How do neighborhood spaces influence the resilience of newcomer families? A comparative study of three neighborhoods in Ottawa-Gatineau

LUISA VERONIS

GEOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

Acknowledgements

Our research participants

Our community partners
- The City of Gatineau, APO, SITO
- The City of Ottawa, OLIP, CESOC

Our research team
- **Lily Xia, Lina El Bakir, Rachel Walker, Brian Ray, Anyck Dauphin, Idris Alghazi, Sabrina Laarousi and Cloé Maisonneuve**

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

Research Objectives

1. Examine neighbourhood factors that shape migrant resilience
   - How the **spatial and social environment** at the neighbourhood scale influences settlement and integration experiences

2. Understand the characteristics that make neighbourhoods "resilient"

3. Identify structures and actors of resilience at multiple scales

Mont Bleu, Gatineau

Ledbury-Heron Gate, Ottawa

Overbrook-Cummings, Ottawa

Methodology

Collaborative approach

- Community and government partners
- **Gatineau**: The City of Gatineau, APO, SITO
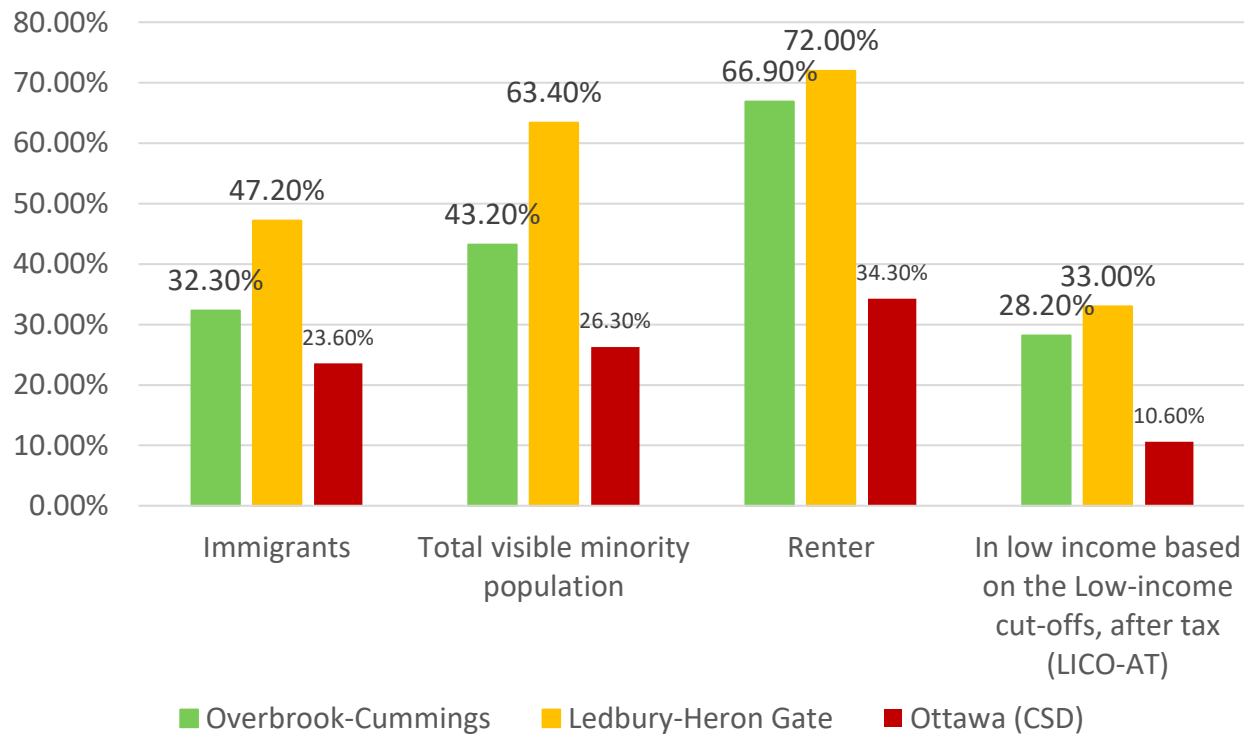- **Ottawa**: The City of Ottawa, OLIP, CESOC

