MONTRÉAL

Creative Footprint
Report 2023

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About CFP: Creative Footprint (CFP) is a research project conducted by VibeLab and PennPraxis that researches creative spaces and communities in order to study the cultural strength and impact of a city's music and nightlife. As of spring 2023, it has been conducted in Berlin, New York City, Tokyo, Stockholm, and Montréal.

About CFP Montréal: This report, conducted in partnership with civic organisation MTL 24/24, details the findings of qualitative and quantitative research conducted in late 2022. Based on focus groups, interviews, and 14,600+ data points relating to Montréal's approximately 271 music and nightlife venues, the report aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the city's nightlife scene as it recovers from the impacts of Covid-19. This includes the spatial distribution of nightlife, relationships to other urban variables, and policy and social dynamics.

What the report contains: Following overviews of Montréal's night governance (Sec. I) and CFP methodology (Sec. II), the report details spatial and quantitative findings (Sec. III), as well as profiles of Montréal's densest nightlife boroughs. A discussion of qualitative findings (Sec. IV) follows, including a deeper discussion of noise and sound closures, and spotlights on independent venues and collectives. The report closes with recommendations for action (Sec. V) with a Montréal-specific section on sustainability in nightlife, profiling one festival's wraparound approach to sustainability and inclusion.

Key findings:

Montréal's overall Creative Footprint score is 6.57, similar to both Tokyo (6.51) and Stockholm (6.58). CFP scores are made up of three topic areas, and the city's higher Space and *Community & Content* scores (8.38 and 7.15, respectively) are counterweighted by a lower score for *Framework Conditions* (4.18)—which research participants affirmed in interviews and focus groups.

Montréal's venues score highly in programming variables in comparison to other CFP cities, particularly multifunctional venues (those showcasing more than one type of programming). Notably, experimentation and diversity of programming increases with venue size, in contrast to other CFP cities, suggesting a high calibre of large-scale events and festivals.

Spatially, **Montréal's 271 venues are highly concentrated in a few central boroughs with high population density, transit density and percentage of young adults. 89% of venues studied are in four central boroughs: Ville-Marie, Le Plateau-Mont-Royal, Le Sud-Ouest, and Rosemont-La-Petite-Patrie.** Other boroughs exhibit the population and transit density often associated with venue density, suggesting there may be opportunities for more active nightlife in these areas of the city.

The **most significant divergence from previous CFP studies: Montréal's venue density does *not* correlate with regional clusters of high rent and income.** Other CFP analyses have shown a positive relationship between venue density and areas with higher rents and income. This suggests that there are opportunities to support existing spaces and to develop more creative spaces in desirable areas, with less cost relative to peer cities.

Montréal's nightlife actors see its mid-size, talent, energy, and cross-pollination between scenes as strengths. But its spaces also face challenges: research participants voiced a range of issues in accessing indoor and outdoor event spaces, and threats from increasing residential development, particularly in the form of conflict over noise and sound.

Policy and governance issues also pose significant obstacles, such as enforcement approaches perceived as "arbitrary," limited nighttime transit options, and strict closing times.

Montréal's venues score highly in programming variables in comparison to other CFP cities

Montréal has exceptionally strong cultural funding opportunities, and nightlife is generally recognised as an asset to the city's global identity. However, participants still reported challenges in accessing funding schemes and reaching municipal decision-makers, suggesting disconnects between publicly expressed values and actual implementation.

Recommendations

Recommendations for action fall into three categories, with short, medium, and longer-range steps to:

1. **Protect** and preserve Montréal's existing venues and economic accessibility (particularly in districts with the majority of venues) through mapping and expanded sound protections for venues;
2. **Build trust**, improved relationships and dialogue between nightlife, public safety, and municipal decision makers;
3. **Grow**: expanding time and space for nightlife via later hours, transit access, and access to new, affordable spaces.

These recommendations include, among others:
- Steps to strengthen venues' resilience against, and ability to address, noise and sound conflicts;
- Specific, local strategies to develop shared visions for the continued existence of their venues and nightlife;
- Expanding nightlife creators' access to information, including access to city decision makers and offices;
- Updating alcohol licensing regulations to enable longer nights;
- Incorporating urban planning and zoning mechanisms that promote the production of music events and new nightlife spaces, in Ville de Montréal's forthcoming city planning and zoning documents and strategies
- Drawing upon Montréal's existing sustainability initiatives and expertise to establish the city as a global leader in sustainable, inclusive nightlife.
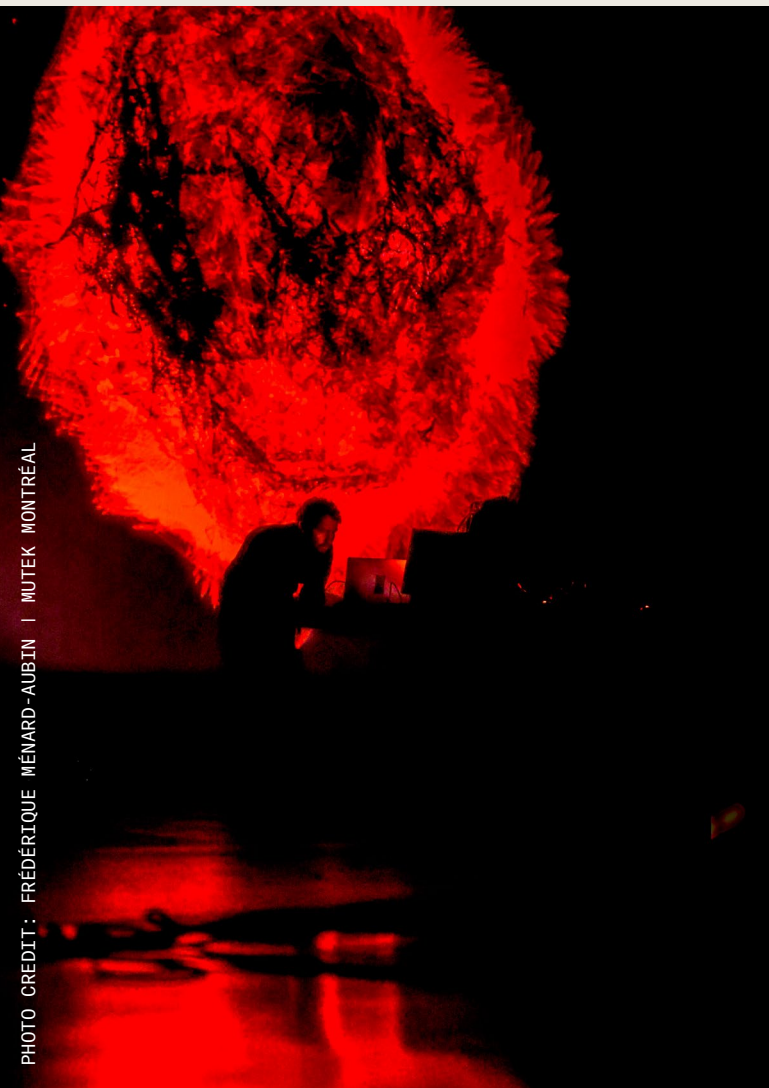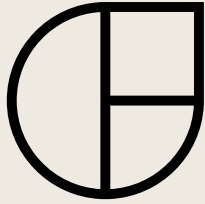
PROJECT PARTNERS

Creative Footprint

Creative Footprint[1] (CFP) is a research project by nighttime consultancy agency VibeLab that researches creative spaces and communities to study the cultural value and impact of music and nightlife in the city. Creative Footprint's unique methodology was developed by Lutz Leichsenring in partnership with Harvard University and has been thus far been implemented to examine the creative nighttime sectors of Berlin (2017)[2], New York (2018)[3], Tokyo (2019)[4], Stockholm (2022)[5], and now we are proud to present Montréal (2023)[6].

Creative Footprint's team of data scientists, led by lecturer Michael Fichman at the University of Pennsylvania, analyse thousands of data points pertaining to a city's venues to develop a rich cultural analysis of the city's creative and cultural infrastructure. The team integrates venue data with economic and spatial data from government databases using a customised software environment. Working in collaboration with local music and nightlife experts, Creative Footprint's research team gathers insights from dozens of actors, stakeholders and decision makers embedded in a city's creative, music and nightlife scenes to assess the current picture. Through focus groups and in-depth interviews, the Creative Footprint process uncovers the current pressing issues, challenges and opportunities for the city's nighttime sectors.

VibeLab

VibeLab[7] is a leading, purpose-driven consultancy agency in all things at night. Founded in 2018 by Amsterdam's former Night Mayor Mirik Milan and Berlin Club Commission's[8] spokesperson Lutz Leichsenring, VibeLab is based between Amsterdam, Berlin and Sydney. Our expertise and international network of over 3,000 cultural and creative industry professionals, scientists and public officials in more than 100 cities on 6 continents helps all those seeking new paths to improve creative nighttime ecosystems. VibeLab is fast-acting,

trendspotting and strategising with all parties involved in creative communities, private and public sectors. By facilitating the exchange of ideas and providing tried and tested tools, formats and best practices, we amplify subcultures.

PennPraxis: University of Pennsylvania

PennPraxis[9] is the applied research, professional practice, and community engagement arm of the University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School of Design. It provides opportunities for multi-disciplinary student and faculty collaboration through fee-for-service projects in the fields of Urban Planning, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Historic Preservation and more. PennPraxis' data analysis process involves the creation of custom, open-source software tools to allow for reproducible, flexible, and complex analysis for a range of use cases related to planning, health, landscape and the built environment. PennPraxis is an experienced global leader in nighttime urban planning and urban data analytics, and has been a part of the Creative Footprint project since 2018.

Project partner: MTL 24/24

MTL 24/24 is a non-profit organisation that analyses, animates and provides frameworks for Montréal's nightlife. MTL 24/24's work aims to enhance the development of our city by introducing the night as a new frontier for innovation. MTL 24/24's approach is rooted in a desire to foster mindful development that favours shared uses. Through exchange and communication among nightlife participants, research on nocturnal activity and the production of events that stimulate economic growth in a philanthropic manner, MTL 24/24 serves to assist the city of Montréal in formulating public nightlife policies that consider local realities. MTL 24/24's objectives are to destigmatise nightlife activities, support the local scene, enable a dialogue between the 9 community, public and political authorities, and to enhance local economic life – promoting the potential international influence

of our metropolis. MTL 24/24's operations will eventually facilitate the development of a new economic sector and allow the city's culture to shine on a world stage. MTL 24/24 places the dynamic and philanthropic advancement of Montréal nights at the core of its mission. As an incubator of ideas, practices and projects, MTL 24/24 animates, creates and provides frameworks for our city's nightlife economy, while contributing to its influence.

Creative Footprint Montréal is funded with generous support from our partner MTL 24/24, the Ville de Montréal and the Gouvernement du Québec.

"Montréal was maybe one of the first places that was really owning that eclectic energy—you don't have to be one sound. I think it's because we were a small community, all aware of one another and exposed to one another...I think we are quite high up there in quality of artists and I wish that was clearer in the global scene."
—Tiana McLaughlan/Honeydrip, DJ and producer

SECTION I:
INTRODUCTION

"À Montréal, le coucher du soleil n'annonce pas la fin d'une journée, mais l'éveil d'une nouvelle facette de la ville…"[10]
In Montréal, the sunset does not announce the end of a day, but the awakening of a new facet of the city…

Montréal has long been an important centre for alternative culture in North America. Known since the beginning of the 20th century as the "Paris of the New World"[11], Montréal has been a music and nightlife destination for over 100 years.[12] As Canada's second-largest city and Québec's largest, the city is connected through language to both the Anglophone and Francophone worlds, which influence its music and nightlife.

In addition to a thriving electronic and contemporary music and art scene, Montréal is known for its hip hop, disco, burlesque and LGBTQIA+ histories and subcultures[13][14], including the Village, the largest LGBTQIA+ neighborhood in North America in terms of area[15]. In recent decades, Montréal's summer music festivals have gained global recognition (as well as Igloofest, one of the "coldest festivals in the world").[16] Music and cultural events take place everywhere from cosy basement vinyl bars to the monumental infrastructure of Expo 67 and the 1976 Olympics, and scene locals are proud of Montréal's emphasis on the sound and culture, where, as one interviewee put it, it hardly matters "how you're dressed or what you look like: I think [that's] important for the weirdos of the world."

This report is the fifth Creative Footprint analysis conducted after Berlin, Tokyo, New York City, and Stockholm. Through both qualitative and quantitative research, it aims to provide a comprehensive picture of Montréal's nightlife scene as it recovers from the impacts of Covid-19, including the spatial distribution of nightlife, relationships to other urban variables, and policy and social dynamics. By highlighting Montréal's strengths and identifying areas for improvement, this report provides a roadmap for the city's continued growth and success as an international hub of nightlife. Beginning with an overview of Creative Footprint methodology, the report details research findings, and closes with a set of recommendations and next steps for the years to come.

Quick facts[17]

Population (2021):

1.76 million
Ville de Montréal

4.29 million
Island of Montréal

Language:

10%
English

30%
French

57%
both languages (metro area)
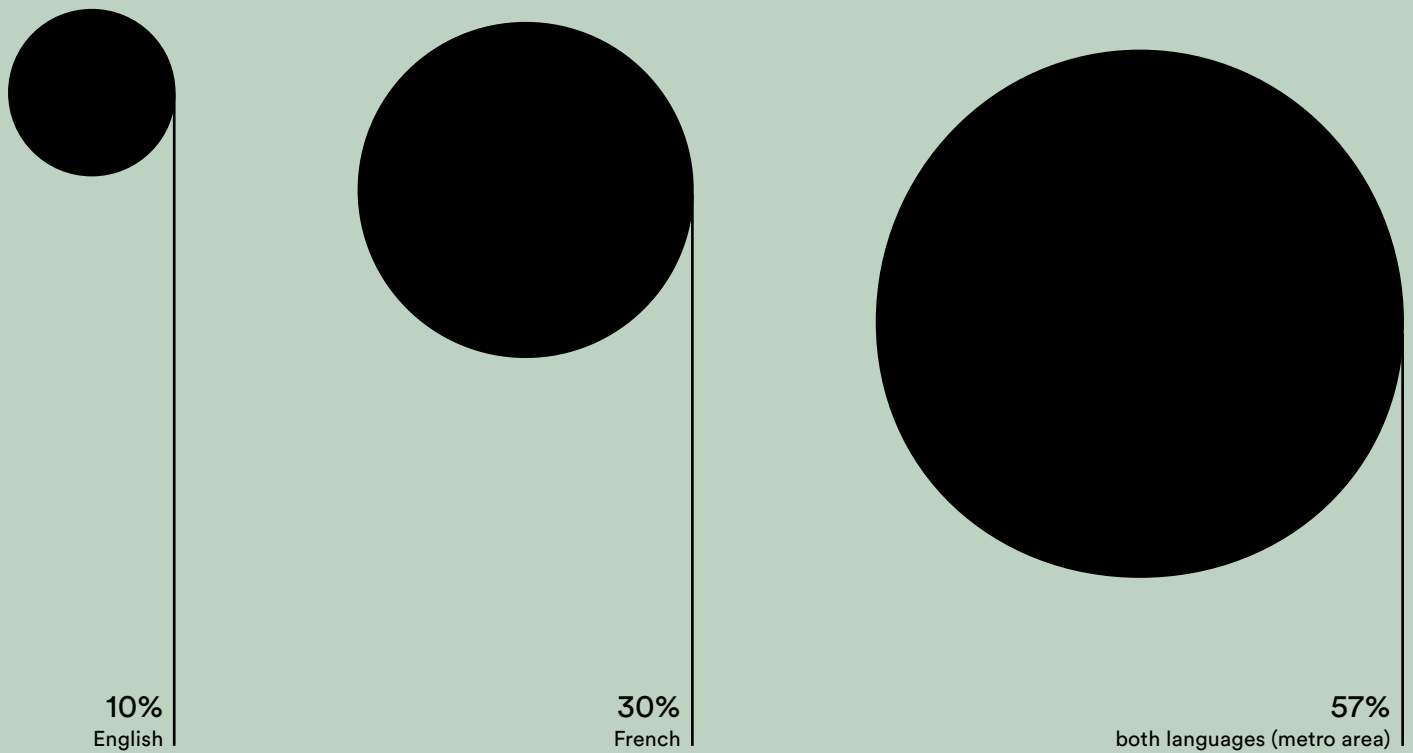
Demographics:

Ethnicity (2016):

~76%
European and/or
non-Indigenous
North American
origins

18%
Asian

12%
African

7%
Caribbean

5%
Latin American

2%
Indigenous

Housing:

>63%
Renters
~31% >30% income
on rent

Age:

~15%	~68%	17%
<15	15-64*	>65
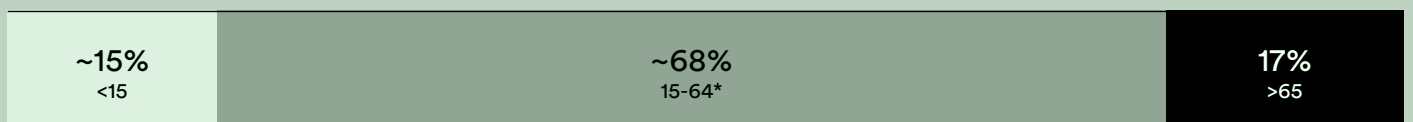
32% (561,995) 20-39

Geography:

South east Canada, 50 km north of Canada/United States border
Municipality contained on Island of Montréal, junction of the St. Lawrence River and Ottawa River
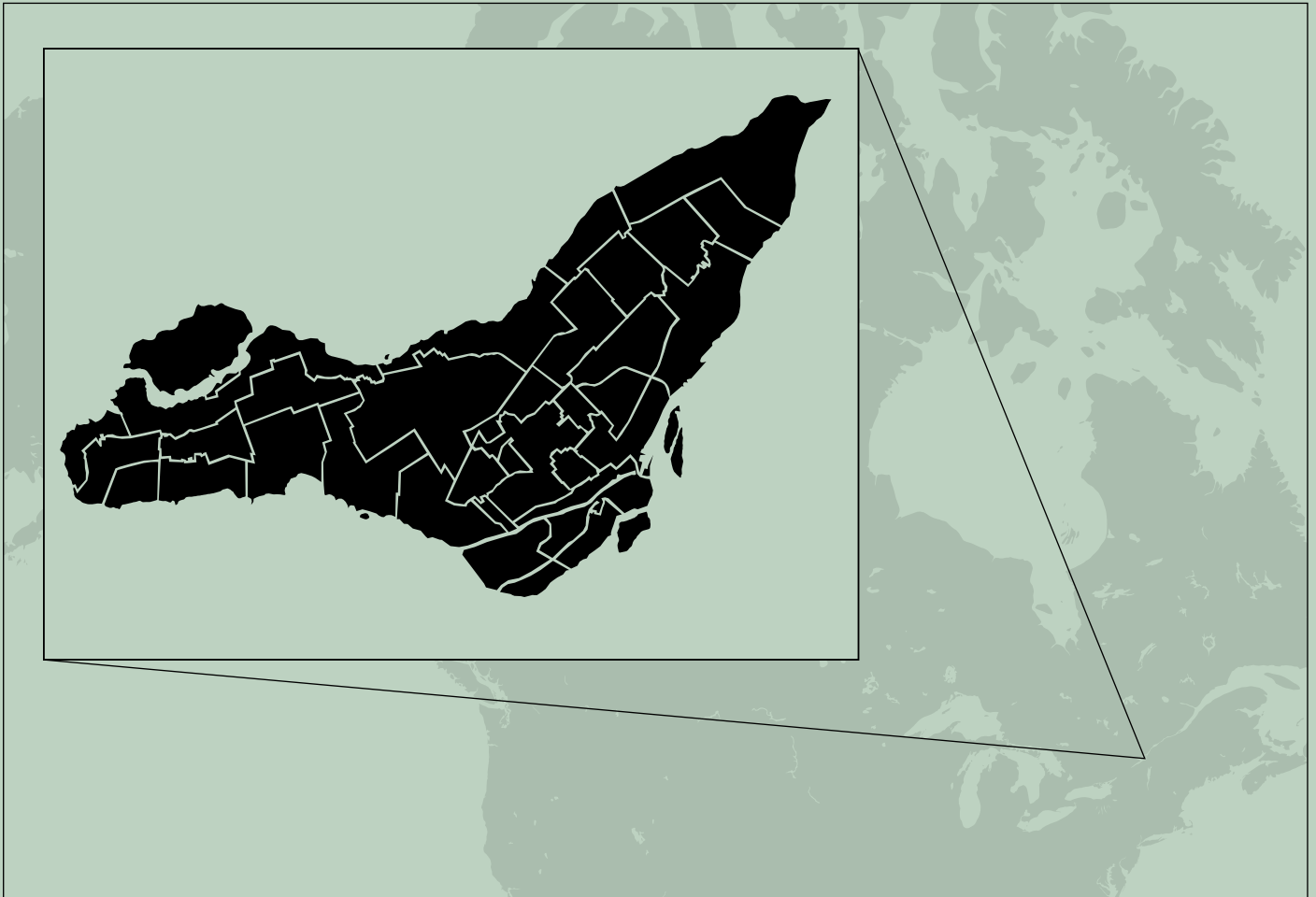
*2019

