Stories of Place: Urban Community and Contested Space in Montreal's Cabot Square

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ABSTRACT

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Cabot Square is a public space in west downtown Montreal. The Square has long been the site of controversy, as it is both a neighbourhood park and a gathering place for people experiencing various forms of homelessness and socio-economic marginalization. In 2008, the City of Montreal's Ville-Marie Borough released an urban planning document called the PPU Quartier des Grands Jardins (Arrondissement 2008), which included provisions to revitalize the Square, along with plans to build a set of condominiums across the street, carried out in 2012. The revitalization of the Square was initiated subsequently in 2014. Fieldwork was conducted between 2012 and 2014 in Cabot Square and the surrounding area in order to understand the ways in which the Square functions as a gathering place, and to learn from the experiences of people who spend time there, as well as the outreach workers and community organizers who support them. Theorizing space and place according to the work of Casey (1997), Massey (1994; 2005), and Ingold (2009; 2011), this thesis tells a story of Cabot Square as a gathering place with processual, relational, and political dimensions. Place is presented as an emergent human experience generated by paths of wayfaring and practices of relationality, and contested by divergent claims to boundaries and belonging. This conceptual frame aligns itself closely with the ways Cabot Square is experienced by those who linger in it, but differs from the view taken by urban planners and city employees who have been involved in the PPU Quartier des Grands Jardins. The argument of this thesis is that different conceptions of place affect the ways spaces are designed, used, regulated, and experienced, and that consideration of the processual, relational, and political aspects of place might inspire more sustainable and equitable urban development projects in the future.

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Introduction

I arrive on my own at Cabot Square, carrying a cloth grocery bag full of sandwiches that I prepared with the other volunteers at Right to the City the night before in my kitchen. I have just stopped at Second Cup in Alexis Nihon for an americano, and carry it with me to-go. As I approach, I see some yellow tape stretched horizontally across part of the Square. I worry at first there has been some kind of incident, but as I get closer I see a large piece of equipment — a truck or crane of some kind — parked next to the statue inside a wide circular area cordoned off by the tape. A couple of men are standing by the equipment, wearing goggles and bright orange vests. The day is grey and chilly.

I walk into the Square. It is not large, nestled in the space of one city block between Ste. Catherine Street and René-Levesque Boulevard. The bronze and marble statue at the centre, currently being cleaned by some kind of pressure hose, takes up a lot of space, and around it radiate a couple of dozen trees that stretch tall against the clouds. Just off the main pathway encircling the statue, I notice a crowd of about ten or twelve people gathered around one of the picnic tables that punctuate the areas of the Square which were once grass and are now compact dirt. Today it is more like mud, with patches of the old feral grass struggling to break through. The people gathered are mostly Inuit — they are speaking Inuktitut — and mostly women; I see only one Inuk man, and two other men standing at the periphery. I nod and say hi to the men hovering around the picnic table. Then I hear someone say something about "arctic char for lunch," and I ask one of the men about it.

"Arctic char?" I ask.

"Yeah," one says, "have you ever tried it?" I say no, and he beckons me over to the picnic table, moving aside to reveal its surface layered with soggy newspaper and flattened cardboard boxes, and piled atop them mounds of meat. There is a fish head with a bit of meat still attached, a few scraps of something that looks to me like salmon, orange-pink striped with thin white lines of inter-muscular tissue. A piece of silvery fish skin lies discarded to one side. Then I notice two other things: one is a large chunk, maybe the size of two or three fists, of very dark, almost purple meat. The other is a pile of glistening, luminescent substance that is golden-white, a bit translucent, and in places smeared with a bit of red blood. One woman is holding a small plastic-handled steak knife and sawing narrow wedges from the large, dark piece of meat, then giving them to the others or eating them herself. I approach cautiously, not wanting to disrupt the event, but the man who invited me over asks the woman with the knife for a piece of char for me to try. I ask what the dark meat is, and a few people reply simultaneously: "seal meat!" The woman cuts off a thin strip of the seal and hands it to me, her fingers bloody. It is partially frozen; I pop it in my mouth, steeling myself for the unknown. It has the texture of very tender beef, icy but quickly melting in my mouth, easy to chew, with a clean, fishy aftertaste that reminds me of the ocean. I am surprised how much I like it. A First Nations man, a regular I see almost every week when I bring the sandwiches, wanders over and tells me a story about seal meat:

"When the mother of my kids was alive, she used to keep the freezer full of seal meat. One time I went in there and saw this meat, and thought it was elk or something. I pulled it out and cut off a piece and put it in

my mouth, and right away it started melting and had this fishy taste. So I said to her, something's wrong with this elk meat! This elk meat is rotten or something! And she said that's not elk, that's seal!" Laughter erupts around the picnic table.

I am offered a piece of raw char, which tastes to me like salmon sushi, more seal meat, which I gladly accept, and some seal fat. One of the other women sitting on my left asks me if I've ever had “beluga fat.” I say no, and ask if there's any beluga fat here for me to try. She nods at the table, at the golden glistening chunks. The man who brought me over asks if I want to try the fat, and I say yes, is it beluga? He says no, it's seal fat, and asks the woman with the knife to give me a piece. It's cold and squishy, leaving my fingertips covered in translucent oil after I put it in my mouth, where it melts almost like unsalted butter. The consistency is like stiff jello, with a bit of pleasant chewiness. I say it's delicious, and I could put it on a piece of bread like butter for breakfast!

The women continue to eat, and the one Inuk man, but the other men only ask for pieces of meat on my behalf. The Inuit speak Inuktitut to one another, and occasionally English. One woman, who is sitting on the top of the table at the far end, says "Thank you God" after she eats a piece of meat. I ask where this all came from, and they say someone brought it from up North.

After a while one of my colleagues from the Right to the City joins me, but by then most of the others have trickled away and there isn't much *natsiuviniq* — the Inuktitut word for seal meat — left. He and I sit across the table from Elisapie[1], the small Inuk woman who had been cutting and distributing the meat, and John, her quiet, kind-eyed boyfriend from rural Quebec. Elisapie is still cutting away the last scraps of seal meat from the bone. She is from up North, and has been in Montreal for thirteen years. John has only been here for two. I ask why they came here, and they both reply with variations on the same theme: "To get away from there … For a change of scenery." Elisapie had a difficult childhood and suffered some abuse; she says she went back two years ago when her mother died. "I buried her,” she says, miming a handful of dirt tossed over a grave. “Then I got outta there before I killed someone. I don't want to kill someone. I'm not ready to go back."

I ask about the seal meat, how often this kind of meat sharing happens. John says it only happens “once in a while." Elisapie tries to recall the name of the person who brought it, but can't; she says they were here earlier. John takes the seal bone from Elisapie and says he'll cut it for her. He cuts off several strips while Elisapie talks to me, but after a minute or two she takes it back from him.

He protests, "you're too slow! Look here,” and points to all the morsels he'd managed to liberate, but she replies, "You don't do it right!" He acquiesces. The piece looks like a shoulder blade to me, a broad thin bone with a bit of curvature to it, and I ask what it is but I can't make out the answer. Hip, maybe? Elisapie says, looking at the meat, "this is a … not female. Male, old one, big one."

"How do you know?" asks John.

"I just know. I grew up like this!"

[1] Pseudonyms are used throughout unless otherwise indicated.

I ask what's better, big old ones or younger ones, and she says the younger ones are better. She says, "I grew up like this, every day. Dad would hunt. We had big freezers full of this." I ask her how to eat it: is it always frozen and raw? "Frozen, cooked, unfrozen, and … " she can't recall the name for another method of preparation. "Boiled?" I suggest. "Fried?" offers my friend. She nods, saying they make it many ways. Then she smiles broadly. "Sometimes we hunt and right after—" she lifts her arms as if cradling a rifle— "we open it up right there on the ice and eat." She grabs a piece of seal resting on the newspaper between two fingers and thrusts it towards me, making it wriggle from side to side and laughing: "still moving!"

—Adapted excerpt from field notes, May 9, 2012

Natsiuviniq: Country Food and Material Practices of Relationality

This was not my first trip to Cabot Square, but it was a pivotal one. I had been volunteering for a few months with Right to the City[2] Montreal, a student-run anti-gentrification group critical of the City's plans to redevelop the area surrounding Cabot Square. We had been bringing lunch prepared by the People's Potato kitchen at Concordia University to the Square every Wednesday, the only day when no hot meal was available at any of the day shelters in the neighbourhood. The lunches were eaten by the people I would come to call 'regulars'. The City calls them 'the disenfranchised population' of the Square; outreach workers call them 'clients', and organizers sometimes refer to them as 'la population cible'. They don't call themselves anything in particular, but when pushed on the subject, they might nod meaningfully in the direction of the Square and talk about 'the people in the park' or 'our people'. They are not all Inuit, but many are, and many others claim a variety of Aboriginal identities: Cree, Métis, Mohawk, Mi'kmaq. Some come from the Caribbean, others from Toronto or St. John's or Prince George or Ivujivik. What links them is their presence in Cabot Square on a regular basis, where they gather, linger, and relate to one another and to the physical space in a way that passers-through, commuters who merely walk from one end of the Square to the other on their way home from work, do not.

What happened on May 9, 2012 was a shift in my understanding of what is important about Cabot Square. Prior to sharing seal meat with Elisapie and John, my interest had focused on the redevelopment project, and the student group's concerns that the new luxury condos being built across the street would push poorer residents and the people in the park out of the neighbourhood, as has happened in other areas of the city and other cities around the world. Our argument was based on the conviction, derived from Henri Lefèbvre (1974) and recycled through a variety of Marxist geographers (Harvey 2008; Mitchell 2003), that everyone has a 'right to the city', a right to occupy its spaces, and especially its public parks and squares. The negative space of that conviction — that is, what it is people actually do with that right, how it is they occupy urban space, and what this means for people's lived experiences of the city — was suddenly filled with *natsiuviniq* and the sharing of stories from home. There was something significant about this event, this gathering in a specific place and all the layers of meaning surrounding it, that would open up into a field of inquiry that inspired my MA thesis research

[2] The group modelled itself on the Right to the City activist network in the United States (cf. Katiya and Reid 2012).

project two years later. I still return to my memory of it as a kind of touchstone for thinking through what I've learned about the Square, unpacking it morsel by morsel and allowing it to inform my theorizations of space, relationality, and politics.

I have since learned that 'country food' sharing is an important Inuit cultural practice (Kishigami 2002; Patrick and Tomiak 2010), one which perhaps takes on special meaning in the city where seal meat and fresh arctic char are hard to come by. While an analysis of the role these food sharing practices play in building community, a sense of place, and even fostering wellbeing amongst Montreal Inuit should be done in the future (for preliminary work see Kishigami 1999; 2002; 2008), for now this activity serves as an example of modes of intersubjective engagement whose prevalence and meaning are not evident to passers-through, and even less evident to city planners taking a bird's-eye view of the Square. In order to understand what the Square means for people in and around it, and how regulars are connected to each other and to the world beyond the park, these practices must be accounted for.

For Elisapie and the others who shared seal and fish that day, a connectedness to home, family, and identity was felt, sensed (seen, tasted, and smelled), and concrete. This sharing of country food is precisely the kind of "practised interrelation" (Massey 2005:188) to which geographer Doreen Massey refers when she explains emplaced relationality, a concept that has become central to my thesis and which will be explored in Chapter 1. Through the embodied activities of cutting, giving, receiving, eating, savouring, being grateful for, and talking about the seal and fish meat, the people around the picnic table were enacting their identities as Inuit, and affirming their relationship to the distant home territories where the seal and fish were hunted. Another useful concept is that of the 'Native hub' (Ramirez 2007), an urban gathering which helps to affirm and rearticulate Indigenous identities and relationships. On the 'Inuit hub' created in the moment of sharing seal meat, one spoke extended all the way along the trajectory of the aunt, cousin, sibling or friend who had brought country food down with them from up North. Other spokes extended back in time to Elisapie's childhood, connecting her to memories of seal hunting on northern ice. Still other spokes drew all of us there, even me, to a central place — a picnic table in a public park — where the experience could be shared, and where invitations to the sharing were spontaneous and themselves emplaced.

I have also come to understand those trajectories which bring people into the Square as inextricable from political realities and histories of colonization. Canada, after all, is a settler colonial state, and Montreal is a settler colonial city (Blomley 2004; Wolfe 2006). The childhood trauma and fraught relationships with home and identity divulged by Elisapie over the last bit of seal bone are products of a colonial system which has used violence, forced relocation, and tools of assimilation like the Indian Act and residential schools to alter and erase Indigenous identities in the North and elsewhere (Tester and Kulchyski 1994; Backhouse 1999; Lawrence 2002; Quinn 2007). Today, the social and material conditions of many Aboriginal communities produce difficulties that lead some away from home places and into urban centres like Montreal; in Nunavik, the northern region of Quebec populated by fourteen remote Inuit villages, for example, a housing crisis leaves a third of households

overcrowded, half in disrepair (Knotch and Kinnon 2011:7), and drives many Nunavik Inuit to Montreal, along with other 'push factors' like physical and sexual abuse (Savoie and Cornez 2014:5).

Inuit and Aboriginal trajectories to Cabot Square are influenced, but not totalized, by these histories and ongoing colonial processes. The trajectories of non-Indigenous people also, some of whom are people of colour and immigrants, are bound up in the complexity of a colonial state system that is dependent on modernist and neoliberal capitalist ideologies that exclude such people from full citizenship, either materially or symbolically (Razack 2002; Thobani 2007). This political and historical backdrop makes understanding material practices and their meanings in Cabot Square all the more important for any project seeking to affirm a 'right to the city', or at least guided by ideals of social justice and transformation.

Silence at the centre

In my graduate research two years later, I went on to befriend Elisapie again and meet some of her relatives who also live in Montreal, but I failed to connect with the Inuit women in Cabot Square as I had hoped. Looking back, it was perhaps a naïve conceit to imagine that I would; I studied Inuktitut, but the learning was slow, and I volunteered at a local day shelter called the Open Door, but this led to limited interactions, and it turned out that the majority of clients are men. Still, I had set up an interview with a woman who had become a friend, a gentle and sincere Inuk with greying hair, perhaps in her late fifties, who always hugged me when she saw me. When it came time for the interview, though, she became nervous, and although she said she wanted to help with my research, her clear discomfort dissuaded me from pursing it further. Instead, she took me to Chez Doris to have lunch, where I sat and listened, uncomprehending, to several women chatting in Inuktitut at the 'Inuit table', and occasionally smiled at my friend over our plates of food. Although I had identified something important about the presence of Inuit women in Cabot Square, I found it guarded by a silence I could not penetrate. Someone once described it to me as a hoped-for conversation, a potential relationship between me and the women in the Square, but one already filled by the noise of thousands of other voices over hundreds of years, making the distance between us greater than it seems.

I am uncertain whether my own research will continue, but what I am certain of is that if Cabot Square is to be understood — not on the terms of a classificatory system or totalizing modernist epistemology seeking to control and evaluate, but from a perspective which includes as many stories and experiences as possible, and which may therefore allow more meaningful interactions and even effect social and political transformations — the stories of Inuit women living in the city must be listened to. No doubt there are many, including the outreach workers I interviewed whose expertise, commitment and compassion I admire, who already know these stories; perhaps in the end they are not stories for researchers, but for trusted friends and confidantes.