Comparative study

- Ottawa-Gatineau
- 3 neighbourhoods (2 in Ottawa, 1 in Gatineau)
- Immigrants with English/French as their first official language spoken; the uneven geography of bilingualism in the Ottawa-Gatineau region

Case Study:
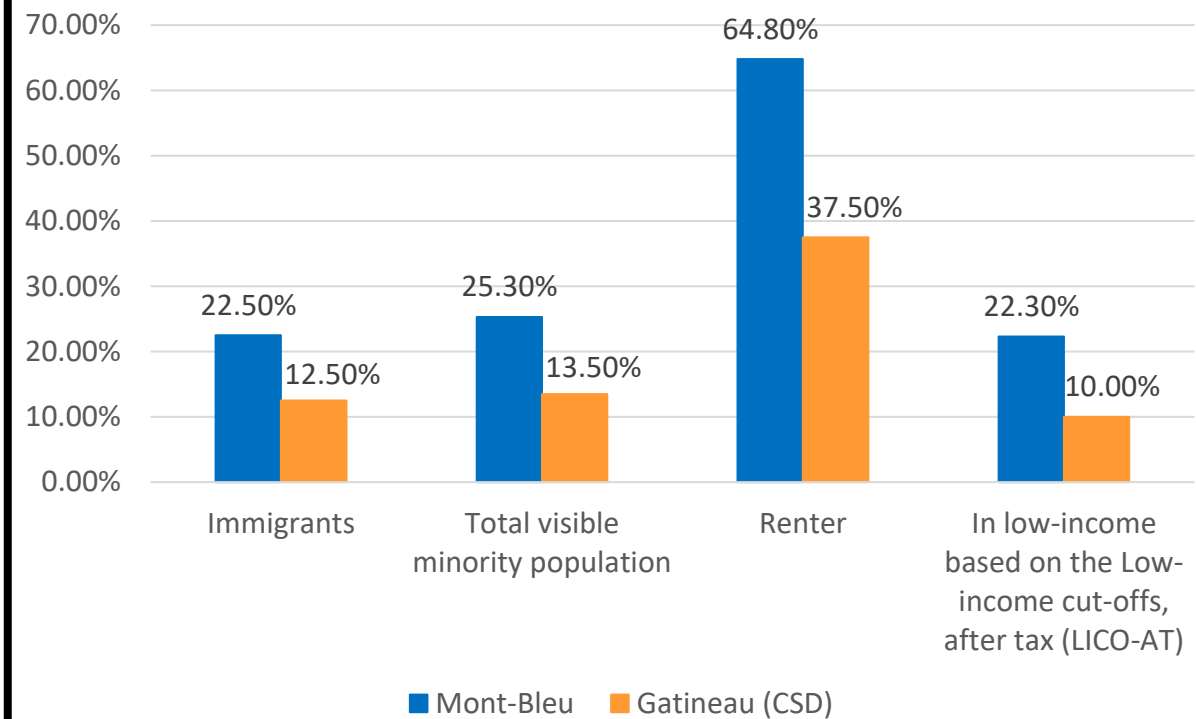# 3 neighbourhoods in Ottawa-Gatineau
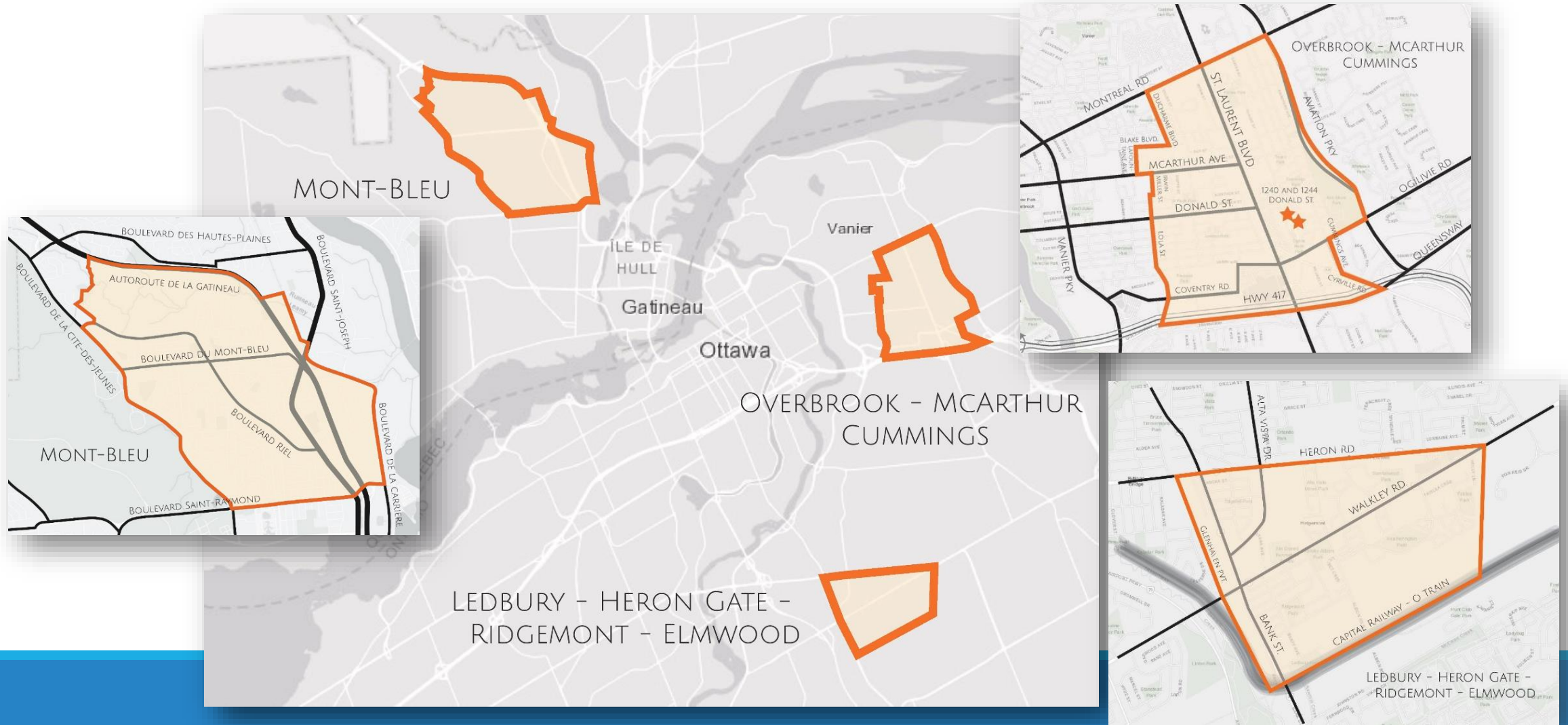
Neighbourhood Profiles: "superdiverse" and low-income

