

*Narrative Debris: Counter-Mapping Overlooked Socio-Political
Stories of Montreal's Quartier des Spectacles*

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ABSTRACT

Narrative Debris: Counter-Mapping Overlooked Socio-Political Stories of Montreal's Quartier des Spectacles

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This thesis-creation bears witness to overlooked social and political narratives of Montreal's Quartier des Spectacles, a historically and culturally rich area undergoing rapid gentrification and commercialization since 2003 (Lam, 2007).

The creation project, *Narrative Debris* (2021) consists of a public facing website and participatory kit. The website presents an illustrated map of the Quartier des Spectacles which invites visitors to explore experiential feedback from participants of an audio walk. The participatory kit offers the public an accessible tool to create their own paper-making debris-mapping of the neighbourhood. The goal of the research is to challenge the area's current monolithic narrative as a place of commercialized entertainment by using embodied, materially engaged, and participatory methods. The research emerges from a series of iterative walks leading to new sensory, temporal and qualitative approaches to mapping. These techniques captured the subjective, material, and gestural dimensions of Quartier des Spectacles, and examined how maps could amplify alternative socio-political narratives.

Debris-maps: hand-made paper sheets created using debris collected from the Quartier des Spectacles, were developed as a counter mapping strategy. Examining what discarded remnants can tell us, the process highlighted local social phenomena such as the opioid crisis and the impacts of the recent acceleration of gentrification. This process exposed the importance of inviting others into the research. Informal interviews, an audio walk, and participatory kits were used to engage with local participants' experiences and histories of the area.

Keywords: Counter-Mapping; Debris; Paper-Making; Walking, Participatory Methods and Kits; Urban Narratives; Quartier des Spectacles; Montreal; Research-Creation

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Equally important, as a participatory research-creation project this work could not have happened without the thoughtful input and time of the many participants who walked, collected, documented, mapped, and created in response to the audio walk and participatory kits. Thank you to these individuals who volunteered to be interviewed, provide documentation and/or create debris-mappings for this research. I am incredibly grateful for your contribution.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|------|-------------------------------|
| QDS | Quartier des spectacles |
| BLM | Black lives matter |
| Bld | Boulevard |
| HIV | Human immunodeficiency virus |
| POPs | Persistent organic pollutants |
| St. | Street |

INTRODUCTION

Defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “a representation usually on a flat surface of the whole or a part of an area” (2022), maps are used as a tool to organize large amounts of information. Maps are not exclusively geographical or spatial but can also illustrate supply chains, electronic circuits, or even weather patterns, they are – specifically representational maps (Knight, 2021a) – traditionally used to mark out borders, ownership, roads, buildings, and even places of commerce (*ibid*). Representational maps are a visual representation of a place that mimics the layout of a system, such as streets, to make it easy to navigate or understand (*ibid*). For example, historical representational maps were used by European settlers when they first arrived in what is today Montreal (Tiohtià:ke), to indicate the shore of the river and the location of the fortified settlement. Today there are many forms of representational maps that people encounter on a daily basis: Google Maps on their cell phones, floor plans of institutional buildings often found on walls next to elevators, and the map of the Montreal metro system. These maps tend to be easy to read, drawn to scale, and mirror the spatial layout of the place they represent.

However, maps can also supplement spatial representation to convey social, political, and material information and stories. For example, counter-mapping is a method less preoccupied with geographical readability and more concerned about conveying gestures, feelings and stories (Knight, 2021a). One specific form of counter-mapping is called ‘inefficient mapping,’ a term used by arts researcher Linda Knight, also professor at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University in Australia, to title her recent eponym book (*ibid*). For Knight, whose work challenges dominant spatial narratives through projects such as *Interface Jammers* (2022) which invites children to interact with, examine, and map their city (2022), inefficient mapping is a “visual, corporeal, animated and gestural practice” (2021b, 00:24 - 00:40). Envisioned as an immersive approach, counter-mappings thus highlight the many shifting relationalities of a place (*ibid*) and call for a change in both the aesthetics of the maps produced as well as the methods used to create them.

As such, this approach of using counter-maps to highlight socially and environmentally implicated narratives is an established practice among artists, including Lize Mogel and Lex Bhagat, Larissa

Fassler, and the Kollektiv Orangotango. Mogel is an American self-proclaimed counter-cartographer who sees "maps and the use of geography as a way to draw people into other stories such as the politics of space" (Whitney Museum of American Art, 2015). Alongside Lex Bhagat, Mogel curated and created *An Atlas of Radical Cartography* (2011), a collection of ten examples of politically charged maps from around the world that illustrates how representational maps can also be used to critically examine places we live in and move through. Larissa Fassler (2022) is a Canadian cartographer who creates layered hand-drawn maps. Through a mixture of statistical information, qualitative observations, and the cartographic layout of streets and buildings, she brings attention to the importance of the complexity of public spaces. Finally, Kollektiv Orangotango (2023), a global collective of critical geographers that formed in 2008, uses a mixture of statistical information, qualitative observations, and the cartographic layout of streets and buildings to explore questions of space, power, and resistance. With the book *This is NOT an Atlas* (2018), the collective provides over forty examples of how maps can be used as political tools to document the anti-eviction struggles in San Francisco, defend the Amazonian traditional territory, and mapping the flow of waste through the city of Hyderabad, India. Including multiple layers of complexity, the diverse counter-mapping approaches outlined above attend to what queer-feminist professor Stephanie Springgay, co-founder, with Sarah E. Truman, of the WalkingLab (McMaster University) describes as "the undocumented, affective, and fragmented compositions that tell stories about a past" but also "the present and an imagined future" (2017, p. 14).

As an incoming Masters of Design Student (Concordia University, Department of Design and Computation Arts, 2019 - 2023) and a newcomer to Montreal, I first started mapping or documenting the spatial, material, and social aspects of the city while commuting and walking, often between the University and my apartment in the Vieux-Rosemont neighbourhood. I repeatedly travelled through the Saint Laurent metro station to catch bus 51 going North. Through note-taking, photographs, and illustration I became curious about the social and demographic contrasts existing in the area surrounding the metro station. For example, shiny new condominium buildings were constructed next to people sleeping on the street, who lay next to groups of youth skateboarding.

This area of the city slowly discovered during my first months of living in Montreal (September 2019 to March 2020) is named the Quartier des Spectacles (QDS). Located within downtown Montreal, it spans East-West from Bleury Street (St.) to Saint Dominique St., and North-South from Ontario St. to René-Lévesque Boulevard (Blvd), covering less than one square kilometer (km²). Historically, the area was known for its sub-cultures and alternative entertainment. From the 1920s to the 1950s, the Red Light District, famous for its lively sex industry and for attracting jazz musicians and cabaret artists (Linteau, 1977), thrived in this neighbourhood. The area also contains a large section of the Saint Laurent Blvd or ‘The Main,’ historically known as the dividing line between the English (to the West) and French (to the East) cultural sides of Montreal (Linteau, 1977). Later in the 1980s and 1990s, music venues such as Les Foufounes Électriques became famous for bringing artists like Nirvana and Green Day to Montreal (Nirvana, 1991) and the Red Light District transformed into a hub for the local punk scene, motorcycle gangs, and sex work (Linteau, 1977).

Despite the thriving nightlife, the visibility of the sub-culture communities associated with the neighbourhood was not always appreciated by the City of Montreal (Linteau, 1977). In the 1950s, Mayor Jean Drapeau ordered an investigation to remove all of the people in the area considered dirty or of lesser value: cabaret dancers, people of colour, musicians, and sex workers (*ibid*). Drapeau referred to this as ‘cleaning-up’ the neighbourhood (*ibid*). More recently, since 2003, the dominant narrative of the QDS, envisioned as a major development and gentrifying project (Lam, 2007), is centered around commercial, mainstream entertainment and culture. The QDS attracts thousands of tourists every year to Montreal to consume entertainment in over thirty performance spaces and eight landscaped outdoor event spaces (Discover the quartier, 2022).

Today the area, which includes a section of the Saint Laurent Blvd, is part of the Ville-Marie Borough which is composed of forty-six percent immigrants of diverse cultural origins such as China, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Morocco (City of Montreal, 2018). While the QDS is currently being completely redeveloped by the City of Montreal as well as large developers such as the Société de développement Angus (Harper, 2009), its historical, cultural, and social diversity is at risk. As local QDS Cafe Cleopatra owner Zoumboulakis outlines, new developments threaten to erase the rich history of the area’s identity (*ibid*).

The QDS is not unique in facing the challenge of developing and improving the conditions of the city (e.g. introducing more bicycle lanes, creating public spaces, etc.) without defaulting to a monolithic narrative of, in the case of the QDS, a mainstream and gentrified area. Three examples of neighbourhoods in Montreal and Toronto that have, and are, going through this struggle are Griffintown and Park Extension in Montreal, and Chinatown in Toronto. Griffintown, was formed in the early 1800s by Mary Griffin and the Irish immigrant community. It became a thriving neighbourhood for many marginalized groups such as Irish, Ukrainian, and Italian communities (Mayrand-Fiset, 2013). In the 1960s the city rezoned Griffintown as an industrial area which allowed for the Bonaventure Expressway to be built straight through it (*ibid*). The inhabitants of the neighbourhood were quickly pushed out, and by the 1970s only a few thousand people lived in the area (*ibid*). While in recent years the City of Montreal committed to revitalizing Griffintown through the construction of large condominium buildings, the neighbourhood's history is quickly disappearing and leaves in its wake a shiny cluster of condominiums that is indistinguishable from countless other areas throughout Montreal and North America.

Park Extension is another neighbourhood facing large-scale development that threatens the community. The area has been home to many immigrant communities since the mid 1900s from Italian, to Greek, to most recently South Asian, Haitian, and Latin American (Choinière, n.d.). The neighbourhood has built a strong community which can be easily seen by all of the Indian, Pakistani and Sri Lankan grocery stores, clothing shops, and restaurants that line Jean-Talon St. (*ibid*). Recently, the area faced challenges ignited by the development of the new Université de Montréal's Campus MIL in Outremont (2019). The local influx of students and high-tech companies has caused a landslide in rent increases, evictions, and/or absentee landlords to occur (Parc-Ex Anti-eviction Mapping Project, 2023). Within this tense socio-political context, counter-mapping tools like the Parc Ex Anti Eviction Mapping Project are being used to document the housing impact of new large-scale developments on the current low-income community and hopefully help protect the diversity of the neighbourhood (*ibid*).

Finally, with rent increases of almost fifty percent since 2016, Toronto Chinatown's historical and social significance is also currently under threat from gentrification (Nasser, 2019). While Chinatown, similar to others across North America, provides an important physical site for Chinese

and Taiwanese individuals to find community and connect to their heritage (*ibid*), the current situation makes it hard for family-owned businesses to stay open and the community is left vulnerable to new, more affluent business owners to enter the area, who have little knowledge or concern about the history of Chinatown (*ibid*). The transformation of these three areas, Griffintown, Park Extension, and Toronto's Chinatown illustrate how development is sometimes made with little consideration for the impact on the most socio-economically vulnerable and their histories.

The case of the QDS aligns with all three previous examples which demonstrate how the re-development of an area can risk the loss of historical contexts and splinter local socio-cultural networks. When urban planning and development homogenize a neighbourhood, community consultations and interviews are some techniques that contribute to uncovering citizens' needs and desires (Springgay & Truman, 2017). This research-creation project proposes complementary alternative methods to these well-established strategies. It does so to value the multiplicity of narratives and histories of the QDS by mapping the human sensory experiences and memories, as well stories told by the more-than-human inhabitants such as the pigeons, old beer cans, scraps of insulation, and dried leaves.

Over time, this research-creation emerged as an inquiry into how overlooked narratives of the QDS could be preserved in an effort to diversify the stories told about the area, beyond the current dominant narrative of mainstream commercialized entertainment. The main research-creation questions discussed in this thesis thus articulate as follow:

How can counter-mapping techniques be used to uncover and preserve the overlooked socio-cultural and political narratives of the QDS?

To address this question, I actively worked in the QDS for two and a half years (April 2020 – November 2022), walking, documenting, mapping, and foraging the neighbourhood. This journey resulted in the emergence of a secondary research question:

What can walking and engaging with the material debris of the QDS teach us about the area?

The research process resulted in *Narrative Debris* (see Appendix A), a web and participatory piece initially presented online (2021), and subsequently in person (Milieux Institute for the Arts,

Culture, and Technology, 2022). *Narrative Debris* is composed of two parts: a public facing website (www.narrativedebris.com) and a debris-mapping participatory kit. The website, accessible in French and English, hosts a digital version of an illustrated map of the QDS. Focusing on a slightly smaller subsection of the area (East-West between St. Urbain and Saint Dominique, and North-South between De Maisonneuve and René-Lévesque). The map proposes red dots for visitors to click and explore feedback and observations from locals, newcomers, academics, artists and researchers who participated in the audio walk (Fall 2020). The illustrated map acts as a visual repository of a diverse range of qualitative experiences of the QDS such as the sound of loud traffic and visually noticing discarded clothes and dandelions. Alongside this, the website also includes a debris-maps page and, originally when the research was active, an onboarding form for the public to participate in the research and receive a kit. This research-creation work was produced during Covid-19 when physical exhibitions were not possible. Therefore, the website acted as both a research and dissemination tool. The second part of the work, the participatory kit, is created from recycled materials and offers the participants accessible tools to create their own debris-mapping: Bilingual instructions, a pre-stamped return envelope, a mesh-screen, and recycled shredded paper. In total eight debris-mappings were created by participants, all of which can be viewed on the website. In this way, the website fed the dissemination of participatory kits, while the participatory kits fed the website.

What is the objective of this thesis and who is it for?

With an understanding of maps being an effective and affective tool to explore a specific geographical place, this research-creation examines how representational and counter-mapping, sustained by methods such as walking, sensory exploration, foraging, or paper-making, can bring awareness to the multilayered histories that exist in the QDS. By connecting with the materiality of the site and producing maps which challenge the dominant commercial narrative of the neighbourhood, an effort is made to remember and re-imagine the area. This opens potential for awareness of and an expansion of narratives that are valued and used to define the QDS in a more inclusive multi-temporal manner. The purpose of this research is thus to propose the use of more embodied, materially focused, sensory engaged, and participatory forms of exploring and documenting the QDS, and more broadly, North American urban areas undergoing transformation. To do so, the research proposes methods that can inspire fellow artists, designers, cartographers,

community organizers, archivists, and educators interested in using mapping to draw attention to the plurality of socio-political narratives that exist in urban areas, specifically those of gentrification, economic inequality, and policing.

Notes on the methodology

At the “the complex intersection of art practice, theoretical concepts, and research” (Springgay & Truman, 2016), research-creation problematizes material and performative practices with “the aim of producing new esthetic, theoretical, methodological, epistemological or technical knowledge” (Hexagram, 2017). Professors Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman from the WalkingLab (McMaster University) describe key aspects pertaining to the experimental and speculative dimension of research-creation. They outline how this approach is “future event oriented” and thus “invents techniques of relation.” The researchers write that “the aim of research-creation is not to reflect on something that has passed” but rather a way of ‘thinking-in-movement’ or “to think in the act.” Springgay and Truman thus suggest that this ‘thinking in the act’ allows for proliferation of ideas and emerging “ethical-political concerns” that can only be explored and experimented iteratively to examine the outcomes they produce (Springgay & Truman, 2016).

Echoing Truman and Springgay, this research-creation thesis centers an emerging methodology that remains attentive to detours, details, and pivotal moments in the process. The counter-mapping approach presented, both in its material and intellectual dimension, emerged through the various combinations of methods that continuously modulated the evolution of *Narrative Debris*. Following an iterative and cyclical approach (Giaccardi & Straooers, 2023), each “prototype” or, in this case each intervention or action in the urban environment, held space for reflection and critical evaluation. This recursive approach informed each step of the research, and fostered the emergence of new discoveries and ideas along the way (Jarry, 2019). Indeed, walking was first used by me to discover an area of the city that I knew very little about.

Walking was combined with photography, audio recordings, and field notes, to develop a critical and sensory-focused method of walking which informed my creation and use of maps as well as a participatory audio walk. Throughout this process I also conducted interviews with a variety of stakeholders: a developer, a local former drug user, and another individual who grew up in the area.