Methodology

Speaking with Inuit women was one of the challenges of my fieldwork; another was the informal nature of the

'community' in Cabot Square, which had no official leadership or structure within which to establish myself as a researcher. Instead I relied on spending time in the Square, albeit with no lunch to offer, and volunteering at the Open Door, a well-respected and busy day shelter across the street. I also moved in circles peripheral to the Cabot Square Project, an initiative organized by the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network (or simply the NETWORK) and coordinated by Allison Reid[3]. The project, which is ongoing at the time of this writing, has as its goals the fostering of a sense of safety and wellbeing in the Square and the surrounding area (NETWORK 2013:6), and was spurred to action by the City's plans to redevelop the Square[4] as one part of a larger revitalization plan called the *PPU Quartier des Grands Jardins*. Allison and her small team were extremely helpful and provided a link to the redevelopment process at the municipal level, as their role straddled the interests of both government and community organizations.

An early attempt to set up interviews with clients at the Open Door who were also regulars in Cabot Square was promising at first; many people I approached were interested in my project and seemed willing to donate their time. I subsequently learned that the schedules of the people in the park, who are constantly on the move from one place to another in order to fulfill their needs, are far from predictable. When I returned after the winter holiday in early 2014, all but one of my prospective interviewees were nowhere to be found. One Inuk man had gone back up north for the winter (something I was later told is common practice), and one other man, one of the first people I had met in the Square, had gone to jail. In the end, I only interviewed one regular, an old acquaintance from my early days in the park named William. My other interviewees were Caleb Clark, the director of the Open Door; Beth, an employee of the nearby women's day shelter Chez Doris; Allison Reid of the Cabot Square Project; and two outreach workers, Michelle and Elaine, from the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal. Their contributions inform the text throughout, but I have tried to keep William's interview more or less intact, as a way to foreground the lived experiences and stories of people in the park. The project was far from perfect in its planning or its implementation, but I was guided by a desire to co-theorize with research participants and learn from their own analyses (Ramirez 2007, Phillips and Cole 2013), to place them in dialogue with academic voices, to be conscious of the colonial context in Montreal (Tuhiwai Smith 1999), and to remain mindful of my own identities as a non-Indigenous, middle-class researcher.

Research Questions and Chapter Summaries

My interest in Cabot Square has always been inspired by a more general interest in places. As an Albertan living in Montreal, and someone who has been privileged enough to travel quite widely, I have cultivated and contemplated the now-familiar feeling that home is both here and somewhere else. Early formulations of my research question gravitated to ideas of community and belonging, and how these play themselves out (or not) in

[3] Allison Reid and Caleb Clark gave permission to use their real names; all other names of individuals who participated in the research project are pseudonyms, with the exception of public figures.

[4] Although the redevelopment of Cabot Square finally started after many delays during the summer of 2014 while I was writing this thesis, the bulk of my research took place prior to (and in anticipation of) this, so I have confined mention of it to the Conclusion for the sake of clarity.

Cabot Square. They were also informed by my involvement in what some might call a radical politics of urban development, which places urban belonging in a rights-based discursive framework, and so the question became, whose rights of access to the Square are least recognized, and how does this impact the formation of community? Once in the field, the limitations of my study became apparent, and I found that larger questions of community were difficult to discuss, in part because those I call 'regulars', the people in the park, do not always recognize themselves as such.

Finally, I have settled on employing theories of space and place — informed by my own disciplinary and personal inclinations, but also by the analyses I had already encountered through spending time in Cabot Square — to explore the ways in which different conceptions of place affect the ways spaces are designed, used, regulated, and experienced. I want to make sense of the material practices and ideological conflicts bound up in Cabot Square by asking what the space means to different people and at different times. I will then argue that one way of understanding place — ie. as processual, relational, and political — aligns itself closely to the ways the park is experienced by those who linger in it. This view of place is not the view taken by urban planners and city employees who have been involved in the plans to redevelop the Square itself, but if considered might inspire more sustainable, equitable, and just development projects in the future.

Chapter 1 outlines the conceptual framework I use to approach place and space. I draw on the work of geographer Doreen Massey, philosopher Edward Casey, and anthropologist Tim Ingold to construct a critique of modernist theorizing about space which understands it as static, planar, empty, and interchangeable. The critique argues that this view of space is divorced from human experience, as the viewer of the 'Concept-city' from the top of Michel de Certeau's skyscraper is divorced from the everyday spatial tactics and imaginings of the people walking the streets below (1984). Whether it is experienced as place or as space, the placial/spatial dimensions of the world might instead be understood as processual, changing over time in a recursive relationship with those who use and create it; relational, dependent both on relationships to other places and the relations enacted within places between self, other, and material environment; and political, always emplacing struggles over boundaries, identities, and meanings that might reveal much about the broader social and political systems in which they arise. Finally, I suggest that Cabot Square, as a public space in the heart of a settler colonial metropolis, is shaped by ongoing processes of colonization, neoliberal gentrification, and capitalist expansion that reinforce the privileges of Canada's 'exalted subjects' (Thobani 2007) — ie. white, male, non-Indigenous wage-earners who are full citizens — and the marginalization of those who do not fit this mould.

Chapter 2 gives a brief history of what is now Cabot Square based on archival research in historical texts, newspapers and municipal documents. To acknowledge the importance of rewriting colonial histories (Lawrence 2002), I begin with an exploration of what Cabot Square might have been long before European expansion brought French missionaries to the island; a more thorough Indigenization of Montreal's history is certainly needed. Then I discuss the ways Cabot Square, formerly known as Western Park and by a few other (official and unofficial) names, has emplaced various events and practices over its life as a municipally-

designated gathering space. Curiously, it has often occupied a place on the margins of other matters of concern. As one of Montreal's smaller and less celebrated squares, it has been relegated to a supporting role in the stories of Montreal's famous Forum, the Alexis Nihon Shopping Centre, the Atwater Library, and the Montreal Children's Hospital. I conclude by reviewing the neighbourhood's economic decline over the last half-century, and then the City's plan to revitalize the area, which after much talk and planning finally coalesced in 2011-2012 with the building of a set of condominiums across the street from the Square. Situating Cabot Square in its historical context, however partial, is an important step towards understanding places as processual and open to a shifting variety of meanings and uses.

Chapter 3 discusses the ways in which relationality is embodied as material practice in Cabot Square. Focusing on the notable Inuit presence in the Square as a starting point, I ask who comes to the Square and why, and finally what keeps them in its orbit. I compare the modes of relationality in Cabot Square to Ramirez' (2007) theorization of the Native hub, suggesting that although the gatherings in the park share many of the same features, and perhaps even the potential for political mobilization, created by Ramirez' hubs, they are also different in the extent to which they fall short of being deliberate gatherings of urban Indigenous people for a specific purpose. The metaphor of the hub is useful nonetheless for understanding the web of relationships that is woven around Cabot Square through the trajectories of the people in the park, who remain connected to other places in the city and home communities beyond it. I conclude by emphasizing the importance of access to the Square as a gathering place for reaffirming and rearticulating this connectedness.

Chapter 4 illustrates two emergent discourses about meaning in the Square. The first, structured largely around William's interview, is the conviction that Cabot Square is a 'home for the homeless' where people experiencing transience, marginalization or precarity can find a sense of familial belonging. William explains how his own feelings of belonging have been fostered through material practices of gathering, like those discussed in the previous chapter. He tells the story of his arrival in the Square, his subsequent hardship, and finally his sense that he has found a new family with whom he can share his experiences and on whom he can depend for material and emotional support, all situated within Cabot Square as a *home place*. Next, I add the discourses of other interviewees to William's analysis that Cabot Square also has importance, materially and symbolically, as a *green space* in the city. I frame the discussion of green space in the context of theories of modernist urban design and contrast it to the narratives of interviewees, who connect the importance of green space not only to the imagined 'health' of the city, but to the formation of communities and even to the affirmation of urban Aboriginal identities. These overlapping layers of meaning, as articulated by people in the park and those who work with them, emphasize the relational nature of place as a realm of emergent intersubjective encounter.

Finally, Chapter 5 examines the municipal redevelopment project, which began with the construction of condominiums along Ste. Catherine Street and has most recently led to the fencing-off of Cabot Square itself for reconstruction, as productive of another layer of meaning which understands the Square as a thoroughfare or a

gateway. This view, I argue, rejects the call to recognize intersubjective experience present in the discourses of *home place* and *green space*, and focuses instead on the Square's material configuration with a view to improving its utility and efficiency as a conduit both for commuters and for economic growth in Montreal's downtown core. It also relies on precisely the concept of space rejected by Massey, Casey, and Ingold: it casts the cartographer's gaze on the Square, converting its three-dimensional materiality into two-dimensional diagrams, and remaining aloof from its particularities, its emergence over time and as a product of dialogue and difference, and the multiple ways in which it is used, inhabited, and imagined. By reviewing a meeting hosted by the Borough of Ville-Marie on the subject of Cabot Square's future, I show how the bureaucrats and politicians involved in the redevelopment project absolve themselves of responsibility for the more complicated social issues at stake in the park by artificially separating 'city business' from 'social engineering'; if instead processes of urban revitalization were able to take a holistic view of place as processual, relational, and political, they might be more adequately equipped to address the real needs of the communities whose home places and green spaces will be altered by them.

I must acknowledge that the process of conducting this research has humbled me, and convinced me that academics should tread carefully and without grandiose expectations into any field, but perhaps especially those already populated by highly skilled, experienced, and compassionate people like the outreach workers and organizers surrounding Cabot Square. I do not presume to offer solutions that have not already been offered, and even implemented, through the work of the NETWORK, its Cabot Square Project, and its numerous affiliated organizations; rather, I hope to pay my respects to the people who made my work possible by taking the time to talk with me, hold my hand, and guide me through my research experience. My conceptualizations of space and place are perhaps not as accessible to a wide audience as I had intended, but I hope that with time and experience I will learn that skill, too. For now, what follows is my attempt to understand the gatherings in Cabot Square as practices which create new home places in the city, and to argue that the ways we conceive of space can make the significant difference between places of exclusion and places of belonging.

Chapter 1
Theoretical Approaches to Place and Space

Place and space figure prominently in my thesis, both as concepts and as phenomenal components of fieldwork. Cabot Square was a starting point for my research for reasons I explained in the Introduction, and remained central as an object of inquiry and contemplation. Many studies focus on a social group or cultural practice, following one of these into its various spatial and placial configurations. Instead I began with place, asking how actors, practices, and histories intertwine and are bound up together in Cabot Square. Every study implies questions of place and must engage with them to varying degrees, especially in social science research. My aim is to make place — first conceptually and then more concretely — the centre of inquiry. This aim arises from my own interests and perspectives, and is further inspired by a literature which calls for sensitivity to place in anthropology, and in social inquiry more generally (Appadurai 1988; Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 1997; Feld and Basso 1996; Gieryn 2000; Rodman 2003; Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga 2003; Çinar and Bender 2007; Low 2009).

In this thesis, I develop a theory of place that draws from a variety of disciplines, and which is informed as much as possible by local understandings of Cabot Square. In order to fully engage in the kind of co-theorizing with research participants I so admire in anthropology (Phillips and Cole 2013; Robertson and Culhane 2005), I would have needed more time to build collaborative relationships. But to the extent that it was possible, I modelled my understanding of place on the ways in which Cabot Square was described by research participants, many of whom emphasized its social and relational aspects, its embeddedness in history, and its capacity for gathering. Happily, many useful conceptions of place and space exist in the theories of the 'spatial turn' in scholarly thought and writing, some of which coincide with the on-the-ground theorizing of people who experience the Square on a daily basis. It is my hope to use them as tools for deepening my analysis of how Cabot Square functions as a place, and what this means to the people who pass through and inhabit it.

Many scholars with far more time, experience, and expertise than I have undertaken ambitious projects related to space and place. Although they are only a few examples — albeit eminent ones — from a vast and varied interdisciplinary literature, I am modelling my own theoretical frame on the works of philosopher Edward Casey, geographer Doreen Massey, and anthropologist Tim Ingold. Other authors and ideas enrich this basic frame, but I have chosen these three as guides because each has dealt with the concepts of space and place as subjects of inquiry in themselves, rather than backdrop or metaphor[5]. Taken together, their writings contribute to a conversation across disciplines that advances a theoretically and politically provocative view of place and space. Ultimately I hope to frame my research as a preliminary attempt to respond to what Massey calls "the

[5] Anthropologist Margaret Rodman published a response to a special issue of *Cultural Anthropology* edited by Arjun Appadurai (1988a) in which she describes places as "politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions" rather than "inert containers" (Rodman 2003:205), and criticizes Appadurai and the other 1988 contributors for assimilating the question of place into the discussion of voice and ethnographic authority and treating space, place and geography as metaphor rather than lived experience (208).

challenge of space" (2005), a challenge which requires us to engage with the ongoing divergences and convergences made possible by our emplacement in the world. I intend to take a theoretical framework that acknowledges this challenge, and ask what it has to offer anthropological inquiry into specific places like Cabot Square.

The broad outline of my conceptual approach to place and space is as follows: place (and space) can be understood fundamentally as a) *processual*, ie. constantly being created and recreated through active processes of social (and material) construction; b) *relational*, which is to say that space, as a precondition for the juxtaposition of self and other, is always experienced — and indeed constructed in the processual and co-constitutive manner described above — through relationships amongst human and nonhuman subjects; and c) *political*, because as a phenomenon of ongoing relationality, meaning is always and continuously contested and negotiated.

Before going further, however, it will be useful to introduce the thinking of each author, all of whom share the premise of a critical approach to place and space. It might be tempting to oversimplify their arguments into a question of semantics: that we must take sides in an ongoing battle between *space* — associated with modernism, rationalism, and colonial expansion, and fundamentally disconnected from human experience — and *place,* the postmodern antidote to space, associated with a return to the body, particularity, and subjectivity. Casey writes against the "marginalization of place" in philosophical thought (2013), and Ingold sets forth an argument "against space" as a fallacy of modernist logic that 'inverts' human experience (2009; 2011). While Massey contradicts them both on terminology, preferring to rescue *space* from infamy, she nonetheless sets up a similar oppositional framework in which she encourages us to think about space differently. So although they approach it from different angles, each scholar presents a challenge to (a certain kind of) space, and proposes that thinking of space and place otherwise might yield a rich analysis that, rather than granting us the bird's-eye view of modernist theory, takes us deeper into human senses of emplacement.

Challenging Space: Place, Wayfaring, and Imaginative Geographies

> Space on the modernist conception ends by failing to locate things or events in any sense other than that of pinpointing positions on a planiform geometric or cartographic grid. Place, on the other hand, situates, and it does so richly and diversely. It locates things in regions whose most complete expression is neither geometric nor cartographic.
>
> (Casey 2013:201)

In *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, Edward S. Casey describes a trend in thinking that he calls "the marginalization of place" (2013:134). Casey suggests that place was a primary, indeed a primordial, concept in the ancient world, but that its primacy was eroded by a growing attraction to space, which promised infinitude,

unlimited extension, and freedom from the boundedness and groundedness of place. The problem, for Casey, is that this abstract notion of empty space "fails to capture what is specific to place, namely, the capacity to hold and situate things, to give them a local habitation" (20), the kind of "situating power" (200) which gives place such prominence in human experience. After all, he points out, "[n]othing we do is unplaced. How could it be otherwise?" (ix). He follows a trajectory through millennia of the western philosophical canon which has slowly but surely shuffled place out of the spotlight, for example by relegating it to a mere particularization of space: place as space with added meaning and specificity, space with content (x). Then he shows how Enlightenment-era knowledge regimes of both theology and physics — epistemological stances inextricable from the project of European colonial expansion — worked together in favour of a conception of space as a kind of infinite planar void into which one might expand indefinitely:

> The colonizing tendency of Christianity is echoed in the attempts of Galilean, Cartesian, and Newtonian physics to appropriate whole realms formerly consigned to alchemy and "natural philosophy," not to mention local custom and history. In both instances, the power of place, uncontested in the ancient world (and still potently present in medieval times), was put into abeyance—indeed, often literally abolished, and with as much relentless force as that with which native peoples were subjected to Christian indoctrination. (Casey 2013:77)

Casey does not make this comparison lightly. The marginalization of place was achieved during this period by conventions of space that favoured maps, charts, measurements, and expansion — all of which had practical value for the colonization effort. Place and Indigenous peoples, for Casey, were marginalized during the same era by mutually constitutive ideological and material forces. This connection between cartography, infinite space and colonialism is important, and I return to it in a later section of this chapter. For now, we begin to see the ways in which Casey's philosophical history intersects with social and political history. The slow but steady triumph of space over place had real consequences which linger and continue to shape the world, and whose vestiges can be seen in the ways place and space are conceptualized, regulated, and enacted in settler-colonial societies like Canada.