Tourism:[18]

Characteristics of nightlife tourist:

- 3 or less nights

- Planned only 1-2 weeks before

- Spends more daily than longer-term visitors

- Mostly from nearby CA and US

- Young pleasure-seekers

22%*
Tourists' primary
reason nightlife
(2.4 million visitors)
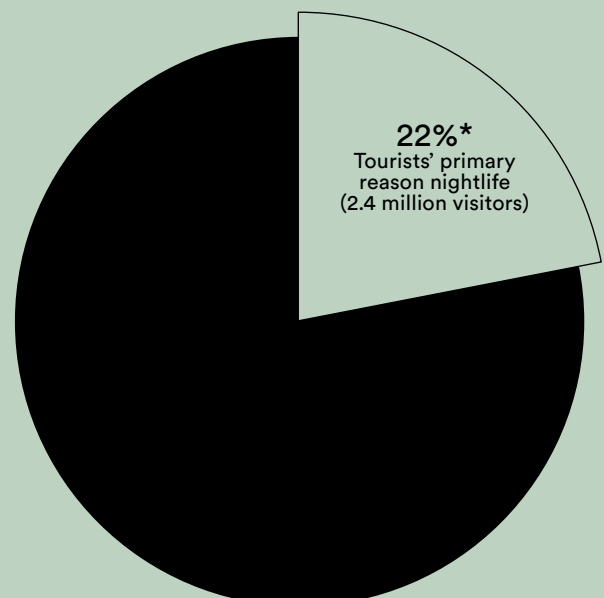
*2019

Nighttime economy:

(figures from 2019 - before pandemic impacts)

Revenue:

2.26 billion
CAD direct expenditures (909 million CAD tourist

121 million
CAD tax revenues

Employment:

33,558 jobs

$994 million
CAD in wages

Public transportation:

All-night bus service, Between Stops service,
Nuit Blanche all-night subway service[19]

1:00AM   5:00AM

Subway operating hours
5:30AM — 1:00AM
(1:30AM Saturday)

Hours:

3AM
Closing

(some all-night licences granted)

Night governance:

Night governance in Montréal involves cross-cutting entities at different levels of authority[20], from provincial to borough governance:

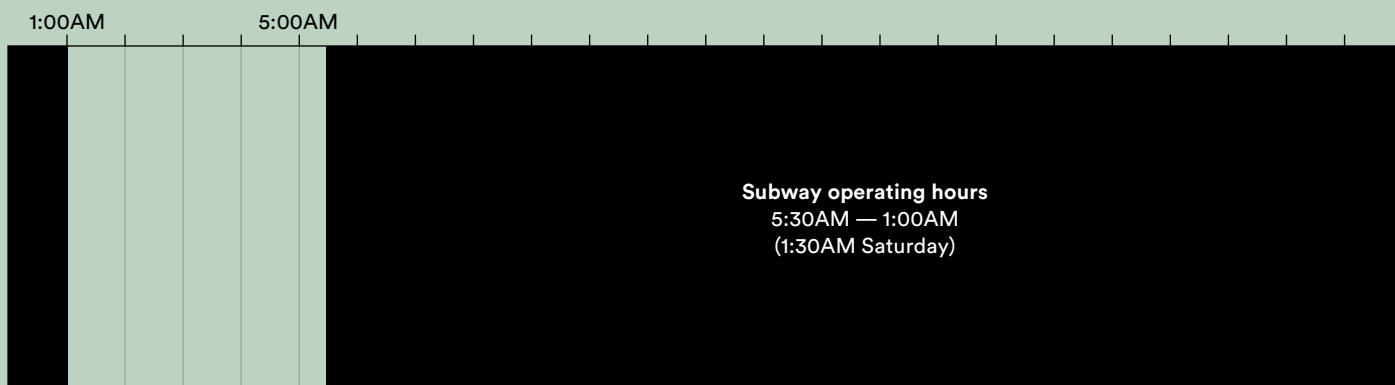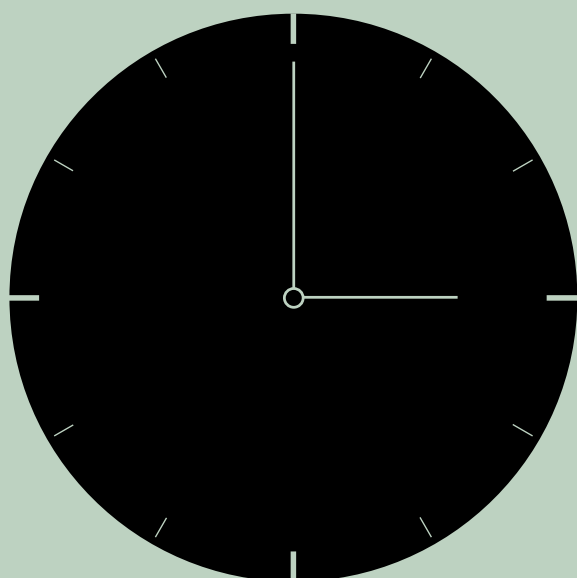| Level of governance	Nightlife-related Authority
Provincial government:	Alcohol licensing (devolved to Montréal in 2016)
Agglomeration council (Mayors of Montréal and surrounding municipalities; 15 Montréal city councillors):	Public transit
Ville Montréal city council **Department of economic development** and city nighttime liaison:	Soundproofing subvention awards; nightlife strategy; late-night event pilot programme
Borough mayors and councils:	Public services; coordinating soundproofing subventions

In addition, civic organisations engage with the city, such as MTL 24/24, which advocates for nightlife and nighttime interests, and Tourisme Montréal, which advocates for a sustainable nightlife economy.[21]

Ville de Montréal's department of strategic planning first identified the night economy as a place for collaboration, creativity, urban identity and tourism potential in the 2011-2017 economic development strategy.[22] The city had not previously conducted research into nightlife, nor addressed it in city plans.[23] In 2014, then-mayor Denis Coderre sought to extend bar opening hours in parts of the city until 6:00am, and was prevented by the provincial government; in 2016, the province ceded this and other measures of authority to Ville de Montréal. In 2017, mayor Valérie Plante pledged to develop a night policy framework and create a *Commissaire au bruit et à la nuit* (Noise and Night Commissioner). Concurrently, the city began considering nightlife in neighbourhood economic strategies (*commerce de proximité*). Meetings began between MTL 24/24 and the city council on the cultural value of nightlife and changes to night governance and regulation.

In 2020, the city began work on a new nightlife strategy (expected mid-2023), while MTL 24/24 launched the *Conseil de Nuit* (Night Council), an independent body of nightlife representatives to engage in public debate and policy processes. The city commissioned MTL 24/24 to produce a nightlife economic impact report[24][25] (published 2022). In 2022, the city's youth council *(Conseil jeunesse de Montréal)* also presented a report on Montréal's offerings for young people at night.[26] From May 2022 to March 2023, the city, MTL24/24, and other cultural producers ran a 9-month series of pilot events utilising later alcohol licences. These events included 14 dates produced by 7 collectives and festivals, the city's 20th anniversary *Nuit Blanche* with over 70 restaurants, bars, and clubs[27], and MTL 24/24's three NON STOP events in May 2022, September 2022, and planned for May 2023.[28][29]

SECTION II:
METHODOLOGY

Creative Footprint's methodology was originally developed in 2017 by Lutz Leichsenring in partnership with professors based at Harvard University and was further developed in collaboration with other leading academics and practitioners in urban planning at the University of Pennsylvania's PennPraxis.

In 2022, Creative Footprint employed its methodology to study Montréal's music and nightlife scenes. Combining quantitative and qualitative research methods, Creative Footprint's approach yields a detailed snapshot of a city's creative and cultural nighttime infrastructure, as well as the prevailing issues, challenges and opportunities for music and nightlife in the city.

PHOTO CREDIT: FRÉDÉRIQUE MÉNARD-AUBIN | MUTEK MONTRÉAL

Throughout August to December 2022, Creative Footprint researchers and PennPraxis data scientists studied the key characteristics of Montréal's creative and cultural nighttime infrastructure, as well as current issues, challenges and opportunities for the city's music and nightlife scenes.

	2022				2023
August	September	October	November	December	[...] March

Stage 1:

Literature review

Review of journalistic, grey and academic literature pertaining to Montréal's nighttime governance.

Developing a venue database

Assembly of database of music and nightlife spaces across Island of Montréal boroughs and adjacent municipalities.

Developing a stakeholder database

Assembly of database of key actors, stakeholders and decision makers in Montréal's music and nightlife scenes.

Stage 2:

Venue focus groups

Two online focus groups with 50+ Montréal-based music and nightlife actors and stakeholders to gather data on Montréal's venues.

Framework Conditions focus group

In-person focus group with 35+ Montréal-based music and nightlife actors and stakeholders to gather data on issues related to Montréal's nighttime framework conditions.

In-depth interviews

11 semi-structured interviews with Montréal-based music and nightlife actors and stakeholders to explore key issues, challenges and opportunities for the city.

Stage 3:

Analysing research data and score calculation

Analysis of all data pertaining to Montréal's music and nightlife venues, coupled with urban, economic and demographic datasets to understand the relationships between Montréal's venue clusters, urban environment and population.

Recommendations formulation and report development

Compilation of all research findings to formulate recommendations; final report.

Creative Footprint focuses on venues because nightlife requires physical space to thrive—and because increasingly, urban places that host or create cultural activity are at risk. Mapping and assessing nightlife spaces affords insight into the health of a city's cultural and nighttime ecosystem.

Nightlife spaces facilitate the sharing of ideas, beliefs and customs between different people and communities, and through that exchange, have the potential to transcend social, cultural and political differences between the people and communities that make up the fabric of a city. Music and nightlife venues are the physical spaces that form Montréal's creative and cultural nighttime infrastructure. These spaces drive Montréal's creative and cultural sectors. Montréal's venues serve as important anchors of the city's nighttime economy. They play a crucial role in shaping urban life after dark for Montrealers and visitors alike. Creative Footprint recognises that nightlife spaces are primarily interdisciplinary: they bring together different creative practices, which in turn foster cultural innovation across a range of fields from music, visual arts, fashion, dance, film, design—even cultural heritage. Creative Footprint sees nightlife as a core creative activity that influences and generates other related social, economic and cultural activities in the city:

Music and nightlife venues are the physical spaces that form Montréal's creative and cultural nighttime infrastructure.

Cultural

Creation

Presentation

Commercial

Rehearsal Spaces

DIY spaces

Grassroots Music Clubs

Community Radio

Street art public spaces

Theatres Operas

Arthouse Cinemas

Music Bars

Record Stores

Artist Collectives

Dance Schools

Music Clubs

**Music
Literature
Visual Arts & Design
Performing Arts
Culinary Arts**

Labels

Promoting Agenices

Concert Halls

Recording Studios

Artist Agencies

Comedy/ cabaret Theatres

Cinemas

Slow Food Restaurants

Cocktail Bars

Booking Agencies

Discotheques

Karaoke Bars

Musical Theatres

Film & Photography Studios

Hotels

Design Agencies

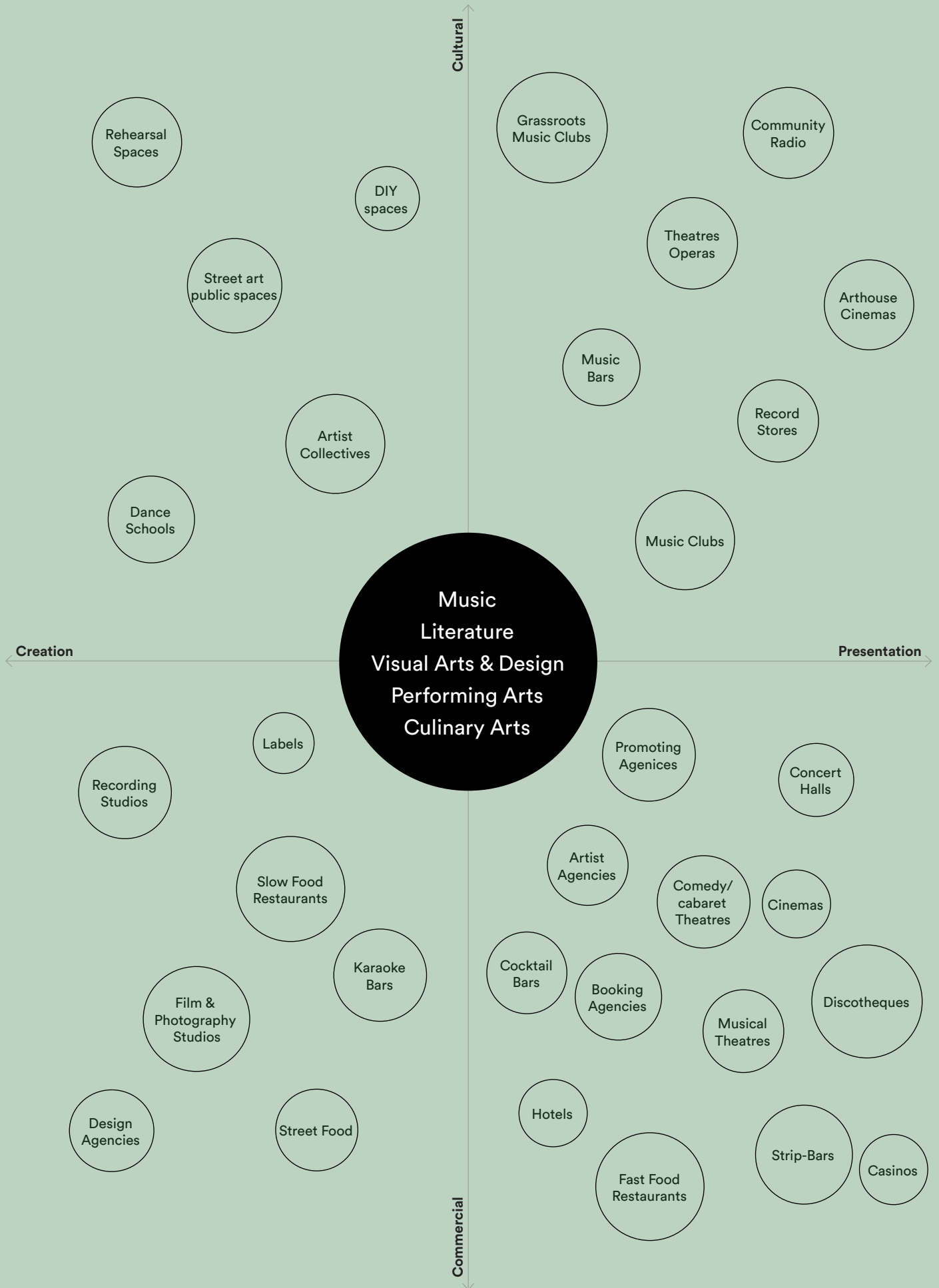Street Food

Strip-Bars

Casinos

Fast Food Restaurants

FIGURE 1: GRAPHIC VISUALISING INFLUENCE OF ARTISTIC FORMS ON THE NIGHTTIME ECOSYSTEM ACROSS DISCIPLINES

*How does Creative Footprint's methodology define a **music and nightlife venue?***

Music and nightlife venues are defined as venues that have regular music programming that is advertised publicly, and must host at least one music event per month. Our venue research in Montréal included dedicated live music venues, concert halls, arenas, clubs and discotheques, parks and public spaces, bars regularly hosting music events, and rental venues regularly used by event organisers. It should be noted that Creative Footprint's methodology does not factor in private venues that only host invited events such as birthday parties or weddings.

*What's the difference between **nightlife** and the **nighttime economy?***

Creative Footprint defines **nightlife** as social and creative culture traditionally expressed and experienced at night. It is created by a broad range of creatives, supporting workers, stakeholders and consumers—together, they form the **nighttime community.** These individuals are part of the **nighttime economy** (NTE), which connotes all the activities, businesses and workers operating at night: nightlife, hospitality and leisure as well as night shift workers, late-night transportation, retail, and more.

Creative Footprint employs 15 different indicators across three sets of parameters—Framework Conditions, Community and Content, Space—to examine a city's creative and cultural nighttime infrastructure. To assess a creative space, interviewees and focus group participants respond to specific statements using a Likert scale—a psychometric response scale—indicating their level of agreement or disagreement or validity of the statement for the city.

Framework Conditions
External conditions affecting artistic, cultural and other nighttime activity, including relevant laws, regulations and policies; relationships between cultural actors and civic decision makers; the type of funding and support infrastructure available; and access to public and private space for cultural programming and activities.

Community and Content
Criteria related to how venues value creativity and culture, including how venues promote cultural offerings in their marketing; if venues facilitate interdisciplinary and/or experimental artistic formats; how community-centred venues are; and if venues foreground original creative content.

Space
Internal and external physical conditions related to the city's creative and cultural nighttime infrastructure, including venue size; how well connected venues are to nearby transportation hubs; how long venues have operated in the city; the multifunctionality of venues; and the reputation of venues.

Framework Conditions	Community and Content	Space
Public transportation at night	**Promotion**	**Venue size**
To what degree is the city's public transportation available at high frequency after midnight? How affordable and accessible are venues via public transport?	To what degree does the venue centre music and artistic content in their marketing and promotion (in contrast to food offerings or drink specials)?	Venue floor space used for music events and performances, in m².
Overall funding for music and nightlife	**Interdisciplinarity**	**Pedestrian frequency**
To what degree is public or government funding available for music and nightlife activities?	To what degree does the venue enable a range of artistic practices and interdisciplinary formats?	Venues' proximity to fixed public transport nodes and pedestrian accessibility.
Overall policies and regulations	**Community focus**	**Years operating**
To what degree do the city's policies, licensing, and law enforcement support music and nightlife activities?	To what degree does the venue provide space for specific scenes and communities, whether minoritised, marginalised and/or underrepresented in the city? Does the venue act as a hub for emerging talent, subgenre(s) and local communities?	Number of years a venue has operated since opening.
Access to local politicians and decision makers	**Creative output**	**Multifunctionality of spaces**
To what degree can music and nightlife stakeholders access the city's politicians and decision makers? Is there a night mayor or representative that fosters a collaborative approach to resolving issues?	To what degree does the venue platform original creative content (including DJing and electronic music) through their music and nightlife programming?	Venues' number of regular uses and functions.
Public cultural activities	**Experimentation**	**Reputation**
To what degree do the city's public spaces and properties allow for music and nightlife activities? How affordable and accessible is acquiring a licence for music and nightlife events?	To what degree does the venue platform original experimental content through their music and nightlife programming?	Venues' social media reach.

Quantitative and qualitative research approaches

Creative Footprint's data scientists examined 15 key data indicators related to each music and nightlife venue in Montréal (totalling 271 venues) across the above parameters. Primary data were gathered through two online focus groups with 50+ Montréal-based music and nightlife stakeholders pertaining to a representative sample of venues in Montréal. These data were then related to economic, geographic, and demographic data and the locations of critical transportation infrastructure*. Using a custom software environment designed and maintained by Michael Fichman at PennPraxis, the CFP data team described the distribution of variables collected in the CFP data, and mined them for important trends and relationships. They integrated these data with those from other CFP cities to see how Montréal compared. These data are also integrated with CFP's proprietary algorithms to calculate the CFP "score". In analysing the original content and programming of each of Montréal's venues, this methodology evaluates the cultural and social impact of the city's creative and cultural nightlife, as opposed to solely its economic impact.

To accompany quantitative analysis, Creative Footprint conducted qualitative research including focus groups and in-depth interviews with stakeholders, in order to identify the key issues, challenges and opportunities for communities and creative spaces making up Montréal's music and nightlife scenes.

