Memory Walks of the “Ungeographic”
The Demolition of Black History

by

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Abstract

Memory Walks of the “Ungeographic” explores how demolition serves as a tool to disproportionately misrepresent, criminalize, and erase Black people from Canadian history. Such demolition of space fits into a larger pattern of concealment and marginalization, painting a skewed picture of Black geographies in Canada. The state’s determination to deny the historical and contemporary presence of Black people on their land requires the constant and repeated destruction of any evidence of their existence. The project analyzes, interprets, and speculates how the formation, distribution, and commodification of stories, memories, and political interests support such demolitions. This thesis uses modes of making— tracing, stitching, tearing, weaving, and cutting— to picture built space through its countless layers and threads produced by conflict, capital, subordination, and care. Using the framework of digital gardens, it will also explore how the memories and stories of unseen, undocumented, and “ungeographic” govern agency in physical space.

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Note on Structure

The process of writing this thesis was not a linear journey. Instead, it consists of fragments of information coming from conversations, lectures, movies, tv shows, and books that sparked new lines of inquiry—some connections are obvious where others are not.

The writing oscillates between scales, zooming in and out to capture the connections between ideas, photos, notes, and quotes. In the margins are notes documenting these discoveries, which carry an equal weight to the text itself. These tangent discoveries are just as important as the body of text. The current order functions to tell a particular narrative; however, the dotted lines connecting sections and notes allow you as the reader to “walk” through the thesis and follow different trajectories of inquiry and have insight into the way the book was constructed.

Finally, this thesis is a work in process as I learn more i want to add more notes. I don't consider it a final product but rather a working document visualizing my research and learning on the topic.

Introduction

“Black Canadian geographies cannot be “thrown out” because geographical processes ensure past-present, contested, and contextual possibilities that are invoked by the differing ways space is produced and lived.”

- Katherine Mcrittik, 2006 pg 2

The way narratives of demolition represent the inner city as a place to be feared and rehabilitated functions as a productive reinstatement of the social categories set in motion by colonization and the legacy of transatlantic slavery. Demolition, property rights, and the politics of preservation are just a few everyday processes of devaluation, exploitation, and expendability that are entangled with notions of ongoing structural violence, imperial conquest, and racial capitalism. These systems carry into the written and recorded histories, policies, and stories told by governing actors that establish how cities are built, structured, and changed over time, ultimately instituting who has the right to claim citizenship in the city.

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, the process of *urban renewal* was an increasingly popular scheme to redress a complex variety of urban problems in cities throughout Canada, the United States, and around the world. Neighborhoods affected by urban renewal are what scholar Saidiya Hartman calls “*a striking contradiction*.” On the one hand, popular media and civic narratives describe sites slated for urban renewal as dense, crime-ridden, unsanitary pockets in the urban fabric in need of “revitalization.” On the other hand, for the Black, Indigenous, and racialized people disproportionately

As described by the Ontario Department of Municipal Affairs “urban renewal may be described as the total of all public and private action which must be taken to provide for the sound maintenance of built-up areas or for their redevelopment, whichever produces the most desirable results- socially physically economically visually.”¹

“A boy last week, he was sixteen, in San Francisco, told me on television — thank God we got him to talk — maybe somebody thought to listen. He said, “I’ve got no country. I’ve got no flag.” Now, he’s only 16 years old, and I couldn’t say, “you do.” I don’t have any evidence to prove that he does. They were tearing down his house, because San Francisco is engaging — as most Northern cities now are engaged — in something called urban renewal, which means moving the Negroes out. It means Negro removal, that is what it means. The federal government is an accomplice to this fact.”²

— James Baldwin

impacted by the act of urban renewal, these sites are representative of their community’s care, relationships, routines, and memories. The imbalance of power generates state-led narratives, whose biased representations of place are rendered as truth and put forth demolition and displacement as ubiquitous methods for dealing with spatial challenges. The marginalized people occupying these neighborhoods are forced to constantly re-negotiate their individual and collective identities due to the trauma of being routinely displaced and dispossessed. While demolition initiates an explicit act of physical destruction and spatial relocation, *Memory Walks of the Ungeographic* argues that the use of language and narrative is equally influential in the process of urban renewal, justifying, concealing, and ultimately shaping how cities define, confine, control, and erase people.

While Canada’s contemporary social, political, economic, and cultural geographies are underpinned by this long history of land dispossession and racial subjugation, Canada has continually denied its own legacy of slavery, segregation, redlining, and continuous subjugation against Black People. This positions Black histories in a particularly precarious position. As author Robyn Maynard explains in *Policing Black Lives*, “the making of Black poverty and precarity did not occur by one simple process but is the result of numerous state policies and agencies that have acted in concert on heterogeneous and diverse Black populations.” However, Canadian institutions present themselves as removed from these systemic implications. For example, in June 2020, following the police murder of George Floyd in Minnesota, Ontario Premier Doug Ford stated: “Thank God we’re different than the United States, and we don’t have the systemic, deep roots they’ve had for years.” He, like many other Canadians, hides behind the hyper-visible history of Black subjugation in the United States while subscribing to Canada’s myth-laden national branding as a multicultural, racially inclusive state. This mindset leans into a stereotype that deems slavery - and the structural racism that follows - as somehow un-Canadian, hindering any sincere examination of the discrimination and harm present in Canada.

Memory Walks of the Ungeographic speaks to the contributions the demolition process presents to the intentional historical erasure of Black people in Canada. This study is rooted in analyzing the formation, distribution, and commodification of stories, memories, and political interests that support such demolitions by exploring how demolition harms the psyche of those impacted, scrutinizes the associated built environment, and interrogates how the memories and stories of the unseen, undocumented, and “ungeographic” govern agency in physical space.

Questions of who has access to spatial agency and memory preservation will be studied primarily through two social housing sites at different demolition processes: Regent Park in Toronto, and the neighborhood I grew up in, Ramsey Crescent in Ottawa. While Ramsey Crescent is not currently facing demolition, an analysis of my own experience living in social housing will both reveal the personal effects of destructive narratives inflicted on social housing sites in addition to how they intermingle with my own memories embedded in the

Figure 1
Rupture

This drawing visualizes the gravitational pull that happens when an event in a singular location spans space and time. The murder of George Floyd sparked outrage and protest on the global scale.

Chapter Structure

Chapter 1: Narrating Cycles of Displacement and Dispossession interrogates how narrative plays a role in constructing and destroying space. I refer to this as a ‘demolition logic’: the idea that demolition is an intentional act composed of processes formed, controlled, and implemented by political narratives. The primary focus of demolition logic is narratives of (1) emptiness: describing a place as empty before it has gone; (2) decline: the dehumanization of a place and people to invalidate their agency to take up space; and (3) progress: the idea that the outcome is about bettering and improving a place. These three narratives and language tools mask the violence inherent in acts of demolition, presenting them as a necessary, inevitable process.

Chapter 2: Woven Through the Plot Holes thinks through the tangibility of memories outside the bounds of the dominant political narrative. The chapter uses theories borrowed from archeology and cognitive science disciplines to think through how the value of everyday buildings, artifacts, and places changes when viewed through the lens of community memories. In this chapter, Memory Walks seeks to acknowledge how memory can be stored prosthetically and questions the relationship between memory (our feelings, experiences, and routines), the human body (the way we move and interact with space), and the built environment. How is the value of everyday buildings, artifacts, and places changed when viewed through the lens of community memories?

Finally, *Chapter 3: Authored Gardens of Stories and Memories*, uses the framework of the previous two chapters to posit how narratives of the many could have the agency to materialize in physical space. It studies the organizing principles of ‘digital gardens’ to navigate technical data and think through how technology can act as a mediator and a translator between multivocal experiences and space. Finally, the chapter covers the potentials that the digital garden can bring to community documentation, research, and experience — a tool that supports residents’ memories and resists the imposition of colonial imaginations.

Methodology

Figure 3
to cut ⁴
make an opening, incision, or wound in (something) with a sharp-edged tool or object.

Figure 4
to sew ⁵
join, fasten, or repair (something) by making stitches with a needle and thread or a sewing machine.

Representation is a critical tool that forms and controls the spatial imagination of what is possible. The architect, cartographer, urban planner, or developer controls how information is communicated to provide a clear relationship between the research and the proposition through drawing. Having the power to construct an image and widely distribute it gives people the agency to control the spatial narrative. Jonathan Hill reiterated this statement in *Architecture - The Subject is Matter* by stating, “[t]he language used by architects, and architectural historians have two obvious aims, to talk precisely about architecture and to exclude outsiders from the conversation.” Thus, image production for the creation of architecture is an incredibly layered and meaningful practice beyond the use of images as simply a medium of representation, framing the profession of architecture and other spatial designers to be as much about imagining space as building it.

The act of reimagining the role of architecture’s imagination begins with the tangible, personal act of making by hand. Expanding in scale, these acts of making grow to encompass interrogations of mapping and GIS. These explorations are deployed to present the networks of care and harm concealed under the guise of neutrality and perceived permanence of built space within the sites of Regents Park and Ramsey Crescent. Expanding from Neil Smith’s concept of “Deep Space.” These explorations identify that metaphorical and material are inseparable from one another. Yet, they simultaneously remain distinct. With this underlying understanding of deep space, Memory Walks explores the idea of compressing space, time, the metaphorical, the conceptual, the invisible, and the material into one artifact: the city. Experiences of the city are reframed to orient everyday space simultaneously across a multiplicity of scales and time frames, entwining the global and local onto and into the past, present, and future.

Figure 5
to weave ⁷
form (fabric or a fabric item) by interlacing long threads passing in one direction with others at a right angle to them.

Figure 6
to trace ⁶
something (such as a line) traced or drawn: such as a: the marking made by a recording instrument (such as a seismograph or kymograph)

Chapter 1:

Narrating Cycles of Displacement and Dispossession

Housing performance under the National Housing Act has been production orientated, a quantitative operation qualitatively devoid of broad social objectives and economically inaccessible to many Canadians. The production of new houses should be a means to an end, not the prime policy objective.

Good Housing for Canadians, Report of Ontario Housing Authorities, 1964 pg 64.

During the years following World War II, the anxious urgency of government officials and private businesses to revive the fallen economy radically inflected the Canadian urban fabric. For planners shaping the Canadian city, the primary goal was to clear problematized areas, develop transportation infrastructure and urban growth. This resulted in the foundation of housing policy and urban development to be rooted in slum clearance and renewal schemes from the 1930’s onward. While the conditions of these areas had been ignored during the previous decades’ construction boom, the collapse of the construction industry introduced an increasing interest in surveying, documenting, and revitalizing slum areas, sparking the development of The Urban Renewal Program in 1944. City officials, private developers, architects, urban designers, construction contractors, and planners proposed multiple projects centering on a subsidized housing plan strategy as the ultimate solution to provide jobs and “relieve the misery of the slums for the poor.” To borrow the words of the League for Social Reconstruction’s, leading housing policy formulator, subsidized housing was seen as providing “healthier and happier living conditions for many of the country workers “and a “less repressive environment for their children” while being a profitable disbursement of national funds.

