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YUL-MTL : DESIGN AS A COORDINATING FORCE

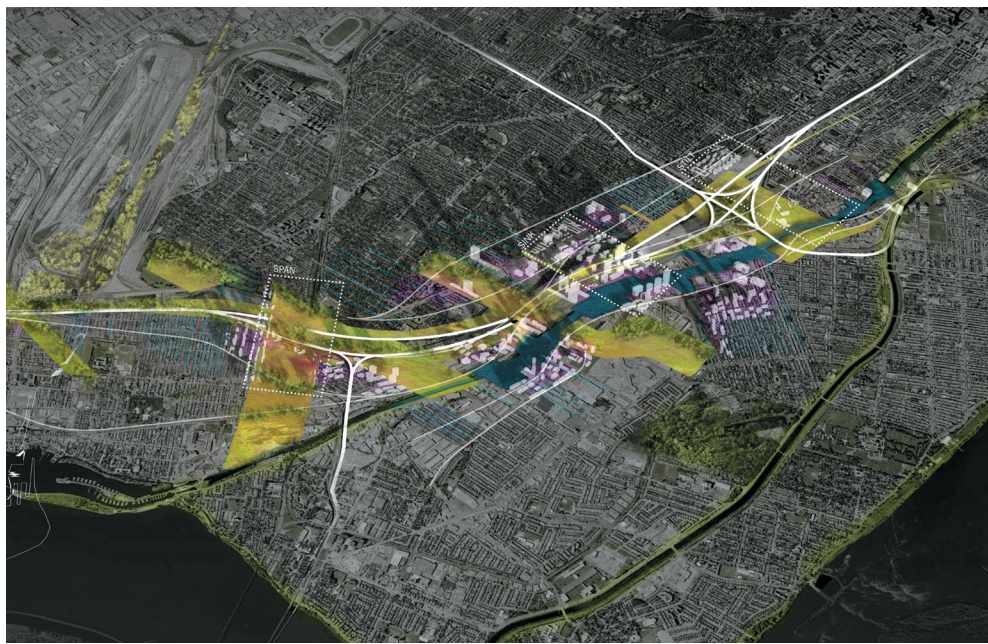
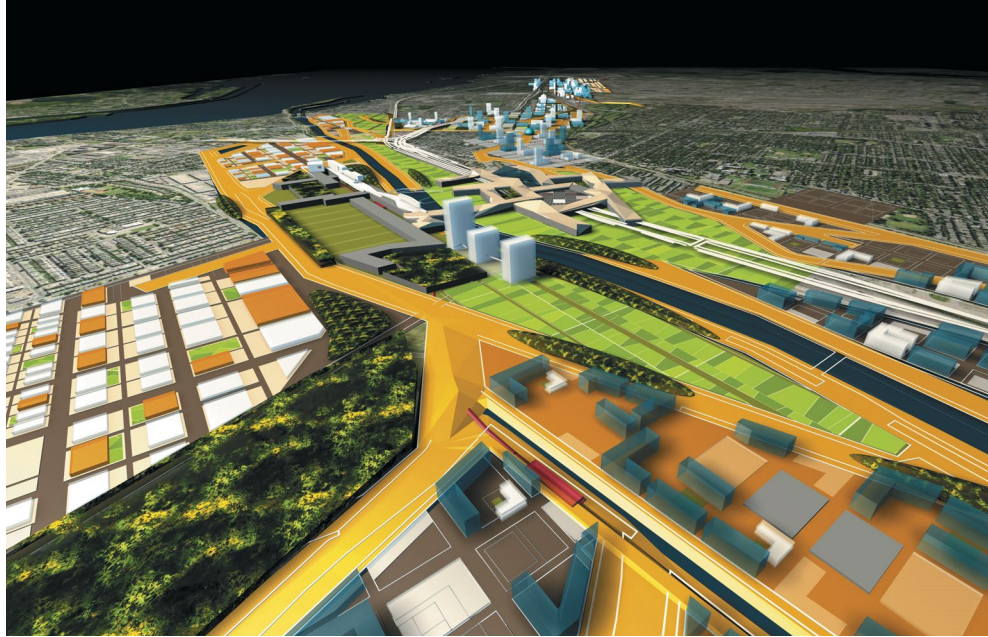


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COORDINATING FORCE
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THE THREE WINNERS OF THE COMPETITION,
YUL-MTL LANDSCAPES IN MOTION **1**
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IN THE 20TH CENTURY, the growth of road and highway networks spurred urban sprawl. In the absence of distinct edges, towns and cities spread out into amorphous expanses. When driving an urban approach route, it has become increasingly difficult to discern the unique character of the spaces being crossed. The visible landscape is often devoid of territorial expression and coherence. In many cases, these conditions stem from a lack of land-use planning and the impacts of transportation infrastructure that fragments, separates and isolates neighbourhoods or landscape elements. Montreal's situation is comparable to that of several cities worldwide.

