the boroughs.

Policies for green space and green amenities in the *Plan climat* are very straightforward: more trees, more protected space for parks and forests, and involving the community in local projects to add greenery to their neighbourhoods. While there has been a lack of progress on the expansion of protected land area (over the five years between plans the goal has remained to increase this area to 10% of the island), some projects are in the pipeline, such as the *Grand parc de l’Ouest*, which aims to merge five major city parks and a variety of other green spaces to created the largest municipal park in Canada. The Plan climat also works to connect food and urban agriculture policy to its other initiatives, linking it to community organization, the growth of social capital, greening and innovation.

Interestingly, direct mentions of economic development are downplayed within the *Plan climat.* To the extent that the economy is addressed directly, it is in terms of the transition towards a circular economy, for which it offers a short definition, describing the circular economy as "a system of production, exchange and consumption which aims to optimize the use of resources at every stage of the cycle of a good or service, by a circular logic, while reducing their environmental footprint and contributing to the well-being of individuals and the community." (Ville de Montréal, 2020, 115). While the economy takes a backseat within the plan, mentions of innovation are present throughout the *Plan climat*. The term "innovation" occurs nearly three times more in this plan than in any previous climate plan devised by the City of Montreal, and in the case of the *Plan climat*, these mentions of innovation are often tied to the greening of various industries including construction and food production, as well as innovations promoting the emergence of a circular economy. The *Plan climat* also mentions a variety of pilot projects in sustainable mobility and green technology - key sectors of innovation that this plan aims to attract and build on. This includes the creation of a zero-emission hub in the city's downtown, and "innovation zones" meant to encourage the emergence of local green technology.

Despite the economy being downplayed in the *Plan climat*, the administration nonetheless draws a direct relationship between the policy agenda proposed in the plan and potential returns for businesses and the city's economy as a whole, indicating that economic growth is still very much on the agenda. Mayor Valérie Plante was quoted as saying of Montreal's sustainable development policy agenda:

> "We are experiencing a climate crisis that poses a real threat to the quality of life of the population and public health. However, we have the opportunity to make the ecological transition a powerful lever for economic development, capable of contributing to the positioning of the metropolis and generating benefits for its businesses. We will work closely with our major partners to accelerate the pace of the fight against climate change and we will be there to support businesses in the changes they will be implementing" (Montreal Climate Partnership, 2022b)

On the whole, analysis of the *Plan climat* found it to comply with observations made by Bassett & Shandas (2010), who claimed that most climate action plans tended to rely on "well-known land use and transportation solutions to the climate challenge such as enhanced transit, compact community design, and green building codes, to be implemented both by local government and

the broader community", and " actions that were highly visible (e.g., tree planting) or produced immediate results (e.g., energy or cost savings from weatherization)" (Bassett & Shandas, 2010, 435). Where the *Plan climat* steps outside of this box is with respect to its self-governing measures aimed at modifying municipal practices in a more sustainable direction, and on which much of the plan's legitimacy rests. The municipal administration is depending on the "exemplary" practices described in the plan to set the agenda for non-government actors and convince broad swaths of the business community and citizen body to modify their own practices in response.

MCP and Montreal climate governance interviews

The MCP is a particularly interesting structure to study within Montreal's climate politics when trying to understand how the city's green growth coalition understands their role, and what their vision is for the city's sustainable development turn. Its participants include a variety of influential actors hoping to influence or directly shape this process. In this section, I describe the results of interviews with people enmeshed in the MCP and in Montreal's sustainable development landscape. I then draw on these interviews to describe some broad trends that emerge. The first trend is a depoliticization of the climate governance process defined by a turn towards expertise and a marginalization of public input. This trend is reinforced by a tendency toward innovative community-based projects and experimental governance arrangements, as well as an approach defined by practices borrowed from transnational municipal networks. Next is a broad emphasis on the good intentions of actors in the climate governance process, and a recurring narrative that well-meaning companies will be the ones to profit from green growth. This is followed by a preference for incremental action, in tension with rhetoric which urges quick action used by the same actors. Interviewees also noted a lack of leadership taken by the city on climate change and appeared to question its ability to foster cooperation between actors and share information. This appears as an issue that is systemic to Montreal's climate governance structure, as communication between working groups was a difficulty for the MCP, in addition to the fact that the partnership has produced limited concrete results a year and a half into its life.