The language and positivity surrounding the Urban Renewal Project reconstituted a more widely accepted social response to land clearance and the act of demolition. In her book Bulldozer: Demolition and Clearance of the Postwar Landscape, Francesca Russello Ammon presents the notion of a culture of clearance to describe the postwar era as a time where the production of mass quantities of tractors, scrapers, and bulldozers for wartime application

this always makes me think of Foucault’s quote “ make live and let die” This represents a violence by neglect, when governing powers see that it’s more expensive to maintain a neighbourhood it lets it die because demolition is ultimatly cheaper then gradually and constantly maintaining a place. ⁸

*de-mol-ish*⁹verb_ _ _ _ _

- 1 a: tear down, raze
b: to break to pieces: smash
- 2 a: to do away with
b: to strip of any pretense of merit or credence

*log-ic*¹⁰

noun _ _ _ _ _

- 1. reasoning conducted or assessed according to strict principles of validity.
- 2. a system or set of principles underlying the arrangements of elements in a computer or electronic device so as to perform a specified task.

in conjunction with the machinery’s invasion of the popular imagination (through novels, children’s books, and film) were influential in reshaping the city and the public perception of destruction. Her historically specific exploration of demolition, described as beginning “when bulldozers went to war,” asserts that it was the war that “inflicted [an] ideology, technology, policy, and practice for large scale destruction.”

Following Ammon’s reading of demolition as a more extensive ideological process, a more in-depth understanding of the intricacies and etymology of demolish and logic must first be examined to establish demolition logic as part of a system that acts beyond the bounds of physical removal.

Demolition is unquestionably wrapped up in the physical destruction, removal, or dispossession of buildings and is broadly understood as the destruction of a building or neighborhood at a specific location and time. Breaking down the root word demolish (as shown in the epigraph) offers an expanded definition, identifying that demolition can also act outside of the physical realms of brick and mortar, inflicting damage on the human mind or character as well. If we consider demolition as a product of all its descriptors: to destroy, to tear down, to raze, to do away with, or to strip of merit, we can understand that demolition encompasses a range of practices, including the violence of destruction, displacement, dispossession, and the degradation of character that can divorce people’s relationship with place.

Logic’ - from the Greek word logos- is defined as the study of reasoning. It investigates and classifies the principals involved in producing valid inference, distinguishing ‘good’ reasoning from ‘bad.’ In philosophy, logic applies declarative sentences that make assertions, often disengaged from psychological processes connected to thought and emotion. This method of leveraging statements as factual, definitive, scientific ideas is, as sociologist Randy Martin suggests, becoming the critical organizational technology of our times. Within the context of demolition, two organizational logics —creative destruction and philosophical destruction— will be used to conceptualize state and corporate intentions behind demolition.

Creative destruction is a concept authored by Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter and described as the “process of industrial mutation that continuously revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one” to create a new one. In the context of urban planning, Ananya Roy argues that this cycle of “creative destruction simultaneously engages neoliberal “renewal” processes as creation and (post) colonial “exploitation” practices as destruction.” This establishes demolition as a cyclical ritualistic act that borrows the historical means of subjugation to fulfill political agendas of economic growth. Philosophical destruction, on the other hand, as described by British philosopher and author Colin McGinn, is the impulse to destroy ideation present in the discipline of philosophy. He describes the process as an attempt to destroy any beliefs others may have on a particular

Figure 7
An advertisement for International Harvester

one of the manufacturers of these machines, took his assertion a step farther, proclaiming the entire conflict “a dirt moving war.”¹¹

position and eliminate that component of their mental state. Arguing that there is no avoiding violence in philosophical criticism, McGinn writes, “you can’t destroy (demolish, decimate) an argument or a position without doing violence to it—[just] as you can’t destroy a material object without doing violence to it.” With these concepts in mind, demolition logic – retaining both its ritual and destructive psychological etymology - then invites a conceptual pathway to engage with neighborhood clearance, and acts to identify a system of profitable physical and psychological displacement.

While Ammons’s notion of a culture of clearance successfully expands the scope of demolition from a physical act to an ideological process, situating the discourse of the logics of demolition within a postwar framework places a certain limitation on the depth of understanding of this process. This research’s use of the term ‘demolition logic’ is not intended to be a corrective discussion of the ‘culture of clearance.’ Instead, it expands on the connections Ammon draws between the use of language, media, and collective memory to drive and justify deliberate physical destruction across a larger historical timeline. While Ammon deeply studies the use of the physical tools of clearance and demolition, this chapter focuses on specific psychological transitional tools that are used to materialize and construct the dominant mental imagination of space. Interrogating how the dynamics of construction and destruction establish terms based on larger processes of capitalism, colonialism, and racial categorization will reveal which subjects can or cannot make citizenship claims to the city.

Be it that all physical space, buildings, and objects begin as someone’s imagination, ideologies of separation, domination, and destruction formed by positions of power can be argued as the first move towards physical removal. In *The Matter of Erasure: Making Room for Utopia at Nonoalco-Tlatelolco*, Mexico City, Adam Kasa emphasizes this by stating that “urban erasure is ideological, and that ideology is material.” He continues this argument writing that “processes of urban erasure, of urban demolition, of slum clearance and of land terraforming require structures of legitimacy to be enacted, and those structures of legitimacy are produced through materials.” Through Kasa’s discussion of materiality we can understand materials of public discourse – the paper, ink, journal, the printing press, and newspaper - as agents that operate in connection with materials produced by urban erasure, that serve to mobilize individual political choices as technical necessities. This means that in addition to its existence in these material forms, —public discourse particularly that of governing agents—has the power to infiltrate the mind and shift ideology in society.

As Mark Freeman points out in *Telling Stories: Memory and Narrative*, much of what we remember “is suffused with other’s memories which are suffused with other other memories.” So, while we tend to think that our personal memories and thoughts are strictly our own, they are inevitably a product of our broader relationships and interactions. This gives societal elites—namely,

premiers, ministers, mayors, counselors, commissioners, engineers, architects, planners, and the media—the greatest agency to control the material narrative, be it through policy legislation, newspaper publications, surveys, or physical construction. They, therefore, have the power to also control the collective perception of a place. Through this understanding, these powerful actors become the public translators of spatial decisions, where public knowledge of place is told through the lens of their political motivations, aspirations, and desires. That is to say, a narrative’s ability to exist in the material realm as well as infiltrate and shift normative ideology in society positions it as a fundamental component to the capacity of urban erasure.

This relationship narrative has to build space positions it as a primary contributor to the construction and naturalization of traditional geography. Traditional geography, as defined by McKittrick, “assumes we can view, assess, and ethically organize the world from a stable (white, patriarchal, Eurocentric, heterosexual, classed) vantage point.” Building on this articulation of geography, *Memory Walks* argues that narratives are used to stabilize and cement traditional geography, as we know it, deeper into place. This stability is obtained with neatly packaged narratives that disseminate a clear logic wrapped in the shiny cellophane of rationality. While these narratives of control follow a linear sequential pattern, their power also comes from their ability to resurface cyclically, mutating and assimilating to different points in history. Such narrative cycles routinely conceptualize and circulate information supported by capitalist powers, reinforcing the structural racial violence enacted by settler colonialism.

In “What is an Apparatus,” Giorgio Agamben defines an apparatus as “a network that is established between elements” and “a concrete strategic function” that “appears at the intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge.” The narrative cycles inherent to maintaining traditional geography become an apparatus of demolition logic, helping us to understand narratives of demolition in conjunction with other means of structural violence and spatial control. Rather than prioritize a singular event, demolition logic operates as the concrete strategic function that produces a network of narratives controlled by the state. It will draw on patterns of physical and psychological destruction spanning from Canada’s colonial origins to current practices of gentrification.

The primary narratives that will be explored in this chapter are emptiness (imagining a place as empty before it is removed), decline (dehumanizing a place and the people in it to invalidate their agency to occupy space), and progress (the idea that the act of demolition is in all aspects bettering and improving the place) revealing how narrative cycles underpin several political discourses of subjugation throughout history, including but not limited to colonization, segregation, and gentrification. This chapter is not a comparative analysis of different jurisdictions but instead an exploration of how these narratives, in their legal and spatial forms, emerge in conjunction with modern concepts of race at different districts and different points in time. Grounding the discussion of these three elements will be Nicholas Blomley’s essay *Law, Property and the*

Geography of Violence, where he does a deep analysis of three spatializations of violent ownership, the frontier, the survey and the grid in order to make sense of the legitimation origins and workings of property. The notions of emptiness, decline and progress expand on the social relations that allow these spatializations to exist.

In conjunction and connection to understanding the use of narrative cycles through historical, political, economic, and cultural contexts, I used a tactile approach to mapping. This allowed me to better understand these cycles as processes rather than as a stagnant sequence of events in history. Producing the map with tedious actions allowed me to have a more intimate relationship with the information I was consuming.

To localize this study, I selected Canada’s first physically demolished neighborhood and twice-removed community, Regent Park, as the site of study. In order to illustrate how narratives of emptiness, decline and regeneration are constructed, I have chosen to describe a neighborhood whose history exemplifies the common stereotypes of an urban renewal area: small close together row houses, declining to poverty and decay after the world war, and completely demolished with the promise of a better life. Regent Park is a neighborhood located in the center of Downtown east side Toronto. The site currently stretches from “Gerrard Street East to the north, Parliament Street to the west, Shutter Street to the South, and River Street to the east.” The original neighborhood of tightly knit two-story Victorian brick structures was once colorfully known as “Cabbagetown”—after the vegetables were grown on the front lawn of the Irish immigrants who originally inhabited the area. Critics and reformers described these buildings as “fire hazards and breeding places for disease,” stating that it was in need of “fundamental change.”

Construction of the first version of Regent Park began in 1948. The new construction consisted almost exclusively of low-income housing projects. Despite the recommendation of Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of the Great American City* to employ a diversity of land uses, Regent Park only featured “a few stores and institutional uses such as the public school, community center, and churches in Regent Park South.” It was also “designed using a superblock plan, ‘with all internal streets eliminated and no through traffic permitted’” Apartment buildings were grouped into five, fourteen-story high-rises. The strategy claimed to be a philanthropic effort to improve the deteriorating living conditions of low-income communities. However, the outcome of this urban scale experiment ostracized the original families that occupied the site: accepting only 23% of the original residents back into the new buildings. Despite proving to be an ineffective strategy, between 1948 and 1964, destruction through urban clearance became a ritualistic practice on this site. Cabbagetown was repeatedly targeted both by state-led and privately-owned construction companies, picking away at the original urban fabric producing what is now known as Moss Park and St. Jamestown.

Extensively studied by reformers, social scientists, and urban planners, Regent Park has had a vast amount of data extracted from it. Parallel to this documentation, approaching the second demolition of the site, the community produced their own collection of data, namely music, films, articles, and plays as a form of protest against the ‘revitalization’ scheme, but also as a tool to preserve their histories the way they want it to be told. This provides greater access to information to facilitate this study. Coupled with the historical narration of Canada’s historical relationship with emptiness, decline, and progress, I produced a map that engages with these different narrative forms— policy, media, and community told media—as they relate to the cyclical narratives of demolition logic. Each section will inform one specific process of the mapping fabrication method. The way each map is made - by tracing, cutting, and sewing - is not merely a method of representation but offers tools to think through action and progress both intimately and complexly. Dividing the discussion about how each map was made among the following three sections empower the processes of fabrication to be seen as an equal method of understanding in relation to the text rather than pose as supplementary explorations.

Emp·ti·ness

In *Mapping the Land/ Body/ Subject: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies in African Narrative*, Harry Garuba describes that “colonialism as a regime of power was largely organized through spatiality and subjectivity” He continues explaining that “to capture land, it first had to be explored and mapped, literally and figuratively. In this sense, to explore, to map, and to know is not just about getting to know the things themselves; to know in the colonial logic is about defining and quantifying relationships of distance. This relationship of distance relies primarily on the construction of a constitutive outside or other—In other words, what is deemed proper, orderly, or appropriate rests on opposing the definition of this decided outside/other. The effect is to distinguish that the violent acts of colonial thought and law are a lesser or a necessary evil to order the chaotic, uncivilized, dangerous wilderness. The notion of emptiness is a key justification tool integral to performing this subordination. Classifying a place as empty devalues it and reduces it to nothing, which, in turn, rids controlling subjects of any obligation to treat the existing landscape and its inhabitants with dignity.