Neighbourhood Profile - 2016

	Overbrook-Cummings	Ledbury-Heron Gate	Ottawa (CSD)
Immigrants	32.30%	47.20%	23.60%
Total visible minority population	43.20%	63.40%	26.30%
Renter	66.90%	72.00%	34.30%
In low income based on the Low-income cut-offs, after tax (LICO-AT)	28.20%	33.00%	10.60%

Neighbourhood Profile - 2016

	Mont-Bleu	Gatineau (CSD)
Immigrants	22.50%	12.50%
Total visible minority population	25.30%	13.50%
Renter	64.80%	37.50%
In low-income based on the Low-income cut-offs, after tax (LICO-AT)	22.30%	10.00%

Statistics Canada: Census 2016

3 neighbourhoods = 3 events

1. **Ledbury-Heron Gate**: Timbercreek evictions – 2016-2018

2. **Overbrook-Cummings**: resettlement of Syrian refugees – late 2015 onwards

3. **Mont Bleu**: a tornado hit in September 2018
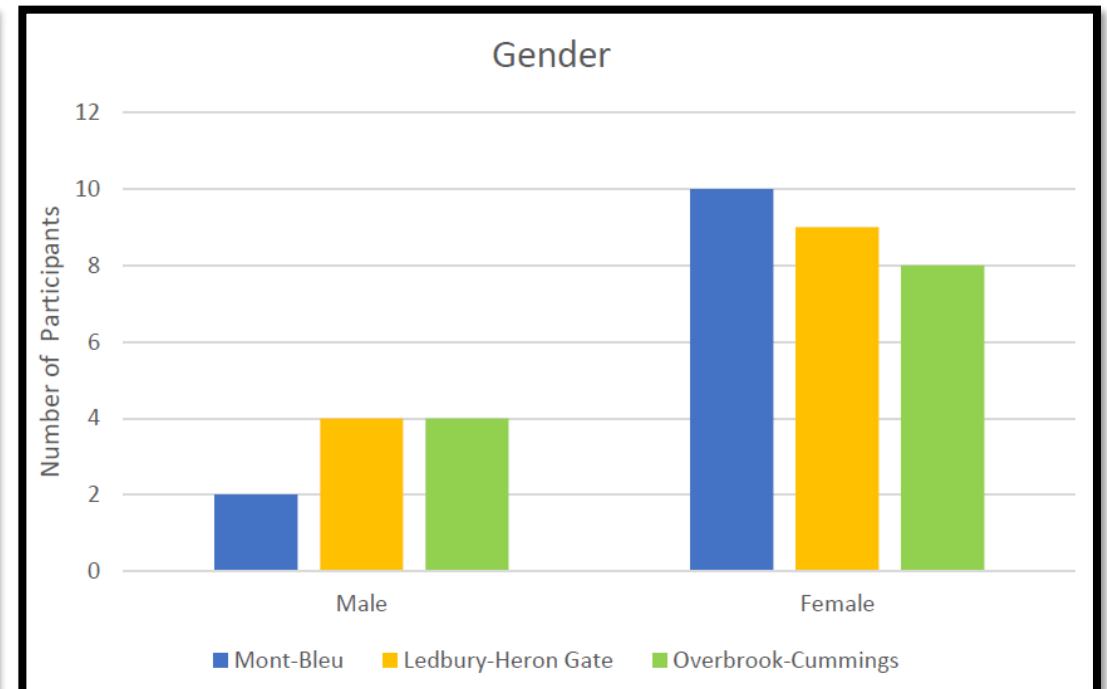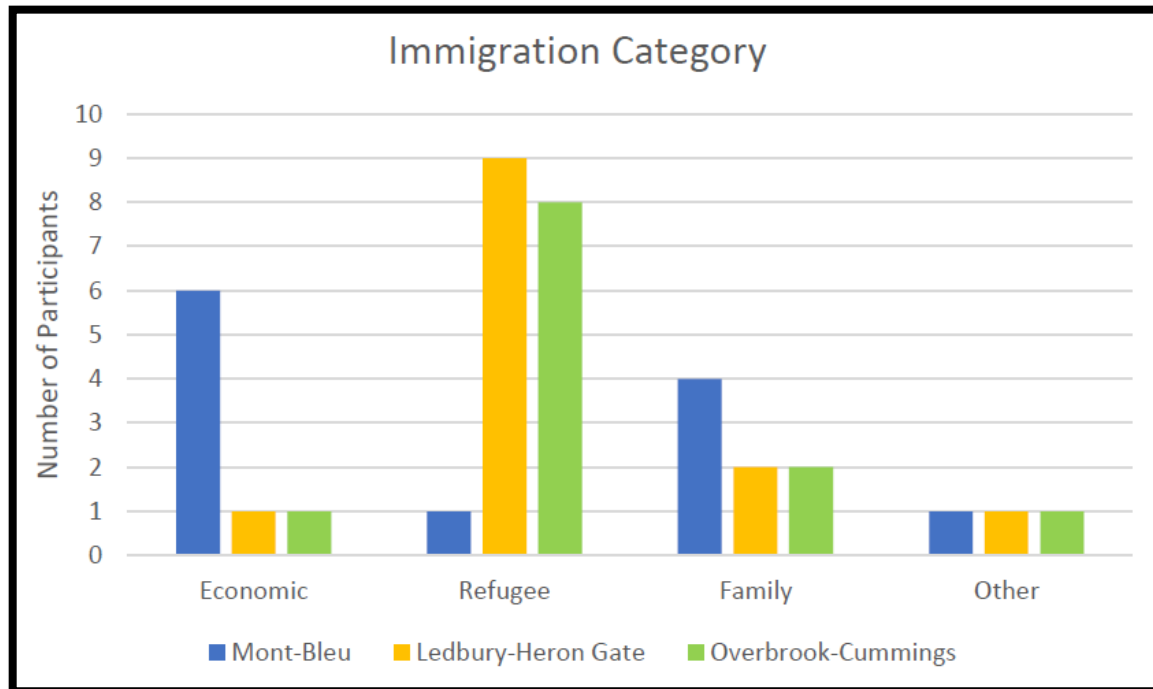
Qualitative Methods