Research participants

Collectively, focus group participants and interviewees represented independent grassroots venue and label operators, artists and DJs, underground event organisers, and staff from larger, established event companies, as well as Montréal's nighttime event-going public. Focus group participants and interviewees ranged in age, background, ethnicity, sexual and gender identity. They represented a mix of experience, from several years to several decades' experience in music and nightlife across multiple scenes and subcultures (including Anglo- and Francophone music), with strongest representation from electronic music.

*Economic and demographic analysis was conducted using Statistics Canada census data sets from 2021 (and from 2016 where measurements of change over time are concerned). Administrative and transportation data sets are from Ville de Montréal open data portals. All sources are listed in References.)

Research scope

Creative Footprint's research scope includes Montréal's 19 boroughs as well as several contiguous (or landlocked) cities and towns on the Island of Montréal and smaller peripheral islands.*

*(Excluded from scope: Baie-d'Urfé, Beaconsfield, Senneville, Kirkland, Montréal-Est, Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, Dorval, Pointe-Claire)

Ville de Montréal boroughs

1. Ahuntsic-Cartierville
2. Anjou
3. Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce
4. Lachine
5. LaSalle
6. Le Plateau-Mont-Royal
7. Le Sud-Ouest
8. L'Île-Bizard–Sainte-Geneviève
9. Mercier–Hochelaga-Maisonneuve
10. Montréal-Nord
11. Outremont
12. Pierrefonds-Roxboro
13. Rivière-des-Prairies–Pointe-aux-Trembles
14. Rosemont–La Petite-Patrie
15. Saint-Laurent
16. Saint-Léonard
17. Verdun
18. Ville-Marie (including Île Sainte-Hélène and Île Notre-Dame)
19. Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension

Contiguous municipalities

a. Mont-Royal
b. Hampstead
c. Côte-Saint-Luc
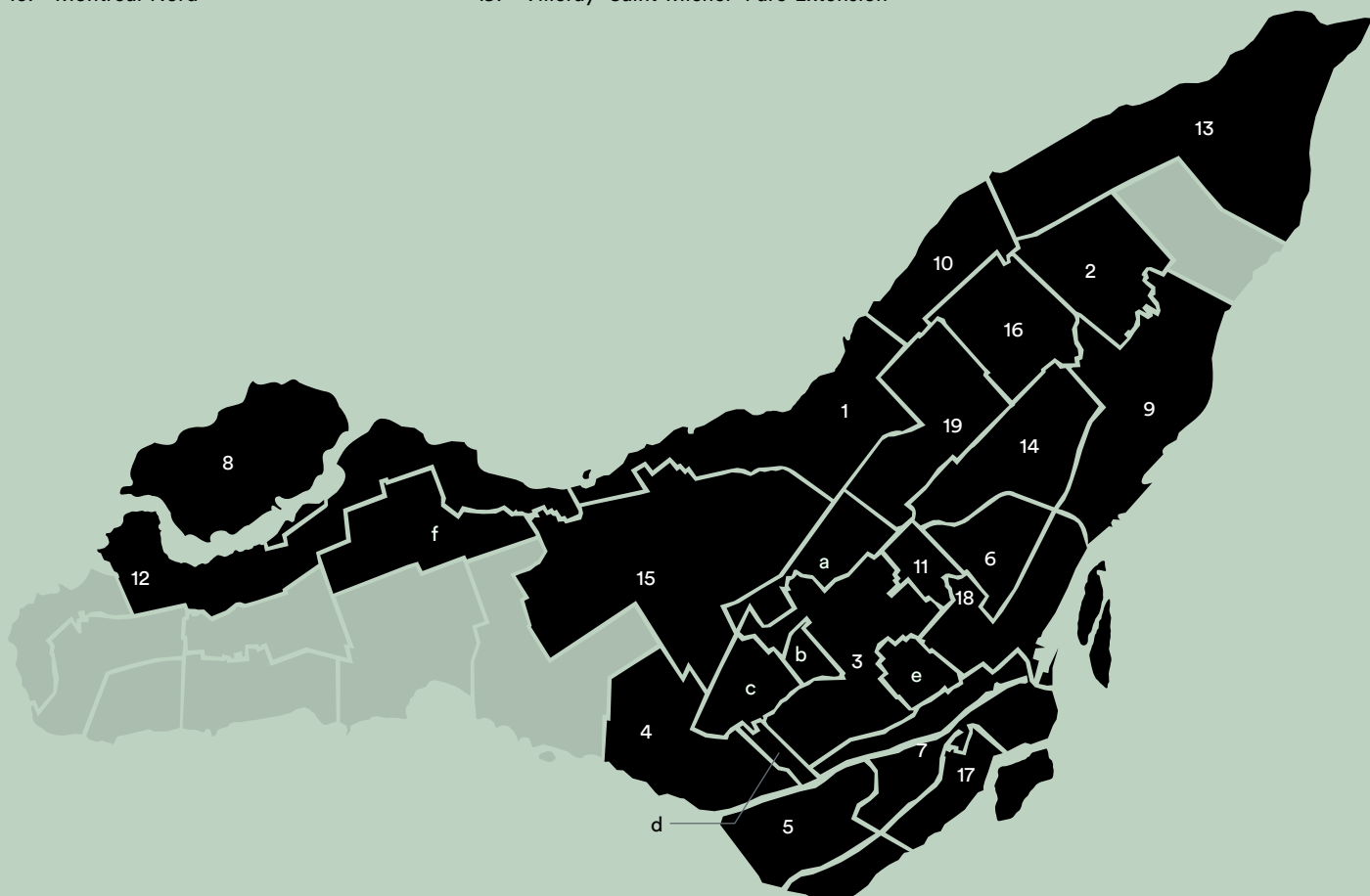d. Montréal-Ouest
e. Westmount
f. Dollard-des-Ormeaux

FIGURE 2: MAP SHOWING RESEARCH SCOPE OF CREATIVE FOOTPRINT STUDY OF MONTRÉAL

SECTION III: PRESENTING MONTRÉAL'S CREATIVE FOOTPRINT SCORES

Creative Footprint consists of qualitative, quantitative, and spatial analyses to offer detailed insights as well as an overall snapshot of a city's nightlife culture. Montréal's overall Creative Footprint score is **6.57,** similar to both Tokyo (6.51) and Stockholm (6.58). The city's higher *Space* and *Community and Content* scores are counterweighted by a lower score for *Framework Conditions*—which research participants affirmed in interviews and focus groups. The next two sections detail research outcomes, beginning with spatial findings in this section followed by discussion of qualitative insights. *Key insights:*

Montréal's 271 venues are highly concentrated in a few central boroughs with high population density, transit density and percentage of young adults. 89% of venues studied are in four central boroughs: Ville-Marie, Le Plateau-Mont-Royal, Le Sud-Ouest, and Rosemont-La-Petite-Patrie.

Venue density does *not* correlate with regional clusters of high rent and income. This finding diverges from other CFP city analyses, which have shown a *positive* relationship between these variables (i.e. venues gathering more densely in more expensive areas of the city). This suggests that there are opportunities to support existing spaces and to explore the development of creative spaces in desirable areas, with less cost pressure in comparison to other CFP cities.

Montréal's venues score highly in all programming variables as compared to other CFP cities. Programming variable scores (*Community and Content* metrics) are particularly high for multi-use venues as compared to single-use venues.

Experimentation and diversity of programming is seen to increase with venue size. This pattern is different from other CFP cities, which tend to display more experimentation in smaller venues.

Several districts exhibit characteristics often associated with higher concentrations of venues (i.e. population density, transit access), **but do not exhibit expected venue density.** This suggests there may be opportunities for more nightlife space in these areas of the city.

Montréal's nightlife actors see its mid-size, talent, energy, and cross-pollination between genres and scenes as strengths. But its spaces still face issues: research participants voiced a range of challenges in accessing indoor and outdoor event spaces, threats from increasing residential development. Policy and governance issues such as "arbitrary" enforcement approaches, limited nighttime transit options, and strict closing times also pose obstacles. Furthermore, while Montréal has exceptionally strong cultural funding opportunities and nightlife is generally recognised as an asset to the city's global identity, participants still reported challenges in accessing funding schemes and reaching municipal decision-makers, suggesting disconnects between values and implementation.

Public transportation at night — 5.10

Overall funding for music and nightlife — 5.80

Overall policies and regulations — 3.30

Access to local politicians and decision makers — 4.52

Public cultural activities — 2.52

Venue size — 9.05

Pedestrian frequency — 9.80

Years operating — 8.18

Multifunctionality of spaces — 8.38

Reputation — 7.80

Promotion — 6.59

Interdisciplinarity — 7.56

Community focus — 5.56

Creative output — 6.38

Experimentation — 5.06

FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

COMMUNITY AND CONTENT
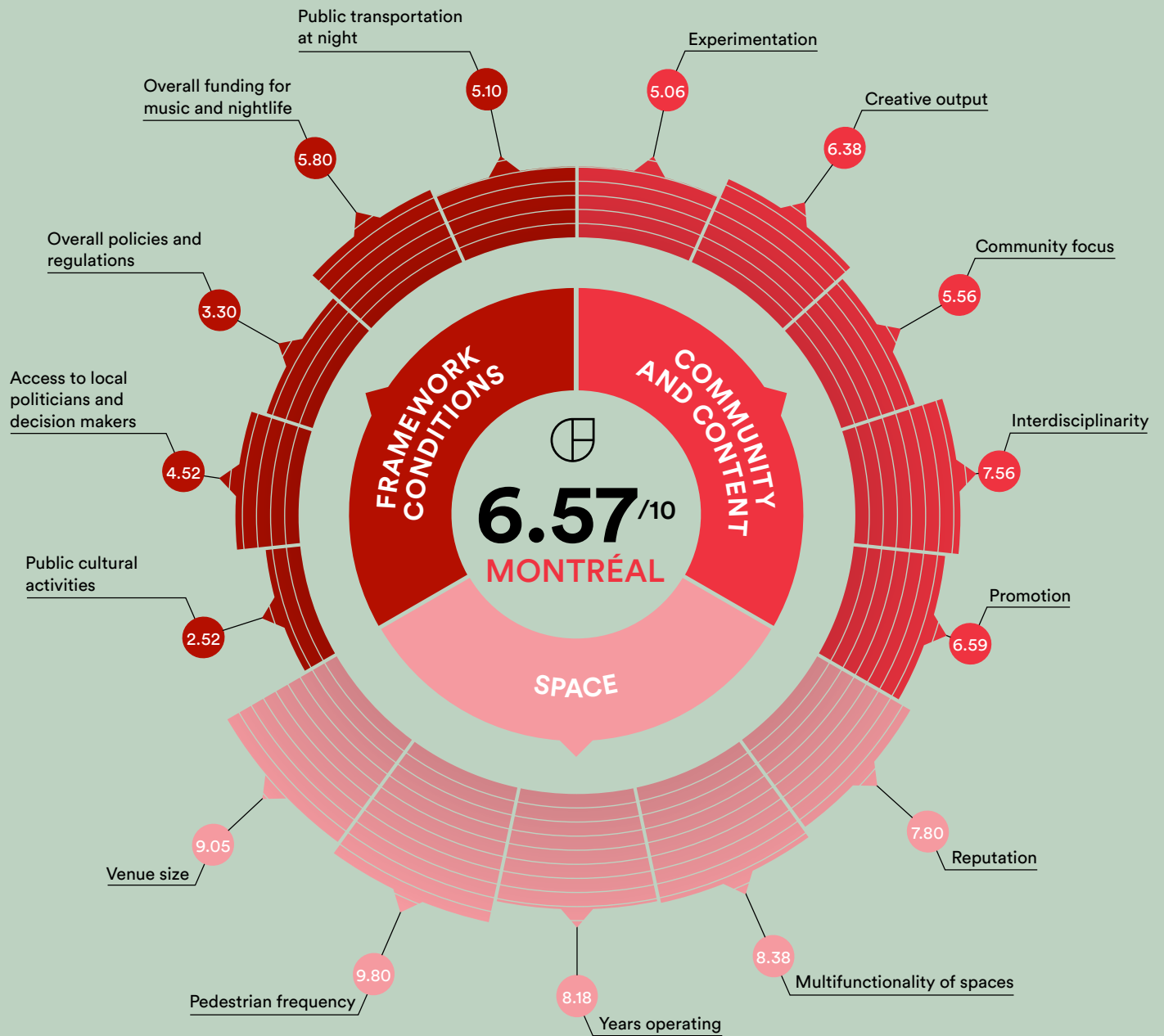
SPACE

6.57/10
MONTRÉAL

FIGURE 3: GRAPHIC SHOWING OVERALL CREATIVE FOOTPRINT SCORE FOR MONTRÉAL. EACH SCORE IS OUT OF 10.

Framework Conditions	Community and Content	Space
Public transportation at night	**Promotion**	**Venue size**
5.10	6.59	9.05
Overall policies and regulations	**Interdisciplinarity**	**Pedestrian frequency**
5.80	7.56	9.80
Public cultural activities	**Community focus**	**Years operating**
3.30	5.56	8.18
Access to local politicians and decision makers	**Creative output**	**Multifunctionality of spaces**
4.52	6.38	8.38
Public cultural activities	**Experimentation**	**Reputation**
2.52	5.06	7.80
Overall	**Overall**	**Overall**
4.18	**7.15**	**8.38**
Public transportation at night	**Promotion**	**Venue size**

Venue Density

Venues are geographically clustered in a few boroughs in the central areas of the urban agglomeration. The areas surrounding Ville-Marie, which tend to be denser, younger and more accessible by public transit, also contain many of the city's key cultural, educational, and governmental institutions. Other boroughs surrounding the city's core contain far fewer venues than the two central boroughs of Ville-Marie and Le-Plateau-Mont-Royal. No venues were documented in boroughs and municipalities on the northern and western sides of the island, which tend to have less commercial centres and are dominated by residential neighbourhoods and industrial clusters.

1. *Le Plateau–Mont–Royal*
2. *Ville–Marie*
3. *Le Sud–Ouest*
4. *Rosemont–La Petite–Patrie*
5. *Outremont*
6. *Villeray–Saint–Michel–Parc–Extension*
7. *Mercier–Hochelaga–Maisonneuve*
8. *Côte–des–Neiges–Notre–Dame–de–Grâce*
9. *Saint–Léonard*
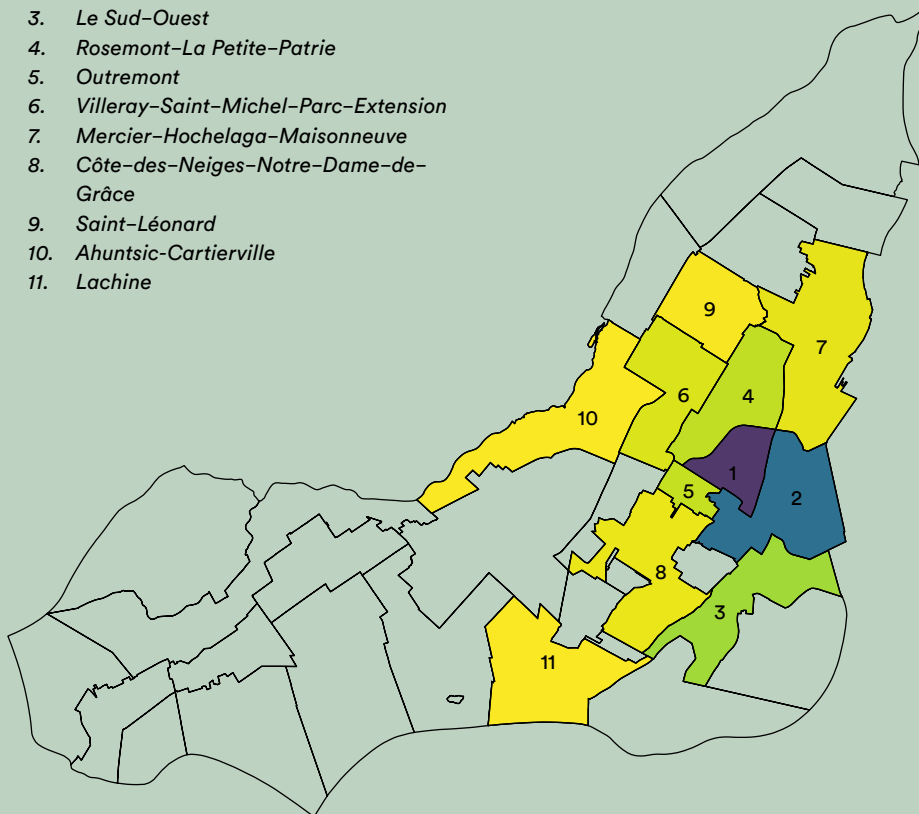10. *Ahuntsic–Cartierville*
11. *Lachine*

Maximum

Minimum

FIGURE 4: MAP SHOWING DENSITY OF VENUES IN MONTRÉAL

Venues by Borough

Ville-Marie

Le Plateau-Mont-Royal

Le Sud-Ouest

Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie

Mercier—Hochelaga-Maisonneuve

Villeray—Saint-Michel—Parc-Extension

Côte-des-Neiges—Notre-Dame-de-Grâce

Outremont

Saint-Léonard

Lachine

Ahuntsic-Cartierville

0   25   50   75   100   125

Total venues
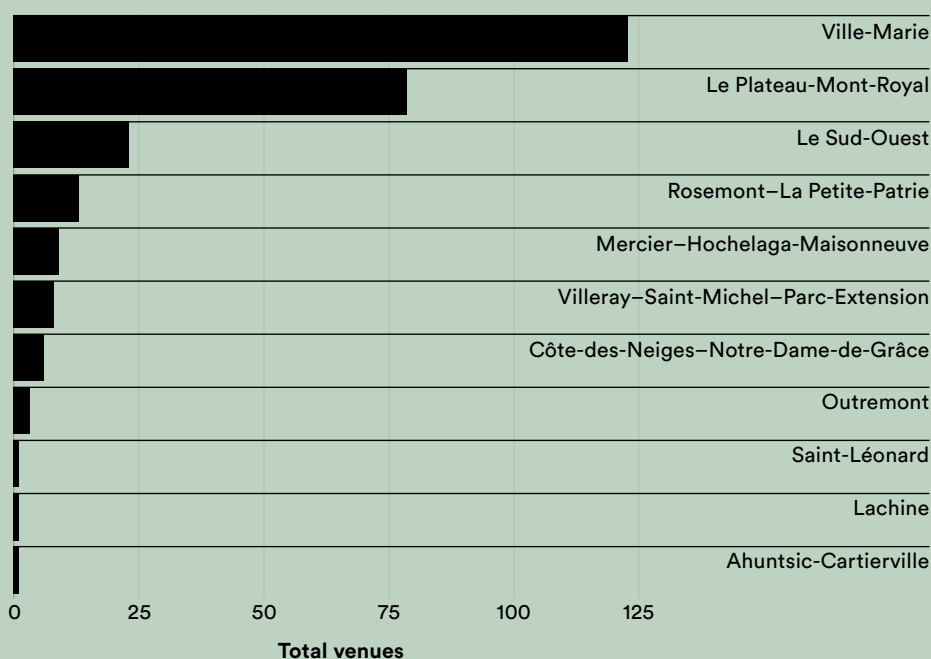
Venues are concentrated in a few boroughs. Ville-Marie and Le-Plateau-Mont-Royal account for roughly 75% of the venue sample, while the top four boroughs hold 89% of identified venues. Our community research process identified venues in 11 boroughs (the city has 19 boroughs, the Island of Montréal has 15 additional boroughs and municipalities).

FIGURE 5: GRAPHIC SHOWING NUMBER OF VENUES BY DISTRICT IN MONTRÉAL

Montréal's overall Creative Footprint score is **6.57**, similar to both Tokyo (6.51) and Stockholm (6.58).

While Montréal is comparable to other cities on Space metrics and scores highly on *Community and Content*, its *Framework Conditions* score is the lowest of the CFP dataset, suggesting that these concerns are most significant to address.

	Framework Conditions	Community and Content	Space	Overall Score
Berlin 2017	8.82	6.75	8.49	8.02
New York City 2018	6.35	6.92	8.59	7.29
Tokyo 2019	4.48	6.96	8.08	6.51
Stockholm 2021	5.06	6.27	8.40	6.58
Montréal 2022	**4.18**	**7.15**	**8.38**	**6.57**

Programming variables

Montréal's cultural venues scored highly in programming variables, particularly for promotion and creative output. Each of these metrics is measured on a four-point Likert Scale. For example, the Promotion metric is assessed as follows:

"Q: Is the promotion/marketing of this space focused on artistic content (artists, lineups, performances)? Are musicians the main reason why people attend these venues, and not e.g. culinary offers?"

