In late 2021, residents of Île Sainte-Thérèse, a large island within sight of Montreal, were told that they would soon be evicted to make room for a park. Many had built whole lives on the island, some dating back generations, to when it was a vacation destination, or before that, when it was owned by the church.

In the wake of this difficult decision, members of the Montreal Waterways Collective at Concordia visited the island at the invitation of residents, and asked themselves: how do you tell the story of an island, and who gets to tell it?

An Island Is More Than a Park

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Montreal Waterways Collective

Concordia
Ethnography
Lab

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Contents

Acknowledgments

Multiple stories of an island

Kregg Hetherington

In September 2021, the city of Montréal announced a brand-new nature park to be constructed on Île Sainte-Thérèse, a large piece of the Hochelaga Archipelago of islands snuggled between Pointe-aux-Trembles and Varennes on the South Shore. As the city of Montreal grows, the idea of protecting this island is very welcome, and will, with the Îles de Boucherville, offer an accessible public greenspace for people in the eastern end of the city. But parks are not without their costs, and the news came with the revelation that some 100 family cottages were being evicted from the island to make room for the park. Residents have organized to oppose the evictions, but the outcome is still uncertain. The question, though, is why the city considers the evictions necessary for the protection of the island?

In fact, the proposed eco-tourism park on Île Sainte-Thérèse is only the most recent story of parks going up against local inhabitants. The first park of this sort in North America was Yosemite National Park in California, created in 1864 for the enjoyment of upper-class Americans by forcibly evicting the Ahwahneechee who used the valley. Quebec's first national park, Forillon, was created in 1969 by demolishing and burning the houses of some 1800 people in Gaspésie. In both cases, and in countless others around the world, park creators were less trying to "conserve" a pristine piece of greenspace as to create an idyllic picture of nature by getting rid of the people who called it home.

What a strange version of "nature" this is that has no people in it. As environmental historians have long pointed out, this understanding of nature is really a romantic idea from the 19th century, based on an idea of the perfect landscape and view common to the British aristocracy. It's not exactly that there should be no people there, but that the people should be separated from the landscape itself, standing apart and appreciating it as owners, as visitors, or simply as spectators (see Cronon 1996). That elevation of one way of appreciating nature comes at the expense of others. In order to burn down people's houses, you have to first convince yourself that what they are doing there is illegitimate. Indigenous Californians, gardening and controlling brushlands with fire, had no place in the grand vision of Yosemite

as America's version of Eden. In sub-Saharan Africa, pastoralists who used to live in wildlife preserves have been refigured as "poachers" who need to be kept out of their old homelands (see Brockington and Igoe 2006).

What is currently happening on Île Sainte-Thérèse is only the most recent version of this. The island has never been targeted for development in this way before, and so residents, who have had houses and cottages on the island for generations, have never been forced to prove the property rights. Now they have been refigured as "squatters" and "illegals" by proponents of the park, who imagine that the only form of legitimate belonging is enshrined in property titles. Once they were framed negatively, it seemed easy to convince a public – that wants a park after all – that it's okay to get rid of these people. And despite years of battle in the courts to argue that their long residency, their receipts for past taxes, and their care for the island should be acknowledged, they were unable to beat the city in court.

But why do we need to remove people for the park? This is not a model of park-making that has held up very well historically. Again, the example of Yosemite is instructive. Before the arrival of European colonists, indigenous people cultivated the valley with controlled fires, stopping the forest undergrowth from getting out of control. As soon as they were gone, Yosemite developed a problem with forest fires, which in the era of climate change have only gotten more extreme. It turns out that the ecosystem the park was supposed to protect was actually created by people expertly cultivating the forest undergrowth for centuries. The sanitized view of nature that gets petrified by the park is one that takes constant intervention, while Californian cities grow increasingly wasteful and uncontrolled only a few miles away. Our local controversy is smaller and less extreme, but kicking people off an island close to Montreal while allowing concrete sprawl to continue unabated in our suburbs is a version of the same story.

So what should we make of the Île Sainte-Thérèse park plans? It's important to underline that no one in this story thinks that a park is a bad idea. In fact, the residents of Île St-Therese have been calling for decades on the city and province to pay more attention to the island, to the archeological heritage hidden in its sands and to the erosion taking place on its banks. How ironic that when someone finally paid attention, they told these same residents they had a few months to leave. Instead, residents

call for a more human park, one that is open to the enjoyment of many, that tries to protect the creatures and landscapes on the island, but also recognizes the possibility that people might have a place in the natural environment. That might be a good step toward realizing that nature is not so much a place preserved against humans but one in which we participate as living creatures among others, trying to negotiate a better way of living on the planet.

For now, it appears that the question has been settled, and residents will be gone in a few short years. This is the condition in which the Montreal Waterways Project, a group of researchers at the Concordia Ethnography Lab encountered residents of Ile Saint-Therese at the end of 2021.

Our group had been interested for a while in the fact that while Montreal calls itself an "island," most residents do not experience themselves as "islanders," and do not cultivate an ecological relationship with the river that surrounds them. And yet here were the residents of Ile Saint-Therese only a few kilometers away, totally invested in the river, its shores, and the wildlife that cohabited with them. We reached out to them and were overwhelmed by their generosity, even at a moment of grief at losing the island. Still shaken by the loss of their land, they told us that one of the biggest blows was the erasure of their history, the erasure of their families, from the story of the island. Indeed, the court case might have been won by power and money, but it was a contest over how to tell the story of an island.

And so this is our attempt to tell another story, in solidarity with residents, but also as visitors and guests, who found a singularly complicated place, full of deep memory and belonging, ecological commitments and historical traces, all on the brink of erasure. Unlike a court proceeding, we tell the story ethnographically, committed to the belief that all stories are multiple, that all places are composite, and that history is always more—more complicated, more beautiful, more human, and more than human—than what we encounter in a Visitor Centre.

Figure 1. Crossing over to Île Sainte-Thérèse from Varennes. Photo taken by Maya Lamothe-Katrapani.

How to tell the story of an island?
On caring as relating

Melina Campos Ortiz

On October 29th, 2021, L'Association de la communauté de l'île Sainte-Thérèse (ACIST) organized a protest in front of Chantal Rouleau's office, the member of the provincial assembly for Pointe-aux-Trembles, on a cold and bright fall day. Some 40 people protested what they found an unjust eviction from Isle Sainte-Thérèse (IST), arguing that their cottages could co-exist with the park the City wanted to build (see ACIST, 2021). During the event, the protesters carried placards with messages such as: "don't take away the island where I grew up." Some of those placards also included old photos that evoke the lives and histories they were protecting (Hodgson, 2021). I started this research by asking: how do family photographs become political artifacts? Why are the IST inhabitants invoking their old family pictures to reclaim relation to a place?

Figure 2. ACIST Protest. Photo courtesy of ACIST.

After months of media and archival research and online interviewing, we visited the island for the first time on a hot day in late May. Valarie, who we met virtually in February, welcomed us with her cousin Cedric at a small pier in Varennes. After a short boat ride in Valerie's *chaloupe* and a nice stop at their land (which comprises an old and a new cottage and a peaceful river view), we started to walk under the midday sun. A part of the group visited the Durocher family along with Cedric, and the rest of us followed Valerie to the other side of the island to meet Fanny and Natasha, two of the people more involved in the IST anti-eviction campaign. We sat on Fanny's porch; the wind made me forget how hot the day was. While we saw people disembarking on the island, they recounted the eviction process to us. How expensive it was, how it brought the three of them closer, their interactions with different political authorities and NGOs, and their decision to stop trying and accept the deal offered by the municipality, which included the possibility of keeping their cottages for seven more years.

Figure 3. Cedric and his grandmother (on the left) at the ACIST protest. Photo courtesy of ACIST.

What struck me the most was learning about how they dealt with the grief that leaving their cottages provoked them: one spent the whole winter crying, and another wanted to celebrate her last birthday on the island and destroy her cottage herself.

After listening to them for a while, I asked about the protests and the placards. It was not an easy question to pose. Emotions were running high, and I was too self-aware of my difficulties in French. "Why did you decide to use your family pictures on the placards?" I shyly offered. "Because we wanted to convey emotions, and pictures convey emotions," they replied. "Because we are not squatters," they continued, with a certainty that contrasted my original hesitation. "We protested because we didn't want to leave, but most of all, we protested because we didn't want people to believe we didn't belong here."

What does it mean to belong to a land? I keep pondering this question when thinking about the profound attachment I feel for the place where I grew up thousands of kilometres away. A former coffee state in the Costa Rican central valley –with a magnificent mountain view– that my grandmother inherited from her Italian father and turned into our home. The place where my family has planted trees to commemorate those who are no longer with us. The place where I played with my cousins, and where I now I see my nephew growing up. Can I feel an attachment to that place while acknowledging that other people, whose stories I don't know, inhabited it before us?

