BACK SPACE:

exploring residual territories and landscapes of deletion

a Major Research Project
Sam Carter-Shamai

Aknowledgements

This is for old friends and new colleagues, for all of you who motivate, challange and inspire me. For all of us who get lost, get in trouble, and get through it, we get through it together.

Thanks to my supervisor Nina Marie Lister
I wouldnt have been able to do this without your patience support and encouragement

Thanks to my second reader, Brigitte Shim. I am gratful for your insight, direction, feedback and inspiration.

Special thanks to my mother and father for helping me stay on track even when my head was in the clouds.

To Olivia for sharing your life and love with me.

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Back Space:
An Exploration of Residual Territories
and Landscapes of Deletion

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BA Concordia University, 2012

A Major Research Project
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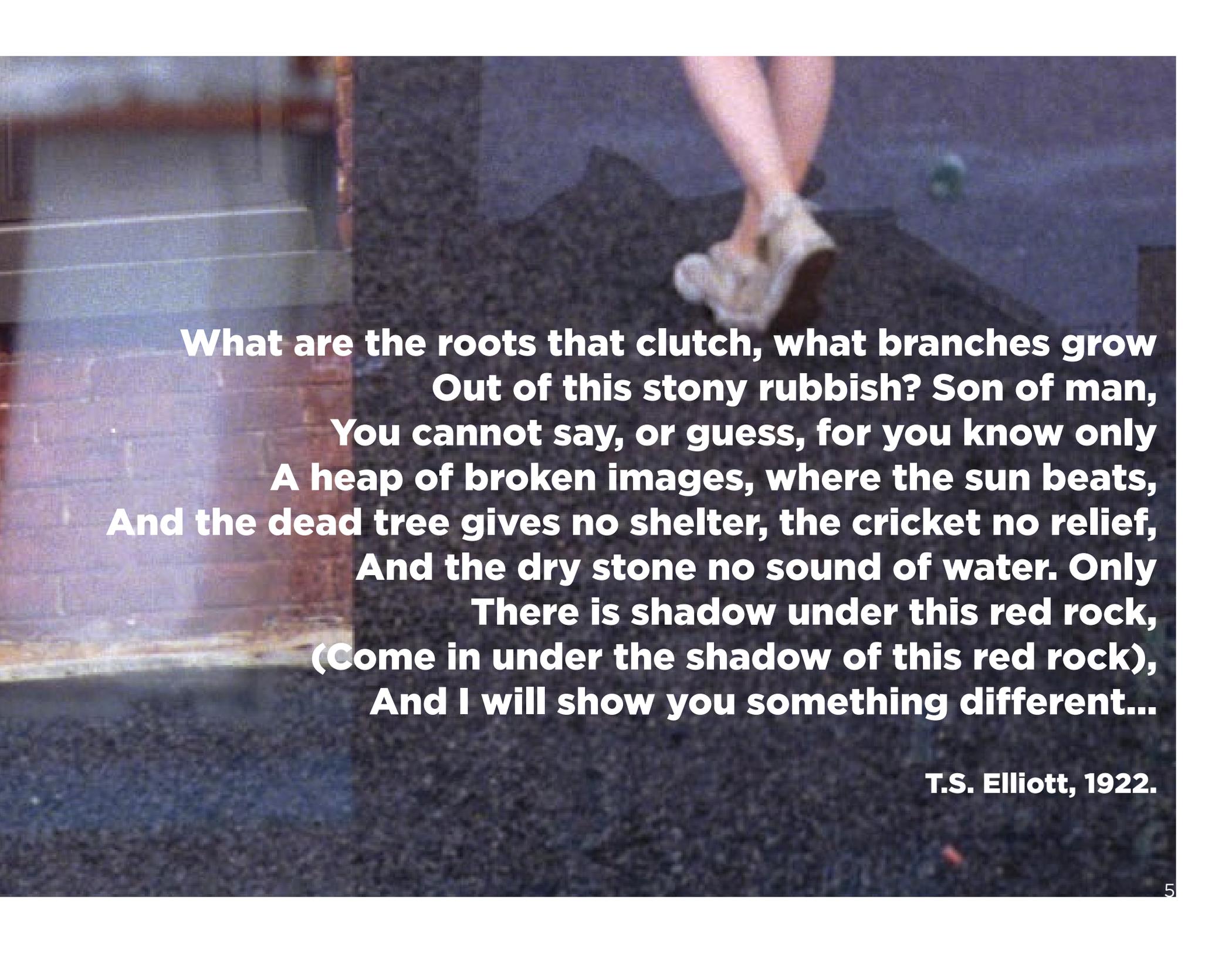
What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different...

T.S. Elliott, 1922.

Introduction

This research is about the informal uses of small public spaces in the city: the laneways, residual spaces and connective tissues of neighbourhoods. They are undergoing rapid change and transition. By drawing attention to the unintentional by-products of periods of growth and the residual adaptations of periods of decline, I will identify unique qualities and characteristics of transformation, gentrification and ephemeral cultural practices of city centres and downtown neighbourhoods over the last half century.

Since the late 1970s planning theorists and practitioners have been advocating for the merits of mixed use and urban consolidation rather than sprawl (Myers 1978). While many point to the refocus from the suburbs to the centre (Wyatt 2012), I will argue that today's urbanism is driven by a formulaic development industry which lacks critical imagination and stifles creativity (Sennett, 2006). Contemporary urban planning is in a period of transition. Planners, designers and architects have unprecedented capacity to employ the tools at their disposal to rapidly effect change. Nonetheless, a process of rigidity and sanitization undermines critical understandings of the function of the city and particularly the public spaces and public life of the city. Studies such as Dr. Hulchanski's Three Cities Within Toronto (2010) reveal, whether deliberate or not, an insidious polarization which is the result of practices of city building since the mid 20th century.

With a renewed focus on the core of cities comes an opportunity to revisit the trajectory of critical interpretations of civic functions and the urban condition. This has significant implications for how the contemporary planning profession conceives of its role in cases of both growth and decline. New and innovative opportunities arise out of the adverse conditions and constraints of rapidly shifting physical and social contexts, only if we are able to adapt and respond creatively to new circumstances. In Germany, the Urban Catalyst Collective, (Oswalt, Overmeyer and Misselwitz, 2014) have been expounding the power of radical planning interventions such as temporary use since the late 1990s.

Today, business developers, municipalities and property owners alike have woken up to the fact that the sustainable and successful development of urban life cannot be achieved without a consideration of contextual aspects.
Urban Catalyst (2014) p.5

Cities present society great opportunities for creative action and progress through collective efforts. In navigating the modern metropolis, complex identities are informed by the exercise of democratic political discourse (Arendt 1959) and the simultaneous experience of anonymity and isolation amongst the masses (Benjamin 1985). Great cities excel through the balancing of this dichotomy between individual and collective goals.

Fundamental to the realization of these most human aspirations, personal and collective expression, is the necessity of access to public space as a venue for mediation, meditation and exploration. The city is by nature a space of extremes and dichotomies and the public realm is where we can confront what is outside of our experience and engage in the raw politics of coexistence. Throughout the modern era, promises of utopian technocratic solutions have been pursued in stark contrast to the very qualities that offer the promise and potential of the city: agency, density, and diversity. After World War II, the world was rightfully horrified by the destruction wrought by the powers of our technological capacities. In Europe, the core of many cities had been severely damaged by acts of war. In North America, the pursuit of sprawl and the post-war suburban dream similarly eviscerated the hearts of many once great cities. The past sixty years have seen various attempts at rebuilding, renewal and reinvention.

Today it would seem that what is old is new again. Through the popularity of New Urbanist principles and Neo Traditional design aesthetics we have come recognize the value and importance of downtowns. In a time when the ubiquity of telecommunications technology and personal devices allow us to communicate across vast territories, geographic distance may be nullified. Proximity, personal interaction, opportunity and culture assume a more prominent role against this backdrop (Florida, 2012).

These forces play out differently from one city to another. For this paper, I will examine the transformations on the edges of the conventional cityscape: laneways, vacant lots and other residual territories in Toronto, Detroit and Berlin. These areas outside traditional landscapes of the city offer alternative possibilities and are therefore of particular interest, as they represent the connective links between what is and what could be. As we will see, these areas, which I will refer to as *Back Space*, can be found throughout the hearts of major urban centres, at the edges of former industrial districts, in the underused plazas of office parks or in the alleys behind bustling commercial districts. These are the areas where conventional identities are stretched to their limits and reconstituted through social, political and economic upheaval. It is precisely the uncertainty of these urban vacancies that presents the opportunity for critical reflection. Back Space can act as a foil to the monument of the city itself, an alternative sphere of discovery, experimentation and cultural re-invention in the heart of the metropolis (Sola-Morales, 2014).

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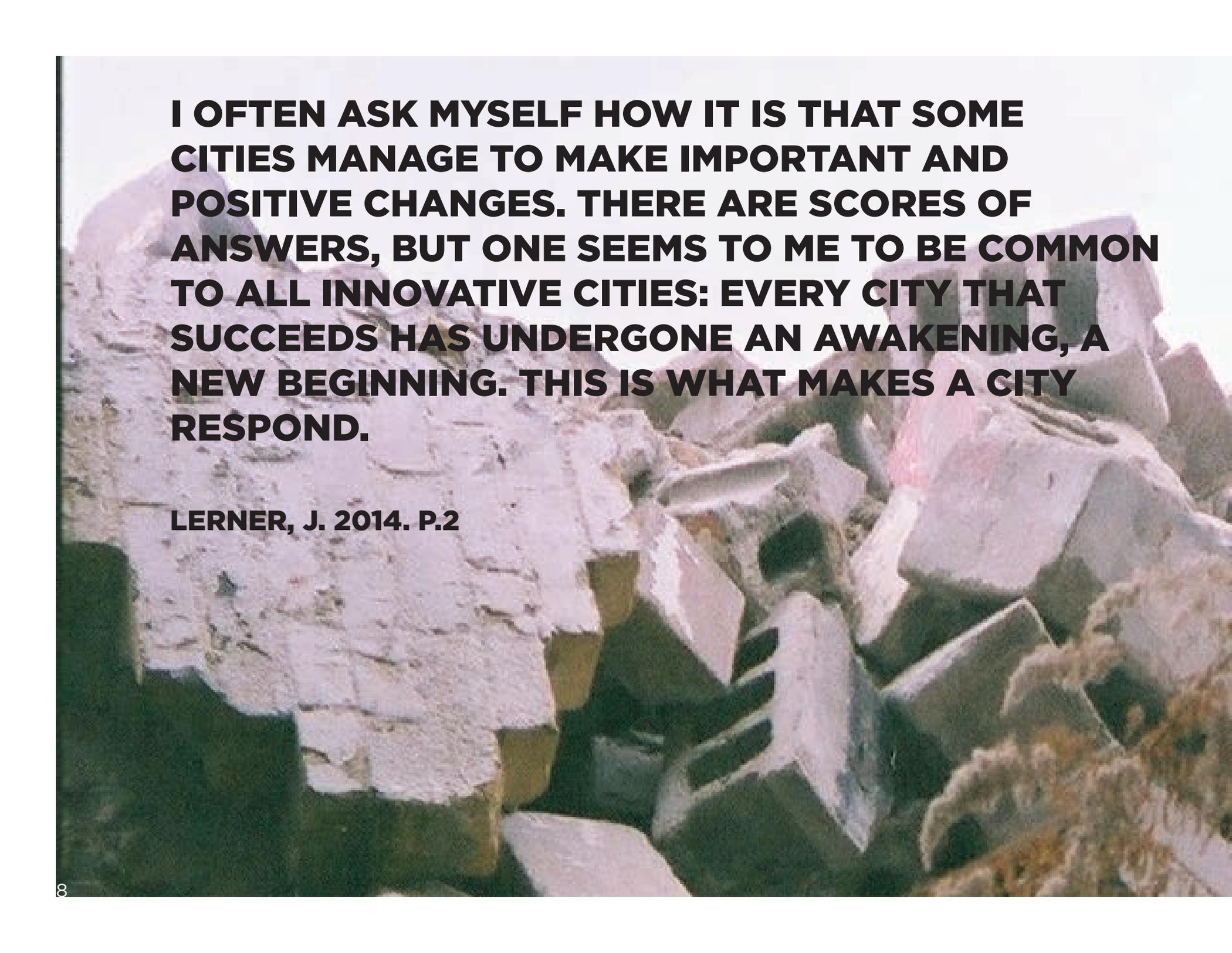
I OFTEN ASK MYSELF HOW IT IS THAT SOME CITIES MANAGE TO MAKE IMPORTANT AND POSITIVE CHANGES. THERE ARE SCORES OF ANSWERS, BUT ONE SEEMS TO ME TO BE COMMON TO ALL INNOVATIVE CITIES: EVERY CITY THAT SUCCEEDS HAS UNDERGONE AN AWAKENING, A NEW BEGINNING. THIS IS WHAT MAKES A CITY RESPOND.

LERNER, J. 2014. P.2

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Methods

This paper will proceed in three sections with a focus on morphological examinations of Berlin, Toronto and Detroit. Following a brief introduction to the theories and concepts upon which this research is grounded, morphologic content analysis will provide an overview of observed patterns of use and behaviour, as well as the social and cultural contexts, represented in the physical form of these three cities over the course of the late 20th century. This paper is informed by several methodological approaches: secondary source review and non-reactive observation as described in W. Lawrence Neuman's Basics of Social Research (2007), modern interpretation of morphologic analysis rooted in Caniggia and Conzen's schools of morphologic analysis (Levy 1999), and design research. (Farrell, Moreno and Steadman, Stevens and Hebbert, 2014. Schon, in Clark and Broody, 2009. Mariani and Barron, 2014).

The street becomes a dwelling for the flaneur; he is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls. To him the shiny, enamelled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafes are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done.
　　　　Benjamin, (1985) p. 37

In terms of source materials, this research derives much of its scholarly authority from non-participatory site observation, rigorous analysis of archival maps and review of planning documents which reflect current priorities of social, economic and political regimes. However, there is another complementary set of skills and methods that underscore this research, foremost among which, is the practice of street photography. Having lived in Halifax, Montreal and Toronto through my academic career, I draw on a repertoire of cumulative knowledge and design skills. They undoubtedly influence my creative process and approach towards the investigation of urban issues (Schon, in Clark and Broody. 2009). In the same way that a scientist must be intimately familiar with his or her laboratory, a planner should have a deep and personal connection with their city. When not at work or in classes, I spend my time in the streets wandering, wondering and watching; I thrive in the anonymity afforded by a crowd. There is a certain calm to be found within the hustle of the metropolis, if only one is able to embrace the chaos.

The primary research conducted for this paper is based on non-reactive observation and photography of public spaces (Neuman, 2007). Simple observation however, lacks the nuance that is essential to the tradition of the flaneur (Benjamin, 1985). The literature review grounds these observations in the current state of knowledge (Neuman, 2007) and established theory surrounding concepts of terrain vague and tactical urbanism (Mariani and Barron, 2014; Lyndon, 2012) while morphologic analysis of the built form establishes a connection

ANYONE WHO IS CAPABLE OF BEING BORED IN A CROWD IS A BLOCKHEAD.

I REPEAT: A BLOCKHEAD, AND A CONTEMPTIBLE ONE.

BAUDELAIRE.
in Benjamin,(1985) p. 37

to the evolution of urban landscapes over time (Caniggia and Maffei, 2001, Levey, 1999, Whitehand, 2007). In preparing the diagrams, maps and plans for this project, I have moved through many variants and iterations of these ideas in graphic form. The act of putting pen to paper is fundamental to this learning process.

Morphologic analysis is an informative method for delving into the nuanced patterns of change within a city. Caniggia and Consent are two of the pioneering scholars in the field of morphologic analysis. From Italy and England respectively, they each emphasize a slightly different conceptual interpretation of the evolution of built forms. Caniggia takes a more organic approach and draws attention to the relation between building typologies and the natural and urban contexts. Caniggia provides a fascinating theoretical dialectic between spontaneous and critical consciousness. Spontaneous Consciousness refers to periods of incremental, additive building and construction while critical consciousness refers to large-scale redevelopment periods. Conzen, on the other hand is more focused on the relationships at the block scale and offers the concept of the burgage cycle to refer to the gradual process of development, infill and eventual clearing of structures within the urban fabric (Whitehand, 2007). The fallow period at the end of the burgage cycle creates an opportunity for renewal and adaptation, these are the conditions which produce the residual spaces that are at the core of this research.

The content analysis at the heart of this project relies on a series of contemporary, historical and figure ground maps to examine the periods of the burgage cycle. By reducing the complex patterns of development in the city to figure ground and block allotment diagrams, we are able to concentrate on relationships obscured at other levels of observation.