4 main research stages:

1. Literature review and neighbourhood selection in collaboration with community partners (May-August 2018)

2. Ethnographic study: participant observations in the neighbourhoods, census data, & media analysis (June 2018-May 2019)

3. Photovoice interviews (October 2018-July 2019)

    total of 37 participants : 12 (MB), 12 (OC), 13 (LHG)

4. Analysis and community meetings (summer-fall 2019)

    Ledbury-Heron Gate: 12 participants (June)
    Overbrook-Cummings: 10 participants (August)
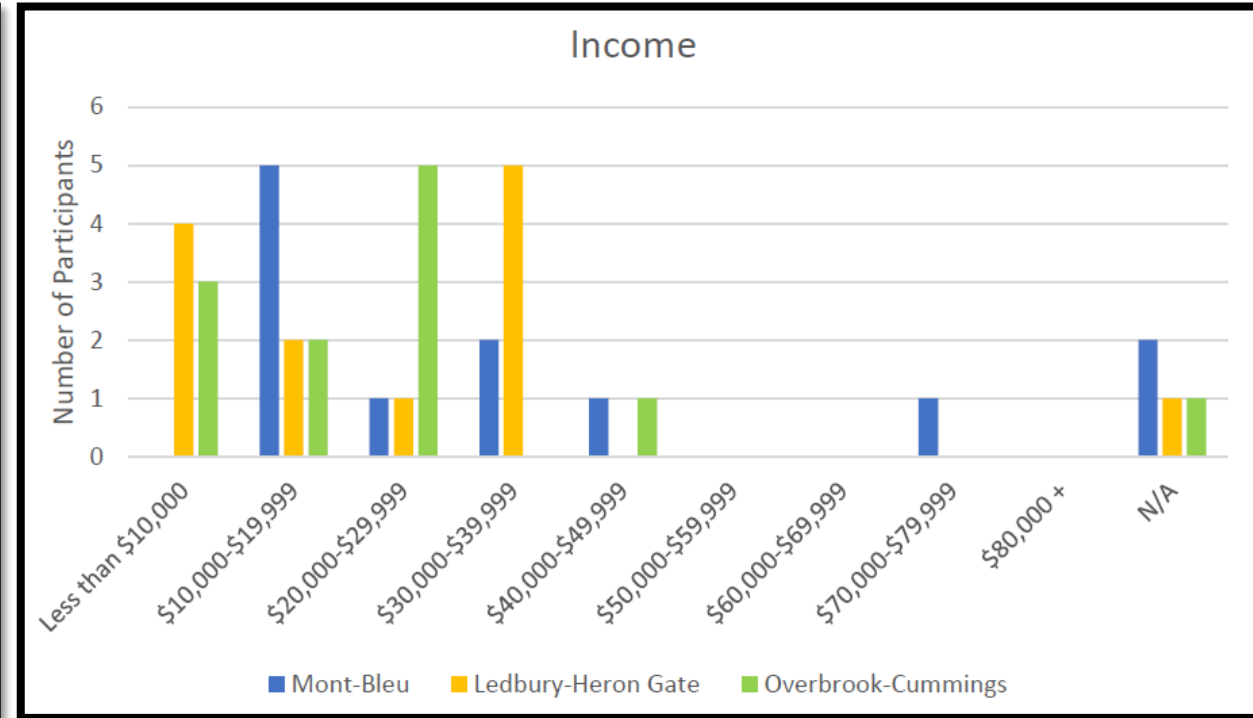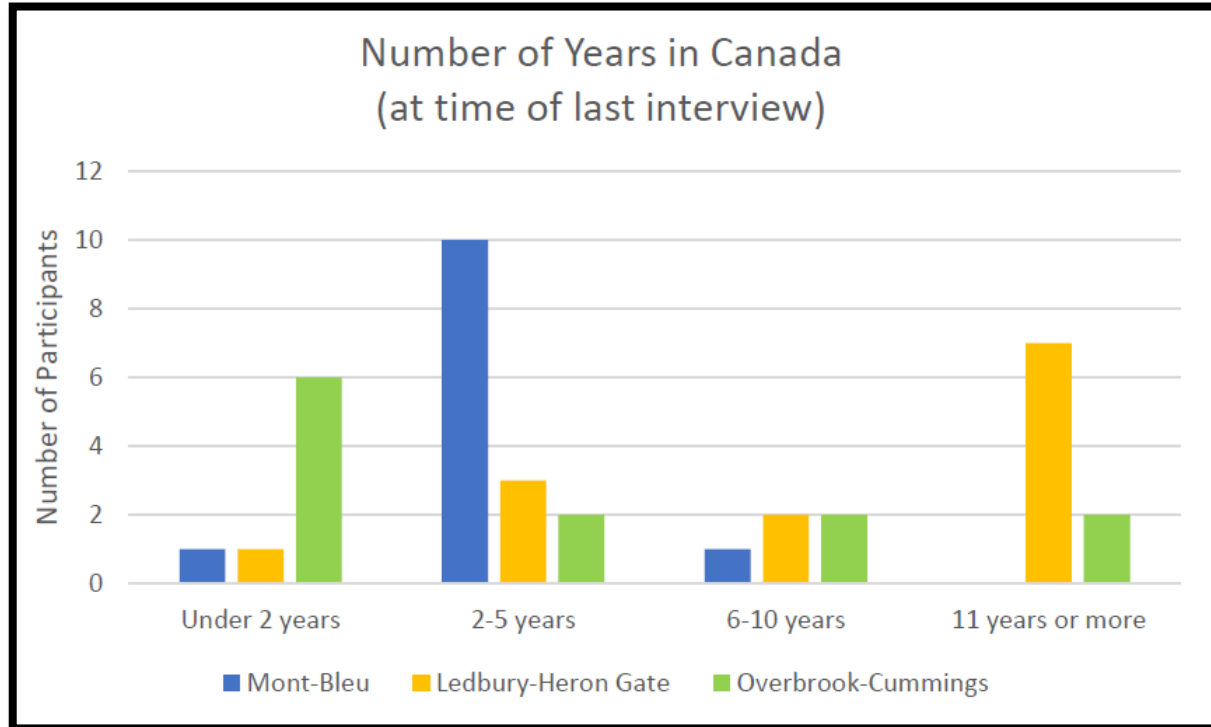   Mont Bleu: 13 participants (October)