In Canada, the notion of emptiness was primarily mobilized with the use of the *empty land myth*. The “empty land” myth as a controlling ideology in spatial production was an early discourse constructed by European explorers in the 16th century to legitimize the rendering of North America as occupiable land. Elizabeth Furniss’s essay, *Indians, Odysseys and Vast, Empty Lands*, defines the empty land myth (also known as the frontier myth) as a political discourse that portrays “North America as an empty, unoccupied wilderness, where resources are rich, and the land is free for the taking.” This constructed frontier—marking the line between wilderness and civilization—was considered necessary protection from the savagery outside the borders drawn by governing powers. As geographer Nicolas Blomley describes, “inside the frontier lie secure tenure, fee-simple ownership, and state-guaranteed rights to property. Outside lie uncertain and undeveloped entitlements, communal claims, and the absence of state guarantees to property.” This inscription of the frontier, distinguishing the land as empty and Indigenous people being inadequate, categorizes Indigenous land and people unilaterally as spaces to rule and people to control.

This gesture of textually emptying territories and creating virgin lands waiting for European occupation and projection of fantasies of savagery and violence upon unknown territories requires an initial prioritization of the abstract space of the mind. The insecurities manifesting in the physical terrain are transferred

An example of the construction of the / "other" is the constant redefinition of the term "Indian." between the years of 1850 and 1869 the federal government revised the definition of indian-ness almost every year. This showcases the illegitimacy of law and other forms of knowledge formed by colonial powers. It constantly was changing and redefined to suit it's current needs of the time.¹²

into the domain of textuality, and some illusion of security is achieved by textual stability. One of the most influential key political thinkers on this subject, English philosopher and physician, John Locke validated the space of the mind through the term *tabula rasa* meaning “empty slate.” He writes, “the mind to be, [...] white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas,” questioning “how comes it to be furnished?” In her reading of John Locke’s work, Kathryn Milun outlines that the “*tabula rasa* argument refers to space as extensive, everywhere, static and uniformly subject to the same laws and abstract in the sense of being empty.” She continues by stating that Locke perceives space as “an ordinary fiction of abstract space that serves as a foundation of seizure of real space by the state and of by individuals.”

To enact this seizure, scientific techniques of measurements and quantification materialized through the colonial map sought to produce a distance between the proper person and the subjugated “other.” While the map is often considered a scientific and infallible account of geographic space, the way we draw and retrace space involves intentional subjective representational decisions. Tracing is thus more than just a benign act of replication; it is directly tied to the biases and beliefs of its creator. On the colonial map, the act of tracing functioned within an ‘Enlightenment’ logic subordinating the world to the frames of representations designed by the Master Subject, who was often European and male. To quote Mcritick,

“European mappings, explorations, conquests, [are] interlaced with a different sense of place, those [marginalized] populations and their attendant geographies are concealed by what might be called rational spatial colonization and domination: the profitable erasure and objectification of subaltern subjectivities, stories, and lands.”

Figure 8

Map from the Pacific Ocean the Rocky Mountain Zone

As with any authored artifact, the mapmaker has the agency to decide what to include and exclude. In the text *Maps Knowledge and Power*, J.P. Harley asserts that “maps - just as much as examples of literature or the spoken word - exert a social influence through their omissions as much as by the features they depict and emphasize.” These omissions are what he calls silences on the map. This 1874 map of Canada (Figure 8) exemplifies the power of exclusion though labeling much of the land as an “unexplored region.” This distinction of the land as empty was translated to the papal doctrine of *terra nullis* and the doctrine of discovery legalizing the geographical domination of Indigenous land and people in both Canada, the United States, and other colonial territories. Furniss argues, the power

of the frontier myth, Terra Nullis, and the Doctrine of Discovery is not in their “use to support the authority of the Canadian state but in its transformation in a particular historical worldview that is reinforced and reproduced in everyday dimensions of life [...] limiting our historical imagination.” In other words, space as a “blank slate” problematically suggests that physicality and what is seen is the only viable and legitimate aspect of geography, neglecting the connections between the seeable and the unseeable, and renders this “foundation” with an air of neutrality.

Black people experience this notion of emptiness by being consciously absented, written, and imagined out of Canadian history. Following the abolition of slavery in 1834, anti-Black racism in Canada was reconfigured entirely to uphold myths of racial tolerance. As told in Maynard’s *Policing Black Lives*, “by 1865, textbooks bore little allusion to any Black presence in Canada, erased two centuries of slavery, included no mention of segregated schools (an ongoing practice at the time), and alluded to the issue of racial discord only in the United States.” This explicit act of concealment works to justify that racism was a product of its time. Depicting Canada as “the land of multiculturalism” and a haven for enslaved Black Americans produced a national image positioning Canada and Canadians as a nation of tolerance and diversity. This myth-laden reputation has been internationally accepted despite Canada’s poor track record, which includes: a segregated school system that lasted longer than the one in the United States, significant Ku Klux Klan membership, and discrimination in employment and housing. As Robyn Maynard writes: “Canadian newspapers and politicians nonetheless continuously framed the so-called “Negro problem” as an American issue.”

What this culminates in is a tradition of Black people being imagined as distant from the land – as ungeographic. These traditions are carried out through property law and racial regimes of ownership setting in motion differential racialized valuation that form modern practices of private property. Property law did not just appropriate land, but it was central in constructing the proper legal subject. To be considered a “fully individuated citizen-subject,” you had to have the capacity to own or appropriate land. However, as Brenna Bhandar has argued, “in the colonies, one had to be in possession of certain properties or traits determined by racial identity and gender to own property.” Property and property law are thus deeply entangled with notions of racialization and racism furthering the colonial dispossession. As Cheryl Harris argues in her article “Whiteness as Property,” whiteness, obtaining similar characteristics to property such as “the right to use and enjoyment, the reputational value, the power to exclude,” makes whiteness, analogous with property. She continues stating that “only particular forms of possession—those that were characteristic of white settlement—would be recognized and legitimated. In other words, these racial categories continue this production of distance that are carried out into the modern production of territories.

Sites slated for urban renewal were prime candidates for experimental modernist utopian planning strategies that gained popularity post World War II. These practices were first popularized by the pioneers of modernist utopian architecture and city planning, such as Le Corbusier, who introduced the idea of living in predetermined places where the city is planned, designed, and built. The guiding philosophy of utopian modernist planning is that a desirable future can be achieved through design and proper spatial organization. Often, utopias are designed to be ideal living spaces for their desired residents, cast with a strong environmental and moralistic tone, believing that if humans are only placed within a proper setting (whether social or physical), they will behave as the creators of the utopia believe they should.

Imaginations through city planning began before the post war era. In Canada, one of the first attempts of such utopian planning was tied to the career of Thomas Adams (1871-1940), a British town planning consultant that introduced the first tentative steps towards involving the federal government in the provision of housing. Working as an apprentice to Ebenezer Howard, Adams was heavily influenced by the typology of the Garden City. With his development of the Town and Country planning association, he carried over much of Howard’s ideology, giving “general encouragement to manufacturers to move out of crowded centers, stimulate interest in and promote the scientific development of towns, and encourage the erection of sanitary and beautiful dwellings with adequate space for gardens and recreation.” Illustrating the ways in which the application of these planning techniques could improve the quality of life for all Canadians, Adams outlines recommendations to restrict land speculation, establish more compact urban development, layout streets according to the land’s natural contours, retain trees and green spaces in urban areas, and have roads built to the width appropriate to the volume of traffic on them. He wanted his plan to not only be applied to the suburbs, but also inner-city neighborhoods. However, the budget did not allow for this; Adams placed a ceiling on the budgets for inner-city construction. This forced contractors to construct the buildings poorly and with cheap materials to meet the budget ceiling.

This trend of poorly executed idealist constructions continued in Canada post World War II. The practice of urban renewal was supported by the federal government, where they “had passed legislation permitting cost-sharing between local, provincial, and federal governments for any urban renewal scheme involving clearance and new construction, or, in some cases, rehabilitation.” The goal of urban renewal was always rooted in complete elimination:

“get rid of the street system; demolish as many buildings as possible; create great chunks of open space, and build functional structures that looked entirely different from everything else.”

This presents a vision of space similar to John Locke’s, where spaces unknown

or unvalued by governing agents are perceived as blank slates needing “furnishing.” The transformation of Cabbagetown to Regent Park, like many others, exemplifies how utopias are rooted in this blank slate strategy. Toronto was void of housing policies expressly supporting affordable housing development and slum clearance until the mid-1940s. This, in addition to the city’s lack of a comprehensive zoning system, resulted in pockets of substandard housing. Corbusier’s utopian tower in the park model was used as a blueprint to construct Regent Park’s master plan. Inspired by Corbusier’s belief that “the creation of vertical cities was the solution to solving the urban housing crisis,” the master plan for Regent Park introduced higher density residencies sitting on open green spaces. Both Regent Park North and South were designed using a superblock plan, completely eliminating any trace of the past urban grid. This continuous “emptying” of the site paid little mind to the communities and cultural formations that were pre-existing on the site. American city planner Martin Meyerson criticizes how utopian planning often deals with the physical environment superficially, where class structure, economic base, and the process of government are not addressed in the utopia of the future they present. It can be argued that the practice of urban renewal itself - behaves like a utopia.

With these layers in mind, I carefully traced historical maps of Regent Park. (Figure 12) The area has undergone several massive changes in its urban composition. The process of tracing was slow, particularly when working with the figure-ground of Cabbagetown. The site was densely packed with old Victorian houses abutting narrow streets to form dense blocks. With each added layer, the footprints of the building got larger but fewer as the buildings climbed higher. Compressing all the layers together on transparent paper reveals relationships between what is there and what once was. This layered map will be used as the base for the rest of the experiments throughout this chapter.

By introducing a version of the map that acknowledges the presence of the past, I am setting the stage for future experiments to acknowledge both the current state of the landscape and its buried pasts.

I coupled this with GIS mapping of relationships between infrastructural networks, socioeconomic standing (Figure 10), and racial demographics in both in Regent Park and the broader site of Toronto to explore the relationships between people, site, and place and how the elements of the Tree (Figure 11), the Park, and the Grocery Store (Figure 9) are deployed in the city in relation to race and socioeconomic status. This exercise of collecting data began as a cataloging tool to begin to identify the patterns and trends of the city and how they have socio-political agency. Reflecting on the process it these maps add an added dimension to the notion of trace. These maps effectively trace what is not visible from an on-the-ground perspective, and layering these maps together reveals patterns of subjection that justify the lived experiences of those of the community. (Figure 13)

Figure 13
Spatializing Economic Difference
This map uses average economic income data and models
it producing a landscape of economic difference .

De·cline

As Bhandar notes, from the founding of Canada as a self-governing Dominion, ownership and “having the capacity to appropriate has long required the prerequisites of obtaining certain properties or traits determined by racial identity in order to attain the status of being considered ‘a proper subject’ of modern society.”Since 1628—with the arrival of Olivier Le Jeune, the first Black enslaved person, in Quebec,1628 —Black people in Canada were forced to perform a subordinate role in society contingent on their economic function to serve. Throughout the following 200 years of the transatlantic slave trade, Black men, women, and children were not considered to be full human beings but as “interchangeable commodities” that could be raped, tortured, and lynched with impunity. In this way, property ownership can be understood as complicit in fabricating a globalized perception of Blackness.