Yet this triumph was never complete. Casey's philosophical history takes us through the Enlightenment and modern periods, dark times for place as well as for people marginalized by colonial expansion, into the postmodern era and a resurgence of place. He argues that postmodern philosophers (and their antecedents, like Kant and Heidegger) retrieve place in a variety of ways, notably through attention to embodiment and variations on phenomenology. By tracing these trajectories away from space and towards place, Casey is attempting to uncover place's "hidden history" and "find a way back into the place-world" (xv), important goals if the modernist dominance of space is to be contested. For Casey, place must return from exile precisely because of its primacy: "we are immersed in [place] and could not do without it. To be at all—to exist in any way—is to be

somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place" (ix). Denying this in favour of an abstract view of space, within which emplacement and embodiment are inferior, incidental, or inconsequential, is to deny the very ground upon which we stand as humans experiencing and interacting with the world.

Finally, Casey asks: why did place lie dormant for so long in spite of its clear prominence in lived experience? He points to a certain metaphysical freedom that comes with conceptions of space as infinite, noting that on the contrary:

> Place presents itself in its stubborn, indeed its rebarbative, particularity. One has no choice but to deal with what is *in place*, or *at place*: that is, what is *at stake there*. Regarding the particular place one is already in, one cannot speculate, much less levitate or miraculate, freely; one has to cope with the exacting demands of being just there, with all its finite historicity and special qualities. (Casey 2013:338)

Thus place's unique "power of gathering" (1996:25), its capacity to 'gather bodies in its midst' (46) and to emplace histories, people, and things, to ground them in a shared material and temporal *event* (2013:337), compels us to affirm the complexity of our interactions with the world and its human and nonhuman inhabitants. Understanding Cabot Square as a place in this sense brings attention to the ways in which it is experienced by people moving in and through it, rather than the kind of strategic urban planning that might arise from considering it only as 'space' or as 'site', which Casey portrays as a "leveled-down, monotonous *space for* building and other human enterprises" (x). Sites exist, especially in urban settings, to be designed, controlled, augmented. Cabot Square as *site* is ripe for redevelopment, indeed destined for it[6]; Cabot Square as *place* presents a more complicated picture, one tethered to history and politics, as we shall see below.

Casey's argument seems at its root a phenomenological one: place is the medium through which we experience life, and understanding it may bring us closer to ourselves and to each other. Both Casey and the next scholar I discuss, Tim Ingold, are heavily influenced by the Heideggerian philosophy of 'dwelling', which understands the human experience as a processual inhabitation of the lifeworld, asking less about the nature of being than about how being unfolds (Ingold 2005:504). Both argue that being necessarily unfolds in places, but Ingold adds the caveat that places also unfold, existing not as static entities, but being comprised of entanglements of our trajectories, the paths of movement along which we all travel through space and time.

Ingold, a much-cited anthropologist known for eloquent, if controversial, stances on debates within the discipline, follows Casey in making a distinction between space and place. In an essay called *Against Space: Place, Movement, Knowledge,* Ingold rather poetically exposes the fallacy of space:

> Of all the terms we use to describe the world we inhabit, [space] is the most

[6] Cities are often conceived according to a logic of progress that assumes a kind of destiny for urban spaces (Blomley 2004:115). This will be discussed further below.

> abstract, the most empty, the most detached from the realities of life and experience .... Farmers plant their crops in the *earth*, not in space, and harvest them from *fields*, not from space .... Casting our eyes upwards, we see the *sky*, not space, and on a windy day we feel the *air*, not space. (Ingold 2009:29)

Space, in sum, does not really figure into lived experience, and only persists due to the "logic of inversion" (*ibid.*) central to modern thinking. This inversion, in a move not unlike the marginalization of place, "turn[s] the pathways along which life is lived into boundaries within which it is enclosed" (Ingold 2009:29), producing a way of understanding our being-in-the-world that is problematically divorced from how it is experienced. Modernity has, as it were, confused the map for the territory, and accorded the map special privileges at the territory's expense. As such, space should be discarded in favour of more applicable terms.

Helpfully, Ingold has an arsenal of such terms at the ready: he suggests that place is preferable to space — nodding to both Casey and Massey for their contributions to this argument — but that place should be understood in a particular way. He insists that places are not mere containers for being or activity: "lives are led not inside places but through, around, to and from them" (33). Here he refers to his concept of 'wayfaring' or movement 'along' a path or trajectory, which he contrasts with the movement-across-a-surface model of "transport" (2009:35). If we understand human experience as inhabitation[7], inhabitation as movement, and movement as wayfaring, Ingold argues, we see that "every inhabitant lays a trail. Where inhabitants meet, trails are entwined, as the life of each becomes bound up with the other. Every entwining is a knot, and the more that lifelines are entwined, the greater the density of the knot" (2009:33). He goes on to explain that "[p]laces, then, are like knots, and the threads from which they are tied are lines of wayfaring" (*ibid.*). Place is not a container, a setting or a backdrop for objects or events, but a way of describing these 'knots' and picking them out of the complex tangle of intertwining threads that Ingold calls, after Henri Lefebvre, a "meshwork" (38), the fabric of the lifeworld. As we shall see, and in harmony with Casey and Massey, Ingold's place-as-knot emphasizes the relational and processual aspects of the phenomenon: places are entanglements of trajectories that occur at specific moments in time, as these trajectories intersect. Urban places, the subject of this thesis, are examples of high-density knots, instances of entanglement that involve a large number of threads, wayfaring paths that span out widely across the meshwork and continue to intertwine over a long period of time.

Like Casey, Ingold is critical of mapmaking, accusing "cartographic conventions" of contributing to the flawed modernist vision of the world (34). Ingold does not make explicit connections to European colonial expansion — or to a broader politics — but he does link an alternative understanding of place with local, place-based knowing and Indigenous lifeways (2009:34), just as Casey would expect from an anthropologist (2013:339). This move towards epistemology is quite explicit in Ingold's work, and relatively succinct compared to Casey's broad-reaching philosophical history, although similar points are made. Ingold advocates for

[7] Ingold adapts this term from Heidegger, calling inhabitation a way to "join in the gathering" (2010:5), a participatory and experiential process of being in the world.

knowledge "forged in *movement*" (2009:41) over knowledge resulting from the measurement of a compartmentalized world; what we know through wayfaring is something closer to lived experience, and somehow more meaningful, than what we know from looking at a map or gazing down from a skyscraper[8]. In a subsequent book (featuring a republished version of his 2009 essay 'Against Space'), Ingold takes it further by proposing to replace "classificatory knowledge" with "storied knowledge", for in a world of movement, wayfaring, and entanglement, "we can understand the nature of things only by attending to their relations, or in other words, by telling their stories" (2011:160). Stories, he explains, "*always, and inevitably, draw together what classifications split apart*" (*ibid.*), just as places gather and situate, encouraging us to face place as an arena of contemporaneous diversity and, often, of conflict. Both Casey and Ingold propose a move towards a more integrated, holistic epistemology and away from the atomizing individualism of classifications, abstract space and the logic of transport. This is a move I hope to follow.

Ingold's work is provocative. The insight that "every 'somewhere' is on the way to somewhere else" (2009:34) is particularly applicable to an analysis of Cabot Square, where people are often 'on the move'[9], and where the Square's relationship with other places defines it to a large extent; but there seems to be something missing from the picture. Certainly we move through life along pathways that have both spatial and temporal dimensions, and this movement (at least along the temporal axis) is constant. And certainly these pathways are in fact carved out by our own movements along them; we each blaze our own trail. But although we are always in some sense on the move, do we not also gravitate to particular places and, at least once in a while, stay in them and stake some kind of claim? In a world of constant movement, how might we understand a desire for stability, or those fraught and intangible terms, belonging and community? To say that places exist only in relationship to our trajectories passing through them is not to deprive them of the gathering power they possess, that draw which keeps us coming back. Massey addresses directly this issue of belonging, of demarcating places in order to claim them, in her discussion of the challenge of space and the ways in which space embodies and opens up the realm of the political, as we will see below.

While Ingold writes 'against space', geographer Doreen Massey's work, *For Space* (2005), seems at first glance like a counter-proposal. On the contrary, Ingold and Massey share many similar concerns about space; the difference is that Massey chooses to salvage what Ingold and Casey have discarded. Ingold, who is aware and appreciative of Massey's work, suggests that more is at stake for a geographer — at least, more than for a philosopher or an anthropologist — when considering whether to rescue or jettison 'space' as a concept (Ingold 2006:892). Whatever the reason, Massey's argument 'for space' lines up in many ways with Casey's and Ingold's arguments for place and for wayfaring, namely in its insistence on understanding space as a fundamentally

[8] In Michel de Certeau's famous chapter 'Walking in the City' (1984), the view of city streets from a New York skyscraper is contrasted to the experience of pedestrians walking those streets. The differences are similar to those proposed here to exist between space and place: the view from above takes the viewer "out of the city's grasp" (92) to a god-like vantage point that reduces the city to a spatial vista; on the ground, people walking through the city "weave places together" (97) with their movement.

[9] An analysis of Cabot Square from the point of view of mobility studies (cf. Cresswell 2006; King 2007; Kirby 2009) would be appropriate and interesting, but falls outside the scope of this thesis.

relational phenomenon.

The notion of space as a sphere of "radical contemporaneity" (2005:195) is contrasted in Massey's work to an effort, also part of the modernist-colonial paradigm, at "the taming of the spatial" (106). Although mapmaking figures in to this 'taming' process, she approaches her critique of cartography from a more nuanced angle. She challenges the representation of space "as a flat surface, a continuous surface. Space as the completed product. As a coherent closed system. Here space is completely and instantaneously interconnected; space you can walk across" (106). The space of the map flattens out time, depth, and experience, and presents itself as a foregone conclusion. She goes on to point out the link between this flattening of space through its geometric-cartographic representation, and the spatialization of representation:

> Two things are working together here then, and they powerfully reinforce each other. On the one hand the representation of space as a surface, and on the other hand the imagination of representation (here, again, in the specific form of writing, as scientific representation) in terms of spatialisation. Together what they lead to is the stabilisation of others, their deprivation of a history. It is a political cosmology which enables us in our mind's eye to rob others of their histories; we hold them still for our own purposes, while we do the moving. Crucial to this operation is the taming of space. (Massey 2005:122)

Maps viewed in this way are technologies of surveillance and power, cartography a stabilizing tactic to which "[l]oose ends and ongoing stories are real challenges" (107). Stories and histories do not figure into the totalizing strategies of cartographic space. Unlike Casey and Ingold, however, Massey is unwilling to consign cartography to the role of a villainous usurper of place. She points out that "[n]ot all views from above are problematical — they are just another way of looking at the world …. The problem only comes if you fall into thinking that that vertical distance lends you truth" (107). Whereas Ingold argued that "wayfaring is our most fundamental mode of being in the world" (38), Massey is prepared to accept space, however problematic in its conception, into the broad range of possible human experiences. This raises some interesting questions: are place and wayfaring *truer* expressions of what it means to be human? Does the subject at the top of de Certeau's skyscraper not experience the world in that moment as fully and intimately as the subjects walking the streets below? By calling some modes of experience 'primal' and 'fundamental', are Casey and Ingold making a truth claim that precludes the legitimacy of concepts like space, transport, mapmaking, and other such 'views from above'?

Rather than positing space as antithetical to place and vice versa, I, along with Massey, am interested in ways in which we might think of both a little differently. Like Ingold, I owe no professional debts to the concept of space. But I am still uneasy discarding it entirely in favour of place, as he and Casey both attempt to do, mostly because of the risk of erasing space as a lived and experienced phenomenon. Neither do I wish to cut

myself off from understanding the potential re-appropriations of the concept of space for purposes other than those of colonial cartography (Indigenous land-use mapping, for example; cf. Tobias 2009). Space is different from place, yes. But it is no less real. As Massey contends, "[the] argument is not that place is not concrete, grounded, real, lived, etc. etc. It is that *space is too*" (2005:185, emphasis added). Research participants used the terms 'space' and 'place' interchangeably to refer to Cabot Square; I am reluctant to preclude one term or the other from my analysis.

The problem for Massey, then, is not a question of choosing space *or* place. It is a closed conception of space as static, exclusive, bounded, definite; when space as it is recorded on a map gains a privileged sort of existence over the places the map depicts. This closed and reified two-dimensional space is a result of a "failure (deliberate or not) of spatial imagination" (8), and denies space's processual quality, its relationality, and perhaps most importantly for Massey as we will see below, its pivotal role in the playing-out of the political.

Massey, Casey, and Ingold all champion a particular view of space or place over and against another theoretical stance, described variously as modernist, hegemonic, or colonial, and always flawed. For my purposes here, I might call this conception of space 'modernist-colonial' after Restrepo and Escobar (2005)[10], in order to point to its association both with modernist thought, understood as arising from a Western epistemological tradition rooted through the Enlightenment in classical philosophy, and the material and imaginative practices of European colonial expansion. For all three authors, the modernist-colonial conception of space is a fallacy with political and social impacts that reverberate through history, flattening the lived world into a two-dimensional cartographic fantasy, and erasing the lives and traces of people whose trajectories complicate the modernist-colonial narrative of progress.

This distinction is tempting in its simplicity, and because it seems to allow alliances to emerge between the enemies of modernism; Casey and Ingold both draw links between place and Indigenous thought and lifeways. Indeed, my own project approaches Cabot Square as a modern-colonial space, and my politics are informed by a desire to decolonize such spaces through careful attention to contested histories and multiple voices. I might have said that I wanted to assert Cabot Square's importance as a place over and against its conception as a space on the part of city planners and other bureaucratic, cartographic minds. I might have argued that understanding the park as place, not space, would allow for a greater sensitivity to the ways it is inhabited by First Nations and Inuit, whose marginalization appears to be linked to that of the concept of place. Place could be understood here as an embodied experience with processual, social, political, affective, and intersubjective dimensions. Space, on the other hand, may be a discursive tool which allows us to talk about place from a different perspective, usually an imagined vantage point that surpasses the bodily limits of time and emplacement. Place has been marginalized, inverted, and tamed, and must instead be returned to its rightful place in the foreground of human experience and allowed to run free, even 'off the edge' of the map. Massey

[10] Latin American anthropologists Restrepo and Escobar, in outlining a framework for the world anthropologies project, refer to 'modernity/coloniality', a term coined to refer to the ways in which modernist and colonial systems are mutually constitutive and inextricable from one another (2005:104). More on this below.

explains, “[o]n the road map you won't drive off the edge of your known world. In space as I want to imagine it, you just might” (2005:111).

