Vivons nos quartiers
Phase 1

Executive Summary

Gabrielle Désilets*and Anna Goudet **

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*Gabrielle Désilets, Postdoctoral fellow at Concordia University

** Anna Goudet, Ph.D. candidate in Urban Studies, INRS-UCS

Executive Summary

This report presents the strategies used in the *Vivons nos quartiers* project to promote the resilience of stakeholders and organizations, that is their capacity to maintain and improve their services and their well-being in the face of the challenges raised by immigration at the neighbourhood level in Montreal. Mobilizing the indicators for measuring a "welcoming community" (Esses et al. 2010), our observations were concentrated on the indicators relating to: 1) a positive attitude towards immigrants, cultural diversity and the presence of newcomers in the community, 2) the presence of organizations serving the newcomers and able to effectively meet their needs, 3) the promotion of social capital, 4) the connections between the main actors in the neighbourhood, and 5) the adjustment of the municipalities and their services to the presence and needs of newcomers. We were particularly concerned with the idea of collective effort and responsibility of the welcoming environment which establishes organizations and facilitates contacts and dialogue among the stakeholders with the goal of creating and maintaining this welcoming place.

In recent years, Montreal has had to welcome new categories of immigrants with new profiles. The increase in the number of newcomers has brought about changes in services, including the addition of new resources and the hiring of new employees. This has given rise to support and mentoring challenges, since the stakeholders feel that they are poorly informed and equipped for meeting the needs of this new clientele. The main lack of knowledge observed has to do with immigration status and the rights of immigrants. This lack of knowledge can lead to confusion about access to available services and the administrative steps to be followed. By facilitating interaction between actors at the neighbourhood level, stakeholders become better informed about the resources available in their neighbourhood. This mobilization promotes mentoring and referrals which can be done more easily for the benefit of stakeholders, but especially the migrants themselves.

The increase in the number of irregular arrivals in 2017, part of migration movements in other parts of the world, created a feeling of crisis in Quebec, strongly fomented by politicians and the media. This notion of crisis certainly had a negative effect on the perceptions of the extent of the phenomenon.

Nevertheless, even if it is not true in terms of numbers, the appearance of new realities can produce a feeling of crisis among stakeholders. This is particularly the case when it involves families with young children, mental health issues or specific cases which can be impressive and make stakeholders feel helpless and overwhelmed.

At the same time, the crisis atmosphere triggered the mobilization and deployment of new resources, both material and human. The collaborative and creative efforts to find solutions and overcome barriers to being a welcoming community were observed in the course of our project. The cooperation between various sectors (governmental but also field organizations and academic actors) also promotes the exchange of information and of best practices in real time. The meetings of different committees like GARD#qa, and a cross-sectoral committee which has brought together every six to eight weeks since the spring of 2017 all the key Montreal actors as well as the different levels of government involved in the reception of asylum-seekers have allowed the stakeholders to develop personal connections which facilitate everyone's work. The spontaneous creation of various partnerships and common activities between community organizations at the neighbourhood level also demonstrates the resilience and the level of welcoming of the neighbourhoods. Several difficulties persist, especially in communication and referrals between organizations, in the lack of human, material and language resources and intercultural and psychosocial intervention skills of stakeholders. These realities can have harmful consequences for newcomers and for their experience living with the rest of the population. This work nevertheless allowed us to identify the practices which promote the resilience of institutional and community actors in the face of the issues related to immigration and also to identify the practices which promote, or hinder, the welcoming of refugees and immigrants at the level of Montreal neighbourhoods.

Phase 2 (2018-2019) of the research project will allow us to seek out the perceptions of residents and immigrants on the notion of welcoming in the neighbourhoods participating in the *Vivons nos quartiers* project in order to complete the picture given here with the experience of the stakeholders. We will document public and citizen initiatives by the VNQ project and question the key actors on their perception of the welcome, of the crisis and of the changes in their work in recent years. We also want to leverage the concept of hospitality (Le Blanc and Brugère 2017) in our analysis in order to go beyond the structural

identifiers of reception and study the transition between the reception and the settlement of immigrants in a sustainable perspective of belonging.

By identifying the frictions (Belkhodja 2009) which operate within and between the dimensions of the welcoming community, it becomes possible to put in place living and settlement environments necessary for immigrants to thrive. If at the local government level orientations are deployed to achieve welcoming communities for immigrants at the level of their daily life, we must ascertain whether these mechanisms actually contribute to a better quality of life for individuals. Moreover, certain local initiatives for the improvement of inclusion practices and hence the reception of immigrants and refugees do not receive the support, especially the funding, which is needed for them to be sustainable. In the context of frequent political change at different levels of government, community organizations and their stakeholders must demonstrate continuity in services and cope with multiple constraints.