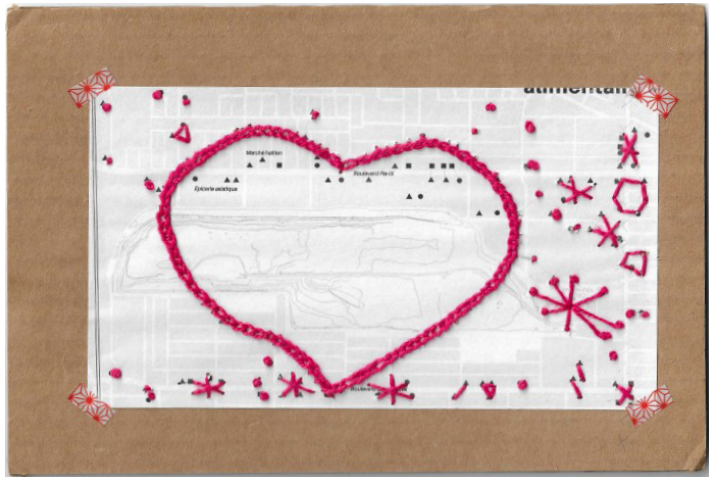


PIT STOP

Our encounter with
the Francon Quarry at
Saint-Michel



Le terme 'Pit' est le nom que nous avons donné affectueusement à ce lieu, cette enclave qui scinde Saint-Michel. Nous avons décidé de garder ce nom dans la version française de ce Zine.



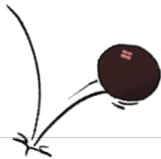
Francon Quarry exploitation
Source: Raymond Gagnon, Ville de Montréal Archives

Some communities choose to become enclaves in order to protect their culture or their wealth.

Some communities are forced to become enclaves because of discrimination.

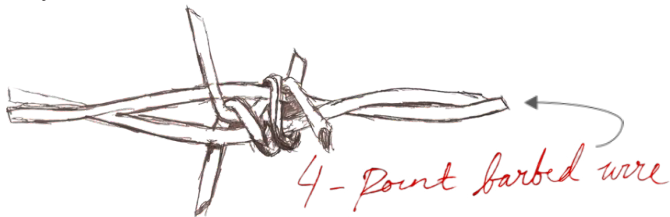
And some communities become enclaves because they are powerless to prevent a city from building infrastructure around them that serves the convenience of other people...

The Fence:



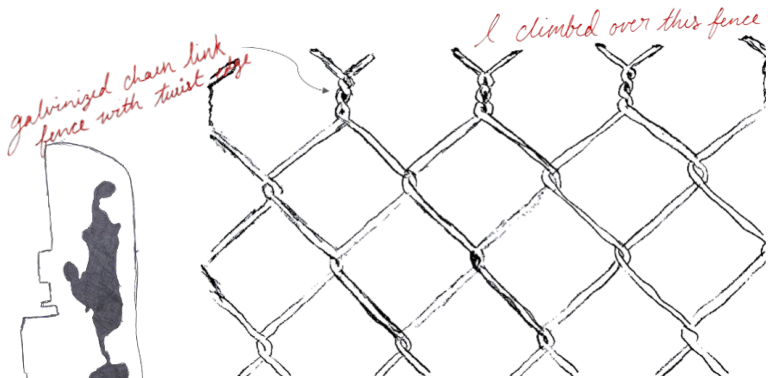
What happens if a ball goes over the fence?

There exists a division, a barrier, a horizontal and vertical obstacle crowned with barbed wire preventing people from entering the pit. It is a physical obstacle for residents of the area and a symbolic representation of barriers between the public and the quarry.



Stay out! Fences have a long history of restricting mobility and containing bodily movement. Barbed wire fence was made to make a recipient move in a desired direction. In this case moving people away from the pit.

Around the pit, the sense of restriction and surveillance varies. Certain sections, especially those near the snow dump, feature modern, shiny silver fencing. Though it may appear protective, crawling under it is quite simple. Yet these visibly new fences are no safer or more effective.