However, I think the terrain here requires more careful footing. Taking a stance inspired by Jackson’s radical empiricism (1989; 1996), I present place and space not as irreconcilable opposites, but as interconnected phenomena that are both fully part of human practice and experience: while I agree with Jackson’s stipulation that theory or discourse not be elevated in truth-value above lived experience, since they are both necessarily a part of it (1996:1), the implication is also that theory and discourse be taken alongside lived experience, and not discounted by accusations of abstraction or aloofness. Participants in my research experience both place and space in a multitude of ways, and my objective is to understand how these discourses and experiences converge in, and indeed create, the space-place nexus of Cabot Square.

Meeting the Challenge of Place

> Space is as much a challenge as is time. Neither space nor place can provide a haven from the world. If time presents us with the opportunities of change and (as some would see it) the terror of death, then space presents us with the social in the widest sense: the challenge of our constitutive interrelatedness — and thus our collective implication in the outcomes of that interrelatedness; the radical contemporaneity of an ongoing multiplicity of others, human and non-human; and the ongoing and ever-specific project of the practices through which that sociability is to be configured.
>
> (Massey 2005:195)

Thus Massey concludes her volume, *For Space* (2005), by gathering together a nuanced description of space that emphasizes interrelatedness, multiplicity, practice, and the social. Always grounding her theoretical work in the political, she calls for a “politics which responds” to the 'challenge of space' (10), which affirms the contemporaneous presences of others rather than denying them, and which pays attention to practice and lived experience. This is a politics with which I hope to align my own research, and one step toward doing so is by framing the conceptions of place and space that underpin it.

Drawing from Casey's call to return to the 'place-world', Ingold's insistence on 'wayfaring', and Massey's encouragement of 'imaginative geographies', I propose to understand place from three mutually constitutive perspectives: first, the *processual*; second, the *relational*; and third, the *political*. This echoes Massey's three-part description of space as “the product of interrelations”, the realm of “coexisting heterogeneity” without which we have “no multiplicity”, and as “always under construction” (2005:9). She goes on to suggest that “we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far” (*ibid.*). If time is that which makes change possible, and if space is that which makes possible the coexistence of self and other(s), then the situation of place as a focal point of both time and space — Massey sometimes refers to this as “space-time” (1994; 2005) — presents negotiating

through difference not just as a philosophical thought experiment, but a lived political reality. Only in place does intersubjectivity become possible; and so does conflict. The politics of place, as we will see below, take on particular qualities in the urban metropolises of settler-colonial states.

Process

Understanding place not as an entity, but as a process, allows for the openness required to live up to the challenge of space. On this Massey, Ingold, and Casey would agree. Casey suggests that places do not simply exist, but "happen" (1996:27); Massey writes of places as "processes" (1994:155). These perspectives implore us not to be fooled by the appeal of a space-without-time, as though space exists on a separate, infinite plane and simply waits for things to happen in it, to modify it into places; instead, space and time are inseparable, and find their co-constitutive expression in place.

The choice to view place as processual or not has political consequences. Space as a static surface that is rendered immutable and basically empty once it is catalogued and recorded "can lead us to conceive of other places, peoples, cultures simply as phenomena 'on' this surface. It is not an innocent manoeuvre, for by this means they are deprived of histories"[11] (Massey 2005:4). If space is not emergent from time, then time can be erased from space, and with it history. Rather, if we understand space as Massey suggests, as a "dynamic simultaneity", then "phenomena may be placed in relationship to one another in such a way that new social effects are provoked. The spatial organization of society ... is fully implicated in both history and politics" (Massey 1994:4). Thus the version of Cabot Square that is nothing more than a rectangle demarcated on a map erases the social and political struggles that have taken place there and shaped the Square and its surroundings for hundreds, even thousands of years. Understanding Cabot Square as 'implicated in history and politics' requires that its history be taken into account, as I will do briefly in Chapter 2. Furthermore, applying a processual view of place means that what the Square is, its *placeness* — or, if we understand place as an event, how the Square 'happens' — is open and constantly negotiated; it may be many things to many people at many points in time. Finally, I will argue that the place-making process occurs not just in the easily recognized form of architecture, city planning documents, and construction projects, but also in the ongoing and everyday experiences of those who use and inhabit places. Therefore, the people whose paths of wayfaring take them to and from Cabot Square on a daily basis shape the space, both materially and symbolically, as much as any construction worker or architect.

Relationality

If we accept that place is processual, constantly being made and remade, then we might say it is its *relational*

[11] The importance of recognizing multiple histories and understanding that all cultural groups change through time has been thoroughly discussed in anthropology, notably by Eric Wolf (2010 [1982]), who discussed the de-historicization of non-European peoples, and Arjun Appadurai, who theorized the 'incarceration' of native bodies and identities, which are often conceived as confined to place-belonging in a way non-native bodies and identities are not (1988b).

nature that unfolds through this process. As a 'knot' of intertwined trajectories, it is the ways in which these trajectories relate to one another — tangling, twisting, pulling, redirecting, gliding past smoothly or sticking and creating friction — that give shape to place. The relational aspect of place links specific places to a geographically and temporally wide net of entanglements and trajectories, which is also defined in terms of relations. So places only exist (or occur) in relation to other places. After all, how do we describe them except by reference to these relationships? The answer to the question of 'where' always invokes relationality and nearness. Furthermore, places are themselves constituted by the relationships among the trajectories that form them, and a recognition of this amounts to an opening up of place to include "relations which stretch beyond — the global as part of what constitutes the local, the outside as part of the inside" (Massey 1994:5). This holistic view of space as "open and porous" (*ibid.*) allows us to understand what is really going on in places, in contrast to a closed view that insists upon discrete boundaries and leaves some trajectories out of the picture.

Massey also points to an important ontological truism: "Without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space" (2005:9). Space is indeed a name we give to that which makes room for the many, that which makes possible the coexistence of the different. We might understand self and other as simultaneously separated and brought together by the phenomenon of space, or by experiences of emplacement. But Massey's understanding of space as relational goes beyond this premise, noting that relationships are not simply metaphorical or imagined, but concretely embodied through what Massey refers to as "active material practices" through which "space and place emerge" (118). Intersubjective relationships — amongst human and nonhuman subjects, extending to include our relationship with material spaces and the layers of meaning we attribute to them — are concrete, and are enacted in place.

Paying attention to relationships as emplaced, embodied, and practiced is especially revealing in the context of Cabot Square, where concrete practices of relationality, I will argue, are at the heart of the regular gatherings that happen there. I will compare these gatherings to another model of relationality developed by Laverne Roberts and Renya Ramirez, called the 'Native hub', whereby urban Aboriginal peoples use a variety embodied practices, many of which depend upon place, to affirm their connectedness to far-away home communities and Aboriginal identities (Ramirez 2007). In Cabot Square, people do not gather aimlessly, but rather to engage in just these kinds of practices, meeting up with friends and family, sharing ideas and information, supporting one another through cooperation and friendship, eating, drinking, sleeping, and simply spending time together. Understanding these practices as a fundamental enactment of relationality, and therefore of place-making processes, presents Cabot Square as both materially and symbolically significant for a certain portion of Montreal's precariously housed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community.

Politics

If space is the condition for the juxtaposition of self and other, and its uses and meanings are multiple and constantly negotiated, then what is this negotiation of lived and practiced relationality if not politics? The

political is an important preoccupation for Massey, who advocates for a place-based political approach that "addresses rights of presence and confronts facts of difference" (Massey 2005:153; cf. Amin 2002), one which faces the challenge that emerges in places as relational and processual entanglements. Although this is her vision for fostering a radical politics of space, she acknowledges that whatever the approach, politics is always at stake in place: "Space, as relational and as the sphere of multiplicity, is both an essential part of the character of, and perpetually reconfigured through, political engagement. And the way in which that spatiality is imagined by the participants is also crucial" (Massey 2005:183). So space and spatial imaginings are constantly defined by political contest, and the focus of this contest is often a question of difference and belonging.

In Cabot Square, various imagined regimes of belonging compete to define the material space. Three distinct visions of the Square will be explored in the following chapters: regulars and the people who work closely with them describe it as a *home place*; others in the neighbourhood conceive of it as a family-friendly *green space*; finally, the City of Montreal and its partners in the redevelopment effort consistently refer to it as a *gateway* to the downtown core and its future economic growth. Each of these is, as Massey puts it, an attempt "to institute horizons, to establish boundaries, to secure the identity of places ... *to stabilize the meaning of particular envelopes of space-time* ... to impose the meaning to be attributed to space" (1994:5). Each vision includes competing ideas about who belongs in the park, how it should be materially configured, and which uses of it are appropriate and desirable. I argue that the conflict arising from these competing visions reveals some of the social and political contests that undergird Montreal as a settler-colonial urban metropolis. The contours of these debates are explored in the next section.

In understanding place as political, I argue against the erasure of history and lived experience carried out by the vision of Cabot Square as a *gateway*, which simultaneously denies the multiple meanings and practices at play in the Square and reduces it to surface geography, a position on a map. Ultimately, I argue for the "genuine, thorough, spatialisation of social theory and political thinking" called for by Massey, which strives to "imagine a fuller recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell" (2005:11). While political contest over the meanings of place is inevitable, certain approaches to space and place allow more openness to the particularity of places, the lives and choices of people who inhabit them, and the possibilities for a genuine dialogue across difference.

Public Spaces in the Settler Colonial City

Understanding place as processual, relational, and political is a deliberate choice made both out of personal conviction and for the purposes of this research project. But the heart of this project is not theoretical space, but a material place, a public square in Montreal. It is equally important, therefore, to examine the ways in which space, and especially public space, is theorized by the political, social and economic systems at work in the context of Cabot Square.

Canada is a settler colonial state (Pateman 2007; Wolfe 2006; Razack 2002). This means that the

country's political and legal systems, its national imaginaries, and its notions of rights and citizenship are founded on a history and ongoing process of colonization, or what Restrepo, Escobar and others refer to as the 'modernity/coloniality' complex (Restrepo and Escobar 2005). The modernity/coloniality approach understands colonialism not only as linked to modernist projects, but also as an ongoing, constitutive part of the political, legal, and economic systems that shape our lives and choices in the present. I am no political theorist, and neither can I paint a complete picture of the ways these systems may or may not converge to produce the emplacement of Indigenous and socio-economically marginalized bodies in an urban public space like Cabot Square, but I hope to show here that the social and political contests arising in the Square are linked to larger forces. My goal is to understand the presence of people experiencing homelessness or other forms of marginalization in the Square not as a problem in itself — as it is sometimes depicted in news media and public discourse — but as a consequence of structures that limit the choices available to people who, as we shall see, fall outside the category of the 'exalted' Canadian subject-citizen (Thobani 2007). I will further argue that these same structures are reinforced by a view of space that denies its processual, relational, and political qualities.

Cities: the 'heroes of modernity'

That Cabot Square is located at the heart of one of Canada's largest cities is significant, due to the role of cities in the settler-colonial project and the dynamics of urban development. de Certeau calls the city “simultaneously the machinery and the hero of modernity” (1984:129), and Çinar and Bender assert that it is “the locus of modernity and nationalism [which] becomes the site for the negotiation of what is to be included in the making of the national community and what is to be excluded” (2007:xxiii). Montreal, therefore, as a settler colonial city, emplaces many of the tensions and socio-political struggles of Canada, albeit at a different scale and in ways shaped by its own particular social, cultural, political, and spatial histories. All of Canada's cities are contested spaces (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003) fraught with competing narratives of nationhood, belonging, identity, and history.

Cities are also spaces where neoliberal policies are increasingly being enacted; these policies favour economic growth over social priorities and propel urban spaces forward on the stage of global competition (Gibson-Graham 2002; Lyon-Callo and Hyatt 2003). In 2008, Marxist geographer David Harvey reinterpreted philosopher Henri Lefebvre's foundational work, *Le droit à la ville* (1968), asserting the 'right to the city' as a means of resisting neoliberal policy that deepens inequality and restricts access to urban space and property:

> The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most

neglected of our human rights. (Harvey 2008:23)

The importance of access to public space is a prominent feature of this 'right to the city'. Mitchell argues that public space arises from a dialectic of contestation, the outcomes of which are indicative of the "justice regimes" operative in a given society (2003:232), and that accessible public spaces are necessary for a just and democratic urban community (2). Ruben criticizes the "neoliberal development model" which "cleaves apart the interest of 'the city' from the interests of the poor people who live in cities" and "imposes a logic of consumption" (Ruben 2001:436, 455, 460), echoing de Certeau's distinction between the 'Concept-city' and lived urban experience. Gentrification, one outcome of neoliberal policy in which urban neighbourhoods are redeveloped according to the interests of the wealthy, is often held responsible for the "displacement of the urban poor" (Smart and Smart 2003:273). Such neoliberal policies of the privatization of space and property lead to a "redrawing of the public and the private" that is linked to the twin projects of modernity and capitalism (Brash 2006:348), resulting in a spatialization of increasing socio-economic inequalities.

Indigenous experiences in the settler city

The settler city, then, is an emergent concept, a convergence of colonial, modernist, and neoliberal ideologies which work together to exclude and deny the presence of poor, nonwhite, and Aboriginal bodies in urban space. A burgeoning literature on urban Indigeneity is beginning to acknowledge and examine urban Indigenous experiences, but much of the preceding scholarship has either ignored Indigenous presences in cities, preferring instead to locate Indigenous bodies and communities in the non-urban settings of the reserve or the ancestral homeland, or framed urban Aboriginals as lost, disconnected, and out of place (Lobo 2002; Ramirez 2007; Peters and Andersen 2013). Even claims to ancestral land and territory, which have been key in the articulation of Indigenous identities, have often excluded urban Indigenous people (Peters and Andersen 2013:11) due to their focus on the link between place and identity that precludes cities from being Aboriginal spaces.

However, new articulations of urban Indigenous identities are emerging that highlight agency, creativity, and connectedness. Peters and Andersen suggest that rather than disconnection and alienation, urban Indigenous identities are characterized by innovation and renewal. They challenge articulations of Indigeneity that exclude urban centres by pointing out that cities, too, are on ancestral Indigenous territory, and that the "creation of Indigenous 'homelands' outside of cities is in itself a colonial invention" (7-8). Ramirez, writing of her own community in California, explains that "urban Natives are not—as they are sometimes portrayed—living as exiles without a culture, inhabiting a netherworld between the traditional and modern", but are rather "bridging community and relationships across tribes and geography" (2007:1). Blomley, writing about another Canadian settler city, Vancouver (2004), suggests that although cities have generally been declared white, settler, non-Native spaces, there is still hope for reaffirming Indigenous presences in urban space if the processual and political nature of space is acknowledged:

> Place making and the enactments of claims to land are social and political projects. They are both immensely powerful but also, to the extent that they are enacted, are partial and incomplete. For a settler society, displacement is a social achievement, but also an aspiration; it is an accomplishment, and also an assertion. To that extent, displacement is open to contestation and remaking. (Blomley 2004:109)

Blomley's settler city is a place where a logic of ownership, closely associated with the cartographically-conceived space of the colonial enterprise, has allowed settler society to lay claim to spaces as they have "improved" them; according to this "narrative of improvement", land that is improved belongs to the improvers, in this case the colonizing power (119). Blomley argues that this narrative combines with a teleological view of the city, whose land is destined to fulfill its "highest and best use" (115), to result in urban space as the epitome of the settler colonial project.

Public space and the settler contract

These dynamics, Blomley asserts, are not new but a continuation of "the colonial encounter" (108). The *terra nullius*, or 'empty land', doctrine formed the legal basis for European occupation of Indigenous territory, using the argument "that the lands were uncultivated wilderness, and thus were open to appropriation", or sometimes the claim "that the inhabitants had no recognizable form of sovereign government" (Pateman 2007:36). Pateman, a political theorist and critic of social contract theory, writes further that "*terra nullius* was at the heart of the creation of a new form of political organization. A modern state can have no competing sovereignties within its borders" (39). This new form of political organization formed the basis for colonization, and lived on in the "notion of continuous expansion, a Canadian version of 'manifest destiny,' no less genocidal [than] the United States in its ultimate goals of supplanting Indigenous peoples and claiming their territory" (Lawrence 2002:44). Struggles over access to land and resources continue in all parts of the nation, and the legal system continues to be scrutinized for the ways it marginalizes and disproportionately punishes Indigenous people, who are overrepresented in Canada's prisons (Friedland 2009; NETWORK 2012:12).