Research participants' sociodemographic profile (1/2)

37 participants:

12 in Mont Bleu, 12 in Overbrook-Cummings, 13 in Ledbury-Heron Gate

Research participants' sociodemographic profile (2/2)

Number of Years in Canada (at time of last interview) — Number of Participants by neighbourhood (Mont-Bleu, Ledbury-Heron Gate, Overbrook-Cummings) across categories: Under 2 years, 2-5 years, 6-10 years, 11 years or more.

Income — Number of Participants by neighbourhood (Mont-Bleu, Ledbury-Heron Gate, Overbrook-Cummings) across income brackets: Less than $10,000, $10,000-$19,999, $20,000-$29,999, $30,000-$39,999, $40,000-$49,999, $50,000-$59,999, $60,000-$69,999, $70,000-$79,999, $80,000 +, N/A.

Neighbourhood spaces & immigrant resilience

Immigrant Place-Making →

Livable Cities
Walkability
Community
Sustainability
Interconnectedness

← The Revanchist City & Immigrant Precarity

Neighbourhood spaces & immigrant resilience

IMMIGRANT PLACE-MAKING & COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Superdiverse cities & neighbourhoods

Social inclusion

Diversity and sense of belonging:
cultural pluralism, welcome, hospitality and
co-habitation

Settlement and integration supports: access to
information, social networks

Spaces of encounter and difference

Community Care: solidarity, mutual aid,
community leadership & initiatives

THE REVANCHIST CITY & IMMIGRANT PRECARITY

Transformation of the 'in-between city'
New urban frontier & the Revanchist city

Socio-economic exclusion & precarity,
expulsion, displacement, marginalization

Production urban space and the 'right to the
city

Neoliberalisme >< Resilience

Walkability

Location & Proximity
◦ Central location, accessibility, transportation
◦ Shops, ethnic stores, amenities & services