Alexander Weheliye’s theory of racial assemblages helps to contextualize the trauma of these experiences. It understands race as a set of sociopolitical processes that categorize humanity into full human, not quite human, and nonhuman. This categorization is not biological but rather grapples with the idea that political hierarchies are anchored to human flesh. Therefore, Canada’s framing of Africans as nonhuman and bestial life justified the commodification of Black life and their labor that enriched the nations of Europe for centuries to come. Legislation, government policy, and law enforcement then fortified this white European authority, upon which Canada’s institutions and governance systems— such as immigration, education, labor, health care, and land ownership—were based and are upheld. As Maynard summarizes:

“the attributes that had been attached to Blackness—subservience, criminality, lack of intelligence and dangerousness—set a road map for treatment of Black life throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Despite the end of formal bondage, Black people’s lives would continue to be devalued, and their movements subject to surveillance and containment. White settlers and their governments would proactively enforce a racially divided society in which Black lives were worthless.”

With this discriminatory ideology of race and segregation disguised as a simple desire for health and safety, the white ruling authorities often relegated new incoming populations to traditionally Black areas in Canadian cities. Such was the case in The Ward, which was a site in Toronto that traditionally housed Black people coming from America through the underground railroad. This act of segregation was reinforced in The Ward, as well as other sites, by white residents protesting their presence within white neighborhoods, further feeding into this subjection of Black and racialized people. This rhetoric of criminality and inadequacy rooted in the structural violence of anti-Black racism affected a larger and more diverse population, making it common for researchers to erroneously describe urban renewal as simply the result of economic “decline.” However, race plays a significant role in these processes. It is important to acknowledge that white European migrants were given priority for land settlement, as well as employment opportunities, and could participate in the state’s formal arenas of authority and governance.

The rhetoric’s of modernity thus ushered in a relationship between ownership and subjectivity, wherein the latter continued to be defined through and based on one’s capacity to appropriate.⁵⁴ During the 19th and 20th centuries, racially coded language such as ‘blight,’ ‘declining slum,’ ‘unsafety,’ and others were used to appropriate a sense of place. Andrew Hirscher describes how, particularly in the Post World War II era, ‘blight’ became a historical and scientific word that de-facto defined the conditions of racialized space. Originating from “seventeenth-century British agricultural discourse, “blight” referred both to plant diseases of mysterious causes and to the symptoms of those diseases.” The reappropriation of the word in the specific context of urban space not only implies that Black, Indigenous, and the racialized people are an “urban disease” it also labels this spatial act of violence under new, less accessible terminology, disguising further the true meaning of the words and the actions that come with them. Extending blight’s agricultural genealogy, early descriptions of urban blight often staged the immigrants who were filling the ranks of the industrial city’s reserve armies of labor as agents of this urban disease. These conditions were connected to poverty, decline, or social difference; cast as “blight,” these circumstances were staged as abnormalities—an urban disease that solicited a cure. In line with these framings, Adam Kaasa’s work on the matter of erasure forms an important argument that “all can be demolished if a legitimate cause is produced.”In other words, the actual condition of the building or the person is not as important as its selectively produced image.

Throughout Canada, private-sector marketing and government policies have implemented narratives of the “declining” slum in parallel with describing deteriorating health and safety. In 1934, during Toronto’s centennial birthday celebration, Ontario’s Lieutenant Governor Herbert Bruce stated:

We have a great and beautiful city. ... It is a city enviably situated, a city of fine residential areas, of beautiful buildings, of high standards of citizenship. That is how we see it, but I fear, in all candors, one must confess that this city, in common with every large city, has acquired inevitable “slum districts.” These areas of misery and degradation exert an unhappy environmental influence upon many of our citizenship.

His sentiments expressing that the slum districts had a negative effect on the civic character of the city influenced the city’s publication of the Bruce Report shortly after. These narratives were then reinforced by government-funded agencies like the National Film Board (NFB). Like the portrayal of Indigenous land during the conception of Canada, legal documents and popular media began to paint the inner city as a wild unruly landscape. The Canadian National Film Boards’ 1953 dramatization of the condition of Regent Park, Farewell Oak Street, exemplified an act of emptiness through a monochromatic representation of the lives of the residents. The film deliberately traced the negative features of the neighborhood, highlighting the “verminous walls, the fire hazards, the juvenile delinquency, the drunkenness [and] broken marriages.” The national representation of Cabbagetown and other urban renewal sites as the wilderness of the urban city legitimized the shift in urban policy to direct their policing and urban management. Newspapers of the era were likewise filled with stories used to describe predominantly Black neighborhoods as venues laden with crime. Similarly, municipal housing surveys organized data to promote the singular view that Black communities were inferior and disruptive.

Onto the previous tracing of the layered plans of Regent Park, I explored the relationships through cataloging and stitching archived fragments of historical and contemporary newspaper articles to the specific geographic locations they referred to. Since naturalizing the narrative of decline relies largely on the public’s belief of the dehumanizing rhetoric and the alienation of those who live in affected neighborhoods, popular media concentrates on disseminating a holistic, coded, racialized language of unsafety as a means of justifying policy decisions. By contrast, precisely placing these stories on specific street corners, roads, and areas in my compositions challenges the use of all-encompassing terminology as an indicator of a place’s identity or a determining factor of its preservation or removal.

Progress

The former two narratives—emptiness and decline— are often justified by the promise of progress. The introduction to the notion of continuous ‘progress’ arose out of the notion of ‘infinity.’ The concept of ‘infinity’ originated between 1450 to 1650 in early modern pre-Enlightenment Europe. Infinity can be defined as innovations that allow society to reproduce itself at a higher level. Following the development of Newton’s calculus, the concept of infinity for the West evolved into describing an infinite goal that could never be reached. This carried into the Enlightenment period, which mobilized the perspective that there is one ultimate way of thinking, knowing, and experiencing every aspect of life, including the land. Not only did this early form of capitalism regulate the human as solely a product of labor, but it also produced the planning ideals that are ultimately root in individual ownership and continuous improvement in the fabric of today’s city.

One way to describe the idea of continuous improvement in historical and contemporary urban planning practices is the idea of the highest and best use. This is defined as “the reasonably probable and legal use of vacant land or an improved property that is physically possible, appropriately supported and financially feasible and that results in the highest value.” In other words, this positions the market as a determinant factor of land use through the capacity of different user groups to pay rent. This produces an uneven terrain and value system that ultimately determines who gets to own and change the land. The Bruce Report expresses this sentiment of producing better through demolition by stating:

“It seems to me that the only availing remedy in Toronto is a planned decentralization... [that] would permit workers to establish their homes convenient to their work in surroundings where their children would learn by experience that grass is a green, living, and loving carpet and that there are really and truly other and lovelier flowers than those of the lithographed calendar that hangs on the cracked, crumbling and soiled wall of a murky room into which the sun’s rays have never penetrated... as we evacuate those factories and hovels, we must raze them and bury the distressing memory of them in fine central parks and recreational centers... devoted to the physical and mental improvement of our people.”

This idea of continuous improvement was perscribed to nature as well with the concept of “survival of the fittest,” which was ultimately just a justification that and individualistic mindset that captialism relies on is a natural process.¹³

As noted by John C Bächer in his article Canadian Housing, “Policy” in perspective, “Canadian housing programs prior to the 1964 National Housing Act amendments, [...] exhibited a remarkable rigidity in devoting government revenues towards helping those in higher income brackets.” While the National Housing Act stated that its objective is to “improve the housing and living conditions of low-income communities, it’s important to note that this was ulteriorly motivated by the desire to create jobs and improve and build back the economy after it fell during the Second World War.

Using the base layer map of Figure 12, I add a layer of sewing to the newspapers to illustrate the role policy and media have in ultimately altering the composition of the site. Printing each layer on translucent paper, I sewed together the footprints of the new development and zoning laws. (Figure 14). The translucent paper produces a blurring effect distorting and concealing the viewers’ access to parts of the information. The content on the lower layers is almost invisible. The arrangement of the layers of texts is not in chronological order, but rather in order of ease of access, physically representing my laborious search and retrieval of data/knowledge/documentation on/off the site. To this day, the primary narrative about Regent Park is still the original narrative used to justify its creation and the erasure/destruction of cabbage town. The use of transparency within the materiality of my drawing replicates the work of uncovering (or a more archeological word) the layers of the site for the viewer, allowing them to become cognizant of the historical histories of the site on a more explicit level.

Overall, these explorations help demonstrate that within the context of design and urban planning, it is crucial to understand the direct implications of representation and how design methodology tends to mirror the same recurring narratives of emptiness, decline, and progress. The significance of making by hand slows down the process of understanding and allows space and time for reflection. This process was meticulous, forcing me to think through every single action to show a tangible relationship between spaces of discourse and the production of space. While a cleaner, faster, more efficient result could have been achieved through an embroidery machine, making this layer by hand allows for a conscious presence with the information. Producing a drawing using analog tools of layering and sewing examines the process of production at a different time scale that feels possible in real life. For people who are experiencing demolition, the process feels fast. Regardless of the actual duration, for the people experiencing and living through urban renewal, these processes feel like they are happening too fast. This process of temporal drawing slows down the architect and makes them look at the history, space, and information in a new way.

Figure 14
Newspaper Map - Plan View

Figure 15

Newspaper Map -Detail 1

Figure 16

Newspaper Map -Detail 2

Figure 17

Newspaper Map -Detail 3

Chapter 2:

Present in the Plot Holes

Process is more important than outcome. When the outcome drives the process, we will only ever go to where we've already been. If process drives outcome, we may not know where we're going, but we will know we want to be there.

Bruce Mau

When faced with a perfectly packaged narrative, one should always question who or what has been cut-out, concealed, or excluded from the story.

Plot holes are an opportunity for narrative to change a story. In fiction, the plot hole or plot error is an inconsistency in the storyline that goes against the flow of logic established by the main plot. Such inconsistencies describe things that are seemingly illogical, unlikely, or impossible. This includes events or statements that contradict aspects of what is widely understood as a universal “truth” within the dominant narrative. In the case of Canada, the previously established plotlines surrounding the construction of space. The presence of Black people and Black geographies is a plot hole within these narratives, or as Kathrine McKittrick articulates, inhabit a moment of ‘surprise.’ McKittrick defines surprise as “an unexpected or astonishing event, circumstance, person, thing; ... [or] an act [prevailing] contrary to [it’s prescribed] expectations.” The surprise of Black geographies and Black life reveals what has been erased/what Canada’s governing agents have tried to erase: their deep ontological and historical roots to these places that challenge the perception of Black life as a recent appearance.

“Being ungeographic doesn’t mean that you cannot be located, but it means that the tools and structures of space and placemaking have been weaponized to attempt to foreclose your ability to materialize your sense of place in the world. This underscores the paradox of approaching blackness and the power of blackness through the language-mediated order of culture—of sign systems, aesthetic values, philosophies, and theories of form, content, and relation meant to administrate human life and embodiment through formal and deterministic judgements, classifications, and taxonomies.”¹⁵

Understanding the plot holes of urban renewal narratives and spatial production at large through the lens of McKittrick’s surprise offers opportunities to challenge what is or is not deemed possible in space. As McKittrick writes, the concept of surprise in terms of geography “is contained in the material, a political and social landscape that presumes and requires that subaltern populations have no relationship to the production of space.” The condition of being absently present depicts the geography of the othered and, in particular, Black geographies, Black places, and Black people as simultaneously violent criminal attacks on the otherwise pristine order of the city and entirely non-existent. The documentation of everyday life in Africville, the Ward, Hogans Alley, and other historically Black places all challenge that dichotomy and refute what was considered possible for sites of urban renewal. Both these conditions—of hyper-visible criminality and invisibility—inhabit the same vice. They are both extreme exaggerations limiting the possibility of where Black geographies exist. These limitations ultimately function to deem Black life as incompatible with modernity, progress, and the white vision of the future.