The apolitical nature of governance in growth-driven urban economies has been a common critique of capitalist forms of urban development, as public opinion does not always run parallel to the growth imperatives driving it. This depoliticization can be noted in Montreal's practices, both within the *Plan climat* and the MCP, and appears in several forms, including a reflexively apolitical stance taken on by many of the actors involved in Montreal's climate governance, the marginalization of democratic participation in planning practices, and a reliance on expertise. In

the *Plan climat*, the public is the subject of a variety of outreach efforts meant to inform them of the potential benefits of the process of sustainable development. The MCP, for its part, creates a near-complete separation of climate action from democratic politics, and the importance of broadening democratic participation in climate governance was downplayed by many interviewees. When asked about the role of citizens in the coming ecological transition, one prefaced their answer by stating the arenas in which public opinion should not be involved, preferring an approach that responds to active public engagement instead of seeking it out:

> R: "What is the best approach to involve communities?"
> JF: "Yeah, that's a difficult question. I would say it depends on the project. For instance, the electrification of city buses, you know… how do you integrate citizens into that process? There may not be a need for them to be involved. We shouldn't be asking ourselves for each element of the plan: 'citizens need to be actively involved.' And I say that in the sense of not forcing the involvement of certain sections of the population in these projects, which can be counterproductive. If people want to be involved and there are barriers, that's different, but we shouldn't start off saying that we need to involve citizens in every project."

Another stated that citizens should not have a say in the creation of climate planning documents, and instead their input should be heard when individual policies are proposed and debated:

> JV: "I'm not sure if these plans have a really intrinsic role to play in that respect. I think that citizens… I'm not sure that it's important that people know there's a climate action plan, but I do think that if there are programs or bylaws that come from those plans that impact their lives… I do think it's through programs that come from strategies that either local organizations or citizens can be more involved."

The structure of the MCP was also lauded for being independent of municipal politics, and insulating the application of the policies in the *Plan climat* from shifts in public opinion:

> JV: "To me, the duration of electoral mandates is an issue. It's difficult to adopt and implement a policy over four years and make a difference… and also this is tied to the public's capacity to absorb these changes. […] One point I would add is that one of the benefits to engaging with external partners in sustainable development planning, that

ensures that the plan is not tied to one specific administration. […] Having these external partners in the creation and implementation of a joint strategy allows a plan to operate through several administrations."
R: "So this is a benefit to decentralization? The kind that the climate partnership provides?"
JV: "Exactly."

This tendency to downplay democratic participation underlines a tension in making cities the locus of climate action. While the proximity of the city government to its voters can easily be seen as a positive - a reason why cities are uniquely positioned to save the world - that same proximity and democratic responsiveness leads to conflicting ideas about climate action as local politics shift. This ambivalence toward direct democratic participation is unsurprising within the MCP as it is ultimately a group composed of experts and industry insiders funded by large philanthropies.

Devolution of responsibility from the city to an apparatus of largely private actors comes to be understood as a desirable outcome that may even make the implementation of climate strategies more efficient, and goals more reachable, in particular due to the good intentions of the stakeholders involved. Participants brought up, often unprompted, the good faith of the actors involved in climate governance, an undercurrent to the marginalisation of politics and the downplaying of material interests from these processes. It was stressed that those companies that participated in the partnership did so due to their conscience, and because it is the 'right thing to do'. On the other hand, companies and organizations that do not act on climate change are failing to do so because they lack information or resources or lack an "example" to motivate them. The need for exemplary behaviour emerged as a pattern in both the MCP and in the *Plan climat*, with the latter including an entire governance section devoted to explaining how the city can adopt practices that will allow the municipal government to reach carbon-neutrality by 2040, 10 years ahead of schedule, leading the way for other stakeholders to adopt beneficial practices voluntarily.

This preoccupation with intentions and awareness on the part of business actors is tied to the incentive for economic growth. The MCP and the *Plan climat* attempt to make the case that there is a common-sense economic incentive to adopting sustainable practices, expressed for example by Mayor Plante when she said of the ecological transition that it is "a powerful lever for economic development, capable of contributing to the positioning of the metropolis and generating benefits for its businesses." (Montreal Climate Partnership, 2022b). Green growth presents opportunities for building consensus among stakeholders, while jettisoning the need to engage with popular

politics. Actors simply pursue their self-interest and, in the win-win paradigm presented by green growth, the city's reluctance to engage its citizens and its ties to growth actors can be easily explained by emphasizing its engagement with virtuous companies that are doing the right thing. Businesses not engaged in the ecological transition must therefore either lack the resources or the information to make the 'right decision' with regards to its practices, as evidenced by the overrepresentation of information programs in both the MCP and the *Plan climat*, justifying further information programs and subsidies. One interviewee described how the MCP is working to change corporate culture and synthesize good intentions with the profit motive:

> KR: "We are not trying to tell developers or real estate actors to choose one option or another, but instead we want to show that 'science tells us this' - we invoke science often - if science tells us something, there's no way that new buildings can be 100% natural gas [powered]. And how can we make sure that we're avoiding that sort of thing while we wait for a bylaw to be applied, so we're trying to create a culture of low-carbon construction and to show the advantages, the potential returns, because there are ways for stakeholders to maximize their returns while everyone does their part."