By comparing the same site over time, changes become apparent and comparisons can be made. One of the limitations of morphologic analysis in the modern, North American context is the relatively short time frame of urban evolution, when compared to the older cities of Europe where this method was first developed. However, in drilling down to a sixty-year time frame, from the late 1940s to present day, we are able to examine the effect of a period of rapid change at a very local, neighbourhood scale. The neighbourhood scope provides insight to the impacts of development and decline. In addition, more focused site-specific highlights will bring the analysis and observations right down to street level. What becomes clear is the ephemeral nature of the elements that create a venue for the routines, habits and mundane events of everyday urbanism of our neighbourhoods and communities. Rather than just drawing attention to the physical qualities of place, the temporal dimension of this research provides insight to the prolonged impacts of power upon a place and the emotional characteristics which imbue space with memory and community. (Wunderlich in Carmona, 2014).

Making a map is a way to hold a domain still for long enough to be able to see the relationships between the various approaches, methods and tools. Maps are good for visualizing relationships, finding dense and empty spots, and spotting opportunities. Maps can be useful for showing complexity and change.

Sanders and Stappers (2012) p.18

As a form of discovery research, the iterative process of analysis, observation and representation of space helps to identify unarticulated or unrecognized gaps and adaptations in the following case studies (Squires in Clark and Broody. 2009). In addition to rigorous secondary source research, and morphologic analysis, this work builds on the culmination of years of self directed urban exploration, photography and people watching in many cities across North America and Europe, including, but not limited to Toronto, Detroit and Berlin. As mentioned previously, this research is unabashedly exploratory. It is a research process in the tradition of a modern day flaneur. Non-reactive observation is an established practice within the academic canon, and is applied to any number of subjects. In contrast, these practices, street photography and the contemplative meanderings of the flaneur, are intrinsically linked to the formation and understanding identity within the city (Sola-Morales, 2015, Benjamin, 1985).
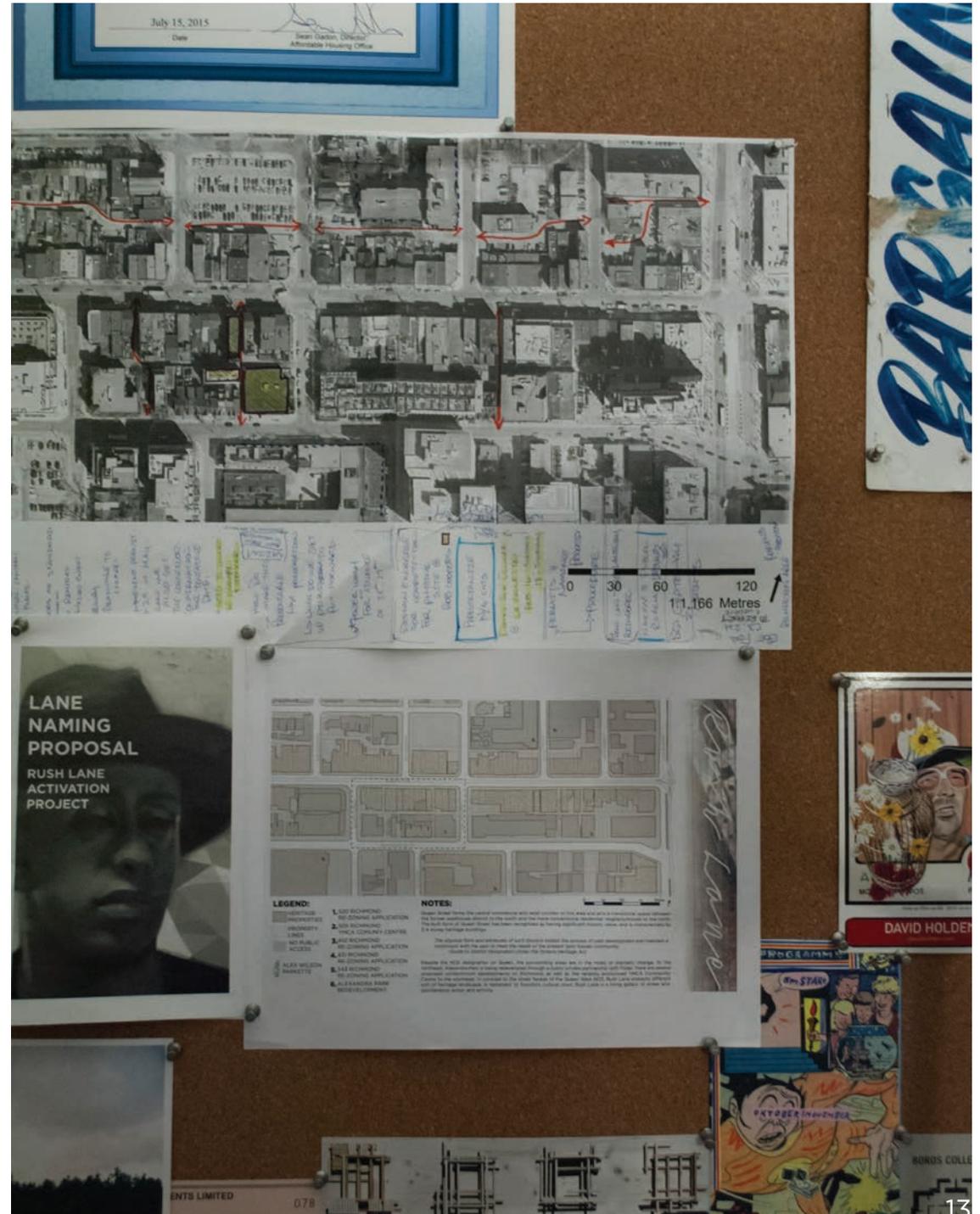
THEY BEGIN TO DEAL IN IDEAS, IN EXCHANGES OF FEELINGS AND DESIRES, IN BRINGING OTHER PEOPLE FROM OTHER DISCIPLINES INTO A SHARED CREATION, ONE SHARED ALSO WITH THE PUBLIC. THE SEPARATIONS BETWEEN ART, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ARCHITECTURE AND EVERYDAY LIFE ARE BEGINNING TO APPEAR AS ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES AND HENCE TO DISINTEGRATE.

BURNS, J. 1972. P.8

In the great cities of North America and Europe, there has been a turn away from the modernist utopian visions of the tower in the park and suburban subdivisions. In mono-functional office park districts, suburbs and former manufacturing regions, struggle to redefine their purpose and seek to incorporate 'urban' features like walkability and integrated public transit. On the other hand, in a city like Toronto, which is already built out (and still growing), vertical communities spring out of old industrial districts in the form of loft style condominiums. The Ontario Growth Plan sets out specific intensification and density goals (Places to Grow 2013). Guided by a prescriptive focus in the traditional growth machine, government, developers and investors are trained on gentrifying neighbourhoods, where profits can be realized despite ever-rising property values. Between these extremes, innovation and adaptation, the true hallmarks of the urban condition are emerging and presenting an other way, something different, something known as the 'informal city'.

The last forty years have seen a dramatic increase in what have come to be called the 'informal city', a term intended to replace the negative connotations of both slums and of a centralized government sponsored urban renewal often known as "slum clearance" with a valorizing frame of reference.
Bergdoll, (in Gadanho, 2015) p. 12

Out of these circumstances, planners are faced with a new set of challenges and opportunities: how to provide amenities and quality of life for those within dense downtowns, where space is at a premium. Conversely the challenge of retaining a sense of place and community in areas experiencing urban decline faces us as well. To tackle the simultaneous challenges of growth and decline is to come to grips with an increasingly nuanced perspective to the tools available to planners. There is an imperative to take up a more flexible and dynamic approach to of assumed hierarchy of urban spaces and a reorientation with regard to the cultural value of public space and the nature of urban identity.

Taking up the mantle of the radical urban tactician rather than that of systems- driven bureaucratic administrators, this will be an optimistic exploration and critique of the gap between urban planning in theory and the urban experience in practice (Crawford in Chase, Crawford & Kaliski 2005). This paper seeks to examine new understandings of the relationship between explicit and residual landscapes, an exploratory journey between the built and unbuilt legacies of the urban condition. Rather than the technocratic dictums of the modern era, this research proposes to highlight opportunities for contemporary planning to embrace the residual spaces, the laneways, small plots and non-traditional development sites that require a non-traditional approach.

This exploratory research is about the informal uses of small public spaces in the city, the laneways, forgotten spaces and connective tissues of neighbourhoods undergoing rapid change and transition. By identifying indicators that speak to the pre-conditions of exclusionary gentrification and the ephemeral practices through which residents to assert claims to the accumulated cultural capital of place.

This paper will shed new light, present new opportunities, and find room for necessary outlets and amenities to support community in rapidly evolving neighbourhoods. To understand the frame within which these non-traditional concepts lie, the following research is grounded in concepts of tactical urbanism (Laydon, 2012), terrain vague (Sola- Morales, 2014), and everyday urbanism (Chase, Craford & Kaliski, 2005) and located in specific areas; the urban thresholds within the city (Stavrides, 2014), the marginal, residual landscapes behind buildings and in alley ways; and underneath the bridges and elevated expressways termed "El Space" by the Design Trust for Public Space (2015). These spaces take different forms across different cities. For the purposes of this paper we will be primarily interested in laneways, marginal spaces, underused and empty spaces in Detroit, Berlin and Toronto. In order to establish a simplification terminology for these myriad typologies, which all carry the common theme of freedom from conventional use, throughout this paper the broad spectrum of informal spaces will be refered to as Back Spaces.
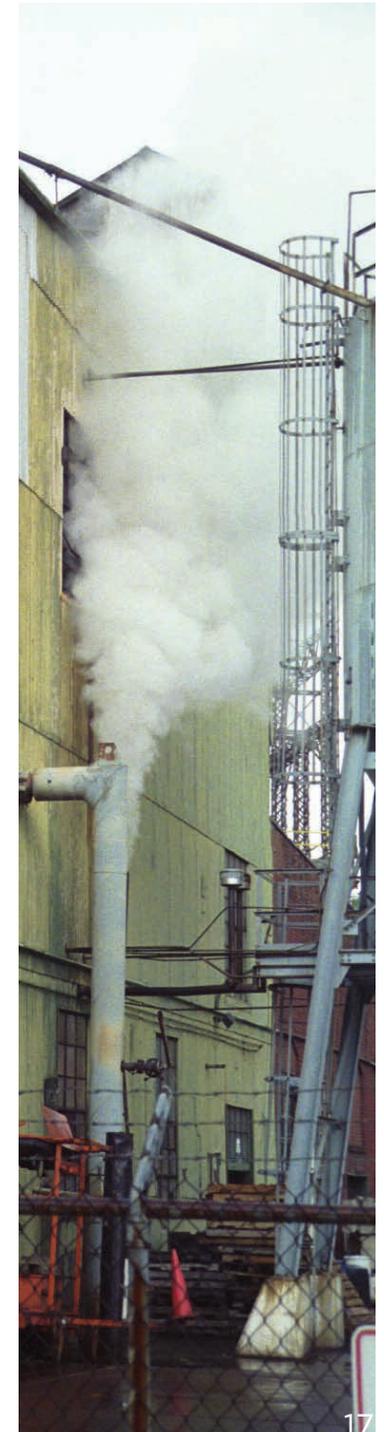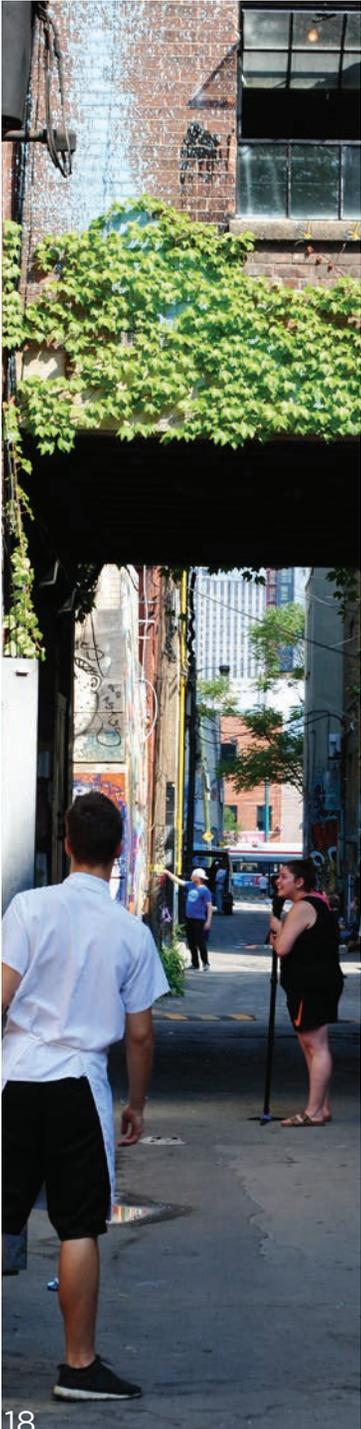
From "El Space" to "Back Space"

Recently the Design Trust for Public Space, in collaboration with the New York Department of Transportation have launched a series of interventions to illuminate the underused potential of the space underneath New York City's many raised transit lines and highways. In a similar vein, this research intends to focus the same lens of tactical use toward laneways and vacant lots. For the purposes of this paper I will refer to these underused territories as Back Space, those areas in our cities that are unseen and ill-defined. These spaces are understood primarily as what they are not. Back Space is the area behind the conventional streetscape frontages, a lane way, a tunnel or an underpass, the forgotten residual elements of development and growth. Back Space can also be the territories formed out of processes of erasure and deletion.

Empty, abandoned space in which a series of occurrences have taken place seems to subjugate the eye of the urban photographer. Such urban space, which I will denote by the French expression terrain vague, assumes the status of fascination, the most solvent sign with which to indicate what cities are and what our experience of them is.
Sola-Morales, (in Mariani/Barron 2014) p.25

Many creative art forms and cultural practices have emerged from our cities draw on these residual Back Spaces. Art forms such as street photography, graffiti art, and even skateboarding all find their place in the city through alternative mechanisms of understanding place and identity. I am interested in these dynamic landscapes because they represent not simply the built form of our cities but also the opportunities, potential and power of the unbuilt. As the antithesis to the majesty of the created city, it is through these areas that creative individuals, the changemakers and innovators in society find the space to define themselves not by what our city is, but rather through these spaces of reflection; in what the city is not. The opportunities for self-discovery are found away from the monolithic structures, symbols and systems of the city that surround us.

Terrain Vague

Ignasi de Sola-Morales describes terrain vague as the residual landscapes which are separate from the city but at the same time fundamental to the formation of urban identity. These unknown and overlooked spaces, provide the counterpart to the monolithic structures of the towers, expressways and storefronts of built city. In both form and function, terrain vague represents the voids within the built environment; the gaps, which in the absence of prescribed purpose, offer unbridled opportunity for interpretation, a central concept to this research. Within this term there are two ideas that jostle, contrast and complement each other's meanings. First, there is terrain, meaning land or territory; and vague, which in the most literal sense means non-descript, uncertain or unclear. Together this suggests an uncertain landscape. On another level, drawing on the French word for wave, vague suggests cyclical motion, progress and change (Sola-Morales, 2014). Often overlooked in conventional planning as unproductive, urban wastelands, it is imperative that these spaces become more familiar to the planners. A city without Back Space is a rigid place of social, political and even architectural conformity (Arendt, 1998). Devoid of opportunities to engage with the unknown and confront difference, innovation (be it cultural, social or economic) may be confounded under the tyranny of the status quo. As the antithesis to the hegemony of capital and the private city, terrain vague is the most radical fringe of the public realm.