Stripping Black people from place and deeming them as ungeographic is undoubtedly a violent act. It is important, however, to articulate that the path to liberation is not reinstating and classifying Black geography according to “proper” spatial norms of ownership. Rather than thinking solely of the disadvantage not fitting into these categorizations positions the othered population in - and particularly Black people - these plot holes and moments of surprise can be points of departure for imagining a world absent of these violent categorizations. Plot holes as realms of possibility can be interrogated by Neil Smith’s deep space through its acknowledgment and validation of alternative, unconventional interpretations and experiences of space. Reading space from conceptual, metaphorical, and multiscale vantage points offers a doorway into rethinking what it means to be present in space and what legitimate spatial production looks like. Rather than attempting to simply contest these inconsistent narratives, plot holes are portals that hold within them the possibility to reimagine a new world altogether that sits outside of the current capitalist colonial vision of the world.

To reimagine our world, how we map, document, and represent information must be manipulated to offer a methodology to redraw realities. Though the origins of mapping are associated with domination, as McKittrick observes:

“The conditions of bondage did not foreclose Black geographies but rather incited alternatives. Mapping practices during and after transatlantic slavery, many of which were/ are produced outside the official tenets of cartography: fugitive and maroon maps, literacy maps, food-nourishment maps, family maps, music maps, were assembled alongside “real” maps.”

Traditional parameters of mapping can be challenged through ephemeral Black cartographic practices. Positioned as an exercise of counter-mapping against

Figure 18

Portals as opportunities for change, Annika Izora
<https://www.instagram.com/annika.izora/>¹³

*por-tal*¹⁴
/pɔːrdl/
a doorway, gate, or other entrance, especially a large and imposing one.

Figure 19

Lecture: Treve Ellison on The Last Place They Thought Of.
*Vantapower*¹⁶
registers the potential in having a contrary or abolitionist relationship to racial capitalist productivity and racial capitalist social norms
I watched this lecture and the notion of vanta power felt like it connected both Saidiya Harmans critical fabulations and Neil Smith’s deep space. It simultaneously talks about both rethinking the validity of the archive through anylizing it though a multidimensional perspective.

Figure 20

Alexander G. Weheliye Black Life¹⁷

The idea of plot holes being portals of opportunities is an interesting one that shows up similarly in other discourses such as “ungendering” and “citizen less.” It’s interesting that by blatantly and violently stripping people from these categories simultaneously creates these gaps that can be used to dismantle it all together.

It don’t think I fully understood the concept of the ungeo-graphic until I watched this lecture by alexander wheelee where he discusses the concept of ungending though the notion of bathrooms in the jim crow era being labled men women and coloured

dominant power structures, I produced a visual method of cataloging researched information. (Figure 21) The limitation of race-based spatial data—particularly in Canada —reinforces this erasure of Black presence in the production of space. This map attempts to locate Black people, histories, and imaginations superimposed onto a map of Canada through following Black cultural production such as fiction, poetry, art, and music. Through this lens, this mapping of Black people not only traces the presence of Black train porters, the Thornton and Lucie Blackburn creation of the first taxi company in Toronto, and other people and processes that are materially visible but also attempts to trace these networks of kinship and care and positioning them as just as valuable as traditional forms of geographic knowledge.

Following this understanding of the map, the following experiments in this chapter will question what it means to document or “map” space on a smaller scale, rethinking modes of mapping space. The experimental tactile account of Regent Park in the previous section (Figure 13) will be used as the terrain to discover how to dissect and interrogate what these new opportunities may offer. The use of a top-down, plan view in my original mappings (Figure 23) to represent current dominant narrative connections visualized an understanding of space from a distanced vantage point. This distanced point blurs all individual experiences into a unified representation, detaching our/inhabitant’s intimate bodily connection with the site/space. Being disconnected from the lived experience of space forces us to relinquish control over the fate of our surroundings, allowing it to be managed through the intricate network of stories told by data and documentation owned and controlled by nation-states and private corporations.

To better acknowledge a multiplicity of individual, on-the-ground experiences, the third dimension of photographs is added to the original newspaper mapping. First, a collection

Figure 21:
“Routines of the Ungeographic” View 1

Figure 22:
“Routines of the Ungeographic” View 2

Figure 23
Map of Multiplicity Detail 1

Figure 24
Map of Multiplicity Detail 2

of images, text, and drawings documenting individual moments in the neighborhood are assembled and printed on transparent paper. These images capture moments in everyday life, from historical photos of what the architecture looked like pre-demolition and Instagram posts of the food at restaurants to the use of a big sports field as a place of prayer during Ramadan. These images are individually attached to pins and punctured through the original map at each artifact's specific location. As the layers build, the use of transparent paper produces intersections between different images. In contrast to the concealing condition the translucent paper had on the newspaper mapping, the complete transparency of these new images captures the essence of multiplicity, and the difference between what you see in elevation versus plan introduces a relationship between the top-down and the on-the-ground experience.

Where narrative cycles translate the imagination of the elite into concrete spaces, the conceptualization and acknowledgment of the memories and experiences embedded in the material realm carry within the multiplicity of interactions with the built environment outside of the knowable and profitable parameters of space. In a revelation about eating a madeleine on Sunday morning at Combray, Marcel Proust describes the temporality of memories as perhaps "so long dormant as to have lost the power of expansion which would have allowed them to resume their place in my consciousness." As referenced in the previous chapter, the individual alone has little control over recovering the past. Memory is formed and retrieved through interactions. Here, this hidden memorial realm will be understood as a mnemonic ecology: "a sphere of prosthetic memory, where human memories are embodied in nonhuman, technical networks." These hidden

Figure 25
Map of Multiplicity Plan View

Figure 26
Map of Multiplicity
Detail 3

Figure 27
Map of Multiplicity
Detail 4

Figure 28
Map of Multiplicity Elevation

networks of memories and mnemonic devices, folded within spaces offer an expansive variety of interpretations that contradict, challenge, and rupture the stability of traditional geography. The human body thus acts as a sensory trigger, transporting these embedded memories back into the human consciousness, mediating the space through the self.

Viewing space as holding this hidden network of memories offers an expansive variety of interpretations that contradict, challenge, and rupture the stability of traditional geography. Following the thoughts of McKittrick, who considers “geography as being mediated by the space of the subject (the body, the self, identity, and subjectivity),” I argue that the human body thus acts as a sensory trigger, transporting these embedded memories back into the human consciousness. These transportations are performed differently with different types of memories. Procedural memory, (the memory of our motor or sensory skills) can be retrieved through routine, while episodic memories (the recollection of specific events, situations, and experiences) can be remembered through places or objects that trigger experiences. Like Proust and his madeleine, “the past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect. And as for that object, it depends on chance whether we come upon it.” The sewing and cutting of the different papers is an act of procedural memory, not only accessing memories from the site but working new ones into it with every puncture of your needle. At the same time, the finished artifacts are able to act as vessels for episodic memories of the individual and the collective. Made up of a collection of existing data points, they are able to move beyond the sum of their

parts through their methodical arrangement/orientation into a new reading and memory and imagination of the site. Therefore, to quote Proust, “the past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect. And as for that object, it depends on chance whether we come upon it.”

The method used to study this mnemonic ecology is greatly inspired by Saidiya Hartman’s concept of critical fabulations, a term she coined in her essay Venus in Two Acts. The word fabulation comes from the Latin word *fabulari*, meaning “relay as fable or myth.” Hartman discusses fabulation as a form of a story that blends the real and the imaginary in a way that rebuilds the worlds around it, an act of writing that works against the limits of the historical archive. While previously, the mobilization of mythology and narrative has been described as a tool to strategically write people out of space, this process of critical fabulations is used to acknowledge these people in space. Like the archive, physical space is also highly contested. The hierarchical narratives that dominate it demand a critical reading in order to discover their political implications and embedded memories. The first requirement of this critical reading is an acknowledgment that space itself is authored like any other document. Critical fabulations become a methodology of research and production that is able to rupture these traditional modes of understanding space.

The following sections use critical fabulations as a drawing methodology to imagine what mnemonic ecologies would look like if we could see these connections in visual space. These drawings explored ways to consolidate the two types of memory —episodic and procedural— through the means of artifact and routine. Through these visualizations, I am examining each site as a singular location that is shaped by and gives shape to multiple spatial differentiations. These artifacts serve to trace the stories of people through space, uncovering how their journeys and interactions with material artifacts ignite different memories and feelings. This is explored through different stages of the demolition process connecting across the seeable and unseeable, the geographic and the seemingly ungeographic, and the struggles that indicate that the material world is accessed and produced by subaltern communities. Demolition is a violently powerful process. However, if we pursue the links between practices of demolition and everyday experiences in placemaking, we see that Black geographies are lived, are possible, and imaginable. These terrains open a meaningful way to approach the power, memory, space, and possibilities of a place.

The drawings will be coupled with a short description introducing the site, rather than providing a simple reporting of the site’s fragments. These short descriptions of the site are not meant to be translations of the drawings but offer contextual information to frame the drawing. The experiences are meant to be read through the lens of the drawings rather than in a linear sequential order. This method attempts in both drawing and writing to not speak for the collective but instead highlight individual experiences collectively in one space.

body memory is a theory that the body itself is capable of storing memories, as opposed to only the brain. .¹⁸

Nolan Oswald Dennis - The [drawing body](#)
“The drawing body is an extension of the human body under these inertial conditions. More precisely, it is a prosthetic transformation of that body in conditions where acting becomes a type of inaction: a game played against time or put simply: planning. The drawing body is called into being wherever an apparatus is put to work to draw out, as a matter of practice, a (k) new body in violation of colonial assumptions of linear time and normative value. Some kind of mark-making instrument that shivers and trembles and moves forward only in indeterminate scribbles. This drawing body is the inverted agency of a planning exercise performed in a situation where consequences must precede their causes’.”¹⁹

Memory Walks

the routes and paths formed by the memories and experiences attached to place.

In Rethinking the Animate, Re-Animating Thought Tim Ingold describes the relationship between the organism - in this case, the human body - and the environment as having “not inside or outside, and no boundary separating the two domains.” Viewing mnemonic ecologies in congruence with Ingold’s interpretation of relation shifts our understanding of space from being “between one thing and another” to “trail along which life is lived.” Using weaving Memory Walks (Figure 29) becomes a web of lines overlapping and intersecting, holding within its form the mnemonic ecology of each site. Memories, as they attach to places, is inherently fragmented. The conditions of both physical space and the interior space of the mind must be aligned for the retrieval of a particular memory.

Pages are inscribed with handwritten memories of the site collected from newspaper quotes or personal stories. These pages are then cut into thin strips of paper. Making a small incision into the base map — derived from Google Maps — I weave the strips in and out of the site, allowing the paper to billow into ephemeral, three-dimensional loops. Weaving paper memories as a technique effectively fragment the text regardless of perspective. Not only does some of the memory hide beneath the surface of the site, but every new curving loop further fragments the viewer’s perspective. The act of weaving lends a three-dimensional nature to the strips of memory paper that not only changes the landscape of the site but attempts to capture the obfuscating temporal relationship between the mental realm and the physical one.