Good intentions also serve to veil the profit motive for corporations applying green growth tactics. A participant explained that at the MCP-organized Montreal Climate Summit, an executive from a major real estate management firm committed to reducing their corporate emissions by 55% by 2030, explaining that they were doing so to create a better future for their children. While this is a nice story, and such considerations for the future doubtless play some role in decisionmaking, it is unlikely that a firm that manages a portfolio worth, in this case, several billion dollars makes any decision based on purely idealistic grounds. A similar dynamic appears as participants discussed the role of Énergir in finding solutions. Its control of essential infrastructure was mentioned, and the firm doubtless stands to gain from playing a major part in the city's energy transition, but its role as a good-faith actor was also emphasized:

> FS: "Énergir are the owners of the urban heating and cooling centre for all of downtown, so one third of downtown are their clients [...]. So you have to include Énergir in the city's energy transition. It's important that the city works with them."

R: “Do you play a role in negotiating diverging interests between actors involved in the MCP? I’m thinking specifically of Energir, whose business model could be impacted by many sustainable development policies.”

KR: “I would say yes, but we’re not the only ones, and these are discussions that are very political, very high-level, which sometimes go beyond the projects that we’re working on. So, Energir is an actor that needs to be at the table, they’re among the actors that are crucial for change, and they’re very active - not necessarily as lobbyists, but are very active in finding solutions. Another necessary actor is Hydro-Quebec, which must take leadership. For the moment, they are expressing that their electricity network alone will not be sufficient, and so Énergir must be at the table, and find better ways to reconcile climate targets with our solutions.”

Much of the energy within the working groups appears to have been directed at developing methods of sharing information, or of developing existing, small-scale initiatives into pilot projects with the hope of eventually seeing them applied across the city. For example, this is how a member of the citizen project working group described their work:

JF: “We especially worked on an investigation project where we wanted to identify and document [brakes and levers] that were identified by certain inspiring citizen initiatives. When I said that we based ourselves on what exists… we thought that it would be worth documenting some initiatives that are promising and which succeeded in having a certain impact in their community [...] From that we developed certain success factors [...] so we could ask the city, make more concrete demands of the city or the boroughs for funding to promote the emergence or the perpetuation of these citizen initiatives.”

Initiatives that were identified for promotion and expansion included libraries of things, a cargo-bike pilot project, a car-sharing service which emerged from a professionalized citizen initiative. They also identified a cycling-based food security network, through which cyclists could deliver meals to vulnerable people which saw significant success during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a variety of bike repair and maintenance co-ops. Information programs that the working groups engaged with were especially focused on informing property owners and business owners of retrofit subsidy programs that may

be available to them. However, it was acknowledged that building retrofit programs that are counted on to reduce building emissions may also struggle from an equity perspective, with interviewee implied that the programs that exist to inform the public of retrofit programs for buildings are largely targeted at businesses and owners. In absence of regulations on building owners requiring them to upgrade their properties, renters would have to rely on their landlords' willingness to undertake these retrofits at their expense, which may or may not occur, despite the existence of subsidy programs.

In implementing solutions to environmental issues, actors in Montreal's climate governance seemed to prefer an incremental approach to managing the climate crisis locally, and this was expressed in the tendency towards communication-based programs meant to inform actors, such as the culture change example illustrated above. Additionally, when asked about the work undertaken by their working groups, representatives of both the business and building working groups mentioned information programs meant to accompany businesses in their transition. However, this was paired with urgent calls to action, and an emphasis on concrete targets. While it is possible that concrete action or targets for participating actors will emerge further down the line, the MCP's members are yet to widely adopt proactive measures, despite urgent rhetoric.

> FS: "I hope it will amount to something [...] but for me personally - my editorial viewpoint, things aren't moving quickly enough. [...] What's next? How do we make things move forward so we can reach our super ambitious targets?"
> R: "So we need more urgency, from your point of view?"
> FS: "I think the urgency is there, but it's as if it was difficult on a leadership level. There are vastly different levels of knowledge [in the working groups]. [...] I thought that we would get more direct commitments. We have the engagement platform, but which is very high-level, and which touches on things we're already doing, so you're preaching to the choir. Reaching out and bringing [actors] in is more complicated."

> FS: "People have come in with a lot of good intentions, wanting to work toward decarbonization. The aspect that I think was the most difficult was the 'together' part and the 'realistic' part, because while you might want to reinvent the wheel, we've reached the point where we have to act so quickly that, can we improve what already exists? [...] Yes, there was a desire to act at the highest level, but

> when it came time to act, everyone said ‘I have my plan, and I have my plan… or I don’t have a plan, and how can you help me?’ But there was no opportunity to take a step back and look at potential synergies between myself and these other actors, and that is something that I think the Climate Partnership is working toward.”

A consistent theme throughout the interviews was the City’s lack of engagement with the MCP, described as a lack of leadership on the part of municipal authorities. This, they claimed, made their work more difficult, as participants in the MCP experienced difficulty in knowing what the municipal government needed or expected of them, despite the fact that each working group included a member of the municipal sustainable development or economic development office. This lack of engagement was in tension with the acknowledged fact that the MCP is a nominally independent entity, which should not necessarily need municipal sanction or support to accomplish its goals, and this contributed to the City being unsure of how to interact with the MCP, and vice-versa.