It's very easy because in this area, everything is very close. Like even 5 minute walk, we go Shoppers, halal food is too, halal meat store. My doctor in South Keys, it's very good. It's very good, that's why I like this house now. (LHG6, woman, Somalia)

Accessibility of amenities & services
◦ Parks, community spaces/centres, daycares, schools, libraries, places of worship
◦ Services for newcomers, ESL courses
➢ **But lack of services & programming**

Oh, the library, I love the library. It's amazing. They have an indoor pool, they have hockey courts, they have a basketball court. It's really nice. (OC 9, woman, DRC)

Transportation
◦ Public transit
➢ **But long & complex bus routes, delays, lack of bus shelters, and increasing cost $$**

Walkability
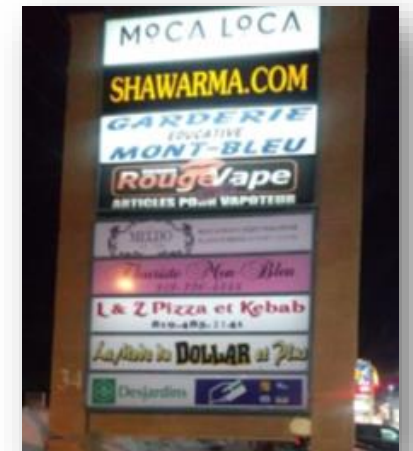◦ Proximity of amenities and services
➢ **But road safety, roads (potholes), sidewalks, snow removal**

...pour l'emplacement, pour la densité des écoles et des garderies ici c'est parfait aussi, au niveau des parcs, il y en a beaucoup, (...) si on parle de la proximité des commerces et des infrastructures très bien aménagés. (MB, femme, Moldova)

Community (1/2)

Diversity
- Many immigrants and newcomers
- Access to information

Sense of belonging
- Cultural diversity
- Shared identity and experiences

Social Networks
- Social connectedness
- Places of worship, parks, community centres

Mutual aid & support
- Family, neighbours
- Settlement supports, childcare, shared meals, community activism

Yeah, so you know, "Can you pick up the kids for me? Can you do this for me?" That's what I'm saying, sense of community. There's nothing important like having a sense of community, you know? (…) You know, what they say, it takes a village to raise a kid, right? (LHG, female, Somalia)

Le fait que Mont-Bleu est quand même habité par beaucoup de nouveaux arrivants, bien quand je sors, j'ai ce sentiment de … de… compréhension ou d'acceptation par l'autre. (MB1, homme, Haïti).

She said they [the immigrant community]'re very good and they're very helpful. (OC.4, woman, Iraq, through translator)

Community (2/2)

Neighbourhood representation, stereotypes & stigma

- **Negative media coverage**
- **Negative perceptions from friends and relatives**
- **Association of crime & criminality with racial & ethnic groups**

Non, tout le monde a déménagé et tout le monde était un peu étonné pourquoi en tant que propriétaire on a choisi de rester toujours sur ici, parce qu'il y a des gens qui a déménégé à Aylmer, à Plateau, à Gatineau, là l'autre côté. Donc, on a dit pourquoi ? Je dis, parce que j'aime la proximité de tout. (MB.7)

Yeah, that's a really big topic, I would say, the stigma, or the stereotypical view towards the community plays a vital role. I mean, I have talked with a lot of people who lived here and known for crime place. "You live in Heron Gate?" I say, "Yeah." "Ohhh."" (LH.8)

J'entends que Mont-Bleu c'est pas un bon quartier. Le Mont-Bleu c'est pas un bon quartier, mais… je ne sais pas de quoi c'est pas un bon quartier, mais…C'est comment il sait, c'est juste parce que y'a des gens qui boivent dehors, qui fument, qui font des mauvaises choses. (MB, femme, RCA)

Sustainability (1/2)

Housing
- Affordable housing, especially 3+ bedroom dwellings for larger families
- No request for prior rental/credit history

Housing issues
- **Evictions (LHG), tornado (MB)**
- **Problems with maintenance, disrepair**