Here in addition to in the images I play with the notion of fragmentation in the text. The text about Regent Park was fragmented from a varitiy of different souce memories peiced together to produce a cobesive story. Rather then telling one story that represents everyone this format attempts to tell multiple individual stories at once.

In the Ramsey Cresent text which hold my own memories, I fragment those through the use of redaction. This explores the agency to privacy and security over our own memories.

Regents Park Memories-

“It was an open community.” “a small town inside a big city.” Residents coming from many ethnicities and backgrounds had to learn to get along.

“In the summer outside on the sidewalks in the middle area, everybody is there talking to each other.” “Everyone knows one another,” and “it’s pretty much one big community.” “if you came to the park to play, it was understood that everything was shared.”

The boardwalk was “the spine of Regent Park.” A long pedestrian roadway that followed the path of the former Oak Street connected to the outdoor swimming pools and the community center with benches scattered at intervals along the path. It was a place where you could always “find your friends, walk and hang out.”

“There are sections to it, “zones that are claimed by particular people. Up at the top, “there were basketball courts for the athletic people. More in the middle is where the little kids were running around through the poles and, on their bikes, and playing. And down ... at night and around the corner of the buildings is where the gangs are drinking and down more there are people playing baseball.

"It pretty much leads to everything."

"The walls kept us safe."

“When you know Regents Park like the back of your hand, you could just zig-zag, though. “Because of how the area was designed, you don’t have to leave the neighbourhood unless you need to go to the mall or the grocery store.”

"It's like we had our own gated community." Somebody always knew you so we could walk around at night and feel safe in the neighbourhood because we were still in the community." "Even if you don't know a person, you'll know their faces a number of times, and you pass them on the street and say hi, and they'll say hi right back at you."

No neighbourhood is perfect. The roads were all blocked and closed so ... if you are driving, you would have to go all the way around to be able to go into certain streets. Buildings would not have lighting on the outside; for example that it would be dark outside. But as a community, we would help fix what we could.

At the same time, Regent Park was one neighbourhood where residents would come out to support one another for the smallest thing that happened.

Ramsey Crescent Memories

The houses surrounding this large soccer field are framed by backyards and bike paths.

Between some of the houses connected to the bike path around the field, there were smaller exits that allowed you to weave in and out of the main space and into the parking lots.

The path to the bus starts from the field's bike path but opens up into a long continuous.

I walked this path a lot. It led to the bus stop, and it [REDACTED] When I remember these walks, I associate them with the music I listen to.

Early in the morning, the path reminds me of Chance the Rapper's Acid Rap album.

For a period of time, I listened to that album from the moment I woke up at 6 am until I reached the bus stop.

████████████████████ it reminds me of 1999 by Joey Bada\$\$.

I would listen to it [REDACTED] and walk [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] into my house [REDACTED]

Memory Artefacts

The study of archeological artifacts often takes a different approach when exposing the subjugation of Black people through urban renewal. Several survey texts and histories use sketches and photographs to visually communicate the dehumanizing nature of the demolition process and unpack activist agendas. While these representations of urban clearance are relevant to understanding how the demolition happened and continues to happen, and are an important signifier of repression, the artifacts found in the archeological dig provoke the imagination in a different way. Each object holds the remnants of beautiful ordinary lives, filled with joy and sorrow, hardships overcome, and opportunities pursued. In the Armory Street Dig – an archeological project digging up the Ward – many sorts of items were uncovered, including “luxury items such as a pair of silk stockings, collections of pipes and fine china, a glass bottle still crimson with nail polish that reflected a complexity in class that the labeling of slum, ghetto, and blight erased completely.” While the deeper, community-based narratives of these demolished sites have not been documented, engaging with the remnants of individual lives forces all of us to reflect on urban renewal sites, to see them as anything but supposed blight within the city.

Taking from the discipline of archeology, the second experimentation method—focusing on the episodic relationships with space (The artifact) — follows a similar process. Inscribing memories, and personal translations of space will be used as a means the Artifact seeks to express the connection between people and architectural artifacts. First, I use photos and Google Maps to capture elevations of all the surfaces of the building, space, or object. Then I print these surfaces onto transparent paper, assembling them into transparent models. This surface becomes the canvas on which to layer written stories, drawings, and photographs, attempting to capture different memories tethered to the site. By explicitly marking down and revealing these tethered memories the Artifacts make physical the desire to value and revel in the ephemeral layers of a site before they are gone.

The Armory Street dig exhibition in 2015 revealed that, hidden beneath the concrete surface of the site, underneath what is now known as the Toronto Courthouse, lies a repository of domestic artefacts. These fragments of broken teacups, stockings, and other buried objects, are what remain from the nearly vanished neighborhood of St. John's Ward.²⁰

There was a pattern of archeology revealing things about urban renewal sites that are not mentioned in textual documentation. See the cases of :

- Seneca village , New York ²¹
- Freedman Town, Houston ²²
- Indianapolis, Indiana ²³

Figure 37
Memory Artefact
Regent Park

Figure 38
Memory
Artefact
Ramsey

Figure 39
Clip from the Movie the Journey

Figure 41
Rubble from the process of demolition

Figure 40
Danger due to Urban Decay

In her essay *Ceramics and Social Media*, Holly Martelle draws a connection between archeology and ceramics, which were used to “transmit messages about people, their beliefs and aspirations to social media.” As understood in the previous section, such archeological objects bring forth a glimpse of the everyday lives of those who previously inhabited the site. At the same time, they provide the opportunity for the object to contradict and counter popular media and civic documentations of the place. The 21st century and the age of the internet have provided a more instant and accessible venue to share multivocal experiences and stories. Digital social media applications, like Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat, give new meaning to what society deems worthy of documentation. Through these platforms, a larger number of people are able to collect, store, preserve and share their personal stories, thoughts, and opinions in a more accessible and informal fashion.

However, like with archeology, this information is often buried. As Gary O. Larson expresses, there is an even greater media concentration online than in the offline world. He explains that:

“Users may be able to choose from millions of sites, but mostly go to only a few. This is not an accident or the result of savvy branding. It is because Internet traffic follows a winner-take-all pattern that is much more ruthless than people realize. Relying on links and search engines, most people are directed to a few very successful sites. The rest remain invisible to the majority of users.”

By visually foregrounding sources such as images, text, newspaper archives, and journal articles produced a map of Regent’s Park, thinking through digital media as a spatial identifier. By neglecting to represent formal identifying features of the traditional map, such as roads, buildings, and street signs, it simulates a vision of space only through its digital footprint. The challenge in obtaining a complete understanding of place lies in identifying the literal and figurative “holes” in the story. Through the intentional manufacturing of plot holes - the omission of physical reality - these mappings work towards a more fully formed understanding of what has been traditionally left out and overlooked within these sites.

I printed out all the collected media of the site, capturing a variety of experiences and stories. With a blade and my bare hands, I methodically cut through each image and text. Creating a small incision, I then tore the rest of the hole with my hands, producing a rough edge. This method removed the ability to achieve precise control over what parts of the image would be eliminated. I used the act of tearing holes through the paper to think about the fragmentation and simplification of the story for the purpose of consumption. To properly see

Figure 46
New Regent Park Buildings

Figure 45
The demolition of buildings

Figure 44
View of the construction of a new building at Regent Park

enough of some images, others must fall to the back. The composition of the photographs and the amount they are cut becomes an intentional conversation about which elements are given the agency to be visible in the final image. This organization reduces our understanding of space to a handful of isolated fragments of images and text, contrasting with the multiplicity of voices offered by the internet. With this in mind, these material explorations probe the question: how can a different organization of digital media be used to mobilize technology to become a mediator between the seen and the unseen?

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Figure 42
Housing is a Right Protest

Figure 43
Photo of teenagers hanging around Regent Park

Figure 46
Holes Map - Regent Park

Figure 47
Holes Map - Regent Park
Detail 1

Figure 48
Holes Map - Regent Park
Detail 2

Authored Garden of Stories and Memories

Throughout the course of this research, different modes of narration were used to explore the multiplicity of experiences woven into demolished space. Each method of narration revealed additional layers of reality. In my work, writing offered an opportunity for the extensive study of historical and political contexts. The resultant GIS mapping offered a study of the relationships between space, data, and socioeconomic organizational patterns. The experimental mappings offered a study of action and process. The study of the built artifact offered a close reading of intimate interactions with space, and the spatial timeline provided a way to move forward and away from linearity and chronological understandings of space. While none of these modes of narration individually offer a complete and deep understanding of the sites, when viewed together as a whole, they start to inform and expand on each other.

The variety of approaches present in my thesis work was necessary to simulate the many tools used to trace and mobilize counter experiences, spatially through crowdsourced mapping and counter monuments, but also textually, through Instagram posts, Tweets, and blog posts. Using these textual means to challenge space allows for an explicit interpretation of information from a variety of different authors. Returning to the concept of deep space, I can imagine the work in this thesis manifesting into a digital garden: a tool that presents information in a richly linked landscape that grows over time. As explained through a quote on the website Hypertext Gardens,

“Gardens and parks lie between farmland and wilderness. The garden is farmland that [is] designed for delight rather than a commodity. The Park is wilderness, tamed for our enjoyment. Since most hypertext aims neither for the wilderness of unplanned content nor for the straight rows of formal organization, gardens and parks can inspire a new approach to hypertext design and can help us understand the patterns we observe in fine hypertext writing.”

Building upon such concepts, this thesis borrows the term Digital Garden from Mike Caufield’s work entitled, *The Garden and the Stream: A Technopastoral*. Caufield compares the parameters of Twitter and Federated Wiki in order to think through a different way to collaborate and communicate information.

Both programs are rooted in disseminating short snapshots of information that, if relevant, are linked to their original information source. Where Federated Wiki deviates is that it allows for information to be linked to and reference other entries written by oneself or other people. Drawing from the linking function embedded in the program, Caulfield expresses that the most compelling aspect is the act of building up complexity rather than reducing it. This network of data allows each individual entry to be understood relationally according to its context. Through this example, Caulfield lays out a foundation of these concepts metaphorically through the idea of the stream versus the garden. He writes that the metaphor of the Stream describes a single, time ordered path with our experience (and only our experience) at the center, like Twitter. Alternatively, the Garden manifests as a web typology. Rather than a single set of relationships or a canonical sequence, there is an interconnected collection of ideas that can be understood through several different trajectories. Caulfield further describes the experience conceptually, stating: “every walk through the garden creates new paths, new meanings, and when we add things to the garden, we add them in a way that allows many futures and unpredicted relationships.”

This thesis appreciates the digital garden beyond its superficial interpretation as a metaphor and recognizes it as a methodology with the potential to visualize a new way for organizing information, to advance the right to the imagination, to empower the right to contradiction, and to make evident the right to be materially present in space. This conceptual understanding of the digital garden is typically materialized in an open-access writing format. Expanding on the potential of a digital garden, I envision it here as a spatial application. I see it as a living and growing *spatial archive* that is available to researchers, designers, community members, and the public at large to document and translate space. Maps make the experiences of the everyday invisible. The intersectional narratives in the built environment often conceal both spaces of violence (experiences of urban renewal, environmental racism, internment camps, residential schools) and infrastructures of care and support. Using this spatial application as a visualization tool converts my personal methodology of learning into an accessible means to document and make visible all the ways in which people already occupy space.