These three interviews, different from the feedback gathered from participants after their engagement with the audio walks or participatory kits, informed the debris collection, paper-making, and the narratives that emerged in each map. In turn, these activities led to the many versions of the participatory debris-mapping kits. Mentioned above, while the research-creation methodology could not be predetermined (Springgay & Truman, 2016), the process followed what Springgay calls “thinking-in-movement” where the combination of the aforementioned methods fed the emergence of this reflection on the social, material, historical, and political narratives of the QDS.

Attending to the ‘techniques of relation’ that informed the research process, what Springgay and Truman name ‘thinking-in-movement’ was also deployed in the very writing of the thesis. It is therefore necessary to keep in mind that the literature review, the research methodology and the theoretical framework that underlie the counter-mapping-approach filter through all aspects of *Narrative Debris* and will not be the subject of separate chapters. Echoing the iterative practice advanced during my Masters of Design, various aspects of the work will be analyzed at different times and each chapter will trace key conceptual and practical relationships that the research-creation sustains with theorists and other practitioners. This choice constitutes a way of keeping the ‘narrative journey’ of this research ongoing, and of anchoring the reflection in all the stages of the research, from making, to analysis, and writing. Below is a summary of the chapters to follow.

About the articulation of the chapters

The first chapter, *Mapping the Quartier des Spectacles through ‘walking-with,’* focuses on how walking was used as a critical method of becoming acquainted with the QDS between the months of April to July 2020. The reflection will be sustained by the works of Springgay and Truman (2017) and Sarah Ahmed (2006). I will share how the iterative nature of walking enabled participants to ‘walk-with’ the QDS. “Walking-with” (Springgay & Truman, 2017) is a form of walking that challenges the dominant narratives and what is taken for granted through shifting one's awareness and perspective. Focusing on the Saint Laurent metro station, the old location of the Screaming Eagle building on Saint Laurent Blvd, and the intersection of Sainte-Catherine St. and Saint Laurent Blvd and their visual documentation, I discuss how ‘walking-with’ allowed the relationality between the human and more-than-human inhabitants of the QDS to be perceived. I

will also examine how ‘walking-with’ led to sensory engagement which brought about the development of the “curiosity spotlight,’ an approach developed through iteratively walking through the QDS and placing my focus on overlooked senses (sound, touch, smell), places, and materials. The use of the ‘curiosity spotlight,’ I developed during the research process, assisted exploring orientation (Ahmed, 2006) towards/away-from different people, buildings and things in the area. In relation to the ‘curiosity spotlight,’ the use of sound walks (Schafer, 1977; Westerkamp, 2023) is discussed as an affective way of discovering a place. Finally, this chapter will end with how representational mapping has been used by many artists, such as Larissa Fassler, Liz Mogel and Kate McLean, to draw attention to alternative socio-political narratives. I will share how a representational map was created while ‘walking-with,’ alongside the use of interviews, to document the emergence of socio-political narratives: police presences, hostile architecture, gentrification, and economic-inequality within the QDS.

Chapter two, *Debris: from Discarded Fragments to Spatial Storytellers*, focuses on how ‘walking-with’ and the ‘curiosity spotlight’ helped to transform debris observed and collected in the QDS from valueless waste into traces of socio-political alternative narratives. The research will be placed in conversation with political theorist Jane Bennett’s concept of ‘thing-power’ and how it challenges the duality between alive and inert (2010). I will also explore ideas proposed by academic and waste expert Myra J. Hird in relation to how materials move from being useful to useless and the value paradigm attached to this cycle (2021). Drawing on memories shared by interview participants as well as the work of artists Agematsu (Oetting, 2022), Hong (Hong, n.d.), and Ajossa (Durgin, 2019) who use debris and/or paper-making in their process, I will discuss how handmade paper counter-maps allowed collected debris to form haptic, spatial, and temporal depictions of specific points within the QDS. In this context, debris collected outside the Saint Laurent metro station, at the intersection of Sainte-Catherine St. and Saint Laurent Blvd, and along Saint Dominique St. behind Place de la Paix will point towards tales of gentrification, drug use, sex work, socio-economic disparity, and houseless-ness.

Finally, the third chapter, *Doing it with Others* highlights the vital and challenging step of involving other individuals to reflect on, engage with, and move through stories of the QDS. I examine how the remote participatory tools of an audio walk and debris-mapping kits led to shared

documentation, memories and debris-mappings that expanded the scope of narratives to include other individuals who lived, worked and/or played in the QDS. For this I will reference Sasha Costanza-Chock (2020) a design-justice scholar and activist, whose work emphasizes the importance of involving individuals in the community that is being designed for. With this in mind, I will also examine the work of other practitioners and collectives using walks and tours such as Jane Jacob's Walks (n.d.), Black Montreal Experience (Joseph, n.d.), Los Angeles Urban Rangers (n.d.), and Friends of the Saint Laurent Blvd (2018), and discuss how the audio walk offered a method of both communicating the research and collecting documentation from participants which was later plotted on the online digitalized representational map. Relying on the work of artists Kathleen Vaughan (2021) and Aaron McIntosh (n.d.) who have used kits as part of their own research-creation processes, I will finally turn attention to *Narrative Debris*' participatory kits. While they relied less on written and spoken language and more on material engagement, I will explain how the kits acted as an iterative and dispersive tool to share techniques developed during my solo research, while encouraging individuals to provide critical feedback alongside their own interpretation of creating a debris-map.

At the end of this thesis, Appendix A offers complimentary images of *Narrative Debris*.

CHAPTER I

MAPPING THE QUARTIER DES SPECTACLES THROUGH ‘WALKING-WITH’

“ ‘Walking-with’ demands that we forgo universal claims about how humans and non-humans experience walking, and consider more-than-human ethics and politics ”
(Springgay & Truman, 2017, p. 11)

Over a period of seven months, April to October 2020, walking slowly became, for me, a central iterative pillar in the research and making process, each walk building on the outcomes of the last (Giaccardi & Straooers, 2023). Walking is not a new practice and it has been used by many artists. One can think of the traditional *flâneur* figure, a person of privilege, often male, who wanders aimlessly in the city (Elkin, 2016). Walking was also used in the past as an act of resistance against the prescribed paths of movement designed within cities. Guy Debord (1956) initiated the concept and practice of the *dérive*, which can be interpreted as a drifting through the city. Contemporary to Debord, social science scholar Michel de Certeau (2002) highlighted the tension brought by the governing forces of a city and the maps produced by official bodies such as governments, municipal administrations, or corporations. In comparison to the transversal way in which people more naturally move through cities, these official maps impose homogenous movements on bodies.

Although Debord and de Certeau highlight the potential for walking as a mode of urban transformation and inquiry, their work pre-exist the current wave of gentrification, and they both approach walking from a white male positionality. With that said, I intentionally chose to look at more contemporary practices, diversifying the perspective beyond the male gaze to foster an inclusion of a plurality of voices and perspectives. In doing so I mainly reference research-creation scholar Springgay (Springgay & Truman, 2017). By using walking as a research method, the author argues that while walking itself is a form of place-making, ‘walking-with’ connects the walker's body and positionality to the environment and the sensory experience of space. ‘Walking-with’ is thus a transversal form of walking that explores the oblique stories of urban spaces (Springgay & Truman, 2016).

Within this framework, walking is understood as a way of becoming responsive to place and activating modes of spatial engagement that are situated and relational (Springgay & Truman,

2016). Starting outside of the Saint Laurent metro station, I leveraged this approach as an early individual strategy to researching the QDS and eventually expanding toward a participatory mode of urban engagement in the final creation piece of *Narrative Debris* (fig. 1.1). Over time, walking became a transversal method to enrich the understanding of relations *with* the QDS dwellers, authorities, architecture, histories, flora and fauna, debris, hierarchies, politics, textures, sounds, and smells.



Figure 1.1 Narrative Debris website homepage

Attending to the multi-sensory experience of the neighbourhood, and using the creation of a representation map to document these experiences, this chapter focuses on how walking brought a deeper awareness of the interactions between human and more-than-humans as well as the material, historical, social, and political agencies at play within the QDS. For this, I relate the experience of walking to the work of Springgay as well as feminist phenomenology scholar Ahmed.

In her book *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), Ahmed addresses the meeting point between human and objects - material items, ideas, memories, thoughts, and social expectations - as a two-way approach: as we 'orient' towards, or away from, objects, they 'orient' towards, or away, from us. While Ahmed (*ibid*) states that objects are relational and our understanding of them depends on our previous experiences, Springgay (2017) leverages this web of interaction to discuss how urban spaces do not contain objects as inert, stagnant matter, but as things that come into existence based on their relationality.

In the first section, I situate the research around the Saint Laurent metro station to discuss how the use of walking, combined with photography and note-taking brought about an attunement to

surveillance, power dynamics, and the entanglement of object-object, human-object and human-human relationalities within the QDS.

Next, I examine the condominium project *Laurent and Clark* to introduce the method of the ‘curiosity spotlight’ as a means to focus on certain senses while walking. I will bring the research into conversation with the notion of ‘orientation’ (Ahmed, 2006), which addresses how the co-habitation of ourselves and other objects dictates what can be reached within space. Relating to the work of Murray Schafer (1977) and Hildergard Westerkamp (2023), I will share how focusing on a single sense during a listening walk opened up an awareness towards the gentrification of the area.

Finally, I will describe how the process of ‘walking-with’ also included conducting interviews and mapping to move towards a more in-depth social and historical understanding of the QDS’s transformation. The individuals interviewed, and participants in general, will be referred to, both in this chapter and throughout the thesis, by their chosen name indicated on their consent form. As will be revealed below, conversation I had undertaken during the interviews, specifically with Pierre and Denise, highlighted conflicting views on gentrification in the area. These conversations were complemented by the use of a counter mapping procedure to capture temporal and qualitative observations of the neighbourhood. Expanding on documentation I conducted of the Screaming Eagle, Midway Theatre and Club Soda, I will discuss how the my slow creation of a counter map was used to capture temporal observations of the QDS as I iteratively moved through this urban area.

1.1 Iterative Walking Transformed Walking into ‘Walking-with’

Within this section I specifically focus on the Saint Laurent metro station and the area directly outside its entrance as a point of departure for exploring the neighbourhood (fig. 1.2). I will discuss two iterations of a walk I took, and how my photo documentation enabled an enhanced perception of the evolution and transformation of the space.



Figure 1.2 Four photos of the Saint Laurent metro station between June and November 2020

A Walk on June 9, 2020: The Uncomfortable Presence of Authorities

As I approached the station, I noticed a police car parked outside of the entrance (fig. 1.3). During the previous weeks there had been protests in the area for the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. BLM is a global protest against the racist modes of operation by North American police, specifically ignited by the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020 (The Canadian Press, 2020). The car acted as a visual metaphor for the power hierarchy that has existed within the QDS for the last hundred years. I challenged a learnt apprehension for the police by engaging with the two officers in an impromptu dialogue. No clear answers were given as to why the police officers were there, however their presence acted as a symbol of surveillance and authority that played and plays, a role in the current, and historical, battles for social rights in the area. For example, in the late 1950's the police raided cabaret venues and bars at the intersection of Sainte-Catherine St. and Saint Laurent Blvd (Leclerc, 2018). This raid destroyed community spaces for black artists, trans-performers, and homosexuals (*ibid*). In the days preceding, and following, June 9, 2020, allies joined with people of colour during the BLM protests which moved directly past the Saint Laurent metro station throughout June 2020.



Figure 1.3 Police car outside the Saint Laurent metro station June 9, 2020

In *Milanese Encounters: Public Space and Vision in Contemporary Italy* (2015), sensory and urban anthropologist Christina Moretti discusses how walking allows her to better understand the political and social dynamics of an urban space, including the power dynamics imposed by certain groups upon others: "neighborhoods are gentrified, new ones constructed, and an increasingly diverse population uses the city's public spaces, [...] streets can become a source of constructive belonging as much as a tool to exclude others from that community" (p. 6). Walking through the QDS, I witnessed groups of individuals constructing a sense of belonging through marching together for BLM, despite the obstacles posed by police officers in opposition to the social solidarity that was attempting to form. While the presence of the police car echoed the historical violence and injustice perpetrated on people of colour, trans-community, and houseless population (Leclerc, 2018), this walk brought a critical consideration towards the power dynamics at play within the QDS and began influencing how I acted, moved, and observed the space.

A Walk on June 17, 2020: Observing More-Than Relations

A few days later, the space outside the station changed again as I observed different types of social and material relations unfold while I escaped the sun in a patch of shade next to the station. At first I saw very little, but slowly, more emerged. Two security guards chatted with one another, a person

talked on their phone, and a can of beer sat hidden behind a pillar. The interactions observed, and reached, were documented through an on-site illustration (fig. 1.4).

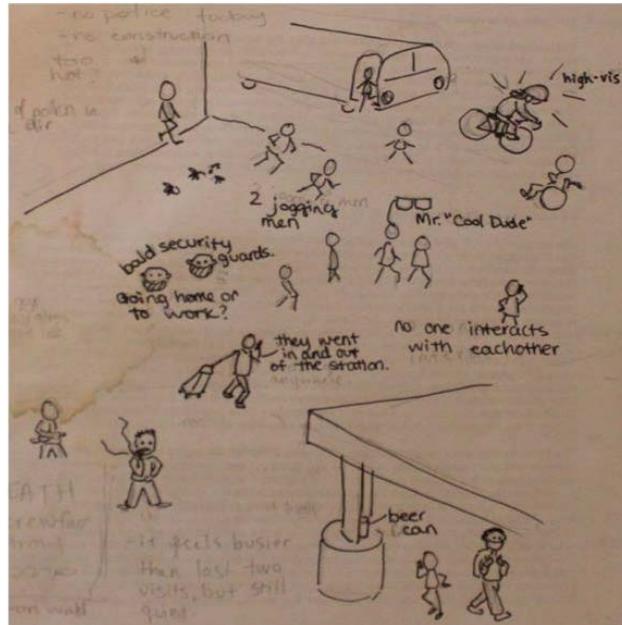


Figure 1.4 Documentation of activity at the Saint Laurent metro station on June 17 2020

Ahmed (2006) suggests that objects are not reducible to commodities but can rather be considered as “relationalities.” Action, she says “depends on how we reside in space with objects” (*ibid*, p. 30). Sitting in that patch of shade, an orientation in relation to the station and sunlight dictated what could be reached and observed. As I took note, I slowly became aware of humans and the built environment in relation to one another. Table 1.1 summarizes some of the many interactions observed onsite.

Table 1.1

Interactions between humans and more-than humans observed on June 17, 2020. The left column indicates what type of objects or bodies are interacting and the right column indicates what relationalities were observed.

| Who and what interacts | Observed Relationalities |
|------------------------|--|
| human-human | Two bald security guards chat as they walk |
| human-object | A person talks on their phone |
| animal-human-object | Birds move between humans in search of food |
| object-object | Partially consumed beverage sits next to a pole by the entrance to the metro station |
| object-building | Cop car parks in front of the metro station |
| animal-object | Ants crawl into my open coconut soda |
| animal-animal | Pigeons fight one another for Mr. Puff's |
| weather-object-human | I hide from the hot sun in the shade of a sign post |

Ahmed (2006) outlines that the ability to perceive relations between people and/or objects is not immediate, but rather is the “effects of the repetition of actions over time” (p. 23). By iteratively returning and documenting the same area in front of the station, more and more social and material relations emerged. While walking enabled an attunement towards a diverse range of interactions, this mode of engagement started embodying the idea of ‘walking-with’ brought by Springgay (2017), and challenged the perceived “distinctions made between humans and nonhumans, nature and culture” (p. 8).

1.2 The ‘Curiosity Spotlight’: The Sounds of Gentrification

Springgay (2017) challenges hierarchies of knowledge by including sensory and experiential methods as legitimate forms of knowing. She also outlines how using proximal senses such as sound, smell, and touch are bridges between mind, body, and the physical space walked through. Walking iteratively in the QDS led towards developing the method of the ‘curiosity spotlight,’ which consists of isolating specific senses, such as hearing, while ‘walking-with’ to explore how different sensory experiences uncover narratives of a space.

‘Walking-with’ sound, I experienced a beeping construction truck; metal clanging; cooing of a pigeon; chatter of a group of people walking by; someone yelling; a skateboard rolling over pavement; the hum of a ventilation system; the wind rustling leaves; and the distant honk of a car.