Many people view the international transit and city entrance from Trudeau Airport to downtown via Autoroute 20 as a negative experience. Bland, anonymous, grey, beige, unstructured: these are some of the adjectives most commonly used to describe the entrance corridor's landscape. And yet Montreal is internationally reputed for its openness, creativity, hipness and quality of life. When the city was celebrating the fifth anniversary of its declaration as a UNESCO City of Design, it seemed urgent to undertake an open and creative idea-development process on the planning visions that can reinvent this entranceway in a coherent manner and give it a new sense of urban vitality.



In early 2011, the Université de Montréal's chair in landscape and environment (CPEUM) and the UNESCO chair in landscape and environment, in collaboration with the provincial transportation department (MTQ) and the corridor's public and private stakeholders, formed a working group to review Autoroute 20, launching a research and action process designed to begin a coordinated planning process to redesign the freeway entrance to Montreal.

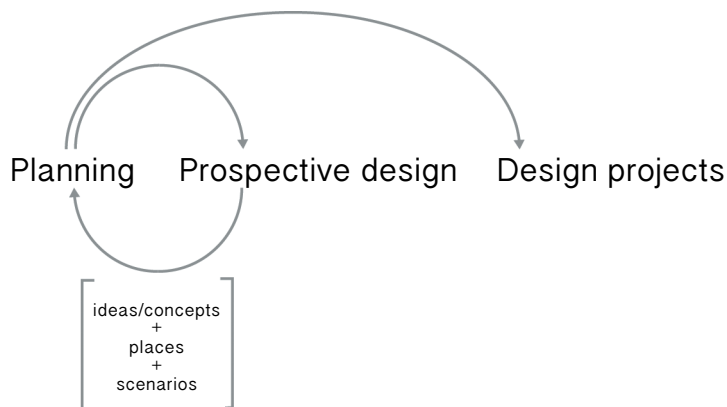
The approach was unique in that it created a working group of representatives of all organizations with a role in planning and developing the area, with the aim of producing a coherent and coordinated vision for the future of the transportation

infrastructure and adjoining areas. It also used two idea-development processes – the international ideas competition (YUL-MTL : paysages en mouvement) and the urban design and landscape creation workshop (WAT_UNESCO – Montréal) – to generate proposals making it possible to visualize the area's constraints and potential and encourage coordination among local actors

A TERRITORIAL VISION AS A FOUNDATION FOR THE IDEA-DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In order to generate material for the two idea-development activities, meetings were held with representatives of the working group to elicit information on the issues, concerns, ambitions and project

opportunities associated with the city-entrance corridor. A synthesis of all the information gathered led to the drafting of a shared vision statement pointing toward three main areas of action. The first is an evolving, emblematic landscape project for the city, through the creation a strong, distinctive cultural identity that honours industrial and urban heritage and pays special attention to urban design. The second is the development of scenarios for experience-based routes marking the approach to downtown, by developing more coherence along the whole length of the corridor, particularly by improving interfaces between transportation infrastructure and the spaces adjoining it, and by improving



the living environment and creating a welcoming, safe environment. The third is a coordinated, sustainable urban development process, including by the creation of green space, new connections among natural and recreational spaces and the repurposing of residual spaces.

This territorial vision was included in the call for submissions to the YUL-MTL ideas competition and formed the basis of the evaluation criteria. Next, the planning issues were specified for the six areas of intervention identified for WAT_UNESCO. The two idea-development processes resulted in 61 proposals establishing comprehensive intervention strategies (see the competition-winning proposals) and 12 proposals addressing more detailed planning sectors.

In order to better understand the scope of the proposals, an analytical phase produced a synthesis of the results. The methodology was based on a breakdown of each proposal into individual ideas. Thus, more than 500 separate ideas were identified in the proposals and grouped into 47 distinct families.

IDEA-DEVELOPMENT AS A TERRITORIAL PLANNING TOOL

Based on the synthesis of planning proposals generated by the international ideas competition and WAT_UNESCO, two categories of tools were developed for use in the coordinated planning process. First, the planning principles and criteria were identified as a means of applying each family of intervention in a manner consistent with the planning vision developed by the working group. The principles and criteria are guidelines for local action on different planning problems, covering a wide variety of concerns with respect to the planning of the freeway and adjacent areas. Next, development scenarios were identified to inspire the development of a strategic vision for the territory by illustrating possible futures. The scenarios make it possible to see that the interventions proposed by the designers can lead to different planning and development options; they also constitute themes that

could shape the identity of this approach to the city.

Far from being tools to be applied directly on the ground, the design principles and criteria, as well as the planning and development scenarios, are tools for coordination. Each in its own way illustrates a variety of development possibilities stemming from the initial vision.

BEGINNING THE CITY-ENTRANCE LANDSCAPE PROJECT

This exploratory process thus demonstrated the usefulness of idea-development approaches within a planning process (see figure 1). In this context, design is not an end; it is a vision exercise essential to the visual depiction of positioning and to programming, the development of specifications and decision-making. From this point of view, it is not the end of a project, but a key constituent of a quality assurance process for urban and landscape development. Nevertheless, the success of the coordinated planning process demands the local adoption of the territorial vision, which will probably prove to be one of the main challenges in the future.

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