Unincorporated Margins, interior Islands void of activity, oversights, these areas are simply uninhabited, un safe, un productive. In short, they are foreign to the urban system, mentally exterior in the physical interior of the city, its negative image, as much a critique as a possible alternative.
Sola-Morales (in Mariani/Barron 2014) p.26
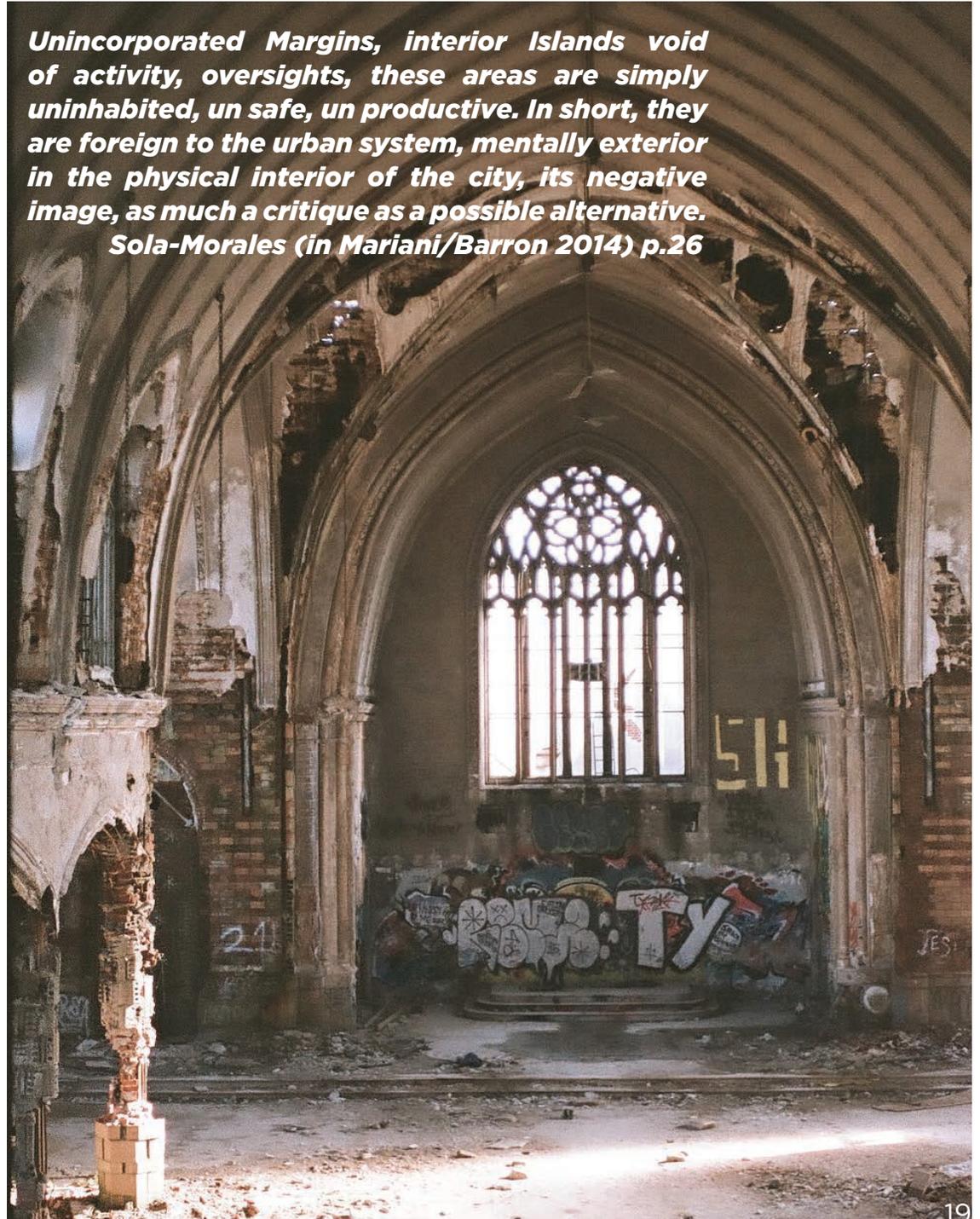
Tactical Urbanism and Temporary Use

Experimental, temporary and improvised, tactical urbanism is in direct contrast to the structural mechanisms of conventional planning and development exercises. By implementing pilot projects, governments, companies and grassroots organizations are able to try out ideas without committing to permanent infrastructure. Tactical interventions are flexible and adaptive, and are increasingly popular as a way to test radical ideas at low cost and risk.

Tactical Urbanism, a term that covers many of these practices, is a highly pragmatic movement that abandons all holistic and comprehensive planning as either failed in its historical record or doomed by the worldwide ascent of neoliberal economy and politics.
        Bergdoll, (2015) p. 12

Temporary uses and tactical interventions are not just experiments or radical intrusions. They are being used across the globe as a way to offer suggestions to the public that can then be adapted, shaped and informed by future users. Employed by all manner of urban actors, from local governments to lifestyle brands and restaurants, temporary uses are a way to directly convey the experience of a desired policy, recommendation, or product. Furthermore, tactical interventions create a living laboratory to draw on local expertise, by encouraging the public to engage with an experience and provide feedback, before a large capital investment is made.

Planners have long recognized that cities are inherently complex and dynamic organisms (Jacobs, 1969, Sassen, 2015) yet master plans treat this diversity with heavy-handed certainty, as if the city will one day become finished. That is at best a fantasy and at worst a delusion. So much of the focus of city planners is on permanence and grandeur. However, tactical uses can be a powerful means of instigating change (Lyndon, 2012). They offer the necessary malleability to respond to the diversity of the contemporary metropolis (Sassen 2015). In many cases, tactical actions are initially proposed as temporary pilot projects. Often these prove so successful that they are adapted and incorporated into future uses and developments (Urban Catalyst 2014).

In New York, The Design Trust for Public Space has had tremendous success implementing tactical interventions throughout the city, by following their Pop Up > Pilot > Permanent framework (DTPS, 2015). By starting with a low cost, temporary prototype, the Design Trust is able to test ideas and solicit user feedback while also providing a service. In 2003 a pilot project to improve the pedestrian experience in Times Square was proposed. By 2009 Broadway Ave was fully pedestrianized and temporary tables and chairs were installed. The intervention has been so successful that in 2011 the Department of Transportation selected the architecture firm Snohetta to transform Times Square into a pedestrian area. In three phases over 5 years the proposal will widen the sidewalks, and install integrated electricity connections for new lighting and street furniture.

Everyday Urbanism

Fundamental to this research is on-the-ground, in the streets observation. Rather than an exclusive reliance on the armchair planners' repertoire of theory and professional knowledge, the everyday urbanist gives deference to the mundane and vernacular experiences of the everyday and the ordinary. The important feature this approach is that while informed by the literature and technical expertise it is not limited by that knowledge set; value is also given to the pedestrian, non-academic perspective. This means balancing academic theories of how the city should work with the lived experience of how the city actually works. Ironically this approach is itself rooted in the writings of urban theorists like Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, who endeavored to bridge the gap between theory and practice by emphasizing the vital importance of the seemingly trivial activities of everyday life (Crawford 2008). In contrast to top down planning perspectives, everyday urbanism is an inclusive practice premised on the notion that regular people can provide insight to the patterns of use and activity that imbue spaces with life and culture. The implications of everyday urbanism on design and policy are to establish horizontal and collaborative mechanisms, enriching both institutional knowledge and vernacular understandings of place.

Everyday space stands in contrast to the carefully planned, officially designated, and often underused public spaces that can be found in most American cities. These monumental spaces only punctuate the larger and more diffuse landscape of everyday life, which tends to be banal and repetitive, everywhere and nowhere, obvious yet invisible.
Crawford (2008) p.6
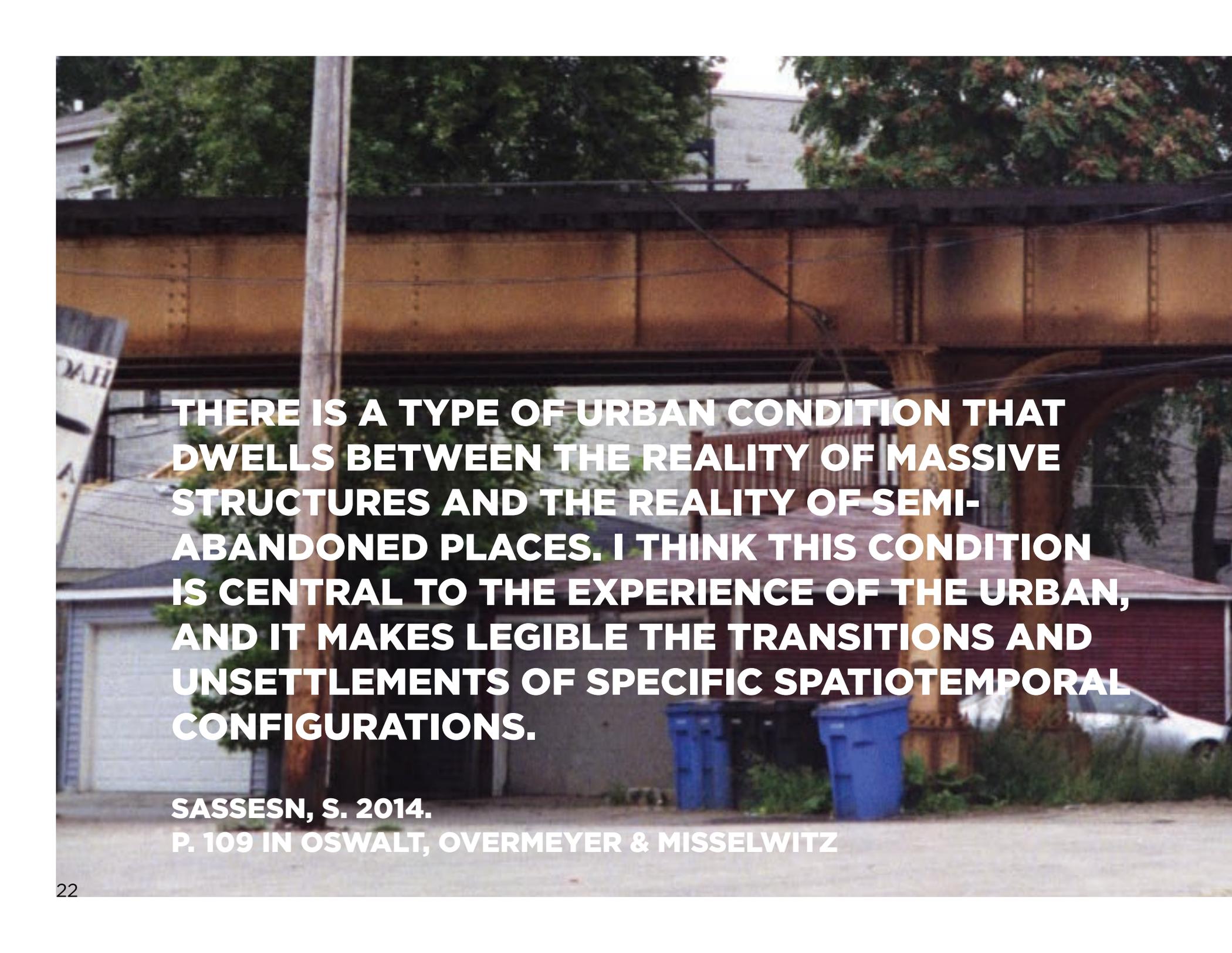
THERE IS A TYPE OF URBAN CONDITION THAT DWELLS BETWEEN THE REALITY OF MASSIVE STRUCTURES AND THE REALITY OF SEMI-ABANDONED PLACES. I THINK THIS CONDITION IS CENTRAL TO THE EXPERIENCE OF THE URBAN, AND IT MAKES LEGIBLE THE TRANSITIONS AND UNSETTLEMENTS OF SPECIFIC SPATIOTEMPORAL CONFIGURATIONS.

SASSESN, S. 2014.
P. 109 IN OSWALT, OVERMEYER & MISSELWITZ

Morphologic Content Analysis

The remainder of this paper will focus on three case studies for content analysis: Toronto Berlin and Detroit. While these cities are certainly quite diverse, the common theme of the use of void spaces or the potential of the Back Space creates an interesting comparison. Through an examination of the way in which social, economic and political forces, manifest with the Back Space, I will investigate how it is that the practices of development, planning, architecture and even urban identity, are formed in relation to residual and unconventional landscapes. I will try to draw attention to the growing need to recognize the potential of unused spaces under, beneath and behind the conventional cityscape.

Berlin represents a city, which has undergone cycle of growth, decline and re-invention. Toronto is a young city, in its proverbial adolescence and growing very rapidly. Detroit has experienced periods of both dramatic growth and, more recently, prolonged decline. The focus of the analysis of Detroit is on its emerging renaissance and resurgence. The real opportunity, in the comparison of these examples, is that we have cities of varying ages that represent various stages in their development. Within each city, site-specific study sites will be presented in context to represent a spectrum of conditions and circumstances.

A successful neighborhood is a place that keeps sufficiently abreast of its problems so it is not destroyed by them. An unsuccessful neighborhood is a place that is overwhelmed by its defects and problems and is progressively more helpless before them.
    Jacobs, (1992) p. 112

Beyond the conventional streets and frontages of our cities lie spaces with hidden potential to foster the conditions to successfully accommodate the challenges of growth and decline. Through morphologic analysis, I will examine the evolution of the respective built forms of these cities over the last 60 years, roughly from the modern mid-century onwards. I will look at political, economic and social forces as they have affected the built form of these cities through periods of rapid transportation. All three examples have been subject to dramatic change in their respective urban fabrics. However, more significant for this research is the influence of these contextual forces on the patterns of the unbuilt landscape. The end focus of this paper is twofold: to shed light on the potential offered in Back Spaces and to examine informal planning interventions.

Berlin is the baseline by which we measure the effective use of residual landscapes can in creating an identity and defining a sense of place. Toronto and Detroit on the other hand offer a much different perspective. First is their context within North America. They are both significantly younger cities, and are therefore more influenced by auto-centric development

patterns. Furthermore, the bombing campaigns and the division of Berlin after World War II haveprofoundly impacted the patterns of development and the built form. Berlin is one of the most unique and distinctive cities in the world for these reasons, and it's response and approach to reconstruction after re-unification will be the focus of the section on Berlin.

To establish a transition in contexts between the Europe and North America, there will be an examination of London, Melbourne and Toronto to illustrate the export of English allotment systems throughout the colonies. Beyond their geographic context as midwestern cities on the shores of the great lakes, it would be unfair, and inaccurate, to say that Toronto and Detroit are very similar cities. These are two cities that have followed their own distinct trajectories and patterns of growth. The period of analysis was chosen to capture several key events, picking up at the end of WW2, the Detroit Race Riots of 1967, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the practice of careful renewal and finally the prolonged condominium construction boom in Toronto. These events have had a profound influence on their respective cities. They have shaped unique responses and approaches to engaging with temporary uses.

The following three morphologic case studies will provide a glimpse of unique perspectives and circumstances, centred around a particular theme. Berlin: careful urbanism/ critical reconstruction. Toronto: Making the most of the creative city. Detroit: Collaboration: opportunity

out of adversity. The morphological analysis will provide the history and context. A comparative analysis of figure-ground diagrams will reveal the trends and patterns of the built and unbuilt forms. Linking the three case studies, Toronto, Detroit and Berlin is an underlying common thread of the deconstruction and a subversion of the conventional progress models to make way for new structures under the paradigm of temporary use and informal practice.

This tension between the enduring and the ephemeral is one of the paradoxes of city building and of the urban experience. So much of what our discipline strives towards is monumental and seemingly quite permanent. However, without consistent use, occupations and evolution, all our efforts are temporary. Currently when municipalities are faced with growth and development, proactive planning takes a back seat to more reactive regulatory functions.   To get beyond the practice of development control and engage with forward thinking city planning, we must, as a profession, recognize the transient reality of the patterns of use that underscore and give purpose to the neighbourhoods, cities and regions that we supposedly plan for. This is especially true when we consider what it means to work in the field of heritage preservation where delayed action results in the loss of irreplaceable structures.

Even the most popular ideas of a given day are fleeting and fading. Despite the deliberate impermanence, informal practices can have a profound impact for many years to come. This means at once recognizing the legacy and importance of past conditions and to recognize the value of what we build today. Heritage preservation cannot simply be an imitation of previously trends or superficial styles, nor can it ignore context and tradition. There is an imparative to maintian integrity in the practice of preservation and conservation. Authenticity in conservation requires confident identification of the defining features of our times; preservation requires that we recon with representations of the past and present in such a manner as to not limit future potentials. Preservation efforts must be conducted with integrity and the intention of creating in the present and building on the past. Otherwise the next generation will have nothing to look back on. Throughout these examinations of historical processes one must remember that change is the only true constant. As planners our primary task is to anticipate, encourage and guide that change.

The modern city has undergone radical changes in its physical form, not only in its vast territorial expansion, but also through internal physical transformations. These have created entirely new kinds of 'fabric'. Cities that were dense, compact and continuous have become diffuse, loose and discontinuous.
Levy (1999) p.81

In contemporary cities, particularly North American cities, the pace of change is far more rapid than in the traditional European cities where the practice of morphology was originally developed. This presents difficulties to employ the conventional elements of morphological study. In identifying this challenge, Levy (1999) presents a number of primary elements a 'traditional closed' urban fabric. To help interpret the following plans, photos and diagrams, I will take Levy's primary elements as a baseline and adapt further indicators to better reflect the 'modern open' conditions found in Toronto and Detroit and contemporary Berlin. Together these will serve to inform the analysis of the following case study examples.

Since the mid 20th century, as the relationship between built and open space has become less defined, we must draw on other features to understand the organizing frameworks of the city. As a guide for these sets of urban elements, the following table is intended to serve as a legend for how these typologies will be graphically represented in the morphologic analysis and to provide additional information about the significance of each element in shaping this analysis. The first three features, the street, **constructed space** and **open space**, are drawn from Levy's concept of traditional urban fabric, remaining five features, the **block, laneway, infill, heritage, and deletion**, are prominent features, observed through this research, that reflect critical spaces of contemporary 'open' landscapes.

ELEMENTS OF TRADITIONAL URBAN FABRIC
CONSTRUCTED SPACE
STREETS & OPEN SPACE

The basis of this morphologic analysis are figure ground diagrams, such as this image of 1916 Detroit. By reducing the complexity of the urban landscape to built and unbuilt spaces relationship between open and constructed space becomes clear. In traditional 'closed' urban fabric systems streets, plazas and courtyards are clearly defined. By looking at sequential figure ground diagrams we will be able to observe the changes in this relationship between built and open space.