> R: “Would you have appreciated a more collaborative relationship with the City, or were you fine with them mostly serving as observers?”
> CD: “Yes, we would have liked them to be more involved, especially considering that [...] the city is working on so many projects with so many stakeholders, and having people from the City on so many working groups is an opportunity to coordinate now, and to make sure that we’re working in parallel. They would say ‘there are things we’re working on right now, but we can’t share’, and it’s like… we’re there for you, so why not share? Because If we had tighter collaboration, maybe there are already people working on something that we can contribute to, or vice-versa. [...] [Some people] were saying that the city doesn’t really know what relationship it should have with the partnership, because it’s an independent initiative, so it was important for it not to look like the City is running the show.”

> R: “Can you describe some of the aspects that were lacking in the *Plan climat* that [the MCP] addressed?”
> CD: “Yeah, cooperation between businesses was [...] difficult to figure out. [...] We took the time to break down the plan and found that there were no specific directions for businesses saying ‘we expect x, y, and z from the city’s

> businesses.'[...] Sharing knowledge and resources between businesses… that wasn't brought up at all in the *Plan climat*. We found that we were in a good position to mutualize many things."
>
> FS: "I have to say that, through the MCP's structure that is managed by foundations, which is very good, but at times we wondered about the City's leadership. And it's not that the City didn't want to take it, but it's… to what extent is it up to us to do these things [...]?"

This sentiment on the part of the actors in the MCP is not surprising as it has been acknowledged that while municipalities' rhetoric may point toward them taking a leadership role, they do not always follow through with accurate roadmaps for how they plan on doing so. Scientific literature on the matter has frequently critiqued municipalities for this lack of engagement (Salvia et al., 2021). For this reason, partnerships and private actors may feel that they are left on their own, and are in search of leadership, even if they are participating in ostensibly independent structures which ought to be able to set their respective agendas and act on their own, suggesting a closer relationship between the municipal government and the MCP than might be expected for an independent entity.

As a result of this dependence on the municipal government, it cannot be said, at least for the moment, that the MCP or its associated actors are leading from the front either. While the MCP's working groups are doubtless in the process of developing solutions, either based in work done in Montreal, or drawn from international best practices and ripe for adaptation to the local context it became clear that, a year and a half into the MCP's existence, little concrete action has materialized. Further action has been taken by the city and key stakeholders to build on the *Plan climat* including a pledge to make buildings in the city fully carbon-neutral by 2040 (Ville de Montréal, 2022), for which the MCP has served as a venue for dialog between actors, but it remains unclear what will be accomplished by the specific actions of the MCP's steering committee and its working groups in terms of setting concrete corporate targets or undertaking large-scale projects driven by the MCP's actors. As of the end of 2021, the MCP cited the following as measures taken to "help achieve the ambitious objectives set out in the Climate Plan":

> “Creation of the steering committee, made up of 26 decision-makers and network leaders from economic, community, institutional and philanthropic organisations recognised in Montreal for their degree of commitment;
> Creation of 6 highly diversified working groups: Buildings, Mobility, Adaptation, Business, Citizens' projects and Finance, involving 80 active organisations;
> Launch of the commitment campaign "Les grands gestes: démocratiser la réduction des GES à Montréal";
> Launch of a study with INRS and Polytechnique on the carbon footprint of telework;
> Preparation of the annual Summit, which will take place next May.”
> (Montreal Climate Partnership, 2022b)

It was stressed in interviews that despite the modest results so far, the major success of the MCP so far has been in terms of fostering dialog with a variety of participants through the working groups and the Montreal Climate Summit. It was also promised that further support programs and outreach events would be forthcoming from the MCP:

> R: “Can you tell me a bit about the accomplishments of the MCP, the results of your work with actors in various sectors?”
> KR: “Yes. So far it’s been a year - barely a year and a half, really. This was launched [inaudible] for two years, saying ‘let’s try this. Working groups, steering committee, let’s see what comes of this.’ The conclusion after a year is that there’s interest and there’s lots to do. But, and I don’t have the numbers here, participation on our committees is very strong, whether on the steering committee or in the working groups despite this being people involved as volunteers who have lots of other things to do, who are on plenty of committees. [...] So to see that there’s so much involvement after a year and a half, that’s very useful. It’s useful for - the first thing that people say is that it creates exchanges between actors who would not necessarily have spoken otherwise. For instance in the buildings working group, there’s a lot of diversity with academics involved. [...] To have that diversity, and to have that richness of exchanges, that’s a success. And some of the initiatives that have emerged, I think are very promising. […] Our event from ten days ago (the 2022 Montreal Climate Summit), overall was a success. There were 520 participants, and if we went up to 800, we would have been full. The success from the event was to get people to meet who wouldn’t have met otherwise, mixing

> environmentalists with businesspeople, good-faith leaders looking for solutions, whether in the construction, auto, startup, tourism, or health sectors… everyone is interested in these questions. And we managed to reach a good share of them, though there's still a lot to do."
>
> KR: "I can tell you that the business group has been working with its members to figure out what is lacking at the moment, in the field. It isn't support programs that are lacking, but what is lacking is fluidity in the information that is communicated, and especially the need to break into the market. Right now the young chamber of commerce (which heads the business working group), with its fellow group members is working on a project that's been proposed to the MEI (ministry of economic development and innovation) to create a climate hub aiming at, no necessarily centralizing, but making those [support] programs better-known, but especially to have a communication strategy to reach those actors. What we often hear [...] is that especially small businesses want to act but do not necessarily know how, and yet we know that these [support] programs exist, and which are struggling to reach actors, businesses. [...] The citizen project working group has also identified interest in creating a process that would lead to a major citizen event centred on the socio-ecological transition, because that was not so much our target audience at the Climate Summit. The citizen project working group is being reorganized to plan this kind of forum."