The next time I went to the island just a few days after Saint-Jean Baptiste, I brought some pictures of the protest, looking forward to discussing these issues less awkwardly than the first time (see Tinkler 2014). After two short rides on her *chaloupe*, Valerie welcomed us with a magnificent cup of instant coffee, her favourite while on holiday. I took the printed pictures out as soon as we felt at ease on the island again. Valerie and Cedric quickly recognized themselves in one of them. "That is us! That is our grandmother holding that placard during the protest", they said, pointing out a picture that accompanied a placard that read: *Ne m'enlevez pas mon île – mes petits-enfants y ont grandi!* ("Don't take away my island – this is where my grandchildren grew up! "). "Why did your grandmother choose that specific picture?" I asked." Because we are all there, her grandkids, we were born here, and we love this land as much as she does." "Was this picture taken here?" I wanted to know. "No, our cottage has not always

been here. It is just some meters away". "Can we go?" "Yes, but you won't see the place; the forest has taken over."

When Cedric took the rest of the group on his ATV to see other inhabitants and historical sites, I stayed with Valerie and her family on her land. First, she talked about her grandma and her late grandfather and how their life stories were intertwined with IST's history during the second part of the 20th century. After seeing my enthusiasm for the photos on the protest signs, she shared with me, via SMS, some of the pictures she had taken with her phone from family albums. In some of them, her grandma was pregnant; in others, you could see her surrounded by her family, which grew bigger and older on IST.

Figure 4. Valerie's grandmother and her family on IST. Photo provided by Valerie Rochon.

Figure 5. Looking through photos with Valérie. Photo by Maya Lamothe–Katrapani.

Then, we went to see the place where the picture was taken. On our walk, she told me stories about her childhood and coming of age on the island. On how she grew up there, but there was a period when they stopped coming. And somehow, our conversation gravitated toward trees. She showed me how they planted many of the trees that now form the forest "that took over." The old tires in their roots attested it.

Back in her land, she showed me the different trees she had grown over the years on the island. The first one is the pine tree that welcomes us after landing. She planted it when she was about twelve; it was a gift she received at an environmental fair at the Olympic stadium back in the nineties. The next tree was an apple tree; she got it from the bank when she got the loan to buy her first house a few years ago. Then we took another walk; she showed me the trees she had planted with her partner and his two daughters just the day before. Each of them planted a baby maple tree from their garden in Montreal.

Figure 6. Maple trees planted by Valérie and her family. Photo taken by author.

Figure 7. Maple trees planted by Valérie and her family. Photo taken by author.

As the day went by, I witnessed how Valerie, her partner and their daughters were taking care of the island: building a new dry toilet, reading the meanings of the water movements, receiving people that came over to help, and introducing me to their favourite island meals. When talking to the girls (who thought I looked like Mirabel from Encanto and shared with me the few words they knew in Spanish), they told me: "we only would have

the cottage for seven more years." "Why do you take care of a place you know you will have to leave?" I asked Valerie when the girls grew tired of talking to me about their favourite animated movies. "Because we want to make this place better," she replied non–hesitantly. "Because that is what we have always done," she continued while showing me all the improvements she plans for the coming years.

It has been a month since we visited the island for the second time. I cannot stop thinking about the baby maple trees, the girls talking to me about only having the cottage for some years and Valerie wanting to make the place better even if they know they must leave. It brought me to a broader question: *Why do we care?* For Joan Tronto, care implies:

> everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair "our world" so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all that we seek to inter-weave in a complex, life-sustaining web (Tronto 1993, quoted by Puig 2011, p. 93).

Valerie and her family have cared for IST for years because they wanted to live well on it for as long as it lasts, whether seven years or another lifetime.

When thinking about care through Donna Haraway's work, Puig (2012) suggests that: "[i]n worlds made of heterogeneous interdependent forms and processes of life and matter, to care about something, or for somebody, is inevitably to her family taught me: that it is through care that they have developed their relationship with IST. They showed me how caring is their way of belonging.

Yet, as feminist activists and scholars have made evident since the feminism second wave, one of the main issues with care is its erasure, its given for granted–ness (see Federici 2010; Eme Vázquez 2019). In her seminal essay about care in technoscience, Puig (2011) suggests that to engage with neglected things, we should follow Lucy Schuman in asking ourselves: "what kind of social relations are assumed to be desirable, … whose interests are represented, and whose labours are erased?" (2007, quoted in Puig 2011 p.93). I realized that what the municipality did when calling the residents "squatters" was offensive because it doubted their presence on the island by, among other things, erasing their

labour of care. Maybe that is what they wanted to showcase with their placards: that for them, this island was "a matter of care" (Puig 2011) way before the nature park became "a matter of concern" (Latour 2004) for the municipal government.

During my stay at her place, Valerie told me her stories about the island and her life. We talked about when she drove across the United States or visited Costa Rica, my home country. I felt so at ease that I almost forgot I had spent a whole day speaking in French. I thought we could so easily be friends. "What do you want me to do with this story?" I asked right before my colleagues made their way back. "What I want is clear; I don't want to leave." I felt a crack in my heart; I could not promise her I would do everything in my hands to prevent that from happening. As a team, we had acknowledged their process was closed and that, as Natasha and Fanny attested, they are now grieving. Who are we to re-open wounds or to promise things? I could not give her an answer. But, as I write this, I find the need to at least promise her that I will care for her care.

But how to make up for my promise? How to talk about people who care for a place even when they know they will be evicted in seven years?

Puig (2011) reminds us that representing matters of care "is an aesthetic and political move in re-presenting things that problematizes the neglect of caring relationalities in an assemblage" (p.94). For the author, a feminist ethos of representing care is not reduced to applying an established theory. On the contrary, it must be constantly rethought, contested and enriched, and this can include a *speculative commitment* to think about how things would be different if they generated care. My speculative commitment with this short piece is not telling the lovely story of a woman whose life milestones can be recounted by the various trees she planted on an island over the years. Instead, I want to use this story to ask how things could be different if care and not numbers, or legal papers, were part of municipal environmental decision-making processes.

Figure 8. Girls having fun at the beach. Photo taken by author.

Îles-de-Boucherville Park : a case study

Clara Casian

> …*alors, au bénéfice de qui voulez-vous faire des îles un parc ?*
>
> La Seigneurie, 1982

This short text reflects on the formation of the Îles-de-Boucherville park and the broader phenomenon of the 1971 *Un fleuve, Un parc* project, which advocated for the transformation of 110 islands into recreation and conservation areas. With the help of archival findings from newspaper clippings and documented public debates, the work unravels a web of historical research of past Quebec environmental movements, expropriation, and suspended property development. Îles-de-Boucherville case study offers an earlier example of natural habitats transitioning into recreation parks, filled with contested testimonies that slowly create a sense of rupture with the ethos and values instilled by the original *Un fleuve, Un parc* project. Through the lens of the reconstructed past, forty years on, this misalignment is heightened as we witness the slow erasure taking hold of Île Sainte-Thérèse, as we come to understand the wider phenomenon of its transformation into a park.

Un fleuve, Un parc

The history of the Îles-de-Boucherville Park is attributed to Anthony LeSauteur's 1971 project *Un fleuve, Un parc*, aimed to salvage the deterioration of 110 islands between Montreal and Sorel. The project intended to promote regular engagement with nature, protect the sites from industrialized works, and preserve the natural habitat (LeSauteur, n.d., 153). The project envisaged the recovery of the Boucherville Islands from a housing development project, urging the Quebec government to acquire the land and preserve its habitat (*La Presse* 1975).

An article printed in *La Presse* on 10th April 1975, reveals the $50 million residential development plans of *Les Enterprises Boucherville Inc*, consisting of 5000–6000 housing units, to host a population similar to that of Île des Soeurs. *Les Enterprises*

Boucherville Inc were the proprietors of the land since 1954, and the residential project was planned to unravel in 1977. Due to a lack of funding or perhaps a change of legislature, the islands were put up for sale around 1970. *Les Enterprises* also rented Île Commune and Île Grosbois for farming intentions; during the construction of Louis-Hippolyte-Lafontaine bridge-tunnel, the debris left over from the building process was deposited on the banks of the islands, used as a landfill site. The excavated debris of moraine and rock created an artificial embankment, connecting Île Charron and Île Sainte-Marguerite, after being carried through the passage between the islands. The rest of the materials were used for Expo 67, as part of the development work on Île Sainte-Hélène.

There is further literature on LeSauteur and his work as a president of *La Fédération québécoise de la faune* (FQF), a conservation association established in 1945, as well as a member of *Société pour vaincre la pollution* (SVP) and *Société canadienne pour la conservation de la nature*.
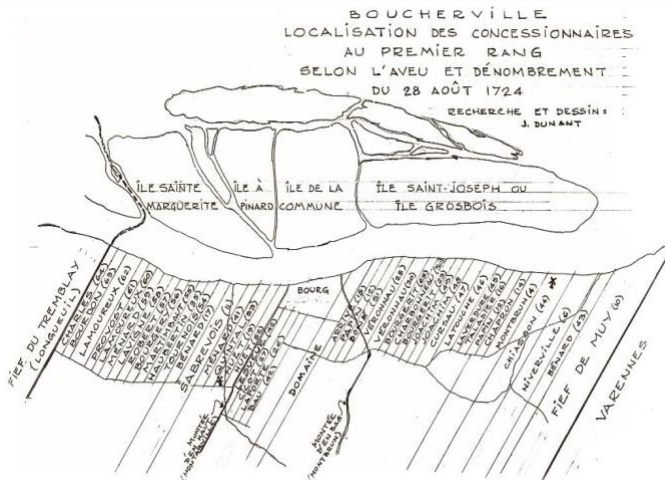

Figure 9. Plan of the Boucherville seigneury in 1724, drawn by Jacques Dunant. Image provided by the Société d'histoire des Îles-Percée.