Downtown Detroit, 1916
(Plunz in Daskalkis, 2001)

ELEMENTS OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN FABRIC

BLOCKS & LANEWAYS
INFILL & DELETION
HERITAGE

In the later stages of the burgage cycle of urban renewal, the relationship of individual buildings to the street may be obscured. In these cases, the block structure becomes more prominant. Laneways and mid block passages provide indications patterns of use. In order to convey cumulative impact of processes of infill, deletion, and renewal I will daw attention to sites of particular significance as follows: Infill and renewal will be identified in **PURPLE** while vacated plots will be marked in **BLUE**. In contrast, buildings which are deliberately preserved, due to their heritage value will be denoted in **ORANGE**.

Queen and Portland,
Toronto (2014)

27

BERLIN

The the ethic of adaptation and innovation course through the lifeblood of Berliners. These five sites within the city represent varying expressions of this culture of creativity. The AEDES Architekturforum is an architecture and urbanism research laboratory in an 18th century brewery. Alexanderplatz, is a grand public square framed by the massive archtecture of post war soviet redevelopment. Teepee Land is a self governed squatters commune built on the banks of the Spree river. The Young African Art Market is one part outdoor gallery, one part riverside dance bar, one part craft market representing the afro-caribean diaspora and Tempelhof was built as a Nazi airport and is now a much loved community park.

AEDES:
ARCHITEKTURFORUM

ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEEPEE CITY

YOUNG AFRICAN ART
MARKET
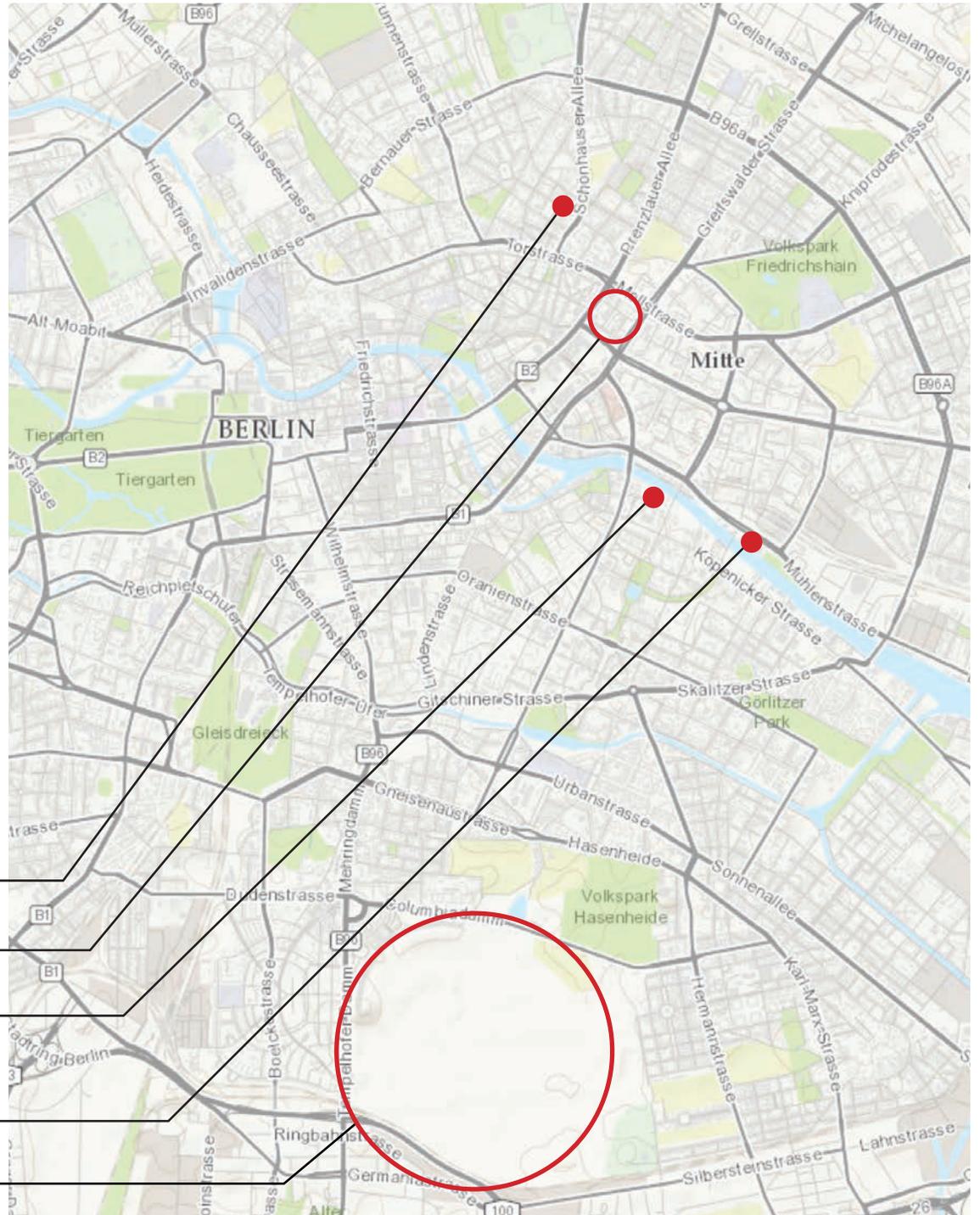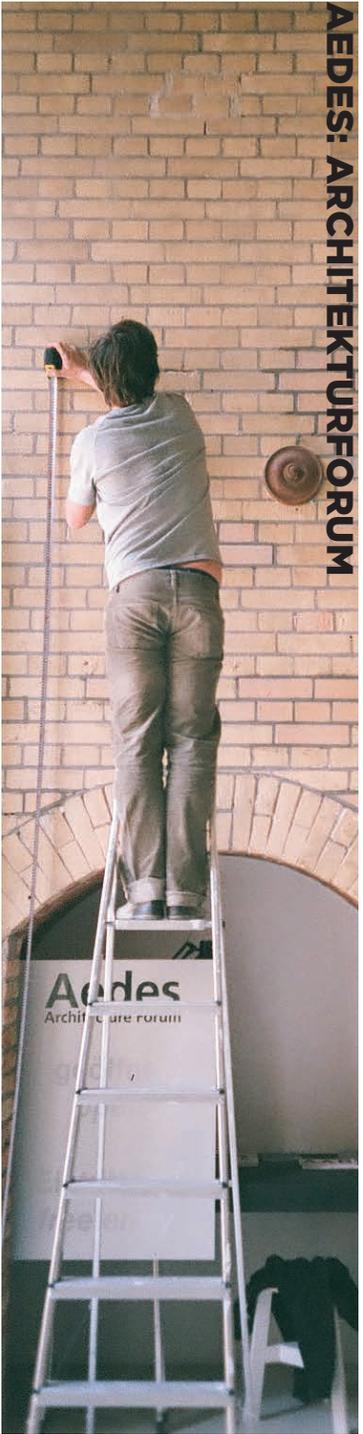
TEMPELHOF

AEDES: ARCHITEKTURFORUM

ALEXANDERPLATZ
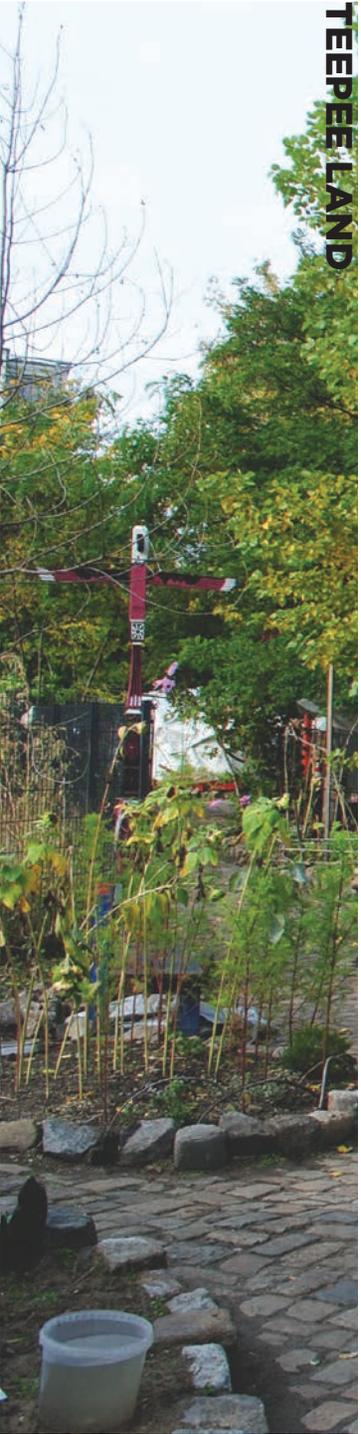
TEEPEE LAND

YOUNG AFRICAN ART MARKET

TEMPELHOF

BERLIN

Elements of Albert Speer's unrealized master plan for the Nazi capital, New Germania, is depicted here in orange.

By the end of the 1980's the Berlin Wall had fallen. Marked in blue, the footprint of the wall cut an abrupt swath through the city.
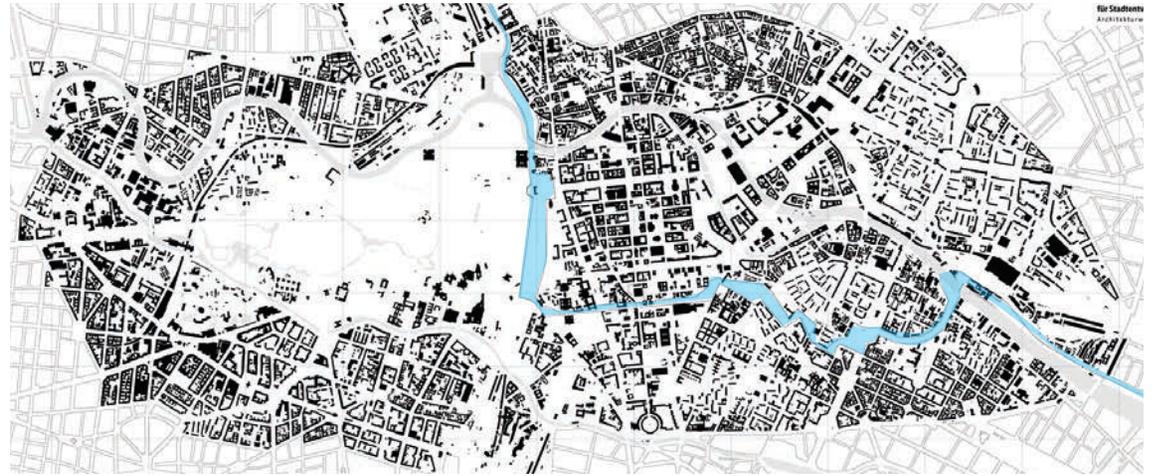
After the Berlin Wall's removal in 1989, the controlled environment of the no mand's land was literally and figuratively unbound. The resulting *terrain vague*, in both the mind and on the ground, is a space offering openness, potential, and growth.

32   Golden, in Mariani and Barron, 2014

Berlin, is the oldest city under examination in these case studies. It has had more opportunities to shape and be shaped by the political actors, social events and economic fluctuations which have influenced the evolution of one of the world's creative cultural capitals. Certainly the destruction brought on in the course of World War II and the subsequent influence of the Soviet rule in the divided city have had profound impact, not only on the built form but also in terms of creating a tradition of resiliency and adaptation. Berlin has siezed opportunities for finding creative solutions in rebuilding and reconciling what was not only a physically but socially and economically divided city. Today Berlin is a fascinating case study which shows the possibilities of what happens when a city is permitted, and encouraged, to reckon with the difficulties of activating unused space.

The many small free corners and gaps, the many fallow spaces and vacancies in the city make up an enormous potential for the implementation of new ideas, for processes of appropriation and neighbourhood involvement or for temporary uses.
        Berlin IBA 2020, 2016

In Berlin, adaptation and innovation in the use of scarce resources, was fuelled by necessity. In observing the city today, there is physical evidence of all stages of the burgage cycle, from the organic development of the historic city, to the widespread destruction and clearing of buildings throughout WWII, the large scale redevelopment projects under the Soviet era

and the focused adaptations since reunification: each illustrates a stage of the burgage cycle. Of particular interest is the approach towards the redevelopment of the city centre since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Redevelopment in the city has been guided by the ethic of "careful urban renewal". This approach stands in stark contrast North American 'slum clearance' urban renewal schemes, in that it respects the character, scale and social contexts established throughout the preceding eras of city building and development.

All human activities are conditioned by the fact that men live together, but it is only action that cannot even be imagined outside the society of men... Action alone is the exclusive prerogative of man; neither a beast nor a god is capable of it, and only action is entirely dependent upon the constant presence of others.
        Arendt, 1998 p.22

There are few cities which bear such distinct markers of sequential modes of development from different political regimes. Coming from a North American perspective it can be tempting to take an example like Berlin and try to emulate this capacity for flexible development practices, however that would be to deny the complexities of historical and cultural circumstances which contributed to the present condition. The most practical lessons to be drawn from the European context are less about specific sites, projects or interventions and more about the attitude of openness and flexibility toward development and city building. The primary lesson being that the best cities take time.

Queen Street is one of the oldest streets in Toronto and dates back to the original alotment system laid out in 1793 by the Royal Engineers (Greer & Carr, 2006). It was originally named lot street, as it served as the threshold between the industrial warehouse district and the residential estates which eventually became Toronto's distinticve residential neighbourhoods.

The transitional role in the fabric of Toronto's downtown core persists, and remains a fundamental element of the city's organizing structure.

While the focus of this report is on the stretch of Queen Street from Spadina to Bathurst, this lot division can also be observed on the east side of downtown. For the same of illustration, the block system south of queen street is highlited here in purple, while the residetial fabric is marked in orange. The study site for the morphologic analysis is oulined in red.
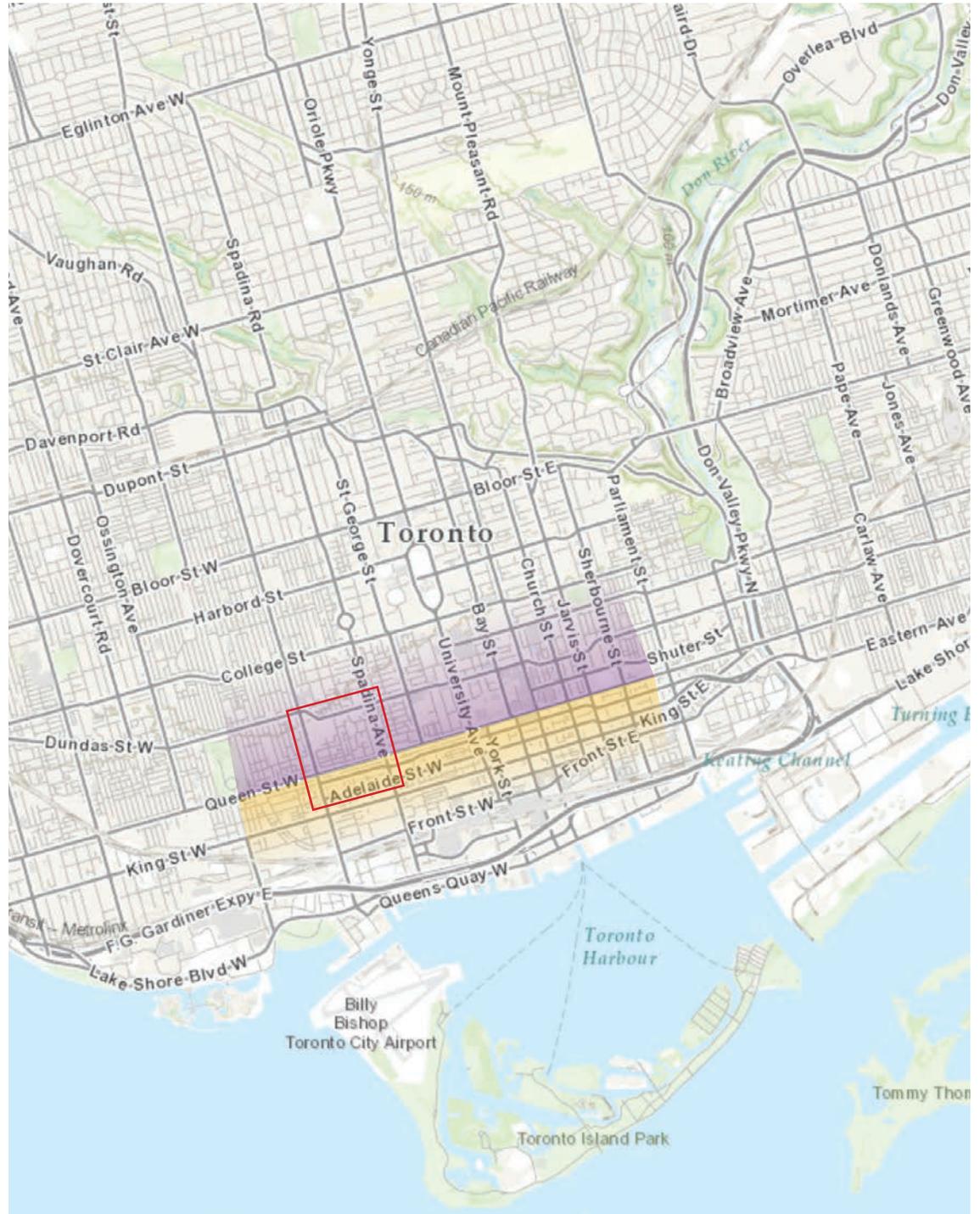
Toronto, is the youngest city examined in this paper. It presents an almost opposite picture of Berlin. For many years, since it's founding Toronto was relatively small and insignificant city. But things have changed; Toronto has begun to gain recognition on the international scale of urban centres. Behind all of the civic rhetoric and boosterism of becoming a 'world class city', what we see in Toronto, is a city that is struggling to find its identity. Dr. Hulchanski's "Three Cities Within Toronto" (2007) highlights the growing economic and social chasm. Between the disparate priorities of the downtown core, and the surrounding suburbs, is a seeming inability to create authentic places, which convincingly represent these dueling identities within the landscape. The imbalance created by increasingly rapid pace of growth of both the suburbs, and the downtown core is difficult to reconcile. More so than the other cities examined in this paper, Toronto struggles to define it own identity, to acknowledge an authentic identity as opposed to a melange of caricatures of other cities. What is needed is a genuine reckoning of Toronto's distinct qualities and the characteristics of our own traditions and trajectory.