In the *World Soundscape* (Simon Fraser University, 2022) composer, writer and educator Murray Schafer uses sound walks and field recordings to document different sites, their sounds such as construction trucks and power tools, and the associated stories that we learn to ignore and write-off as noise (Schafer, 1994). Similarly, influential Canadian sound ecologist and composer Hildegard Westerkamp, member of the *The World Soundscape Project*, creates “acoustic images” of cities using sound recordings, shared memories and stories, such as “Beads of Time Sounding” (2023). Using the ‘curiosity spotlight’ changed my perspective on urban sounds or what Schafer (1994) refers as “stories that we learned to ignore and write-off as noise.” Experiencing these sounds along Saint Laurent Blvd pointed toward the impacts of gentrification on the area.

Indeed, the bombardment of construction sounds at the *Laurent and Clark* condominium construction site, across from the station, poses the question: who is intended to have access to this space in the future? Twenty-five percent of the population in the QDS was considered low income in 2016 (City of Montreal, 2018). In the last five years luxury condominiums continued to be constructed in the area. In 2022, a two-bedroom unit in this building rented for \$6,000 per month (Padmapper, 2022). Several other luxury housing projects such as the *MonDev Myriade* condominiums, built south of the station in 2022, highlighted how the QDS is currently being developed to attract a wealthier demographic, with a risk of erasing the area’s diverse and layered histories.

This rapid change in the neighbourhood’s aesthetics, buildings and inhabitants is a controversial topic. Pierre, an employee of Cité Angus, a large Montreal-based development company whom I connected with after reaching out to the company, told me he was proud to be part of the movement to make the area “nicer than it was” (Pierre, personal communication, Nov 18, 2020). He described how:

projects such as Carre Saint Laurent are interesting in the way that they muster a bit of work in the buildings surrounding the project. We saw last year or so people building

on the other part of the street what is likely to be now owned by new people who will probably invest and bring other people (*ibid*).

This view of ‘development’ runs parallel to Mayor Jean Drapeau, who in 1955, ordered an investigation to ‘clean-up’ the living conditions in the area in an effort to push out more vulnerable people that called the area home: musicians, people of colour, sex workers, and burlesque dancers (Linteau, 1977).

In contrast, when interviewing Denise, a local Montreal citizen who grew up in the plateau and spent many days and nights in the area in the 1980s and 1990s as a teenager, a different view on gentrification emerged. She described how “lots of stuff was happening there. And yea I can see how someone might say it was scary, but just because it was so different. [...] But this is real. This is life.” (Denise, personal communication, Nov 24, 2020). Discussing the current state of the area Denise noted that those whom she mostly sees in the area now are homeless people, no longer motorcyclists, sex workers, or punks. Rather than being opposed to re-development, and aware of how certain communities were erased, Denise expressed how she wished companies like Cité Angus would create projects that worked with already-existing communities and what they need rather than try to re-create the area from scratch (*ibid*). Through interviewing both Pierre and Denise and using the ‘curiosity spotlight’ to bring attention to the sounds of the QDS, I was able to gain new understandings of the historical and current gentrification and social inequalities that exist in the area. This sustained and intentional focus on the auditory experience became a process of ‘turning-towards’ certain objects and sounds, and away from others (Ahmed, 2006). While my senses pulled attention in the direction of gentrified buildings, the ‘curiosity spotlight’ zoomed in on the socio-economic divide in the area, and ‘walking-with’ became a way to uncover barriers of access to the city (Springgay & Truman, 2017).

1.3 Mapping Material and Social Experiences

The use of the ‘curiosity spotlight’ enhanced my desire to further document the changing and increasingly gentrifying streetscape of the neighbourhood. Expanding the approach of ‘walking-with,’ I started mapping experiences within the area and interviewing local stakeholders. While the use of representational maps risks inflating dominant narratives and neglecting the multitude of stories from residences, memories, and everyday impressions of a place (Elsherif, 2018), mapping

and interviews were complementary means to bear witness to the stories of the at-risk past and present buildings and local communities. In this sub-section, I continue to draw from interviews with both Pierre and Denise, to zoom-in on the historical and social narratives associated with the Screaming Eagle Building on Saint Laurent Blvd and the intersection of Saint Laurent Blvd and Sainte-Catherine St.

A Walk June 19, 2020: Screaming Eagle is Here Today but Gone Tomorrow

Screaming Eagle was the name of a leather motorcycle clothing store situated at 1424 Saint Laurent Blvd, and founded in 1986 (Screaming Eagle, 2022), it was demolished in 2021 to construct condominiums. The recent sale (2020) of this leather motorcycle clothing store links to the historical context of the QDS in the 1980s and 1990s as a gathering space for motorcycle gangs. As interviewee Denise (Denise, personal communication, Nov 24, 2020) shared, a few blocks away from this store “there was this great ice cream place on Sainte-Catherine St. next to a big open lot. All the motorcyclists hung out there.” Later Denise described another spot around the corner where she shared a kiss with someone as they sat on a bench within a park that no longer exists (*ibid*). Memories of a place are attached to the physicality of that place, illustrated by the difficulty Denise described in locating memories without physical reference points (*ibid*). As I approached 1424 Saint Laurent Blvd, I directed my ‘curiosity-spotlight’ toward what was there in the moment: orienting toward the debris, graffiti, and humans present at the Screaming Eagle site.

I started recording the old rags, the interaction between two men, a parking sign, and gravel. This map, although representational in nature, highlighted the temporal and sensorial traces and encounters within the surrounding space, such as the sounds of trucks, and scattering of cigarette butts outside the Saint Laurent metro station. Consisting of a patchwork of small pieces of paper, the map acted as a guiding force, as it slowly grew into its final form and incorporated other segments of the QDS as I ‘walked-with’ them (fig. 1.5).

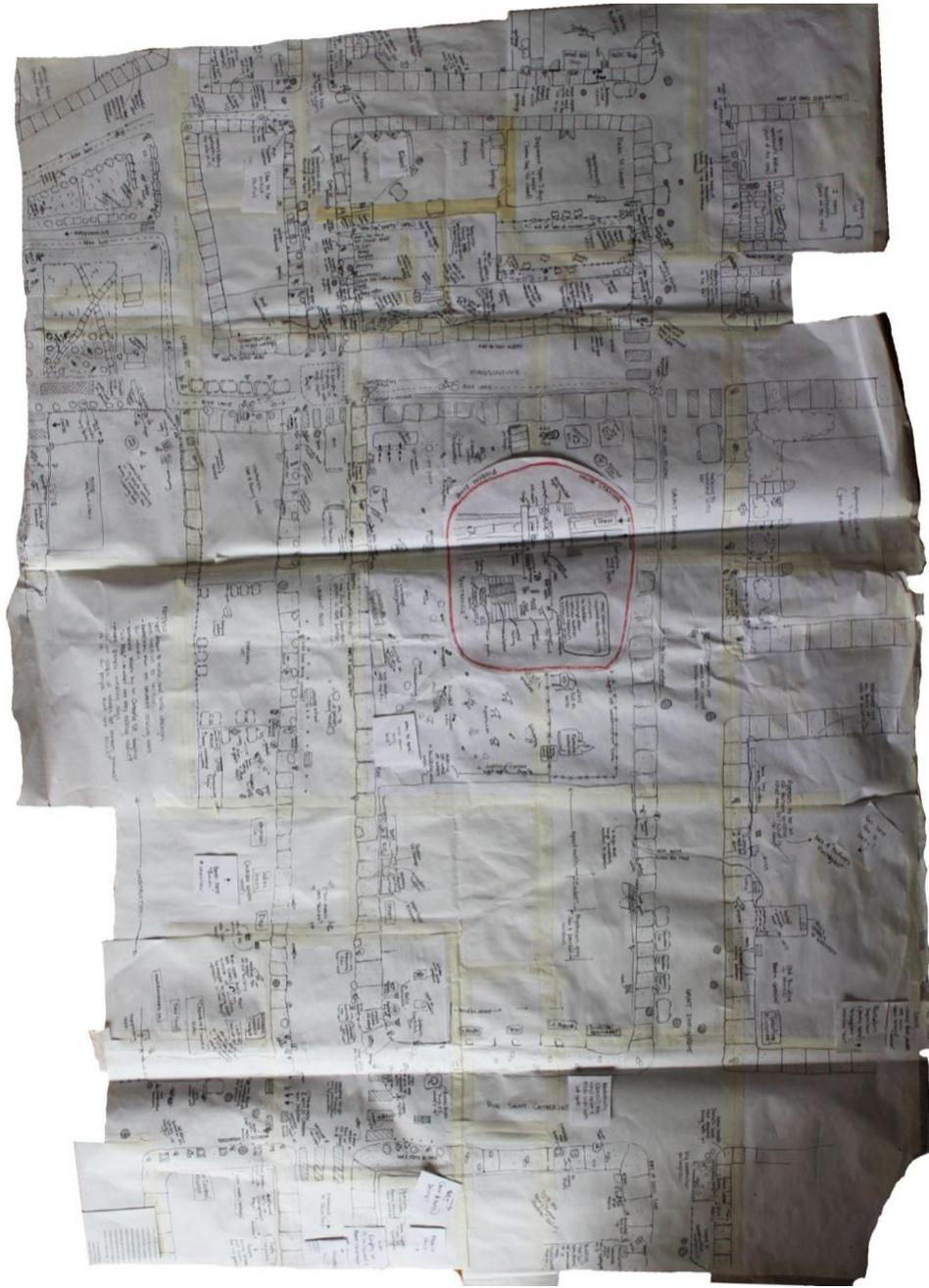


Figure 1.5 Illustrated representational map of the QDS

This process parallels the annotated map *Civic Center II* created by Larissa Fassler (2022), a Canadian cartographic artist who use maps to draw attention to the layers of influence and narratives within public spaces (*ibid*). *Civic Center II* is a documentation of Fassler's personal

experience visiting Calgary in 2016 through including observations and thoughts such as “Man walks in, quickly, scans the room, walks out at the same quick pace” (*ibid*).

Another artist using mapping as a form of capturing overlooked narratives is Kate McLean. McLean organizes participatory smell walks within cities throughout the world and creates intricate cartographic depictions of these experiences, such as *Summer Streets Smell* (2017). The maps use different colours, symbols, text, and proximity in the maps to indicate scent trails, bubbles, and instances (*ibid*).

Finally, another practitioner using maps as a form of social awareness and resistance to dominant narratives is the counter-cartographer and educator Liz Mogel. Mogel creates and curate’s maps as a form of challenging preconceived ideas of spaces and histories (Whitney Museum of American Art, 2015). She has been working on a mapping and walking project since 2016, *Walking the Watershed*, which explores links between landscape, politics, and histories in relation to New York City’s water supply (*ibid*).

Similar to Fassler, McLean and Mogel, I also used walking, in the form of ‘walking-with,’ alongside mapping in order, not to delineate land but rather, to document the temporal, sensory and material assemblages of the QDS. This slow process of specifically focusing on the social and material dimensions of QDS unravelled its historical dimension.

A Walk July 5, 2020: Unfolding a History of Sex Work

From the Screaming Eagle, I turned my attention one block south, towards the intersection of Saint Laurent Blvd and Sainte-Catherine St. (fig. 1.6). In the first half of the 20th century this intersection was the main axis of the Red Light District, an area famous for jazz music, cabaret, and the sex industry (Linteau, 1977). Many buildings and venues from that period can still be spotted today, such as the Midway Theatre and Crystal Palace (now Club Soda). Ahmed (2017) describes how viewing objects with wonder or curiosity brings the history of these things (or places) alive. Standing at this intersection, I was curious about what, currently and previously, lay behind the dusty windows of the “Chambre and Studio Hotel.” As documented on the map (fig. 1.6), “each window had an A/C in it. Who stays in these rooms?” (Enns, 2020).

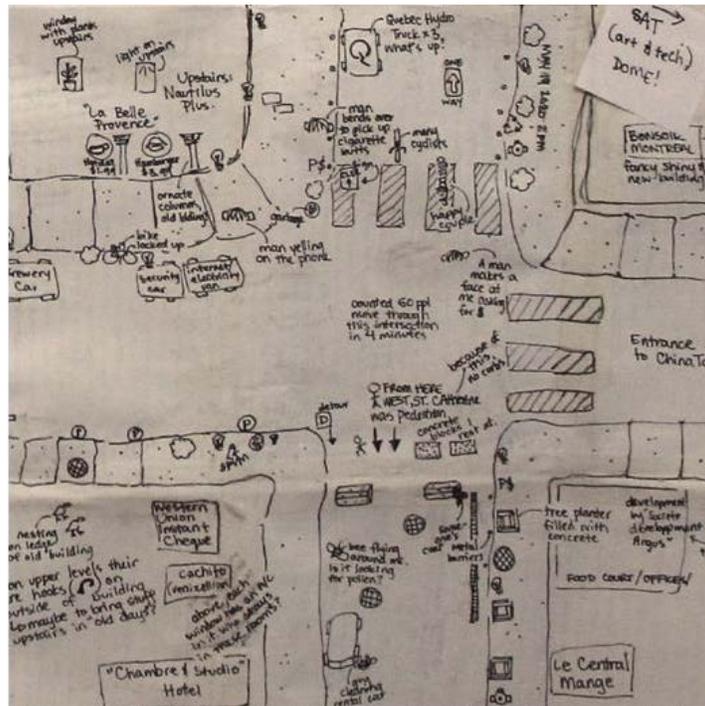


Figure 1.6 Section of the illustrated map: North side of the intersection of Sainte-Catherine St. and Saint Laurent

It is likely that “Chambre and Studio Hotel” is used by sex workers to conduct business because it is along a busy street, Sainte-Catherine, which tends to offer a certain level of safety due to the high volume of people (Black, 2020). The sex industry has always had to operate with caution in the area. In the 1950s sex workers within the Red Light District were constantly arrested during frequent police raids in an effort to shut down the operations (Linteau, 1977). Today, the industry has become even less visible due to Bill C-36 which makes paying for sex illegal (Government of Canada, 2015), gentrification of the QDS, and the ethical disapproval of the industry by a large portion of society. Pierre voiced this prejudice when stating “I was scared of going there [...] because you hear stories about prostitution and drugs and all that stuff [...] I hope that [has] changed” (Pierre, personal communication, Nov 18, 2020). Pierre’s statement demonstrated how the presence of the sex industry is synonymous with danger according to certain communities.

Documenting with the illustrated map provided an opportunity to focus attention on the sensory and layered experience of these sites. Through my exercise of recording the dusty windows, rags,

rubble, and graffiti these overlooked objects began holding narrative potential as I shifted my orientation, and focused the ‘curiosity spotlight’ on them (Ahmed, 2006). Through ‘walking-with,’ new forms of mapping could be speculated on and I found a means to speculate and imagine, and thereby challenging narrative hierarchies (Springgay & Truman, 2017). To do so, I tried to walk with an intentional focus placed beyond the QDS’ current dominant-commercial-entertainment narrative, hoping that the entanglement of socio-political narratives crucial to the present and historic context of the area would begin to unravel. The narratives that emerged related to sub-communities, specifically motorcycle gangs and sex workers within the QDS. Lived experiences shared by Denise and Pierre contextualized how this area has, and continues, to transform due to gentrification, and the narratives and material assemblages discovered were documented as written observations or clusters of objects drawn on the map (fig. 1.6).

1.4 Conclusion

The experience of returning, day after day, to the Saint Laurent metro station let me to ‘walk-with’ the site and thereby experience the QDS in a detail orientated way. Through this process I developed the tool of the ‘curiosity spotlight’ which required a focus on one proximal sense (e.g smell, sound, touch) at a time. To document these walks I created an illustrated map in-situ, a map that grew slowly as I moved through the QDS. Conscious that maps are “[historically] entrenched in imperial and colonial powers who use and create maps to exploit natural resources, claim land, and to legitimize borders” (Springgay & Truman, 2017, p.13), I used the creation of the map, along with interviews, to highlight the material and social layers of the QDS rather than clear borders and boundaries.

One of the goals of this project was to explore how social-political narratives could emerge through the employment of alternative mapping techniques. The initial individual phase, outlined in this chapter, brought an exploration of this to the research through the creation of the representational illustrated map, spanning approximately one meter wide by two meters high. Standing outside the Saint Laurent metro station, I became aware of how, both historically, and in modern day, this site is a locus for demanding social rights, such as with the BLM protests. Using the ‘curiosity spotlight’ to focus on the soundscape of the QDS, specifically the noise of construction, I tuned into the effects of gentrification that threatened to push low income communities out of the area both

currently and in the past. Through informal interviews and map making, the historical context, specifically that of the motorcyclist community and sex industry, began to emerge. The process of mapping helped to document histories, material and social narratives that were encountered as the QDS was ‘walking-with.’