The 'settler contract' discussed by Pateman, which is founded on the doctrine of *terra nullius*, underpins the social contract itself, the philosophical basis for the legitimacy of a certain type of political system linked to the emergence of the modern nation-state (Pateman 2007; Mills 1997; Pateman 1988). Another important component of this social contract is the division of the life of the nation into two spheres, the public and the private. Pateman's critique of social contract theory joins a body of feminist literature that questions the ideology behind this public/private division, which creates a private or domestic sphere into which the concerns of certain subjectivities — namely women, nonwhites, and Indigenous people — are exiled and rendered apolitical (Pateman 2007; Thobani 2007; Phillips and Cole 2013). The public is the realm of the ideal citizen, who is

supposedly neutral but in fact inscribed as white, male, heterosexual, and middle-class — identities which Thobani calls those of the 'exalted subject' (Thobani 2007). According to Thobani, nominally Canadian subjects have been divided into three disparate categories: true Canadian citizen, Indian (referring to Indigenous peoples by their legal designation under the Indian Act[12]), and immigrant. She examines how state and social practices have constructed "certain subjects as exalted (nationals), others as marked for physical and cultural extinction or utter marginalization (Indians), and yet others for perpetual estrangement or conditional inclusion as supplicants (immigrants, migrants, and refugees)" (6). Canadian histories, dependent on the fiction of *terra nullius*, that describe Canada as a vast, rich, and untamed wilderness, and by extension exalt the virtuous Canadian subject and his ability to survive and prosper here, erase the histories of Indigenous peoples (Lawrence 2002:24) and suppress legacies of colonial violence (Thobani 2007:10) that are foundational to the perceived prosperity of the nation.

Although the 'public sphere' in which these exalted subjects enjoy special status as preferred citizens does not map perfectly onto 'public space', together they can "represent conjoined arenas of social and political contest and struggle" (Low et al. 2014:24), especially in an urban context where the divisions between public and private property are particularly clear and enforced. Phillips and Cole refer to 'publics' as "mobile, contingent and contested" sites, whether spheres or spaces, (2013:16) which can be "mobilized to make further distinctions between civil and uncivil behaviour, between what is considered to be respectable and what is treated as 'matter out of place', and between good citizens and unruly citizens" (14-15). One example of such mobilizations is Razack's claim that "racial difference is also spatial difference" (2002:17); she argues that "the physical segregation of marginal populations" is an "exclusionary practice characteristic of the liberal state" (5). She investigates how such practices work at the material and symbolic level to turn spatial marginalization into legal sanction: "When public toilets are systematically closed, the homeless have no choice but to perform bodily functions in public .... The violent evictions that produce the homeless body are therefore a "constitutive violence"; they make possible subjects who are legitimate and those who are not" (10). In the Canadian setting, certain activities that are fully sanctioned by the state in private space — bodily functions as mentioned above, as well as consuming alcohol and being unclothed, for example — become not only illegitimate but *illegal* when performed in public space. One concrete outcome of this is the disproportionately high number of tickets received by homeless individuals in Montreal (Commission 2009). Razack suggests that the project of 'unmapping', "intended to undermine the idea of white settler innocence (the notion that European settlers merely settled and developed the land) and to uncover the ideologies and practices of conquest and domination" (2002:5), can be carried out by an investigation of these types of spatial and social practices at the local level (16).

[12] The Canadian government distinguishes between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (Statistics Canada 2008); but Indigenous scholars often point out the diversity of cultural groups and communities and resist homogenizing labels. I use the terms Indigenous and Aboriginal provisionally and in recognition of their partiality.

Cabot Square: a contested public space

Cabot Square, as an urban public space in a settler colonial nation-state, is shaped both materially and symbolically by processes of modernity/coloniality, neoliberal economic policy, and regimes of citizenship based on the notion of the 'exalted' Canadian subject. In their examination of the neoliberal state, anthropologists Lyon-Callo and Hyatt push for a brand of activist anthropology they call 'ethnography from below', "built upon the notion that studying localities means simultaneously "ethnographizing" and thereby demystifying, the nature of the neoliberal state" (2003:177). This brief analysis is only a small step towards that important goal, but it is clear to me that the presence of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals in Cabot Square is directly linked to the structures of the neoliberal settler-colonial state, which mark Aboriginal bodies as other and out of place, and whose various programs and policies — reserves, residential schools, the Indian Act — have created layers of intergenerational trauma in Aboriginal communities (Quinn 2007). In cities, where Aboriginal people are disproportionately represented amongst the urban poor (NETWORK 2012:6), neoliberal trends in urban development like privatization and gentrification are compounding the marginalization doubly felt by urban Aboriginals, whose identities and concerns tend to fall through the cracks.

Along with Phillips and Cole, I want to ask: "what are the ways in which publics are created, and how might they be re-invented … in ways that germinate, circulate and buoy equality projects rather than re-entrenching inequalities?" (2013:8). While Cole and Phillips are focused on feminist activism in Canada and Brazil, the same questions applied to Cabot Square cast 'equality projects' in terms of socio-economic marginalization, race, urban Indigeneity and settler colonialism. How might the public space of Cabot Square become a site for political mobilization, as with Ramirez and Roberts' 'Native hub' (Ramirez 2007)? How might the diverse uses and meanings of the Square be recognized, affirmed, and celebrated?

Although there are no doubt multiple and complex answers to these questions, the argument of this thesis is that by acknowledging the 'challenge of space' (Massey 2005) as it presents itself in Cabot Square, we might affirm the diversity of perspectives and practices that shape it. According to the logics of modernity/coloniality and neoliberal capitalism, Cabot Square is a small rectangle on a map, positioned strategically at the edge of Montreal's downtown core and economic centre, surrounded by real estate that is ripe for the development of condominiums, and indeed destined for a higher and better purpose than that which it serves now. These logics frame the unintended uses of Cabot Square — that is, uses by people with unstable access to housing, low or unstable income, and substance addictions — as problems that can be solved by better design, maintenance, and control. To see Cabot Square instead as a place that is formed processually by the multiplicity of trajectories that become intertwined within it, experienced through material, embodied practices of relationality, and open to political contests over meaning that are infused by Montreal's position as a settler colonial metropolis, is to affirm the challenge it presents and meet it head on.

Chapter 2
A Short History of Cabot Square

The history of the founding of Montreal is well documented as an important and fateful chapter of Quebec's colonial story. Its heroes abide in the city's toponymy and monuments: early visitors Jacques Cartier and Samuel Champlain are now bridges connecting the island of Montreal to its suburbs in the east; Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve, founder of the first European settlement on the island and emissary of the Sulpicians, now poses heroically in Place d'Armes and stretches from east to west across the city as a wide and busy boulevard; the Sulpicians themselves still boast a functional seminary, and many of their buildings have been commemorated as objects of *patrimoine nationale*.

Although Cabot Square is one of the city's oldest squares, its history is hidden, sometimes literally, between the lines. Its purchase from the Sulpicians dates to 1870, but it often falls off the edges of maps and city plans, sometimes floating, disembodied and incomplete, sometimes disappearing altogether and only existing in the gap between one cadastral sector and the next. When reference to it appears, it is often as an afterthought to the more famous public squares: Place d'Armes, Place Royale, Dominion (now Dorchester) Square, Viger Square. Even John Cabot, or Giovanni Caboto, the park's namesake since the 1930s, occupies a marginal place in Quebec's history, recognized only for his role in 'discovering' what is now Newfoundland (Montreal Gazette 1933), and for an affiliation with Montreal's Italian and Newfoundlander community. Most of the attention it has garnered over the last 150 years has been related to the square's proximity to other things: Western Hospital, later to become Western General and then the Montreal Children's Hospital, the legendary Montreal Forum, just across Ste. Catherine Street, and most recently Prével's lucrative condo developments in the neighbourhood. And when people do speak of the Square directly, it is often in the form of requests to improve what is perceived as its degenerate condition.

What follows is a brief sketch of Cabot Square's history, with a focus on the types of activity that have occurred in and around it, and on the multiplicity of uses and meanings it has acquired. My research suggests that today's dissatisfaction with the upkeep of the Square — often decried as unkempt and unappealing — is in fact a recurring theme, and that the Square has functioned almost since its creation as a hub for public transportation routes that fan out around the city. Between 2012 and 2014 the Square seems to have drawn more attention to itself than usual, as urban problems of homelessness and gentrification have become political platforms, but taking a longer historical view reveals that urban development is a process ongoing since at least the founding of Ville-Marie in the 17th century, as is the displacement and disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples in the area.

The 'Empty Land'

“Au commencement, Montréal, c’était la forêt” (de Laplante 1990:15). The tiny area that is now Cabot Square was probably forest too, home to a deciduous mix of sugar maple, white and red pine, hemlock, oak, and beech,

not to mention deer, racoons, turtles, squirrels, and other diverse fauna (Parks Canada 2009). But even this was long after the Champlain Sea, once filling the lowland basin between the Canadian Shield in the north and the Appalachian Mountains in the south, had receded, and with it the glaciers of the last ice age some ten thousand years ago. Millions of years before that, glowing magma boiled up into an impassable crust to raise Mount Royal and its sister Monteregian Hills above the surface of the Silurian plain, where they remain, surveying the alternately flat and rolling expanses that lie between them. Jacques Cartier, when he scaled and named Mount Royal in 1535 on behalf of the French Crown, may have enjoyed a view of the future Cabot Square, some little patch of forest nestled between the mountain's slope and the St. Lawrence River, which cut across the valley and brought the waters of the Great Lakes to meet the Atlantic Ocean. Or maybe Cabot Square was by then a cornfield planted by some of the 1500 Indigenous residents of the village of Hochelaga (Linteau 2013:18), ripening in the sun beyond the settlement's circle of wooden palisades.

This may seem picturesque, but if certain legal and political fictions are to be believed, Cabot Square before European occupation was empty space. Not the void to which Casey refers (2013), but a pristine wilderness ripe for cultivation by the right kind of society, and devoid of a properly developed civilization. Only the "logic of inversion" (Ingold 2009:29) that converts place into space could posit an area rich with waterways, forests, animals, and the varied and complex social and spatial configurations of Iroquois, Cree, Algonkian, and Huron nations (George-Kanentiio 2006:11) as 'empty'. But it is precisely this logic, borne out in the doctrine of *terra nullius*, that provided the juridical and moral legitimacy underpinning European invasion and settlement in what is now North America.

The irony of *terra nullius* is that the land which is understood as empty is also coveted for its fullness. History books are replete with references to the island of Montreal's 'strategic' location between river and mountain, and its fertility and abundance of game, fish, and other resources (Dawson 1888:6; Deslauriers 2002:109; George-Kanentiio 2006:11). Many suggest that the Lachine Rapids, an impassable section of river that would have forced water travellers to disembark and go around on foot, was key to the settlement of the island, both for Indigenous peoples and for Europeans. The future site of Montreal had long been a nexus of trade and travel, and although the Indigenous village of Hochelaga had disappeared by the time Samuel de Champlain arrived at the beginning of the 17th century, the Mohawk Nation continues to affirm its claim to Montreal as unceded territory, based at least partly on the existence of this settlement and the trade routes that had been converging there for thousands of years (George-Kanentiio 2006:61). Whether the island, and by extension the Square, were empty or not before Cartier and Champlain 'found' them for the Europeans, depends on whether they are understood as places of converging trajectories and unfolding processes of place-making, or as space available for inevitable expansion of Europe's economic, religious, and political interests in the 'New World'.

1642–1870: 'L'oeuvre sulpicienne'

"...if all the trees on the Island of Montreal were changed into Iroquois I am bound by honour and duty to go..."

Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve, c. 1642
(Dawson 1888:3)

Some of these interests must have been particularly appealing to an order of Catholic priests and nuns affiliated with the Church of St. Sulpice in Paris, known variously as the Society of St. Sulpice, *la Compagnie de St-Sulpice*, or simply the Sulpicians (cf. Deslandres 2007). The order's founder, Jean-Jacques Olier, was inspired by a vision of a settlement in New France where the order might establish a seminary for the formation of priests, schools for the religious instruction of Indigenous people, and hospitals operated by Sulpician nuns. He commissioned Maisonneuve to lead a small settlement party to the island of Montreal in 1642. Historians describe Maisonneuve as a "religious knight" on a holy quest (Dawson 1888:3), exemplar of a new class of adventurers "qui ouvrent les voiles de leurs navires vers des espaces illimités" beyond the confines of the bounded Mediterranean (Gauthier 1912:195). It seems, at least, that he was determined to fulfill his promise to Olier in spite of the threat of hard winters and skirmishes with the Iroquois, as evidenced by the epigraph, his statement to the governor of Quebec who had tried to dissuade him (Dawson 1888:3). Maisonneuve and the colonists succeeded in keeping alive a small settlement, piously dubbed Ville-Marie (City of Mary), until 1657 when the first Sulpicians crossed the ocean to establish their position as "les seigneurs" of Montreal (Deslandres 2007:86).

Detailed histories of the early foundation of Ville-Marie are easy to come by, and much that might be said here must be left out for the sake of brevity. Some notable events include the so-called Great Peace agreed upon by European settlers and the representatives of at least 40 Indigenous nations in 1701 (Linteau 2013:41), after which the perpetual state of war in Ville-Marie is said to have ceased. Then in 1760, Ville-Marie and New France fell to the British, which was followed by an era of immigration from Ireland and Scotland, a trend which began to divide the city along lines of ethnicity and class (Dufresne and Hébert 1983:166). Wealthier anglophone immigrants settled in the west, leaving the francophone populations clustered in the east. The patch of land that would become Cabot Square found itself straddling the divide between the 'two solitudes' (as they were called in MacLennan's classic 1945 novel of the same name (2011)) of anglophone and francophone Montreal, what is today the border of the municipality of Westmount.

Records of Ville-Marie and the work of the Sulpicians from the 17th and 18th centuries have little to say about Cabot Square; it would have fallen to the west of the original settlement, outside the fortification wall erected to repel attacks. A mission was built by the Sulpicians in 1669, possibly between present-day Atwater and Wood Streets (Dufresne and Hébert 1983:163), which would place it in the vicinity of the future Square, but only until it burned down the following year, to be replaced by a different Seminary built in 1690 and which remains today east of the Square and north of Sherbrooke Street.

What became of the Indigenous occupants of the island with respect to Ville-Marie is unclear; they seem to disappear from the budding urban landscape, sequestered (often forcibly at the hands of colonizing powers) in the communities of Akwesasne, Kanesatake, and Kanewahke. There are references to displays of public art and dancing for urban settlers (Dawson 1888:8), to a school for native children housed in the towers of the Grand

Seminary built in 1840 (65), and to an undefined area described as a "commune" where "on y trafiquait ... avec les Indiens" (de Laplante 1990:15), possibly due to the burgeoning fur trade, which remained vital to Montreal's economy for many decades.