As a city, our cultural and collective identity is still forming. Toronto's urban terroir is connected to the in-between spaces of the city and is not easily communicated through our major institutions and landmarks. The real Toronto character of place is found within the neighbourhoods parks and cultural mélange.

Toronto has a façade fetish, which extends beyond feeble forays into superficial heritage preservation. The very politics of identity and culture are tied up in appearances rather than substance.

Indications of the true diversity of this city are few and far between. I would suggest that is that the truest, most authentic representation of what Toronto is can be found, not on the front streets and main boulevards but behind them, in the neighbourhood alleyways and the forgotten landscapes where average Torontonians are able to express themselves and navigate the layers of their own narratives. The Toronto case study will primarily examine the history and context of Queen Street, between Spadina and Bathurst. The physical conditions cultural expression is found in Rush Lane will be investigated in terms of the transitional role which Queen Street plays in the city.

Queen Street, formerly known as Lot Street represents a significant and very important element of Toronto's morphological context, marking a distinction which dates back to the original lot assessment system. It reveals the foundations of the street grid as originally laid out in Toronto. South of Queen Street was an industrial area with large blocks, housing warehouses and factories. To the north, the long and narrow estate lots form the fundamental block structure, which have become the neighbourhoods that are so distinct to this city.

TORONTO

Threshold spaces are spaces marked by experiences of social liminality. As those spaces do not simply circumscribe to a defined area of use, but rather offer a passage from one area to another, they are spaces with a strong power to institute comparisons, to encourage new relationships between people, to make differences communicates. A threshold is not a boundary that divides and keeps apart. A threshold connects a separates at the same time, connecting while separating and separating while connecting.

Stavrides, (in Mariani & Barron, 2014) p.57

Now recognized as a historic preservation district, Queen Street itself is that dividing line between physical and cultural districts within downtown Toronto. As planners we must constantly be asking, what is the history that is being preserved; what narrative is being perpetuated. The adjacent land uses, both South and North of Queen Street, are undergoing particularly rapid transformation at this point in time. South of Queen, the large blocks and warehouses have long since ceased their industrial function. Today this character of this area is shifting from factories to entertainment, warehouses to condominiums. With the dramatic increase in residential developments in the area, the city is struggling to find parks and amenity space. There is a dire need for a public commons for the thousands residents who now live in the vertical communities which make up a neighbourhood in the city that was never intentionally planned for such a high population density. North of Queen, on the other hand,

we have one of the older subsidized housing developments in the city, Alexandra Park. It is also being redeveloped to accommodate an increase in population density and to to create a new mixed income community. Queen Street itself represents the connective space, dividing line and threshold between these two communities. This role is increasingly important if the street, a designated heritage conservation district, is to remain relevant and retain its identity as a creative hub within the city.

The challenge we face, in opening up the potential of Back Space, is one of behaviour change. Despite the historic conservation designation, the streetscape and built environment contexts have changed dramatically. Yet our institutions are reluctant to challage the status quo in recognition of this new reality. There is an uneasy disconnect, as citizens have not learned to adapt their daily habits and use of urban space to the reality of a dramatically changed environment.

Between the realm of academics and the practice of planners, is a common challenge to figure out how to increase its functional capacity, not only in terms of commercial and institutional uses but perhaps more importantly the city's role as a social conduit and a incubator for creative capital. The challange is that new solutions must accommodate change without stifling the conditions of openness and diversity which enable creativity.

The History of
Queen Street West
resides within
buildings and
all streetscape
elements. It is also
inscribed in the
living memory
of the people
who frequent its
stores, restaurants,
offices, residences
and amenities.

Greer & Carr, 2006 P.228

TORONTO 1947
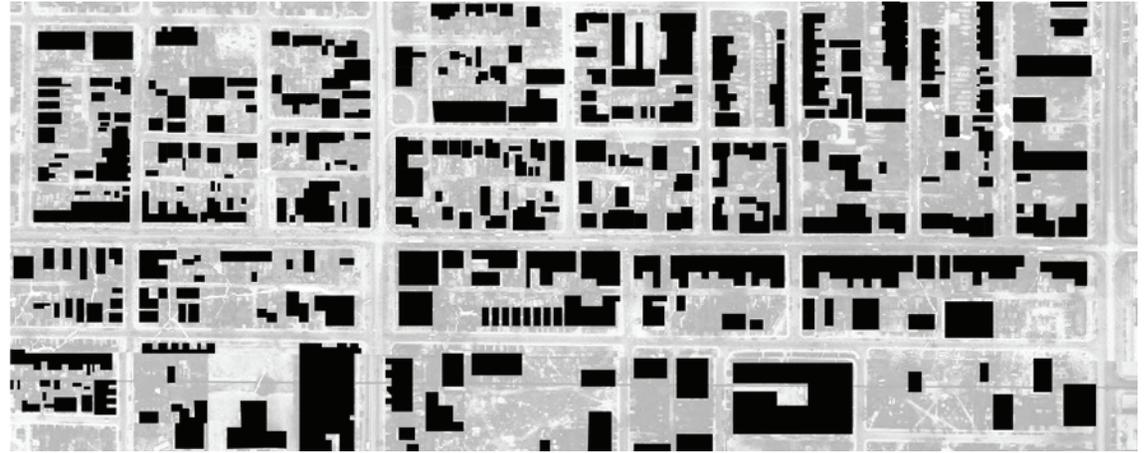
TORONTO 1981

TORONTO 2014
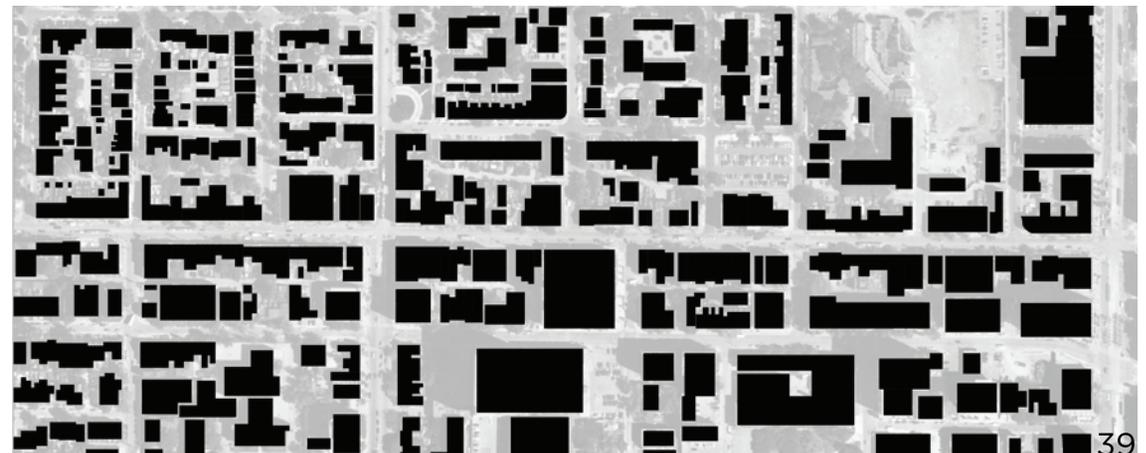
TORONTO 1947

0 25 50   100   150   200
Meters

What is important to note at this stage, 19497 Toronto is the persistence of the regular block system. North of Queen Street, the elongated blocks are occasionally broken up, however the broadly speaking the pattern is consistent and in tact. South of queen, the blocks are not as long.

Also of significance is the continuity of the Rush Lane alleyway. It is part of the threshold territory between the industrial and residential tissues of the city.

0 25 50 100 150 200 Meters
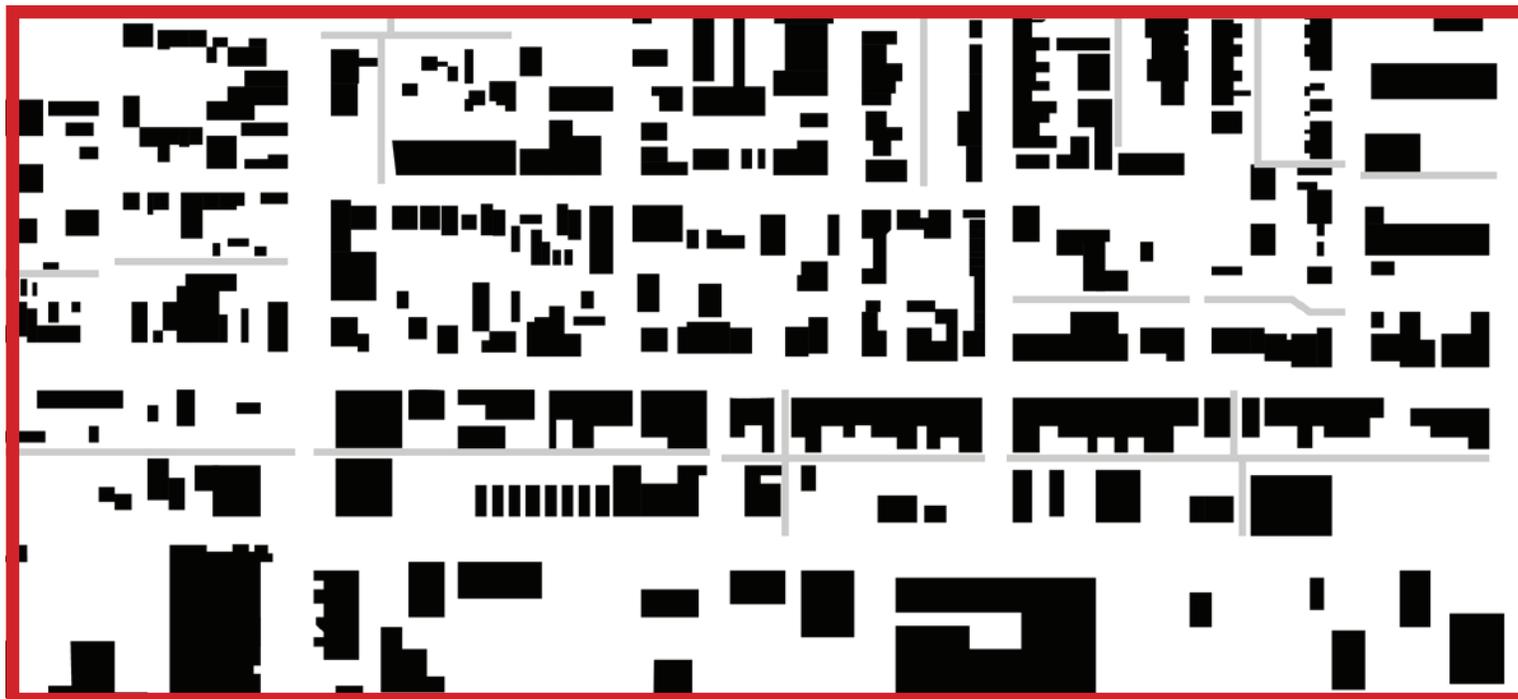
KEY FEATURES IN 1947 TORONTO

TRADITIONAL URBAN FABRIC
- BUILT SPACE
- STREETS
- OPEN SPACE

CONTEMPORARY URBAN FABRIC
- BLOCKS
- LANEWAYS
- INFILL
- DELETION
- HERITAGE

0 25 50 100 150 200 Meters

0 25 50   100   150   200
Meters
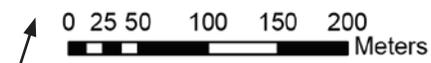
By the 1980s, a significant intervention in the urban fabric of this area has occurred: the Alexandra Park affordable housing project. Built in 1960's in the tradition of the modernist, large scale urban renewal projects, Alex Park cleared several blocks of traditional neighbourhood to make room for the affordable housing development.

The prominence of the automobile has also had an impact on the built form of the area by this point. Several large surface parking lots take the place of formerly conventional built up lots.
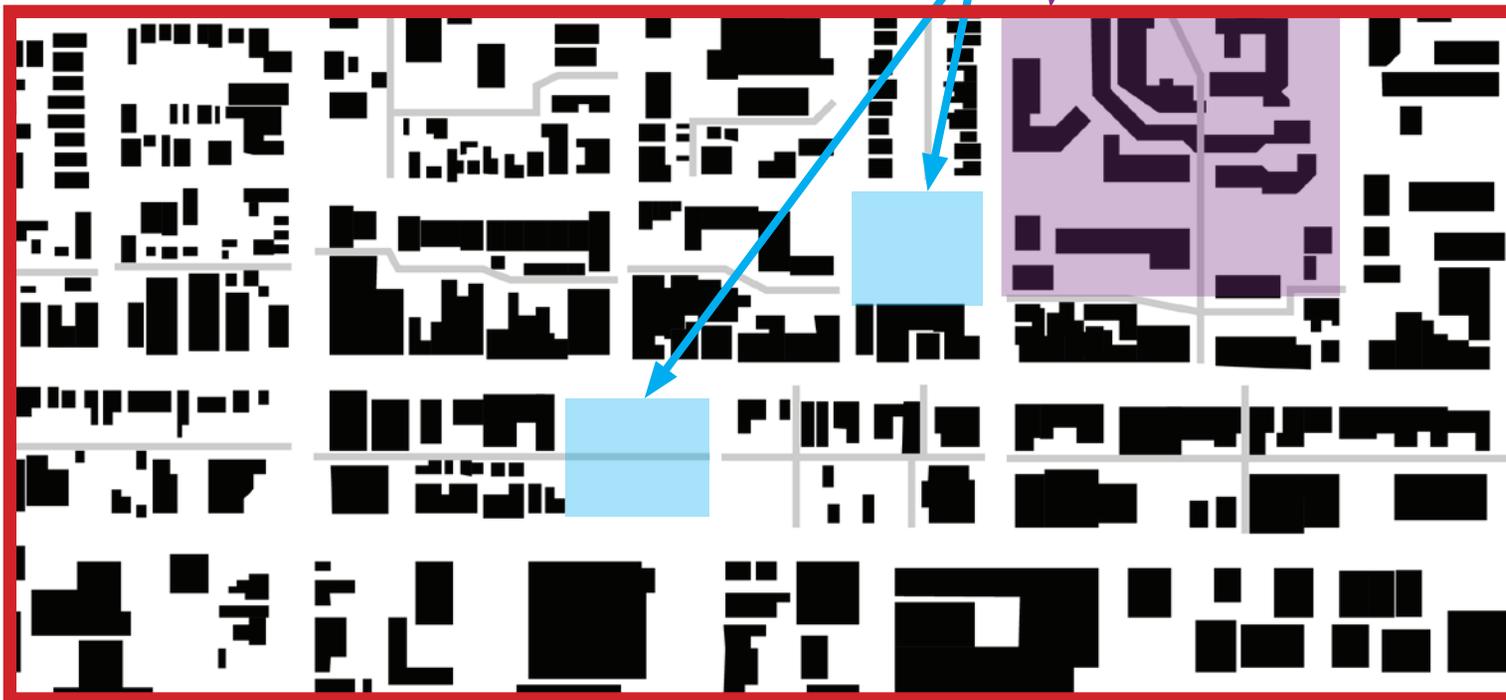
KEY FEATURES IN 1981 TORONTO

TRADITIONAL URBAN FABRIC
- BUILT SPACE
- STREETS
- OPEN SPACE

CONTEMPORARY URBAN FABRIC
- BLOCKS
- LANEWAYS
- INFILL
- DELETION
- HERITAGE

43

0 25 50   100   150   200
Meters
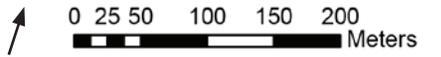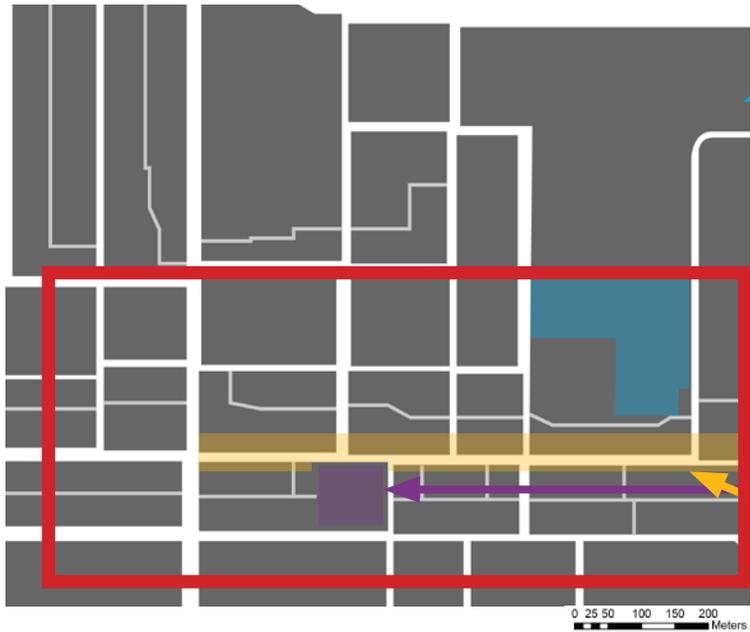
At the present day Alex Park is once again in the midst of renewal, through a Public Private partnership with the developer Tridel. The intention is to introduce a mix of incomes to counter the negative stigma of the aging housing project.