1. Not At All Likely 2. Not too likely 3. Somewhat likely 4. Very Likely

Nearly 50 venues were rated by our community assessors the highest likelihood (4) in all four categories.

Likelihood rating

- Not At All Likely
- Not too Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Very Likely
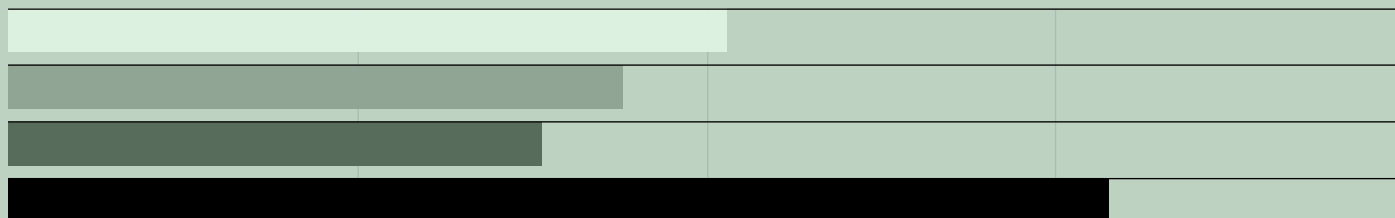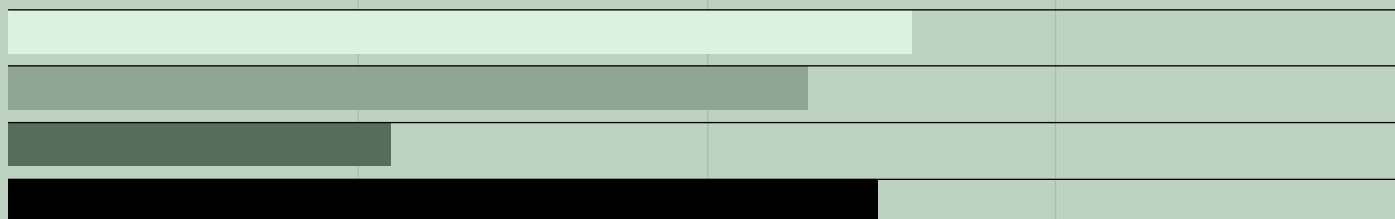
FIGURE 6: GRAPHIC SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF PROGRAMMING VARIABLES FOR MONTRÉAL'S VENUES

Venue size distribution

Montréal (Square meters)

Most venues in Montréal are in the small to medium size category, with a still significant share of larger venues. This "venue ladder"[30] offers steps for artists and promoters at many stages of their career: more intimate spaces that can support emerging local or regional artists and promoters, as well as fewer, larger spaces suited for national and international acts.
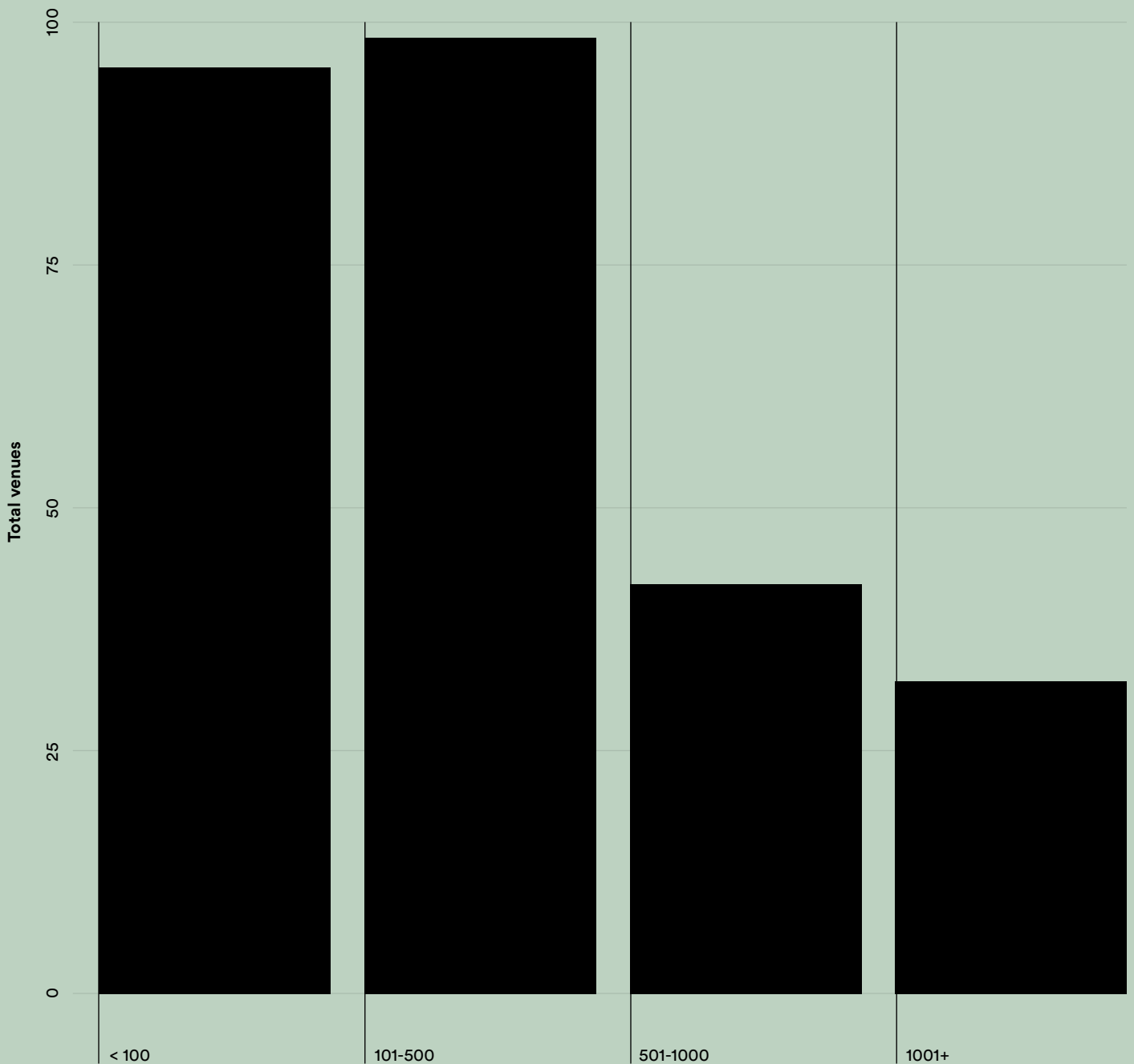
FIGURE 7: GRAPHIC SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF MONTRÉAL'S VENUE FLOOR SIZE IN METRES SQUARED

Venue Size: CFP Cities

Compared to the venue size distribution of other CFP cities, Montréal's venue ladder is similar to that of Berlin and Tokyo, with a relatively healthy mix of small and medium size spaces that are ideal for local programming. However, some promoters did report their perception that the city still lacks spaces in the 150-350 and 500-1500 capacity range; this is further discussed in Section IV.

Size (Square Meters)

- < 100
- 101–500
- 501–1000
- 1001+

● Berlin
2017

- < 100
- 101–500
- 501–1000
- 1001+

● New York City
2018

- < 100
- 101–500
- 501–1000
- 1001+

● Tokyo
2019

- < 100
- 101–500
- 501–1000
- 1001+

● Stockholm
2021

- < 100
- 101–500
- 501–1000
- 1001+

● Montréal
2022

- < 100
- 101–500
- 501–1000
- 1001+

Percentage of Venues %

FIGURE 8: GRAPHIC SHOWING COMPARISON OF VENUE FLOOR SIZE IN BERLIN, NEW YORK, TOKYO, STOCKHOLM AND MONTRÉAL IN METRES SQUARED

Experimental score by venue size

This graph shows experimental content score distribution for each venue size category. While venues of all sizes rate relatively low for experimental programming, the percentage of venues with high experimental ratings rises with venue size, indicating that a significant share of the city's large venues are associated with experimenta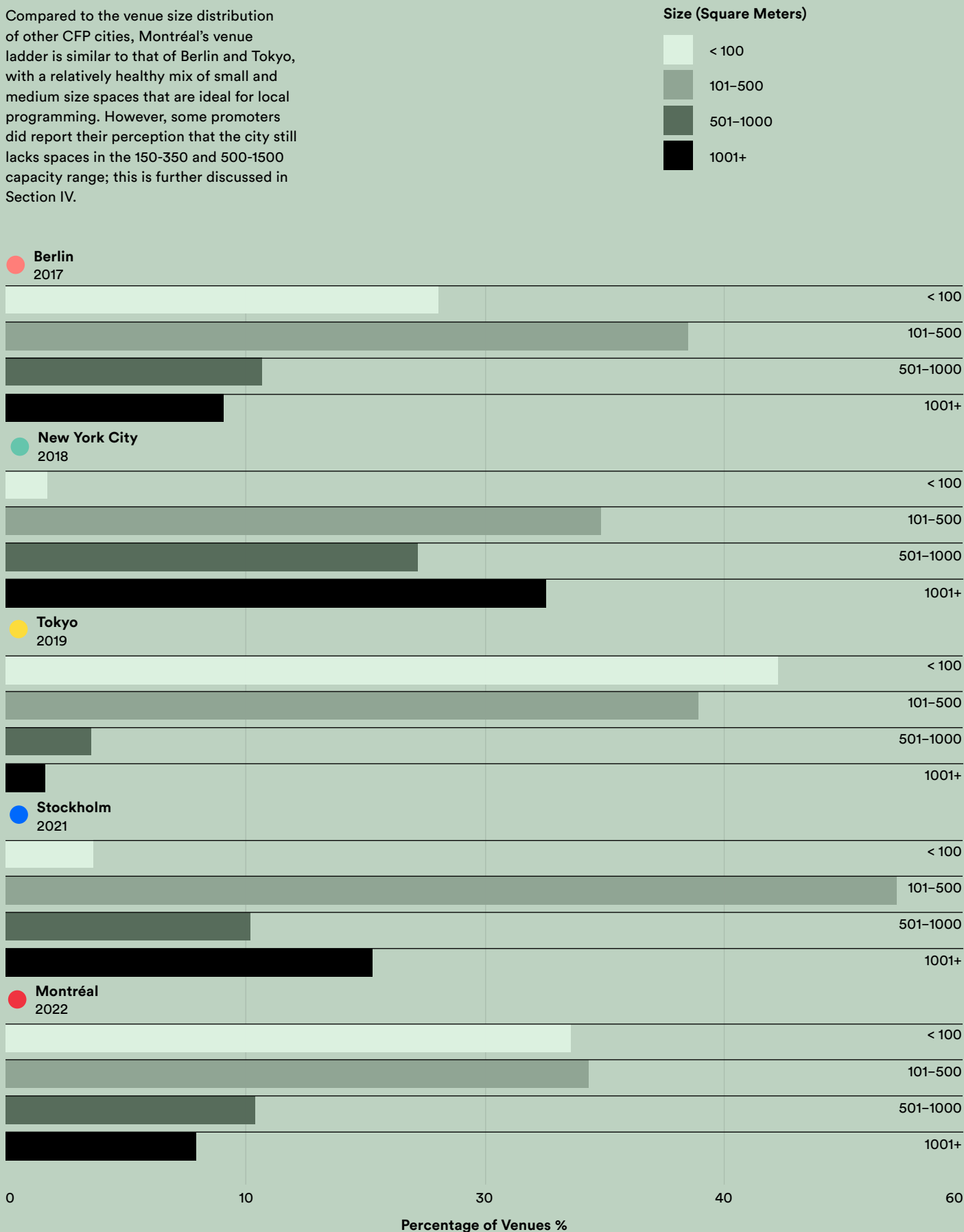tion and diversity. This is different from other CFP cities, where smaller venues tend to have more diverse and experimental content while larger venues tend to have more mainstream content.

Many of these large highly experimental venues (>1000 m2) are located in Ville-Marie and include notable theatres and performing arts centres such as Société des arts technologiques (S.A.T.), Parc Jean-Drapeau, MTelus and Place des Festivals. However, most of the smaller highly experimental venues (>500 m2) tend to be located in the neighbouring Le Plateau-Mont-Royal borough.

Likelihood of Experimental Content

- Not At All Likely
- Not too Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Very Likely

< 100 m²
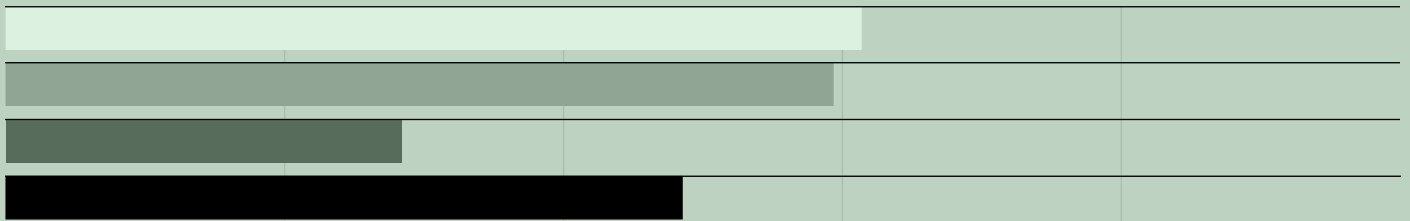
101–500 m²

501–1000 m²

1001+ m²

0   10   20   30   40   50

Percentage of venues in size category

FIGURE 9: GRAPHIC SHOWING EXPERIMENTAL CONTENT SCORES FOR MONTRÉAL'S VENUES IN RELATION TO VENUE FLOOR SIZE IN METRES SQUARED

Distribution of programming variables by venue use
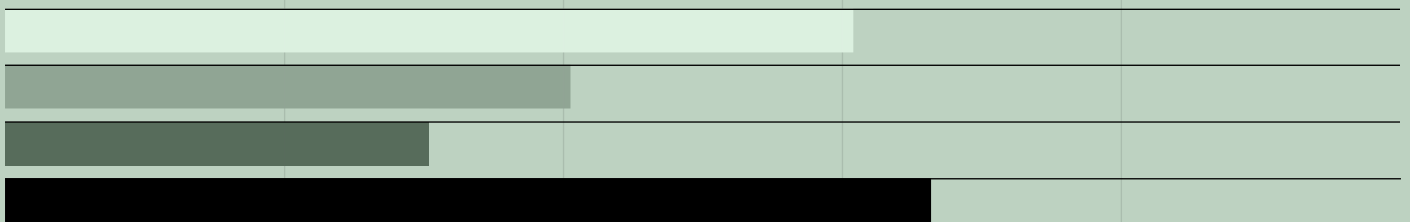
Multi-use venues were ranked significantly higher in all programming variable categories as compared to single-use venues. This implies that venues that host multiple types of activities (for example a warehouse that serves as a club, studio and gallery) are perceived as generally more creative and experimental, better able to promote their content, and are regarded as integral parts of their community. This finding is interesting in that it might reflect beneficial cross-pollination from Montréal's reliance on multi-use spaces. However, the lack of dedicated "club" type spaces was also cited by community members as a deficiency—seeming to contradict this data insight. Lower levels of initial capital investment needed for multifunctional spaces (in contrast to dedicated club spaces) might offer opportunities or a lower barrier to entry for new spaces.

Likelihood rating

- Not At All Likely
- Not too Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Very Likely

Multi−Use
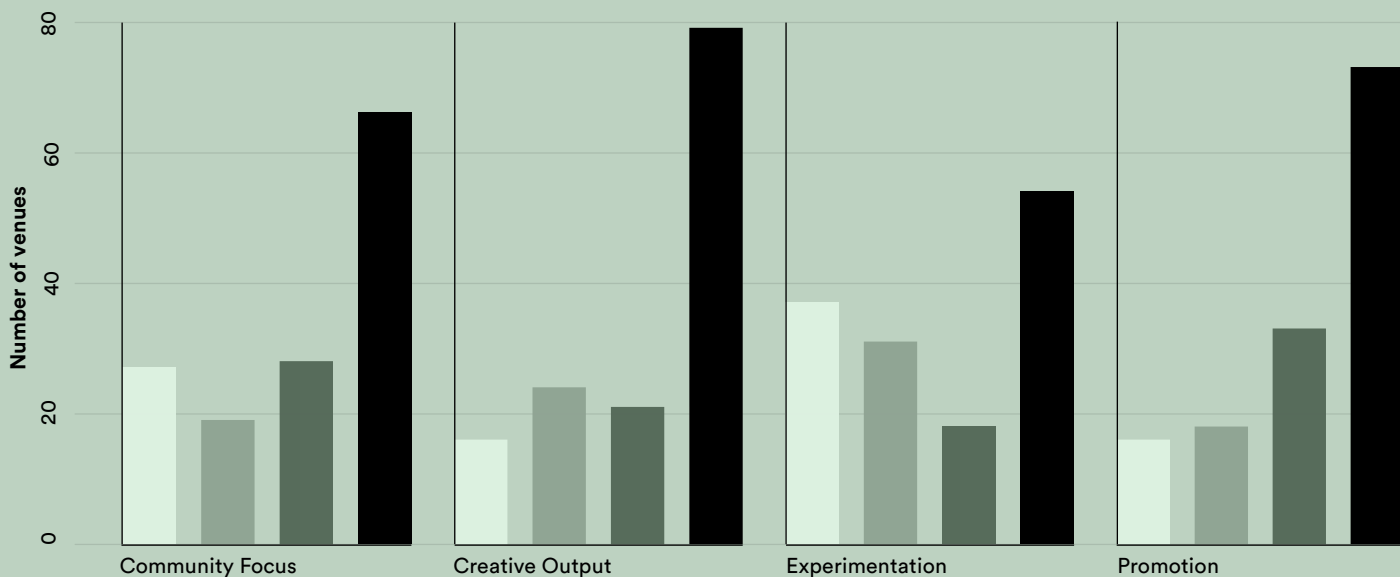
Single−Use
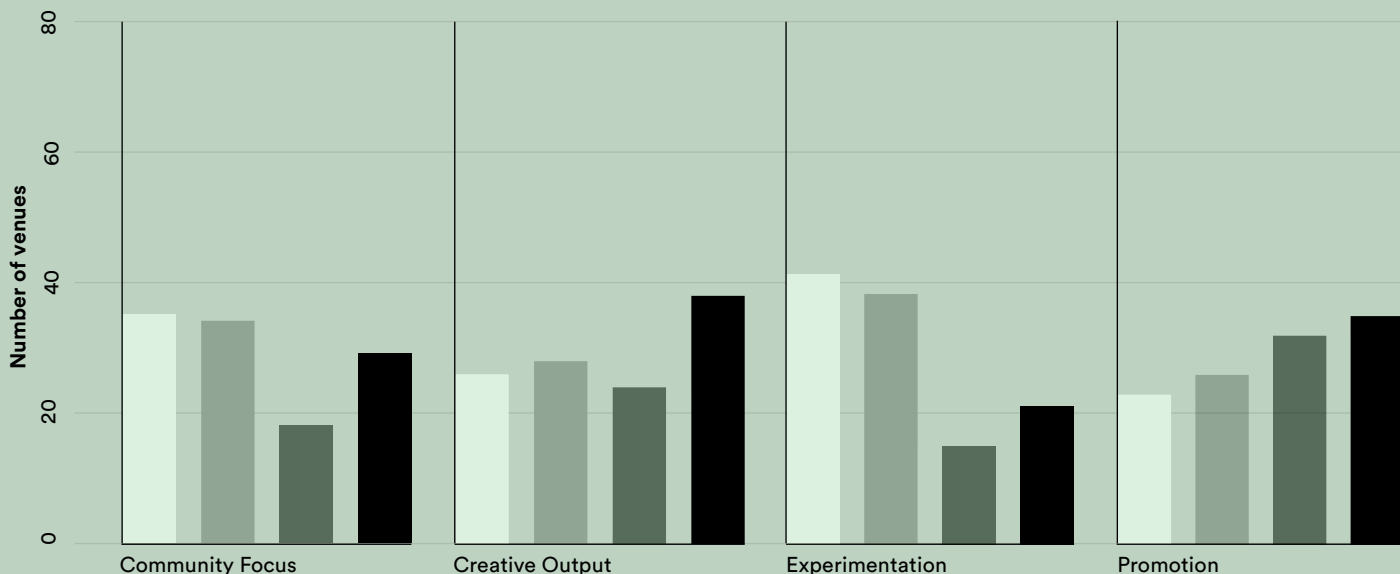
FIGURE 10: GRAPHIC SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF MONTRÉAL'S VENUE PROGRAMMING VARIABLES

Venue density

Agglomeration is a core concept in urban economics—firms, and populations co-locate with each other and with infrastructure and amenities. This creates strong economic competition between venues and other land uses for well-located space—a source of economic risk to creative communities.