This last assertion comes from de Laplante's (1990) detailed history of public squares and parks in Montreal. Even in a work which deals so explicitly with public spaces like Cabot Square, the Square itself receives barely a mention; but de Laplante's meticulous excavation of the history and politics of parks still builds some helpful context. He notes that following the British victory in 1760, Montreal was slow-moving, politically and in terms of its urban development, until 1810 when it again started to expand (15). Vital to this move was the demolishing of the fortifications, namely the wall which extended along the settlement's western edge. Tearing it down allowed the opening of new streets to the west, into the area which would encompass the Square. In 1840, says de Laplante, the City of Montreal was officially incorporated as a municipal authority (29), and the first officially public spaces in the city were opened and used for markets, military displays, and the public humiliation of criminals (16). Montreal was growing quickly in size and population at the beginning of the 19th century; the city at this stage is described by Laplante as "un organisme complexe qui a poussé ses rameaux autour des noyeaux des ancient faubourgs" (28). Between 1855 and 1860 there was an explosion of greenery in the new public spaces, with the addition of gardens, the cleaning up of existing squares, and the installation of fountains (probably similar to the one eventually included at the centre of Cabot Square's first incarnation) (36-37). By 1865, urinals had been added in Place Jacques-Cartier and Square Victoria, which were "des endroits très fréquentés, et par toutes les classes de la société" (39).

Since 1840, the City of Montreal had been purchasing surrounding land from the Sulpicians. In 1870, with the urban population breaking one hundred thousand and exhibiting signs of deepening spatial segregation between working-class francophones and business-owning anglophones, even as Montreal shifted from a religious and military outpost to a booming economic centre, a small plot of land which used to be a forest was purchased by the city. First, it would become Western Park, and then Cabot Square.

1870–1967: Trams, Fans, and Monuments

At the end of the 19th century, Montreal functioned as a hub for national and international trade, situated as it was at the end of the Grand Trunk Railway and at the convergence of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers (de Laplante 1990:53; Dawson 1888:22-23). It was also the "main port of entry" for immigrants to Canada (Deslauriers 2002:111), which had started to include Irish and Jewish families as well as English and French. Cabot Square, however, had yet to come into its own. An empty rectangular space is visible on Hopkins' 1879 map of the island, marked simply "PUBLIC SQUARE", at the western edge of Ward St. Antoine. Then in 1890, this same rectangle is referred to as Western Square, eventually to be accompanied by Western Hospital to the south, which existed at the latest by 1902 (although it is difficult to know which name came first).

Despite its humble size compared to the city's grander parks and squares, Cabot Square already functioned as a hub of its own, mostly for public transit.[13] Tramways had been set up as early as 1861, the heavy carts pulled

[13] One unconfirmed source claims that it was also a water main, part of the Montreal Waterworks and therefore a hub for the

along rails in the summer and skates in the winter by pairs of horses, and in 1891 the Montreal Tramways Company began converting to electricity (Linteau 2013:91). Important tram lines ran east and west along Ste. Catherine Street, at least passing by Western Square if not stopping alongside it. The arrival of electric tramways allowed for the growth of suburbs flung further from Montreal's downtown core, which the City aggressively annexed, encompassing 33 new areas (23 of which had been distinct municipalities) by 1918 (105). Although a 1923 map of tramway lines shows no explicit indication of Western Square as a stop, several routes converge just north of the intersection of Atwater and Ste. Catherine, and a shaded block marked 'Western Hospital' is visible to the south. In the Pinsoneault map from 1907, Western Square is at last visible, across from an expanse to the northwest called 'Montreal Baseball Grounds', also known for a time as Atwater Park, and eventually the Alexis Nihon Shopping Centre.

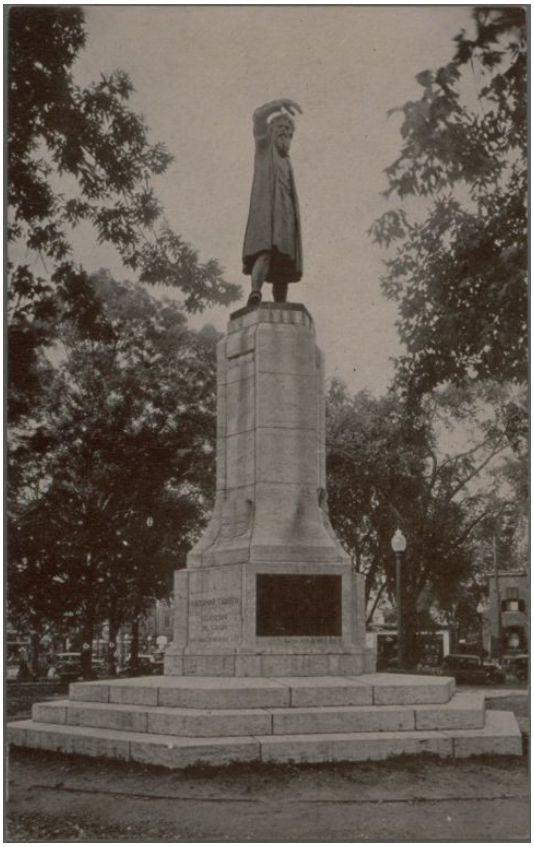
Western Square survived the early 1900s without much controversy, except for a brief consideration of extending it north to Sherbrooke Street, perhaps as a sort of buffer zone between English and French Montreal (Wilkins 2013; de Laplante 1990:77). At some point, it was decorated with an iron fountain, surrounded by pathways, benches, grass, flowers, shrubs and trees. Below is a postcard from the first half of the 20th century depicting Western Square (here referred to as Western Park) as a place of leisure.

Pre-1933 view of Western Park on a postcard. Source: BAnQ Archives Digital Collection

The first major change to the park, following its establishment as a public square, was the installation of a monument to Giovanni Caboto, which replaced the fountain pictured above. The change was not without controversy. The statue, bronze on an engraved base of marble, was donated by the Italian community of Montreal and gratefully accepted by the City, but on the condition that its inscription held Cabot responsible only for his greatness as an explorer and navigator, not for the discovery of the New World as originally proposed (Montreal Gazette 1933). At the time this was treated as an "exceedingly delicate question" (*ibid*.)

city's physical infrastructure as well (Wilkins 2013).

which no doubt provoked ethnic and class tensions that already roiled beneath the surface. From 1933 onwards the park was unofficially called Cabot Square or Cabot Park[14], until the City renamed it Cabot Square in 1957 (Ville de Montréal 1957). Throughout its history Italians and Newfoundlanders alike have celebrated June 24 as 'Discovery Day' or 'Cabot Day', hosting ceremonial gatherings at the foot of the impressive statue (Montreal Gazette 1959; 1961; 1962; Bruemmer 1964). This monument, today still a striking feature of the Square destined to remain even after its redevelopment in 2014-2015, has acquired interesting and unexpected meanings that will be explored in later chapters.



Giovanni Caboto monument in Cabot Square. Source: BAnQ Archives Digital Collection.

de Laplante's history of Montreal's parks sketches a meandering outline of parks funding throughout the 20th century. He notes that in 1940, Dorchester Street (which retains its old name west of the Square, but to the east is now René-Levesque Boulevard) was expanded and money was invested in sprucing up the surrounding parks (1990:131). He also traces a steep increase in municipal funding for public spaces, taking it from $4 million in 1949 to $24.6 million in 1968, creating what he calls the 'golden age' of parks funding in the fifties and sixties (170; 131). Despite this and the apparently picturesque condition of Western/Cabot Square throughout the 1900s, this particular space has often been targeted as a problem area. In 1937 a letter to the Montreal Gazette's editor called attention to Cabot Square's condition, which was described as "rapidly degenerating into a slum oasis" (Montreal Gazette 1937a), and a response to it in defense of the Square nonetheless warned of "pedestrian vandals ... using it as a short-cut thoroughfare" (Montreal Gazette 1937b). Twenty years later, complaints focused on the concrete bus shelters that had been built along three sides of the Square in order to accommodate the publicly owned bus service that replaced the privately owned tramway system in the late fifties (Linteau 2013:154). One observer explains: "A large portion of the park is now grassless expanses of earth and gravel which become mud and gravel, or dust and gravel, depending on the weather", lamenting that the thousands of people who commute through Cabot Square's bus terminal every day are greeted with "an eyesore" (Montreal Gazette 1957). Despite a redevelopment effort in 1958 (captioned "Grass to Replace Dust") (Montreal Gazette 1958a), which invested $15 000 into the park, more beautification was still demanded by another citizen in 1961, who suggested illuminating the monument at night (Jackman 1961), which is, incidentally, part of the current redevelopment plan some fifty years later.

[14] Or a variety of other unofficial names. A Gazette article from 1953 describes "Cabot peering through the overhanging boughs in the little Atwater Park" (Montreal Gazette 1953). Another article about the renaming in 1957 claims it would henceforth be known as "Cabot Place" (Montreal Gazette 1957). There are also oral histories that refer to it as Pigeon Park (see Chapter 4).

Perhaps the most interesting feature of Cabot Square in the early 20th century is not any aspect of the Square itself, but its surroundings. In 1924 the Montreal Forum opened across the street, destined to become the legendary and much-celebrated home of the Montreal Canadiens until 1996. The Forum drew crowds, as did the Atwater Park baseball diamond, and restaurants sprang up along Ste. Catherine to feed and entertain them. Some have claimed that Cabot Square functioned as a kind of "front yard" for the Forum (Noakes 2014), a place where people could gather before and after hockey games, wrestling matches, and eventually rock and pop concerts. In 1955, the infamous Maurice Richard Riot foreshadowed the demonstrations and large gatherings that would begin in the Square over the next several decades; following the announcement of 'The Rocket' Richard's suspension from the rest of the playoff season, more than 6000 people gathered in the Square and in Atwater Park and eventually made their way down Ste. Catherine, carrying signs, smashing windows and looting businesses[15] (Bauch 1980). One witness remembers seeing a wooden newspaper stand in Cabot Square "go up in flames" (Auf der Maur 1985). Whether or not this marked the beginning of the Quiet Revolution that would grip Montreal throughout the sixties is up for debate (*ibid.*), but Cabot Square would continue to be a starting point for rallies, marches, and demonstrations until the present day.

Though less glamorous, the presence of Western Hospital to the south was not insignificant, as we will see in the following sections. By 1956, the Children's Hospital had taken its place. Adjacent to it was the Weredale House Boys' Home of Montreal, later to become the Batshaw Centre[16]. The Library of the Mechanic's Institute, located since 1910 to the west of Cabot Square, changed its name to Atwater Library in 1962, and remains there today in its historic building (Atwater Library 2009). To the east of Cabot Square were the restaurants, small businesses, and apartment buildings that had sprung up as part of the Forum's ecosystem; and to the northwest, the Atwater Park baseball field was slated for a major redevelopment project that would coincide with the opening of the new metro line, and the explosion of modernist enthusiasm that was the Montreal Expo in 1967.

1967–1996: Rise of the Global Metropolis, Decline of the Park

> We are speaking here of Montréal's core, the birthplace of its history and the catalyst of its future. The Ville-Marie District is both the City's oldest and most modern component, combining the most historical areas as well as those developing rapidly and opening up to the world.
>
> *Mayor Jean Doré, October 1990*
>
> *Introduction to Master Development Plan: Ville-Marie District*
>
> (Ville de Montréal 1990)

The new development was the Alexis Nihon Shopping Centre, a massive complex with an underground level that would connect to the bus station in Cabot Square and transform it into the western terminus of Montreal's new metro line. The newly designed underground transit hub was projected to accommodate 150 000

[15] Although the Forum is no longer the home of the Habs, people still go there to watch the game on the big screens of the sports bar that now occupies the second floor, and hockey riots are still a common occurrence, win or lose.

[16] The Batshaw Centre now coordinates youth protection and intervention services for Montreal (Batshaw 2009).

users each day, and along with the massive shopping centre and adjoining office buildings, it was heralded as a symbol of the "trend toward urban redevelopment" that was beginning to characterize the *centre-ville* (Montreal Gazette 1966). Not coincidentally, 1967 was also the year of Montreal's famous Expo, which marked the city's debut as a modern global metropolis amidst growing nationalist sentiment. Mayor Jean Drapeau described its effect on the city: "The boundaries of the possible have been pushed forward. Spiritually, morally and psychologically, Montreal will be different forever" (Bauch 1986).

Unfortunately, some of the changes were to the detriment of the city's economy and its public spaces. Linteau describes the ensuing period from 1976 to 1994 as "testing times" for the city due to a restructuring of industry inspired by recession (2013:171). During this period, unemployment was high, and most welfare recipients lived in the suburbs, which continued to expand even as Montreal's population growth slowed (174-175). During an overlapping period, de Laplante notes that municipal funding for public spaces also slowed to a trickle. He blames political changes, including a separation of the 'service des parcs' from the 'service des sports et loisirs', for the slow death of the parks service between 1971 and 1984 (1990:195). A logic of functionalism, mechanization and rationalization, he explains, took over the operation and maintenance of public space, and by 1984 the 'service des parcs' was no more. His volume features a photograph of Cabot Square in this chapter, with the caption "Le square Cabot négligé et piétiné à volonté. Le monument Jean Cabot et très mal servi" (208).

Another effect of declining public spending in the 70s and 80s — now linked to the nascent neoliberal policies of Thatcher and Reagan which would become a global imperative — was the demise of the city's *vespasiennes*, or comfort stations. The vespasienne in Cabot Square was one of about 25 that were built in Montreal's public parks and squares, mostly in the 1930s as Depression-era make-work projects (Maskoulis 1978), and functioned as a public washroom. By 1978, several of these had closed, a move justified by declining use and the cost of repair, but one which is consistent with the general reduction in public spending described by de Laplante. A Gazette article cites a City representative claiming that more washrooms in restaurants and shops are fulfilling the needs of the population (*ibid*.), another indication that the increasing privatization of the city was beginning to have material repercussions for those who could not afford to be paying customers.

Where fans of The Rocket had gathered twenty years earlier to hurl patriotic indignation at the windows of shops along Ste. Catherine, in 1977 a union demonstration began in Cabot Square, led by injured factory workers and eventually passing through the working-class neighbourhoods of St. Henri to the south (Blanchfield 1977). In the eighties, the homeless population of Montreal was estimated at 10 000 (Doré 1986:89), a number supposedly inflated by the loss of 40% of Montreal's low-income rooming houses between 1978 and 1983 due to lack of municipal funding (*ibid.*). In 1986, the Gazette reported drug dealers in Cabot Square, a handful of men in their twenties busted for selling marijuana and hashish (Montreal Gazette 1986). Chez Doris, a shelter and service centre for women, opened in 1977, and says it has been serving Inuit clients since the '80s (Chez Doris n.d.); the Open Door, another day shelter in the area, began serving meals in 1988 (The Open Door 2010). People I have spoken to about the history of the Square assure me that there had been a transient population gathering there, in some form or another, for nearly forty years. Complaints about the upkeep of the Square, which seem to have ceased for a brief period in the prosperity of the sixties, began again. It was called "a grimy

bus stop" (Lehmann 1993) that was "begging to be revitalized" (Montreal Gazette 1988), and in 1989 the City invested $635 000 to refurbish seven of the city's sculptures and monuments, including the bronze statue of Giovanni Caboto (Montreal Gazette 1989). Finally, in 1993, the Transit Corporation removed the metro station entrance and concrete bus shelters lining three sides of the Square, all of which had been much maligned by passersby and blamed for the general shabbiness of the park, and replaced them with the glass structures that remain today, described at the time as "light and airy" by comparison (Lehmann 1993).

By then, the parks service and Montreal's economy both had seemed to find reprieve. With renewed attention to "activités culturelles[17]" that emerged in municipal politics after 1985, some parks started to come slowly back to life (de Laplante 1990:222). Montreal's economy emerged in the early nineties, pulled out of recession by a focus on the service industry, the boost that came from free trade agreements with the United States, and aggressive revitalization of urban neighbourhoods (Linteau 2013:181,184-185). "In no more than a few years," explains Linteau, "Montreal eliminated thousands of scars that blotched its urban landscape" (185), filling gaps in the downtown grid with new luxury condos and office complexes.