One of the former surface parking lots has been developed and now houses a Loblaws, Winners and condominiums. The developers did not consider the impact of disrupting the laneway network and occupying the site of the Styles in Progress graffiti and hip hop festival.

The Queen West Heritage Conservation District has also been established from University Ave. to Bathurst St.
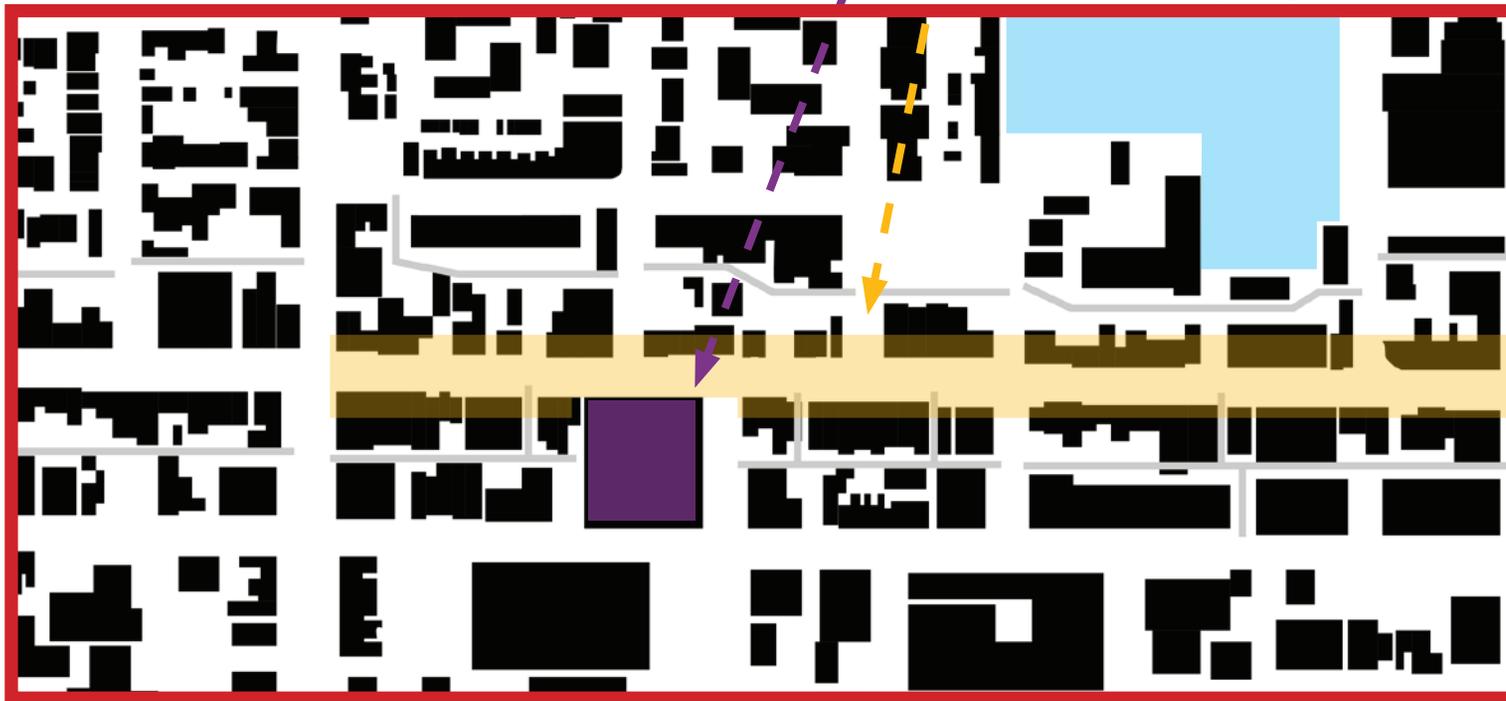
KEY FEATURES IN 2014 TORONTO

TRADITIONAL URBAN FABRIC
- BUILT SPACE
- STREETS
- OPEN SPACE

CONTEMPORARY URBAN FABRIC
- BLOCKS
- LANEWAYS
- INFILL
- DELETION
- HERITAGE

0 25 50   100   150   200
Meters

45

Street labels on map: RYERSON AVE, DENISON AVE, VANAULEY ST, CAMERON ST, SPADINA AVE, QUEEN ST W, PORTLAND ST, AUGUSTA AVE, MC DOUGALL LANE, RICHMOND ST W, MAUD ST, BRANT ST
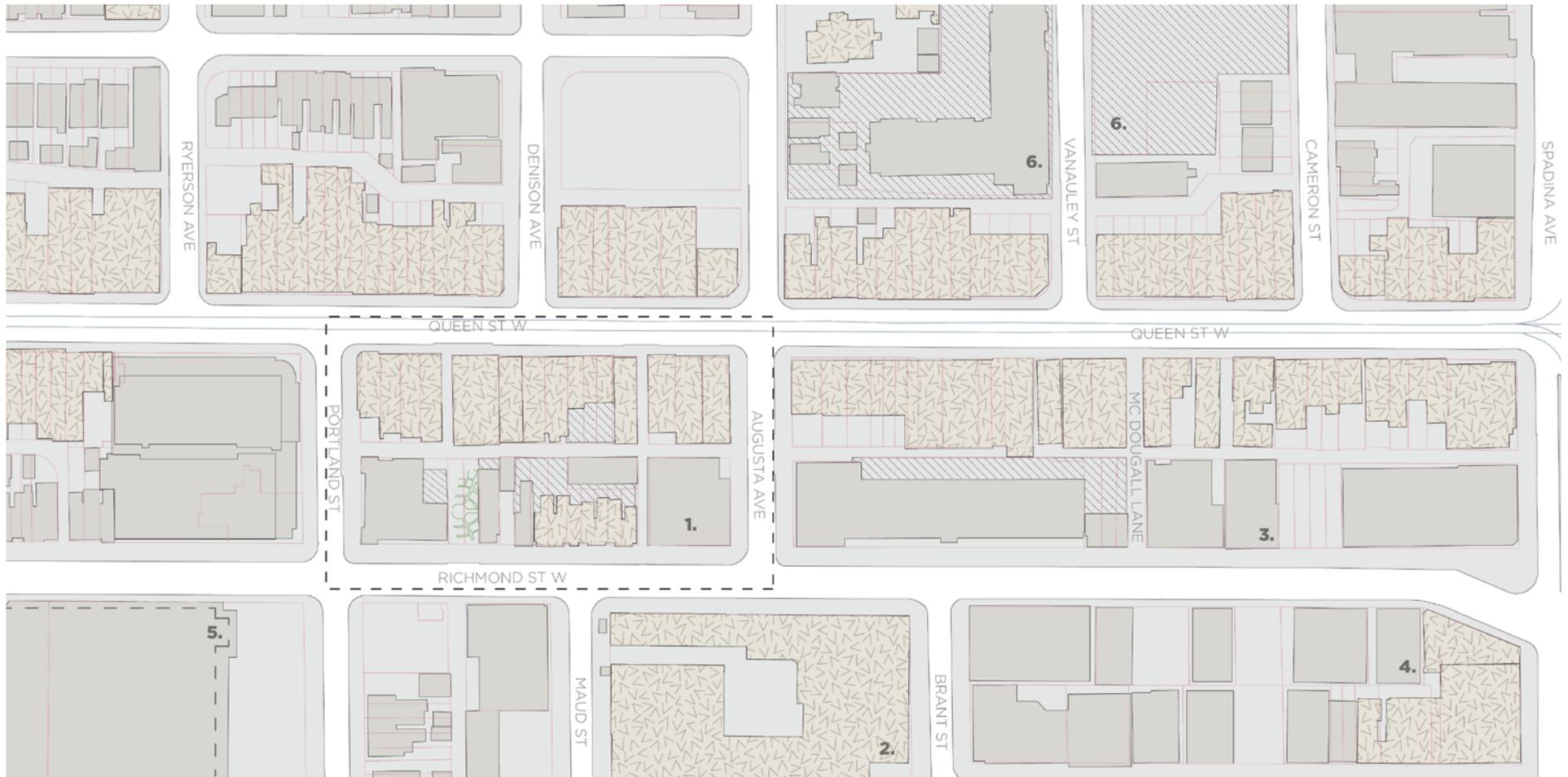
LEGEND:

HERITAGE PROPERTIES

PROPERTY LINES

NO PUBLIC ACCESS

ALEX WILSON PARKETTE

1. 520 RICHMOND RE-ZONING APPLICATION

2. 505 RICHMOND YMCA COMUNIY CENTRE

3. 452 RICHMOND RE-ZONING APPLICATION

4. 431 RICHMOND CONDO PROPOSAL

5. 543 RICHMOND RE-ZONING

6. ALEXANDRA PARK REDEVELOPMENT

0   25   50   75   100m

NOTES:

Queen Street forms the central commercial and retail corridor of this area and acts a transitional space betwee the former warehouse district to the south and the more conventional residential neighbourhoods to the nort The built form of Queen Street has been recognized as having significant historic value, and is characterized b 2-4 storey heritage buildings.

The physical form and attributes of such districts exhibit the process of past development and maintain a continuum with the past to meet the needs of the present (and future) community.
-Guide to District Designation Under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Despite the HCD designation on Queen, the surrounding areas are in the midst of dramatic change. To th northeast, Alexandra Park is being redeveloped through a public private partnership with Tridel, there are sever proposed condominium developments on Richmond, as well as the recently announced YMCA Communit Centre to the southeast. In contrast to the street facade of the Queen West HCD, Rush Lane presents differe sort of heritage landscape. A testament to Toronto's cultural clout, Rush Lane is a living gallery of street art spontaneous action and activity. We have the opportunity for a whole new front door, oriented to the communit centre, simply by supporting the uses and activites which already exist

Considering the development pressures facing downtown Toronto, a tremendous challenge faces the residents, business owners and political representatives of this urban neighbourhood. Toronto's laneway system, often under appreciated and neglected, presents an opportunity to enhance the experience of living and working downtown. One of the residual effects of prolonged development pressure in the centre of the city is a dearth of amenity spaces and parks.

Over the next two decades, nearly 2.5 million people will be added to central Ontario's current population - all requiring housing. With Toronto's low-density housing stock at maximum capacity, ideas of liveable space downtown have been revised.

    Shim and Chong, 2003. p. 18

In the absence of conventional parks, a rethinking of the laneway network presents a chance to provide an alternative pedestrian network and new commercial frontages. However this means opening a new perspective in the collective understanding for the role Back Space plays in Toronto. In the broader area, there are a number of active and proposed developments on the horizon for this district. Many of these developments are drawing on this nascent network of pedestrian connections as an asset. In the absence of conventional amenities, these laneways are beginning to be transformed into exciting, adaptable community spaces, an alternative network of new frontages stretching from Front St. to Dundas.

Alexandra Park Redevelopment

Rush Lane & Study Area

501 Richmond YMCA

620 King

489 King BIG

The Well
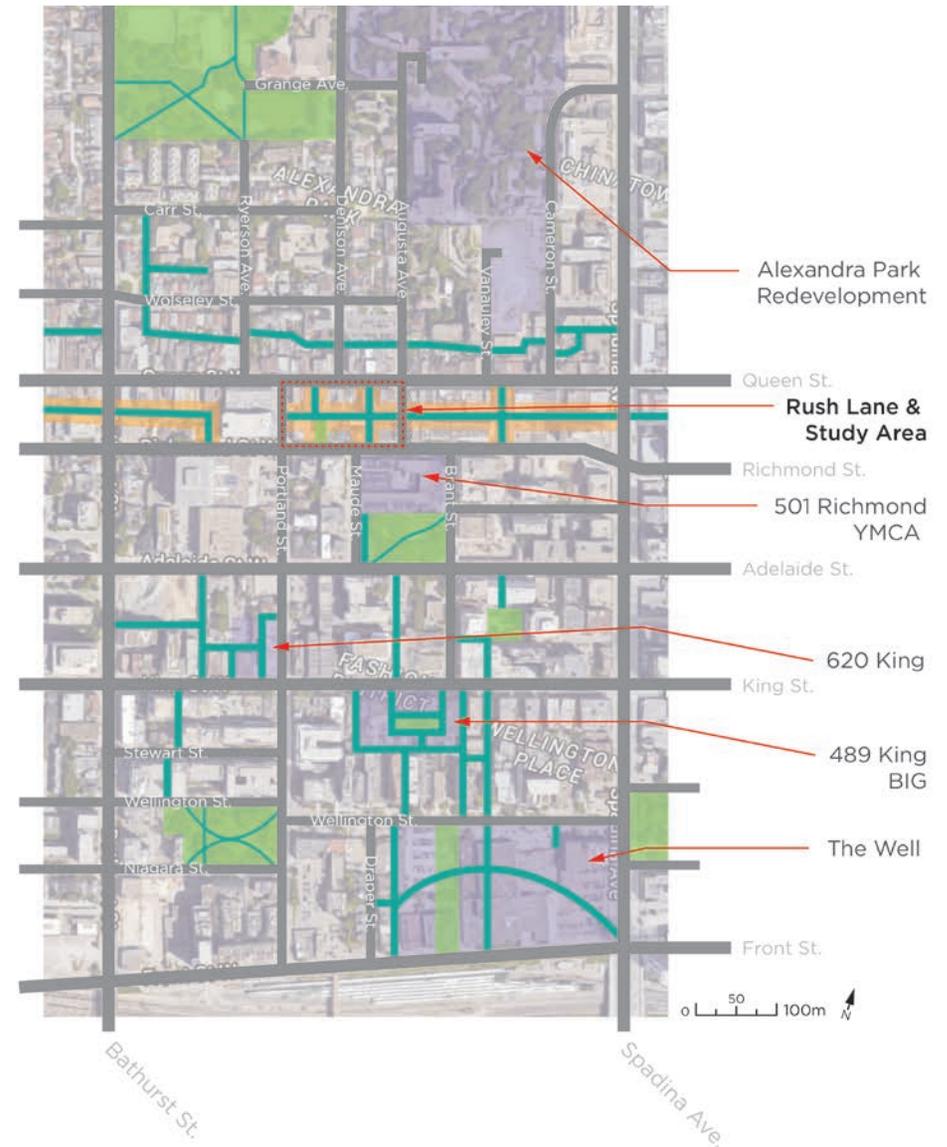
RUSH LANE ACTIVATION PROJECT:
Existing and Proposed Pedestrian Connections

LEGEND

Roads
Rush Lane Study Area
Alley / Pedestrian Path
Green Space
New Development Underway or Proposed

DETROIT

The primary study site for the morphologic analysis in Detroit centres on the neighbourhood around the Heidelberg Project. It is a neighbourhood that, in the face of severe decline, has been invigorated and animated through the artistic vision of longtime resident Tyree Guthree.

As a point of comparison, The Belt is a very different example of similar principles, arts based identity building, in the downtown core. Driven by a property development agency and artist collective rather than local residents. These two examples present paralel interventions leveraging arts in Back Spaces to re-engage their respective communities.

