**PROPOSING A RENEWED REGIONALISM:
AN ANALYTIC MAPPING OF LE BRETON FLATS**

By

Marie Poirier, B.A.S.

A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

M. ARCH. (professional)

Carleton University
OTTAWA, Ontario
May 16, 2007

© Marie Poirier, 2007

Library and
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

ISBN: 978-0-494-26976-3

Our file Notre référence

ISBN: 978-0-494-26976-3

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

ABSTRACT

When architecture becomes more capable of evoking place than it currently does, it has the potential to restore a renewed sense of identity to those urban developments which have become increasingly generic in character. Through the careful analytic mapping of a given site's particularities it should be possible to extract a heightened understanding of the site, which could then be physically transcribed into the built environment. The result would be an architecture capable of responding to some of the site's many facets; history, economy, topography, environment, in order to invite a stronger sense of connection between urban dweller and built environment. It is my belief that the outcome of this would be a more sustainable type of architecture, both environmentally and socially.

This method of analytic mapping possesses multiple regionalist notions, particularly that of critical regionalism. Attributed to Kenneth Frampton, this type of regionalism is not seeking a vernacular or nostalgic approach to design, but, more simply, a way to embody local particularities. However, where this approach may be lacking in the current era of digitized information is the aspect of the unseen particularities, such as economy or "spatialized power projects" as denoted by Saskia Sassen. This exploration will attempt to incorporate several different theories, including those of Frampton and Sassen, which address the subject of regionalism.

Le Breton Flats in Ottawa is the case study of my investigation. In it, I seek to identify the unmediated borderlands which have been produced on the site through numerous historic acts of expropriation. The proposed redevelopment on the site will attempt to address both the seen and the unseen scars left on the site while simultaneously imbuing the site with renewed urban identity.

I would like to thank Brian for all his thoughtful contributions and
patience towards the completion of this thesis.

I would also like to thank Charlie, my family and friends for their
unconditional support and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	II
TABLE OF FIGURES	V
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. THE SITE: LEBRETON FLATS, OTTAWA.....	5

3. ADDRESSING POST-INDUSTRIAL PLACELESSNESS.....	12
TRENDS IN REGIONALISM: SLOW FOOD TO FAST FOOD	14
REGIONALISM IN ARCHITECTURE	17
Critical Regionalism	17
(Re)Generating the City	19
Regionalism in a Digital Era?	21
Architectural Precedents	23
4. MAPPING LEBRETON FLATS.....	26
INTENTIONS FOR THE SITE	26
THE CHRONOSCOPE.....	27
THE NEXT ITERATION: THE LEGEND.....	32
DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION	35
Site 1 – Reading, Learning and Performing	40
Site 2 – Living, Relaxing and Playing.....	41
Site 3 - Creation, Integration and Commerce	42
FINAL DESIGN PROPOSAL	42
5. CONCLUSION	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	57

TABLE OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1 - 1A FRENCH HOUSE, 1B FRIESIAN HOUSE, 1C GERMAN HOUSE FROM GIOVAN ANTONIO RUSCONI'S TRANSLATION OF VITRUVIUS ENTITLED <i>DELL'ARCHITETTURA</i> .	1
FIGURE 2 - AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH, 2003, NATIONAL AIR PHOTO LIBRARY.....	5
FIGURE 3 – BROAD STREET STATION AT LEBRETON FLATS, 1897, CITY OF OTTAWA ARCHIVES CA-90025.	6
FIGURE 4 – LEBRETON FLATS, 1900, JUST AFTER FIRE, ARCHIVES OF CANADA A023233.	7
FIGURE 5 – PHOTO OF LEBRETON FLATS TAKEN BY AUTHOR, 2006.	8
FIGURE 6 - PHASE 1 OF REDEVELOPMENT AT LEBRETON FLATS, DRAWINGS PRODUCED BY DAN S. HANGANU ARCHITECTS AND DAOUST LESTAGE INC. WITH CLARIDGE HOMES CORPORATION.	10
FIGURE 7 - DANIEL LIEBSKIND, SKETCH OF DISTORTED STAR OF DAVID OVERLAID ONTO MAP OF BERLIN FROM <i>AT MEMORY'S EDGE</i> , BY JAMES E. YOUNG, P167.....	24
FIGURE 8 - RENZO PIANO, COMPETITION ENTRY FOR THE TIJBAOU CULTURAL CENTRE.	25
FIGURE 9 - EXTERIOR VIEW SHOWING DOOR WITH HANDLE AND PEEPHOLE, PHOTOGRAPHS BY AUTHOR.....	28
FIGURE 10 - INTERIOR VIEW OF <i>CHRONOSCOPE</i> SHOWING SLIDES AND OPEN DOOR.	29
FIGURE 11 –DIGITAL IMAGE DEPICTING INTERIOR OF <i>CHRONOSCOPE</i> SHOWING MAP AT BOTTOM.	31
FIGURE 12 – DIGITAL COPY OF IMAGE CAST BY <i>CHRONOSCOPE</i> PRODUCED IN DARKROOM ON PHOTOGRAPIC PAPER, BY AUTHOR.....	31
FIGURE 13 - 1857 MAP OF LEBRETON FLATS, OTTAWA FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND 2005 AUTOCAD DRAWINGS OF SAME SITE FROM THE CITY OF OTTAWA.	32
FIGURE 14 – IMAGE DEPICTING ONE 100M SQUARE TILE FROM THE <i>LEGEND</i> PRODUCED BY AUTHOR.	34
FIGURE 15 – <i>LEGEND</i> DEPICTING ENTIRE 900M SQUARE SITE, PRODUCED BY AUTHOR.	35
FIGURE 16 - IMAGE HIGHLIGHTING 3 MAIN AREAS OF STUDY AND BOOTH STREET, PREPARED BY AUTHOR.....	37
FIGURE 17 - MYLAR DRAWINGS BASED ON <i>LEGEND</i>	38
FIGURE 18 - PLASTER AND WOOD MODEL GENERATED FROM THE <i>LEGEND</i> AND PREVIOUS DRAWINGS.....	39
FIGURE 19 - VIEW CONTROL PLANE OF LEBRETON FLATS FROM THE OFFICIAL PLAN, CITY OF OTTAWA.	41
FIGURE 20 - SITE 1, GROUND LEVEL PLAN SHOWN ALONE AND WITH <i>LEGEND</i> UNDERLAY TO ILLUSTRATE DESIGN PROCESS.	45
FIGURE 21 - SITE 2, GROUND LEVEL PLAN SHOWN ALONE AND WITH <i>LEGEND</i> UNDERLAY TO ILLUSTRATE DESIGN PROCESS.	47
FIGURE 22- SITE 3, GROUND LEVEL PLAN SHOWN ALONE AND WITH <i>LEGEND</i> UNDERLAY TO ILLUSTRATE DESIGN PROCESS.	48
FIGURE 23 – OVERVIEW OF AMPHITHEATRE AT NORTH END OF SITE 1.	50

FIGURE 24 – OVERVIEW OF PARKSCAPE, SITE 1.....	50
FIGURE 25 – OVERVIEW OF SKATE PLAZA AND PLINTH, SITE 2.....	51
FIGURE 26 – SKATE PLAZA VIGNETTE, SITE 2.	51
FIGURE 27 – PLINTH VIGNETTE, SITE 2.....	51
FIGURE 28 – OVERVIEW OF OUTDOOR MARKET AREA WITH PERGOLA, SITE 1.....	52
FIGURE 29 – INDOOR MARKET AREA, SITE 1.	52
FIGURE 30 – TRANSIT STATION , SITE 1.....	52
FIGURE 31 – COMPLETE SECTION THROUGH SITE.	53
FIGURE 32 - ENLARGED AREAS FROM SECTION.....	53

1. INTRODUCTION

The connection between architecture and place has not always been as complex as it has come to be. It used to be that “regional” architecture was shaped by external and internal physical restraints, which naturally changed from region to region, resulting in distinct architectural forms. Now, many years later, with the possibilities offered by global communication, technology, economy and culture, the very idea of what comprises a region has come into question and, with it, the question of the relationship between architecture and place.

1a

1b

1c

The commonly acknowledged notion of “placelessness” in architecture as caused by industrialisation and subsequently globalization has been a major focal point for architects and urban planners since the decline of Modernism. Where the architects of the Modern Movement were often adamant about severing all links to the past and, consequently, employing a *tabula rasa* approach to ensure it, many architectural movements are now seeking to do just the opposite: employ ground-up strategies that work to strengthen the ties between place, form and identity. This interest in a renewed perspective on regionalism however, extends beyond the field of architecture.