Montréal's economic landscape presents some opportunities in this respect—areas with relatively good transit access and high density of young adults have more reasonable rents than in peer cities. However—venue-dense borough Ville-Marie has had one of the fastest rates of rental increases in the last 10 years, suggesting this trend might change.

Montréal's *relatively* affordable core, with its density of venues and strong programming characteristics, is something rare that can be preserved.
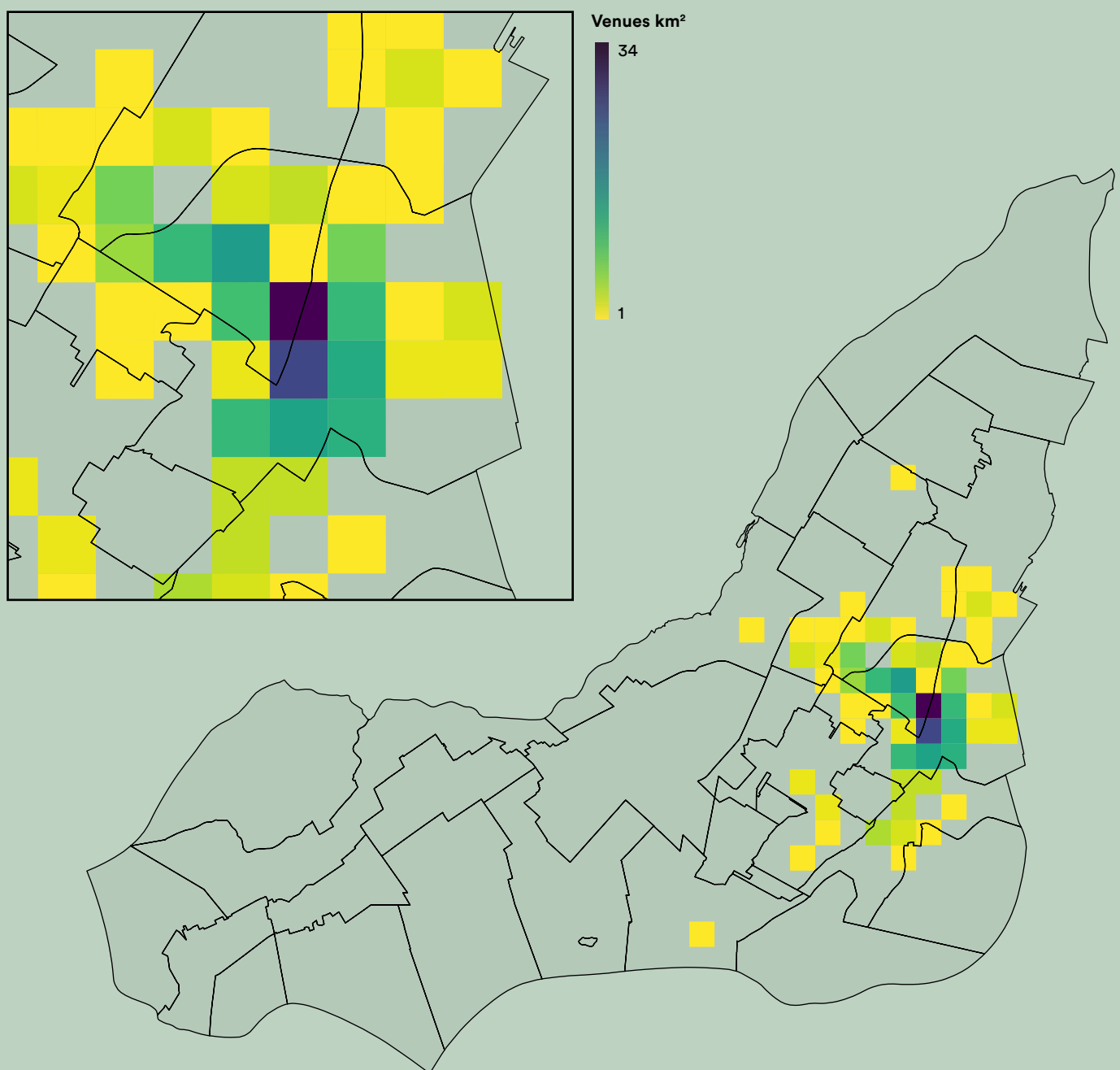
FIGURE 11: MAP SHOWING DENSITY OF VENUES IN MONTRÉAL IN KILOMETRES SQUARED

Venue density and transit density go together

Each point represents a borough (NY), ward (Tokyo), district (SWE), arrondissement (MON) or bezirk (BER)
Dotted line represents best fit trend.

Nightlife venues and culture rely on accessible transit, and thrive where that infrastructure exists. Transit density, specifically the availability of fixed rail, tends to correlate with venue density in CFP cities, including Montréal.

The CFP method is based (in part) on the examination of urban trends in multiple cities. One global trend CFP has identified is the co-location between density of fixed transit stations and density of venues. Montréal's venue and transit densities are consistent with this trend: if a district has an above-average density of venues, it likely has an above-average density of transit.

CFP Cities:

● **Berlin**
2017

● **New York City**
2018

● **Tokyo**
2019

● **Stockholm**
2021
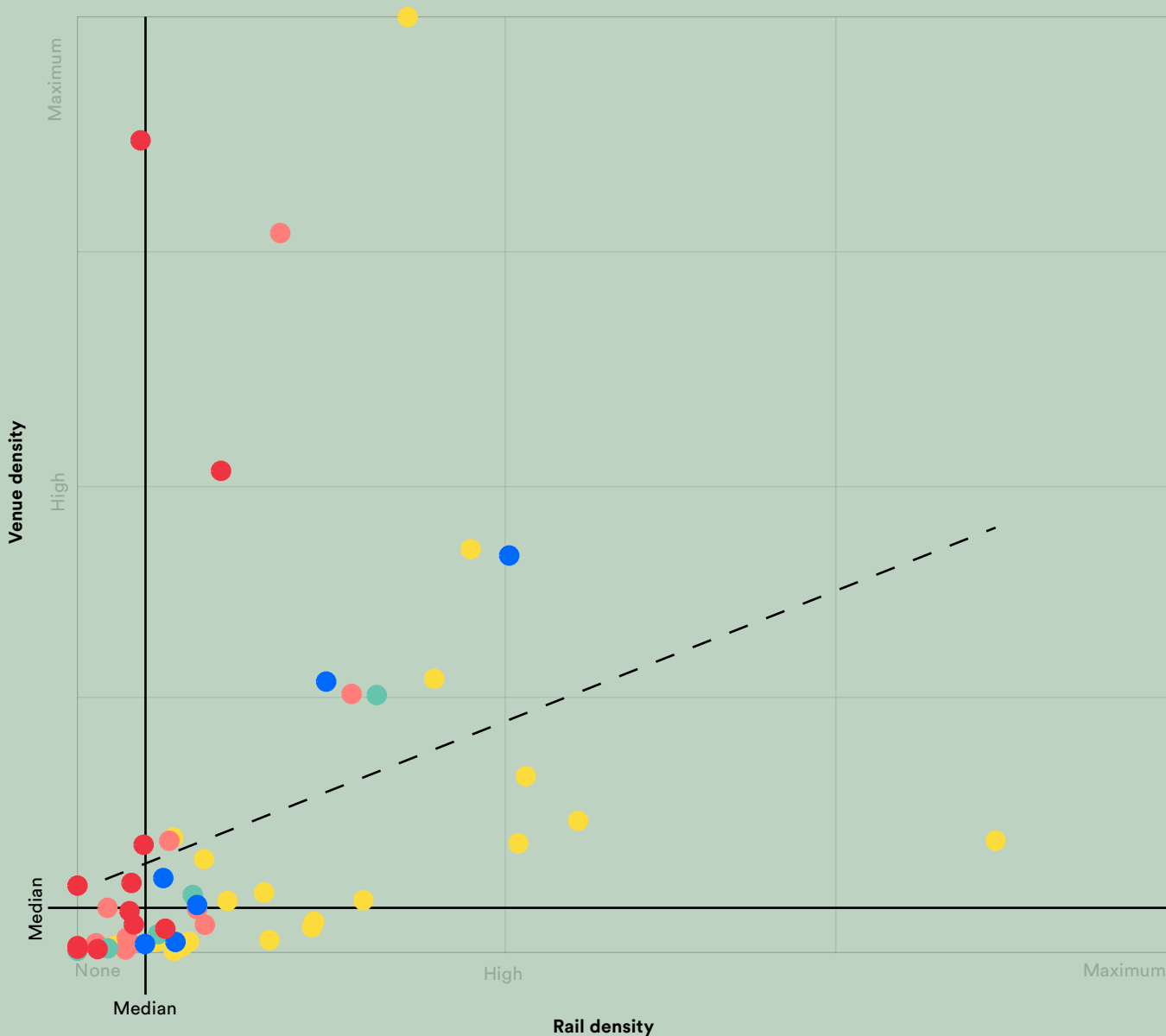
● **Montréal**
2022

FIGURE 12 GRAPHIC SHOWING POSITIVELY CORRELATING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSIT AND VENUE DENSITY ACROSS BERLIN, NEW YORK, TOKYO, STOCKHOLM AND MONTRÉAL

Venue characteristics as function of urban variables

Demographic and spatial urban variables have also been shown to correlate with the presence of nightlife venues in CFP cities. **In Montréal, borough venue density correlates with population density, density of young adults, transit density, and mean pedestrian frequencies.** These findings reinforce trends seen in other cities and indicate that these urban conditions are favourable for the existence and growth of nightlife.

Venue density in Montréal's boroughs does not, however, correlate with area income as has been seen in other CFP cities. While in cities like Stockholm and Berlin, areas with rich nightlife also exhibit higher rent and income, this trend is absent in Montréal. In the 2021 Census, Ville-Marie's median annual household income was below city averages despite being a central nightlife area with some higher income census tracts. Similarly, Le Sud-Ouest has one of the lower median rent levels in the city, but still contains a significant share of venues. Montréal's high income and rent areas are spread to suburban areas of the island.

- ⬤ Positive correlation
- ⬤ Negative correlation
- ⬤ No clear correlation

	Pedestrian Frequency	Density of Young Adults	Transit Density	Population Density	Area Median Income
Venue Density	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	No clear
Experimentation	Positive	No clear	No clear	No clear	No clear
Creative Output	Negative	No clear	No clear	No clear	No clear
Promotion	No clear	No clear	No clear	No clear	No clear
Community Focus	No clear	Positive	Positive	Positive	No clear

Zoom in: Montréal's Nightlife Core

Le Plateau-Mont-Royal
78 venues

The borough is known for its hip neighbourhoods of Le Plateau and Mile End, its residential character, and the many popular restaurants, coffeeshops, bars and performance spaces that have established the borough as a centre of Montréal's cultural scene. One of the city's smaller boroughs with both the highest population density and venue density in the city. A high percentage of young adults, and a higher median annual income ($62,300) compared to the other three boroughs. Median rent of $1035. High rankings across all programming categories.

Ville-Marie
122 venues

This central borough contains important administrative, economic and cultural institutions, the *Quartier des Spectacles* arts and entertainment district, the islands of Île Sainte-Hélène and Île Notre-Dame, neighbourhoods such as The Village, Old Montréal, and many of Montréal's large venues and festivals. Highest transit density makes it the most central, accessible area, citywide. The highest percentage of young adults of any borough. Second lowest median household income in the city ($57,383), and relatively high median monthly rent ($1118).

Four of Montréal's 19 boroughs contain 236 (or 89%) of all studied venues, but each have a different 'profile' in terms of their population, transit, venue stock, and programming.

Zoom in: Montréal's Nightlife Core

Rosemont-La-Petite-Patrie
13 venues

Located north of Le Plateau-Mont-Royal, and made up of diverse and densely populated residential neighbourhoods such as Little Italy and Mile-Ex. Home to Little Italy's Jean Talon Market. Bars and restaurants are clustered around several commercial corridors that go throughout the borough like Rue St Hubert, Rue Belanger, Saint-Laurent Blvd, and Rue Masson. Over a quarter of this borough (26%) are young adults. Median annual household income $60,855 and median monthly rent of $843; lower transit and venue density than the other three boroughs profiled here.

Le Sud-Ouest
23 venues

Made up of several largely residential and historically working class neighbourhoods and home to Atwater Market. Median rent remains affordable compared to other central boroughs: residents' household income has increased by 31% to $57,914 over five years (one of the most dramatic changes in the city) while rent has increased by 16% ($791). This area has seen recent, intense residential growth in areas like Griffintown, and may see continued growth in nightlife due to proximity to downtown, affordable rents, and increase in average household income.

For further research…
Five districts lack venues but share characteristics of boroughs with high venue density (transit, population density, high pedestrian frequency, and high proportion of young adults):

- Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce,
- Mercier–Hochelaga-Maisonneuve,
- Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension,
- Saint-Léonard and Verdun (to a lesser extent than the prior three).

It is important to note that other factors (borough governance, local conditions) exert a strong influence; these areas' infrastructure and demographics suggest potential opportunities.

SECTION IV: DISCUSSING CREATIVE FOOTPRINT'S RESEARCH FINDINGS

Montréal's Space scores were the strongest of the three categories, ranging from 7.80 to 9.80 of a possible 10. But even with these strong scores, industry actors reported challenges of financial accessibility, access to space, and threats from increasing residential development.

PHOTO CREDIT: NATHALIA-SEGATO
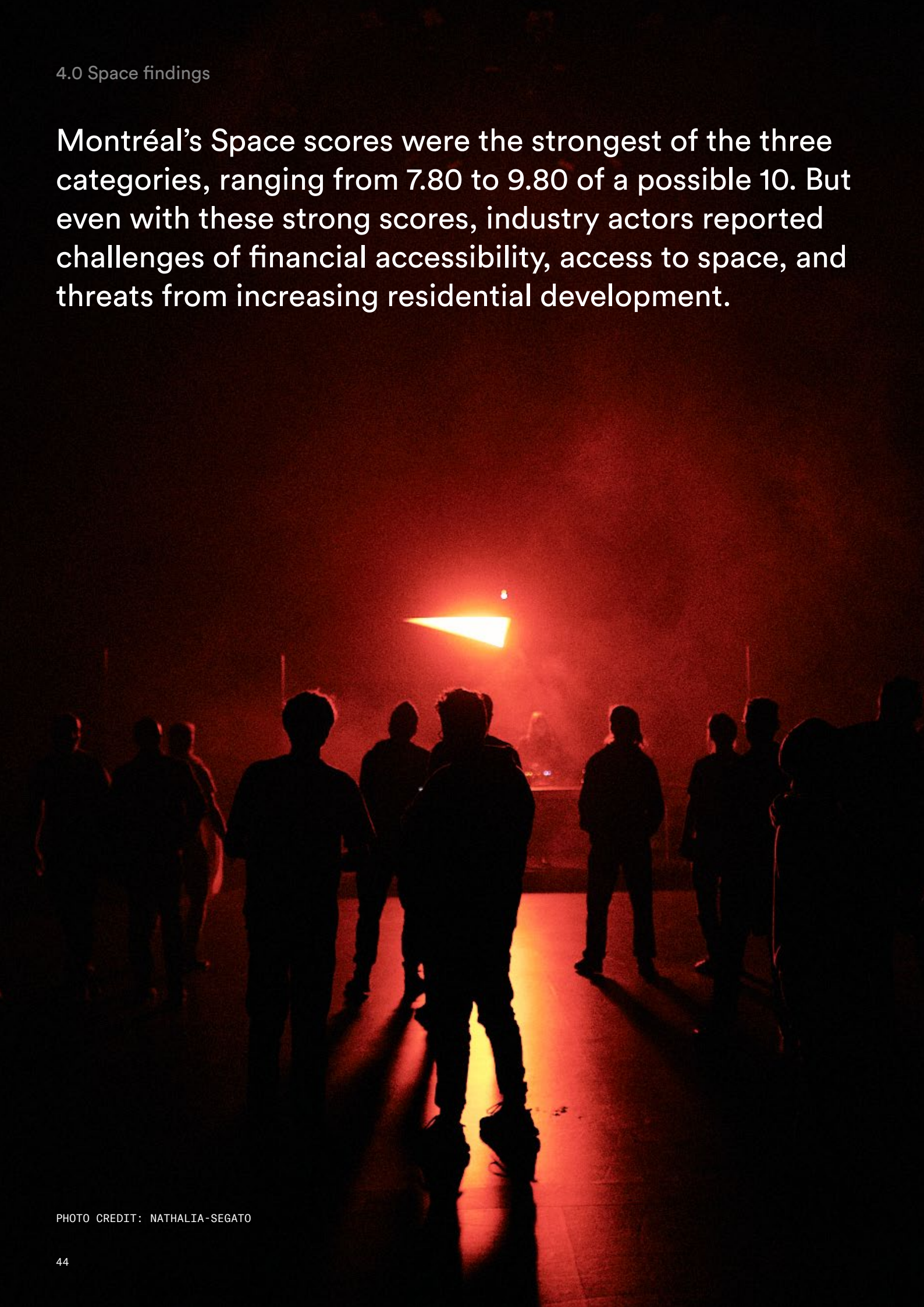
The Creative Footprint methodology defines Space as the interconnected internal and external physical conditions surrounding creative and cultural nighttime infrastructure in the city. This includes venue size, how well connected venues are to nearby transportation hubs, the average age of venues, as well as their multifunctionality, reputation, and visibility.

The paradox: Montréal has a strong "venue ladder," but industry participants voice an acute lack of space. Why? Montréal scores highly on venue mix, artistic quality, and multifunctionality—but respondents still struggle to access affordable space for events. What's happening here?

A range of factors are at play, including a larger talent pool of artists, DJs, and promoters than available and affordable venues; cost pressures across the artistic ecosystem; and a lack of dedicated club space. Increasing residential development sparking conflicts over nighttime sound presents a further threat. This section investigates these dynamics.

The talent pool is growing and needs more dedicated space to match it.

Longtime scene actors point out how the city's scenes have "exploded" in the last decade across indie, hip-hop, and electronic scenes, yielding international recognition and dynamic artistry—and recent years have seen a further rise in new parties and artistic collectives. This means a flood of artists, collectives, and event promoters seeking affordable space to both experiment with sound and build audience bases. Since Montréal's nightlife reopened in spring 2022, promoters describe finding spaces booked "back to back" months in advance.

Furthermore, many Montréal event organisers tend to work on a one-off relationship with either dedicated music venues or spaces used as pop-up event rentals. As Ziry, a promoter, event organiser and DJ put it: "There's not 'clubs'. We rent a venue and bring the sound in. It's a lot of work, but we're dedicated." This ground-up approach means that event organisers may bear the costs for not only space rental, staff, and talent, but also sound, lighting, and equipment rental, and often the initial cost of purchasing alcohol per *permis de réunion* requirements. This "event-based" culture is ultimately labour and cost-intensive for event producers.

Ziry's point also speaks to the *nature* of Montréal's spaces. Montréal has the highest proportion of venues in the Creative Footprint data set with multiple uses (i.e. showcasing multiple art forms, café or restaurant, etc). While multifunctional spaces can be flexible, interdisciplinary, and foster greater economic resilience, they may also feel less suitable for promoters seeking dedicated club spaces with a suitable sound and setup, and a large enough capacity for electronic music events. Furthermore, electronic music events often run late into the night, making clubs, bars, or music venues with 3 a.m. closing times unsuitable event spaces. This pushes operators to instead seek out reception halls or other one-off spaces to legally operate late-night events

By using floor area to calculate space, this analysis found that 36% of the city's venues have a maximum capacity of 100 people. However, building occupancy is calculated using other criteria (such as number of bathrooms and/or exits) alongside floor area, meaning that a venue's legal capacity may be lower in practice than its floor area suggests. Some promoters and artists voiced a need for more, smaller venues (150-300 capacity) particularly for electronic, hip-hop, and queer audiences. Others hoped for more venues in the 'missing middle' from 500-1500 capacity. As one promoter explained: "If I want to do an event with 1000 people, I only have six options." This suggests that the availability of accessible, affordable, and well-suited space is still a challenge.