THE HEIDELBERG PROJECT

THE BELT
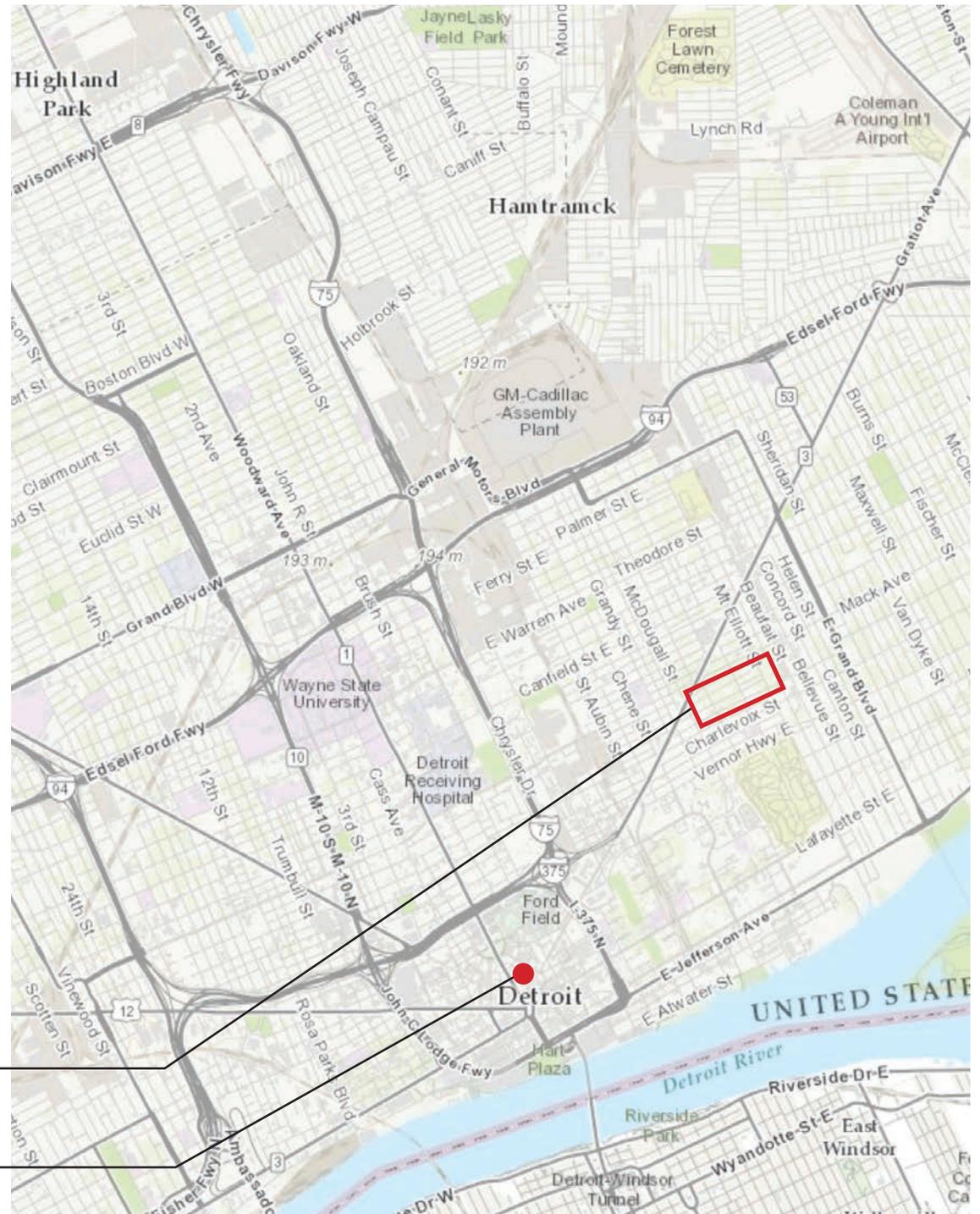
Grounding this comparison of Toronto, Berlin, and Detroit in particular, is a hopeful and optimistic vision for progressive urban experimentation. Detroit has recently been recognized as a UNESCO City of Design (Stella & Schneider, 2016). The heart of American industry, Detroit is one of the most and iconic cities the world. In the future both Detroit and Toronto face challenges which require a reevaluation of their respective civic identities. Through the juxtaposition of these challenges there is a convergence of potentials. Today there are exciting and encouraging hopeful examples of innovative use of residual landscapes and Back Space within these cities.

Detroit design and industry made the world mobile, fundamentally changing the way we move, work, and live. There is not a city in the developed world that has not been influenced by the products of Detroit design. As the cradle of American modernism, Detroit has a rich legacy as a global center of design.
Stella & Schneider, 2016

Detroit produced the technology that dramatically altered the very shape of cities and how people live around the globe. However Detroit today is a very different place from Detroit of the first half of the 1900s. Since the middle of the 20th century there has been a swift and steady decline in the city's population. From 1950 to the year 2000, the population dropped from over 1.8 million to just over 950,00. (Daskalakis, Waldheim, & Young 2001)
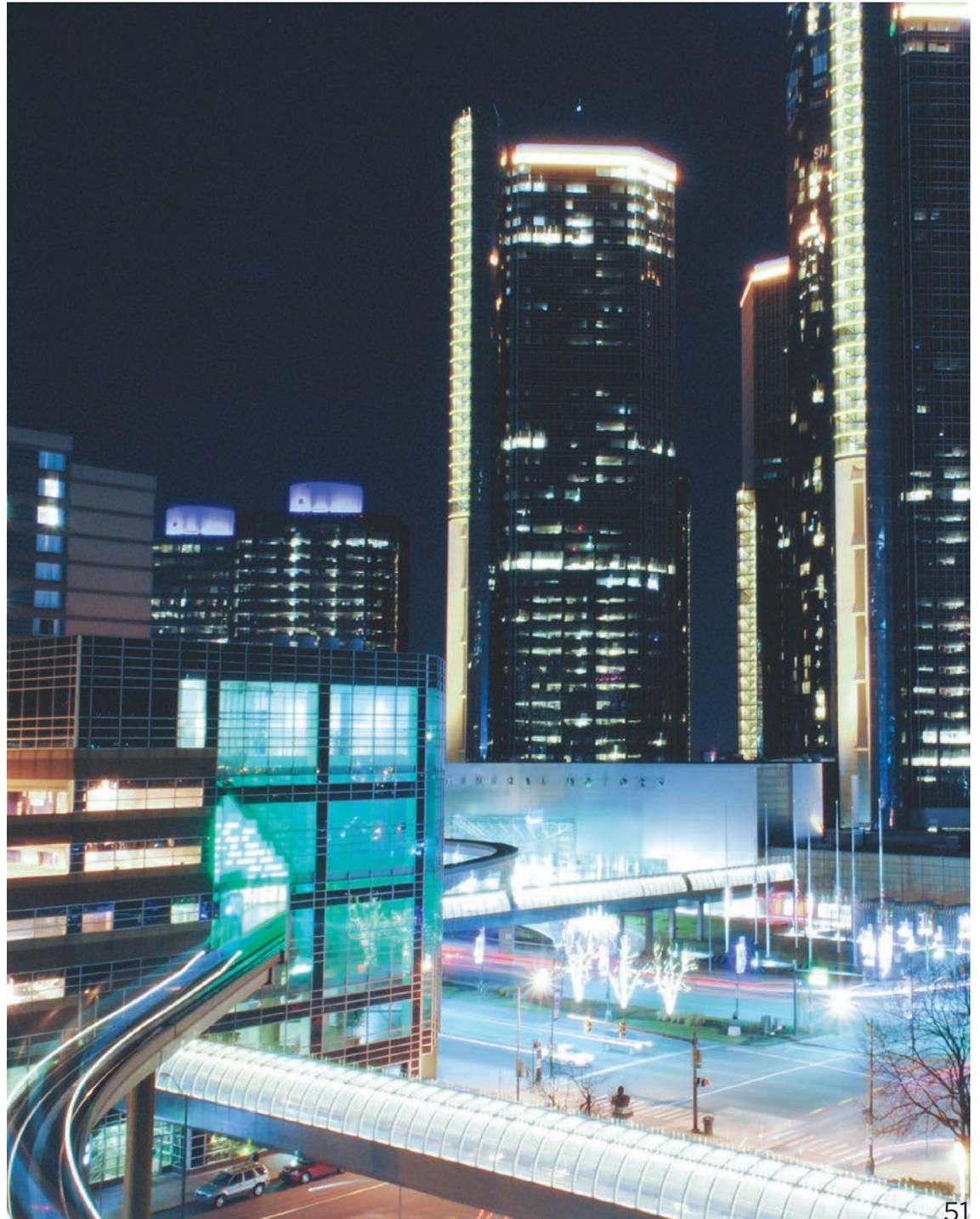
The challenge that faces Detroit is less about rebuilding than it is about re-conceptualizing the relationship between the residents and their city. To revive Detroit is to redefine the model of American progress for the new millennium. The challenge is to build on the identity of this powerhouse of modern industry, in music, culture and design. Detroit in its prime was more than the industrial machine at the core of American production in. Detroit was the promise of a steady job and the home with the picket fence. The American dream was made in Detroit.

Detroit is the most relevant city in the United States for the simple reason that it is the most unequivocally modern, and therefore, distinctive of our national culture: in other words a total success... This makes Detroit the revealed 'Capital of the 20th Century" and likely the century ahead, because this is place, more than any other, where the native history of modernity has been written.
> Herron in Maruani and Barron, 2014 p.62

In contrast to the previous examples, Detroit represents a different set of opportunities. As an extreme version of the industrial decline, Detroit is a fascinating landscape of potential in the face of adversity. With such a drastic decomposition of the built environment, the challenge in Detroit is to re-conceptualize the collective understanding of familiar, yet forgotten functions and imagine what could be. More than any other example, the future Detroit is tied to the Back Space.

BUT TO WHOM
DOES A RUIN
FIRST APEAR
AS A RUIN?
NOT TO NATIVE
INHABITANT,
SURELY,
FOR WHOM
HISTORY IS
NOT A HOLDIAY
DIVERSION, BUT
A CONTINUOUS,
IF HAPHAZARD
WAY OF LIVING.

**Herron in Maruani and**

**Barron, 2014. p.64**

1949 Detroit
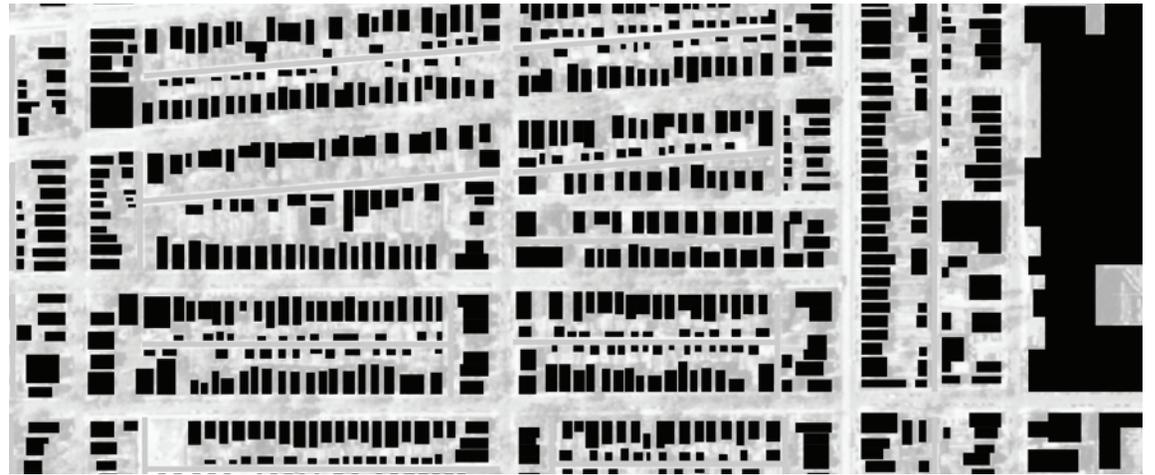
1981 Detroit
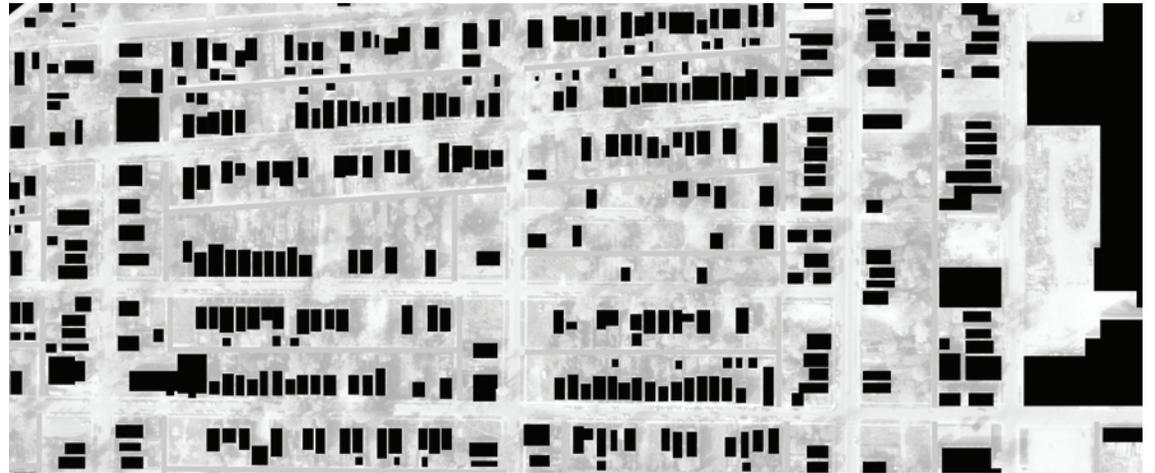
2014 Detroit
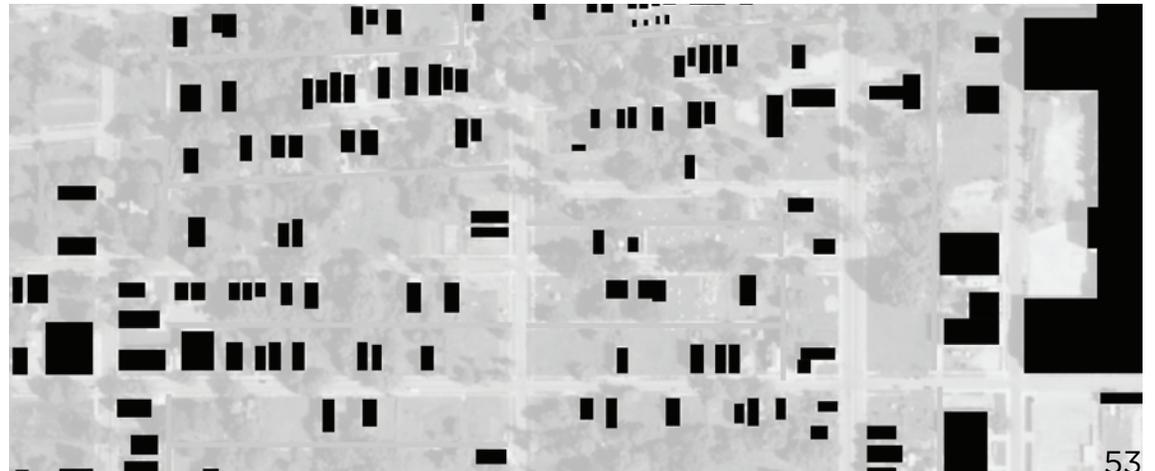
Meters
0   50   100   200   300
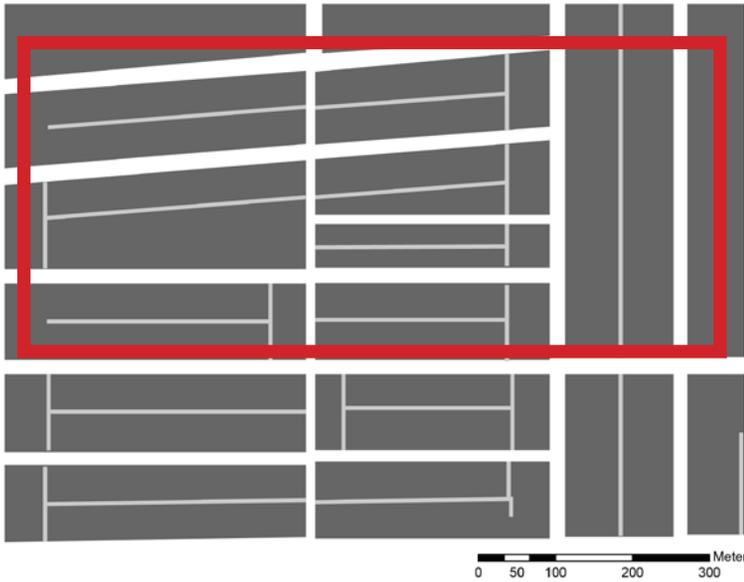
From 1900 to 1950, Detroit's population exploded from less than 280,000 to nearly 2 million (Daskalakis, Waldheim, & Young 2001 p.14). In the late 1940's, near Detroits peak, this was a thriving neighbourhood of streets lined with detached homes only a short drive from the downtown core.

These figure-ground diagrams show the proportion of built space to open space and streets is well balanced, and the open spaces are well defined by the built environment.