Cabot Square, however, was about to lose a major source of its gathering power when the Forum closed in 1996.

1996–2014: The 'Dead Zone': Collapse and Revitalization

TSN hosted the coverage of the final professional hockey game to be played in the Forum from a set built for the occasion in Cabot Square (MacKinnon 1996). It was March 1996, and the Habs played the Dallas Stars, followed by an elaborate closing ceremony. Not long after, the statue of John Cabot was temporarily dismantled for cleaning (Rose 1996), and did not return to its place in the centre of the Square until 1998; one imagines a relatively lonely Square in the absence of crowds of hockey fans and its monumental centrepiece. This was one part of a four-part *Plan de mise en valeur* drawn up by the City in 1994 for Ste. Catherine Street, which also called for the metro building to be restored, the original design of the Square by Frederick Todd to be respected and revived, and the now defunct vespasienne to be converted into a flower shop (Ville de Montreal 1994:29). Perhaps the City was trying to pre-empt the detrimental effects of the Forum's closure, but despite these efforts, the Square changed from a place of pre-game gathering and post-game riots into what would be described in 2004 as a "refugee camp" for the homeless (Banerjee 2004).

Participants in my research project have consistently identified the closing of the Forum with the decline of the neighbourhood surrounding Cabot Square. Even after the Forum reopened in 2001 as the Pepsi Forum Entertainment Complex, featuring a multi-screen movie theatre and a small array of bars and restaurants, other businesses in the area continued to flag. An article from 1997 describes the boarded-up buildings as a "dead zone", quipping that "the only things up on the marquee at the Seville Theatre these days are pigeons" (Curran 1997). By the Square's 2004 indictment as a refugee camp, little appears to have improved, and a dynamic — one which still shapes the Square today — was already emerging, with police and local residents identifying the

[17] In the Ville-Marie borough, the office in charge of parks today is even more broad-ranging, called the *Direction de la culture, des sports, des loisirs et du développement social*.

Square as problematic only to be warned by area service providers that "forcing everyone out will do more harm than good" (Banerjee 2004). The latter argument was made on the basis that the people who now called the park home tended to be First Nations or Inuit, tended to struggle with substance abuse, and were generally considered "marginalized" in various compounded ways (Kom 2005).

In 2008 the newly formed *Table de concertation du centre-ville ouest*, a committee comprised of local business owners, property holders, residents and other stakeholders in the neighbourhood's revitalization, hosted an 'ideas workshop', which eventually yielded the *Programme particulier d'urbanisme (PPU) Quartier des Grands Jardin*s, approved and released by the Ville-Marie borough later that year (Arrondissement 2008). In the mean time, plans went ahead to demolish the Seville Theatre, which had stood abandoned[18] and in disrepair for many years, and replace it with a $100-million condo project, a partnership between Prével and Claridge Inc. (Mennie 2010). The first time I set foot in Cabot Square in 2011, a set of cranes stretched into the sky over the open pit that had been the old theatre to the northeast, dwarfing even the looming mass of the Forum, and the sounds of construction drifted incessantly through the park. The condo project was finished in 2012, and Prével became an interested partner in the revitalization of Cabot Square.

Partial Excavations

This brief history, reliant on newspaper articles and other archival data, can only hope to reveal a partial view of Cabot Square, but is nonetheless important for understanding the Square of the present. Together with a conceptual framework that focuses on the processual, relational, and political qualities of Cabot Square as a place and a set of place-making practices, a historical overview sets up a field of inquiry hoping to understand the current uses and meanings of the Square and the ways they interact, conflict, and converge. It is clear thus far that Cabot Square is a hub for various kinds of gatherings: Indigenous traders, European settlers, families, commuters, protesters, rioters, celebrants, sports fans, drinkers, and increasingly those experiencing housing precarity have all gathered in the Square for various purposes and created new layers of meaning, many of which remain inscribed on the material space in the form of physical structures (the monument, the defunct vespasienne, the metro shelter, to name only the most prominent and enduring). The chapters that follow will explore contemporary contests over the meaning of Cabot Square from the point of view of those diverse individuals who gather there on a regular basis, the material practices which continue to shape the place, and the insights of outreach workers and activists whose efforts sometimes conflict, and sometimes cooperate, with the ongoing development initiatives of the city.

[18] But not entirely: some of my interviewees claimed it was a popular place to stay the night for those looking for shelter in the area.

Chapter 3
Gatherings: Material Practices and Relationality in Cabot Square

> I came here and I saw my people here. These are my people. This is my land. I'm not gonna leave.
> *Josie*
> *February 10, 2012*

When Elisapie shared seal meat with me that day in the Square, I began to wonder whether more was at stake there than the simple need for shade and shelter. Until then it had been evident that people gathered in the Square, met up, talked, joked, slept, exchanged goods and information, but the sharing of country food, and the work it did to affirm networks of communities and identities, raised new questions. I had been interested in what people do in Cabot Square. Now I wanted to know: if not in Cabot Square, then where? Where would these activities take place if the Square did not exist? Were they ready-made encounters searching for the most likely place to occur, or did the Square itself — its geography, its materiality, its history — give rise to them, emplacing them in some primordial way? How do goings-on in the Square emerge out of the interplay between the structuring forces of history, economy, and materiality, and the agency of emplaced individuals? If Cabot Square as a place is processual, relational, and political, how do material practices situated within its sphere of 'gathering power' figure into its placeness, its very existence as a place?

Before I address these questions, a brief note about materiality. If the processes which shape places are relational and political, then the manifestations of these processes, as they appear in human experience, can be understood as twofold. They consist of the materiality of place, on one hand, and the meaning ascribed to that materiality on the other. This analytical orientation to understanding the multiplicity of space has been described in various ways by various scholars: Low writes of the social *production* of space, resulting in its material form, and the social *construction* of space, which adds layers of meaning through discourse and experience (Low 1996; Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga 2003); Raffaetà and Duff explore a threefold experience of space that includes material, social, and affective dimensions (2013); the field of urban semiotics has explored thoroughly the material-semiotic dualism of space (Lagopoulos 2009). This splitting of experience into categories, while it remains an analytic trope with certain limitations, is useful for probing the extent to which material practices, which depend on the physicality of space, and socially-produced meanings work together to make experiences of emplacement. Here, I want to show how embodied practice *enacts* and *produces* relationality in Cabot Square, and how place, as described by Massey, "emerge[s] through active material practices" (2005:118). She reminds us frequently that the relationality of place, that is, its capacity to emplace relations between people, communities, and environments both within and beyond it, consists of "practised interrelation" (188) and is always grounded in material and embodied experience. Thus the 'Native hub' described by Ramirez (2007) is not a metaphor realized subjectively by people who gather in it; rather, the intersubjective material practices of the people who gather create the very real connectedness that is the 'hub'. In Cabot Square, these hub- and place-making practices connect people not only metaphorically to culture and community, but concretely in the

form of visits with family and friends who travel various distances to gather there, and activities that affirm a lived connection to various (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) identities.

This chapter will explore two major questions underpinning my research: why do people gather in Cabot Square, and what happens when they gather? I will frame gathering as a set of material practices that are made possible by, and reinforce, the relational nature of place. While I cannot hope for a comprehensive list of activities emplaced in Cabot Square, I will illustrate what I found to be some of the most compelling practices through stories from my fieldwork.

"Where the Inuit women fight"

I describe Cabot Square to a friend of mine over coffee, situating it for him so that I can talk about my research.

"The little park over by Atwater station. You know, across Sainte Catherine from the Forum…"

"Oh!" he says with the enthusiasm of sudden recognition, "Where the Inuit women fight."

While my friend says this with interest, not malice, I have heard similar statements uttered by many throughout the course of my research who are distinctly less sympathetic. Cabot Square is often recognized not by name, but by association with violence, drunkenness, and the presence of an unruly 'homeless'[19] population. Perceptions that the Square is 'not safe for children' or 'uncivilized' prevail in both popular imagination and the news media (Curran 2013).

Many places in Montreal share similar associations with substance abuse, illicit activity, and homelessness (Parc Émilie-Gamelin, for instance, by the Berri-UQAM metro station); this is by no means specific to Cabot Square. My friend's comment, however, reveals precisely the phenomenon that makes Cabot Square interesting, and possibly even unique: the visible presence of Inuit women. While Inuit men also use the space, they tend to fade into the taken-for-granted presence of other homeless men, at least to the public eye.[20] The women stand out in Cabot Square not only because they are women, but because they are almost constantly engaged in social activity with other women. While 'fights' — on a spectrum from yelling matches to physical altercations[21] — do break out from time to time in the Square, the extent to which a capacity for violent behaviour is attributed to Inuit women as an essential quality is disturbing, and raises more questions about the double-stigmatization of Indigenous women, who fall short of the ideal subject-citizen on two counts. The range of social activities engaged in by Inuit women in the Square is far richer than these narrow stereotypes allow. In order to explore the other creative and important ways in which they inhabit Cabot Square, it will be helpful first to understand why they are there.

[19] I use this term in citation to point to its role in public perception and particular discourses; the diverse situations in which people in Cabot Square find themselves with regards to housing and access to private space escape the grasp of such an oversimplified concept.

[20] Service organizations that work with people experiencing homelessness in the area do recognize the difference, by contrast, although they generally lament the lack of Aboriginal- and Inuit-specific services available in the area.

[21] It is important to note that abuse and suicide rates are extremely high in many northern communities, which shapes the life experiences of women in Cabot Square; these conditions must also be understood as ways of working through intergenerational trauma rooted in the past and ongoing violence of colonization.

Entanglements

If places really do "gather" (Casey 1996:24), then Cabot Square is a place *par excellence*. As we saw in the previous chapter, it has been gathering people in its midst since 1870, although the people who gather and the purposes for which they gather have changed. The turn-of-the-century Cabot Square, then Western Park, brought the relatively wealthy English-speaking families of Westmount to its shady lawns for picnics beside the fountain. For quite some time it has brought travellers, or at least commuters, first along tramway lines, then along bus routes from the suburbs of Verdun and Lachine, and now along the green line of Montreal's metro system, which connects to commuter train routes that spider across both forks of the river and into the suburbs. Situated as it is on the westernmost edge of Montreal's downtown core, the Square is also relatively easy to access from Pierre Elliot Trudeau International Airport in the western suburb of Dorval.

Since the monument to Giovanni Caboto was erected in 1935, Cabot Square has emplaced family picnics, political demonstrations, riots fuelled by booze and patriotism, and stately celebrations. But these, of course, are the events most likely to be recorded in official histories. For a more intimate portrait of Cabot Square, a thorough oral history research project would need to be conducted with those who frequent or used to frequent the park; due to the relatively small scope of my study, a snapshot of everyday practices in Cabot Square between 2012 and 2014 will have to suffice.

The first time I visited Cabot Square as more than a passer-through was in spring 2012, as an undergraduate student learning to do fieldwork, and a volunteer with a student-run anti-gentrification group interested in Cabot Square and the Prével-Seville development project. Along with a handful of other undergraduate students involved in the group, I trundled every week to Cabot Square with a cartload of food to share — in the winter we brought hot soup and bread, and in the summer, sandwiches. In addition to grappling with the politics of activism and aid (the group eventually disbanded due to difficulties sustaining membership and achieving a unified vision), we had an opportunity to learn about the Square and the lives of people spending time there through something that at least approximated participant observation. This initial experience would soon be supplemented by more dedicated fieldwork for an undergraduate project that would eventually inform the focus of my MA research.

Encounters in Place

Cabot Square today is accessible by several routes, some of which are patrolled by the massive, purring buses that idle and exchange passengers at one of the many bus stops surrounding the Square, others by the metropolitan trains speeding through dark underground tunnels to a soundtrack of sliding doors and bustling commuter feet. Pedestrians might arrive from the east by way of Ste. Catherine Street, Montreal's downtown shopping artery, or from the west through the sleepy, leafy streets of Westmount, or from the south, past the trendy Atwater Market and up the hill, under the train trellis that bisects Atwater Street below René-Levesque Boulevard, or from the north, down from the always-visible mountain and past the impressive stonework of Dawson College, housed in the former residence of the Sulpician nuns. The first day I arrived wearing a

proverbial anthropologist-in-training hat, notebook in hand, I did so by emerging from the neon-lit bowels of the Alexis Nihon shopping centre.[22] It was February 10, 2012.

The centre has since been renovated, but the tunnel that protrudes diagonally under the intersection of Atwater and Ste. Catherine streets remains largely unchanged, except by a fresh layer of white paint and a sleekly designed public washroom, poised where shopping mall chic meets metro station disrepair, like a last rest stop before a long, lonely stretch of highway. As I wound through the consumer gauntlet of Canadian Tire, Dollarama, Jugo Juice and various brightly lit shops and islands selling cheap clothes and cell phone accessories, the lights grew dimmer, and the shopping bag-laden crowd thinned until I found myself proceeding alone down a flight of steps into a tunnel that smelled of urine and sweat. The tiled walls disappeared, replaced by unfinished concrete. After passing through a set of glass-and-metal doors reminiscent of other metro stations around the city, and then riding up the escalator, I saw the inside of the metro shelter, itself a construction of glass, metal, and concrete, squatting heavily in the northwest corner of the Square. The winter daylight was cold and diffuse behind the huge, green-tinted windows lining the shelter, and backlit a small cluster of people huddled close to one another, sharing a roll of toilet paper for nose-blowing and leaning against the window ledge. I pushed through the heavy door into the chilly but fresh air of the park and was greeted by the monument to Caboto, whose bronze gaze cast itself determinedly into the middle distance over the top of the Forum from its marble perch.

The Square was a wintry landscape of snow and ice pushed up into piles around its edges, the sparse cleared areas showing some exposed brick path but mostly dark, grimy ice covered in brown sand and salt. Two dozen or so tall, bare trees stood scattered throughout the square, alongside six or seven rusty metal statues made of plain and coloured pieces in abstract shapes, sometimes decorated with gears or cogs or chains. I read on a sign that the installation was called 'Arcane de mer', dedicated “En mémoir des voyages de l'explorateur Giovanni Caboto”, combining elements of “cinétique, construction navale et esprit d'aventure.”

There were pigeons in the trees, flapping lazily to the ground to peck at small piles of birdseed on the ice. Low, green segments of wrought-iron fence sketched out a walkway that circled the statue and angled out of the park at each corner. Half a dozen heavy, synthetic grey picnic tables were half-buried in the snow; I sat down at one between the metro shelter and the statue. Around the outer edge, closest to the sidewalk, a few black lampposts, of a special decorative style, were hung with bunches of evergreen and Christmas baubles, and some of the trees on the Tupper side were covered in strings of tiny blue-white LED lights, struggling to shine against the daylight.

My picnic table was cold and covered in black pen graffiti, cigarette butts wedged between the planks, folded bottle caps and other small debris, including a piece of a broken coat zipper. From my spot at the table I looked around: the Square was surrounded by bus stops, some with shelters and some with only metal signs, city buses pulling in, waiting, and pulling out. The sounds of the buses, other traffic, the occasional ambulance, fire

[22] Later I would learn that the shopping centre and adjoining metro station, despite the ever-present risk of being ticketed for loitering on private property, are favourite haunts of Cabot Square’s ‘regulars’. I often see people I recognize panhandling or sleeping in the corridors, moving through with the flow of the crowd, or grabbing a coffee at the McDonald’s across from Cabot Square.

engine and dump truck, as well as the tapping and drilling sounds of construction were incessant. I looked to the construction site at Ste Catherine and Atwater, where the Seville Theatre used to be. The billowing yellow sheets covering the condo under construction were bright against the sky, surrounded by high scaffolding and a plywood barrier at street level. It took me a few minutes to notice the giant construction crane jutting into the sky over the Seville.