Figure 1 - 1a French House, 1b Friesian House, 1c German House from Giovan Antonio Rusconi's translation of Vitruvius entitled *Dell' Architettura*.

The Slow Food Movement provides one such example where its participants seek to nourish themselves through the implementation of regional products and practice. The

benefits are meant to include improving health and general well-being, stimulating local economy, and promoting sustainability both environmentally and socially. Interestingly, this movement is now operating globally, making clear the fine line which very often divides *regional* and *global*. Equally paradoxical, is the fact that some of the most global organizations such as McDonalds are now recognizing the previously unforeseen benefits of regional strategies and exploring these avenues themselves. As we will see, these ideals are not simply limited to the food industry.

Architecturally speaking, the response to “placeness” has employed similar regional strategies in an attempt to restore a heightened connection between built form and place. One such example, Critical Regionalism, proposes a highly self-conscious and contextual approach to architecture in an attempt to resist increasingly common universal typologies. This design strategy does not denote any one particular aesthetic style but, rather, it values singular site specific design strategies capable of expressing unique regional values in order to promote identity. It is important to recognize that these ideals do not form a monolithic perspective, as Critical Regionalism is only one aspect of this concept geared toward recapturing the distinct aspects of “place.”

Anthony Vidler suggested that the response to this loss of place is emblematic of a “Third Typology” in architecture.¹ Rather than the top-down approaches to urbanism attributed to Modernism, this typology proposes working from the ground up. Through reconsidering the original urban fabric of cities which have become increasingly generic, architects refer back to the city itself in order to re-establish place and ensure continuity

¹ Anthony Vidler, “The Third Typology”, *Oppositions Reader: Selected Readings from a Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture* (1973-1984).

“against the fragmentation produced by the elemental, institutional and mechanistic typologies of recent past”.²

Perhaps one of the most recent contributions to current thoughts on regionalism is the approach of using information as a way to establish place. Since digital information has become integral to daily life, the question of its connection to built form has become increasingly important. As opposed to Critical Regionalism, which focuses heavily on physical context, this approach incorporates less visually apparent informational readings of site. Saskia Sassen and Christine Boyer both suggest that digital information is now playing a key role in the understanding of and development of architecture and urban planning.³

As a case study for illustrating the possibilities offered by regionalism to bring heightened meaning to architecture, I have chosen the area of LeBreton Flats in Ottawa. The area, known historically as “The Flats” in order to distinguish it from the high cliffs to the East, extends north from Albert Street to the Ottawa River, between Bronson Avenue and Preston Street, and covers approximately 165 acres. This site, one of Ottawa’s oldest areas, has been consistently plagued by irresolution, controversy and expropriation at least since the French first encountered the Algonquin along the waterway. Perhaps the most obvious example of this paralyzing indecision is the expropriation of the land which occurred in 1962, which was subsequently followed by fifty years of near complete abandonment. Left with only trace elements of its industrial past, this site is now in a state of anticipation for its upcoming development. For these reasons, this site provides a rare opportunity to explore the potential for mapping the many unresolved issues of the site,

² Anthony Vidler, “The Third Typology”, *Oppositions Reader: Selected Readings from a Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture* (1973-1984):261.

³ Saskia Sassen, “The City: Between Topographic Representation and Spatialized Power Projects”, *Art Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 2, (Summer, 2001) and Christine Boyer, “Playing with Information: Urbanism in the Twenty-First Century” from, “Future City” (eds. Read, Rosemann and Van Eldink, 2001).

while at the same time establishing this area as an integral component of Ottawa's urban centre once again.

This thesis evaluates the potential for the recovery of expropriated urban sites through a proposed regional strategy. This analytical mapping exercise will begin with the research of the historic developments of the LeBreton Flats, whereby significant public areas, interventions and events can be isolated. The exercise will then synthesize the historic site information with current site conditions in the establishment of a new urban landscape. The result of this study will demonstrate a strategy that can enrich new developments on LeBreton Flats through a heightened connection to the site's history, thus promoting a more cohesive urban experience.

Remembrance shapes our links to the past, and the ways we remember define us in the present. As individuals and societies, we need the past to construct and anchor our identities and to nurture a vision for the future.

Andreas Huyssen⁴

⁴ Andreas Huyssen, "Monuments and Holocaust Memory in a Media Age", in *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 12.

2. THE SITE: LeBreton Flats, Ottawa

Figure 2 - Aerial Photograph, 2003, National Air Photo Library

The Beginnings of a City: Early Days in the Capital

Throughout the last half century, LeBreton Flats in Ottawa has been little more than a wide open space to the north of the city just west of the Parliament Buildings boasting some of the city's most historically rich waterfront real-estate. Originally occupied by Algonquin Indians, the site was used for hunting and trading with other tribes from the area. Around 1613 the French explorer and colonizer Samuel de Champlain arrived at the cliffs overlooking LeBreton Flats to stake his claim, and not long after, British explorers arrived to do the same. It is not surprising then, that during this period when the land repeatedly switched "ownership", the river that flows past it was subject to repeated name changes; from the "Outaouak" after a local Algonquin tribe, to the "La Grand Riviere du Nord", to the "Outaouais" by the French as, then later shortened by the British to the "Ottawa".⁵

As settlers began to move into the area, they settled first on the North side of the river in what is now known as Gatineau, and then later on the South side precisely at what is now LeBreton Flats. Because the Ottawa River and Chaudiere Falls provided opportunity for transportation and power generation, as the region became increasingly populated, LeBreton Flats remained the central hub of the area. By the end of the 19th century, the

⁵ Nick and Helma Mika, *Bytown: The Early Days in Ottawa* (Bellville, Ontario: Mika Publishing Company, 1982), 10.

neighbourhood boasted hotels, housing, churches, taverns, a passenger train station, a fire station, lumber and other industries.⁶ Things continued in this way until the early part of the twentieth century when a fire, which swept across the river by means of the lumber yards, razed the area. (Figure 3 and Figure 4)

While LeBreton Flats was rebuilt shortly thereafter, many of the businesses and wealthier families left, thus changing the character of the neighbourhood from upper-middle class to primarily working class. Despite this, the area continued to operate as a mixed-use neighbourhood for another fifty years, with new businesses, stand-alone and row houses and commercial and industrial buildings.

Figure 3 – Broad Street station at LeBreton Flats, 1897, City of Ottawa Archives CA-90025.

⁶ Phil Jenkins, *An Acre of Time: The Enduring Value of Place* (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter and Ross, 1996), 157-178.

Figure 4 – LeBreton Flats, 1900, just after fire, Archives of Canada a023233.

The decision to make Ottawa the capital of Canada in 1857 had as much to do with geographic location as anything else since it was seated comfortably between Upper and Lower Canada. Along with this change a few new strategies were needed to ensure that the small industrial city would suit its grand new title. Beginning in 1899, this responsibility was awarded to a series of commissions charged a seemingly simple mandate, “to beautify the Capital through the creation of urban parks and scenic driveways”.⁷ The current incarnation of this commission, The National Capital Commission (NCC) was formed in 1959 with a specific interest in implementing the Greber Plan that had been on the drawing board since 1938.⁸ This plan, by recognized French planner Jacques Greber, proposed expropriating LeBreton Flats to make way for a landscaped ceremonial parkway leading into the capital. This plan was later revised to include a major government complex to house The National Defence Headquarters.

⁷ NCC Mandate Review Brief, October 2006, 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

The final decision for the expropriation of the 165 acres in question can be summed up in the following statement by Public Works Minister David J. Walker, “It simply didn’t make sense that there should be Parliament Hill here, and directly to the west this incredible eyesore.”⁹ So, in 1962 the site was cleared of all its nearly 3,000 residents and its businesses and the parkway put in place. Unfortunately, that was as far as the plans ever got, and for the next fifty years the land stood vacant, apart from the eerily overgrown roads and sidewalks.¹⁰ (Figure 5)

Figure 5 – Photo of LeBreton Flats taken by author, 2006.

While the NCC was struggling to negotiate a plan for the Flats, the conveniently located site found itself reoccupied by various temporal events such as music festivals, a circus, protests and a papal mass in 1984, to name a few.¹¹ However, being neither parkland nor maintained urban space, the NCC found that this flexible venue did not make the best

⁹ Phil Jenkins, *An Acre of Time: The Enduring Value of Place* (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter and Ross, 1996), 185.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 179-185.