LeSauteur founded in 1975 *Fédération des associations pour la protection de l'environnement des lacs* (FAPEL); he published

articles on pollution and is considered an early advocate of Quebec grassroots environmental movements (Barr 1995).
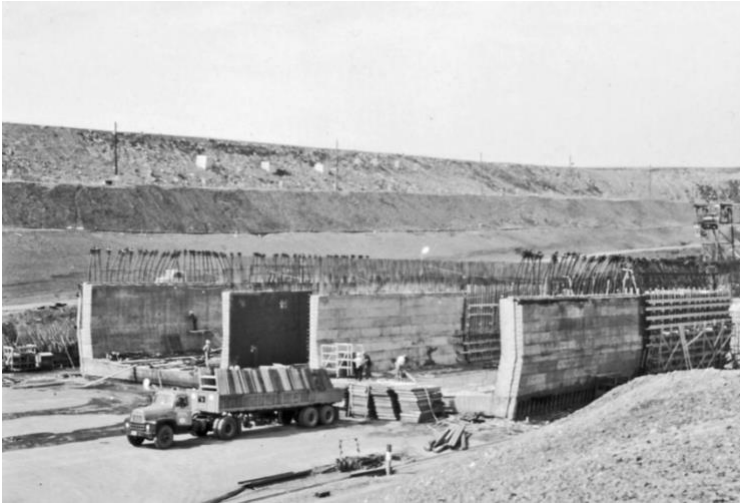
Figure 10. Assembling a caisson in the dry dock, 1964. Photo by Jean P. Lequy. Image provided by the la Société d'histoire des Îles-Percées.

As a chemical engineer working at the *Régie des eaux* since 1964 and chief of the department's sanitary engineering branch in Montreal, he pointed out that pulp and paper mills were the main sources of pollution found in Ottawa river. It is noted in Montreal Gazette (Grescoe 1970) that between July 1969 and July 1970, LeSauteur interviewed on thirteen television and six radio programs, made 64 speeches, and wrote 35 newspaper and magazine articles on pollution as well as an encyclopedia and a pamphlet. He fought against Montreal's untreated sewage dumping and alongside the biochemist Marcel Chaput has explored the issue of pollution in 'Dossier Pollution' published by Editions du Joui: "Sous prétexte de progrès, nous sommes allés trop loin, il faut retourner en arriére" (*La Presse* 1972)

In *Journal Des Debats,* 17 May 1973, we can read how LeSauteur advocated for the prohibition of any commercial operations on designated parks found in the province of Quebec. In the same *Journal Des Débats* he actively recommends the suspension of the Hydro Quebec installation of a pumping reserve on Parc des Laurentides, which was created in 1895 to ensure the retention of green spaces for future generations. He

argued that this decision would affect all future parks and a clearer distinction is needed between what is considered ordinary natural territory or a special natural territory ("Journal Des Débats (Hansard) of the Commission Permanente de l'industrie et Du Commerce, Du Tourisme, de La Chasse et de La Pêche - National Assembly of Québec" 1973).

It is interesting to note that 1977 The Parks Act was adopted the same year that *Les Enterprises Boucherville Inc* residential project was planned to start. According to the 1977 Parks Act in Quebec (*Gazette officielle du Québec* 1977) and the politics of the Recreation, Hunting and Fishing Ministry, the parks can be conservational or recreational. The conservation park protects the site for future generations, promotes a deeper relationship with nature, and is chosen by its biophysical characteristics. The recreation park, on the other hand, presupposes a certain modification of the natural habitat to allow recreational activities to occur. Still, these modifications are generally monitored to avoid habitat degradation. Due to the proximity to urban areas, the maritime traffic, the construction of the Jacques Cartier bridge, and the low-altitude prairies, which could serve as an optimal ground for recreational activities, the Boucherville Islands was assigned as a recreational park. The island archipelago covering an area of 814 ha was named *Parc national des Îles-de-Boucherville* and was officially opened to the public on September 12, 1984.

Le promoteur du projet "Un fleuve, un parc" se sent particulièrement à l'aise dans un milieu qu'il connaît comme le fond de sa poche: les îles du Saint-Laurent.
(Photo Jacques Grenier)
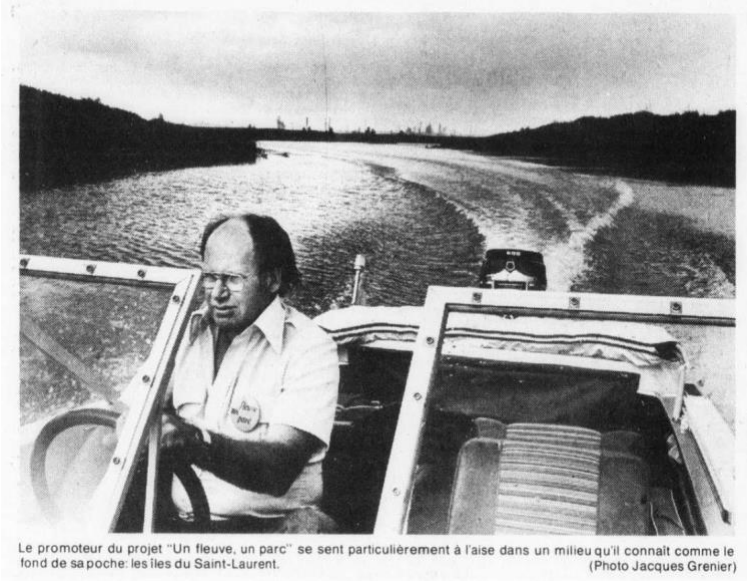
Figure 11. Le Devoir, August 26, 1978, " Tony Le Sauteur. No government has ever endorsed "Un Fleuve, un parc"'" (Translated by author).

The Residents

Archival findings on the history of Îles-de-Boucherville National Park in the province of Quebec point to an article in *La Seigneurie* on 15 December 1982. In the article, several memoirs were presented by hunters, farmers, trappers, and environmentalists to the Quebec Recreation, Hunting and Fishing Ministry over four days of hearings, following the debates over the transformation of the Boucherville archipelago into a national park. One memoir addressed by the City of Boucherville was created by biologists Denis Auger and Jean Provost, calling for a wildlife reserve. Others called for the agricultural preservation of the land or the creation of the park, while maintaining protected areas of wildlife reserve and allowing certain hunting and trapper rights. The reviews were mixed as the narrative surfaced by the image of a recreation park conflicted with the aims of preserving the natural habitat, the usage rights, and the blurred distinctions between "conservation" and "recreation" park (*La Seigneurie* 1982).

With the creation of a park, the regulation of the hunting, fishing and trapping attracted further critique. François Laramée, in an article on November 24, 1982, states that residents have been maintaining and using the land for 300 years, and the island's transformation to into a park exposes the land to further dangers: « Ce qui me semble, dans tout ce projet, le plus déplorable, c'est que, en plus de mettre, vous-même, les îles en danger, vous voulez faire payer le prix de leur conservation à ceux qui, depuis des générations, s'en sont toujours chargés (*La Seigneurie* 1982). »

> « …alors, au bénéfice de qui voulez-vous faire des îles un parc ? Du reste de la population direz-vous, mais qui l'a formellement demandé ? sûrement pas eux. VouS voulez libéraliser un territoire au détriment de ceux qui jusqu'à ce jour l'on conservé intact, sans votre aide. Et, pour ajouter l'insulte, ce sont vos propres aménagements qui font qu'il y a maintenant danger» (*La Seigneurie* 1982).

Reading again the newspaper articles published eleven years after the birth of the *Un fleuve, Un parc*, LeSauteur's earlier work in promoting the rights of the hunters and anglers is heavily contrasted by François Laramée's 1982 newspaper article and his discontent with the fishing and hunting regulations imposed in Boucherville.
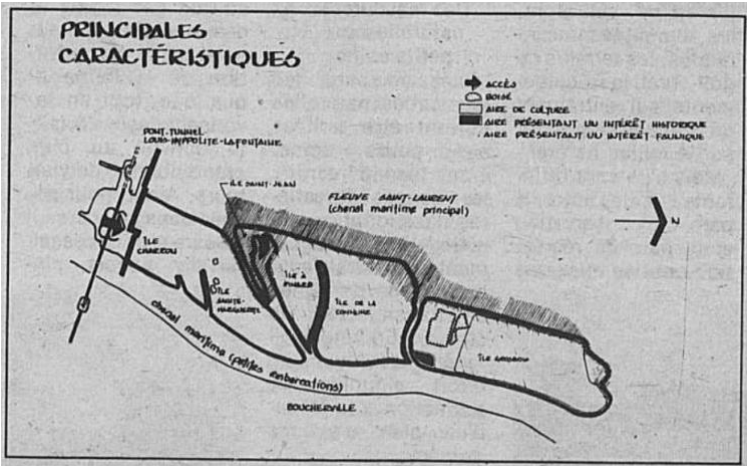
Figure 12. *La Seigneurie*, October 27, 1982, "The Boucherville Archipelago: a park for relaxation and leisure". Translated by author.
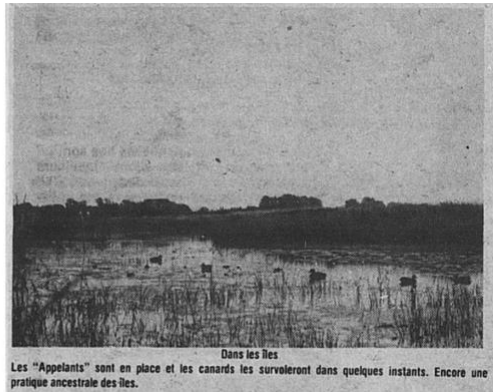
Figure 13. La Seigneurie, December 15, 1982, "A provincial recreational park: an artificial necessity". Translated by author.