Rising costs are an obstacle for promoters, venues, and artists alike.

Independent venue operators and promoters operate close to the margin. Even for successful and well-regarded independent venues, financial sustainability is a challenge—and Covid-19 and inflation have only exacerbated this dynamic. Malick Touré, director and cofounder of Ausgang Plaza, explains, "it took time for us to be able to be self-sustainable."[31] The venue, launched in 2015, was finding its financial and artistic footing in early 2020: "The beginning was perfect, we could pay the rent, we had our programming planned from spring to summer. That was the first time we started being able to see further [into the future], to invest and think about projects. And then Covid hit." Similarly, Jules Gauliard-Martineau of established Plateau venue Quai des Brumes sees municipal support funding for venues as essential to keep his and other spaces alive, particularly as property taxes rise.

"Rising costs [keep] a lot of people [from] participating," explains Moka Amraoui, cofounder of queer party FRKY. He notes that space rental costs have more than doubled in the past five years, making it difficult for industry entrants: "The creativity is there. I think a lot of people are blocked by the economics." Promoter and venue owner Shermine Sawalha agrees: "You want to grow into bigger venues, but the cost of being at those bigger venues becomes much higher." She explains the costs of a hypothetical large-scale event, from venue rental and talent to a venue's required costs of staffing, ticketing platforms, SOCAN fees, and even coat check: "I made the calculations and thought, *wow*. I called a couple promoters who assured me, *'there are no options.'"*

Increasingly, those costs are reflected in higher ticket fees for audiences, making it harder for those on a budget to participate in nightlife. Some scene veterans recall past years' free or $5 entry. Typical event pricing is now closer to $30-40, with some bigger events rising to $70.

Conflict over noise and sound is one of the biggest threats to creative space.

These dynamics are further compounded by increasing residential development. As nightlife areas see an influx in new residential development, new conflicts between residents and nightlife spaces can develop. While property developers and new neighbours may be attracted to the liveliness of nightlife districts, they may not fully recognise the realities of what the area sounds like at night. And while bars and venues are proud to contribute to the entertainment culture Montréal is known for, they must also contend with complaints, noise-related fines, and venue closures.

SPOTLIGHT: NOISE–RELATED CLOSURES

One of the greatest threats to Montréal nightlife are conflicts between residents and businesses, as gentrification and urban development create denser, mixed-use neighbourhoods. The resulting noise complaints and fines can in the worst case lead to venue closures. Unsurprisingly, venues are increasingly vulnerable and frustrated by these conflicts.

Closures can be particularly damaging to niche scenes. Now-shuttered venues like Jello Martini Bar, a home for Montréal's jazz and soul community, or Katacombes, a local platform for metal, punk, and underground scenes, made local scenes visible as "gathering points and discovery points for fringe Montréal music"[32]. Claudy Philius, veteran promoter and FRKY co-founder, describes the damaging cycle of gentrification as new residences displace venues: "Everyone flocks to these condos because there's an interesting nightlife…then boom…complaints left and right."

Noise complaints can originate from just one neighbour, as was the case in 2018, when popular independent theatre Le Divan Orange, where Arcade Fire got their start[33], was forced to close.[34] Le Plateau's Quai des Brumes faced the same issue from a neighbour who had converted a commercial space into a residence, eventually buying out their new neighbour to resolve the issue.[35]

Municipal negligence also threatens venues. La Tulipe, an historic music venue, has since 2016 been in dispute with a neighbour who was given a municipal permit in error to convert a commercial space to a residence. Borough mayor Luc Rabouin is attempting to reverse the faulty permit. The case remains in court.[36]

Venues are coming up with creative sound mitigation and neighbourhood mediation strategies. Quai des Brumes and neighbouring venues have worked with residents directly. In 2017 the Boulevard Saint-Laurent neighbourhood association (SDBSL) created a team called *Les Veilleurs* to mediate disputes

between residents, patrons and businesses.[37] To mitigate sound leakage to nearby residences, Breakglass Studio has developed flexible pulley systems that turn countertops into sound-dampening window coverings.

Despite the availability of a subvention fund for soundproofing, venues need more tailored municipal support, such as expanding the subvention fund eligibility to all venues including bars with dancefloors.[38] Ville de Montréal can consider other solutions including the agent of change principle[39], sound-blocking windows (Hafencity-Fenster[40]), and sound zones.[41][42][43]

As Nicolas Cournoyer of Piknic Électronik puts it, "we need a dialogue between residents, bar owners, venues…all those levels need to be involved." Noise-related conflicts are solvable. It is already clear that Ville de Montréal and venues are willing to work together so nightlife can coexist with local communities, which is increasingly necessary as Montréal continues to develop and grow.

Montréal's overall Community and Content score is higher at 7.15 than any of the prior Creative Footprint analyses. This complements the high Space scores generated by research participants, suggesting a high degree of attachment and pride to the local scene.
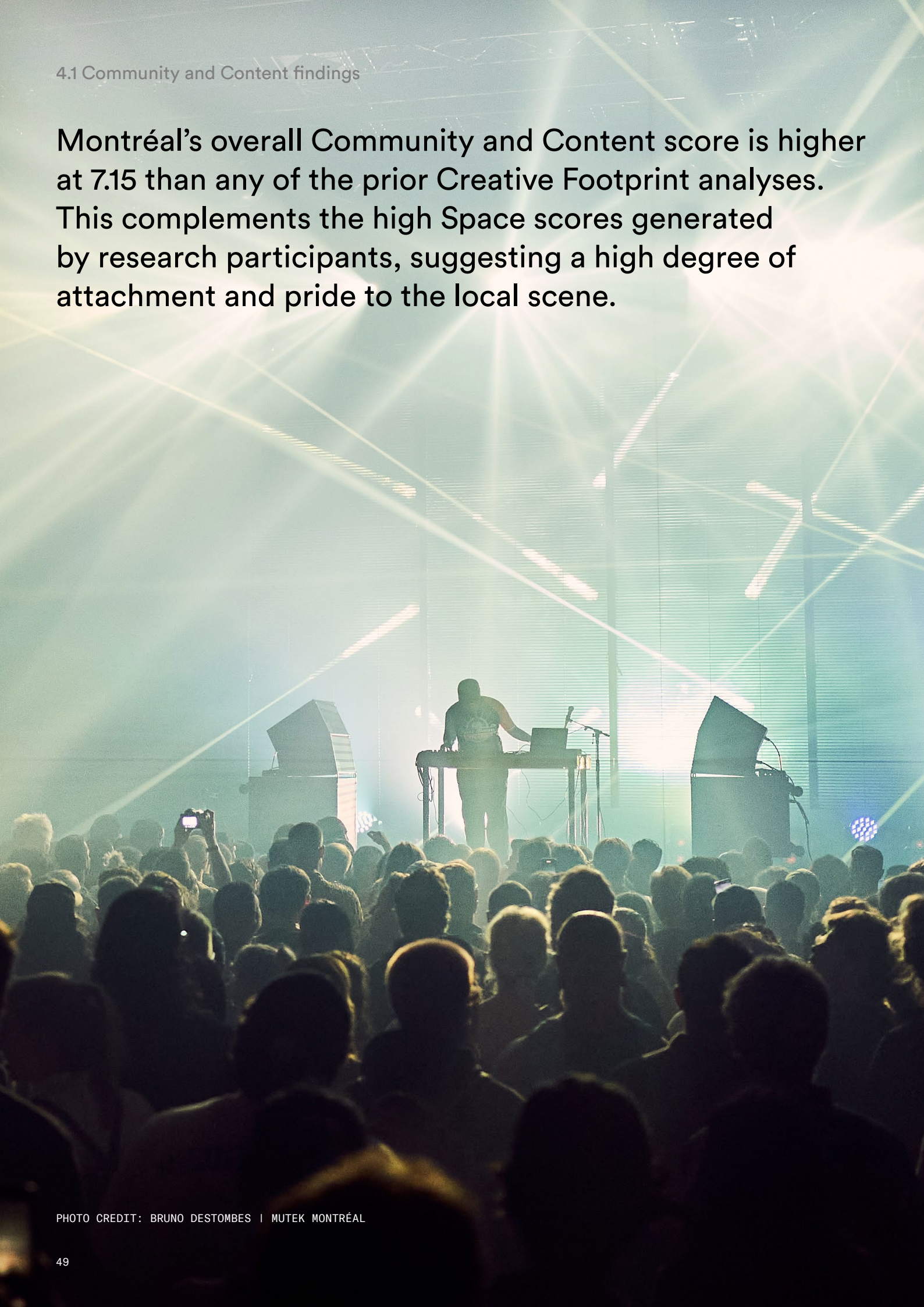
Creative Footprint defines Community and Content as interconnected metrics focused on the cultural value of creative and cultural nighttime infrastructure. These metrics look to creative venues' interdisciplinarity, originality and experimentation, and the value they place on community building. Key themes:

"Small city, big mentality": The city is large enough for a range of genres and scenes, but small enough for cross-pollination between them. Respondents were quick to appreciate Montréal's enthusiastic audiences, its deep history of disco and many other genres, and its bilingual heritage of both Francophone and Anglophone music traditions. In contrast to larger cities, where artists and nightlife creators might be more likely to spend time in just one musical scene, Montréal's smaller size enables more possibility of encounter, drawing inspiration from other genres and subcultures. Respondents saw the city's size as enabling its rich cultural identity. In their words:

"Montréal was maybe one of the first places that was really owning that eclectic energy— you don't have to be one sound. I think it's because we were a small community, all aware of one another and exposed to one another...I think we are quite high up there in quality of artists and I wish that was clearer in the global scene."

—Tiana McLaughlan/Honeydrip, DJ and producer

"Per capita, people go see more shows than in many other big cities. ...When I go backstage and speak to the artists after the shows—you see it in their face and their energy that they really appreciate the engagement. The energy we put forward as a group of people enjoying music—that's so precious."

—Evelyne Côté, Evenko

"We get a lot of feedback from artists—'the crowd was just amazing.' Of course when you play in front of 10,000 people outside in -15° and they're going crazy...it changes the perspective! It's a dance between the DJ or artist and the crowd. That's one thing I like about Montréal: their open mind with the music journey."

—Nicolas Cournoyer, Piknic Électronik

"Montréal is a nightlife city since the '70s: Disco era. Through the '70s to now, it's always been a party town. And it's a multicultural city. People mix — French, English—the language barrier's not a problem."

—Moka Amraoui, FRKY

"[After Covid] I started venturing out and talking to people and I realised that Montréal's nightlife is booming. There's so much going on. [Queer] people are more out, they're creating their own scenes. So on any given night I'm competing with four different queer events—we never used to have that, and that's amazing."
—Claudy Philius, FRKY

"It's very diverse—there's so many little scenes. The thing I like most is the creative talent. There's a lot of creative souls here in different styles of music. Electronic, techno, house, hip-hop, new hip-hop, all the new trap, pop, Latin, Haitian music, there's so much talent here that's being recognised internationally. That's what I admire the most."
—Malick Touré, Ausgang Plaza

"You have to know someone": the scene can appear closed to newcomers—particularly non-Francophones. When asked about barriers, participants were quick to cite the sometimes closed nature of the industry. In the words of some, "you have to know someone": not solely for booking opportunities, but also for practical knowledge of complex permitting, licensing, and organisational formation. While promoters identified a culture of informal mentorship—having learned the ropes from experienced actors, and supporting others in turn—they simultaneously noted the culture of exclusion that informality perpetuates. This dynamic is further exacerbated by language barriers, with a general sense that Francophone industry actors have an advantage in official processes and access to funding (even while many venues and collectives are English-speaking). Both the lack of written resources and language barriers can be obstacles to the inclusivity that Montréal's scene and administration promote.

"The ability to assimilate, speak the language, and implement all the requirements makes planning [events] inaccessible for a lot of people. When you look at the cultural policy of the city, diversity and inclusion is always at the forefront. But [for]...people who maybe for socioeconomic reasons have less free time to...gain this literacy, those people have much bigger barriers to entry."

—Lola Baraldi, MUTEK / shesaid.so Montréal

"If somebody's trying to create an event, no matter what it is, it's gonna boost Montréal's economy and Montréal's interest. A lot of things have to be done in French and French only...I'm Francophone, but I was born in New York, so I'm [considered] Anglophone. There are so many people like me, and we have so many things to say."

—Claudy Philius, FRKY

Industry actors struggle with the city administration's lack of recognition of electronic music, clubs, and night culture as culture. Research participants pointed out that despite nightlife playing a major role in Montréal's reputation as an "open" city, the city administration takes a restrictive approach to night culture, particularly electronic music and late-night events. As DJ Christian Pronovost sees it, "It's a lack of understanding of what the culture's really about. Maybe a rock band wouldn't go till eight in the morning, but DJs do. Electronic music is about that." This sentiment informs various aspects of policy, ranging from inclusion in funding programs to "rave protocol" policing, which was perceived as strongly biased against electronic music events. Industry members active with smaller collectives also voiced the feeling that city officials focus primarily on the largest events and festivals, failing to recognise the richness, innovation and creativity in the smaller spaces and collectives of the city.

"There's still this sense that culture happens at Place des Arts but not at Casa del Popolo. The way that elected officials and government talk about culture often seems to exclude the majority of cultural activities that are actually happening on the ground, in favour of...venues that only represent one corner of the sector."

—Jon Weisz, Les Scènes de Musique Alternatives du Québec (Les SMAQ)

While Montréal has an international reputation for its festivals, its independent music, arts and cultural initiatives are vital to those larger events' success, feeding a healthy cultural ecosystem. In the words of Evelyne Côté of Evenko: "without the underground, there is no big event. That's where it grows, where it's birthed. It's like the oxygen." This report highlights three independent initiatives that uplift homegrown and international talent, acting as local incubators for artistic innovation, experimentation and collaboration.

SPOTLIGHT: MONTRÉAL'S INDEPENDENT VENUES AND COLLECTIVES
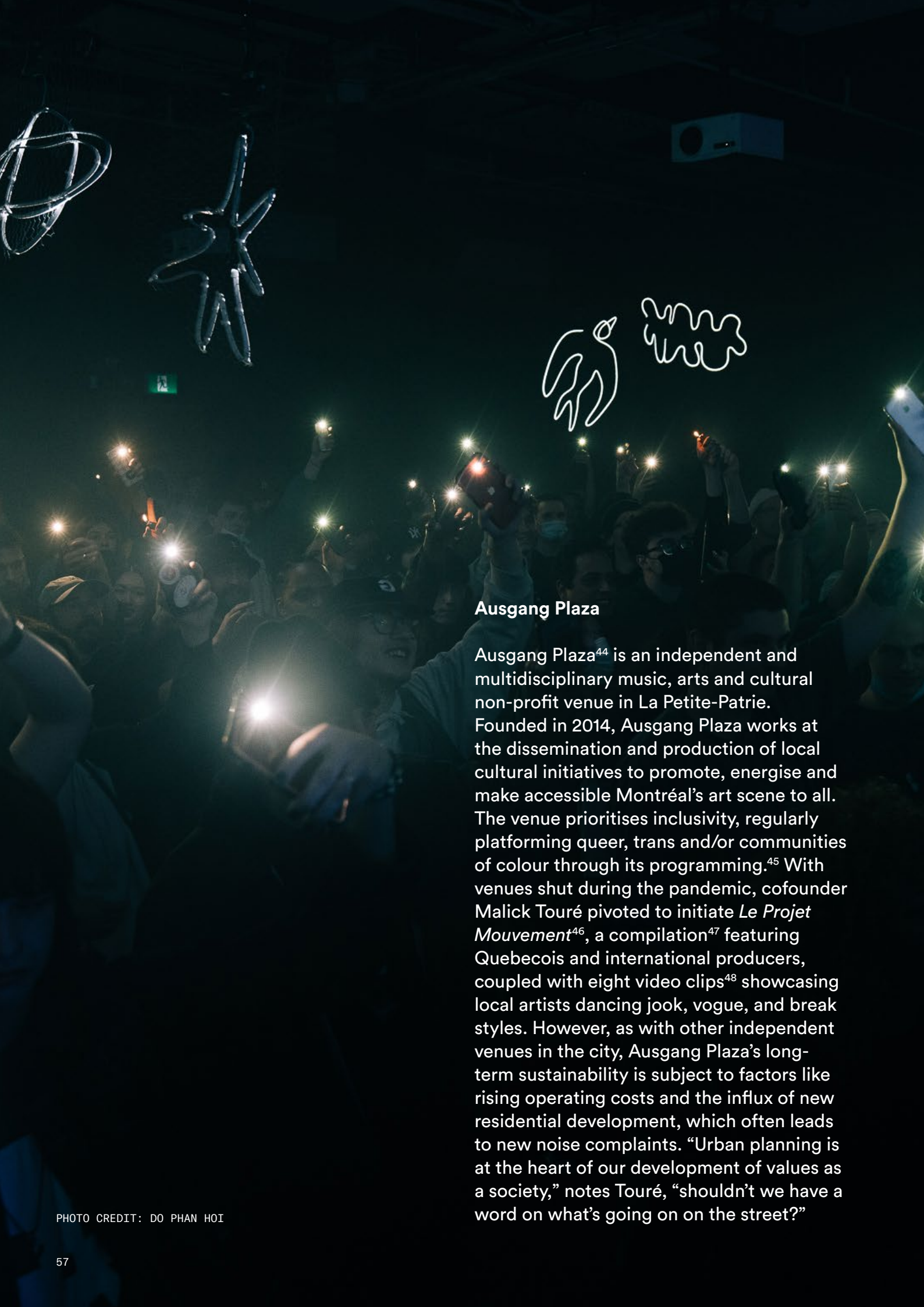
Ausgang Plaza

Ausgang Plaza[44] is an independent and multidisciplinary music, arts and cultural non-profit venue in La Petite-Patrie. Founded in 2014, Ausgang Plaza works at the dissemination and production of local cultural initiatives to promote, energise and make accessible Montréal's art scene to all. The venue prioritises inclusivity, regularly platforming queer, trans and/or communities of colour through its programming.[45] With venues shut during the pandemic, cofounder Malick Touré pivoted to initiate *Le Projet Mouvement*[46], a compilation[47] featuring Quebecois and international producers, coupled with eight video clips[48] showcasing local artists dancing jook, vogue, and break styles. However, as with other independent venues in the city, Ausgang Plaza's long-term sustainability is subject to factors like rising operating costs and the influx of new residential development, which often leads to new noise complaints. "Urban planning is at the heart of our development of values as a society," notes Touré, "shouldn't we have a word on what's going on on the street?"
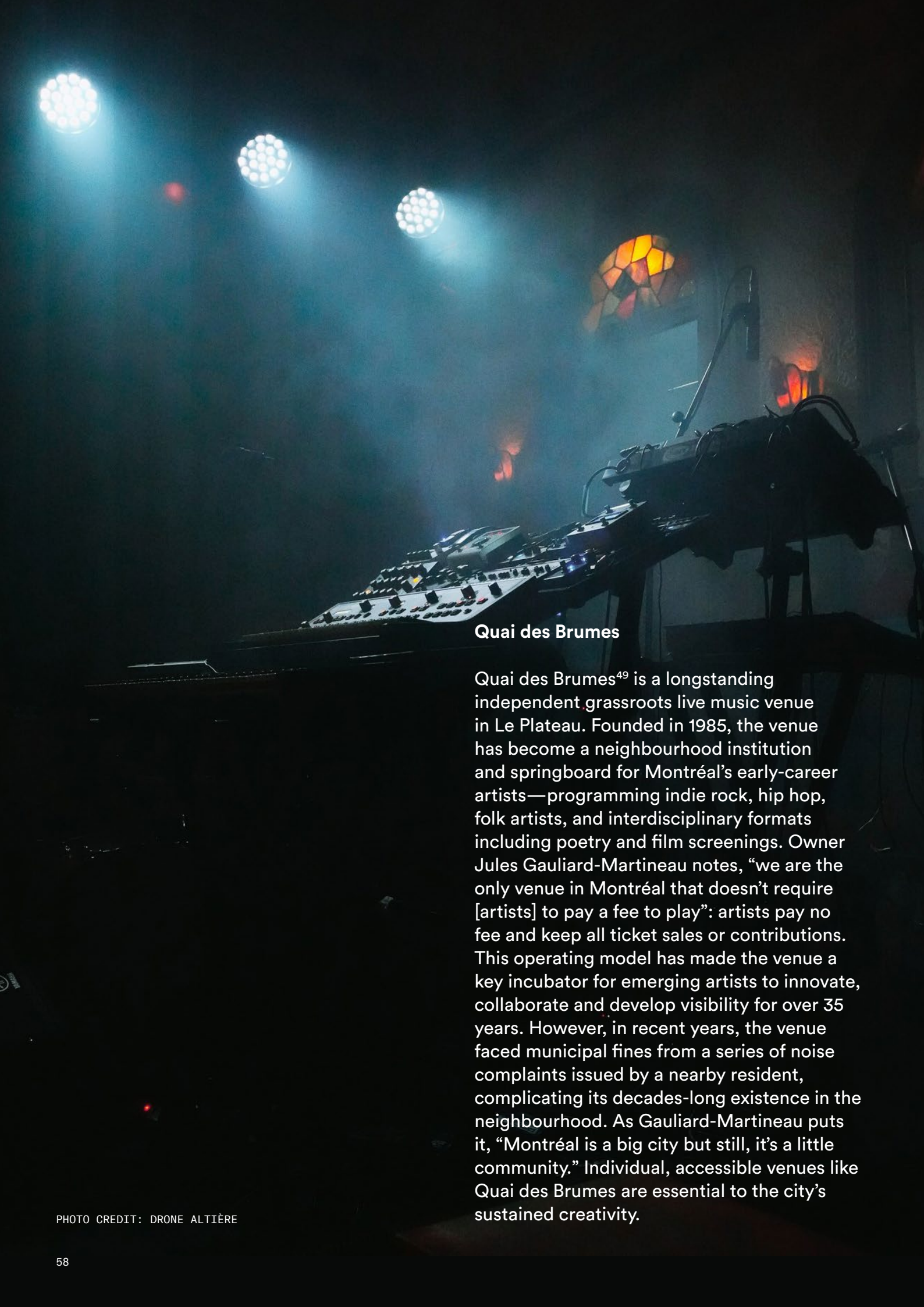
Quai des Brumes