CHAPTER II

DEBRIS: FROM DISCARDED FRAGMENTS TO SPATIAL STORYTELLERS

“Waste [or debris] is an ironic testimony to a desire to forget”
(Hird, 2021, p. 106)

As seen previously, my experience of ‘walking-with’ (Springgay & Truman, 2017) brought an awareness to the layers of histories, materiality, and movements of humans and things that composed the QDS. Within this chapter I will elaborate on how this process of concentrated focus, found through the use of the ‘curiosity spotlight,’ while ‘walking-with’ brought a material emphasis to the research. This manifested as debris-maps, created through collecting material fragments while walking and then embedding them into sheets of handmade paper. These handmade maps became a specific form of counter-maps that convey gestures, stories and sensory experiences of a place (Knight, 2021a).

Historically, debris is defined in relation to buildings and infrastructure, such as “the scattered and atomized remains of structures that had been levelled by cataclysmic events” (Gissen, 2009, p. 132). However, my research-creation project extended the term debris to include other forms of forgotten or abandoned remains: a worn-out pair of shoes in an alley, left-overs of someone’s lunch at a bus stop, a dusty birds’ nest in the rain gutter of a metro station, or a collection of personal items in a bag left next to a garbage bin.

In the following pages, I will frame debris, not as waste, but as materials eager to share stories yet to be told. For this, I will introduce and reference the work of political theorist and materialist scholar Jane Bennett (2010) and Queen’s University environmental studies scholar Myra J. Hird (2021). As Bennett and Hird put emphasis on the agency of materials, objects, and things, they become allies in reflecting beyond the experience of the human body, as previously seen in the work of Springgay (2017) and Ahmed (2006). More specifically, I will reference Bennett’s concept of ‘thing-power,’ which challenges dualities between animate and inanimate, alive and inert beings. This concept decentralizes humans as the focal point of social inquiry and helped contextualize debris as materials and objects that can act and produce effects (Bennett, 2010). Alongside ‘thing-

power,’ I will draw from Hird’s book *Canada’s Waste Flows* (2021) and her critical reflection on what society is intending to forget through our excessive production of waste, and whether or not forgetting is achieved.

I will first outline how the ‘curiosity spotlight,’ iterative ‘walking-with,’ and an interview with a local recovered injection drug-user, referred to as Dan, helped to attune to the debris and its ‘thing power’ within the QDS. I connect the process of collecting debris to the artist Agematsu who collects and curates debris as a form of documenting New York City over time. I will describe how the sensory focus of the ‘curiosity spotlight’ evolved toward the haptic experience of collecting debris, which deepened the discoveries of alternative histories and socio-politics made in the first chapter.

Next, I will share how this continued focus on the haptic and sensorial qualities of debris lead to map the QDS again, but differently. I describe the process of handmade paper-making and working with collected debris to create counter-maps that use discarded fragments to visually speak about the neighbourhood. I connect this process to other situated paper artists, Hong Hong (n.d.) and Riccardo Ajossa (Durgin, 2019) who embed materials in the papers they create.

Finally, I present three debris-maps, out of thirteen created between October 2020 to January 2021, made from material remnants collected at specific locations within the QDS: along Saint Dominique St., Sainte-Catherine St. and Saint Laurent Blvd, and outside the Saint Laurent metro station. These three maps are contextualized with excerpts from interviews with Denise, and Dan. The maps underline how the collected debris spoke of narratives relating to social inequality, the entanglement of waste with ecology, and the rapid gentrification of the QDS, respectively.

2.1 Attuning to and Collecting Debris: A Plastic Knife and an Injection Needle Share Tales of Social Inequality

In total, this research-creation project included twenty-eight iterative walks through the QDS. Elaborating on one example of these walks, I describe how attuning to debris through observation, haptic engagement, and material collection, led to a slow unpacking of narratives of substance use and abuse in the area.

It was extremely hot on July 9, 2020 and sweat dripped into my eyes as I moved to orient my body, for a moment, in the shade of a sign-post outside the Saint Laurent metro station for a moment. Applying the ‘curiosity spotlight’ towards what could be visually noticed, I stepped out from the shade, began scanning the area (fig. 2.1), and observed on the ground (among other things): a plastic knife, a knitted hat, a pylon, a crumpled plastic bottle, an old beer can, a blue ribbon, a bunch of rubble, some broken glass, an injection needle, and the pit of a stone fruit.



Figure 2.1 Tricia Enns scanning and recording observed debris July 9, 2020

These materials captured my attention as more than discarded objects or debris. Echoing Bennett “I caught a glimpse of an energetic vitality inside each of these things, things that I generally conceive as inert” (2010, p. 5). With the use of the ‘curiosity spotlight’ I was able to focus attention on the gathering of things, which allowed for future speculations of untold stories connected to these material remnants to emerge.

This process of collecting discarded objects and materials is similar to that used by New York City based artist Agematsu. In *Microscopic City* (Oetting, 2022), Agematsu created a series of choreographed ‘sculptures’ of debris collected during his 2020 daily walks. In 2022, he described how *Microscopic City* tracked the evolution of the city: “Gradually, gradually, gradually I can tell that objects on the street—tiny objects, anonymous fragments—change. [...] City life makes us unsatisfied, frustrated, and that’s why we throw things away. The so-called trash is like a mirror” (*ibid*). This curiosity for discarded things and their impact is also held by Hilary Powell, a British artist whose site-specific work engages with demolition sites and their materials. Her project *Urban Alchemy* (2015) investigated the materials and humans found at demolition sites. The project “[worked] with hidden histories and overlooked techniques in acts of imaginative salvage – valuing the seemingly mundane” (Powell, 2019). In the work she uses found materials such as zinc, steel and iron to create etchings and inks to tell stories of the demolition sites the materials were retrieved from (*ibid*).

Echoing as I walked, these artists who salvage and record that which is at risk of being forgotten, I was drawn by the injection needle to the population of individuals that use injection drugs to manage traumatic experiences and life challenges in the area (Poliquin and Perreault, 2021). Later that year, in November 2020 I interviewed Dan, a recovered injection drug user, who describes the area around Saint Laurent metro station as “seedy” and “busy” (Dan, personal communication, Nov. 4, 2020). Dan explained how ‘seedy’ was not necessarily a negative quality to her, but rather it added to her appreciation for the eclectic nature of the area (*ibid*).

At the time that this thesis is being written, around the corner from the metro station, on Berger St., is one of Montreal’s three supervised injection sites; it serves as a space for people using injection drugs to do so safely without the risk of transmitting diseases such as HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) or Hepatitis C (Quebec Government, 2016). Since the beginning of the pandemic, more than one person a day has died from a drug overdose in Quebec, yet these deaths received little attention by mainstream media due to stigma towards injection drug use (The Canadian Press, 2023). Centers like the one on Berger St. help people using injection drugs to feel less stigmatized, less alone, and provide a point of contact for people can offer assistance in case of overdose on injection drugs (*ibid*).

During our interview in November 2020, Dan described how the QDS is filled with memories of when she met her drug dealers outside of the metro station prior to 2008, the year she quit doing drugs. Now sober for over twelve years, she shared memories of “being high and drunk, grabbing drugs from two dudes and hitch-hiking [her] way up Saint Laurent. Those are [her] memories of that spot. Meeting [her] dealers, riding around with them sometimes” (Dan, personal communication, Nov. 4, 2020). The injection needle, and later a Naloxone Emergency Kit (fig. 2.2), drew attention to the controversial use of substances within the area and the opioid crisis (Hart, 2021). The opioid crisis began in Montreal in 2014 with the introduction of street Fentanyl to the city, however it did not fully spike until the beginning of the pandemic (The Canadian Press, 2023).



Figure 2.2 Naloxone Emergency Kit wedged in-between two fences

Reflecting on the current opioid crisis in the area, Dan offered ideas that advocate for mixed-use development, to provide care and social support to those struggling with addiction:

Maybe [there could be] a facility for people that are using, so clean syringes, because this is what I think about when I think about this neighbourhood [...] people I have shared similar experiences with. Maybe a facility for those people. So maybe a transitional housing or a rehab facility that is free, government provided [...] [we] need something that adds value to people’s lives, everyone’s lives. A space where people come together. [...] [where they] are not being kicked out but cared for. (Dan, personal communication, Nov. 4, 2020)

Addiction is medically recognized as a disease, and the use of injection drugs is a coping mechanism for dealing with challenges, often traumatic, of life (Poliquin and Perreault, 2021). The current support and services offered are not enough to curb the opioid crisis, however the Naloxone kit wedged in-between the fences, as well as Dan’s ideas, gestured towards a potential future of the QDS where stigma does not exist, acts of anonymous care are abundant, and lifesaving medical supplies are accessible to everyone (Rowe, 2021).

As the discarded injection needle and Naloxone kit revealed, that which is habitually considered worthless – debris – proved crucially effective in drawing attention to the human narratives and lives attached to these materials. The clustering of a needle, hat, fruit pit, plastic bottle, can, and ribbon observed outside of the metro station exuded a ‘thing-power’ which tied together human and more-than-human histories, and speculations. As I bent over to collect things, the ‘vibratory nature’ (Bennett, 2010) of the debris placed me in a specific relationality with the QDS, with regards to the time of year, weather, sounds, smells, sights, things, and humans around me. In this context, the ‘curiosity spotlight’ acted as a tool for fostering what Bennett (2010) describes as an “anticipatory readiness,’ which emphasizes a necessary way of observing or being “open to the appearance of thing-power” (p.5) of discarded objects and debris. During the months between September 2020 and November 2020 this process gave me access to new sensory understandings related to the social inequalities of the space as I picked up leaves, old bottle caps and observed discarded injection needles. Hird suggests that “making waste is something we do every day yet rarely talk about” (2021 p.13). While debris is usually “a testimonial to a desire to forget” (2021), my act of collecting it drew attention towards the demographic of injection drug users that tend to be ignored by society, and in the process transformed the discarded materials from valueless objects to material storytellers.

2.2 From Paper-Making Toward Counter-Mapping

The debris I collected while ‘walking-with’ the QDS was used to create handmade mappings, which later became an important component of my research-creation project: debris-maps. Suspended in paper pulp as material-spatial-temporal documentations of specific sites within the QDS, my engagement with debris brought an exploration into new sensory and materially engaged forms of understanding of the area. The process of creating the debris-maps involved a slow and

iterative rhythm, not dissimilar to ‘walking-with.’ This process offered a complementary haptic means for deepening attunement to the ‘thing-power’ (Bennett, 2010) of the material remnants found within the QDS.

Indeed, when I opened a bag of collected debris (fig. 2.3) after weeks of having it sit in my kitchen, pungent smells of stale nicotine, dirt, and mold emerged due to the cigarette butts, moisture, and spores trapped together for weeks. While “foul smells have historically been linked to incivility, filth and poverty” (Springgay & Truman, 2017, p. 39), the smells that wafted out of the bag triggered an immediate emotionally-charged disgusted reaction that pointed towards the human and more-than-human entangled within urban spaces.



Figure 2.3 Bag of debris opened after several weeks

To capture these foul-smelling material remnants, I chose to create pulp. To do so, I ripped recycled paper into small pieces and massaged it by hand in a large bin of water to break the fibers down. As the small pieces of paper disintegrated, they turned into fragile pulp which could fall apart easily, potentially turning the sheets themselves back into debris over time. The fragility of the sheets highlights how debris, and its attached stories, can flow and pivot back and forth from valuable to valueless depending on the perceiver (Hird, 2021).

The embodied and sequential steps involved in the paper-making process were similar to the movement of the paper-making artist Hong Hong. In describing her steps she states how

“preparation for every work involves the same sequence of steps: soak, beat, rinse, carry, pour, balance, push, walk, lift. These unfold within and measure, quotidian time” (Hong, n.d.). The repetitive motions and actions taken by Hong demonstrates the familiarity that is developed between a paper-making artist and the pulp and tools, consistent with the embodied and repetitive process of walking through the QDS. The repetition of actions slows down the experience of time, and thereby creates openings to observe things that once went unnoticed.

Also using paper-making as his primary medium, Italian artist and educator Riccardo Ajossa used handmade paper to trap objects that held nostalgic memories of important moments . For example within the work *The Book of Silence* (Durgin, 2019), Ajossa collected debris found on hospital windowsills while visiting a loved one and trapped them within paper. During an interview with Michael Durgin for the *Hand Papermaking* magazine, Ajossa explained that “early each morning I would form two sheets of mitsumata paper and press between them the items I had found the day before. I then documented where and when I found each item” (*ibid*).

I also trapped found materials, but within the pulp itself. To do this I immersed the mold and deckle into the pulp. Lifting the mold and deckle out of the bin full of pulp created a wet sheet of paper. I gently placed debris within this wet sheet of paper, and later dried using towels and sponges which were repetitively pressed to absorb excess water (fig. 2.4). In total, I produced thirteen sheets of various sizes (fig. 2.5).



Figure 2.4 Paper being pressed to absorb excess water

This paper-making process unfolded a new method of experiencing the materiality and the spatiality of QDS. Paper pulp and debris combined to create counter-maps (Knight, 2021a), or more specifically debris-maps, which I explain in the next section.

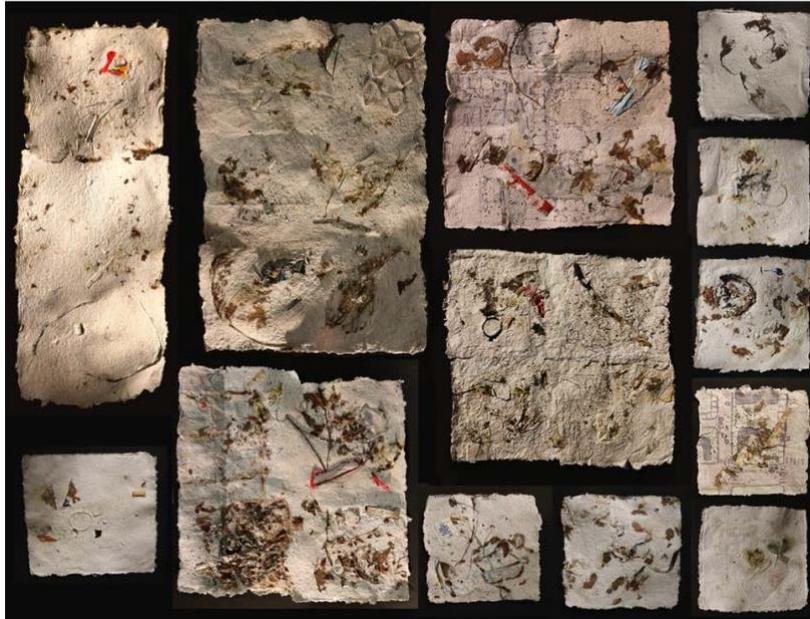


Figure 2.5 Collage of the 13 debris-maps created between September 2020 and January 2021

2.3 The [counter] Debris-maps

In her book *Inefficient Mapping*, Knight (2021a) describes inefficient maps, a form of counter-mapping, as animated, gestural, and relational, rather than purely representational. She discusses how “western readings of the land have shaped particular meanings that erase histories and stories” and how designers can challenge and ‘counter’ these meanings “using site-specific works to generate discussion and critical engagement” (p. 28 - 29). For Knight, ‘counter-maps’ are maps that can mobilize “oral histories and stories to navigate and connect with diverse spatialities, readings, and belongings to place, land, and site and to their many material and living inhabitants.” (p. 22). The paper debris-maps align with these methods of inefficient and counter-mapping: they capture temporal sensory and subjective experiences within the QDS without necessarily attempting to be visually representational.

Below I describe three debris-mappings that zoom in on specific social narratives and areas of the QDS: along Saint Dominique St., at the intersection of Sainte-Catherine St. and Saint Laurent Blvd, and around the Saint Laurent metro station.