Discrimination/racism

Criminality
- **Insecurity, police presence/absence**

More than 10 [phone calls]. Sometimes they tell you they are coming, they don't come. Things like that. Until you walk yourself to the office and go claim again. (OC 8)

She said this neighbourhood is not a high class neighbourhood. Sometimes things happen. That's the only thing she doesn't like about the neighbourhood. (OC.4, through translator)

Sustainability (2/2)

Services/programs
◦ Open, accessible, comfortable programs building familiarity and mutual support

Maintenance
◦ **Problems with maintenance of public spaces (parks, buildings, facilities), disrepair, waste**

Lack amenities
◦ **Inaccessible community indoor/outdoor spaces**

Lack of programming & inaccessible programs
◦ **Missing/invisible/inadequate programs, especially for youths**
◦ **Lack of mental health supports**
◦ **Costly & inaccessible programs, esp. for larger families**

Je vois qu'il y a un service de la ville pour couper l'herbe, pour nettoyer, mais... pas entretenu au niveau des équipements, des bancs, des glissades, le sable... le sable est tellement sale... Parfois, je permets pas mes enfants de jouer là. (MB7, femme, Moldova)

The street is so dark, no lights (...) we call, yeah, they have to fix it. Call 211, you call 311, you don't even know? The city take the sweet time, because which neighbourhood? (LHG, female, Sudan)
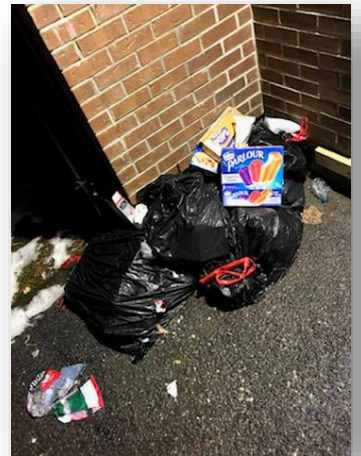
Interconnectedness

Spaces to build networks & solidarity
◦ Volunteering, social involvement, social networks
◦ Community leadership
➤ **Lack of involvement due to constraints**

Language
◦ **Francophones appreciated access to French services, amenities**
➤ **Language barriers: maintenance, stores, & many groups with different languages**

Lack of outreach & coordination
◦ **Service providers & programming**
◦ **Police relations & community policing**

Lack of community consultation

On a réussi à faire des amis. Premièrement, ça a commencé par les parcs, où je sortais avec mon enfant. Comme il y a beaucoup des immigrants dans la région, les parcs sont plein, plein de gens de partout, partout du monde. (MB.7, woman, two children)

"There's not a lot of outreach, and I think that's the biggest thing, is outreach and yeah, like I said, there are so -- I'm pretty there are a lot of programs but we just don't know how to -- we don't know where to look for them, right? [...] But, you can't find it. That's the problem."- LH.6, woman, Somalia

Recommendations…

Community

- **Outreach: City councillors, city staff, police, community centres**
- **Liaison**: information networks, connect different service providers (schools, libraries, settlement orgs, community centres, etc.)
- **Accessible & relevant programming**: esp. children, youth (e.g., leadership programs, vocational training); mental health, parenting programs; legal clinic; civic programs
- **Subsidized programs:** children & youth (academic supports), newcomers (language & practical skills)
- **Engagement** & consultations, hire local residents (esp. youth)

Infrastructure

- **Maintenance (parks, roads, sidewalks)**
- **Cosmetic changes (lights, parks, benches, fountains, garbage bins, etc.)**
- **Accessible spaces: indoor & outdoor**
- **Housing**
- **Transportation (bus shelters, bus fare, walkability, bike paths & bike share)**
- **Mobile library**
- **Mobile grocery (ethnic & healthy foods)**
- **Community gardens**

Representation

- News media, City: featured stories (leaders, youth), contests, exhibits
- Events, festivals, special initiatives

Acknowledgements

Our research participants

Our community partners
◦ The City of Gatineau, APO, SITO
◦ The City of Ottawa, OLIP, CESOC

Our research team
◦ Lily Xia, Lina El Bakir, Brian Ray, Anyck Dauphin, Idris Alghazi, and Virginie Mesana

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

Thank you!

Contact information:

Luisa Veronis, University of Ottawa: lveronis@uottawa.ca