Quai des Brumes[49] is a longstanding independent grassroots live music venue in Le Plateau. Founded in 1985, the venue has become a neighbourhood institution and springboard for Montréal's early-career artists—programming indie rock, hip hop, folk artists, and interdisciplinary formats including poetry and film screenings. Owner Jules Gauliard-Martineau notes, "we are the only venue in Montréal that doesn't require [artists] to pay a fee to play": artists pay no fee and keep all ticket sales or contributions. This operating model has made the venue a key incubator for emerging artists to innovate, collaborate and develop visibility for over 35 years. However, in recent years, the venue faced municipal fines from a series of noise complaints issued by a nearby resident, complicating its decades-long existence in the neighbourhood. As Gauliard-Martineau puts it, "Montréal is a big city but still, it's a little community." Individual, accessible venues like Quai des Brumes are essential to the city's sustained creativity.
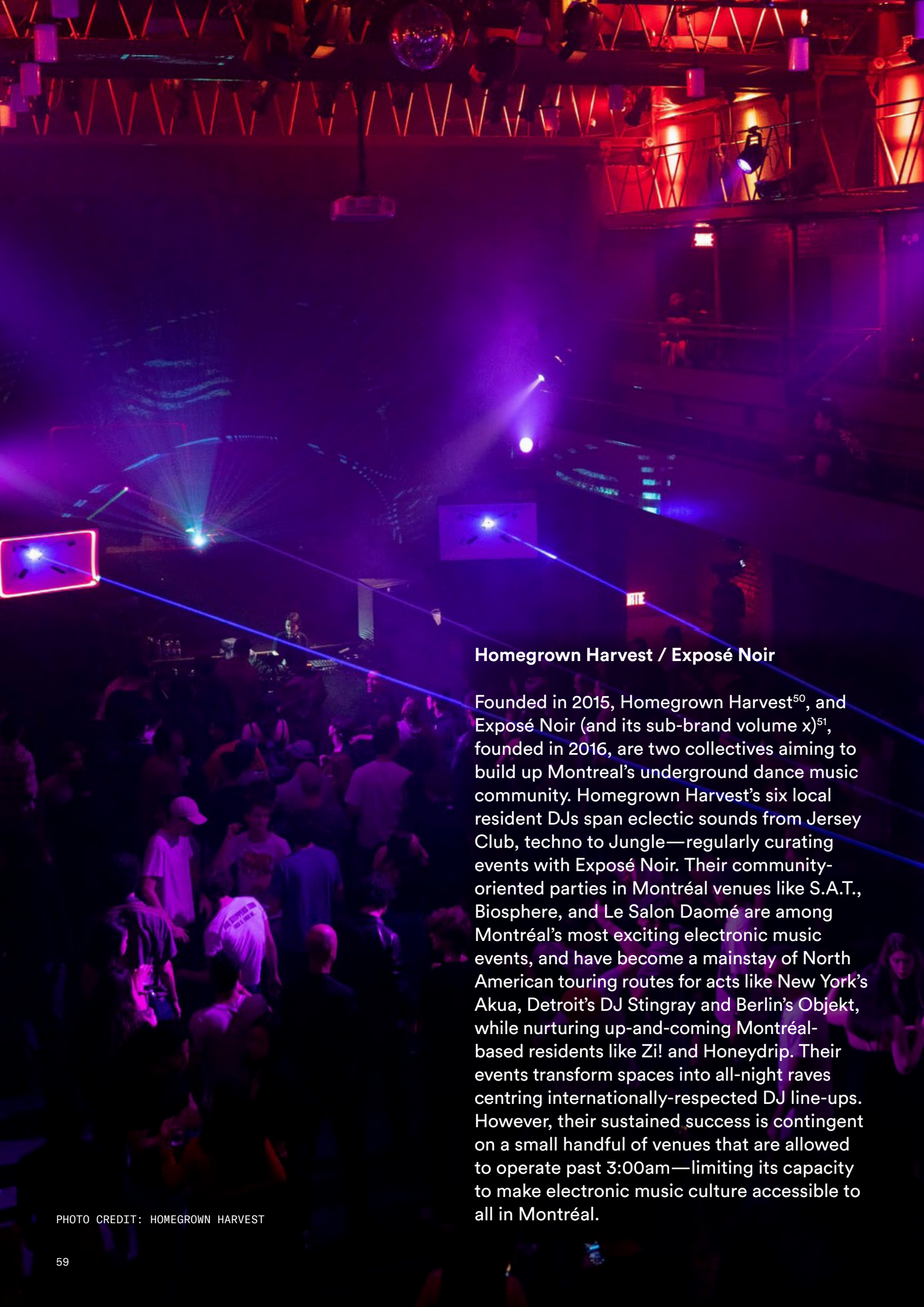
Homegrown Harvest / Exposé Noir

Founded in 2015, Homegrown Harvest[50], and Exposé Noir (and its sub-brand volume x)[51], founded in 2016, are two collectives aiming to build up Montreal's underground dance music community. Homegrown Harvest's six local resident DJs span eclectic sounds from Jersey Club, techno to Jungle—regularly curating events with Exposé Noir. Their community-oriented parties in Montréal venues like S.A.T., Biosphere, and Le Salon Daomé are among Montréal's most exciting electronic music events, and have become a mainstay of North American touring routes for acts like New York's Akua, Detroit's DJ Stingray and Berlin's Objekt, while nurturing up-and-coming Montréal-based residents like Zi! and Honeydrip. Their events transform spaces into all-night raves centring internationally-respected DJ line-ups. However, their sustained success is contingent on a small handful of venues that are allowed to operate past 3:00am—limiting its capacity to make electronic music culture accessible to all in Montréal.

Montréal's combined Framework Conditions score, at 4.18, is lower than any prior CFP analysis, and significantly lower than the other two categories. While almost a quarter of Montréal's venues receive top programming scores across the board, none of the Framework Conditions categories received a single top rating from participants.

Creative Footprint defines Framework Conditions as the interconnected factors that affect artistic, cultural and other nighttime activity. This includes relevant laws, regulations and policies; relationships between cultural actors and civic decision makers; the type of funding and support infrastructure available; and access to public and private space for cultural activities.

Montréal's permitting, enforcement and implementation hinder nighttime creativity and activity. Rating **3.30 / 10** by research respondents, multiple elements of Montréal's overall nighttime policies and regulations are seen as barriers to thriving nightlife:

The mandated 3:00am closing time is seen as an obstacle to artistic expression, economic output, and mobility—as well as creating greater nuisance at one moment of the night.

Why is late night so important? Piknic Électronik cofounder Nicolas Cournoyer explains simply, "our culture expresses itself during the night as well." For respondents, particularly those producing electronic music events, a 3:00am closing is not just seen as out of step with Montréal's identity as a nightlife city, but also creating greater concerns around public safety through the nighttime rush. Stretching out audience departure time allows for better neighbourhood coexistence. Cournoyer explains that 3:00am closings, particularly in Montréal's dense nightlife areas, "emphasise the impact of the bar at only one moment - it's loud, all kinds of stuff can happen. But if you…close at 5:00 or 6:00am, it will go naturally. That will help [authorities'] work. It will help the perceptions of residents. It will be easier, and their sleep would be better." For promoters, longer nights can also better justify ticket pricing and bring more revenue to events, easing worries of financial sustainability. Running events until the early-morning Metro service begins can remedy mobility concerns for patrons.

Policing and enforcement was most often described as "arbitrary" by respondents.

Event promoters and venue operators cited unclear legislation and enforcement protocols that left significant "grey zones" leading to "police overreach or discrimination [towards] events." One promoter noted, "We've had completely legal parties get shut down for absolutely no reason." A venue operator concurred: "As much as I feel like I have a knowledge of the rules, the rules often don't really seem to matter." In particular, the rave protocol (a policing practice of requiring stricter security measures on music events running after 3a.m.) was highlighted as an outdated and unnecessarily punitive tool that stigmatises electronic music and after-hours events, while also leaving it up to law enforcement "to judge if your event is cultural or not."

Montréal's nightlife struggles to access local politicians and decision makers. Rated **4.52 / 10**, many participants from both the largest and smallest producing organisations found it difficult to get in contact with city officials to address issues. One staffer of a large event company described Montréal as "the most difficult local government to access" in their portfolio, and a persistent feeling of being less welcomed by municipal government despite bringing world-class events and festivals to the city. Another focus group participant summed it up: "Even if we are large or small event organisers — we still face the same issue; we cannot find someone [in the city] to talk to."

Nighttime transit options limit audience participation. Rating nighttime transit **5.10 / 10**, research respondents saw a direct connection between transit and participation in nighttime activity. Operators pointed out the illogic of transit ending before bars close, even on weekend nights. Promoters noted that audience members will often leave early from events to catch the last train, missing out on acts they'd hoped to see. While participants acknowledged the "extensive" night bus network, they also observed that journeys easily made on subways may not be well-served at night, particularly for suburban residents. This situation raises safety and access concerns, particularly for women

and LGBTQ+ individuals. One female event professional described the post-pandemic scarcity of taxis, even before the 3:00am rush ("it took 2 drivers that turned me away before the third one said *I'll take you*"), while another artist explained the difficulty for the underground scene, "Most people don't have cars…[and] a lot of queer people just don't take public transit. I think that's a pretty common thing in Montréal."

While cultural funding is abundant, lack of knowledge presents a barrier to access. Rated at **5.80 / 10**, there is a recognition in the industry that there are more municipal, provincial, federal, and industry funding opportunities than ever before. As one participant put it, "we're the only place in the world that has this type of quality funding." Cultural funding can be the foundation of a sustainable career in music—as voiced here by rapper, author, actor, and Concordia University lecturer Narcy:

"If it wasn't for grants in Canada, I wouldn't have been the artist that I am. I got a grant for every album. It taught me how to budget a record. It taught me how to work in the studio and pay everybody and sign papers to clear rights and then go clear samples with that money. So I had a full project that was independent, no label's hand in it. I learned how to do it from A to Z. And then I passed that down to several artists and they learned to do it. And so a grant system allows you not only to fund your project, but to learn structure around the creative process. And I think that's very important."

—Yassin (Narcy) Alsalman

But many respondents found the system confusing and even intimidating, with no central point to understand what's available. Those who *did* access funding typically did so with support of experienced friends or colleagues. Larger organisations, with more know-how and team capacity for navigating official processes, were more likely to be able to access funds. But it's also important to recognise the gaps in the funding system for nightlife actors: nightlife venues may be excluded from funding eligibility even while they host cultural programming, and grant guidelines routinely exclude DJing and comedy as artforms, rendering them ineligible for funds.

Public, outdoor and unconventional spaces yield some of Montréal's most influential events—but are difficult for cultural producers to access. Montréal is regarded as a world capital of festivals, and from the Quartier des Spectacles to Parc Jean Drapeau, events in public space are major draws for locals and tourists alike. But the dimension of public cultural activities received the lowest rating in the analysis at **2.52 / 10**, reflecting that both small and large organisations struggle to access space. This held true for larger organisations who described delays and snags in securing permits, even for large-scale events regarded as mainstays of Montréal's event calendar.

Access to affordable, accessible space is particularly important for young event organisers and smaller groups. For early-career event promoters in cities around the world, public and free space is pivotal. Outdoor and unconventional spaces such as abandoned warehouses and parks provide essential space to experiment, with less financial pressure and more opportunity for innovative, creative events:

"The energy of wanting to push the limits of DIY and what we can do with these spaces, instead of it being 2 rooms and DJs and some drinks. … [When] so many people get together to throw a party somewhere you wouldn't expect, it ends up feeling like such a special moment. You have to put down all façades."

—Tiana McLaughlan/Honeydrip, DJ and producer

Both small and large organisations pointed out spaces they hope to create events in, such as Maisonneuve Park, Parc Jarry, Parc La Fontaine and Théâtre de Verdure, as well as expanded access to Place des Festivals and the Biosphere. And across the board, respondents pointed out the disappearance of free space:

"Before, there were many public spaces available in Montréal: churches, industrial sites...we could use them without renting them. It's not something that is done anymore. Everything has been institutionalised. There is less and less free space [that's] accessible."

—Equipe Spectra focus group participant

SECTION V: CREATIVE FOOTPRINT'S RECOMMEN— DATIONS

Based on the findings discussed in the prior sections, key actions to take fall into three categories:

Protect Space
Preserve Montréal's existing venues and economic accessibility (particularly in districts with the majority of venues) through mapping and expanded sound protections for venues.

Build trust
Improve relationships and dialogue between nightlife, public safety, and municipal decision makers.

Grow
Expand time and space for nightlife via later hours, transit access, and access to new, affordable spaces.

PHOTO CREDIT: REMI BOYER

PROTECT SPACE

Preserve existing venues and economic accessibility in venue-rich districts.

Montréal's venues are the cornerstone of the city's nightlife ecosystem. Both indoor and outdoor venues are experiencing pressures, most notably due to noise and sound conflicts from increasing residential development. With the support of industry and community actors, municipal and borough officials can take action to protect the city's venue ladder:

- **Strengthen venue protections against noise and sound conflicts.**

Short term: Update the guidelines[52] of Montréal's current soundproofing support program to explicitly include venues licensed as bars with dancefloors, in addition to those with cultural venue (*salle de spectacle alternatives*) licences. Bars with dancefloors are a core part of the city's venue ladder, and particularly due to late operating hours are more vulnerable to noise complaints, which, in turn, may preclude lease extensions and increase likelihood of closure.

Medium term: Establish the *Agent of Change* principle in borough planning law, *particularly* in venue-rich boroughs and/or up-and-coming cultural areas. Toronto's 2018 adoption of the Agent of Change[53] and related planning policies serves as one regional model. (Note: this principle only serves to minimise local conflict for *new* residential construction. Other measures, such as increasing sound insulation in new residential development, are still needed to protect venues where new residential construction is already approved or in construction.)

Long term: Establish "sound zones"[54][55] like Malmö's Sofielund district, with restrictions on residential construction and/or clear messaging for those buying or leasing nearby apartments to expect nighttime sound from venues.

- **Develop shared vision and monitoring tools to preserve venues in key areas.**

Short term: On a neighbourhood level, encourage local actors and interested parties to develop a shared understanding of what

nightlife venues mean to the area, and the threats facing local spaces. This might result in a manifesto or commitment to preserving the area's culture and community spaces.

Medium term: Using this report's data as a starting point, develop a monitoring tool or annual review to gather data and document change in the borough (this might include noise complaints, rent increases for venues, closures, and other pressures). Berlin's Clubkataster[56] is one such tool: monitored by Berlin Clubcommission, the portal notifies administrators of approved building plans that may impact nearby venues, allowing for timely intervention.

Long term: Modelled after two innovative programmes in London, establish a citywide *Culture at Risk* office[57] and/or fund to support venues facing threats to space, as well as a *Nighttime Data Observatory*[58] to enable long-term learning about nighttime space, work, and changes over time.

- **Retain and develop subsidy programmes to invest in local venues, artists, and scenes.**

Short term: Some venue subsidy programmes initiated during the pandemic have been continued through 2023[59]. Only recently, Montréal's festivals have published an open letter "ringing the alarm bell"[60][61] and calling for continued government support. Recognising that full sector recovery from Covid-19 may take several years[62], retain venue subsidy programmes to provide greater resilience for cultural businesses that operate close to the margin.

Medium term: Assess where tourism revenues are allocated, and reinvest a portion of revenue into local creative content and scenes. Berlin's approach to its city tax[63] is one example: established in 2014, a portion of hotel tax revenues charged on overnight stays goes back to the artistic and cultural projects that give the city its reputation. A particular focus is on local event series and co-productions,

especially those not well-served by other funding sources[64]. The city's approach isn't perfect : critics point out the small portion (less than 10%) that goes to culture, while an increasingly larger share goes to tourism promotion or back to the state budget.

BUILD TRUST

Improve relationships and dialogue between scene actors, public safety, and city officials.

Both large and small nightlife organisations struggled to access information on permitting and licensing protocols and to reach city officials with concerns; policing and enforcement was often seen as antagonistic rather than collaborative. Trust and collaboration are pivotal to healthy nightlife in Montréal. A few steps to take:

● **Develop accessible resources and/or consulting offers for promoters, artists, and venues.**

"It would be relevant to have some kind of guide that explains the different processes needed to organise an event in a public space. Or city advisors who can help you with the process."
—Focus group participant

"A single checklist sheet of the different things including licensing, zoning, fire, bathroom, capacity, exits—everything. Noise and decibel level. Proximity... An actual thing that organisers could put in their own time to meet, and [know] those are actually worth something."
—Nic Levy, DJ and event organiser

Short term: Develop clear, bilingual, and accessible guides or checklists for common processes such as securing event permits, venue licensing, or establishing a nonprofit, as a common reference for both public and industry actors. Compile grant resources in easily accessible online platforms.

Medium term: Establish municipally-supported info points for musicians, for clubs and venues, and for emerging promoters to seek knowledge, mentorship, and support. Three of Berlin's programmes can serve as models: *Musicpool*[66] offers musicians free expert consulting and coaching as well as industry meetups and networking. *Clubconsult*[67] connects venue operators to free expertise on topics including legal, tax and business issues, staffing, sustainability and inclusion. The *Free Open Air Initiative*[68] supports emerging event promoters through

peer-to-peer roundtables, handbooks and resources, space offers, and an annual certification training in cooperation with the city's chamber of commerce.

- **Expand the city's nightlife liaison role into a more structured, cross-departmental office** with links across multiple city departments, including a public safety liaison to build more trusting relationships with event operators.

Short term: Utilise the coming years' Night Summits to: first, conduct community response sessions on the municipal nightlife strategy to solicit feedback and develop industry and community buy-in; second, to establish initial discussions and shared understanding between city law enforcement and Montréal's night scene actors; and third, to assess what the nightlife industry and community most need from a municipal nighttime office.

"We're fighting against people that do not understand our culture. Our culture has been there for over 30 years. I think if we could all discuss together...it would be much easier. You don't have to party to understand what we do."