2.3.1 Saint Dominique and Saint Laurent: Packaging and Masks as Markers of Social Inequality

The debris-map discussed below includes a syringe packaging, a face mask, leaves, plastic, and cigarette butts, which associated it with the site and time of the material collection: October 2, 2020, along Saint Dominique St. and Saint Laurent Blvd (fig. 2.6). Including the mask drew attention to the pandemic's effect on the area, shutting down all forms of entertainment, and increasing feelings of isolation for marginalized groups, such as injection drug users (Rowe, 2021). The pandemic exacerbated an already crisis situation for these groups partially due to:

- a) an increase in use to combat feelings of loneliness and judgement;
- b) curfews resulting in inaccessible operating hours at safe injection sites;
- c) unreliable supply chains due to restrictions around foreign goods entering Quebec (*ibid*).

Within this context, the mask and syringe wrapper drew attention towards challenges faced by those existing within the QDS neglected by the dominant narrative of commercial-family-friendly-entertainment.



Figure 2.6 Debris-map of Saint Dominique St. and Saint Laurent Blvd

2.3.2 Sainte-Catherine and Saint Laurent: Seasons Change and Plastics Persist

While ‘walking-with’ on October 8, 2020, I collected plant materials at the intersection of Saint Laurent Blvd and Sainte-Catherine St.. They became part of the largest debris-map, spanning approximately one meter by half a meter (fig 2.7). At the moment of collecting the materials, the cold weather caused the leaves to crunch under my shoes, which led to gathering the decaying plant life. In this debris-map, the dried leaves reflect the time of year, autumn: a time of death, decay and hibernation. The plastic six-pack-rings reflect the environmental impact of plastic waste.



Figure 2.7 Debris-map of Sainte-Catherine St. and Saint Laurent Blvd

While discarded plastic fragments slowly break down into persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and microplastics seep into waterways, impacting flora and fauna (Hird, 2021), this specific map drew attention to how debris “flows” (*ibid*) and how humans, things, plants, and animals are now entangled in new anthropocentric stories and lives.

2.3.3 Saint Laurent Metro Station: Erasing Memories Through Rebranding the Area

While conducting this research-creation project, the *Laurent and Clark* condominium building, discussed in Chapter I, was constructed just across the street from the Saint Laurent metro station. Pieces of insulation and caution tape were collected on October 28, 2020, as I walked past the construction site (fig. 2.8).

Today the dominant narrative of the QDS is one of middle-to-upper class family-friendly entertainment and festivals. However, prior to the re-branding of the area in 2003, the QDS was a place for the Montreal subcultures to flourish. Denise, an artist I interviewed who grew up in Montreal and spent her teenage years in the QDS, also participated in an audio walk, and described a memory she had, as a teenager in the 1990s, of the blocks surrounding the Saint Laurent metro station:

When I was a teenager it was the area I liked to frequent. There use to be a strip of vintage clothing, it's still there, Eva B's is still there, but it's not the same. [...] As a teenager that was lots of fun to go visit and just hang out in parks around there and walk around. It was so much fun to just be rebellious I guess. And [...] now, when I think of that area it's nostalgic to me [...] It's a shame the way they have changed it so much. (Denise, personal communication, Nov 24, 2020)



Figure 2.8 Debris-map of the area outside Saint Laurent metro station

Post 2003, the area drew attention from many developers. In addition to condominium buildings such as *The Laurent and Clark*, high-end restaurants, such as *Cadet*, a “tasting” restaurant around

the corner from the Saint Laurent metro station, have become standard features. For Denise, empty lots or small parks, that are currently disappearing and replaced by condominiums like *The Laurent and Clark*, were important places for gathering: “there’s a little park just behind Foufs¹ [...] and there were tons of people there at the time and everyone was smoking or selling and doing whatever and it was the coolest thing to be there” (Denise, personal communication, Nov 24, 2020).

The conversation with Denise highlighted how the rebranding of the QDS has displaced many sub-cultures and their stories, crucial to the character of the area. The insulation and caution tape in this debris-map (fig. 2.8) critically emphasized the transformation of the neighbourhood which has caused the rapid erasure of historical landmarks to be replaced by new high-end projects. In contrast to Denise’s view, Pierre shared how he sees ‘empty’ spaces not as places rich with histories but rather as places in need of change. In Pierre’s words “you can see there are still some areas you need to invest in. Maybe change a little bit of the culture and architecture that is around it” (Pierre, personal communication, Nov 18, 2020).

While discarded objects that were once “a desirable commodity” after use become “garbage” (Hird, 2021, p. 130), materials, whether called debris or waste, connect humans to places, to histories, to other more-than-human species, and to different temporalities. Serving as one iteration beyond using representational maps that attempt to order and “make sense” of space (Knight, 2021a), debris-maps countered the status of discarded objects previously deemed worthless. Through debris-mapping, these materialities became productive anchors that valued overlooked stories of the QDS and allowed the natural multiplicity of histories and trajectories to emerge from the specific material assemblages and configuration of each map (Bennett, 2010).

2.4 Conclusion

Using the iterative process of ‘walking-with’ and the ‘curiosity spotlight,’ attention was (re)oriented towards the overlooked plastic knife, knitted hat and injection needle. These discarded objects drew attention towards hidden corners, the edges of buildings and dark corridors. This

¹ Abbreviation for Les Foufounes Électriques

brought an attunement to the associated narratives related to social inequality and injection drug users.

In this chapter I built on the alternative narratives explored in the first chapter. After collecting debris, I embedded it in handmade paper to create counter-maps, referred to as debris-maps. Collecting and working with syringe wrappers placed me in relationality with the unknown and anonymous individual who used the once packaged needle, which encouraged me to research the opioid crisis in the area and its exacerbated effects due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The smell of the debris, as I created mappings with it, pointed towards the entanglement of human and more-than-human that existed in the area. Plastics broke down to form POPs in the soil, while dried leaves reflected the change of seasons and the passage of time.

By collecting material crumbs and working with it, I shifted my perspective towards the ground, dark corners, overlooked stories, and memories of yesterday. The debris reflected the nostalgia Denise expresses for the version of the QDS she knew in the 1990s, which no longer existed due to gentrification, while highlighting rapid development that is changing the culture of the area. The haptic experience of carefully collecting and then using these discarded material remnants as the focal point of debris-maps flipped the preconceived association with debris from one of forgetting to one of remembering overlooked socio-political-environmental narratives.

CHAPTER III

DOING IT WITH OTHERS

“The tacit and experiential knowledge of community members is sure to produce ideas, approaches, and innovations that a non-member of the community would be extremely unlikely to come up with.”

(Costanza-Chock, 2020, p. 94)

The central objective of this research is to examine what alternative socio-political narratives of the QDS can emerge through engaging with debris found in the area. The first two chapters discussed research methods I primarily used as a solo researcher. However, in next pages, I expand the scope of the research to include the participation from other individuals through audio walks and participatory kits. *Narrative Debris* was realized during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, therefore all participatory interactions were conducted remotely. The audio walk was a guided walk following a set route through the QDS with an audio track that participants were invited to listen and respond to. The participatory kits were packages filled with instructions and supplies needed for participants to create their own debris-mappings which they were invited to return using a pre-stamped envelope.

These participatory modes of engagement led to *Narrative Debris*, the final research-creation project (www.narrativedebris.com). Visitors arriving on the website first discover an illustrated map, the same one created while ‘walking-with’ the QDS (see Chapter I). Plotted on the map are red dots that, when clicked, open different documentation from audio walk participants. On the page “participate,” a carousel displays debris-maps created by participants using the kit. Not necessarily providing a clear navigation trajectory, the website demonstrates personal and intersubjective interpretations and explorations of the QDS, and lets visitors stumble upon different stories, photos, and debris-mappings to generate their own narratives and conclusions.

In this chapter, I continue ‘*thinking-with*’ per Springgay (2017), but also look at the work of Sasha Costanza-Chock, a designer, researcher, educator, and writer who works to dismantle power hierarchies and support community-led design processes (2020). Their most recent book, *Design*

Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need (ibid) exposes how “universalist design principles and practices erase certain groups of people” (p.19), those people often being marginalized, and burdened by the ‘matrix of domination.’ The term ‘matrix of domination’ refers to how capitalism, heteropatriarchy and white supremacy interact and intersect with one another placing those outside this intersection at a disadvantage (*ibid*). Costanza-Chock’s work helped to guide the research as I considered how to invite participants into the process, who the research was for, and what limitations existed.

I will first discuss how I created the audio walk, how feedback and documentation was received from participants, and how this opened the research to a wider web of narratives and experiences held within the QDS. I will outline where potential participant bias existed and the recruitment challenges faced. Finally, I will share how participant documentation demonstrated the complex tangle of narratives that exist within the QDS dependent upon participant’s memories of the area in the eighties, the cold weather, and other inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

In a subsequent section, I will discuss how the kits were developed with the intention of creating a more accessible and dispersive method of participatory engagement that placed less reliance on written or oral language. I will share the importance of approaching the creation of the participatory kit as an iterative process that evolved through feedback from participants. Finally, I will discuss how the kits provided a point of access to a diverse range of temporal, qualitative experience of the QDS through squished blueberries, brick fragments, cigarette butts, and dried plants.

3.1 Walk With Me...Remotely

Alongside my ‘walking-with’ and ‘curiosity spotlight’ exploration of the QDS, and my creation of counter-maps of the area using debris I collected, I also pondered how, most effectively, to invite other individuals into this process. I initially had the intention of facilitating a walking tour that would bring participants together to walk down Saint Laurent Blvd and along Saint Dominique St. Walking tours are a common tool used by many communities, artists, and activist groups. For example, Jane Jacob’s Walk is a Canadian-based international series of walking tours facilitated by community volunteers who share their knowledge and experience with participants about a specific neighbourhood they live, work or play in (*What is jane jacobs walk?*, n.d.). These walks

draw attention to diverse range of experiences and histories held within any one given person and/or place (*ibid*).

Another example of the use of walking tours to diversify the narratives shared of a place is the Los Angeles Urban Rangers (Los Angeles Urban Rangers, n.d.). This group of “rangers” guide participants through Los Angeles with a specific focus on the hidden ecological elements of the city (*ibid*). The Los Angeles Urban Rangers challenge the widely accepted idea that nature is outside of cities by pointing out significant environmental features of Los Angeles, such as Los Angeles’ Griffith Park being one of the United States’ biggest urban wilderness parks (*ibid*).

Finally, a Montreal-based example that uses walking tours, albeit remote audio walks, is the Friends of the Saint Laurent Blvd (2018). This non-profit is dedicated to educating people about the history and heritage status of Saint Laurent Blvd (*ibid*). They do this through projects such as *10 Moments on the Main: Heart of the Main*, which is an audio walking tour that starts at Saint Laurent Blvd and Sherbrooke St. (*ibid*). The audio track narrates a historical walk to the listener as they walk north along Saint Laurent Blvd (*ibid*).

Below I will outline how I drew inspiration from the Friends of Saint Laurent Blvd and created an audio walk as part of the research process. In the first section I will outline how I created this audio walk and recruited participants. In the last section I will share participants' documentation and feedback and discoveries made for future iterations.

3.1.1 Creating an Audio Walk

Springgay (2017) describes how walking can act as a method of fostering a critical awareness of our situated, relational and responsive experiences of spaces. Echoing these thoughts, Costanza-Chock asserts that when communities are left out of a design project, the results may not be useful for the communities the project is intended for (2020). While *Narrative Debris* intended to expose and diversify the stories and histories of the QDS, my personal understanding of the neighbourhood was embedded in solo exploration and situated within my appearance as a cis-female-white-anglophone person and the privileges and safety concerns that brought with it. I thus hoped to counter the traditional mapping method of spotlighting only one dominant narrative voice (Knight,

2021a) by including plural situated and relational experiences of participants through sharing their responses to the audio walk on the final project website (www.narratedebris.com).

Unfortunately, primarily due to the pandemic, there were limits as to whom could be reached and recruited for the research. Many community groups in the area were shutting their doors due to health concerns. In addition, being a newcomer to Montreal, and having a lack of French vocabulary, made it more difficult for me to access many of the communities directly within the QDS. Despite these challenges, participants were recruited through Concordia University research centers and groups such as the Milieux Institute for Arts, Culture, and Technology, the Center for Oral Histories and Digital Storytelling and other social networks (e.g Facebook, Department of Design and Computation Arts). In total, nineteen individuals signed up to participate in the audio walk through a website link. The majority were students, researchers and a mix of locals and newcomers to the area.

Like other aspects of this research, such as walking and mapping debris, the creation of the audio walks was iterative. The audio walk followed a specific route (fig. 3.1). I created the audio track using ambient sounds from walking the route myself, then later recorded my voice narrating the route and offering prompts specific to each stop:

Along this street, Sainte-Catherine, there are many old businesses and music venues, have you been to any of them? What are your memories of them? What new memories are you making right now? [...] Now that you know this is a park you are in, does it cause you to interact with it differently? [...] What plants are growing here, and what else is growing here? Lives, stories, bacteria [...] what do you see? [...] I wanted to stop here to think about the histories that shape the world. The hidden layers that are now plastered, bricked or painted over [...] what histories do you feel exist here? (Enns, 2020)

In total, the audio walk was 38 minutes and 16 seconds long and included eight points that the participants were asked to stop at². Outlined above in the audio excerpt, the prompts invited participants to reflect on their relationship with the QDS, through their sensory experience in the moment as well as their personal memories.

² You can listen to the audiowalk online at <https://soundcloud.com/user-68166499/narratives-of-saint-laurent-metro-audio-walk>

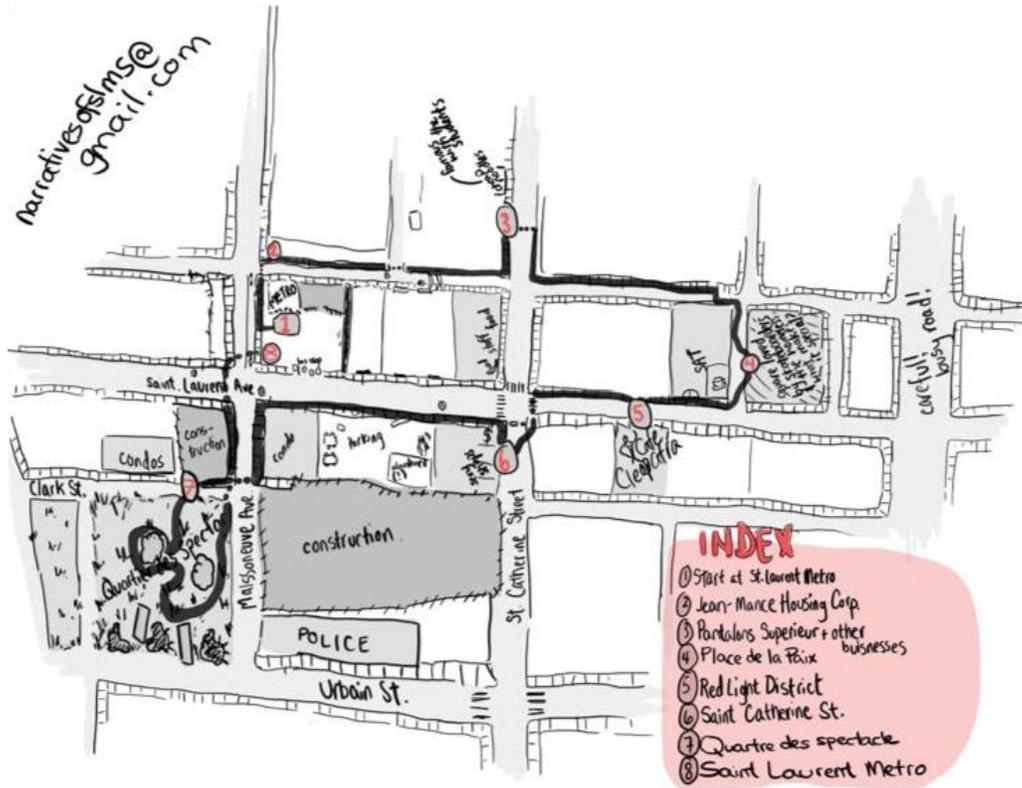


Figure 3.1 Map of the audio walk participants were emailed alongside a link to the audio track

The stopping points were often of historical or socially significance and were locations that I discovered while previously ‘walking-with’ the QDS (see Chapter I) and conducting interviews.

The first stop was the Saint Laurent metro station, a central and clear landmark of the neighbourhood. I conducted an impromptu interview with police officers at this site in relation to BLM, and I chose this stop for its ties to how relationalities between human and more-than-human unfolded during hot summer days.