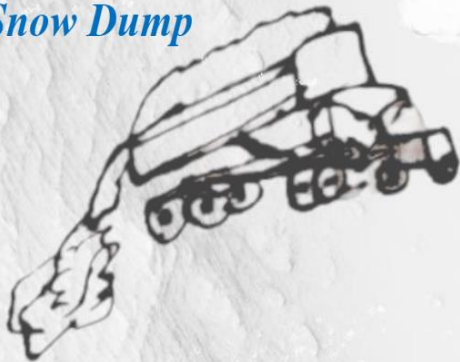
Instead, the fences reinforce the notion that the City owns and martials the space, moreover, making them not liable for the public being in the pit.

the fence shields an area and keeps out the very people who want to access it

Every winter, Montreal clears 300,000 truckloads of snow, but most people don't know where it goes. The Francon Quarry receives 40% of the City's snow, helping to maintain cleanliness and functionality. However, it poses challenges for the Saint-Michel communities, limiting their mobility accessing *essential services and schools* and posing *environmental and physical risks*.



The Snow Dump



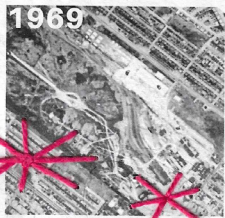
Contending with *the toxicity, noises, and physical dangers* caused by hundreds of snow-loaded trucks passing hourly throughout the winter is a routinized life of the community. How would the Saint-Michel neighborhood be different without this snow dump? Can we imagine its future transformation?

Cardboard paper hearts

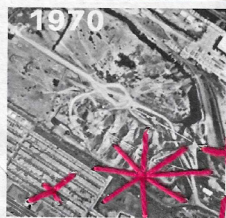


Wearing cardboard paper hearts on their clothes, *michelois.e.s* demonstrated against the construction of a public works facility at the Francon Quarry on a cold spring day in 2019. Together, and under the leadership of VSMS, they had envisioned the project « *Francon, Coeur de Notre Quartier,* » which seeks to turn the quarry into a sustainable and thriving living environment for the community. Our ethnographic work taught us that this ambitious project is currently dormant. Other more pressing issues are occupying the organization. **While the project sleeps and the quarry still operates as a snow dump, those cardboard paper hearts remind us of the power of the community to own their own futures.** That is already a big win. We are looking forward to seeing what comes after.

1969



1970



1981



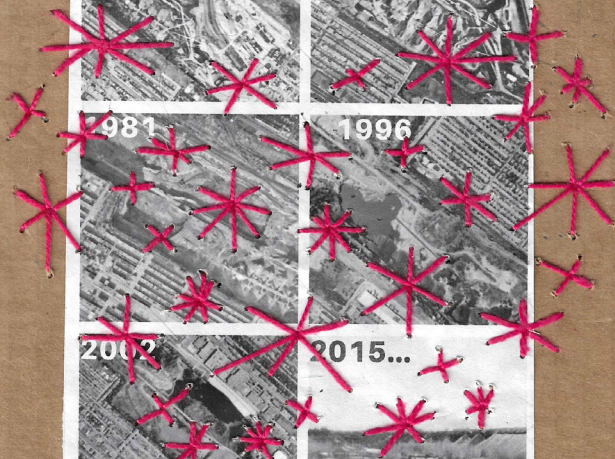
1996



2002



2015...



When people protest to transform the quarry, they
awaken it with big campaigns of visibility.

A dormant pit?

When no one mobilizes,
the Pit remains here, in
its cosmic nap, out of
sight... or maybe not.



Sometimes, furtive pot-heads, researchers and neighbours hear the call of the quarry... They cross the fences, to peer into it.

What do they have to say?



The Pit of Possibilities



Michelois.e.s have been left with this spectacular obstacle, now **they have united to become its guardians and to dream better futures.** This monster belongs to the dreams of the Michelois.e.s despite all adversities.

We, foreigner students, tried to relate to it, to think with it. We took different paths to do it that made us feel that Saint-Michel is not as foreign as we thought. We related to landscapes that we know, our respective homes, **to ambitions of transforming, to feelings of anger and yet, solidarity; despair, but also admiration.**

At last, we were **inspired from those in Saint-Michel daring to contest, dream and proliferate possibilities from obstacles.**



The Pit is an enigma that produces encounters, relations and contested dreams and feelings.

It is better to let it dorm patiently than giving it away to any corporation.