—Renée-Claude "RC" Morin, BBCM Foundation

Medium term: Ensure that the role of the city's nightlife liaison has power to make decisions and execute programming, as well as the capacity to interface with industry actors in both English and French. Consider establishing a dedicated nighttime governance structure able to work closely with economic development, planning and zoning, public safety and health, and other nighttime-relevant departments and policies. Placing such a department close to the mayor's office or similar cross-functional department strengthens opportunities to collaborate, as shown by New York City's Office of Nightlife. Sited in the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, it links with at least sixteen city departments[69] to support safe, fair, and accessible nightlife. Biannual or quarterly roundtables with the community can develop

strong working relationships and help to identify key policy priorities.

"Bring more people that are not involved into the discussions, especially people of colour. Having a strong cultural, musical nightlife brings so much to a city. That's what I hope— that new promoters get the resources we get, and more little doors opening. Have an open discussion, invite everybody."

—Moka Amraoui, FRKY

Long term: Pilot revisions to policies identified by community and industry members as most negatively impacting activities (ex. "rave protocol" for after-hours events).

GROW

Expand time and space for nightlife via later hours, transit coverage, and access to new, affordable spaces.

Particularly as Montréal prepares to adopt the 2050 Urbanism and Mobility Plan[70], the city has the opportunity to radically rethink the way that nightlife spaces are permitted and licensed in the city—and to serve as a model for cities around the world.

"There's a big lack of space to throw events in the city...especially off-hours events. Previously-industrial areas are now filled with condos, and there's seemingly arbitrary zoning regulations from one block to another in an area that's very similar. They'll have totally different zoning, and that will affect your ability to get occupancy permits."

—Max Honigmann, Homegrown Harvest/Exposé Noir

- **Expand current longer-hours pilot programmes into updated alcohol licensing.** The 2022-2023 series of pilot events[71] with alcohol licences running after 3:00am have taken place successfully. Despite some initial reluctance to extend licensing hours for cultural venues, city services including borough governments, police, fire, and emergency services noted no major incidents during this pilot phase, and are now supportive of the process' formalisation and next steps.

  Short to medium term: Expand pilot programming from one-off events to longer periods of several weeks or more. Pursue legislative channels to secure lasting, citywide change to alcohol licensing that enables 24-hour event permits as a matter of course.

- **Encourage cultural (and sound-producing) use of city-owned and otherwise unused space,** including opportunities for industrial to commercial conversion.

  Short term: Integrate a nighttime planning lens (also known as the "night test"[72]) into the 2050 Urbanism and Mobility Plan, ensuring that the coming decades of Montréal urban planning align with the city's nightlife strategy goals. In particular, develop streamlined

processes for industrial derogation to enable creative and community-minded adaptive reuse of space; consider limitations on residential development in certain currently industrial areas to enable sound-producing uses.

Medium term: Via municipal and borough administrations, conduct an audit of city-owned space and property that may be suitable or accessible for cultural nightlife use, seasonally or year-round. (A particular focus may be on 150-500 or 500-1500 capacity spaces.) Berlin's Model Space Project[73] and Draussenstadt[74] provide one model for temporary activations of outdoor spaces, mediated by the city's nightlife commission[75].

Long term: Initiate conversations between real estate developers, nightlife cultural actors, and public entities on expanding opportunities for creative space in Montréal, to ensure that developers are not only interacting with public offices but also with specific inputs and needs of nightlife and culture (ranging from sound insulation to affordable rents). Here, Montréal has an opportunity to go well beyond European nightlife capitals: Lutz Leichsenring of the Berlin Clubcommission notes, "I wish we had more conversations like this in Berlin."

- **Move from after-hours to 24-hour venue licence schemes.**

Short to medium term: To rebuild Montréal's range of late-night options beyond the single after-hours venue currently operating, introduce the possibility of 24-hour licensing in the city's forthcoming nightlife strategy. The municipality should work closely with nightlife community and industry members to ensure that this licence category enables flexible, multifunctional cultural space and activities, and reflects existing practices and priorities.

One example of how this might look: New York City's Nowadays operates as a bar, restaurant, and dance club five days a week, with the space used for voguing dance classes[76] on off nights. Their indoor and outdoor spaces (5000 and 16,000 square feet

respectively) provide an artistic home for 14 resident DJs and curatorial groups[77], making for consistently high-quality, locally-focused cultural experiences. Amsterdam's 24-hour venue permit framework[78] enables similar multi-use spaces. Former Amsterdam night mayor Mirik Milan explains, "Longer opening hours give the nighttime cultural sector the ability to curate better, stronger programs, which drives urban economies and strengthens Montréal's creative community."

The UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was adopted by 193 countries in 2015 as the global framework for environmental, social, and economic sustainability—but Ville de Montréal had committed to sustainable development long before. Montréal is a leading city in environmental sustainability planning, including a strategy[78] for carbon neutrality by 2050, a sustainable transportation strategy[80] and a sustainable cultural development strategy[81]. Ville de Montréal also signed the One Planet Charter[82] in 2018 for local government implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement. The city has also been recognised for sustainable tourism, ranking first in North America and third among large global cities.[83]

A sustainable nighttime economy contributes directly to economic vitality, social cohesion and environmental protection. Montréal has already begun to recognise this: Tourisme Montréal's recent policy[84], which includes actions for environmental, social and economic sustainability, specifically identifies nightlife as a key contribution to urban culture and a sustainability innovation opportunity. Many of Montréal's major music events are leading the way: MUTEK recycled, composted, or diverted 74% of its last festival's collected waste[85]; Nuits d'Afrique has collected 5 tons of compostable material through its events in 2019[86]; and over 90-95% of the Festival International de Jazz de Montréal's food is sourced less than 40 km from its event[87].

Nine of the 17 SDGs have direct connections to existing efforts in nightlife, which VibeLab and Creative Footprint have grouped into five categories:

Health and Safety (Physical & Mental)

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Harm reduction (safer sex, substance use), mental health, event/venue safety.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

5 GENDER EQUALITY · **8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH** · **10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES**

Representation, diverse leadership, pay equality, inclusive and non-discriminatory spaces.

Sustainable Resource Usage

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY · **12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION**

Reduced and sustainable resource consumption, renewable energy usage.

Mobility & Public Space

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES · **16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**

Protecting global culture heritage; safe, accessible public transport and public spaces for all

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Promoting Creativity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Partnerships across national borders and public-private-civil society boundaries

A variety of initiatives in Montréal are already working towards this vision of sustainable nightlife, which presents opportunities for sustainability-focused organisations, funders, and municipal offices to develop new partnerships and support for these existing initiatives. Montréal has an opportunity to act as a global leader in modelling a collaborative and citywide approach to sustainable nightlife.

Health and Safety (Physical & Mental)

By ensuring the safety and physical and mental health of nightlife participants and employees, the industry contributes to overall well being. Venues which are safe and healthy spaces are essential. Initiatives such as GRIP, PLURI and Club Sexu provide education, evidence-based information, workshops, and training on topics including informed and safer drug use, safer sex, active witnessing, and creating safer spaces by combating harassment and marginalisation inside music venues.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
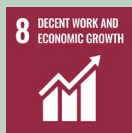
Inclusive economic growth is achieved through reductions in social inequalities and safe, gainful employment. A sustainable nighttime economy relies on equality across gender and other social markers, fair working conditions and an inclusive, non-discriminatory nightlife experience. shesaid. so Montréal, DIG! Quebec and Lotus Collective work to bolster gender equality in the music industry, Voulez-Vous Productions produce events centering queer, gender non-conforming and lesbian artists, and Moonshine has gained international visibility with its inclusive parties centering sounds of the African diaspora.

Sustainable Resource Usage

Societies must shift towards renewable energy and responsible consumption, economies that maintain rather than deplete natural resources, and protection of the environment and human livelihoods. Nighttime and cultural actors can set a positive example for other industries. Organisations like *Conseil québécois des événements écoresponsables* (CQEER) support transitions to more environmentally sustainable events, including the yearly *Les Vivats* certification contest. Strong examples include 2022 *Les Vivats* award-winner Festival Nuits d'Afrique (honoured for waste prevention and management), as well as Piknic, Osheaga, MUTEK, Igloofest, and Festival International de Jazz de Montréal.

Mobility and Public Space

Sustainable cities are those which are accessible and safe to all, regardless of mobility status or any other social or economic disadvantage. Urban public spaces are community gathering places and forums for social experimentation and exchange. Organisations including Air Commune, La Pépinière and Espaces Collectifs and POP Montreal are experimenting with multi-use activations of public space for entertainment and leisure, both temporary and more permanent. These activations facilitate new environmentally-friendly, accessible, inclusive and safe nightlife.

Promoting Creativity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

New avenues for sustainable development emerge when creativity and innovation are prioritised, especially within partnerships bridging institutional and social barriers. Well-supported industry entrepreneurs lead the way to a sustainable and inclusive nighttime economy. Both Les SMAQ and MTL 24/24 associations advocate for and represent nightlife and music, bridging between the industry and local government and policymakers.

SPOTLIGHT: MUTEK

Since 2000, MUTEK has been a premier platform for creativity in sound, music and audiovisual art, showcasing diverse and experimental works by emerging and established artists in their annual festival and forum. For over 10 years, MUTEK has been making concrete steps to become a fully sustainable organisation across social, environmental, and economic metrics—providing a strong example of sustainable nightlife.

Social and economic sustainability (Goal 3, 5, 8, 10): The festival partners with a number of organisations to reduce harassment and promote inclusion in event spaces, and to provide event goers' information on substance use and safer sex. To accommodate festival goers' accessibility needs, MUTEK provides free and subtitled virtual access to a portion of their programming, designated spaces with reduced sound and visual input, and ticket affordability options. Toronto's Criprave conducted a 2022 event accessibility audit, which forms the basis of a two-year action plan.

MUTEK has identified gender parity as a key element of social sustainability: 57% of their 2022 projects included at least one woman or non-binary person. MUTEK was also the first North American festival to sign Keychange's gender parity pledge, and has hosted both the Keychange cohort and Amplify Digital Arts Initiative, promoting yearly cohorts of women and non-binary artists and digital creative professionals.

Environmental sustainability (Goals 7, 12) : MUTEK invests as much as possible in local economies by locally sourcing catering, manufacturing, accommodation and other contracts. 95% of production equipment is rented from suppliers within a 25 km radius. Lessening events' environmental footprint goes beyond recycling and composting, and MUTEK has a dedicated waste management strategy and eco-conscious production team. MUTEK contributes 1% of each ticket purchase to the Planetair reforestation project, and, as a member of the inaugural Écoleader cohort of

Québec, communicates all event data in order to evaluate their carbon footprint. They have received various nominations, certifications and awards for eco-responsibility.

These sustainability initiatives still have room to grow. MUTEK research shows that extended alcohol permits for the festival, in addition to looser city permitting requirements, can present an opportunity to extend its efforts. MUTEK will work to maintain the affordability and accessibility of their programming as the nighttime economy recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic. Lola Baraldi, digital projects and partnerships coordinator, emphasises the importance of partner organisations (Goal 17) in sustainability:

"As a festival, we work with several venues, each one having their own operations and procedures. Their collaboration is essential to ensure our values in environmental and social sustainability are met, for instance by banning single-use plastics, ensuring recycling is possible, and providing space for our respondents trained in harm reduction and anti-harassment."

Where does Montréal go from here? A forward-looking approach to sustainable nightlife can draw on the below principles, as well as local expertise, to help the nighttime economy achieve Agenda 2030 goals.

Collaboration
Nightlife actors must work closely with Ville de Montréal and other partners to achieve goals. This might look like aligning with active nightlife, culture, and tourism sustainability initiatives to track progress and secure funding to scale up successes.

Circularity
Sustainable development relies on circular economic models, which reduce waste, conserve raw materials, and reinvest as much back into the system as possible. With the support of Ville de Montréal, festivals can share their knowledge with venues and collectives as the sector moves toward circular strategies.

Inclusion
Nightlife must be safe and enjoyable for all, regardless of ability, age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or barriers to access. Promoting more inclusive nightlife starts with ensuring mobility access (expanded transit, walking, and biking infrastructure at night); inclusion and visibility of non-Francophone, immigrant and First Nations artists; and promoting more cultural activations of public space and underused urban space.

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SECTION VI: CONCLUSION

This fall, Montréal nightlife creators were asked to imagine an ideal future for the city at night, and their visions were clear:

"More events, more diversity, more trust. Change to better policy and creativity. Keep the will to improve."

"We keep: this people, this drive, this creativity, this city and its building heritage."

"More imaginative nights, cultural surprises, indigenous art, standardised event regulations."

"More of a constant influx of cool people from all over. Less of: a government that treats [the] night as a set of problems. What changes: visionary night governance."

Montréal is at a pivotal moment in its development as a nightlife city. In the past six years, it has taken important steps towards understanding the impact and potential of its nightlife: developing both civic and public nightlife governance, gathering data on economic and sociocultural impact, identifying the biggest obstacles to nightlife in the city, and, with this report, identifying potential in urban areas that could be more fully activated at night.

Montréal has the opportunity to build upon this momentum. With both a new nightlife strategy and Urbanism and Mobility Plan on the horizon, the city has the chance to do things differently: to develop policies that facilitate the coexistence of cultural and community spaces with residential development, that allow for later nights, and that recognise the possibilities of circular, sustainable nightlife. The city's cultural infrastructure, venue ladder, and festivals acting as "agents of social cohesion,"[88] its talented and creative community, and its growing international reputation set the scene for it as an international capital for nightlife in North America.

"Keep the same: Montréal ethos of constant inventiveness": by embracing the city's unique strengths and addressing its challenges, Montréal can serve as a global good example of deeply inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and socially responsible nightlife.

"Keep the same: Montréal ethos of constant inventiveness"

"More: magic sunrises. Less: police. Changes to: licensing, zoning, operating hours, noise regulation. Stays the same: Freak City."

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Datasets used for quantitative analysis:

All Montréal venue data, which includes the selected 271 venues and their corresponding geographic information, characteristics and rankings, were obtained through CFP research and local workshops throughout 2022.

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Ziry

Mathieu Grondin (he/him)
Project Facilitator

Mathieu has been active in dealing with issues of nocturnal governance for the last ten years as well as producing and programming events. In 2017, he founded MTL 24/24, a non-profit organisation that develops Montréal's economic and cultural nightlife, through various initiatives including the Night Council, a consultation table made up of twelve citizens of Montréal who are committed to the dynamic and benevolent development of Montréal nightlife. MTL 24/24 objectives are to destigmatise nightlife activities, support the local scene, enable a dialogue between the community and public and political authorities, and enhance local economic life.

CREATIVE FOOTPRINT TEAM

Lutz Leichsenring (he/him)
Project Lead and Consultant

Lutz is the co-founder of VibeLab and based in Berlin. Since 2009, Lutz has been the spokesperson and Executive Board Member for the Berlin Clubcommission and member of the city's Musicboard and Chamber of Commerce and has fought tirelessly for the rights of the German capital's vast club scene by organising protests and speaking up in public.

Mirik Milan (he/him)
Project Lead and Consultant

Mirik is a former nightlife promoter and one of the first night mayors in the world, having played an instrumental role in the reshaping of Amsterdam's nightlife scene into one of the most vibrant and economically robust in the world. Mirik's inaugural position as Amsterdam's Nachtburgemeester in 2012 has since been replicated in major cities around the world, from New York, Paris and London. Nowadays, Mirik is a nightlife advocate, co-founder of VibeLab and author of the paper 'Governing the Night-time City: The Rise of Night Mayors as a New Form of Urban Governance After Dark'. In January 2020, the journal Urban Studies released this first qualitative study on night mayors around the world.

Amir Alexander Salem (he/him)
Project Manager

Amir is a London-born Berlin-based interdisciplinary urban researcher, project manager and writer of Swedish, Egyptian and German heritage. His research spans queer communities and nightlife, to nighttime cultural policy and governance. As a Project Manager for VibeLab — he has worked across research projects that translate the value and potential of nightlife to decision makers globally. Amir holds a BA in Geography from King's College London, and a PGDip with Distinction in Urban Studies from University College London.

Diana Raiselis (they/them)
Lead Researcher

Diana is Research Lead for VibeLab, co-editor of the Global Nighttime Recovery Plan, and consults regularly for arts and urban organisations across Europe and North America. Drawing upon past experience in nonprofit programme design, civic leadership education, and theatre production with a focus on LGBTQ+ stories, Diana has been recipient of fellowships from Salzburg Global Seminar, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Coro Fellowship in Public Affairs, and Steppenwolf Theater Company. They hold an M.Sc. with Distinction in Urban Studies from University College London and a B.A. in Theater and Civic Engagement from Northwestern University.

Shermine Sawalha (she/her)
Local Lead and Researcher

Shermine is a visual and performance artist, producer, curator of arts and culture, and entrepreneur based in Montréal. She is founder of three projects including the production, booking, and management company, Malahi Entertainment, the Jordan-based, women-focused experimental label Malakat Records, and Ctrllab, a Montréal phygital space that transcends boundaries through technology and the arts with an intimate venue and a broadcast station that aims to disseminate the work of emerging and established artists worldwide. Shermine creates communities and spaces for underground culture to thrive in while educating the public through entertainment.

Xavier Bordeleau (he/him)
Researcher and Assistant

Xavier is a student born and raised in Montréal. His research focuses on political and sociological issues specific to Montréal's nightlife. Xavier is interested in questions of cultural participation at night and how it influences social ties, the way we occupy our urban environment and the way we construct our identities. Having previously obtained a BA in political science at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), he is currently pursuing his master's degree at the Institut national de la recherche scientifique - Urbanisation Culture Société (INRS UCS) based in Montreal. In addition, Xavier is the coordinator of the Conseil de Nuit, a citizens advisory body set up by the non-profit organisation MTL 24/24.

Maarten van Brederode (he/him)
Researcher and Assistant

Maarten is a researcher who believes in the power of grassroots advocacy and engagement to enact real policy change for thriving music, arts and cultural scenes. He was born and raised in Seattle, calling Berlin home since early 2020. Maarten has dual American/Dutch citizenship, having also lived in New York and studied in Amsterdam. He received a BA in Geography from the University of Washington and an MSc in Urban Geography from the University of Amsterdam. Maarten has been with VibeLab since November 2022.

Jess Dymond Barber (she/her)
Communications and Content Manager

Jess is a Berlin-based cultural producer and programmer who manages communications and digital strategy for VibeLab—focusing on events and activations transcending traditional formats within nighttime advocacy, sustainability, awareness, safety, dancing, new media and activism. Jess is growing and connecting the nighttime network IRL and virtually. Jess has a BA in Fashion History and Theory from Central Saint Martins, a music and cultural journalism background, and has long advocated for nightlife and creative communities.

Michael Fichman (he/him)
Lead Data Scientist

Michael is a city planner, researcher and lecturer at PennPraxis at the University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School of Design. He is a nightlife organiser and musician, and a member of Philadelphia City Council's Arts and Culture Task Force. He is also an editor of the Global Nighttime Recovery Plan.

Itay Porat (he/him)
Data Scientist

Itay is an engineer, designer, city planner and musician currently based in Houston. He works to help cities thrive and adapt through better planning and design, with particular focus on ecology, environmental justice and geospatial technologies. He is also active in performing, improvising and composing music, and explores how planning and design can engage and empower artists and audience. Itay holds degrees in engineering from University of Houston and City Planning from University of Pennsylvania.

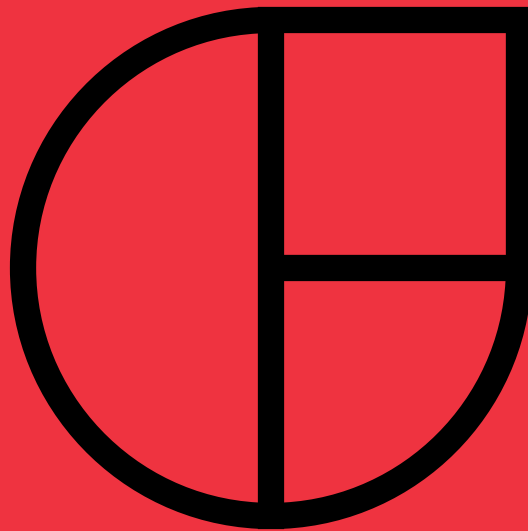**Miriam Anne Cherayil** (she/her)
Data Scientist

Mia is currently in her last semester at the University of Pennsylvania pursuing a Master's in City and Regional Planning. Having worked as a software engineer in Boston before graduate school, she is excited to blend her interests in emerging technologies, data-driven methods, and urbanism to make cities more resilient and inclusive.

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