¹¹ Janine Debanne, “Flats on the Flats”, *Canadian Architect*, September 2005.

use out of such prime real estate, so just before the new millennium, the decision was made to situate the new National War Museum with an adjacent festival site named the “LeBreton Commons”, bringing permanent inhabitation back to the LeBreton Flats. Ironically, the first stage of development with the War Museum displaced Grebers’ parkway into the middle of the site, essentially discarding the last remnants of the plan the NCC was formed to execute.

Current Developments

LeBreton Flats is a unique site, critical to the future of the heart of the Nation's Capital and the Central Area of the City of Ottawa. LeBreton Flats has a destiny, other than as idle lands, and has the potential to support a vibrant community once again.¹²

Currently, the northwest corner of the site is complete with the National War Museum and adjacent Festival Plaza. As for the southeast portion of the Flats, construction is well underway for multiple six to eight story residential towers sitting atop courtyard styled bases which are slated to include both commercial and residential programming. (Figure 6) As this portion has already been approved by the numerous groups involved with the site, for the remainder of this study it will be assumed that these buildings are a given component on the final design of the site. This assumption does not attempt to determine whether or not this phase of development is successful or not, only that it is there.

¹² 20/20 City of Ottawa Official Plan, Secondary Plan for Central Area, 61.

Figure 6 - Phase 1 of redevelopment at LeBreton flats, drawings produced by Dan S. Hanganu Architects and Daoust Lestage Inc. with Claridge Homes Corporation.

While the remainder of the Flats has been zoned, firm plans have not been set. However, some of these possibilities include a light rail transit station, which has been debated for years and is currently on hold, and a site for another public institution to the East of the War Museum. The remainder of the site is zoned as mixed commercial and residential.

It is my assertion after reviewing the historical timeline of the site, that the resulting re-development currently in progress should attempt to address its past significance to the country, the city and to the neighbourhood itself. Ottawa is a city with a relatively modest history when compared to many, and for this reason the expropriation of LeBreton Flats may have been a questionable decision. Nevertheless, it has become simply another aspect

of that history which now lies embedded in the earth. The idea of the trace history affiliated with the site is explored in the following passage from Phil Jenkin's book *An Acre of Time*:

When a community is wiped off the map, the map is never wiped clean. The acre's blackboard was blank, the traces of the lives that crossed it were gone; but they left their dusty mark. After a century of inhabitation on Le Breton Flats, there remained, in the ground, lingering evidence that people had passed this way.¹³

¹³ Phil Jenkins, *An Acre of Time: The Enduring Value of Place* (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter and Ross, 1996), 207.

3. ADDRESSING POST-INDUSTRIAL PLACELESSNESS

The expropriation of LeBreton Flats was certainly not the only example of its kind. Many North American cities during the 60's were doing the same thing, attempting to beautify their cities through relocating industrial sites occupying city centers and replacing them with parkways, housing projects and commercial centres. Coincidentally, Jane Jacobs was writing vehemently against these slum removal programs at the very time when Ottawa was executing one of its own. In her book *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*, Jacobs discusses the consequences of these approaches to city planning, "Commercial centres that are lacklustre imitations of standardized suburban chain-store shopping. Promenades that go from no place to nowhere and have no promenaders. Expressways that eviscerate great cities. This is not the rebuilding of cities. This is the sacking of cities."¹⁴ She then goes on to suggest that the subsequent "spiritlessness" and decay associated with these "amputated areas" are inevitable, despite city planners' best intentions. The answer to this, she suggests, is in the cities themselves. Solutions should be based on the unexpected success and failure of real life rather than on principles based on appearance.¹⁵ Frowned upon by Jane Jacobs, this type of urban redevelopment project was just one aspect of the modern movement that was later attributed to a "loss of place" in our cities.

Another issue contributing to the sense of placelessness in architecture is the current state of globalization. In Bruce Mau's essay, Massive Change, he suggests that the current phenomenon is the result of a desire to establish ever wider trade and communication that originated in the industrial era. He states, "...the notion of the intermodal, the idea of seamlessly integrating one system with another became the central ambition of design in the

¹⁴ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Random House, 1961), 4-6.

¹⁵ Bruce Mau, *Massive Change* (Phaidon, London, 2004) 340.

last half of the twentieth century.”¹⁶ Based on this assumption, the result of this type of worldwide interconnection would be the eventual dissolution and homogenization of many things, including architecture. This attitude is echoed in the following quote by Paul Ricoeur:

The phenomenon of universalization, while being an advancement to mankind, at the same time constitutes a sort of subtle destruction, not only of traditional cultures, which might not be an irreparable wrong, but also what I shall call for the time being the creative nucleus of great civilizations and great cultures, that nucleus on the basis of which we interpret life, what I shall call in advance the ethical and mythical nucleus of mankind.¹⁷

¹⁶ Bruce Mau, *Massive Change* (Phaidon, London, 2004) 127.

¹⁷ Paul Ricoeur, “Universalization and National Cultures,” in *History and Truth* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1961), 276-283; quoted in Kenneth Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance”, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1983.

Trends in Regionalism: Slow Food to Fast Food

It only makes sense that one of the results of this perceived homogenization in society was a general trend towards those theories and practices which sought to counter it. Since the decline of modernism, there has been an increasing shift away from the global aspirations that were fundamental to it and the industrial movement in general. Because of this, the trend towards regionalism is on the rise. Regional strategies are now being applied to a multitude of daily practices, from business strategies to gardening, to eating, to designing, each endeavouring to maximize the benefits offered by a thoughtful synthesis of both global and local practices.

This emergent attitude towards regionalism is easily perceived in the Slow Food Movement which originated in Italy. In 1986, Carlo Petrini started the movement as a reaction to the opening of a McDonald's restaurant in Rome. This movement is based on a desire to resist an increasingly fast paced world, a loss of diversity and a lack of sustainable practices, with a particular focus on food. The first two points of their manifesto taken from their website describe the underlying motivations of the organization:

Our century, which began and has developed under the insignia of industrial civilization, first invented the machine and then took it as its life model.

We are enslaved by speed and have all succumbed to the same insidious virus: *Fast Life*, which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes and forces us to eat Fast Foods.¹⁸

The practices of the Slow Food movement can vary, but in general they may include purchasing local and organic produce, preparing food in traditional methods and becoming more educated about gastronomy in general. All of these measures are geared towards protecting biodiversity of certain foods that have been identified as being threatened,

¹⁸ Slow Food Movement Website, at: http://www.slowfood.com/about_us/eng/manifesto.

promoting the sustainability of economy, environment and society. The Slow Food Movement consists of non-profit organizations whose gatherings, known as “convivias”, are held by volunteers in communities around the world in order to preserve gastronomic traditions in risk of being lost, “We believe that everyone has a fundamental right to pleasure and consequently the responsibility to protect the heritage of food, tradition and culture that make this pleasure possible. Our movement is founded upon this concept of eco-gastronomy – a recognition of the strong connections between plate and planet.”¹⁹

It is a paradoxical condition when a group such as this - possessing 70,000 members from 40 countries across all five continents - operates to such a global extent and yet is based on the premise of encouraging local and traditional initiatives. The Slow Food Movement has the potential to promote sustainability both culturally and environmentally at both a local and a global scale, however much of this may not have been possible without the Internet. This condition is addressed by Saskia Saasen who will be further examined later: “This is a politics of the global centered on local issues and local political actors. Because the network is global does not mean that it all has to happen at the global level.”²⁰ This delicate balance is often the aim of many current regional practices which seek not to condemn globalization, but to exploit the strengths of both approaches.

The benefits of this balance are equally apparent when examining the very nemesis of the Slow Food Movement, McDonalds. It can be seen that even the corporate fast food giant that instigated the Slow Food Movement has felt pressure to explore more regional practices. In Sweden, McDonald’s made a move to rectify its failing corporate image by reconsidering some of its policies. There you will now find organic dairy products, as much

¹⁹Slow Food Movement Website, at: http://www.slowfood.com/about_us/eng/manifesto.

²⁰ Saskia Saasen, “The City: Between Topographic Representation and Spatialized Power Projects”, *Art Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 2, (Summer, 2001) 18.

organic meat and vegetables as the market can supply, and no genetically modified food products. Many of the stores are operating on renewable energy and the transportation of many of their goods relies heavily on train and bio-fuel cars.²¹ In this example one can see the regionalist tendencies of even the largest companies in response to concerns affiliated with globalization and sustainability.

In the two abovementioned examples of emergent regional practices, it can be seen that even while organizations continue to operate in an increasingly global way, the pressure to address issues of sustainability, identity and diversity are increasing. While these examples focus on the food industry, they are reflective of a growing trend in numerous fields, including architecture, which seek to reconsider some of the alternatives to a homogenized global condition through heightened regional ideologies and practice.