The second stop was adjacent to the Jeanne Mance Housing Corporation, one of the largest inner-city housing developments in Quebec and a significant historical development which made clean housing affordable in the 1950s (Corporation D’Habitation Jeanne Mance, n.d.).

The third stop was on Sainte-Catherine St. next to Pantalons Supérieurs. This spot was chosen due to its rich history. Since the early to mid 1900s, many of the businesses and entertainment venues had been operating there. Steps away is the intersection of Sainte-Catherine St. and Saint Laurent Blvd which was the center of the Red Light District in the 1950s (Linteau, 1977).

The fourth stop was Place de la Paix, a park where skateboarding is now legal. This legalization was a long hard-fought battle against the City of Montreal by the skateboarding community. After many years of lobbying (Boots, 2013), skateboarding in the park was made permanently legal in 2015. Based on an impromptu interview with a skateboarder in the summer of 2022, I discovered that now it is the skateboarding community that maintains the park: shovelling snow, clearing leaves and patching stone.

The fifth stop was in front of Cafe Cleopatra, an iconic venue for cabaret and burlesque, which gives a hint at the history of the area and how it may have once been. It is one of the few buildings that was not demolished along this section of Saint Laurent Blvd thanks to the owner Zoumboulakis fighting against developers like the Société de développement Angus (Harper, 2009).

The sixth stop was across from the sex shops on Sainte-Catherine St. west of Saint Laurent Blvd. I chose this spot because it draws attention to the sex industry and other subcultures that exist in the QDS (see Chapter I).

The seventh stop was Parterre du Quartier des Spectacles, a recent park created during the redevelopment of the area in the early 2000s, which re-branded the area QDS (Elsa Lam, 2007). While resting in this park it is easy to view several of the new condominium developments along Saint Laurent Blvd, including *Laurent and Clark*, that contribute to the gentrification of the neighbourhood (see Chapter II).

The eighth stop was again the Saint Laurent metro station, bringing the participants back to where they began.

Using their own ‘curiosity spotlight,’ participants were invited to move beyond their sense of sight to explore their proximal senses: touch, smell, and sound. These senses highlighted the importance of the body as a tool for inquiry, curiosity, and discovery within space (Springgay & Truman, 2017). To explore the material, situated, and relational nature of corners, roads, and parks walked through, the listeners/walkers were often asked by my recorded voice “what do you see/smell/hear?” and “how do you feel?” (Enns, 2020). In the next section, I discuss the participants’ responses to these walks.

3.1.2 How Participants Interacted with the Audio Walk

The intention of creating an audio walk and inviting others to participate was to receive feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders in the QDS. Out of nineteen participants, ten shared documentation of their experience. Submitted by email, the documentation included audio

recordings, photographs, and written reflections, all in response to prompts offered within the audio walk. The participants shared a range of memories and emotional responses to the streets they walked through.

The feedback from the participants became an integral part of the interactive map displayed, and currently active online at www.narrativedebris.com, as part of the exhibition work. This map (fig. 3.2), contained documentation from the participants plotted as red dots on top of the illustrated map created while initially visiting and ‘walking-with’ the QDS (see Chapter I).



Figure 3.2 Screenshot of the illustrated map on the homepage of www.narrativedebris.com

At the Place de la Paix (stop number four, fig. 3.1), I asked the listener/walker to observe how the buildings surrounding the park made them feel. I also asked how do they define ‘a park’? For example, could an empty lot be a park? What do they see growing, acknowledging that what they see will be different from what I or another listener/walker sees? These prompts were offered as encouragement to critically reflect on and observe the materiality of the QDS and the assemblage of materials and lives that make up the area. Julien, as he approached Place de la Paix with his friend, remarks: “we walked past a little mosque I’ve never seen before, I think it was the back of the mosque. There is a mysterious door set into the second story of a building.” In response to attending Place de la Paix, participants shared their experiences of hearing skateboarders and feeling both protected and exposed by the tall buildings surrounding them (fig. 3.3).

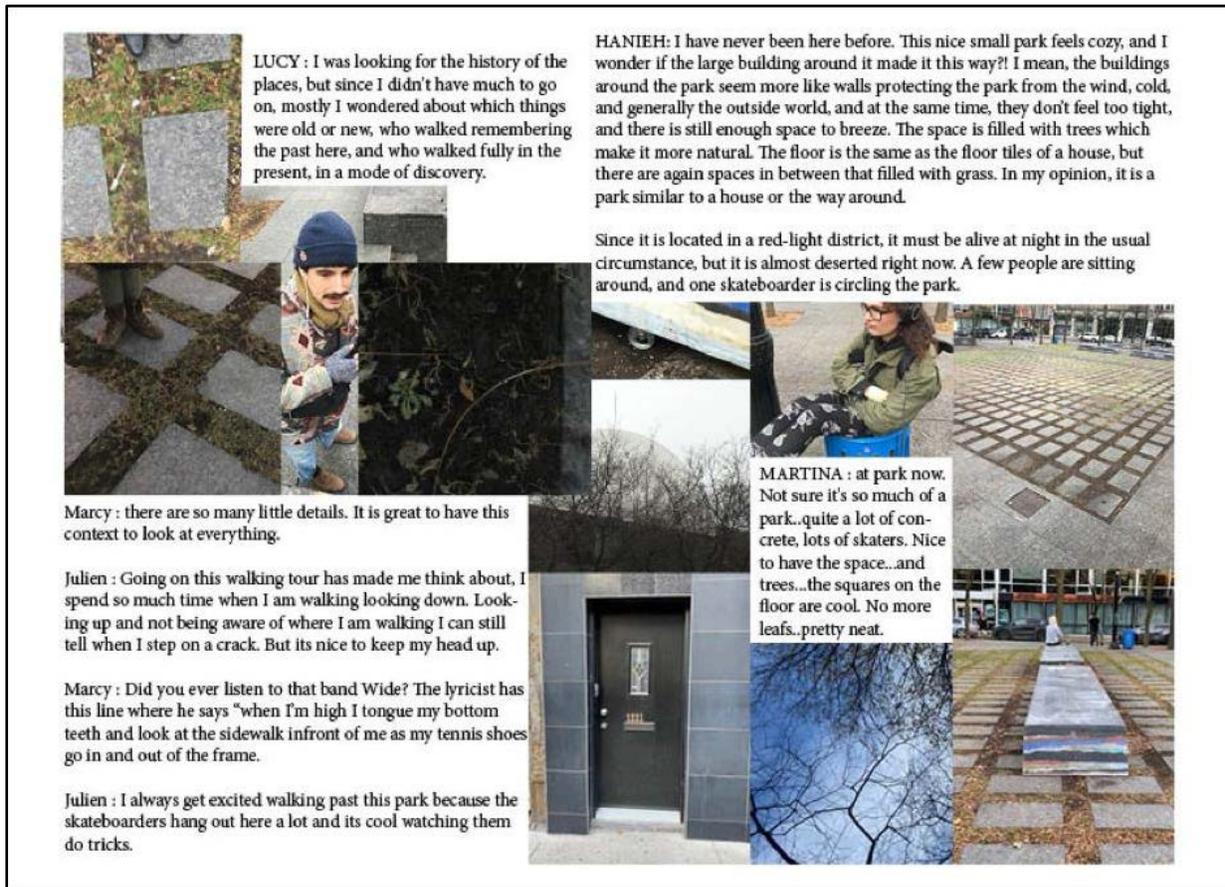


Figure 3.3 Photos and written documentation shared by participants at Place de la Paix

The documentation shared tended to be subjective and shed a new light on the built environment. Denise, who was both interviewed and participated in the audio walk, shared how she was taken back to “some parts [of the QDS] that [she had not] been in so long. Like around the corner right behind the metro” (Denise, personal communication, Nov 24, 2020). Her observation of the Jeanne Mance Housing Corporation during the audio walk present a clear analogy for the transitional phase the area is currently in:

It’s funny, on the tour, when you were asking us to look around and I could see the really tall new buildings on one side of it [the Saint Laurent Metro] and the other side there is that whole project [The Jeanne Mance Housing Corp], it’s sort of towering over, or overshadowing [...] this sketchy building, its government housing, its less appealing. Its casting this wall of “fancy” (*ibid*).

At stop number six, the intersection of Sainte-Catherine St. and Saint Laurent Blvd, participants' written reflections tended to be in response to their general impression of the walk and the QDS area. For example, Lucy remarked “I was looking for the history of the places, but since I didn't have much to go on, mostly I wondered about which things were old or new, who walked remembering the past here, and who walked fully in the present, in a mode of discovery.” Lucy's reflection on moving through the space with limited understanding or memories of the area differed from Denise who shared how participating brought up many memories. Denise wrote “I have a lot of memories from here dating back to the late eighties: shopping at army surplus, being with friends smoking joints, seeing and watching sex workers... There's so much history here, and it's kind of sad to see how it has evolved. The grungy has always been its charm” (Denise, personal communication, Nov 24, 2020). In contrast to Lucy, Denise expressed an intimacy with the area and a nostalgia for its previous form.

At this same location, participants were encouraged to choose a non-human thing and consider where it was from, what it was made of, and how it was interacted with. One participant painted an imaginative picture of the experience of a lonely water fountain they observed during the Covid-19 pandemic (fig. 3.4). These playful prompts encouraged participants to be curious about alternative narratives, both personal and speculative, within the QDS.



Figure 3.4 Photo of a water fountain taken on Sainte-Catherine St. by an audio walk participant

Finally, two other participants, Sarah and their friend, participated in the audio walk together and shared a poetic documentation of their observations.

I remember being in that place with you.
Wow all that light for a Telus store.
I saw Rammstein and Marylin Manson playing there.
The sound of cars is too loud.
Each car has its own sound.

Sarah's response highlighted how walking can draw attention to the collision of memories with the present sensory experience of the QDS.

Each of the snippets of participants feedback shared above illustrate the diversity of perspectives, experiences, and observations that exist within the QDS. The photographs shared about Place de la Paix (fig. 3.3), suggest how perspectives of the neighbourhood could shift and transform when the participants were encouraged to use their own 'curiosity spotlight.'

In December 2020, after the audio walk was closed for participants, I organized a group debrief meeting on Zoom. In this meeting others were encouraged to share their experience of the walk with one another and myself. Elsy, a trained and practicing architect from Venezuela who recently moved to Montreal, shared how on the walk she began thinking about how people interpret spaces, specifically the QDS, differently depending on what part of the world they are from, and what cultures and traumas they have experienced. Also having recently moved to Montreal, Patil, a participant from Beirut, shared how trying to observe the hidden layers of the QDS on the walk was hard because she comes from a place where the layers of history are much more visible. Finally, Sarah, who grew up in Montreal, shared that she specifically focused on trying to be in the moment and engaging with the current sensory experience and not be distracted by her memories.

The participant feedback and the debrief meeting highlighted a non-exhaustive collection of micro narratives held within the QDS, specifically in relation to memories, observed the transformation of the area and discovering (or not) 'hidden' elements of the space. Because of the participants' similar socio-economic situation, homogeneous comfort in speaking English, university educated background, I realized that these stories of the QDS might demonstrate a certain degree of bias. As

Costanza-Chock suggests, bias is often inevitable but what is important is to explicitly state who your engaging with and why they have been included (2020).

This situation prompted the development of a complementary mode of engaging with the QDS that placed less reliance on language as a means of communicating narratives. Such a mode was the debris-mapping participatory kit which I discuss in the next section.

3.2 Collectively Mapping Debris

In *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*, Costanza-Chock highlights that the desire of the designer (or researcher) does not always equal what is actually needed by the individuals of the community (2020). She thus describes how participatory design holds the risk of being “extractive” by gathering research data from communities who receive little of the benefits (2020). Echoing this problematic associated with participatory design, Knight (2021) also suggests that “methodologies can be instrumental in upholding politics and prejudices” and that “new methodologies need to be critically responsive and effectively able to bring stories into the open in ways that pay attention to the politics of subjectivity” (p. 109).

To pay attention to these ‘politics of subjectivity and to alleviate the risk of an ‘extractive research logic’ where individuals provide their stories and experiences to the research without receiving anything in return, I complemented the audio walk process with a debris-mapping participatory kit. Sent by mail to participants who registered through the *Narrative Debris* website, the kit was structured as a gesture of exchange during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. The kit included a small piece of a debris-mapping, which was envisioned as a method to share my own material experience and stories of the QDS and to invite others to do the same.

Another research-practitioner using kits in an act of exchange is Aaron McIntosh. McIntosh is an artist and educator based in Montreal. For the project *Hot House / Maison Chaude* (McIntosh, n.d.), McIntosh sent kits to individuals to explore “collaborative queer botanic futures” (*ibid*). The kits consisted of compostable materials, seeds, glitter, and a pre-stamped envelope. Designed as an act of exchange, the project provided participants materials to grow plants while asking them to share their own “queer compost matter” with the artist (*ibid*).

Similar to the kits made for *Hot House / Maison Chaude* (McIntosh, n.d.), the participatory kits I assembled contained many parts. In the following two subsections I will outline how the kit was created and disseminated. This section will conclude with participant feedback, images of the debris-mappings created, and where this step in the research-creation process led.

3.2.1 Creating Kits that Move Beyond Language

The participatory kits (fig. 3.5) used within *Narrative Debris* encouraged others to perform a “sensory inquiry” (Springgay & Truman, 2017) of the QDS, specifically in relation to how debris looks and feels, through walking. The process asked individuals to collect debris from the QDS, and create and share their own debris-mappings. Similar to the audio walks, the participatory kits were an extension of my personal experience. I was curious to see how the method of debris-mapping would be interpreted and take shape in the hands of participants less familiar with both the research process and the act of paper-making. The participatory kit contained eight key components (fig. 3.5).



Figure 3.5 Participatory Kit with all eight components

Number one ‘Information about the research,’ number two ‘Instructions about participating,’ number three ‘Instructions for making paper,’ and number seven ‘A feedback form’ (fig. 3.5) were

printed in both French and English to reduce language biases, increase accessibility and reflect the historical and current importance of both French and English in the QDS. Acknowledging that many people in the QDS, and Montreal in general, do not speak English or French as their first language (City of Montreal, 2018), the instructions also included small illustrations to visually explain the steps for making debris-mappings. Using illustrations to explain the process of creating debris-mappings, and open-ended instructions, such as “on your walk collect debris that, to you, tells a story of the area” (Enns, 2020), the intention was for individuals to interpret the directions in relation to their lives, experiences, and understandings of the space. The kit was designed to be adaptable so I could iteratively remove and update different components if needed.

The flexibility in how someone can interpret the instructions in the kit resonated with the prompts Los Angeles artist, filmmaker, and writer Miranda July proposed within the project *Learning to Love You More* (Ono, n.d.). *Learning to Love You More* relies on playful prompts to the general public through a website³ (e.g. “Prompt number 30: Take a picture of strangers holding hands”). Any individual was invited to contribute to the project by submitting a response to one of the seventy prompts posted online. While active (2002-2009), the project received 8000 submissions (*ibid*).

Moving beyond the use of language-based prompts, artists and designers also use kits to engage in richer non-verbal exchanges with the general public through the use of materials and making. Kathleen Vaughan (2021) a researcher and educator at Concordia University recently used this approach in the project *What is Art For?*. The project involved sending packages of textiles, paper, fabric, and thread to eighty-one participants who were then asked to visually respond to the question “What is art for?” using the materials in their kit (*ibid*). The sidestepping of verbal or written language resonates with my approach. In producing and sending ten kits in total, the visual instructions, open-ended questions, and versatile distribution, through the post, fostered a greater level of accessibility.

In the next sub-section I will share the responses and debris-maps received from participants and how the feedback contributed to several changes and iterations in the kits.

³ View the project website at <https://learningtoloveyoumore.com/>

3.2.2 Participants Feedback as Key Iterative Development

In total, ten kits were created and sent out to participants, and eight debris-mappings were mailed back (fig. 3.6). Participants could sign up for a kit online through the *Narrative Debris*' website. Similar to the audio walk, the majority of individuals who signed up for participatory kits were associated with Concordia University since this was the community I could access while in-person interactions were restricted during the pandemic.