KEY FEATURES IN 1947 DETROIT

TRADITIONAL URBAN FABRIC
- ■ BUILT SPACE
- ■ STREETS
- ■ OPEN SPACE

CONTEMPORARY URBAN FABRIC
- ☐ BLOCKS
- ☐ LANEWAYS
- ☐ INFILL
- ■ DELETION
- ☐ HERITAGE

DETROIT 1981

Meters
0   50   100   200   300
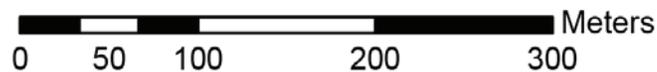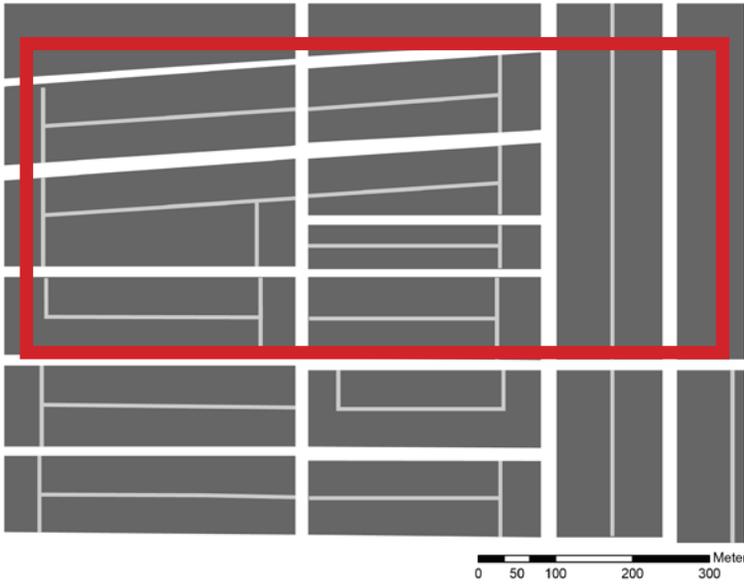
By the start of the 1980's Detroit's population was in free fall. In the 20 years between 1978 and 1998, the city issued over 10,000 more demolition permits than construction permits (Daskalakis, Waldheim, & Young 2001 p. 14). In the late 1980's Tyree Guthree, and his grandfather Sam, tired of seeing their neighbourhood fall into neglect, decided to take the perception of their communtiy into their own hands and the Heidleberg project began.
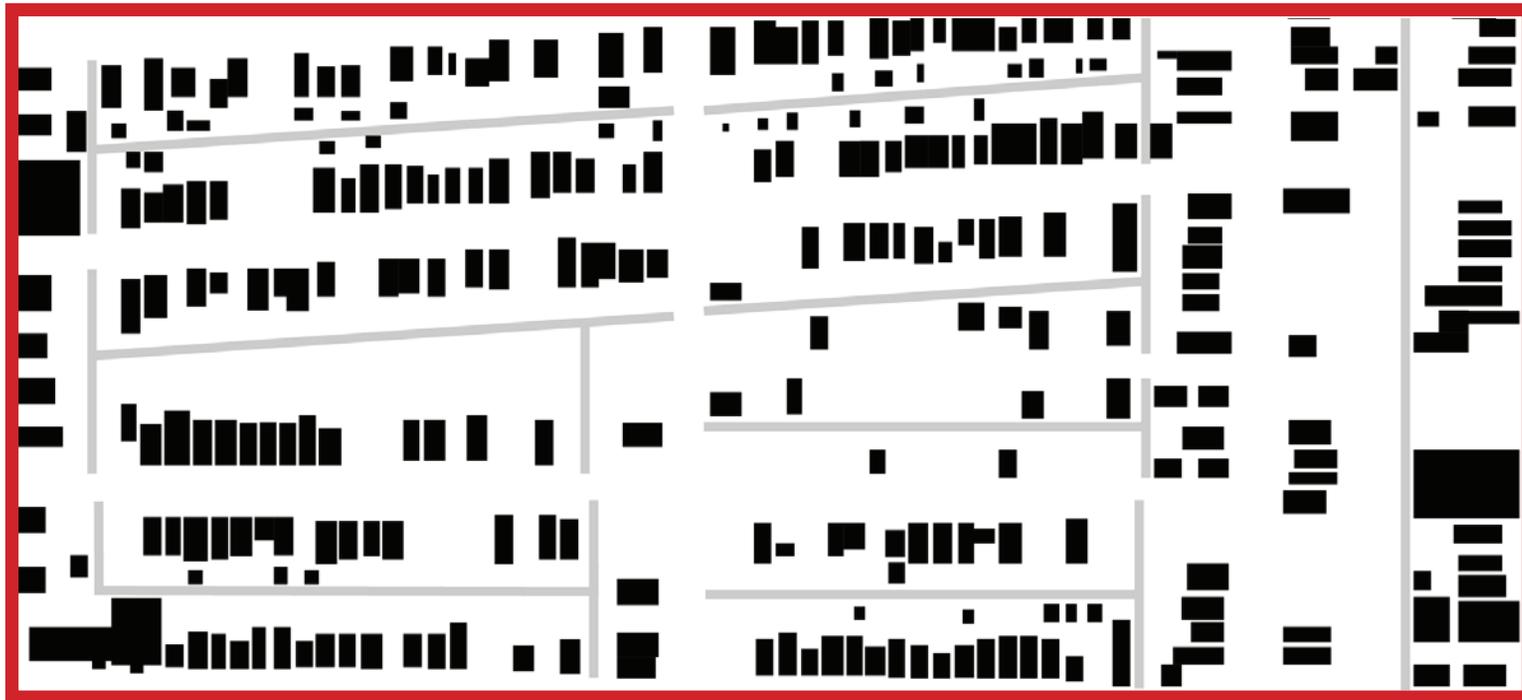

KEY FEATURES IN 1981 DETROIT

TRADITIONAL URBAN FABRIC
- ■ BUILT SPACE
- ■ STREETS
- □ OPEN SPACE

CONTEMPORARY URBAN FABRIC
- □ BLOCKS
- □ LANEWAYS
- □ INFILL
- ■ DELETION
- □ HERITAGE

Meters

0   50   100   200   300

At this point the loss of built form, due to controlled demolition or arson, got to the point that the laneway and block structures are losing significance, as the open space of vacant lots becomes the predominant feature of this urban landscape. The Heidleberg project has brought positive attention the neighborhood and served to coalesce a sense of pride and identity for the community.
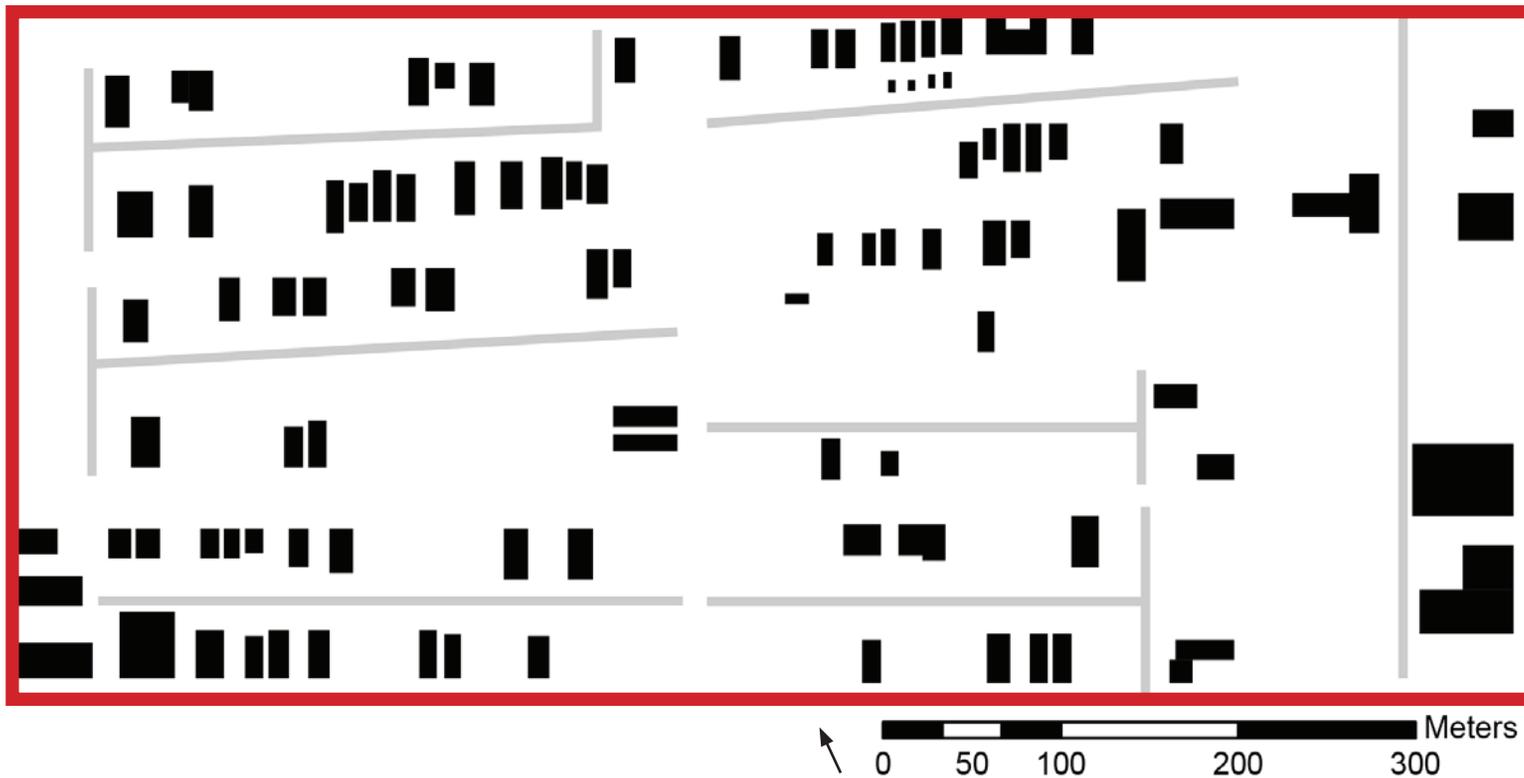
KEY FEATURES IN 2014 DETROIT

TRADITIONAL URBAN FABRIC
- ☐ BUILT SPACE
- ☐ STREETS
- ■ OPEN SPACE

CONTEMPORARY URBAN FABRIC
- ☐ BLOCKS
- ☐ LANEWAYS
- ☐ INFILL
- ■ DELETION
- ■ HERITAGE

With regard to the burgage cycle, there has yet to be widespread infill, but the stage has been set for a renaissance in Detroit. Thanks to the grassroots efforts of folks like Tyree Guthree, there are glimmering sparks of activity and opportunity throughout the neighbourhoods of the city. Organizations like the Detroit Collaborative Design Center (CDCD) are helping to empower the communities in Detroit to disrupt the status quo through community lead design solutions, with the goal of a creating a new, more equitable, ecological and dynamic city, based on the city's most valuable asset: the people of Detroit. (Pitera, 2014).

On of the CDCD's recent interventions is a collaboration with the Heidelberg Project: PlayHouse. In response to concerns around the number of abandoned properties, the DCDC was consulting a group of local residents about what they wanted an open air performance space in the neighbourhood. The CDCD's contribution to this conversation was to suggest that rather than viewing the abandoned houses as a liability, they utilize the abandoned structures as raw materials for this proposed amphitheater. Rather than shying away from controversial circumstances, the CDCD encouraged a reframing of the very structures that were considered liabilities to transform them into assets (Pitera, 2014).

The City of Detroit spends millions of dollars annually on the demolition and removal of abandoned buildings (Daskalakis, Waldheim, & Young 2001). It turns out that the PlayHouse proposal did not only satisfy the communities desire for performance space, the proposal was more economical than demolition or full scale restoration of the residential function. All that was required was the capacity to see and understand the new uses for a familiar structure.

Conclusions

We have seen how the residual landscapes caused by war and political strife have been embraced in Berlin as a way to help re-unite a divided city. In Toronto laneways are beginning to be leveraged to provide amenities and spaces for social cohesion in a period of rapid development and transformation. In Detroit terrain vague is providing a literal and figurative space for people to reconceptualize their relationships to their communities and their city.

These neglected, underuse and underappreciated residual landscapes or Back Spaces are present in all urban contexts. Through this analysis of Berlin, Toronto and Detroit, I have highlighted the diversity of these spaces through various contexts and urban circumstances. Ultimately this research has attempted to expose the ubiquity of terrain vague within the city and therefore the necessity for planners to grapple with it in a sensitive manner. Back Space or terrain vague offers vital opportunities for experimentation, innovation, social interaction and community agency.

The interstitial challange of terrain vague is a design problem that requires understanding and restraint. To this end, we propose a vision of design as an act of tending, as opposed to linear problem solving. To tend terrain vague is to reach comfort with the apparent systems at hand, systems not created, regulated or designed by architects or urban planners.
Stevens and Adhya in Mariani and Barron, 2014 p. 201

An appreciation of these of these landscapes calls on and promotes knowledge exchange between experts and laypersons. To have these spaces where the silos of conventional power structures and hierarchies may be put aside is so important for a just and equitable society. The real challenge for planners is to relinquish the expectation of control of the Back Space. The beauty of these residual landscapes is that they thrive in a state of uncertainty; to colonize these areas is to sterilize and stifle the potential for the innovation and excitement of a truly urban experience.
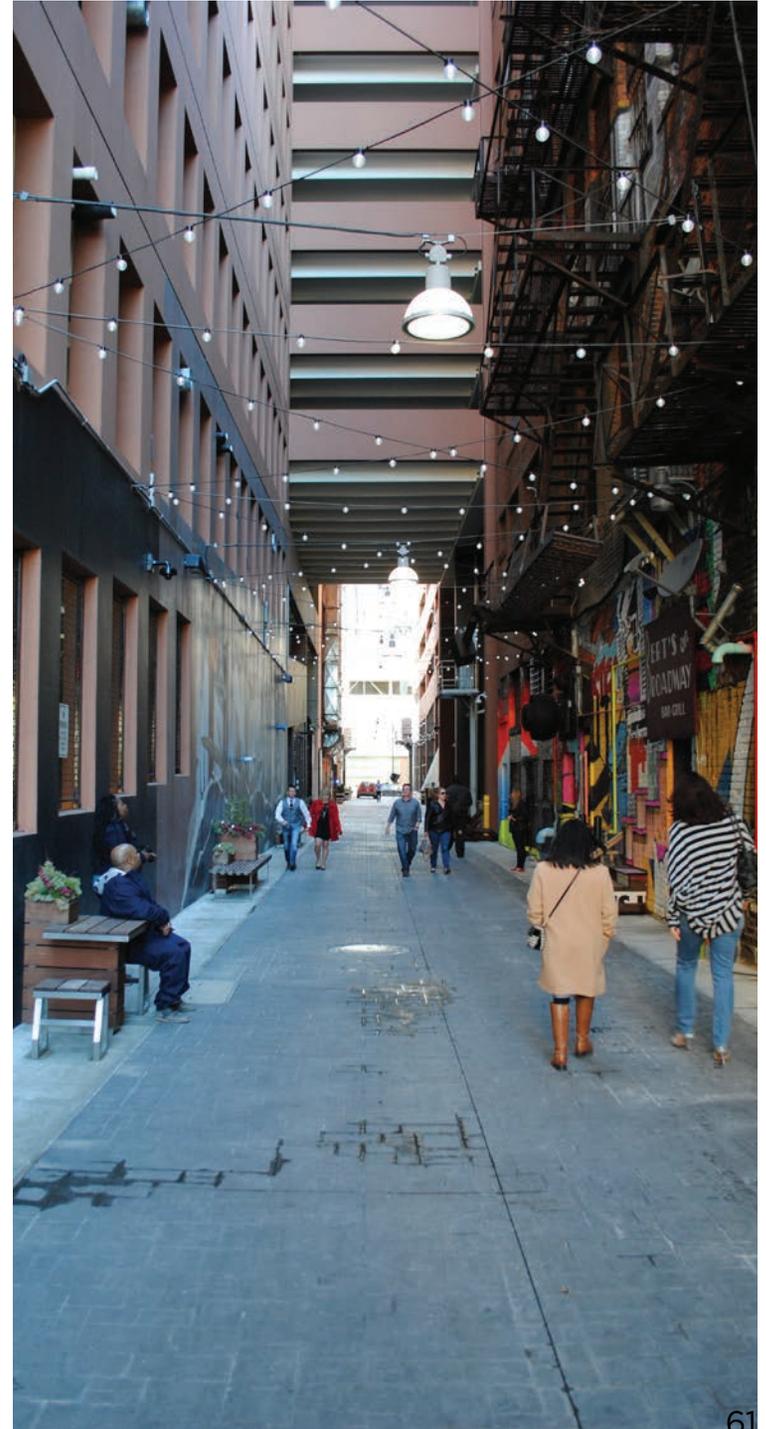
IT IS MORE ABOUT ADDRESSING
WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN BUILT
AND HOW IT ACCUMULATED OVER
A LONG PERIOD OF TIME. IN THIS
PROCESS, THE VIEW IS REVERSED:
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IS NO
LONGER THE GOAL, BUT THE
STARTING POINT.

CHRISTIAANSE, IN OSWALT, OVERMEYER &
MISSELWITZ, 2014. P 15

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