The Boucherville islands were valued by researchers as a site of rich wildlife and wetland, full of ecological, hunting and halieutic richness, as an integral part of "territoires représentatifs des régions naturelles du Québec ou des sites naturels à caractère exceptionnel" (*Gazette officielle du Québec* 1977). Even though it met all the conditions that classify it as a conservation site, its primary use was set for recreation purposes: "The Boucherville archipelago alone contains most of the wetlands in this sector;

however, few areas have been set aside for conservation purposes" (Auclair 1995, xi).

The Îles-de-Boucherville park encloses Sainte-Marguerite, Pinard, Saint-Jean, Commune and Grosbois islands. The more fragile areas which have been granted wildlife protected status only entail Île Saint-Jean and the Courant channel. The lack of legal status of the rest of the archipelago exposes the habitats to fragmentation and degradation over time: the ecosystem is thus disturbed due to heavy use and pollution, unable to maintain native wildlife, commercial activities add pressure on the environment, disturbing the resting spots for migratory species.

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La chasse à la sauvagine est une pratique ancestrale dans les îles. Sur la photo, le résultat de "l'ouverture" de la saison 82. 7 canards. De gauche à droite, Jacques Chagnon, Pierre L'Homme et Michel Chagnon, tous de la région.

Figure 14. La Seigneurie, December 15, 1982, "A provincial recreational park: an artificial necessity". Translated by author.

In 2001, the Parks Act was amended, erasing the distinction between 'recreation' and 'conservation' park, with the intention that all Quebec national parks share the same status. This change was made to prioritize the protection of green spaces, conservation, and the value placed on biodiversity. The new definition of what constitutes a park also mentions the human agency in engaging with the place "for educational or cross-country recreation purposes" (*LégisQuébec* 2022). Later amendments to the 1977 Parks act also added full rights of expropriation: "The Minister may acquire by agreement or expropriation any property the Minister considers necessary for the establishment of a park or for making changes in its boundaries" (LégisQuébec 2001).

Conclusion

As we noted in the Boucherville case study, the transformation of the Boucherville park points to a past rooted in ecological activism, mainly as a response to the slow habitat deterioration caused by development work on the archipelago between

Montreal and Sorel. For instance, the government rights of expropriation amended from the 1977 Parks Act, it seems, were initially designed to stop major development work that would have endangered the areas of outstanding biological diversity. The Hydro Quebec pumping reserve mentioned in Journal de Debats, and the failed housing development project initiated by *Les Enterprises Boucherville Inc* are some examples.

Île Sainte-Thérèse preservation plans and transformation into a park is rooted in the same 1971 *Un Fleuve, Un Parc* project. However, the expropriation phenomenon on Île Sainte-Thérèse is misaligned with the original ethos and values of the *Un Fleuve, Un River* project. As opposed to the Boucherville case study, on Île Sainte-Thérèse there are further complexities brought out by the forced expulsion of the residents who have inhabited the land for generations.

Resembling the Boucherville archipelago, Île Sainte-Thérèse contains distinct geological and topographical spaces of mossland, wetland, and woodland, supporting various species. The site also provides a feeding ground for many species of birds: "the gadwalls, green-winged teal, northern shovelers, black terns, swamp sparrows and bobolinks" (Ducks Unlimited Canada, 2021). Historically, as inhabitants co-existed in balance with their natural environment, an interdependent ecosystem was created, triggered by subsistence methods: soil fertility was maintained by animal residue, shoreline erosion was monitored and managed by the locals, the deforestation slowed down through coordinated tree cutting. With plans for the island's transformation into a park, this interdependent system is now in danger of being perturbed. Is the government's vision of wildlife and preservation aligned with a utopic view of the relationship between man and nature? Here, I draw on the English view of the wilderness, as found in the writings of Wordsworth, as he wrote in his *Guides to the lakes*: "The stranger, from the moment he sets his foot on this sand, seems to leave the turmoil and traffic of the world behind him" (Wordsworth 1977). In the history of Île Sainte-Thérèse, the interconnections between land and inhabitants have long been submerged and intertwined, depending on one another: the land is therefore not relying on a closed system, and concepts of wilderness, conservation, and recreation must be reassessed.

The forced dispossession creates a slow sense of rupture as residents witness their gradual removal from the island. This expropriation manifested by a sense of rupture in place-identity

slowly seeping into "bodies, materialities and memories" (Emery 2018) of the residents, is echoed by several scholars working with disadvantaged communities as they highlight the affect that dispossession plays on the human psyche (Rhodes 2012, Walley 2013). Furthermore, as the island is transitioning from a communal living space to a place envisioned for recreation and conservation purposes, the place is experiencing a slow erasure process, dependent upon the site's redevelopment. Here, the concept of erasure is not only extended to the shoreline degradation and habitat loss foreseen by the commercialization of recreation touristic areas but also a loss of identity and belonging that is affecting the current residents on the island.

Island Ruin: temporal entanglements within the archipelago and its archive

John Neufeld

It was late in May when the Montreal Waterways research team finally got the chance to visit Iles Sainte-Thérèse (IST) for the first time. For several months prior to our arrival we had been meeting regularly at the Ethnography Lab to try and piece together the story of this island through historical archives, media sources, and conversations with community members—some who had family lineage on the island dating back to the late 17th century. But on the day we crossed over the St. Lawrence River from the Quai de Bellevue in Varennes to the shores of IST, we still hadn't fully grasped the affects of life on the island. "You have to come to the island to feel its vibration" as one resident put it, "because you are in another time when you land, we are not in 2022" (Translated by author).

Figure 15. Ruins of unidentified structure. Photo by author.

My objective for fieldwork was to locate and observe ruins on the island, mostly remains of the seigneurial system, including a barn, a farmhouse, and the crumbling stone walls of two other unidentified structures. They are relics of early settlement in Quebec, particularly along the shores of the St. Lawrence River, where hunting and agriculture became firmly embedded as the province's socio-economic foundation given a geography that provided access to land and water, which Harris describes as "riparian settlement" (1984); a relationship with shoreline that would eventually become part of a historic, cultural and political patchwork of Quebec heritage and identity . For this reason, the ruins of the seigneurial system stand to be an important piece in the future plans for IST. In September 2021 mayors from the surrounding municipalities gathered to announce plans for developing certain areas of IST into an eco-park, making it an extension of the Communauté Métropolitaine de Montréal's (CMM) Trame Verte et Bleu, a conservation network that supports eco-tourism and recreation throughout the archipelago. The planned eco-park project is greatly inspired by the Park Métropolitain du Domaine-Seigneurial-de-Mascouche, another project in its infancy brought forward by the CMM with two main objectives of making land and water more accessible to citizens and to "protect, enhance, and promote the landscape and heritage" (Varennes, Service de la Direction Générale, February 2022, p. 5). As stated by Caroline Bourgeois, mayor of Rivières-des-Prairies-Pointe-au-Trembles at the press announcement for the eco-park project, "giving back the shoreline to the population is an important issue and a priority" (La Presse, Sept. 7, 2021).

This common narrative used by officials in support of green-blue infrastructure stems from conservation projects of the 1970s and 1980s, including the 'One River-One Park' and Projet Archipel, each with goals of developing the waterways of the archipelago into a more accessible public space (Dagenais 2017). This narrative, however, contradicts what I describe as island ruin that is specific to IST. Since learning about the island's socio-ecological history and observing it as part of the landscape, it could be described as a microcosm of material and temporal ruination (Stoler 2008, 2013; Gordillo 2014). Ideas related to ruin and ruination have provided a useful frame to ethnographically explore ruin not only as material objects imbued with memories and nostalgia of a lost past, but to think more seriously about how the "afterlife" of ruins shape present and future archives

(Benjamin 1968; Stoler 2008, 2013; Dawdy 2010, Gordillo 2014, Stoetzer 2018). Observing the material processes of eviction and erosion that take place on IST and within the archipelago reveal a cycle of ruination on the margins of land, water, and society that continuously compromises rights and accessibility.

While mayors posed for the press around a display board rendering of the eco-park project, members of the Association Communautaire de l'Îles Sainte-Thérèse (ACIST) were preparing for legal proceedings brought forward by the provincial Government and surrounding municipalities that would have residents removed from the island. According to Stoler (2013),

> Large-scale ruin-making takes resources and planning that may involve forced removal of populations and new zones of uninhabitable space, reassigning inhabitable space and dictating how people are supposed to live with them. As such, these ruin-making endeavors are typically state projects, ones that are often strategic, nation building, and politically charged" (p. 21).