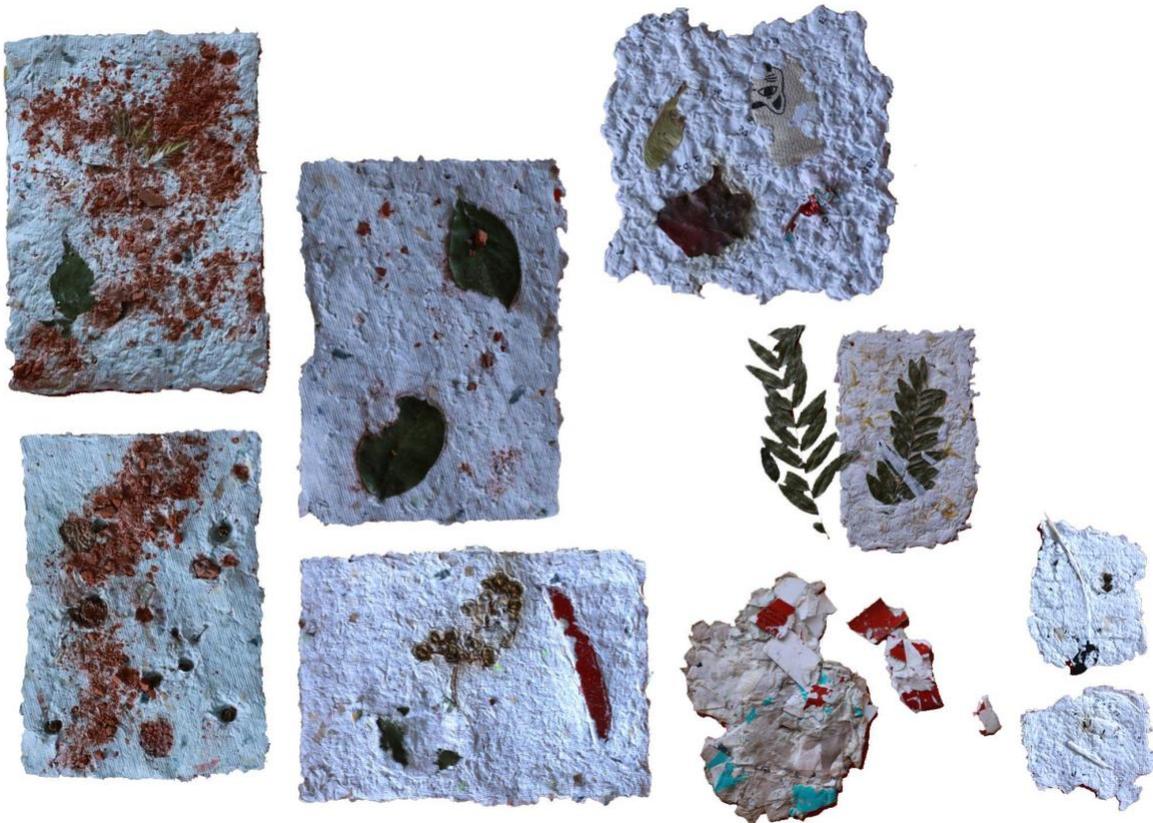


Figure 3.6 Digital collage of photos of the eight participant mappings created

The kits encouraged a critical perspective on our relationship and interaction with the materiality of the QDS. They asked participants to train their ‘curiosity spotlight’ to notice and collect “things we once wanted and now do not want; once valued and no longer value” (Hird, 2021, p. 14). The mappings received contained string, pieces of plastic, leaves, and pieces of brick. They documented natural and human made debris, captured the seasons, and the temporality of the neighbourhood.

As discussed above, each kit contained a feedback form allowing participants to share qualitative and experiential comments. These comments contextualized the participants’ debris-mapping. For example, Eden (2021) mentioned “I couldn’t find anything to represent the colour of the sky. So I squeezed some blueberries (I was eating) on it!”. Another participant, Selina, remarked how “when [she] walked around the area, [she] felt more drawn to the weeds, plants, raspberry bushes, and natural things that stood out against the urban chaos” (2021). The mappings shared by participants held individual preferences in how they represented the space, their comfort with the activity, and what debris existed within the QDS at the time. Similar to my experience of the neighbourhood, the feedback form allowed a better understanding of how “stuff exhibited its thing-power” (Bennett, 2010, p. 4) in the hands of others.

Moreover, the feedback form became a key tool to modify the kit over time and four iterations were produced between April 2021 and October 2021. Table 3.1 documents crucial and productive comments from participants.

Table 3.1
Participant feedback that prompted changes to different versions of the participatory kits

| Question | Participant Feedback | Change To the Kit | Change made? |
|---|--|--|---|
| Any other comments you would like to share? | Wasn’t sure if I needed to mark on my paper the location or if providing a map would be helpful. | Include a map in the kit that participants can mark on it where the debris is from | Not yet. |
| Is there anything you would add to the kit? | Something to help dissolve the paper. | Change the instructions for making the pulp to make it easier | Yes, but could adjust further |
| Was there any part of the kit you liked? Why? | I also liked that anything not in the kit but required was easy to find in any garbage/recycling or even on the ground. | Keep the kit minimal, the hunt for “tools” is part of the experience | Not applicable |
| Was there anything you would add to the kit? What? Why? | The only thing I would change in the kit would be the paper shreds that were prepped. They were so colourful that I think it could distract from what was found on site. | Change contents and instructions so that instead of including shredded paper participants are instructed to rip up the instructions to create the pulp | Yes made the changes, but then received feedback that it was confusing, so changed it back. |
| Was it what you expected? Was that a good/bad thing? Why? | At first I was overwhelmed that I had to craft but then it was ok | Make it clear when individuals sign up that they will have to do some crafting | No not yet. |

In its first iteration, the participatory kits included a map that connected the act of collecting debris to the audio walk route. This was taken out very quickly due to feedback that this connection over-complicated the manipulation of the kit and made the engagement with it complex. Another example of a redesign was the elimination, and then the later re-introduction of shredded paper in the kit. One participant, Mea, suggested removing the shredded paper because its colourful nature distracted from the debris collected and mapped. As a solution, I decided to remove the shredded paper from the kit and invited participants to rip up the instructions and use it as pulp. However, another participant, “T,” wrote how ripping up the instructions to create pulp was confusing, leading to a change in this approach. The feedback related to the shredded paper is a clear example of how making a change based on participants’ opinions did not necessarily equate to a definite form. This was an example of how ‘thinking-in-movement’ (Springgay & Truman, 2016) took form within the research process: changes to the kit acted as iterations, or prototypes that would produce more results, feedback and iterations.

Beyond material design, the feedback form provided a platform for participants to share different interpretations and emotional reactions towards the activity. For example, Kim (2021) outlined how she “had a visceral reaction to collecting debris” and “didn’t expect to be so affected by touching (essentially) garbage.” Another participant, Catharine, shared how she felt “overwhelmed that [she] had to craft, but then it was ok.” In contrast, participant, Mea (2021), wrote “I had done some paper-making previously, so the process was predictable.” In general, many of these individuals shared how our socially constructed behaviours toward waste made picking up debris hard, and highlighted the range of reactions towards being asked to do something ‘creative.’

While I, as a researcher, was so close to the process of mapping debris, these comments demonstrated the usefulness of the kit to better understand the affective and narrative value of this approach for others. The recruitment of participants was difficult because of the pandemic, with similar challenges faced as with the audio walk. The limited pool of individuals I recruited from led to the unintentional omission of many underrepresented communities in the area (Costanza-Chock, 2020) who could have further diversified the narratives of the QDS shared. However, after reviewing the debris-mappings and feedback shared, the goal of the kit to motivate sensory

intimacy and involve participants through materially engaged methods, rather than relying solely on written and oral language, was achieved.

3.3 Conclusion

Through reaching out, beyond myself, I was able to both share sensory forms of exploring the QDS with others while discovering a range of shared memories and experiences from participants. Through the use of dispersive tools like audio walks and kits, I was able to engage with participants despite pandemic restrictions. The audio walk allowed a collection of playful reflections on the history and life of the neighbourhood to emerge, such as “I saw Rammstein and Marilyn Manson playing there” (Sarah, 2020); “I always get excited about walking past this park because skateboarders hang out here and it is cool watching them do tricks” (Julien, 2020); “I have a lot of memories from here dating back to the eighties [...] it’s kind of sad to see how it has evolved” (Denise, personal communication, Nov 24, 2020). These shared experiences could not be accessed without engaging with other individuals in the area.

A surprising outcome of the audio walk occurred during the debrief, when two participants, Elsy and Patil, shared how the divergent histories in their home countries, Venezuela and Lebanon respectively, greatly impacted the speculative histories they could access on the walk through the QDS. The audio walk prompted participants to engage with their proximal senses, feelings and personal memories which resulted in shared experiences I could not access alone.

Complementing the audio walk, the iterative participatory kits provided a form of connecting with participants that placed less dependence on the English language. Instructions were written in both English and French and illustrations accompanied many of them, the kits relied at least to some extent, more on haptic material engagement for communication. The kits - structured as an act of exchange where I gave the participants a piece of debris-map I created in exchange for one they created - underwent several iterations motivated by the feedback received: the map was removed, and shredded paper was removed and then re-introduced. For example, the documentation and debris-maps shared by participants of the kits captured the diverse range of experiences the participants had. One participant, Selina, described how it was the ecological debris that drew her attention, while another participant, Kim, described how disgusted she was by the task of collecting

debris. The participant kit exposed how material engagement alongside others, even if at a distance, can bring about unexpected narratives of the QDS, such as the fleeting memory of the summer sky represented by blueberries squished into the paper, which could not emerge without others.

CONCLUSION

With the objective of bearing witness to alternative social and political narratives of the QDS, this research-creation thesis was driven by two interlinked questions:

(i) How can counter-mapping techniques be used to uncover and preserve the overlooked socio-cultural and political narratives of the QDS?

(ii) What can walking and engaging with the material debris of the QDS teach us about the area?

To address these questions, the three chapters gradually outlined how the process of ‘walking-with’ and mapping evolved into noticing and collecting debris and making counter-maps, which finally led to inviting publics to participate in the process of exploring and sharing overlooked narratives of the QDS. This resulted in the production of a publicly-accessible website (www.narrativedebris.com) and participatory kits. Today, the website captures both my personal and participatory experiences of the QDS as the participate page acts as a gallery, with a carousel displaying debris-maps created by participants using the kit.

In the first chapter, I discussed how the creation of a representational map, drawn as I ‘walked-with’ the area, captured qualitative and temporal observations, such as dusty windows and the neglected façade of the Screaming Eagle. Drawing from interviews with Pierre and Denise, I gained insight regarding diverging viewpoints on gentrification, viewpoints that outlined both the potential benefits and negative consequences -- such as erasing histories, communities and cultures -- of the area’s current rapid development. In an effort to observe overlooked narratives through questioning that which could not be seen, I developed and applied the ‘curiosity spotlight’ to focus on one proximal sense at a time, as demonstrated with the sound walk. This drew attention to the jarring auditory, as well as social, impact of the construction of new condominiums in the area, an example of how the neighbourhood is becoming gentrified.

In addition to this exploration of embodied and sensory-engaged methods of discovering the QDS, the first chapter elaborates on the three interviews I conducted, with a previous drug user, a local developer, and someone who spent their youth hanging out in the area. These interviews exposed

diverging viewpoints around who or what is valued, and how that impacts who is seen and feels they belong. The interviews informed a deeper exploration into the struggles faced by the local sex workers and opioid users. Thanks to the sensory- and materially-engaged approach, these socio-political narratives were able to emerge not as impersonal news articles or headlines but as relationalities that affected me and others. I could see traces of lives that once were as I walked: medical masks, piles of clothes, old shoes. These items began to have an affective quality which continued, as I began collecting debris, to unravel a myriad of socio-political narratives of the QDS.

The second chapter focused on how the iterative nature of walking in the same area, along Saint Laurent Blvd and Sainte-Catherine St., drew attention towards overlooked places such as dark corners, edges where the sidewalk meets the street, and behind buildings. Through observing these places, I noticed and began collecting debris which eventually was combined with paper pulp to create debris counter-maps. Leveraging the ‘curiosity spotlight,’ this process of noticing, collecting and then mapping with debris required an intimate sensory engagement, through seeing, touching, listening, and smelling, with the QDS. The debris-mappings incorporated syringe wrappers, face masks, and plastic packaging which built on narratives (introduced in Chapter I) of gentrification, social inequality and the interaction of human and more-than-human within the QDS. Interviews with both Denise and Dan highlighted the historical socio-political richness of the area and potential opportunities to develop the area with care and consideration for the communities that already exist. The debris drew attention to the exacerbation of the opioid crisis in the area during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the constant wave of construction since 2003, transforming the area from a place for experimental music and art – as was seen in the 1950s with the Red Light District and the 1990s with the punk scene – to the Quartier des Spectacles.

Finally, in the third chapter I discussed how I further expanded the research by inviting people working, playing and/or living in the QDS to participate in the process. The use of an audio walk and participatory kit encouraged individuals to explore the QDS through a variety of senses, and reflect on both their present experience and memories they hold, which may influence their experience. The audio walk participants shared insights of attending music shows, listening to skateboarders, and sharing a kiss on a park bench within the QDS. They also revealed how they noticed new material elements of the QDS: a hidden door, street art, a park. While the participatory

kits relied less on the use of language than the audio walk, they provided a flexible framework for individuals to interpret how to respond to the request of creating a debris-mapping. The kits thus revealed how each participant was drawn to different debris and had a variety of emotional reactions to their material surroundings: one participant commented how they were drawn to natural debris and another reflected on how they were repulsed by the task.

Inviting individuals into the research-creation process provided access to a range of narratives, both about the QDS and reactions towards interacting with debris that I could not have experienced or uncovered on my own. By inviting others into the process, I was able to offer effective alternate means of how to uncover socio-political narratives of the QDS through counter-mapping, walking, and engaging with debris, with countless possibilities. My approach brought participants into a new orientation with the space, encouraging them to both share memories and access new relationalities with the neighbourhood through prompts such as those voiced in the audio walk: “what stories do you think could grow here?” (Enns, 2020). The narratives that emerged demonstrated the diversity of viewpoints and experiences held within the QDS: memories of seeing motorcycle gangs, attending concerts, feeling the cold November air in their boots, seeing a new door in a wall, listening and watching skateboarders doing tricks. The research-creation processes exposed new pathways to reach socio-political narratives that fostered curiosity, empathy, and a sense of connection to the QDS for locals and newcomers alike. Through engaging with the debris of the QDS the socio-political narratives were not just news headlines but had an effect as bodies were oriented to collect syringe wrappers, building insulation was immersed in paper pulp, and pigeon feathers dried in an assemblage of paper pulp and debris.

Although this research-creation advanced several productive ways of engaging the histories and stories of the QDS, the process also demonstrated limitations. First of all, this project began during the Covid-19 pandemic which made it difficult to reach stakeholders to interview, recruit participants and connect with community organizations. Since the pandemic has ended, I have had the opportunity to reiterate the project (discussed below) and engage with participants in person. This setting has provided an even richer opportunity to create and discuss together, on the streets and within the parks of the QDS. Secondly, having limited French language abilities made engaging with a large portion of the community and stakeholders very difficult. The ability to speak

both French and English would have made connecting with the community much easier. That being said, efforts were made to offer written instructions and information in both languages. Thirdly, through this journey and after reiterating the project after the Masters of Design program (*In.site* Symposium, Sep. 12-16, 2022, 4th Space, Concordia University), I realized that participatory projects such as *Narrative Debris* demand time to sustainably develop. For example, reaching out to community organizations and spaces, such as homeless shelters, concert venues, safe injection drug use spaces, and the community associations, to build connections and trust is a slow process. In the first complete version of the project, I underestimated the time this aspect of the research would take, especially within the context of the pandemic. Indeed, more time to recruit a wider and more diverse range of participants, as well as experiment with more iterations of the kit would have benefitted the research by increasing the number and variety of experiences and narratives shared by individuals.

Since this project was centered within the iterative processes of walking, paper-making, collecting, mapping and creating the participant kits, I anticipated from the start that limitations and areas of improvement would arise. The iterative nature of *Narrative Debris* invited introspection and future experimentation. The research continues to iterate beyond these pages and the streets of the QDS - specifically in relation to the process and production of debris-mapping - through exhibitions and the facilitation of in-person workshops. In May 2022, the debris-maps were exhibited at Concordia University as part of Milieux Institute's *In the Middle A Chimera* exhibition. At this event the assemblage of debris, pulp, and illustrations in the exhibited pieces required visitors to spend time with the debris to 'read' or experience the counter-maps. The debris-maps partially take longer to understand because of the "chaos of activity in phenomena" (Knight, 2021a, p. 15) included in them. Requiring viewers to stop and take time observing the debris counter-maps reflected the slow and focused process used when 'walking-with' the QDS to collect debris.