While the goal of the MCP is to bring together a group of actors from across Montreal's climate governance landscape, there is still much work to be done to bring that vision into reality. Indeed, the MCP's ability to devise and implement solutions may have been hindered by limited cooperation across working groups. Interviewees frequently discussed a lack of engagement across specialties, even between sectors which would have been ripe for shared ideation. For instance, it may have been practical to encourage discussions between the adaptation and buildings working groups, or the business and citizen project working groups, and yet this was not done, seemingly due to time constraints within the first year and a half of the MCP's operations. However, there was a desire to deepen cooperation in the future. This siloing of action may not be a unique characteristic of the MCP either, but rather a systemic feature of climate governance in Montreal. One interviewee, describing their experience with the planning process for the *Plan climat*, described disappointment at a lack of cross-disciplinary work and at missed

opportunities in plan development, suggesting that both the City of Montreal and the MCP may want to go to greater lengths to encourage cross-disciplinary projects and dialog. Two separate interviewees brought up this issue of siloed working groups within the MCP, and another said the same of the consultation process for the *Plan climat*:

> R: Were there opportunities to mix the working groups, to find synergies between groups?
> KR: “So, that was our intention, but I’d say that’s the element that is missing because each working group started with more or less the same roadmap and calendar, so to bring together 15-20 people, to identify and to work towards collective initiatives, and each had so much on its plate that they struggled to talk with each other. There were talks between coordinators, but to create joint initiatives [...] for the moment our initiatives are specific to each working group. [...] We want more synergies, but in a second phase.”
>
> R: “What are the most significant obstacles to the accomplishment of the City of Montreal’s sustainable development targets?”
> CD: “Obstacles? Well I think that inter-sectoral collaboration… right now we’re doing that in the working groups, we have a diversity of actors, but when it comes time to apply things, that’s when the [specificity] of each actor becomes very important. When you’re coming from the perspective of collaboration, cooperation, ideation, there are no limits. Everyone’s like: ‘oh yeah we’re totally able to work together on this’, but when it comes time to put it into action, that’s where they’ll say: ‘well, for us… for our building management, we just aren’t sure…’ It’s going to be about finding a way of making our objectives work for a broad diversity of actors. There’s no one-size-fits-all [...] and we need to take into account the reality for each sector.”
>
> CS: I was quite frustrated with people having their wheelhouses predetermined. One of the problems with the *Plan climat* is… if you take a look at all climate plans from cities around the world, most of them, if not all of them, are not synergistic. The subject is too complex and they are usually politically-driven, and we’ll call it bureaucratic. So, therefore, all of the synergies are left out of most of the reports.And this was a frustration that I’d mention all the time, that the idea of

> separating buildings from governance, from resilience, from mobility, and not looking to find synergies was a frustration of mine throughout, and it's one that kept coming back as: 'we don't have the tools and the capacity to interconnect things.'

In this chapter I analyzed the content of the *Plan climat* and described the results of interviews conducted with MCP members and Montreal-based sustainability experts. In the case of the *Plan climat*, I first looked at its emissions targets and explained their origins in transnational municipal networks, and how Montreal and other cities adopt specific goals as an action to position themselves internationally, I followed this up by discussing how the adoption of one-size-fits-all targets can clash with local political pressures and lead to incoherence between the policies in the *Plan climat* and the emissions reductions thay are meant to bring about. I then moved on to analyze the *Plan climat* from an equity perspective and found that the *Plan climat*'s focus on measures aimed at remaking the city through densification, greening, placemaking, and transport infrastructure in absence of concrete measures to mitigate displacement due to rising property values has the potential to increase returns for property owners while driving eco-gentrification. Policy programs based on remaking the urban form in this way to produce immediate results were found to be common in urban climate policy (Bassett & Shandas, 2010), and the *Plan climat* was found to depart from this agenda not through the imposition of contraints on major polluters, but by a slate of self-governing measures meant to build consensus with stakeholders and modify their behaviour gradually.

Interviews with the MCP members allowed me to identify a set of key themes that emerged from discourse about the partnership. First was a reflexive apolitical stance where it was argued that much of the MCP's potential for success stems from its distance from municipal electoral politics. This stands in contrast to narratives placing the city as uniquely well-suited to successful climate policy due to its democratic proximity to constituents. Second, I touched on how this downplaying of democratic participation in counterbalanced by a tendency to highlight the good intentions of elite stakeholders engaged in climate governance, and to describe a win-win scenario by which companies benefit both morally and financially by adopting in green growth strategies. I described how this focus on good intentions can veil processes of accumulation and private control of critical infrastructure. Next, I described how the solutions proposed by the MCP largely focused on information-sharing, incremental change, and small-scale community pilot projects. I then described how this stands in stark contrast to a rhetoric of urgency from these same actors. Indeed, there seems to be a need felt by some elements in the MCP for greater leadership on the

part of the municipal government to push its goals and those of the MCP forward. This stands out as the MCP is a nominally independent organization, but in fact appears very closely tied to the municipal government. This dependence on the municipal government and the relative novelty of the MCP means that there is still little in the way of results, and the MCP had mostly worked on fostering dialog between actors in similar fields to share strategies. This dialog, though, was not cross-sectorial, as I found that actors often felt themselves to be siloed off from other sectors and that this was also a feature of the *Plan climat* creative process, making it something of a systemic issue in Montreal's climate policy.

Synthesis and conclusions

What, then, can we say definitively about climate politics in Montreal after examination of the *Plan climat* and the MCP? It is fair to say that Montreal is applying what While et al. (2004) call a "sustainability fix", defined as the selective incorporation of ecological goals in the greening of urban governance which, in this particular case projects a notion of win-wins between urban sustainability, and environmental, social, and economic goals (Bulkeley, 2005). This puts Montreal well in line with the conventional wisdom on climate governance according to which there are positive feedback loops between "urban development and economic competitiveness, social cohesion, and responsive governance, and, increasingly, environmental sustainability as well" (Barnett & Parnell, 2016, 91). As such, Montreal's climate politics are defined by the need to maintain growth, due to its involvement in regional and international systems of urban competitiveness. A lack of growth or slow growth, and the city will fail to build upon the investments, innovations, and multinational "networking" opportunities and it will necessarily fall behind.

The tensions between economic growth – even of the green variety – and the implementation of a justice-based agenda are not easily reconciled (Bulkeley, 2005), and for this reason it appears that the circle of actors moving in Montreal's climate governance structure has remained relatively small, potentially reducing those tensions by only including those actors most entrenched in local governance and most likely to benefit from green growth policies. While it is possible to talk about the *Plan climat* and the MCP as separate initiatives, they are both products of the same ecosystem of actors for Montreal's climate and energy governance. Many of the stakeholders involved with the advisory committee that helped to draft the *Plan climat* reappear in key positions within the MCP. Énergir and Hydro-Québec appear in both structures for obvious reasons - they manage the vast majority of energy infrastructure in Montreal and have strong interests in playing a part in the City's energy future. Ivanhoe Cambridge, a major real estate investment firm is involved in both, with the Montreal Chamber of Commerce appearing in both structures, and the Youth Chamber of Commerce joining in on the MCP. There is also overlap between nonprofits, as the David Suzuki Foundation and local nonprofit *Vivre en ville* worked on the plan and the partnership. This phenomenon of overlap doubtless reflects the expertise and access to private infrastructure that these organizations provide, but it also produces a landscape defined by insiders, similar to those described in Norway by Aall et al. (2007) and in the Netherlands by Henriks (2008).

Ultimately, while Montreal's climate governance apparatus has worked to identify high-emissions sectors of the economy, it has yet to provide thorough strategies to address the spatial and socio-economic patterns of emissions from an equity perspective with initiatives and recommendations targeted at the city as a whole, with minimal regard for the spatial disparities in carbon emissions. The attempts at modelling exemplary behaviour and devising best practices on the part of both the municipal government and MCP to be followed by various stakeholders also has little currency in a justice-based framework as action is entirely voluntary, but appears to be a recurring theme in municipalities' climate policy. Laine et al. (2020) described the Finnish city of Vantaa's approach to their carbon-neutrality target, and it is striking how similar it is to that of the *Plan climat*, and the solutions proffered by the MCP:

> "[Vantaa]'s general approach to the achievement of carbon-neutral city status is mostly through decreasing consumption, focusing heavily on the energy efficiency of the building stock together with distributed renewable energy production. Most of the processes are not mandatory, thus limiting the City's capability to steer the generation. The only mandatory process related to the production perspective is centralized district heating energy production, which is owned by the City, and thus within its jurisdiction." (Laine et al., 2020, 2444)

Indeed, it could be argued that Montreal's municipal authorities face greater problems still, as, unlike Vantaa they do not control their district heating and cooling systems, nor their energy grid, which are owned and operated in parts by Énergir and Hydro-Québec, respectively. These critical bottlenecks controlled by private (in the case of Énergir) and para-public entities is a serious impediment against proactive, centralized climate action at the municipal level in Montreal. The City of Montreal attempts to overcome these deficits by implementing a program of "exemplary behaviour", insisting on best practices and emissions-reducing retrofits for their internal operations to incentivize other actors in the city's business and nonprofit landscape to do the same. The MCP works in much the same way, presenting exemplary practices, and appealing to the values of their partner organizations to take on commitments, while also promoting the profit-maximizing potential of sustainable development initiatives. While some actors within the climate governance apparatus appear to be operating counter to these trends - for example the citizen project working group of the MCP, which has consistently stressed inclusion and participatory dialog and has attempted to organize a public forum to that end - they appear to be stymied by

the siloed structure of the MCP and the *Plan climat*, which separates community voices from those of institutional and business actors, minimizing dialog.

While the political flexibility of cities as a site of climate action is often lauded by proponents of 'cities saving the world', there is an overall lack of engagement with politics by city authorities and governance actors. Indeed, most would rather escape from politics altogether, and instead use the city as a container for technological solutions, incremental regulatory changes, and public-private collaboration. Interviewee CS stated that the reliance of the City of Montreal on technological solutions and one-size-fits-all targets from TMNs may obscure more productive, quality-of-life and health-oriented policy. I would expand this to argue that these solutions, targets, as well as the prevalence of negotiation between connected insiders standing to profit from green growth obscures the fundamental political and conflictual nature of sustainable development policy (Bulkeley, 2005; Marcuse, 1998; Owens & Cowell, 2002). One of the more important aspects of the MCP, as stated by interviewees, is its degree of removal from politics. The *Plan climat* does little to discuss popular mobilization or co-production with its citizen body, but instead limits itself to awareness-raising, and to the fostering of a rather abstract notion of social capital among residents. Similar to how different specialties were siloed off from each other within the drafting process of the *Plan climat*, and in the structure of the MCP, there is a nearly hermetic separation between the public and the sphere of experts involved in Montreal's climate governance. With limited time, resources, and most importantly a lack of political will to gather public input for the *Plan climat*, citizens were almost entirely shut out of the process. In parallel, citizens are completely shut out from the MCP. While this is perhaps more understandable, as the MCP is an independent initiative without any specific duty towards the citizens of Montreal, it remains the case that they have reinforced a divide between the realm of citizens, and the realm of experts and growth actors, which they embody. This dynamic comes to the surface in the engagement events organized or proposed by the MCP and its working groups. While the 2022 Montreal Climate Forum has been hailed as a success by the MCP and the City of Montreal, it was a rather closed event, with about 500 tickets available to the public, and general admission costing $195. While it allowed stakeholders to negotiate and make commitments, and for the city to announce new measures related to the decarbonization of buildings (Métro, 2022), it was hardly an open forum. To address this exclusion, the MCP and its citizen project working group have proposed to create a citizens' climate forum to be held in parallel to the Climate Forum. While this will provide a platform for the ideas and concerns of citizens to be expressed, albeit in a controlled and potentially tokenistic forum, it reifies this separation.

In the absence of broad public participation in planning processes, specific insiders have been particularly well-positioned to lead, and in some cases benefit from Montreal's energy transition through the control of major infrastructural chokepoints, as well as ubiquitous participation in planning and climate partnership activities. Énergir, the province of Quebec's premier private natural gas utility a prime example of a leader in Montreal's green growth coalition and a crucial actor for the success of any climate policy in Montreal, and indeed in the entire province of Quebec. However, filling gaps in local climate policy through their action has generally meant providing the firm with concessions, sometimes at the expense of the public, so that the firm undertakes various technical fixes to green its business. It can be difficult to tell where cooperation ends and arm-twisting begins, as it has been necessary to transfer hundreds of millions of dollars to the company, and expenses well into the billions will be incurred over time, largely due to private ownership of local energy infrastructure. While the city awaits public hearings in the Fall of 2022 before committing to new regulations for residential and commercial building emissions, Energir and Hydro-Quebec, the province's public electricity utility, have announced their own initiative to reduce building emissions by transitioning their customers to dual-energy systems meant to reduce the usage of natural gas by approximately 70% in participating households. This deal would see Hydro-Québec pay $2.4B in compensation to Énergir between now and 2050 to undertake a collaborative, dual-energy initiative (ROEÉ, 2022). This initiative would retrofit gas-powered buildings to use electricity from Hydro-Québec's grid, while allowing them to draw from natural gas when electricity demand is high and supply is low. This will doubtless reduce emissions from natural gas, but the deal also installs permanent natural gas infrastructure in hundreds of thousands of buildings in the province, and the costs of the project largely rest on Hydro-Québec to be passed on to its customers in the province in order to green Énergir's business. This goes against the basic 'polluter pays' principle that has dominated sustainable development thinking and passes on the costs to Hydro-Québec's customers, who make up a vast majority of the residential energy market in the province. It is no surprise that the energy firm has been able to secure such a deal with Hydro-Québec and public authorities. The city is a crucial market for the gas utility, with hundreds of thousands of residential and commercial customers. Indeed, natural gas occupies a large enough share of the local energy market that its use accounts for 43% of Montreal's community emissions, meaning that Énergir is an essential stakeholder for the municipality. This situation is obviously untenable if the municipal administration hopes to accomplish its short and long-term emissions reduction goals, including full carbon-neutrality of all buildings within the city by 2040 and full carbon-neutrality by 2050. As