The implications of this shift towards regionalism architecturally are no different. Even while many architectural offices are operating internationally, it has become increasingly important for architecture to address regional issues of climate, material availability, culture, religion and economy. The following section will examine some of the ideologies surrounding the emergence of regionalism in architecture.

²¹ Catherine Gray, quoted in Bruce Mau, *Massive Change* (Phaidon, London, 2004) 133.

Regionalism in Architecture

The place, then, is the concrete manifestation of the world of life, and as an instrumental art, architecture is the art of place. In the past, the place was that obvious presence that transmitted identity to its inhabitants. It was not necessary therefore to develop a theory of place; concrete action was sufficient. This common opinion was handed down in vernacular architecture, even though the theory of architecture had become alienated from the world of life. It was only after the Second World War that there began to be a discussion of the loss of place, leading to a sense of the impelling need for a new understanding of the world of life.²²

In this quote Christian Norberg-Shultz suggests that architecture is the “art of place”, and while it used to be that architecture inherently embodied those qualities that initiate identity, it no longer does. This assumption is attributed to the understanding that architectural designs have become ambiguous and generic where they once possessed a stronger contextual association. For this reason - the perceived “loss of place” - architecture has very often focused heavily on re-establishing a sense of connection to those places where it is sited. Here, three theories which each contribute to an understanding of regionalism in architecture will be introduced with the ultimate intention of applying aspects of all three to the redevelopment of LeBreton Flats.

Critical Regionalism

Critical Regionalism is an architectural movement whose primary aim is to address the abovementioned “loss of place”. It proposes a highly self-conscious and sensitive approach to architecture in an attempt to re-instate a sense of place. While this new ideology does not denote any one particular aesthetic style, it suggests a more broad approach which

²² Christian Norberg-Shultz, *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place* (Milano, Italy: Skira, 2000), 28.

encompasses a variety of regionalist values. This loss of identity in architecture is the primary focus of Critical Regionalism.

In their essay *Why Critical Regionalism Today?*, Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre question what it means to be Regionalist in a society where the boundaries of region are continuously disintegrating with increased economic, cultural and technological globalization. They suggest that regionalism has become a nostalgic re-creation of place that is irrelevant, describing it as "...a fake, a pastiche, kitsch, good only for commercial facilities, restaurants, hotels, and other emporia..."²³ However, they are equally critical of much modern architecture suggesting that it is often "anomic, atopic, misanthropic" in nature, resulting in an architecture which is once again irrelevant..²⁴ They argue that Critical Regionalism is the avenue whereby a relevant architecture is to be found.

As stated, Critical Regionalism differs from many architectural movements in that it embraces no particular aesthetic style, but a broad and loosely defined set of principles based on the commitment to re-establishing a sense of "place" in architecture. It goes about doing this through maintaining a high level of self-consciousness and sensitivity to its context. Tzonis and Lefaivre state, "...it draws form from the context, in other words its poetics become specific drawing from the regional, circumscribed constraints which have produced places and collective representations in given bound areas."²⁵ Some of the possible issues used to drive a project might be climate, craftsmanship, local materials, quality of light, topography, or ecology, just to name a few. It is the ability for a building to integrate those qualities relevant to it while simultaneously discarding those qualities that are alien or irrelevant to it.

²³ Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, "Why Critical Regionalism Today?", *Architecture and Urbanism*, Number 236 (May 1990), 485.

²⁴ Ibid, 488.

²⁵ Ibid. 490.

Critic Keith Eggner argues that Critical Regionalism is both vague and contradicting in his article, *Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism*. He feels that Critical Regionalism is often vague in its description because it is a process more than a style, changing with each project.²⁶ However, this criticism only illustrates one of the requirements of Critical Regionalism which is a fluidity which “recognizes the value of the singular” and takes a slightly different form at each application. It is the highly individual nature of this approach that ensures that rigid typologies and standards cannot come into being, further promoting the case for distinctiveness.

Critical Regionalism is the proposed solution to the “relentless onslaught of global modernization”²⁷, according to Kenneth Frampton. While neither rejecting nor embracing past architectural movements, it asks that buildings become more self-reflective and contextual. This approach to architecture encourages a sensitivity to local issues, environment, culture and economy, making Critical Regionalism something that could be applied virtually anywhere with relative success.

(Re)Generating the City

The aspect of studying original urban fabric to guide new development is another design approach which has emerged from the perceived notion of placelessness in cities. In the essay *The Third Typology*, Anthony Vidler suggests that the third typology, which currently informs architecture, explores the city itself as a basis for new design, and in this way, the third typology actually promotes a regionalism whereby the city regenerates itself and thus perpetuates the “local”.

²⁶ Keith Eggner, “Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism”, *Journal of Architectural Education*, volume 55 number 4, May 2002.

²⁷ Kenneth Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance”, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983) 29.

The first typology, he claims, was based on the rational order of nature with the assumption that each element of architecture was a logical addition to the previous. He describes this occurrence as follows, “the chain that linked the column to the hut to the city was parallel to the chain that linked the natural world; and the primary geometries favoured for the combination of type-elements were seen as expressive of the underlying form of nature beneath its surface appearance.”²⁸

The second typology Vidler describes uses the production process itself as a basis for design. In this instance the rational order of mass-production was the foundation for architectural intention. This typology would have occurred alongside the industrial revolution and would have been most prominent during the Modern Movement. Both this typology and the first were seeking legitimization from an outside source, in the first instance nature and in the second instance mass-production, but both were looking towards the “nature” of something beyond itself to guide it.

The third typology differs from the first two in that it uses existing architecture as a premise for design; the “nature” which validates it. Vidler suggests that this typology arose in opposition to the mechanistic typology which preceded it, stating “This concept of the *city* as the site of a new typology is evidently born of a desire to stress the continuity of form and history against the fragmentation produced by the elemental, institutional, and mechanistic typologies of the recent past.”²⁹ He is proposing that the distinct shift from nature to mass-production as basis for design caused a rupture in the linear progression of typologies and that this introduced “fragmentation, de-centralization, and formal disintegration into

²⁸ Anthony Vidler, “The Third Typology”, *Oppositions Reader: Selected Readings from a journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture* (1973-1984), 261.

²⁹ Ibid., 262-263.

contemporary urban life”.³⁰ Vidler ultimately feels that the third typology is meant to ensure a continuous progression of tradition in the city which has previously been threatened:

The heroes of this new typology are therefore to be found not among the nostalgic, anti-city utopians of the nineteenth century nor among the critics of industrial and technical progress of the twentieth century, but rather among those who, as the professional servants of urban life, direct their skills to solving the question of avenue, arcade, street and square, park and house, in a continuous typology of elements that together coheres the past fabric and present intervention to make one comprehensible experience of the city.³¹

As each of Vidler’s three proposed typologies reflect the aspirations of their respective time frames, the Third typology is assumed to be reflective of current aspirations. This typology suggests the idea that architecture should be reflective of the city it originates from in order to perpetuate the original urban experience of that city.

Regionalism in a Digital Era?

During recent years, as the very possibility of regionalism in a global era has come into question, there has emerged a new way of understanding what comprises a region. Where Critical Regionalism has traditionally focused on expressing local conditions of a physical nature, such as topography, materiality and climate, a new approach to regionalism seeks to incorporate less obvious local conditions such as information networks, economy and politics. And while Critical Regionalism attempts to tap into the local in order to resist globalization, Saskia Sassen would argue that the local and the global are increasingly interconnected.

³⁰ Anthony Vidler, “The Third Typology”, *Oppositions Reader: Selected Readings from a journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture* (1973-1984), 262.

³¹ Ibid., 263.

In her essay, *The City: Between Topographic Representation and Spatialized Power Projects*³², Saskia Sassen questions the validity of reading a city through its topography alone. While this representation of the city is an essential component in its reading, it fails to reveal the global networks which often touch down in them, leaving their physical mark on the city. This could be understood in the case of an office tower which represents a large corporation; while the topography might reveal the pertinence of the building within that city, it would not reveal its global span. Sassen explains, “Topographic representations of such a city fail to capture the fact that components of a city’s topography may be spatializations of global power projects and/or may be located on global circuits, therefore destabilizing the meaning of the local or the sited, and hence the topographic representation of such a city.”³³ Sassen describes the intersection between these diverse circuits within the city as “analytic borderlands”. It is within these analytic borderlands that an accurate reading of the city can be found, since it has the potential to address both the global and the local imbrications simultaneously. While Sassen’s work is grounded in economics, it does provide an interesting framework for reconsidering the idea of an architectural regionalism in a digital era.