For more than a decade, residents of IST have been portrayed by the government and media as "squatters" or "les sens droits" (Journal de Montreal, December 4, 2012), and during that time, those who have come to form the ACIST have worked to clear that image by bringing forward what documentation they have to prove property rights, and by going public with stories of family and their relationship to the island, along with pictures; some dating back 40-80 years. Unable to carry the financial burden of taking on the government, residents were forced to settle out of court, leaving many with nothing more than memories and a few years to vacate the island.

Figure 16. Barn on IST. Photo by author.

The expropriation reveals an unsettling irony since the very shorelines that the government claims will return to the citizens of the Greater Montreal area not only require the removal of island residents, but also because much of the shoreline is being lost to erosion. The Durocher family home, now a summer cottage, was built in 1914 and rests near the southern shores of IST where much of the erosion has taken place largely due to the steady flow of maritime traffic. The red brick barn style home with white framed windows and an updated aluminum roof has a certain vernacular charm that is accented by two outbuildings weathered grey with age, matching three wooden picnic tables placed side-by-side to form one long communal table at the center of the yard. Having traced their heritage dating back to the late seventeenth century, and with legal title to their land, the

Durocher family do not find themselves in the same legal battle as ACIST members facing eviction, but have recently had to deal with their own challenges to save their home from the rapidly eroding shoreline. In 2019, the house was lifted and moved back from the encroaching shoreline, leaving behind the original foundation; now a pile of rubble composed of stone, cement and a few stacked red bricks. The week before our arrival a large elm tree had succumbed to the erosion taking with it a large chunk of the shoreline, leaving behind what was left of its tangled roots gnarled with another elm on the edge of meeting a similar fate. With approximately 1-2 metres of erosion each year (participant testimony) the old foundation of the house will likely wash away in little more than a decade.

In the 1940s up until the 1960s people flocked to IST by the thousands in the summer months to enjoy La Plage Choquette and La Plage Bissonnette, and to play in the waters of the St. Lawrence River. Visitors could rent changing cabins for the day and take in nightly entertainment at the island's own dance hall. To supplement their income, farmers on IST built and rented summer cottages and would sell their goods to vacationers (Société d'Histoire de Varennes, video archive). I had not quite grasped the magnitude of the erosion of IST until I was shown a wooden framed aerial photo taken of the Durocher family home in 1981. In the picture you could see the distance between the shoreline then, and where the house once stood (including the recently fallen tree), the loss of land equivalent to hundreds of square metres washed away in a period of 40 years. Between that, and visually observing the photo and video archives of the riparian landscape that was La Plage Choquete and Bissonnette, it is evident that the level of erosion of IST is of rather epic proportions.

To observe the erosion I awkwardly knelt down on a pile of branches near the edge of the bank waiting for a large cargo ship or tanker to pass. From the shoreline out approximately fifty feet, the water is a grey murky colour due to the disturbed sediments coming from the thick layer of clay that is the island's subsoil. The movement of these giant ships transporting resource and consumer commodities along the narrow channels of the St. Lawrence Seaway is an incredible sight to see, as is the force of their wake. Like clockwork, the large volume of water that the ships displace loudly rushes the island, crashing into its banks,

rolling and swirling down the length of the shoreline before the water retreats, pulling with it fragments of the island.

The movement of these ships was made possible by the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway, an incredible feat of engineering which partly consisted of dredging the bottom of the St. Lawrence River. Much of the earth removed from the river bottom was used for Seaway infrastructure, particularly the canal along the southern shore in order to bypass the Lachine Rapids, cutting off access to the river to the people of Kahnawà:ke (Mohawk word for "place of the rapids") and their cultural and subsistence practices. Some of the small islands within the archipelago were also formed by the extraction of the river bottom, including the connected Ile-aux-Vaches and Ile-aux-Crapauds located near the southeastern tip of IST. The long channel between these islands is where many cottages are located, protected from the wake of the passing ships. While it is yet to be confirmed, since no archive related to the creation of these islands has surfaced, one of the residents informed me that the islands are a product of the St. Lawrence Seaway. It is also the location where municipal sewage overflow infrastructure was created in the 1980s at the tip of Ile-aux-Crapauds. Residents shared memories of swimming in the St. Lawrence in the summer when they were kids and how that abruptly stopped when the sewage overflow became operational in 1986, making the water quality a health risk. We were offered to take a quick boat ride to see and get a better idea of what was being described to us. We couldn't see much of anything except a chain link fence at the edge of the water, with any view of infrastructure blocked by the overgrown vegetation surrounding it. But as we rounded Ile-aux-Crapauds, the smell alone was enough to confirm what residents had been talking about.

Figure 17. Durocher family home. Photo taken by author.

Figure 18. Cedric indicating sites of erosion. Photo taken by author.

The evictions and erosion on IST are not isolated events, rather they are interconnected material processes related to a cycle of ruination that is, in its essence, the on-going and changing face of riparian settlement. Whether it be the seigneurial system, the St. Lawrence Seaway, or the more recent eco-park project, each reveal the social and ecological precarities that are the consequence of the development of the archipelago and its shorelines. It is important to note here that my intention is not to compare the recent eviction of IST residents to what the people of Kahnawá:ke have been subjected to. Rather, it is to draw attention to the abstractions of property rights and documentation as material objects that substantiate claims to land, and how the absence of these objects relate to the precariousness of their lots (Hetherington 2009). In terms of property rights for economically and/ or racially marginalized communities within the archipelago, it would seem that these rights are as stable as the eroding shoreline. These mutual processes of eviction and erosion therefore represent a failure by governments and their affiliated conservation agencies blinded by the glory of political legacies to recognize the violent injustices of removal and occupation more often subjected upon those with ultimately little or no political power to stake a permanent or legally legitimate claim to land and cultural livelihood.

In the very short period reserved to conduct a Montreal Waterways-based research, the residents and IST themselves became part of a living archive. The kindness, generosity, and the openness of residents to the vulnerabilities associated with loss to loss demonstrated in interviews and during visits to the island brought into perspective an amphibious relationship that is part of island ruin which could be further explored ethnographically (Gagné and Rasmussen 2016). Beyond the evictions and erosions there is a host of (re)formations on and around the island that are part of a "constellation of ruination" (Gordillo 2014), revealing social, ecological, and infrastructural entanglements (Stoetzer 2018) with "alternative temporalities" (Dawdy 2010) not often written about, or remembered, since they are overshadowed by grander narratives of heritage and "progress", or by the powers that control that narrative (Foucault 2002 [1969]). For myself, "feeling the vibration" of IST, as one resident suggested, is not about objects of nostalgia from a simpler past. Rather, it is situated within this constellation of ruination and renewal where

contradictions rupture, or disturb, a dominant and anthropocentric historical archive with persisting settler-colonial ideas of property, progress, and pure nature that are observable in real-time on the land, water, or the riparian space between.

Condusion

A couple of recurring questions surfaced in our preparation to visit IST. How do we tell the story of an island? And, what is the method for researching an island as archive? After visiting the island the short answer is, you have to be there, as was suggested by one of the residents, which is also the "raison d'être" of anthropological research. Rather than focusing on the past, ethnography can be used as an "archaeology of the present" in order to bring to the surface that which is hidden from view or absent from a linear archive associated to modernity and progress (Gonzalez-Ruibal 2018). Observing IST ethnographically is a way of challenging this archive by observing how material and ecological relationships are continually changing form and meaning as the "ghosts of industrial ruin" (Edensor 2004) past, present, and future converge on one relatively small island. By using ruin as an object of research, it was possible to identify these changes as part of the histories and landscape of the island, where a cycle of extraction, occupation and erosion are made invisible by national or state narratives of heritage, like that of the seigneurial system in Quebec, and the St. Lawrence Seaway. Provincial and municipal governments "giving back the shoreline" to the citizens of the archipelago in the form of an eco-park, may be a step to returning what has been lost, but as one resident aptly stated, "it was never theirs to give," raising an important question still worth exploring about reconciliation and repair as part of an archeological present within the archipelago and its plans for the future.

When Nature Conservation Means Nature Without People

Maya Lamothe-Katrapani

On September 7, 2021, the Metropolitan Community of Montreal and the municipalities of Repentigny, Varennes and Rivière-des-Prairies–Pointe-aux-Trembles, announced the development of a master plan for the creation of an ecotourism park on Île Sainte-Thérèse (IST). A park project had first been initiated in the 1980s by the Quebec Ministry of the Environment but had come to naught after the elaboration of a bike path. In recent years, Montreal and its surrounding municipalities have worked to re-envision a protected park area that would answer the city's recreational and ecological needs (CMM, 2021). Similar to previous proposals, the new plan aims to transform the lands of the island into a public and accessible park that will facilitate access to the river and the practice of nautical activities, while enhancing the biodiversity and the richness of the heritage of Greater Montreal (ibid). It is unclear for the moment if the park will receive federal, provincial, or municipal status, nor when the project will be erected and how this park will be rendered accessible. Yet, it has officially been announced this summer that residents, although long called by governments and municipalities "guardian angels of the island", have seven years to leave their family cottages. Although the island's association, ACIST (Association de la communauté de l'Île Ste-Thérèse), clearly states that the presence of residents on the island will support the conservation aims of the park, according to authorities, their occupation is a nuisance and their lack of official land titles legitimizes their eviction.