The organizing framework used to explore the potentials and possibilities of using digital gardens to translate and understand physical space is: the insights learned from my making throughout this thesis, Maggie Appleton’s structure of the digital space, and the six parameters of the digital garden Coupled with what was learned through my making, the organizing framework used to explore the potentials and Maggie Appleton’s structure of the digital space, the six parameters of the digital garden (Topography over Timelines, Continuous Growth, Learning in Public & Imperfection, Playful, Personal, and Experimental, Intercropping & Content Diversity, Independent Ownership).

Figure 49
Video: Mother Tree

When thinking about producing a spatial ecology we can look and learn from the trees and the ecosystem. They are not individualists as described according to Darwin’s idea of survival of the fittest but rather through their roots these trees are connected sharing carbon and nitrogen back and forth with each other according to who needs it most. This sharing of resources is a system of care, they are helping each other survive. The structural diversity of the forest and the multiplicity of species all working together to survive is what gives the forest resilience for unexpected events

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SORM4dYG8&t=131s>

Topography-Based Organization

“Gardens don’t use chronology as their main organizing rule. They are organized by contextual relationships. The concepts and themes within each note determine how it’s connected to others.”

Organizing information spatially allows the opportunity for connections to be formed. The process of using topography as an organizing rule is not a new one. The act of counter-mapping has often been used as a way to present crowdsourced data to mobilize lived experiences and the voices of marginalized people. There are countless examples that range from archiving LGBTQ2IA+ experiences in relation to physical space, mapping public symbols of confederacy, and finding out more about local Indigenous territories and languages. These maps draw both from research and crowdsourced public data, organizing information spatially to construct inventories of geographical knowledge that, in turn, construct multiple ways of knowing places. Complementing this, the Digital Garden typology brings forth an additional layer of connection through its foundational premise of producing connections through links. Rather than connections being interpreted solely in terms of spatial proximity, my interpretation of a digital garden allows people to make connections between places that are geographically distant. The concept of constructing paths between the information that you upload allows for opportunities to document such things as trains of thought, routines, experiences that could benefit research, community data collection, and a more interconnected organization of experiences.

Interdependent Ownership | Playful, Personal, and Experiential | Learning in Public Imperfection

“A large part of gardening is claiming a small patch of the web for yourself, one you fully own and control.”

The digital garden model values individual experiences. As explored in the Memory Walk exercise, the way an individual interacts with space is deeply personal. Different paths can mean different things to different people. This sentiment applies to both physical paths that are walked along and paths of research. The way this manifest within the spatial application is a personal archive through space for each individual user (Figure 15). This archive will be a private or public personal space, collecting the paths the user has journeyed along, whether they are adventures of research or of the physical realm.

Furthermore, the idea of having individual ownership over a piece of space does not have to be a territorial act of prescribing one interpretation of space as singularly valid. Thinking about learning, memories, and imaginations of space as part of a spatial ecology (which thinks about the environment through its different relationships” values and appreciates the unique perspectives and tools that different individuals offer. Understanding that all of these different perspectives exist simultaneously will begin to deepen our connections and understanding of space.

Gardens are, by nature, non-homogenous. No two gardens are alike. Even if you plant the same plants as your neighbors, you plant them in a different arrangement.”

The spatial application acts as a journal in space. With this understanding, two people could walk the same path or go to the same place and have different emotions and experiences attached to it. They could pick up on different parts of the experience as important and meaningful to them. This realm acts as a diary tethered to space. It gives users the agency to translate and infuse their own experiences into spaces where they are given few opportunities to provide a lasting physical impression. Not only is there a level of playfulness allowed in a user’s documentation that often is non-existent in physical spaces, but there is also a joy for the people who will discover these layers and translations that are otherwise hidden by the neutrality of the built environment.

This format is meant to be less performative than a blog, but more intentional and thoughtful than our Twitter feed, [a place to] build personal knowledge over time.

Space is not stagnant. Even one’s personal relationship with space changes over time. It is important to be able to add to past paths and form new ones to adapt and adjust to one’s ever-changing relationship with space.

Intercropping & Content Diversity

“All varieties of mediums grow in the garden - videos, podcasts, short notes, long essays, academic papers, sketches.”

Reflecting on the multiplicity map (Figure 6) from Chapter 2 reveals the drawing’s limits. Recognizing that Black subjects and communities and their experiences are openly and complexly geographic, albeit distanced from sanctioned geographic knowledge, the drawing is limited by the exclusive use of textual artifacts. While its transparency seeks to allow for a more temporal representation of memory, allowing a visual connection to be made between some of the images, the use of only images and text still subscribes to the traditional idea of what a document is. The digital realm offers the opportunity to engage with different media outputs such as sound. The interface of this app will most closely resemble a collage. Collaging in this way where the photos and video are superimposed onto each other allows the information to be seen as connected entities rather than individual artifacts. The concept of decontextualized scale drawn from the photographs and the passing of time drawn from the video offers an opportunity to see these different interpretations of space in unison. The method of collage is a visual, tangible way to grapple with how space is composed of overlapping trajectories that hold a multiplicity of scales —the molecular, the human body, and the universe — all in one entity.

Conclusion: Continuous Growth

“Gardens are always growing. They’re continuously evolving work in progress.”

Continuous Growth is the last of Maggie Appleton’s six parameters of the digital garden. The idea of a spatial digital garden is not a stagnant one. It as a framework and an application that has the potential to grow and change and expand into a vast number of possibilities and uses. It could be a way for an architect to translate space for community members; a way for the marginalized to assert agency over the spaces they inhabit; or simply a way constructs a personal archive of space.

The aim of this thesis was never to “solve” the intersectional challenges surrounding spatial ownership and the destruction of space. Nor did it intend to simply provide a singular place where the “ungeographic” belongs. Rather, the contradictions and paradoxes that come with being considered ungeographic in space itself is a site of possibility that holds the potential to dismantle totalizing representations of space, ultimately giving people agency and knowledge over their own spaces. This thesis asserts that all the way people are already present in and experiencing space is as powerful and insightful resources as traditional documentation.

Moreover, in being thoughtful and explicit about the approach of making as solely my own understanding of space, the primary thought drawn from this process is the importance of questioning the hierarchical structure and system by which architecture and spatial production at large is established, designed, and constructed. Just as my making process was interlaced with my own biases and interpretations, when laying down space, architects are infusing them with their own memories and their own narratives. However diligent the designer is, there will always be a consideration that goes beyond their own personal lens of understanding.

In response to the research, the proposal of a Digital Garden does not fit into the typical mold of an architectural design project. This was an intentional effort done with the intent to rethink what the role of the architect is, and can be, outside of the physical design and construction of buildings. Reflecting upon the unfolding of this thesis, this project did not linearly move past the stage of site analysis. Instead, it has expanded laterally beyond the bounds of a traditional architectural understanding of place. Each thread of questioning pulled unravels into a web of multitudes, infinitely expanding the matrix of my research and making. Grappling with the complexity and enormity of the project created a continuous worry that a conclusion would never be reached, that a concise architectural expression could not be formulated from so fast a body of thought. This questioning undermines the skills and resources I believe architects can provide outside of hierarchical control over space. Instead of continuing down that path fueled by anxiety, I made the decision not to “build.” The decision, not the build, absolves Memory Walks of solving the problem of spatial ownership and the destruction of space and relieves it of the burden of preventing more. Instead, its exploratory, memory-focused framework has the potential to open up a deeper understanding of how architectural knowledge can be shared more broadly within a community and how in turn, community memories can be amplified back into the spaces they inhabit.

Glossary

- 1. striking contradiction: a term, coined by Saidiya Hartman, to describe moments where objectification is paralleled with Black humanity.
- 2. ungeographic: Based on a reading of Kathrine McKittrick’s *Demonic Grounds: Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, it is understood as a colonial fiction that designates a spatial condition in which Black people and their geographies are understood to be exclusively attached to narratives of displacement and dispossession, such as criminality, evictions and joblessness,
- 3. memory walks: A term used in this thesis to describe routes and paths formed by the memories and experiences attached to place.
- 4. deep space: Neil Smith’s concept of “deep space” describes how the production of space is intensified with ideological and political shifts that impact and organize the everyday. Essentially, deep space allows for the metaphorical and material to be inseparable yet remain distinct at the same time through understanding space from multiple contexts and scales simultaneously.
- 5. urban renewal: a process to achieve the clearance of *blight* and *slum* areas so that they can be built for new uses. *also known as negro removal*
- 6. demolish: to tear down, raze; to break to pieces; to do away with, destroy; to strip of any pretense of merit or credence.
- 7. logic: reasoning conducted according to strict principles of validity; a system or set of principles that controls and arrangement of elements to perform a specific task.
- 8. creative destruction: an economic mechanism that is understood as an incessant process of innovation where the production of new objects, buildings, or concepts are in order to replace outdated ones.
- 9. culture of clearance: based on the reading of Jane Rendell’s “Gender Space Architecture,” it is understood as an ideology formed through the acceleration of the bulldozer after World War 2 that normalized the practice of large-scale rapid destruction.
- 10. demolition logic: this thesis uses the term demolition logic to describe logics and systems that reach beyond the origins and rise of urban clearance in the 1950s, that are still greatly informing the decision making behind what gets demolished. ex: colonialism, capitalism, the construction of racial categories

- 11. apparatus: as defined by Giorgio Agamben as “anything that has the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control or secure, the gestures, behaviors, opinions of discourses of living beings.”
- 12. narrative cycles: a term used in this thesis to describe the links between the language and narratives described as tied exclusively tied to historically and geographically specific events.
- 13. emptiness: an absence of something understood in this thesis as the act of being imagined as containing nothing or not existing. Often used by forces of power to mentally declare certain places, people and events as historically absent from space and time (often resulting in physical or verbal subjugation – see decline).
- 14. *Related words and phrases:* Absented present; empty slate; blank page; white paper; ideal; utopia
- 15. absented presence: is a term, referenced by several Black and Black feminist scholars, including but not limited to: Rinaldo Walcott, Katherine McKittrick, M. NourbeSe Philip and Sylvia Wynter, that describes the contradictory condition of a constant deletion, disregard and dislocation of Black study and Black people.
- 16. empty land myth: a colonial myth established by European colonizers describing Indigenous land as empty and uninhabited in order to justify its violent dispossession and occupation.
- 17. tabula rasa: in reference to the “modern” interpretation of the theory, based on John Locke’s “Essay Concerning Human Understanding,” tabula rasa refers to the conceptualization of land as a blank slate.
- 18. Terra Nullis: Latin term meaning “land belonging to no one”; used as a legal justification to categorize land as unoccupied or uninhabited for legal purposes justifying colonial occupation without treaty or payment.
- 19. Doctrine of Discovery: originating in the 1400s and established by formal statements from the Pope (Papal Bulls), the Doctrine of Discovery was used to establish legal spiritual and moral justification for the colonial dispossession and seizure of sovereign Indigenous lands.
- 20. Garden City: an urban planning movement initiated in 1898 by Ebenezer Howard as a response to the overcrowded city. This design scheme is defined as a self-contained community surrounded by green belts that contain proportionate sections designated for residential, industrial and agricultural use.
- 21. decline: a process of gradually becoming less than or worse over time, understood in this thesis in the context of dehumanizing a place or people to invalidate their agency to take up space.