The Pit is an **invisible yet colossal** daily obstacle for Michelois.e.s. It is full of barriers, noises and mysteries. There are also obstacles of administrative and political will to transform this obstacle and its disturbances into a **Pit of possibilities.**

the "pit" is anything...

the word "pit", in the context of a quarry, calls to mind a multitude of images:

a **cavity**,

an **emptiness**,

a **scar on the earth**;

the Carriere Francon, however, while appearing on the surface to represent these qualities, is quite the opposite in practice.

the passing of seasons see the quarry teeming with snow,
and the many plants and animals which call this place their home.

the "firepit" in the heart of the quarry begs an entirely different question:

why build a firepit down there?

who's using it?

when?

and how do these questions about the quarry reflect or contrast images of its "**emptiness**"?

but empty

as it stands, the quarry acts as a physical barrier for citizens living in Saint-Michel, in terms of transportation but also in terms of possibilities; the firepit can perhaps be seen as a visual representation of the

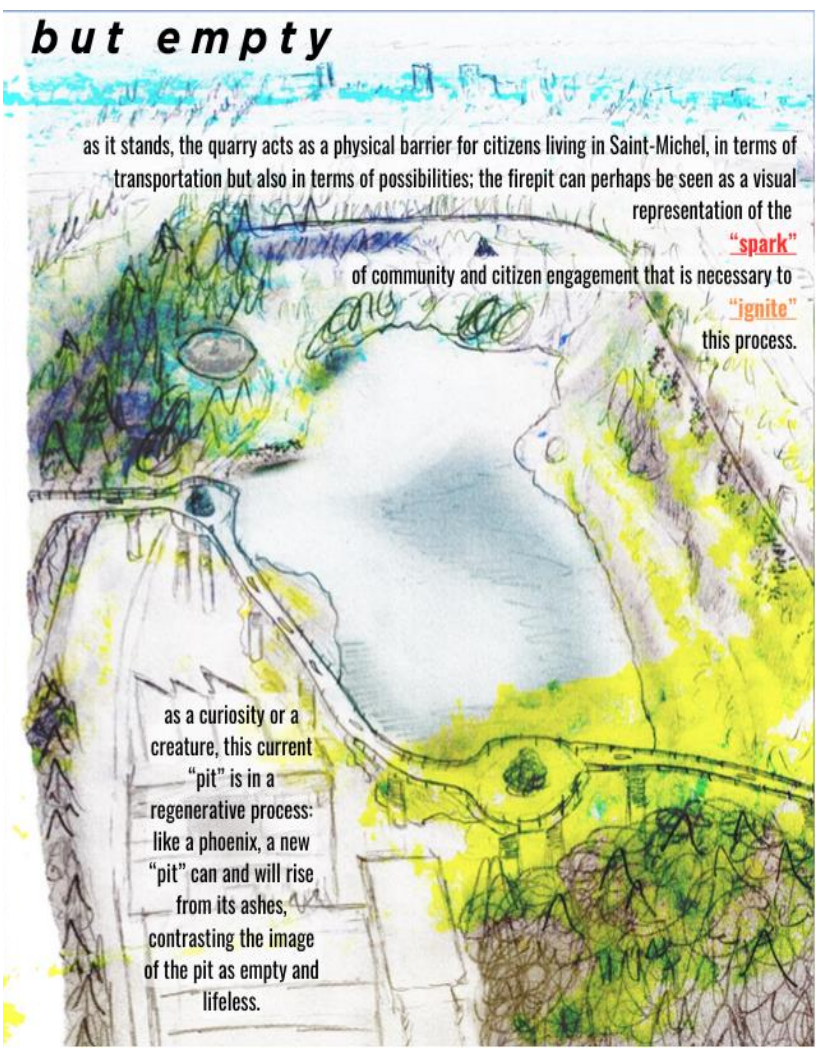
“spark”

of community and citizen engagement that is necessary to

“ignite”

this process.

as a curiosity or a creature, this current “pit” is in a regenerative process: like a phoenix, a new “pit” can and will rise from its ashes, contrasting the image of the pit as empty and lifeless.



We are a group of graduate students from the Ethnography lab at Concordia University. Our explorative project consisted in trying to relate and to think with enigmatic spaces such as the Carrière Francon. A space produced out of colonial and capitalist extractive practices and labor force, now trapped into a massive snow dumping site. It is still an invisible obstacle that prevents Saint-Michel's citizens to travel from East to West. We hope the local efforts to transform this place will become fruitful in a near future.

This zine is a humble output of our personal findings and reflections in learning about the Quarry and its neighborhood.

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Translation and website: Isabelle Boucher

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Other sources and who we are:

