

# **The Transit Oriented Development Model in Montreal (Canada): Mobilizing a Concept and Negotiating Urban Development at the Local and Metropolitan Scale**

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This paper, highlights the links between urban projects, the role of the mayor as well as issues regarding metropolitan governance. In most Western democracies, recent reorganization of local government systems has contributed to the redefinition of the role of local elected officials, forcing them to operate in a new arena (caucus of mayors, pressures from a diversity of stakeholders). Urban development projects are now initiated and managed by city governments, legitimizing and strengthening local elected officials into their roles (Le Bart 2009; Pinson 2009). As the result of the emergence of urban development projects along with the reorganizing of local governments, mayors are now positioned at the centre of planning and development processes, where they happen to cooperate and negotiate with their peers, as long as with other actors. Our research question, hence addresses the link between urban projects and the role of the mayor at the metropolitan scale: Does the urban development project of a municipality contributes to the redefinition of the mayor's role, in a context of metropolitan governance?

The metropolitan area of Montreal has reached a new era in terms of metropolitan governance with the adoption in 2012 of a metropolitan master plan (Plan métropolitain d'aménagement et de développement – PMAD) that forced mayors to acknowledge the influence of the metropolitan level on local issues, especially regarding planning matters. This new context is particularly relevant for the study of political processes ongoing in territorial planning. Moreover, this plan has been at the center of a large mobilisation on the part of the civil society and local elected officials. If the focus on public participation and the role of the civil society in the implementation of PMAD was largely studied in the recent years, few researchers have targeted elected officials specifically.

Our paper, based on fieldwork with local elected officials, argues that the transit oriented development (TOD) model is an exogenous planning idea (Healey 2013) put forward in the context of Montréal's metropolitan plan. Although the general idea of transit oriented development can be considered as the continuation of Montréal's development, this New Urbanism concept (Calthorpe 1993), has become embedded in the discourse of local actors, who mobilise this idea in order to legitimate their actions/urban development, thus helping them assert their new role in urban planning. The metropolitan plan is a planning exercise inspired of the European model of the *Projet urbain* (Pinson 2009), but the TOD model, which was first developed as a mere tool to achieve density goals, became one of the main ideas behind Montreal's mater plan. This planning idea was disseminated with the help of professionals, and appropriated by some of the metropolitan area's mayors, mainly those involved in the governance apparatus. From a general planning idea imported from the United States, the TOD was translated into concrete projects subjected to specific norms (a perimeter of density in the surroundings of major public transit hubs) in the context of Montréal, and therefore can be a good example of mobile urbanism (McCann and Ward 2011).

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