22. racial assemblages: Alexander Weheliye’s theory that describes race as a socio-political process.
23. Revitalization: the process of refilling something with “new life”; used to describe initiatives aimed at “upgrading” urban sites
24. top down: a hierarchical planning approach that involves high-level state officials being responsible for all decision making.
25. progress: forward or onward movement toward a destination, the idea that future holds better
26. plot holes: used in this thesis as an opportunity to change.
27. surprise: a concept used by Katherine McKittrick, described as an unexpected or astonishing event, circumstance, person or thing that is contrary to the realm of possibility within the dominant narrative.
28. episodic memory: refers to a type of long-term memory that describes the recollection of specific events, situations and experiences.
29. procedural memory: refers to a type of long-term memory that contains stored information on how to perform certain procedures where the person has no direct conscious awareness of the process; usually developed through repetitive action.
30. mnemonic ecology: based on a reading of Steve Goodman and Parisi Luciana’s Machines of Memory, it is understood as a hidden sphere of memories prosthetically attached and embodied in nonhuman technical networks.
31. critical fabulations: a term coined by Saidiya Hartman, referring to a style of creative semi-nonfiction that uses hard research and scattered facts to bring forward the suppressed voices of the past to the surface of history.
32. digital garden: a means through which to present and view information as an interconnected web of ideas that can be understood through several different trajectories.

Appendix A:
Catalogue of Demolished Places

THE WARD

REGENTS PARK

ST JAMESTOWN

MOSS PARK

AFRICVILLE

HOGANS ALLY

LITTLE BURGUNDY

HERRONGATE

ALEXANDRA PARK

PRUITT IGOE

PARADISE VALLEY

BLACK BOTTOM

ROBERT TAYLOR HOMES

THE CENTRY EXPRESSWAY

SENECA VILLAGE

ASWAN DAM

SOPHIATOWN

TAHATALI DAM

TAHATALI DAM

BLACK BOTTOM DETROIT, MICHIGAN

Black Bottom was a predominantly black neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan demolished for redevelopment in the early 1960s and replaced with the Lafayette Park. It was located on Detroit's Near East Side and was bounded by Gratiot Avenue, Brush Street, Vernor Highway, and the Grand Trunk railroad tracks. Its main commercial strips were on Hastings and St. Antoine streets.

An adjacent north-bordering neighborhood was known as Paradise Valley. The two were not, however, considered to be the same neighborhood. Historically, this area was the source of the River Savoyard, which was buried as a sewer in 1827. Its "bottom" and rich marsh soils are the source of the name "Black Bottom."

Hastings Street, which ran north-south through Black Bottom, had been a center of Eastern European Jewish settlement before World War I, but by the 1950s, migration transformed the strip into one of the city's major African-American communities of black-owned business, social institutions and night clubs. It became nationally famous for its music scene: major blues singers, big bands, and jazz artists—such as Duke Ellington, Billy Eckstine, Pearl Bailey, Ella Fitzgerald, and Count Basie—regularly performed in the bars and clubs of Paradise Valley entertainment district. It is also where Aretha Franklin's father, the Reverend C. L. Franklin first opened his New Bethel Baptist Church on Hastings Street.

SOPHIATOWN, JOHANNESBURG SOUTH AFRICA

Sophiatown was the Victorian-era brainchild of a real estate investor who in 1897 bought 237 acres of land near Johannesburg, laid out a few tidy streets, and named them after his children and wife. After the city located a sewage disposal plant nearby, his white homebuyers fled, and black residents found an opportunity denied them elsewhere: property ownership.

By the 1950s, Sophiatown was the "Chicago of South Africa", filled with shebeens (speakeasies), incubating musicians and artists. It was a focal point of activity for the African National Congress and a young Nelson Mandela, and a hub of anti-apartheid activism. In Sophiatown Speaks, the poet and former resident Don Mattera declared: "Sophiatown was the antithesis of what they wanted for this country. Sophiatown had the black people – meaning Coloured, Indians, Blacks of all tribes – and the whites living together."

ROBERT TAYLOR HOMES CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Robert Taylor worked to integrate public housing projects into mixed race and mixed income neighborhoods to prevent racial segregation of the housing projects and avoiding a disadvantage for African Americans if the projects were built in slums. Taylor had a grand vision that would have worked; however, in 1950 Taylor was not listened to as a planning began to build public housing for African Americans in black ghettos causing Taylor to resign from his position in 1950, he later died in 1957.

Two years after Taylor's death the new massive projects began construction in his name which is a major slap in the face for Robert Taylor's name, now they used his name to make it look like these would be Robert Taylor approved projects, a great way to cover up a segregated housing plan, Robert Taylor was likely turning over in his grave.

These massive projects took until 1962 to complete because of their massive size; however, they were constructed poorly with cheap material which made this an ever bigger disaster waiting to happen.

LITTLE BURGUNDY MONTREAL, QUEBEC

The Slavery Abolition Act, which came into effect in 1834, abolished slavery throughout the British Empire, including British North America (see also Confederation; Black Loyalists in British North America). The Act made enslavement officially illegal in every province (see Black Enslavement in Canada). In Montreal, Blacks continued to hold low-paid and low-status positions such as cleaners, shoeshiners, domestic workers, busboys and water boys. A few prospered while running their own businesses, and tradesmen often found their skills in demand. Some Blacks were also employed on the steamboats and in canal building. But the transportation of goods and people over water soon gave way to the lure of the railways (see Railway History).

The emergence of an English-speaking, working-class Black community in Little Burgundy is directly linked to the history of Canadian railways, specifically the Montréal & Lachine Railroad which later became the Grand Trunk Railroad and, eventually, the Canadian National Railway. While the railway industry generated enormous wealth for some people, much of its success relied on low-wage Black labour.

HOGANS ALLY VANCOUVER, BC

The first Black immigrants (of African Descent) arrived in British Columbia from California in 1858. They settled in Victoria and Salt Spring Island, but began migrating to Vancouver in the early 1900s, making their homes in Strathcona, an east side, working-class neighborhood that was the original home to Vancouver's Italian community, as well as the southern edge of Chinatown. They were joined by Black homesteaders from Alberta, who originally came from Oklahoma, and by Black railroad porters worked at the Great Northern Railway nearby. Housing discrimination in other parts of Vancouver also concentrated the city's Black population in this area.

Black cultural institutions the neighbourhood was known for included "chicken house" restaurants, which often doubled as speakeasies — best known was Vie's Chicken and Steak house — as well as the African Methodist Episcopal Fountain Chapel (1922-1950s) and the residential quarters of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. At its height in the 1940s, the Black population in Strathcona numbered approximately 800.

SENECA VILLAGE NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

Before Central Park was created, the landscape along what is now the Park's perimeter from West 82nd to West 89th Street was the site of Seneca Village, a community of predominantly African-Americans, many of whom owned property. By 1855, the village consisted of approximately 225 residents, made up of roughly two-thirds African-Americans, one-third Irish immigrants, and a small number of individuals of German descent. One of few African-American enclaves at the time, Seneca Village allowed residents to live away from the more built-up sections of downtown Manhattan and escape the unhealthy conditions and racism they faced there.

Seneca Village began in 1825, when landowners in the area, John and Elizabeth Whitehead, subdivided their land and sold it as 200 lots. Andrew Williams, a 25-year-old African-American shoeshiner, bought the first three lots for \$125. Epiphany Davis, a store clerk, bought 12 lots for \$578, and the AME Zion Church purchased another six lots. From there a community was born. From 1825 to 1832, the Whiteheads sold about half of their land parcels to other African-Americans. By the early 1830s, there were approxi-

AFRICVILLE
HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

Africville, a small, yet vibrant, Black community in Halifax, NS, is an important example of how anti-Black racism was perpetuated by environmental policies. Despite paying municipal taxes, the community was deprived of basic services such as access to clean water, sewage, and waste management. Africville's proximity to the development of an infectious disease hospital, a prison and a garbage dump, over time, added to deplorable living conditions imposed by the City.

The residents, after 120 years of resilience, were subject to a forced and dispersed relocation. Often overnight, over the span of a number of years, residents had their personal items transported in garbage trucks and their homes demolished.

This forced relocation, after years of marginalization by the City of Halifax, impacted the community by displacing residents both from their homes and their place of work, therefore exacerbating their economic insecurity.

REGENT PARK
TORONTO, ONTARIO

A 69-acre housing project known for bedbugs and crime, Regent Park became especially notorious in 2005, when a member of the Point Blank Souljahs gang – an offshoot of the Regent Park Crew – shot dead a 15-year-old bystander near the Eaton Centre, the biggest mall in the downtown core. The killing shocked Toronto; several years later, in 2012, fighting between the gang's descendants, the Sic Thugz, led to another weekend shootout.

Visit now, however, and the area is unrecognisable: a \$1bn revitalisation project has transformed it into a mix of subsidised housing, condominium apartments, retail shops and community amenities. Paintbox itself, a certified social enterprise, trains and employs local people who face barriers to employment, many of whom live at or below the poverty line.

"It took us five years to refine the model," says Chris Klugman from Paintbox Bistro. "Now we have about half our staff who fit our mission, working alongside experienced professionals attracted to Paintbox because they share our social conscience."

PARADISE VALLEY DETROIT, MICHIGAN

Paradise Valley was the business district and entertainment center of a densely-populated African-American residential area in Detroit -- known as Black Bottom -- from the 1920's through the 1950's.

During the 1920's, the black population in Detroit swelled from 41,000 to 120,000 as new migrants from the South arrived daily to seek employment in the automobile industry. The cramped near east side neighborhood of Black Bottom was one of the very few areas blacks were allowed to reside. The residents' daily needs were amply met by more than 300 black-owned businesses in Paradise Valley, ranging from drugstores, beauty salons and restaurants to places of leisure such as nightclubs, bowling alleys with bars, theaters and mini-golf courses.

Many neighborhoods in Detroit were displaced by the building of freeways and the projects of urban renewal, but Paradise Valley suffered the largest losses. Although it was difficult for displaced blacks to find new housing, many purchased property in the old Jewish neighborhood along Twelfth Street. Many of the former residents kept pictures of the old neighborhood and these have helped keep the memory alive of the once vibrant Paradise Valley community.

THE WARD TORONTO, ONTARIO

If you were poor and a new arrival to Toronto in the early 18 and 1900s there was a good chance you'd end up living somewhere in The Ward, a notorious, dense slum bounded by Queen, College, Yonge and University.

For decades, the area officially known as St. John's Ward was home to some of the city's poorest people and large parts of its Irish, Chinese, eastern European and African population. It was at various times Toronto's Chinatown, Little Italy, and the nexus of Jewish life, but conditions were universally bleak for all.

Now known as the Discovery District for its pioneering doctors, The Ward has completely vanished, consumed by office towers, hotels and the area surrounding City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square. What was once one of Toronto's poorest neighborhoods, rife with disease, is now a centre of bureaucracy and healthcare.

CABRINI-GREEN CHICAGO, ILLINOIOS

Cabrini-Green Homes, which encompassed the Frances Cabrini Rowhouses, Frances Cabrini Extensions, and William Green Homes, was a Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) public housing project located on the Near North Side of Chicago, Illinois. The Francis Cabrini Rowhouses and Extensions were located south of Division Street bordered by Larrabee Street to the west, Orleans Street to the east, and Chicago Avenue to the south, while the William Green Homes sat immediately to the northwest.[2]

At its peak, Cabrini-Green was home to 15,000 people,[3] mostly living in mid- and high-rise apartment buildings, totaling 3,607 units. Over the years, crime and neglect created hostile living conditions for many residents, and "Cabrini-Green" became a metonym for the problems associated with public housing in the United States. Beginning in 1995, CHA began tearing down the mostly dilapidated, mid- and high-rise buildings, with the last high-rise being demolished in March 2011.[4] Today, only the original, two-story row-houses remain.

Appendix B: Holes Drawing Series

Regents Park

St Jamestown

The Ward

Moss Park

Appendix C:
Overlay Drawings

Regent Park

Moss Park

St. Jamestown

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Appendix E:
Mind Maps

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