such, it is required to work alongside Énergir due to its large customer base and private ownership of energy infrastructure, as previously mentioned with respect to the urban heating and cooling centre, granting it significant leverage. This is but one example of potential issues arising from a dependence on private sector actors to lead the way on climate change, and Montreal is indeed heavily reliant on the collaboration of these actors to implement its agenda. There is a similar reliance on real estate actors embedded in the MCP to undertake retrofits to their stock, and there is a reliance on private developers to continue adding to the housing stock in a manner that does not conflict with the city's environmental goals. This will obviously need to be achieved by reaching consensus with these actors through a process of negotiation that is likely to involve similar concessions to those afforded to Énergir. Through this system of exemplary practices and negotiation, Montreal may in fact achieve its targets as established in the *Plan climat*, but it will, in the process, cede significant authority over the nominally green city thus produced to these private interests.

These facts make growth machine theory combined with theories of entrepreneurial urbanism particularly relevant to understanding emerging climate governance networks in Montreal and other urban areas, especially as government by public authorities gives way to more multilateral, multilevel governance (Castan-Broto, 2017). It is therefore plausible to see the MCP and Montreal's climate governance structures more generally as a sort of green chamber of commerce dedicated to boosting green growth solutions within Montreal specifically. The actors involved have all adopted more or less the same framing of the climate situation, according to which local innovation driven by collaboration between the public and private sector is the way forward. Within this framing, they have further determined that it is essential to make Montreal a globally competitive city that can attract investment in order to catalyze that innovation and maximize their returns.

In this synthesis section I described the contours of the 'sustainability fix' that defines Montreal's climate governance, insofar as it can be determined from the content of the *Plan climat* and the MCP. I found that Montreal's fix largely conforms to conventional wisdom, focusing on positive feedback loops between urban development and economic competitiveness, social cohesion, responsive governance, and environmental sustainability. This essentially growth-driven model is reinforced by engaging with a relatively limited group of stakeholders who stand to benefit the most materially, and nonprofits that are already insiders to climate governance in Montreal. The generally apolitical framing of climate action in Montreal has allowed these actors to influence

plan production and implementation processes without significant public input and has reinforced systems of negotiating and consensus-building to the exclusion of policies imposing constraints on elite actors. This has positioned specific elite actors to benefit from Montreal's climate policy, as I use the example of Énergir's critical importance to Montreal's energy systems to illustrate this system of negotiation, consensus, and in this case, concessions to the private sector.

Conclusions

To return to the research questions that brought us here, how successful have the green growth-oriented networks that have coalesced around the *Plan climat* and MCP been at influencing Montreal's municipal climate policy? It is undeniable that growth-oriented elite actors have been incredibly successful at intertwining themselves with Montreal's municipal government and promoting a sustainability fix in which they are the key group consulted (as opposed to the public or community groups), and in which their financial success can be tied to reductions in emissions. While the actual influence of these actors on, for instance, the content of the *Plan climat* remains murky due to the inaccessibility of participants for interviews, what is beyond dispute is that Montreal's climate governance structures include insiders to the exclusion of the public, and rely on measures compatible with an entrepreneurial mode of urban development that shuns constraints on actors and inadequately addresses equity concerns, instead focusing on the economic development potential of its climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. Green growth stakeholders have also succeeded in taking the lead on building the structures meant to engage private and nonprofit actors with sustainable development, taking this responsibility from the municipal government between 2016 and the 2021 launch of the MCP. Instead of the city setting the agenda for its partner organizations, now there is a group of middlemen with an agenda that may or may not be compatible with that of the municipal government and the public, which has positioned itself to drive engagement with municipal climate policy. Despite this influence, the MCP's results are so far limited to information programs and pilot projects, making it appear as, at least for now, little more than a green chamber of commerce through which private actors can coordinate and advocate for their individual pursuits, as illustrated by Énergir's dual energy system.

To address the second part of the research question (what do these results signal about the potential of similar climate governance arrangements at the local level?), it seems that Montreal is not a proof-of-concept for a climate governance structure managed jointly by the municipal government and a green growth coalition. Instead, Montreal conforms to existing international

trends that produce similar policy outcomes focused on a nominally sustainable remaking of the urban form. In my view, this signals a need to build a research agenda focused on scrutinizing the usefulness of the sustainability concept as it is deployed by municipalities and their stakeholders in order to critique processes of inequitable climate policy and carbon gentrification as they continue to appear with cities adopting growth-oriented sustainability fixes. To return to Marcuse (1998) who critiques the usefulness of sustainability if it merely serves to sustain existing social and economic structures, it is crucial to enquire whether a particular municipality's climate policy reinforces or challenges systems of accumulation, dispossession, and displacement. Because Montreal appears to be in line with the practices of other international cities, and entities like the MCP are proliferating, it is worth examining whether or not similar green growth coalitions are emerging in other cities, and if so, how they interact similarly or differently with municipal governments and the public.

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