Christine Boyer also writes about the interconnection between information and urban form in her essay, *Playing with information: urbanism in the twenty-first century*³⁴. She begins by addressing the existence of the “Generic City” as produced by a continual territorial and population growth. As a way to deal with this condition, she feels that architects have begun to use information as a way to bring meaning back into architecture. She explains that

³² Saskia Sassen, “The City: Between Topographic Representation and Spatialized Power Projects”, *Art Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 2, (Summer, 2001).

³³ Ibid, 12.

³⁴ Christine Boyer, “Playing with information: urbanism in the twenty-first century” from, “Future City” (eds. Read, Rosemann and Van Eldink).

architects have now “come to be gatherers of information, diagrammatic analysers and cartographers”³⁵ in an attempt to allow site specific information to generate design. While she admits that there is always a certain leap of creativity between the datascape and the final product, it is a way of getting closer to the composition of the Generic City:

This is the basic message behind playing with information – allowing form albeit in an arbitrary and non-methodological manner to emerge from the hidden logics of urban chaos and complexity. This is play at its imaginative best.³⁶

Architectural Precedents

There are numerous examples of instances where architecture has successfully demonstrated ways to express context to achieve a heightened sense of place. The following examples are meant to illustrate how some of the abovementioned approaches to regionalism can be put to practice.

James Young writing about the Jewish museum in Berlin describes Libeskind’s method of looking back in time to extract significance from the site, as he did by forming the distorted Star of David from notable Jewish persons in Berlin.³⁷ This distorted star was then used to generate the final form that the Museum would take. (Figure 7) In this instance, Libeskind is using information to generate form much in the same way that Christine Boyer is suggesting.

³⁵ Christine Boyer, “Playing with information: urbanism in the twenty-first century” from, “Future City” (eds. Read, Rosemann and Van Eldink) 157.

³⁶ Ibid., 173.

³⁷ James Young, “Daniel Liebskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture”, *At memory’s Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, Yale University Press, p.152-223.

Figure 7 - Daniel Liebskind, sketch of distorted Star of David overlaid onto map of Berlin from *At Memory's Edge*, by James E. Young, p167.

In the case of the Tjibaou Cultural Centre in New Caledonia, Renzo Piano looks to the lost culture of the Kanak in order to begin to develop a new design language capable of offering a renewed solidarity. The building was intended to possess international stature, and as such, many of the traditional building materials and methods were unsuitable. Because of this, many of the buildings elements were specially fabricated and imported to be assembled on site by local tradesmen. The basic forms of the buildings are taken from the traditional huts in which the Kanak used to live. While symbolic affiliation to the hut is evident, it is not intended as a direct replica:

When you see that steel structure, you can't say it's just a redrawing of a traditional hut. But the way the parts go together is easy to understand and logical, like the traditional hut, so it works. We didn't work in a basic way just to copy it, but we tried to understand the spirit and work with that.³⁸

³⁸ William Vassal as quoted by Lisa Findlay, *Building Change: Architecture Politics, and Cultural Agency* (New York: Routledge), 69.

Through consideration of traditional Kanak ideologies of site and building approach as well as the traditional form of their huts, Piano successfully infuses the new design with a unique sense of connection to its culture. (Figure 8)

Figure 8 - Renzo Piano, Competition entry for the Tijbaou Cultural Centre.

While the designs and uses of these two buildings have very little in common, they both take on the complex task of commemorating, through architecture, a culture which has been lost. They do this through the systematic re-evaluation and re-interpretation of relevant local data as they attempt to design with increased cultural significance. Lisa Findlay describes the architectural potential offered through this type of regional design strategy:

It is exactly here, at this small scale, that architecture can and does support change. It does this by doing what it does best: by enclosing a series of human uses adjusted to the particular conditions of a specific place. These include the historical and cultural context, the site, the nuanced dynamics of the various people involved, the unique technological and material possibilities, and the rhythms and dreams of the people who will inhabit the building.³⁹

³⁹ Lisa Findlay, *Building Change: Architecture Politics, and Cultural Agency* (New York: Routledge) 36.

4. MAPPING LEBRETON FLATS

Intentions for the Site

Simply stated, if something is taken unwillingly from the public, then in all fairness it should be given back. When a government makes the decision to expropriate privately owned land, as in the case of Ottawa's Le Breton Flats, strategies must be employed that ensure the new development adequately substitutes that which was taken. While it would be nostalgic and inappropriate to attempt to replicate that what was destroyed, it would be proper to establish guidelines that would allow the patterns of public space ingrained in the earlier settlement to become re-exposed in the new development, thus allowing the site to become imbued with renewed historic integrity and offering a greater sense of "placeness" than unrestricted new development can.

The intention of this work is to outline a strategy that would attempt to recover the richly textured urban fabric lost through the act of expropriation. This endeavour has contemporary significance since many urban industrial sites have been vacated and now require redevelopment. Typically the large plots of land are sold in their entirety to one team of developers and are thus subject to the single minded vision of the group in question. While this type of land development is increasingly common, particularly in suburban areas, the delicate nature of the original urban fabric is easily lost if precautions are not taken to preserve it. This proposal is an attempt to establish a methodology whereby the original qualities of a given area are identified and then used to ensure that the character of the site is re-exposed in the new urban landscape.

If the contemporary city suffers from an inadequate and misguided process of planning, then perhaps a re-examination of some of the latter's historical roots might awaken forgotten intentions.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1994), 11.

The Chronoscope

My initial interest in materializing the issues related to LeBreton Flats was to demonstrate how aspects of public space could be recovered from the past in order to generate a new landscape. On this premise, a device was made from the analysis of historic developments on The Flats whereby significant public areas, interventions and events were isolated and identified as “nodes”. These “nodes” were then transcribed onto glass slides which each represented a different historical time frame. Through the layering of slides, I felt it would be possible to project a new two dimensional map of my analysis of the Flats. The result of this map could demonstrate a strategy capable of enriching new developments on the Flats with a heightened connection to the site’s history.

I called this built object a *chronoscope*. This name is comprised of two parts, “chrono” defined as the science of locating events in time, and “scope” being a suffix used in English denoting viewing and observing; derived from the scientific Latin suffix - scopium, meaning a viewing instrument.

The body of the *chronoscope* was made from ceiling tin bought from Cohen and Cohen Demolition Company, who I later discovered held the original Demolition contract for the Flats. The tin was commonly used in the early twentieth century and can still be found in many buildings in close proximity to the site. In manipulating the tin with an interest in maintaining its integrity, it was folded along its pre-existing ridges, forming the body of the “chronoscope”. Because of this initial move, the scale of the map to be produced was already determined by the modules of the ceiling tin. The weathered condition of the tin offered the *chronoscope* a sense of having a previous existence, and thus telling both the stories of its past and reinvented use. (Figure 9)

Figure 9 - Exterior view showing door with handle and peephole, photographs by author.

Inside the box, slides were produced based on research of the site. (Figure 10) Since the intent was to isolate public “nodes” in an attempt to mediate the site, those eras which were subjected to the most controversial land use were the focus. Ultimately, four time frames were selected for making slides.

The first slide denotes the expropriation of the Algonquin Indians from the site around 1760. While this was not an expropriation in the typical sense, their land was successfully usurped by the French and later the British, the hardship of which can be clearly felt in the following passage, a plea for compensation written by the Algonquin to the British Government:

Our beaver and other fur have been destroyed by the constant fires made by the lumber men in our majestic forests. Our deer have disappeared. Our timber to the amount of hundreds of thousands of pounds is annually taken, but from which we derived not the

least benefit. We are starving Father. Our wives and children are naked.⁴¹

The subject of the subsequent slide was the era just prior to major fire at the turn of the twentieth century, while this was not an expropriation per se, it did successfully evacuate nearly every inhabitant.

Perhaps the most significant slide to this study represents the time frame just before the government expropriation in 1962, since this was the last time the land was actually permanently inhabited.

The final slide considers the time frame just before the new millennium. When the decision to build a museum on this site was made, it was no longer available to those who had been freely using it for gatherings, festivals or picnics. While the conditions surrounding these expropriations vary greatly, what remains constant is that in every case, the land is taken against the will of its inhabitants, thus making the acknowledgment of its public “nodes” worthwhile of reconciliation.

Figure 10 - Interior view of *Chronoscope* showing slides and open door.

⁴¹ Phil Jenkins, *An Acre of Time: The Enduring Value of Place* (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter and Ross, 1996), 85.