In 2022, a year after completing the Masters of Design exhibition online (April 2021), the first walking and debris-mapping workshop took place with a group of participants, including myself, physically together. Walking, collecting, and participatory practices were used to create debris-maps in Place de la Paix as part of Hexagram's 2022 *Emergence/y* programming. During the walk participants were initially hesitant to engage with the debris, however they quickly became curious

and fascinated with it, causing the group to take two hours to walk 750 meters. To combat communication limitations, I hired a bilingual friend who supported me with speaking French. On the walk we chatted with an individual on his balcony living in the Jeanne-Mance Housing Corporation, he asked us what we were doing and told us that he was from Vietnam and had lived here for twenty years. Being in-person, it was easier to engage with individuals from the area, and hear their stories, since we, the group of individuals collecting debris and making paper, were somewhat of a spectacle ourselves. Later, when creating debris-maps in Place de la Paix, a couple, in town for the weekend, approached us to ask what we were doing. As we created debris-mappings, on the other side of the park, a group of skateboarders gathered and we watched as they begin doing tricks. As we created debris-maps of the area we were also immersed in the activity of the neighbourhood. Walking in person opened up space for discussion and a collection, not only of debris, but of conversations with long term residence, short term visitors and the sounds of skateboarders and cars as we created debris-maps of, and within, the QDS.

Later in September 2022, the process of debris-mapping was shared with students and the Concordia community at the *In.site* Symposium (4th Space). The activity encouraged a critical perspective on what materials we discard and how these materials expose our habits within the streets surrounding Concordia University. The workshop aspect of this event was hosted next to the sidewalk, with the doors of an indoor space open to the outside world. While this set up was intended to be more inviting to passer-byers, it was difficult to draw people in as they rushed past on their way from one thing to the next. Yet again, questions of how to engage participants surfaced.

In October 2022, I was invited to participate in Detroit's *Marigold Project* to facilitate a debris-mapping workshop as part of a larger community event that explored situated material engagement and participatory approaches in the neighbourhood of Southeast Detroit. The day before the event, the individual I was staying with led me on a walk to collect debris for participants to use. Shortly after the community event began, I realized people were much more interested in using organic materials from marigolds than the gum wrappers, packaging, and cigarette butts I had collected. Although a handful of participants were curious about the use of human-made debris, I mostly focused on sharing the process of paper-making and creating patterns and images in the paper with

the flowers themselves. This experience prompted a reflection on how to adapt the process of debris-mapping to the needs of the community I am invited to. The debris collected had an affect on me, as a visitor to the city, because it told of stories I was unfamiliar with. However, in general, to those individuals that lived in Southeast Detroit and attended the event, the use of marigolds and the process of paper-making held much more interest than the debris.

Coming up, in June 2023, I will be facilitating a debris-mapping walk and workshop in Brooklyn (New York) as part of *HASTAC 2023: Critical Making and Social Justice Conference*. This event offers another opportunity to experiment and explore how the method of debris-mapping can be adapted and evolve through use in different spaces and communities. Being a conference, many of the participants will most likely be visitors to the area, just like myself. Learning from the experience in Detroit, where people were more interested in the process rather than my own debris-mapping agenda, I hope to allow the participants to guide our trajectory through beginning the workshop by asking what they are curious to discover. However, when inviting the participants to guide the trajectory, a tension could arise between offering guiding structure, that can be limiting, versus the opportunity to wander, which can be overwhelming, as reflected on during the *Hexagram Emergence/y* walk. This method of debris-mapping depends not only on the material fragments found at a specific location and time, but the meeting of participants and debris, both unpredictable and varying over time and place. What I have learnt through the workshops I have facilitated thus far is that sometimes people need a theoretical framework to feel able to engage and play with debris, while other times they can wander happily, and sometimes they may reject debris all together. This multiplicity of reactions reflects the range of experiences held within any given moment and place, and demonstrates the importance of “thinking-in-action” (Springgay & Truman, 2016) and adapting the approach, as a researcher and designer, to the people and place in the moment.

As a research-creation project, *Narrative Debris* developed a set of methods to notice and preserve the habitually overlooked narratives of the QDS. This research has motivated, during and beyond the framework of this thesis, an attempt to discover meanings and hidden understandings of places through walking, engaging the senses, and turning towards debris and materials that tend to be discarded or forgotten. The process unfolded many layers of the area, and led to the development

of counter-mapping as a means of situated spatial discovery. I perceive this research-creation project as the beginning of the development of a broader materially-engaged-participatory approach. In light of the new iterations discussed above, especially those in Detroit and Brooklyn, the dispersive potential of debris-mapping could expand even more. Indeed, I am curious to see how the act of debris-mapping varies over time and in response to the places, people, and passage of time within urban areas facing transition. I see the potential for the methods discussed in this thesis to engage, as a researcher, with more diverse local urban communities, in Montreal and beyond. As I reflect on new means of documenting and sharing the process, for instance through online tutorials, how-to videos, and expanding the web platform to include new locations and online discussion, I also see a potential for other artists, designers, students, educators and/or community organizers to appropriate this approach as a situated and materially engaged means of individually and collectively mapping and (re)discovering of a specific place through the material remnants left behind.

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APPENDIX A

NARRATIVE DEBRIS WEBSITE

Screenshots of the participant portal of the website that is no longer accessible online. Website, illustrations and photos all by Tricia Enns except where indicated. Translation from English to French by Florine Allirand and Clément Guénard.



Figure A. 1 Current “participate” page (Screenshot 1 of 2)



Figure A. 2 Current “participate” page (Screenshot 2 of 2)

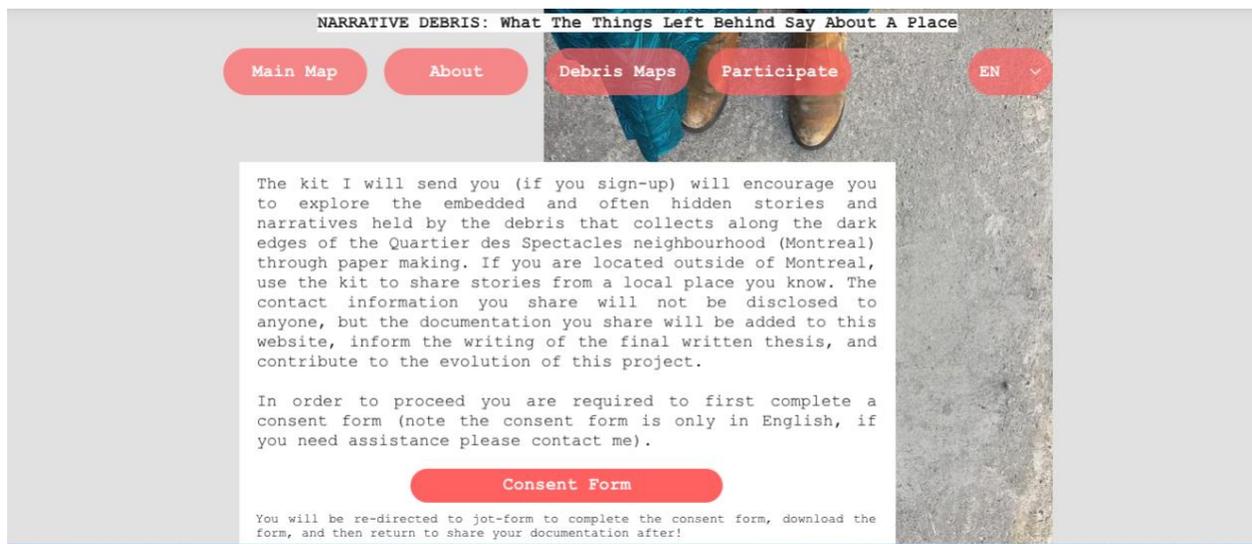


Figure A. 3 “Participate” page in 2021 when the research was active

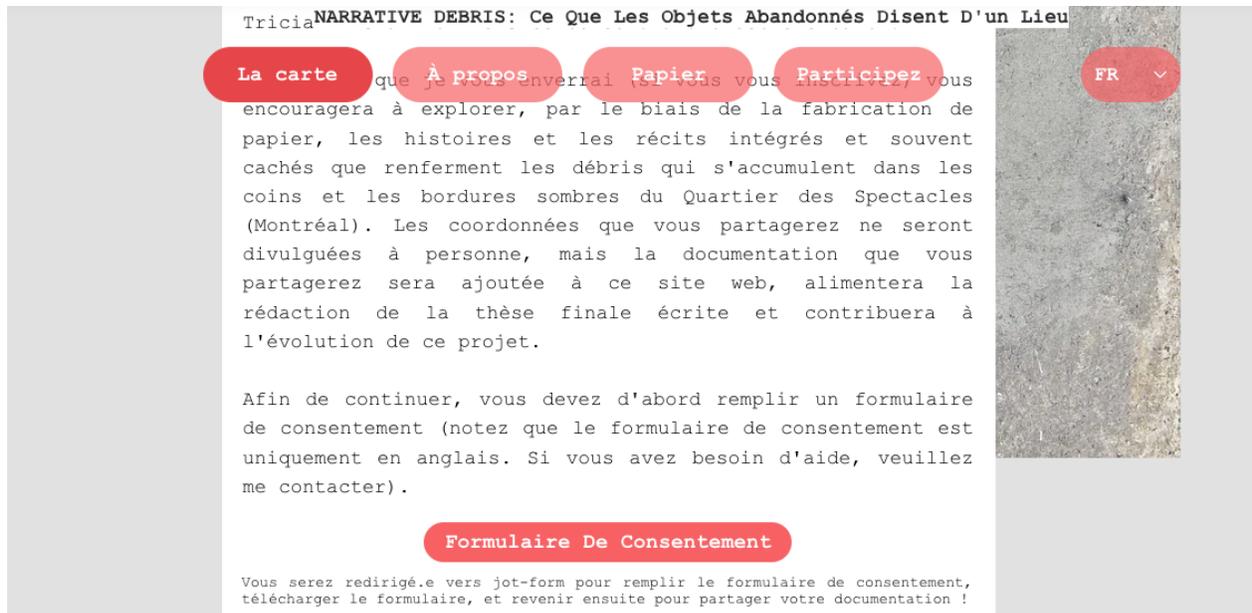


Figure A. 4 “Participate” page in 2021 when the research was active in French



INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR REMOTE WALKING TOURS

Study Title: Discovering New Urban Narratives Together

Researcher: Tricia Enns

Researcher's Contact Information: narrativesofslms@gmail.com

Faculty Supervisor: Professor Alice Jarry

Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: alice.jarry@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study: N/A

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating entails. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher (Enns).

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to explore the embedded and often hidden stories and narratives surrounding the Quartier Des Spectacles neighbourhood and explore how these stories can be shared, built upon and ultimately included within the dominate narrative of this area. The research explores notions of belonging, urban design, and how we as humans relate to one another and our physical surroundings. The research will be disseminated through an online exhibition and website within the month of April 2021 and thesis to be submitted June 2022.

B. PROCEDURES

If you participate by sharing documentation, it is assumed you have, following a map and link to an audio walk sent to you, walked around the Quartier Des Spectacles neighbourhood and surrounding area exploring the material, historic, political and social significance of the site.

The documentation you will be asked to share are your thoughts and experiences captured through note-taking, audio recordings and/or audio/

Figure A. 5 First page of the online consent form hosted by jotform.com

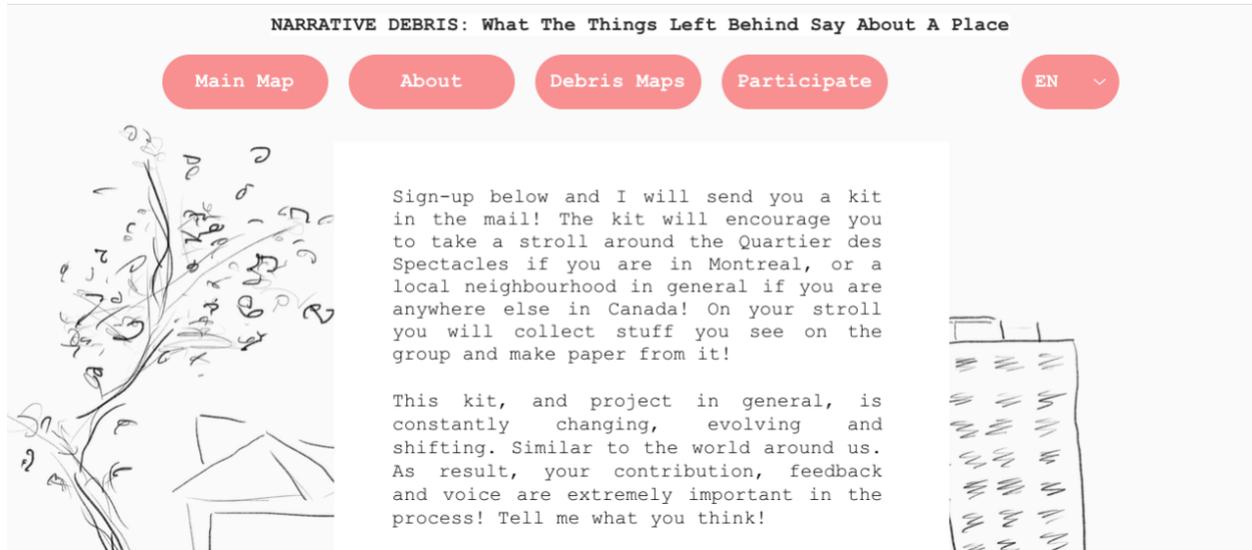


Figure A. 6 Participant address page (screenshot 1 of 2) to receive a kit

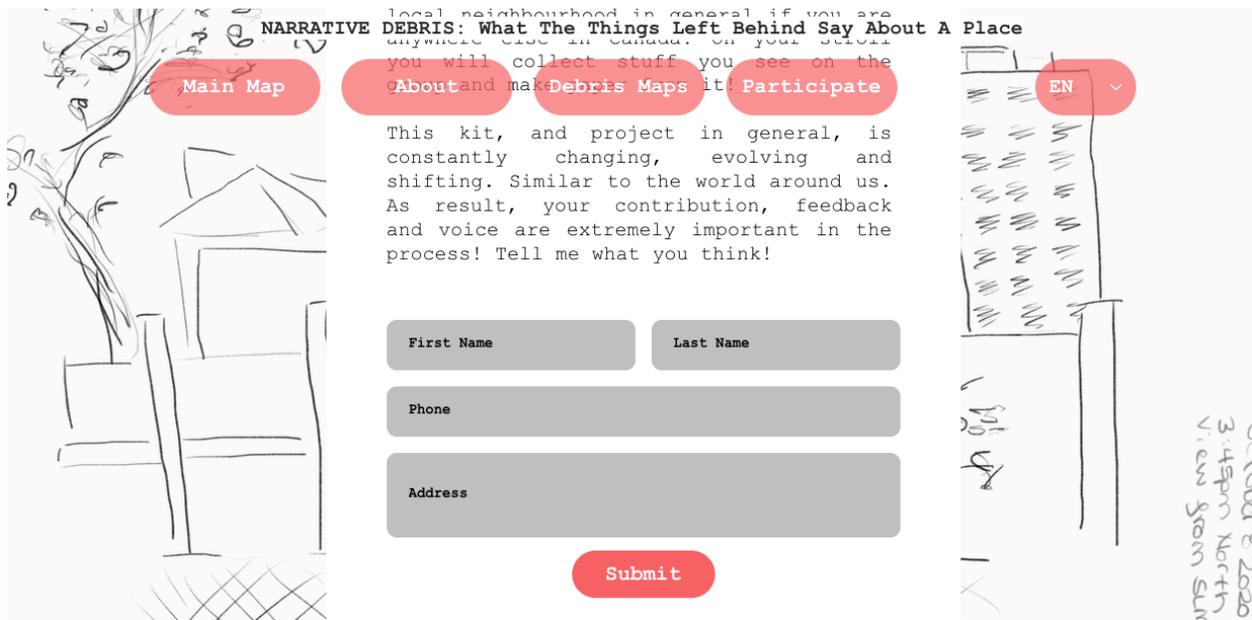


Figure A. 7 Participant address page (screenshot 2 of 2) to receive a kit