The city of Varennes has already published conceptual design plans for the park, including massive belvederes and boardwalks, all operating through a sanitized and stabilized nature (see figures 18-19). The 3D visualizations show seemingly inclusive and sustainable architecture: tall trees canopy the island; a man pushes another in a wheelchair on a smooth wooden deck; another looks at a flock of ducks through binoculars; others run. Women are present, yet inactive: one sits to contemplate the river, another rests on a rock, hands and legs crossed. A few kayaks are lying around, and what looks like a welcome office is towering

above. The erosion issue has ceased, phragmites are no longer invading the island and local residents have vanished along with the material traces of their activities. The territory has a new shape and name: *Parc Éco-touristique de l'Île Sainte-Thérèse*. It illustrates perfectly how we are encouraged to interact with parts of the world we call nature and how the commercial and tourism development of wilderness has become a just and moral way of promoting our environments (West et al. 2006).

Cultural values of re-creation, management and conservation

Many conservation efforts around the world are seeking facts that complement their mission statement and "crisis narrative" (Fairhead & Leach, 1996 as cited in Harmon & Putney 2003:102). Imposing new logics on territories for the legitimation of protected areas, they bring forth cultural values that conform with their instrumental model while disregarding more complex relationships (human/nature/animal) (ibid). In the case of IST, the crisis can be understood as an island weakened by the degradation of natural habitats and the erosion of the banks which have already caused it to lose more than a hundred meters. However, what seems even more disastrous when reading reports on the proposed plan, is that inhabitants of the Metropolitan region of Montreal are "affected by a significant lack of connection to nature" (SNAP, 2021, translated from French). The emphasis is put on the great *potential* the island has for residents of Montreal.

Figure 19. Plans d'aménagement du futur parc. Ville de Varennes, 2021.

Prized for this promise of great beauty and leisure, the island must be enjoyed by city dwellers. For the Mayor of Varennes, Martin Damphousse, the park will allow the population to "reclaim this exceptional environment" (Ville de Varennes, 2021, translated from French). For Mayor of Rivière-des-Prairies-Pointe-aux-Trembles, Caroline Bourgeois, it is the sentimental attachment to the island by the residents of the East of Montreal that motivates its creation: "In Pointe-aux-Trembles, we see it every time we look at the river, it's right there… Finally preserving it and turning it into a place of leisure is a beautiful project" (ibid).

According to park planners and city officials, the island's biodiversity and rare historical heritage makes it a perfect place to hold a nature park for *recreational* tourism. Although the term is

often associated with leisure, it is more than play that motivates the making of parks. We can understand recreational values as those that restore, refresh and create anew through stimulation of the mind, body and soul (Harmon & Putney, 2003). Understanding re-creation as set within creation, parks restore human life by recreating who and what we are (ibid). Applying Harmon's theory, the park will "put people in their place" (ibid, 105), out of culture and into a nature re-created for their wellness. Away from the labor of town, the city dwellers going to IST will feel as though they are elsewhere, but on a deeper level, they will feel at home, going "down to it all" which will contribute to feelings of continuity and identity (ibid,106). Located within an embodied presence, the Park will give us nature with a proper name. We will be able to identify its shape on a map and associate personal experiences to it.

From another angle, we can question how protected areas impose the European nature/culture dichotomy on places where this distinction did not previously exist (West et al. 2006). Whereas residents of the island have organized themselves in symbiosis with nature, merging their cultural activities like hunting, fishing and foraging with the natural environment that they have cared for for centuries, the proposed protected park might actually separate people from their surroundings. As seen on the design plans, we will be encouraged to overlook nature by navigating the space through material infrastructures like belvederes, docks and boardwalks.

Figure 20. On Île Sainte-Thérèse, nature does its thing. Photo taken by author.

Figure 21. On Île Sainte-Thérèse, nature does its thing. Photo taken by author.

Figure 22. Offering contact with "pure nature", wetlands, which account for 131 ha of the surface area of Île Sainte-Thérèse (Ducks Unlimited, 2021) are increasingly attractive to developers, ecologists, government officials and tourists (Garutti, 2019). Photo taken by author.

Figure 23. Hunting cabin. Photo taken by author.

When Kouchibouguac National Park was erected in New-Brunswick in the 1970s after evicting over 1,200 residents (Rudin, 2016), people feared that its lack of majestic scenery would not attract tourists, but would turn the place into "a private playground preserve of the people of nearby cities such as Moncton" (77). This seems to be the goal of the prospective *Parc écotouristique de l'île Ste-Thérèse*, which does not advertise grandiose landscapes that offer spectacular natural values like it is the case in other parks and protected areas throughout the province. Yet, we can speculate that the park will have nationalist, ecological and patrimonial significance as it is a space claimed by the city of Montreal and its surrounding municipalities in the name of nature protection and leisure. It will be first a way of appropriating and delimiting space, then an icon for cultural values of management and conservation. The project is said to fall into the CMM's blue and green alley network initiative (*Trame verte et bleue*) which aims to showcase the natural environments of Greater Montreal and the built heritage that constitutes its identity. Therefore, it is clear that the emphasis will be put on values of progress, and on the East of Montreal's green turn and entrance in the circuit of the tourism economy, all instrumental reasons to make the city more attractive.

Eco-tourism or eco-gentrification?

Île Ste-Thérèse has been produced over time by the activities of the residents and by their actions to protect and conserve it (ACIST, September 2021). Yet, many issues are out of their control which is why they have requested help to "restore wetlands; identify and eliminate invasive species; increase the canopy by planting several trees; showcase archaeological and historical ruins; deal with the discharge of wastewater at the end Île aux Vaches; and control the overpopulation of animals (beavers, geese, deer)" all concerns that they also believe could be solved by the creation of an ecotourism park (ibid, translated from French). Residents care deeply about sharing their knowledge about the ecosystem of IST and finally making the place truly accessible to the public. This aligns with the definition of ecotourism coined by Héctor Ceballos-Lascuràin in 1983 and

reformulated by many conservationists. Ecotourism should combine conservation with the empowerment of local communities "with the result that they can also acquire the benefits directly from the tourism activities" (Akbar & al, 2019) or in Woods's words, "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" (Wood, n.d).

Glossing over the complex ecological reality of the island and its connection to the inhabitants, the announced park project seems more aligned with ecogentrification: "the implementation of an environmental planning agenda that leads to the displacement of a more vulnerable population while adopting an environmental ethic" (Dooling, 2009). Rather than questioning how the major revitalization of the eastern part of the island of Montreal announced by the Government of Quebec in the last year may affect the environment of the East of Montreal (extension of the blue line, construction of the REM de l'Est, revitalization (and densification) of Vieux-Pointe-aux-Trembles and the mushrooming of housing complexes), it seems easier to come up with an ecofriendly project on "untouched" land and start anew. This project is not far from other examples of gentrification in the city of Montreal where local residents are pushed further away from the city center (in this case, they do not seem to be far enough), not because they are obstacles in the way of green living (in fact they have proven to live quite sustainable lifestyles with no waste and self-sufficiency methods), but because the city wishes to instead attract economically sustainable populations, those that give cities competitive advantage on an international scale (Winter, 2018:16). Changing the social geography and prestige of the island to attract a middle class of local tourists, here the park planners are implying that eco-living is more aligned with going over to the island on the weekend and participating in the marketing of wilderness, than the artisanal practices of residents. This points to how sustainable living in the city is increasingly becoming a luxury.

A lot of discussions arise on the importance of ecotourism (or tourism based on nature conservation) in parks, as management and control are particularly important in a place with a lack of clear boundaries. Leslie (1996) writes, "Parks are not islands and therefore susceptible to outside influences" (52). Yet, what happens when parks are islands, like in IST? This rare particularity appears to motivate the project. The municipalities

seem to think that IST is a perfect place for a nature park because of its insularity. The strict delimitation of water and the fact that infrastructures will be built from scratch allows the cities to construct a visual identity that fully resonates with their original goal and makes it easier to displace people.

Concluding thoughts

This park is another example of how smart and green cities are turning us into "users" of the city (Saskia Sassen, 2013). Not residents, not locals, nor cocreators, but users of the technologies and infrastructures of urban life. And as Edgar Morin writes while studying changes in the Bigouden region of Brittany, technology does not only mean "equipment and modernization but permanent transformation" (Morin, 1967: 250). In the case of IST, we are witnessing the transformation of the personality of the island and of its artisanal and individual modes of production which are the result of centuries of physical, political and cultural occupation.

North of the island, a little white house with an ancestral wooden structure takes us back to the 19th century. Fannie Martin, resident and spokesperson of ACIST, imagined this important trace of the island's heritage to be turned into a welcome office with perhaps a little store and a room that would serve as a museum for the many archeological artifacts. She is afraid that, planning without the people who know the environment, history and priorities of IST, the park will miss out on important landmarks. "This place could make an exceptional reception office for the park, but the house should be protected now, otherwise it risks being unrecoverable soon" (Fannie Martin, 2022, translated from French).