Based on the abovementioned periods on the Flats, nodes were extracted that were of particular public significance, which would then become part of the new map. An example of this is the passenger train station at Broad Street and Ottawa Street in existence before the great fire; a small public station which served as the point of arrival for those travelling to the city from the West. Another was the popular Duke Inn, on Duke and Britannia Terrace, which was a longstanding fixture on the site, being one of two buildings to actually survive the fire as well as the last building standing during the demolition of the Flats. The location behind the National Archives is the site of a “node” meant to signify a burial ground left by the Algonquin Indians. While some of the “nodes” identified were landmarks, some were of less significance to the neighbourhood, such as worker row housing as the nodes were meant to be representative of a broad range of issues on the site.

As each node was decided, it was then demarcated on the slide and inserted into the tray holders mounted inside the container. Each node was indicated on the slides by a small machined sprocket in association with a material reminiscent of the “node” being represented, for example, small pieces of wood for the lumber industry and wire mesh representing the chain-link fences at the music festivals. With all the slides in place, a light was then projected through all the slides casting an image at the bottom of the *chronoscope* which becomes a composite whole comprised of each evaluated time frame. (Figure 10)

Figure 11 –Digital image depicting interior of *chronoscope* showing map at bottom.

It was intended that the data could be gleaned from the *chronoscope* in the darkroom on photographic paper. While this was somewhat successful, it not only revealed some of the optical inaccuracies of the *chronoscope*, such as scale and precision, it amplified them. Nevertheless, it provided the theoretical foundation for the subsequent version of the redevelopment map.

Figure 12 – Digital copy of image cast by *chronoscope* produced in darkroom on photograpgic paper, by author.

The Next Iteration: The Legend

As there were a number of issues which made the *chronoscope* more effective in theory than in practice the next iteration attempted to address some of these deficiencies. For this reason, the study adopted a digital format which would allow the various images to be scaled with a much higher degree of precision and accuracy. Another reason for the digital format is that many recent documents for the study of LeBreton Flats are already in a digital format, thus giving the more recent documents clarity not present in the older documents. This creates a condition whereby the more recent the timeframe, the more detailed the information. This means that the time frames further back in history become increasingly distorted in the same way that collective memories of places do. (Figure 13)

Figure 13 - 1857 map of LeBreton Flats, Ottawa from the National Archives and 2005 AutoCAD drawings of same site from the City of Ottawa.

The goal of this phase of the study was to create a comprehensive map of LeBreton Flats which could address the most significant moments of expropriation simultaneously, hence, compressing these moments into one layer. This document was named the *legend* since it was intended to operate as the key to the reading the site.

The square proportion of the *legend* was maintained from the *chronoscope*, however now the evaluated site was a precise 900 meters square, subdivided into 100 meter squares. This 9 by 9 grid could then be produced as a 90 centimeter square document at a scale of 1:1000. The gridlines, which were maintained from the City of Ottawa AutoCAD files of the site, were used to divide the site into equal tiles.

Rather than using “nodes” as in the *chronoscope*, each of these tiles was studied to determine the most controversial aspects of its past use. Based on this study, the transparency and prominence of the different layers used to compose each tile was adjusted in order to reveal the dominant controversial qualities of each tile.

An example of the above method can be seen in Figure 14. The dark diagonal lines running from the bottom left to the upper right side of the tile are CAD lines which indicate where the Ottawa River Parkway originally traveled. While it has since been rerouted away from the waterfront, the parkway has particular significance to the site since this was the reason for the 1962 expropriation. There are several rectangular shapes casting shadows on this tile which are railway cars from a 1950 aerial photograph of the site. In the middle of the tile, there are several light shapes which depict the parapet of the Canadian War Museum from a 2005 aerial photograph. In this instance, I felt these were the issues with the most pertinence to this particular tile.

Figure 14 – Image depicting one 100m square tile from the *legend* produced by author.

Once this exercise was performed on each tile, the respective tiles were assembled to create a composite image of the site. The effect of this offers an overview of the site which, while distorted, is capable of representing the various relevant time frames as a single layer. The *legend* then becomes a palimpsest of LeBreton Flats, to be used as a launching point for its redevelopment. (Figure 15)

Figure 15 – *Legend* depicting entire 900m square site, produced by author.

Design Implementation

Based on the magnitude of the site, I narrowed the focus for redevelopment to a central corridor along Booth Street. Originally named Bridge Street, Booth Street runs north-south and is the only continuously functioning original street on LeBreton Flats. As a main artery between Ontario and Quebec, as well as being the only street other than the Ottawa River Parkway which currently accesses the core of the Flats, this street is burdened

with heavy traffic. It also carries special municipal recognition as a “distinctive street,” based on the City of Ottawa Official Plan, necessitating specific guidelines for its redesign.⁴² This designation identifies Booth as being a street which links important focal points and has a unique role and character.⁴³ Based on these reasons and its proximity to the government buildings and thus federal interest, this street provides a worthy case study for redevelopment.

Three large undeveloped areas along Booth Street were identified for further study: a triangular site at the north-east end opposite the War Museum and north of the Ottawa River Parkway, a rectangular site on the west side of Booth between the Parkway and the aqueduct, and an area at the north-west corner of Booth and Albert Street. (Figure 16)

⁴² City of Ottawa, Official Plan, Annex 9,
http://ottawa.ca/city_hall/ottawa2020/official_plan/vol_1/annexes/pdf/annex_9_en.pdf (March 14, 2007)

⁴³ City of Ottawa, Official Plan, Glossary of terms,
http://ottawa.ca/city_hall/ottawa2020/official_plan/vol_1/glossary_en.html (March 14, 2007)

Figure 16 - Image highlighting 3 main areas of study and Booth Street, prepared by author.

Several drawings were prepared using the *legend* to begin to develop a design for LeBreton Flats. Using an overlaying technique, it was possible to use the shadows of previous buildings, old property lines, industrial buildings, or historic streets to explore the forms that the three chosen sites might eventually take. This method allowed the residual elements from the site's past to begin to inform the proposed development. The first drawing explored only those tiles that were adjacent to Booth, while the second drawing expanded on the boundaries of each tile to allow the sites to extend to natural boundaries such as roads, bike paths or waterways. (Figure 17) Ultimately, the drawings provided an intermediary stage between the composite nature of the *legend* and a more tangible proposal for the site.

Figure 17 - Mylar drawings generated from *legend*, produced by author.

The next step was to manifest these explorations of the *legend* three dimensionally through a physical model. For this, a salvaged piece of “barn-board” was used to represent Booth Street since the aged quality of the material is emblematic of the historic character of the street. On this board, plaster moulds were created based on both the *legend* and the drawing explorations, meant to represent each of the three areas of focus along Booth Street. The intention of the model was to extrude the drawings into a three dimensional format capable of informing the initial schematic design for the Booth Street sites. (Figure 18)

Figure 18 - Plaster and wood model generated from the *legend* and previous drawings.

These explorations of the *legend* helped to inform the spatial potentials of the new development; however, one limitation of both the drawing and the modeling exercise was that by relying exclusively on the *legend*, a condition was created where the site was being redesigned from an exclusively aerial perspective. This approach was less multi-faceted than the intended approach to the site. For this reason, determining the program for each of the sites was meant to reflect the cumulative issues imposed on the site. Based on the “legend,”

current market demands, and both municipal and federal mandates, each site was schematically designed and programmed to respond to its context.

Site 1 – Reading, Learning and Performing

I programmed the site at the North end of LeBreton Flats (Site 1) to be the new Main Branch for the Ottawa Public Library. This decision was based on a combination of aspects from both the site's past and current influences. Historically, this site was one of Ottawa's first settlements, and as such played a key role in Ottawa's development. Supporting Ottawa's intensive lumber industry, this site was once the backbone of the city. After the site's expropriation in 1962, the land fell into federal ownership and was used for the proposed Parkway. Since the recent rerouting of the Parkway to the South of the site, it seems appropriate that the site would assume a renewed sense of the integral function it once possessed. This site is presently reserved for a cultural institution by the National Capital Commission. It also has strict height limitations as it is subject to a view control plane in order to preserve views of the Parliamentary Buildings.⁴⁴(Figure 19) These federal implications on the site are accompanied by municipal mandates on the site as well. In a section of the Municipal Planning Strategy for the City of Ottawa, it is stated that "City Council shall support and encourage the development of publicly oriented uses in the northern section of LeBreton Flats, to serve as a western anchor for Confederation Boulevard and the Parliamentary Precinct."⁴⁵ I feel that the library program will satisfy the government's interest in establishing a cultural institution while simultaneously addressing

⁴⁴ City of Ottawa, Official Plan Volume 2a, Former Ottawa, Central Area, Design Guidelines, (May 2, 2007) http://www.ottawa.ca/city_hall/ottawa2020/official_plan/vol_2a/pdf_files_2a/01_central_en.pdf, p 72.