As Harmon & Putney (2003) write, landscapes have history and our attachment to place is a very strong motivation force in human society. With this piece, I render homage to the unique landscape of IST and to the connectedness that residents have with it, an emotional response which should be understood by authorities as the essential part of any management decision.

Animal Life on Île Sainte-Thérèse

Hanine El Mir

Figure 24. Cartouche, the dog. Photo taken by author.

This is the story of a land, as told by the land itself and the living elements on it. Particularly Cartouche, a hunting dog who spends a good chunk of the year on Île Sainte-Thérèse. This photo-essay asks: "what will happen to the animals on IST?" and explores, from the eyes of the hunting dog on the island who the residents share IST with.

Allow me to present myself, dear ethnographers. As a hunting dog named after the ammunition used in rifles, I take my job in aiding my owner who brought me to the island, one of the residents of IST, very seriously. It is quite common for everyone on the island to hunt, and that is no different for my owner. Much like other members of her family, my owner received her first hunting permit as a birthday gift from her father as soon as she turned 12. She is currently raising her three daughters to follow in her footsteps and teaching them how to hunt. She is known by her neighbours as the hunting and animal life expert of the island, along with my canine expertise of course.

Figure 25. Cartouche, the dog. Photo taken by author.

Figure 26. garter snake. Photo taken by author.

While my family and I spend quite a big chunk of our time hunting, amassing a diet made up of 60-70% of wild meat, we do not ever just hunt for fun or because it is our biggest passion: it is an economical alternative to the rising costs of sustenance due to shortages and inflation all over the province. "There is no way I am killing an animal if not to eat it and feed my family," my owner told one of the ethnographers. She also mentioned that in the past, she would set beaver traps to sell the pelts and eat the meat, but those proved to require more effort than the meat they yielded and the pelts were no longer as in demand now that there are mass produced alternatives in the fashion industry. The monetary return was becoming low and the traps needed to be checked and maintained every two weeks, but they also needed to be placed in strategic positions because they have less of a range than shooting with a rifle: "Beavers move less than 50 metres to find food, requiring extra effort to hunt," she explained.

In addition to helping with hunting, I also really like to take some time to rest, frolicking in the grass, and enjoy playing with other animals on the island whether they're the small snails and snakes I find in the grass or bigger ones like our neighbours' cats, who were also brought to the island as pets like me! We like to catch wood mice and other small rodents and reptiles together, like this grass snake which I brought home with me from the field, to play with. The snake is alive and well; just like my family members, I do not kill the animals I brings home from the field unless it is to eat them.

You must have also seen or at least heard the yellow birds chirp. I hear them all the time when I'm out in the field. They are present on the island almost year-long but they don't really make for good food, so I guess they are my friends.

Speaking of food, you probably heard that there was a turkey hunting event happening until noon close by. You won't see any of these birds erring close to our walking trail today, although trust me I've seen plenty of them on my hunting trips with my owner and her family. That could be explained by the close-by sounds of rifles; the rifle shots we had been hearing were not the actual hunters' shots, but fake shots to scare geese off the farmland. Another animal that was heard but not seen was what we call "loucoy" a combination of "loup" (wolf) and "coyote." They are often found dead because some people are scared of them. Not

me, though! As a hunting dog, nothing scares me. Besides, they are like a "big dog with a very thin nose."

Figure 27. Yellow Warbler. Photo taken by author.

And while we're on the topic of bigger animals, deer really love the apple trees on Île Sainte-Thérèse. You can see one of them in full bloom in this photo. This right here is a great spot for deer hunting: deers often pass by this part of the island to owner and her friends say that there is an overpopulation of deer that weren't as numerous when their families first moved in. It was no surprise that right next to the tree, you can see fresh deer tracks in the mud.

Figure 28.: Deer tracks. Photo taken by author.

Figure 29. Apple tree. Photo taken by author.

Of course, I, Cartouche, am not alone in bringing new animals into the island's ecosystem. One of the residents brought back with her a couple of chickens.

In summary, when you come to Île Sainte-Thérèse, you can find wolves, coyotes, deers, ducks, seagulls, turkeys, yellow birds, vipers, small grass snakes mostly of the non-venomous type, skunks, beavers and muskrats, but that is not all. You can't find any rabbits or hare or even the very abundant squirrels I hear are everywhere in Montreal. The nature of the animals found on IST depends on other living creatures such as other animals already there (like me, Cartouche!) and human activity. The island now witnesses pet dogs, pet cats, and farm animals such as chicken who were brought in by the residents. Other animals, particularly those with migratory patterns, have chosen IST as their homes: the very famous Canadian geese, a symbol of the country, "have started to become permanent residents of the island," informed us several residents as well as one of our guides. Older residents remember a time when this bird would pass by, in smaller numbers before making IST its home. Turkeys are another example given by our hunting expert resident which are now very numerous but weren't there initially.

Figure 30. The chickens. Photo taken by Maya Lamothe-Katrapani.

Here you can see a family of geese composed of two adult parents and three children swimming between them.

Figure 31. Canadian goose. Photo taken by author.

A love letter to the poplar tree

Amrita Gurung

Figure 32. The poplar tree. Photo by author.

A eulogy

I will think of you as the murmurs of my first Montreal snowfall that I found myself enjoying, walking to Marc Favreau Library near my apartment. I will remember you with each sip of hibiscus tea I take with Miriam who planted you 19 years ago in her garden, to find you remind her of the song of the waves of the Mediterranean Sea and the gentle swaying of pine trees. And I will also think of you whenever I find myself longing for Nepali monsoon when the Montreal summer becomes a bit oppressive.

Figure 33. Erosion. Photo taken by author.

How to tell a story of an island?

Following the September 2021 provincial government's announcement of the project to make Île Sainte-Thérèse (hereafter, IST) an ecotourism park, the island residents, including members of Association Communautaire de l'Île Sainte-Thérèse (ACIST), protested against the decision to evict its people. In light of this, the Montreal Waterways Research team decided to pursue it as a research inquiry to learn more about how the decision was affecting the island residents. Going forward, we often found ourselves discussing over the ethical dilemmas of telling a story of this island. However, it became more and more clear with time that even though the stories we wanted to tell were varied, they were rather speaking collectively to our broader overarching question of *how might we (best) tell the story of an island?*

Privileging knowledge making as a socio-material process

and practice (Allen and Marshall 2019), we all chose specific objects to make inquiries into IST or in my case delta life that I discuss about in the following section. My choice of an object was boats in that I expected to explore how maritime traffic affects the IST and its shoreline. As the only means of transportation on the island, they are a means of mobility and hydrosocial life. Additionally, it also resonated with my own research interest in mobility. Inspired by extant literature on delta and its relational focus on human and non-human entanglements, I aim to look at exploring movement through boat/s and further experiment with the idea of flow and stagnation as metaphors of lives on the island while being attentive to 'fragile predicament' that forms a deltaic constellation.

In this piece, I will situate IST and its various environmental, social, and relational predicaments in the wider literature on the delta. In doing so, I will lay out the different ways in which the delta has been theorized by various scholars and how it shapes and gets shaped by people who inhabit it. I will also go on to highlight the ways in which delta encompasses both flow and stagnation as part of people's everyday lives calling for attention to carry out delta anthropology. After this, I will more specifically draw into my encounter with a dead poplar tree on the shoreline in IST that had fallen down in a storm a week prior to our first visit. Furthermore, I will talk about a live tree at Park Jarry and the impact it had on me during my initial months in Montreal last year's winter. In drawing the affective encounters of the dead poplar tree (IST) and alive tree (Parc Jarry), I will elucidate how we cannot possibly disentangle ourselves from human and non-human entanglements, among which some affect us more than others.

Deltaic cosmology

Despite different perspectives on the relationship between land and water, all scholars view social relations as the core of their analysis (Morita 2016, Camargo 2021, Krause 2017). Not only do they point out the binary tension of categorical landscapes (wet versus dry), but they also make a broad appeal to include 'fragile predicaments' to fully understand the dynamics of the delta environment. In its most basic form, a delta is a land that emerged from the water, and as such, it is an ambiguous space that can be

conceived either as an extension of the sea or as an area that can be reclaimed (Camargo 2021; Morita 2016; Camargo 2022). As such, Camargo highlights that flow and stagnation are integral to social relations, delta transformation, and human and non-human relationships that constitute the dynamic delta life. While flow is defined as 'assemblages of things and processes in which water participates as a milieu, and as an engine of motion, friction, and, ultimately, stagnation', stagnation is understood as a 'manifestation of the temporalities and multiple materialities that shape water flows' (Camargo 2021, p. 88).

Flow and stagnation animate life in the delta. While the flow of water makes possibilities for the mobility of various elements, organisms, and humans, Camargo (2022) claims that stagnation is equally important, if not more, in that 'water shapes everyday life and mediates the spatialization of social relationships' (pg. 84). Stagnation, he argues, is fundamental to the transformation of deltaic cosmology. He also examines how stagnation has shaped and is shaped by one in twelve people who live in deltas today. Stagnation facilitates encounters of change and stability, creating differential material conditions for socio-political conflict and instability that not only have bearing in delta formation but its overall cosmology. Water flows become stagnant when they encounter other elements such as 'weather, gravity, and society'. To this end, flow and stagnation also make delta space, in Morita's (2016) words, 'amphibious space' which calls into looking at deeper entanglements and politics of infrastructuring the land and water.