⁴⁵ City of Ottawa, Official Plan Volume 2a, Former Ottawa, Central Area, Design Guidelines. (May , 2007) http://www.ottawa.ca/city_hall/ottawa2020/official_plan/vol_2a/pdf_files_2a/01_central_en.pdf, p.63.

the site's former role as a critical working class hub of industry, ultimately creating an unbiased public area.

Figure 19 - View control plane of LeBreton Flats from the Official Plan, City of Ottawa.

Site 2 – Living, Relaxing and Playing

The middle site between the Ottawa River Parkway and the aqueduct on the West side of Booth Street (Site 2) is programmed to be residential with ground level retail and incorporates a skate plaza at the North end. Perhaps one of the most obvious programmatic decisions, the residential component, suggests putting permanent residents back on LeBreton Flats where they once resided. Since the residents who most often occupied the area were working class, the focus for redevelopment should include affordable options. This not only addresses the historic use of the site, but the current requirements for 25% of the combined housing units on the Flats to be affordable.⁴⁶ However according to the price list of the developers currently building there, the first phase of development currently does not meet this requirement.⁴⁷ The addition of a skate plaza at the northernmost end of this

⁴⁶ City of Ottawa, Official Plan Volume 2a, Former Ottawa, Central Area, Design Guidelines, (May 2, 2007) http://www.ottawa.ca/city_hall/ottawa2020/official_plan/vol_2a/pdf_files_2a/01_central_en.pdf, p 66.

⁴⁷ Claridge Homes, Phase 1 Price list, September, 2006.

site is a way of mediating the expropriation in 1962 by inviting a currently marginalized urban group back to the site, while at the same time fulfilling the City's mandate "To provide an extension to the Central Area, with a diverse range of uses and activities, where people can live, work, socialize and play."⁴⁸

Site 3 - Creation, Integration and Commerce

At the southernmost end of the site (Site 3), I am proposing a Market Building meant to accommodate both outdoor and indoor venues for vendors as well as a new Transit Station on the west side of Booth Street. As this site used to operate as a gateway between the residential and industrial city uses, the Market Building here is meant to operate as a gateway between the existing city fabric and the proposed community meant to occupy the Flats, serving people from both areas. The Market Building is meant to promote a sense of community in the area where people can purchase local handicrafts and produce or work in studios. A linkage to the transit terminal would help promote the use of public transportation while attempting to heighten the mundane experience often associated with it. In addition to this, I propose that the Transitway be lowered to pass below Booth Street so that both pedestrian and automobile traffic can move more efficiently and safely onto LeBreton Flats.

Final Design Proposal

As the initial schematic designs were established, it was apparent that the focal point for each of the sites was the aspect of public space and movement throughout the site. The significance of this requirement of the future design can be seen even in the Official Plan for

⁴⁸ City of Ottawa, Official Plan Volume 2a, Former Ottawa, Central Area, Design Guidelines, (May 2, 2007) http://www.ottawa.ca/city_hall/ottawa2020/official_plan/vol_2a/pdf_files_2a/01_central_en.pdf. p 61.

the City of Ottawa: “City Council shall permit uses such as museums, art galleries and offices, and shall encourage public access, at least within the ground floors of buildings.”⁴⁹ The idea of public access through the site quickly became the most critical factor driving the design of each of the three sites. This realization was pivotal in re-establishing the approach that the redevelopment should take. If the treatment of public space through the Flats takes on the most significance, then perhaps the buildings themselves are negligible. Based on this notion,

I decided that the redevelopment of LeBreton Flats would be guided by several initial public interventions throughout the three selected sites. These interventions would be made with the potential for developing subsequent buildings, but would not necessarily rely on them, as historically, plans for this area have not always materialized. While LeBreton Flats has for the last half-century housed remnants of past development, it will now house foundations for potential development. In this way the proposed design for the Flats maintains the unique character that it has possessed for decades; that of an indeterminate borderland, neither fully inhabited nor vacated.

Within this approach, each of the three main sites has been designed in a way that allows a public corridor to weave through it, thus establishing a framework within which the rest of the development can eventually come to fill. The northernmost site now introduces an urban parkscape system comprised of a series of ponds, grassed areas and seating, which can later serve as a structural foundation for the Library. This design is meant to facilitate possible events or performances on the site by introducing amenities such as water, power and public restrooms. The schematic forms of the Library’s foundations are derived from earlier property lines on this area. These distorted property lines, resulting from the superimposition of layers within the *legend*, became the basis for redesign. In addition to this,

⁴⁹ City of Ottawa, Official Plan Volume 2a, Former Ottawa, Central Area, Design Guidelines, (May 2, 2007) http://www.ottawa.ca/city_hall/ottawa2020/official_plan/vol_2a/pdf_files_2a/01_central_en.pdf. p 62.

the design incorporates the City's Control Plane View requirements into the foundation. It does this by adjusting footing and column sizes in designated areas to allow for higher development there than in others. The area which was once Duke Street forms the main entrance area to the site, marking the existence of this historic street. The south section provides a buffer from the busy intersection and is designed to reflect the numerous marked paths that have crossed the site over time. The resulting angled pathway system is a public area for reading and respite providing low walls - again with potential to serve as foundations - to privatize the parkscape area. The area north of the potential building site uses the contours of the land to form an amphitheatre opening towards the river. The intention of this design is to provide a flexible public venue capable of supporting temporary events and animating the site while still supporting the potential plans for a cultural institution in accordance with the National Capital Commission. (Figure 20, Figure 23, Figure 24)

Figure 20 - Site 1, Ground Level Plan shown alone and with *legend* underlay to illustrate design process.

The design for the central site along Booth maintains the skate plaza within the triangular portion at the north end of the site, across from the potential library. Different from a skate-park, the skate-plaza emulates and collages typical urban conditions such as handrails, stairs and ramps, as these conditions are normally “skate-proofed” within cities.⁵⁰ Additionally, the skate plaza concept is less exclusive than traditional skate-parks, in that it resembles an urban plaza thus making it useable to pedestrians, tourists and skaters alike. By providing a place for this typically marginalized group in the heart of this redevelopment program, a step is being made towards remediation of LeBreton’s history.

⁵⁰ Rob Dyrdek, Skate Plaza Foundation, promotional PDF, http://www.skateplaza.com/plaza_main.asp, accessed February 16, 2007.

The residential portion of the site includes an elevated pedestrian pathway occurring on historic Ottawa and Sherwood Streets. This plinth serves as a semi-public zone on the back side of the street facing walk-up residential units, creating a “back-alley” condition. This pathway divides the site into four sections, three of which are developed while one remains un-programmed as a reminder of the state of the site during the last fifty years. The plinth is meant to provide a place for casual meeting and relaxing after work as it receives the western afternoon sun. In this design proposal, the plinth gets developed with soft landscaping providing areas for picnic and play where residential development may potentially come to be. The wooden boards of the walkway serve to initiate a more residential feel to this site while also speaking to the site’s historic employment of wooden walkways.⁵¹ Materially, the wooden boards also serve to segregate the residential and skate programs as this type of surface is not as conducive to skateboarding as smooth concrete. The walkway and the skate plaza bleed into one another materially, in order to promote a less segregated use of the areas, with an undulating skate ramp running alongside part of the plinth. In this way the residential and skate areas become a place for people to socialize and play in a way that will integrate with new development if or when it occurs. (Figure 21, Figure 25 to Figure 27)

⁵¹ Hugh Deaschel and Jeff Earl, “Archaeological Overview Of The History Of LeBreton Flats”, (Heritage Ottawa LectureSeries, presented at the Ottawa public Library, March 21, 2007)

Figure 21 - Site 2, Ground Level Plan shown alone and with *legend* underlay to illustrate design process.

The site at the corner of Booth and Albert Streets is designed as a market building, meant eventually to include gallery, studio and retail space. Initial designs for this site included a massing of building forms which respond to the historic built forms on the site. Within these, an enclosed market building provides year-round shelter for markets, and public washrooms with two meeting or storage rooms. Where a railway once arched across the back of the site, the open-air market structure is proposed, made of similar industrial materials as what once made-up the site. The pergola-like structure is intended to support canvas covers in the summer months for shelter.

The public pathway travels throughout site from the outdoor market, through the indoor market and to the transit station. This is meant to integrate the two programs as a

means to add interest the experience of public transit. The transit station itself uses numerous industrial materials reminiscent of the site's past, yet in a way which attempts to refine them. In this interest, concrete floors are stained red and polished and steel mesh is used to create translucent walls. (Figure 22, Figure 28, to Figure 30)

Figure 22- Site 3, Ground Level Plan shown alone and with *legend* underlay to illustrate design process.