Water by itself is a self-contained element that interacts with multiple forces such as gravity and pressure and by 'resistive forces' such as riverbeds and banks (Camargo 2021). Morita's claims that delta is performed at the juncture of terrestrial and aquatic modes of infrastructuring which inevitably speaks to an 'ontological politics' which is possibilities of 'performing multiple realities' (Mol 1999 in Morita 2016). His study of the 2011 flooding in Thailand's Chao Phraya sheds light on the 'delta' as a highly ambiguous space between water and land where the interests of different groups intersected in either making water more aquatic or land more terrestrial that ultimately also had a bearing on 'realities of flooding'. Furthermore, he describes how by performing deltas through land and water infrastructures, there is now an emerging coexistence between land and water infrastructures that have implications for some lives over others.

This is also implicated in the land–water relationship, for instance, there was a marked shift in Thailand's transport network from canal-centered to road-centered (Morita 2016).

Water is unruly. Krause (2017) in response to these multiple performed realities that implicitly or explicitly affect the delta inhabitants, stresses the need to do 'amphibious anthropology" that takes social and hydrological relationships to waterflow into account, not just as a landscape shaper, but also as an everyday aspect of life. A study of amphibious anthropology thus examines social and cultural life in relation to the muddy ambivalences of delta environments that vary between not quite firm land and not quite open water, or sometimes one or sometimes the other, with water periodically abundant and continually scarce (p.403). In that, he asks, how can we think reflexively about social relations that are mediated by social and hydrological relations. What I find most appealing is his characterization of delta life as a 'fragile predicament' (Krause 2017) that people who live in it deal with, negotiate, circumvent and live as embodiment of realities of everyday life. Put this way, fragile predicament entails living with multiple forms of precarity which is governed in performing delta in the continuous interplay of land and water as a result of flooding, draining, drying and irrigating, sinking, silting, sedimentation, channeling, erosion and reclamation' (p. 403). The complex interplay of land and water then serves to break the binary, static categorical notions of dry and wet and instead motivates us to look at the distance between land and water in a continuum where possibilities abound to reflexively and creatively deal with various material processes that are ever-changing and shifting and converging with other political and economic issues through which delta world comes into being. He contends focusing on hydrosocial relations will not only help understand delta's 'volatile rhythms as occasional deviations from a constant status quo, but as everyday processes' (p. 407).

The Durocher Family Home

Our two field trips to IST took us to the oldest residents of the Durocher family property on the southern part of the island overlooking the church and teeming houses across the Saint Lawrence River in Varennes. Now a summer house, Durochers are the founding residents of IST with their house first built in

1914 and for this very reason their house looked more like a permanent structure compared to others. On the right side of the house was a vegetable garden that required watering, indicating their reliance on rainwater for everything on the island except for drinking water. On the left side of the house was a one-room wooden farmhouse that served as a storage for agricultural tools. When I followed one of the Durocher family members on a tour of the property, we came across a spot where their house once stood. It quickly became clear that erosion of shoreline due to maritime traffic was increasingly becoming a threat for the islanders as Durochers alone had already lost 60 feet of the land in less than 20 years to erosion.

Hanging outside on the wall of their farmhouse was a boat ring that read 'KEIFO MARU TOKYO' and the family told us that the grandfather had found the ring on the shore and chose to hang it there as a showpiece. Later when we visited other properties, I noticed in one of the abandoned houses, a boat ring was cleverly used to support a drainage pipe that was in a precarious sitting amidst the overgrown grass. In retrospect, the use of the boat ring was a metaphor for life on IST and its residents' entanglements and interaction with sociomateriality, and most notably their reliance on the river— of people of the dynamic delta.

The Poplar Tree

In lieu of the government's decision to turn IST into an ecotourism park, I spent the most time on the riverbank gleaning through the waves that rolled and crashed on the elevated landmass that separated the river from the Durochers. It turned out that soil erosion which is an everyday disaster for the Durochers and other inhabitants of the island, as they have seen how boats both big and small including the humongous cargo boats seemed to pass every less than an hour, had not only taken their portion of the ancestral property but had also affected them in many ways and their everyday social lives. For instance, Durochers had to move their main house from its original position to at least 50 paces deeper into their property so as to

avoid getting swept up by erosion that is slow but dangerous. We were also told that in less than 20 years they lost so much of their land due to erosion of the shoreline that they moved their dock maybe almost 10 meters from where it once used to be. Currently, their property looks and feels as if it is on an actual cliff demarcating the boundary between land and water that in some ways also relates to the lives of inhabitants who will be displaced from the island in seven years.

Figure 34. Life preserver rings. Photo taken by author.

Figure 35. Life preserver rings. Photo taken by author.

As a cliff stood between the land and water, the shoreline was not aligned with my expectation. I was hoping to tell a story about sand, erosion, wood, and a beer can even but, to my awe, there was a giant poplar tree that had fallen a week prior to our visit, to a complementary force of thunder and erosion. It was the first time in my life that I saw a giant poplar tree uprooted and lying on the shoreline. More than 100 years old, this was an old giant tree, its trunk enormous, its branches still very intact, its leaves sparkling in the warmth of the gentle breeze of this sultry afternoon. We were later informed that one of the eldest members of Durochers had planted it. Sadly, the images I have are from an angle that grossly understates its size.

The sheer beauty of this scene initially mesmerized me, but it didn't take me long to register that it was an obscene and heartbreaking scene. I felt sad for a moment. My slightly dehydrated body and parched memories took me back to myschool days in Nepal and where we were taught that trees prevent disasters such as soil erosion and landslides. And yet I was in front of a dead tree which had its life taken away by the storm but soil erosion mostly. I was standing in front of a 100-year-old tree that was slowly dying although the big cluster of entangled roots was still intact. It must have landed with a loud thud when it fell down. Unlike the earthquake that hit my country in 2015, which was unprecedented in its effects on humans and non-humans, soil erosion was a slow disaster that killed little by little which was evident in the dying of this particular poplar tree.

'I turn to nature as a sun-loving plant turns to the sun'

As I dedicate this piece to the fallen poplar tree which we encountered on the shoreline in IST due to soil erosion caused by the consistent maritime traffic seaway, I also acknowledge my connection with the live tree in Jarry Park. In that, I had found solace in the latter in the midst of Montreal's winter last year when I had just recovered from COVID as I took the walk in Park Jarry which is about a 30-minute walk from my place. Having failed to find a connection with humans (Langwick 2018), I turned to 'nature as a sun-loving plant turns to the sun' (Haraway 1994, 59) as I hugged one of the young trees i.e., yet to become a full-fledged tree. I felt connected and secure and I felt a huge relief in that embrace. It was the most secure connection that I had felt that helped me through my first winter here in Montreal.

However, it took me a long time to put into perspective the 'senses of connection' (Craig 2020; 2015) and my felt attachment with the living tree to be a 'way through love' (Floyd 2012). As a love language, it encapsulates an embodied quality of care and concern in forms of human and non-human entanglements as we find ourselves encountering while mediating different life complexities that shape and transform present and most importantly our future experiences of being in the world. I came to Montreal a little over a year ago. I am a female middle-class indigenous person from Nepal and simultaneously an international student, a 'very recent immigrant', a 'visible minority' and an allophone in Canada. As a new student migrant to Montreal, my trajectory in the Montreal Waterways project has been fruitful in that it has not only helped me know more about the waterways but have also enabled me to be sensitive and take into account various human and non-human encounters including social/relational geographies from a student mobility perspective. Hence, I find it appropriate to call this piece a love letter to the poplar in the IST while I acknowledge the presence of the living one in Jarry Park. I dedicate this to the dying poplar not only because it helped me contextualize my felt attachment with the former but it also helped me contextualize my life circumstances amidst COVID curfews through the frigid Montreal winter in 2021. In knowing Montreal's waterways, I have known myself a bit more.

I will sorely miss the dying poplar tree each time I picnic on the banks of Parc La Rapide where passionate people gathered to talk about how we can rethink Montreal waterways during winter. And, when I take *une petite pause* at Lachine canal to wrap up my day of marking papers. I will also think of the tree as a ray of hope lived by a turtle by the remnant of the ghost river– Petite Riviere Saint-Pierre that is long-buried and deeply lost in the underground of Montreal i.e. 'city of water' (Dagenais 2017) whose stories we hear in fragments of historical, social, political power dynamics. And, in a few but important reminders of the 'ontological politics' of modern psyches projected in infrastructuring projects like that of turning IST into an ecotourism park. Also, in ceaseless attempts to transform the delta environment in Morita's words 'either more terrestrial or more aquatic' (Morita 2016, 118). As a parting shot, between dying and waiting *que la nature fasse son oeuvre* [for nature to do its thing], I choose to marvel the poplar tree as a 'pulsating temporality of

hydrosocial life' (Krause 2017, 404) at once in flow and stagnation, as relational embeddedness of the island's inhabitants including that of mine with humans and non-humans species and entities in the swaying of its thousand lemony-zesty leaves shimmering in the glistening light of the afternoon sun against the deep blue depths of Saint Lawrence River, where big and small boats pass by every half an hour or so.

Figure 36. A ship passes the tree. Photo taken by author.

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