All three of the above mentioned sites are programmed and designed to establish LeBreton Flats as an area which provides accessible public space, while attempting to embody some of its historic quality. By establishing this aspect first, it ensures that subsequent development of LeBreton Flats will not be without a well resolved public space. It also proposes an intermediary design strategy which will prevent the possibility of a monolithic design as might occur with a single minded vision for the site. This approach

could even be said to comply with part of the City's guideline, "City Council shall encourage the integration of residential, office, and retail uses in mixed use areas in configurations and building forms that allow unique opportunities for creative development."⁵²

⁵² City of Ottawa, Official Plan Volume 2a, Former Ottawa, Central Area, Design Guidelines, (May 2, 2007) http://www.ottawa.ca/city_hall/ottawa2020/official_plan/vol_2a/pdf_files_2a/01_central_en.pdf. p 72.

Figure 23 – Overview of Amphitheatre at North end of Site 1.

Figure 24 – Overview of Parkscape, Site 1.

Figure 25 – Overview of Skate Plaza and Plinth, Site 2.

Figure 26 – Skate Plaza vignette, Site 2.

Figure 27 – Plinth vignette, Site 2.

Figure 28 – Overview of Outdoor Market Area with Pergola, Site 1.

Figure 29 – Indoor Market Area, Site 1.

Figure 30 – Transit Station, Site 1.

Figure 31 – Continuous section through site.

Figure 32 - Enlarged areas from section.

5. CONCLUSION

At several instances during the course of this project the question arose as to the importance of regionalism in thoughtful architecture. Initially, I presumed that regionalism was a form of architecture which stood independently from other schools of thought. However, I now recognize that the boundary which divides regionalism and thoughtful design is largely undefined; both necessarily identify contextual issues and seek to embody them. Regionalism is an attempt to locate this thoughtful design through a variety of historic, geographic and current contextualizations. This position was confirmed through the application of a renewed form of regionalism in the proposed re-development of LeBreton Flats.

The *chronoscope* and subsequent *legend* are the tools proposed for the future redevelopment of Le Breton Flats. They carefully evaluate the past so that clues to its original character can be identified and ultimately re-exposed in new development. As an alternative to the *tabula rasa* approach of wiping the slate clean for a fresh start, this method does just the opposite. Looking back to the past as a way to move forward is an attempt to imbue urban infill sites with an increased significance, richness and memory.

The outcome of this analytical mapping exercise has led to a design for the future development of the Flats capable of mediating many facets of the site's past and current conditions. Pragmatically, this is achieved through the use of a loosely programmed public corridor which weaves through the site, firmly establishing the much needed public domain of the site. This communal public space then becomes the lynchpin around which the rest of the development of LeBreton Flats may eventually come to fill, or perhaps not, as the case has been in the past. Regardless of future development, this proposal is meant to stand

on its own as a catalyst in the re-vitalization of this site while at the same time acting as a subtle reminder of its historic unrest.

One of the main difficulties encountered within the execution of the design project was the programming and naming of the various sites studied within LeBreton Flats. The programmatic labelling of each of these sites created limitations on use and design. With regards to the final design, this condition led to the very sense of fragmentation that the project was intended to rectify. Fortunately, as the initially conceived building forms were replaced with fluid public space, the design came to assume a programmatic cohesion currently lacking on the Flats. Ultimately, I feel that the strength of the design lies in its ability to encapsulate and perpetuate the most unique aspect of the site: its continual state of balance between remembrance and anticipation.

While Le Breton Flats is useful as a case study for issues of regionalism, the larger issue of urban re-development is much more widespread. As cities continue to evolve and redefine themselves they will continue to expropriate urban settlements deemed “eyesores” in an effort to rectify the perceived problem. However in doing so, they run the risk of permanently losing the unique quality of the original urban fabric. While this process may be inevitable, it is necessary to find ways in which redevelopments can restore some of the original integrity to the site. Without this, urban infill developments will assume a universal generic quality common to much new construction. This fear of “universalization” of our cities is accurately conveyed by Kenneth Frampton, “The typical downtown, which up to twenty years ago, still presented a mixture of residential stock with tertiary and secondary industry, has now become little more than a *burolandschaft* city-scape: the victory of universal

civilization over locally inflected culture.”⁵³ Given the alternative, it becomes increasingly obvious that strategies need to be employed which ensure the recovery of the lost unique character of cities.

When a government makes the decision to expropriate publicly owned land, as in the case of Ottawa’s LeBreton Flats, strategies must be employed that ensure the new development adequately substitutes that which was taken. While it would be nostalgic and inappropriate to attempt to replicate that which was destroyed, it would be proper to establish guidelines that would allow the patterns of public space ingrained in the earlier settlement to become re-exposed in the new development, thus allowing the site to become imbued with renewed historic integrity and offering a greater sense of “placeness” than unrestricted new development can.

The relationship between place and architecture has become increasingly difficult to define in a globalized world. Perceptions of region are in constant flux as current political, economic and technological conditions continually eradicate geographic boundaries, contributing to a universal culture. It is because of this that strategies which focus on strengthening the ties between place, form and identity have become fundamental like never before.

Although we are no longer interested in the ties that bind sovereign to citizen nor the creation of a totalistic perspective over a unified city, yet there is a dormant desire behind many of our contemporary historicizations that the chance survival or wilful preservation of architectural remnants and monuments within the city retain the visible marks of the passage of time and enable them to symbolize and encapsulate a culture of place.

Christine Boyer ⁵⁴

⁵³ Kenneth Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance”, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Seattle, Bay Press) p.17.

⁵⁴ Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1994), 16.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Boyer, Christine. "Playing with Information: urbanism in the twenty-first century", in *Future City*, Ed. Jurgén Rosemann, Stephen Read and Job van Eldijk, Taylor Francis, 2005.
- Boyer, Christine. *The City of Collective Memory*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1994.
- NCC, *Mandate Review: Past Present and Future*, Ottawa, October 2006, available from: http://www.canadascapital.gc.ca/data/2/rec_docs/5334_MandateReview_En.pdf
- Deaschel, Hugh and Jeff Earl, "Archaeological Overview Of The History Of LeBreton Flats", (Heritage Ottawa LectureSeries, presented at the Ottawa public Library, March 21, 2007)
- Dyrdek, Rob. *Skate Plaza Foundation*, promotional PDF, http://www.skateplaza.com/plaza_main.asp, accessed February 16, 2007.
- Debanne, Janine. "Flats on the Flats", *Canadian Architect*, September, 2005, available from: http://www.cdnarchitect.com/issues/ISarticle.asp?id=167489&story_id=97720114749&issue=09012005&btac=no
- Eggenger, Keith. "Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism", *Journal of Architectural Education*, volume 55 number 4, May 2002.
- Findley, Lisa. *Building Change: Architecture, Politics and Cultural Agency*, New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Frampton, Kenneth. "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance", *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1983.
- Huyssen, Andreas. *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Random House, 1961), 4-6.
- Jacobs, Jane. *Edge of Empire: Post-Colonialism and the City*, Routledge, London, 1996.
- Jenkins, Phil. *An Acre of Time: The Enduring Value of Place*, Toronto: Macfarlane Walter and Ross, 1996.
- Mau, Bruce. *Massive Change* (Phaidon, London, 2004).
- Mika, Nick and Helma. *Bytown: The Early Days in Ottawa*, Bellville, Ontario: Mika Publishing Company, 1982.

- NCC, *Mandate Review: Past Present and Future*, Ottawa, October 2006, available from:
http://www.canadascapital.gc.ca/data/2/rec_docs/5334_MandateReview_En.pdf
- Norberg-Shultz, Christian. *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place*, Milano, Italy: Skira, 2000.
- Sassen, Saskia. "The City: Between Topographic Representation and Spatialized Power Projects", *Art Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 2, (Summer, 2001).
- Sassen, Saskia. "Analytic Borderlands: Economy and Culture in the Global City", in *A Companion to the City*, Ed Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson, Blackwell Publishers, UK, 2000.
- Slow Food, Accessed 25 November 2006, available from: <http://www.slowfood.com/>.
- Tzonis, Alexander and Liane Lefaivre. "Why Critical Regionalism Today?", from *Architecture and Urbanism*, Number 236 (May 1990).
- Tzonis, Alexander and Liane Lefaivre. *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World*, Munich: Prestel, 1996.
- Vidler, Anthony. "The Third Typology", *Oppositions Reader: Selected Readings from a journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture* (1973-1984).
- Young, James E.. *At memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.