Some patterns emerged in the first few days of my observation of the Square. I identified three types of people, distinguishable by their ways of using the space: first, and perhaps most noticeable because of the incessant movement, were the 'passers-through', commuters connecting with buses or the metro, or people in the area using Cabot Square as a shortcut. A steady but slow trickle of passers-through would cross the Square from end to end, mostly diagonally to or from the metro shelter, and only occasionally slow their pace to ponder the Cabot statue, light a cigarette, or answer a cell phone. Second were the 'hangers', a somewhat fuzzier group of people, often blending with the passers-through, who might wander into the park and stay for the length of a smoke, a coffee, or a lunch break. Both of these groups were diverse in all the basic traits by which we might superficially identify others: age, ethnicity, gender, roughly surmised socio-economic status. There were families with young children, college students, elderly people, middle-aged men and women in work uniforms and business attire and casual wear; they carried shopping bags and backpacks and pushed strollers, and I heard many languages spoken beyond the expected English and French[23].

These two groups, although integral to the fabric of the Square, are not its epicentre: rather, the third group, which for lack of a better term I still call the 'regulars', made their presence known to me almost immediately. This is the group that many of my interviewees referred to euphemistically as 'the vulnerable population' or simply 'the people in the park'. The first to approach me was a woman named Josie.

As I sat taking notes at the picnic table, my hands slowly freezing in the cold winter air, a middle-aged Inuk woman at the table next to mine looked my way. I had overheard her speaking to a handful of other people clustered around the table and bumming a smoke from a tall black man with a Caribbean accent dressed in baggy shades of brown, who was pacing around the park thoughtfully. I smiled at the woman, and her face split into a wide grin around her cigarette. After a moment she said, "How come I see you sittin' here?" Full of trepidation and uncertainty, I explained about the anti-gentrification student group and my nascent research project, gesturing to the construction site behind me. There were mutters of recognition from the woman and her companions at the table. Then to my surprise, the woman said "I wanna talk to you," in a tone that brooked no argument, ground out her cigarette butt on the top of the table, and stepped down to join me at mine.

She introduces herself as Josie, and I tell her my name. She grabs my hand and pulls me in for a greeting kiss. Her hands are warm and rough, and the kiss is wet on my cheek. She sits across the table from me and puts

[23] While French is spoken in Cabot Square, most of the conversations I witnessed between regulars occurred in English, and local service providers are accustomed to serving clients in English, especially if they are Inuit. Cabot Square has emerged as an anglophone gathering place for people experiencing forms of homelessness and socioeconomic marginalization which has, among the other factors discussed above, made it especially welcoming to people belonging to an anglophone (speaking English as either a first or second language) Caribbean and Aboriginal diaspora.

a bright pink backpack on the table. She tells me she's been in Cabot Square for over twenty years. She is from 'the north'. When I ask her why she came here, she doesn't want to tell me. "You don't wanna know. I came here because I had to." She says she goes to Chez Doris, which is a women's shelter around the corner: "I go every day unless I can't." I ask her why people come to Cabot Square, and how it might be affected by the development. She says, "I came here and I saw my people here. These are my people. This is my land. I'm not gonna leave." Then, after a moment, she says, "You know why we're here?" She stands up from the picnic table with an air of authority and begins gesturing in several directions: "We have McDonald's, we have Open Door, we have the YMCA, we have the shopping mall, we have the Children's Hospital. The hospital, that's our hospital," she says.

—Excerpt from field notes, February 10, 2012

The impact of Josie's pronouncement was deepened by her theatrical gesturing; each mention of a place was accompanied by an embodied acknowledgement of its relationship to our location in the Square. If her hands could have left marks in the air, they would have drawn something like the spokes of a wheel, radiating from the central hub of our picnic table. For Josie, people came to Cabot Square — at least, 'her people' did — because of its location in the centre of a network of services and amenities that drew them in. And maybe sometimes they came because, like her, they 'had to.' Although she did not elaborate at the time on her story, or on the significance of each of the locations she pointed out, my research over the last two years has begun to shed some light on who finds themselves in the park and why.

Cabot Square: a Native hub?

The many-spoked wheel of trajectories which converge in Cabot Square illustrated by Josie might be compared to the concept of the 'Native hub' put forward by Renya Ramirez and her co-theorist in the field, Laverne Roberts. Apart from being a material and geographical hub connecting people in the park to surrounding services, Cabot Square is also a gathering place in itself for Indigenous people living in Montreal. I argue that in many ways, Cabot Square functions in a similar way to the sweat lodges, community meetings, and powwows that Ramirez identifies as important Native hubs, but that it also differs in the extent to which the community in Cabot Square can be understood as deliberately formed, or indeed, as a community at all. A rich line of inquiry, which regretfully does not fit into this thesis, would be to ask how the gatherings of regulars in the Square might be the products of deeply disjunctive experiences. Disjuncture, a process by which identities, relationships, roles and places are rejected, abandoned, or taken away, is often construed as a failure of community (Amit 2012:28). But as Amit argues, it might be more usefully understood as an agentive choice in order to find "temporary respite or more enduring separation from roles, personas, relationships, statuses, routines, institutions or places" (32) that people like Josie wish to leave behind. Many regulars in Cabot Square, I would argue, experience some form of disjuncture, although the extent to which it is chosen is difficult to ascertain; many also feel deeply ambivalent about the sense of community in the Square, oscillating between sentiments of familial belonging

and fear or disdain. Nonetheless, a comparison with the concept of the Native hub reveals the ways in which Cabot Square is connected to a broad network of relationships which are affirmed and enacted in place.

Ramirez, writing about her own community in California, presents various incarnations of the Native hub as examples of the ways in which urban Indigenous people build and maintain a wide network of relationships, explaining that "[t]he hub offers a mechanism to support Native notions of culture, community, identity, and belonging away from tribal land bases" (Ramirez 2007:1). For Ramirez and Roberts, the emphasis is on connectedness between Indigenous people living in the city and their non-urban home communities, mobility along these paths to and from the city as an opportunity for the sharing of ideas and the strengthening of Indigenous identities, and the hub's potential to help Indigenous people organize for social and political change. Hubs themselves can be material or virtual, temporary or long-term, and are formed through collective processes of "hub-making" that include gathering, interacting across difference, using humour, and connecting through emotional and spiritual expression (8; 58). All of these, Ramirez suggests, are ways of "re-membering ... the Native social body that has been torn apart by colonization" (9). The Native hub therefore is an important component — and a social, relational, and embodied one — of the politics of decolonization in urban California.

In Montreal, the urban Indigenous experience has been shaped by its own unique set of historical forces and events. While Cabot Square is undeniably a gathering place — perhaps even a hub — for Inuit and other Aboriginal people, as well as for non-Indigenous residents of the city, it would be a serious mistake to suggest that it encompasses the diversity of urban Indigenous experience. Those who gather in the Square tend to be a socio-economically precarious subset, many of whom struggle with substance abuse and are in frequent contact with the justice system; although Indigenous people living in cities are more likely to occupy the socio-economic margins than non-Indigenous people (Peters and Andersen 2013:26), this does not mean that all or even most fall into this category. There is much more to urban Aboriginal life in Montreal than what happens in Cabot Square, and there are probably numerous better examples of the unifying political mobilization of the Native hub. But Cabot Square is the focus of my research, and its role as a gathering place for Indigenous people in the city cannot be ignored.

Many hub-making practices are present in Cabot Square: the gathering together of people from diverse linguistic, cultural, and geographical backgrounds; the frequent use of humour, in the form of almost constant teasing, laughing, and back-slapping between regulars; displays of emotion, some affectionate, some violent; and even spiritual practices like praying before meals and visiting the nearby Anglican Church that doubles as a day shelter[24]. Material practices like sharing food and drink and visiting with friends and family, which I will explore in more detail below, serve to reinforce connections amongst each other as well as to home communities elsewhere, for example in the North. The use of Inuktitut, considered by some the *de facto* second language of the Square, is another important hub-making practice that distinguishes regulars from passers-through[25].

[24] The Open Door and its role in the neighbourhood will be explored further in Chapter 4. Although Ramirez' references to spirituality as hub-making deal with Native American traditional spiritual practices like smudging and sweat lodge ceremonies, the majority of Inuit are Anglican, and access to an Anglican church appears to be important and valued for the affirmation of this spiritual identity.

[25] For an analysis of the role of language in the affirmation of Inuit identities, see Patrick (2008).

Yet Cabot Square and its 'people in the park' also differ in important ways from Ramirez and Roberts' theorization. It is not a formally organized gathering, in the sense of having a leadership structure or specific events planned in advance. It is not exclusively for Aboriginals or for Inuit, although it is not completely inclusive either[26]. And pathways of mobility to and from service organizations, like the places listed by Josie, are at least as important as pathways that connect people in the Square to their 'tribal homelands'[27]. Finally, the kind of political mobilization encouraged by active practices of hub-making in Ramirez's narrative does not seem to be present in Cabot Square. This is not to say it might not be nascent, dormant, or at least contained within the potentiality of the gatherings in the park, but so far the only explicit political actions addressing Aboriginal homelessness, gentrification, or other issues have been carried out by student groups, activists, and service organizations on its periphery, such as the Aboriginal Strategy Network. Still, a comparison to the concept of the Native hub is valuable because it reveals, just as Josie affirmed for me that winter afternoon, that Cabot Square's gathering power is not somehow inherent or place-bound, but dependent on the web of connectedness that reaches out to include local businesses and service organizations, more distant suburbs, and even more distant home communities in the North, elsewhere in Canada, and around the world. Furthermore, asking to what extent the gatherings in Cabot Square fit the model of the Native hub uncovers a potential avenue for its future mobilization: could Cabot Square become a catalyst for united political action? Could it serve to strengthen the identities and senses of belonging of Inuit and other Aboriginal people living in the city? Could it facilitate the sharing of information and ideas between the city and home communities in Nunavik?

Trajectories from the North

The presence of Inuit women in Cabot Square, I have argued, is definitive of its placeness. This is what sets it apart from other similar gathering places in downtown Montreal, where people looking for street drugs, drinking companions, and places to sleep also tend to hang out in numbers. Inuit women are certainly not the only people present in the park, but I think it no exaggeration to say that all of the regulars have relationships with them of one kind or another. A kind of social ecosystem seems to exist in the Square, something which falls short of an organized community but which is nonetheless robust enough to be identified by admittedly vague terms like 'regulars' and 'people in the park', and at the heart of it are Inuit women. Although this view is supported by the conversations I had with regulars, service workers, and various others regarding Cabot Square, I also want to highlight the presence of Inuit women because, doubly disadvantaged by a patriarchal and settler-colonial society, their experiences and perspectives may be among the least visible, and the most telling.

Almost invariably when I asked interviewees what draws people to Cabot Square, the question was interpreted tacitly as referring to the Inuit population. Although this is surely the result of my choice of

[26] Ramirez's hubs are not necessarily exclusive of non-Natives, but I wish to highlight that my choice to understand Cabot Square as an Aboriginal gathering place – rather than a gathering place for the homeless, or for substance abusers, or for 'the public' – is a deliberate one.

[27] Peters and Andersen note that, at least in the Canadian context, the existence of extra-urban Indigenous 'home territories' is itself an artifact of the colonization process (2013: 7-8).

interviewees in the social services sector from organizations that cater specifically to Aboriginal clients, it also points to the significance of the Inuit presence in the Square. Responses lined up with the results of a research project recently conducted by Japanese anthropologist Nobuhiro Kishigami on behalf Makivik Corporation (Savoie and Cornez 2014), suggesting two main routes by which Inuit arrive in the Square: through contact with urban prisons and detention centres, and through accessing medical services in the city. Secondary to these trajectories is the convenience and accessibility of the Square by public transit, situated along paths that connect easily to suburbs in the west, where many of Montreal's housed Inuit live, and the absence of which might make it a less desirable gathering place for people without access to private vehicles. And finally, all of the interviewees and many of the research participants I spoke with informally referred to a sort of 'momentum' built up in the Square: once people started going there, more people came. It became known as a gathering place, somewhere to find friends and family who might otherwise be difficult to locate. The knot of interconnected trajectories achieved a critical mass which granted it a kind of frictional gravity, drawing more and more threads into itself, by necessity and word of mouth and the desire to connect.

But why Cabot Square? I asked this question of every research participant and interviewee.

Everyone agreed that the initial draws to the Square are hard to identify. "I don't think it's a mystery though," says Allison Reid, the coordinator of the Cabot Square Project overseen by Montreal's Urban Aboriginal Strategy Network. "I think some people do know." And a lot of people have theories, she says, adding that she is hoping my research will contribute to understanding them.

As it turns out, my research is limited by the lack of interview data from regulars themselves, especially from the Inuit women I perceive to be at the heart of Square's gathering power. At the very least I can document a few of the theories and hope that deeper and longer-term research in the future might address some of the questions that remain. What I can offer here, rather than a theory of precise origins, is a description of a set of factors that contribute recursively to the emergence — and continual reshaping — of a certain type of use of the space by a group of people whose connectedness through linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic characteristics has manifested in place. My proposal is that the draws to Cabot Square are threefold (and, of course, interrelated): first, its location in proximity to service providers like the Montreal Children's Hospital, the Module du Nord du Québec, Chez Doris and the Open Door, all of which are accessible to an anglophone, low-income population linguistically, materially through public transit, and some even culturally through attendance to Aboriginal-specific needs and contexts; second, the social networks that already exist between friends and family coming from the small villages of Nunavik in Northern Quebec, all of whom are to some extent dislocated in the city, and some of whom are transient and thus require a public space to gather in; and finally, the very materiality of the Square itself, as an open space with identifiable landmarks, tables, benches, shade, and shelter.[28]

[28] I must stress that my assessment of Cabot Square is based on preliminary and limited research. Although I am confident that the factors I will expand upon below are all significant to the park as a gathering place, it is entirely possible that other factors of equal or greater significance have been overlooked, especially with respect to the Square's non-Aboriginal population of 'regulars'. For example, William, a regular I interviewed, referred to an older generation of park-goers that have now mostly passed away, including a black man, possibly of Caribbean descent, who was highly regarded as a sort of

Services: Day Shelters and Other Resources

Amongst service providers, views vary on whether existing services are adequate and how best to improve them[29]. But from the testimony of Josie and other regulars, it would seem that the location of day shelters like Chez Doris and the Open Door, as well as the relative proximity of other resources like Face à Face, the Native Women's Shelter and the Native Friendship Centre, are important draws to the Square.

While it is probably true that the location of these services makes Cabot Square a good candidate for a public space in which to hang out, it is more complex than that; the relationship between services and the clients who access them is reciprocal. Beth, while acknowledging the insufficiency of funding for most social services in the area, still insists, "The services are here. The services have been here for quite some time. We don't intend on leaving. This is where we've been, and this is where we're going to continue to be, because this is where our client base has been." People come to the park because the services are there, and the services are there because the people who use them hang out in the park.

Beth also points out that even people in surrounding neighbourhoods have relatively easy access to the services around Cabot Square. "Atwater's accessible, it's easy to get to. I mean, if you live in Lachine, or Ville-Émard, or Verdun, or Point-Saint-Charles, Burgundy, it's just one bus ride." Some of the regulars I met do, indeed, live in these neighbourhoods, old working-class factory districts where rent is relatively low and public transportation relatively efficient.

All of these organizations offer valuable services like free hot meals, laundry, clothing and food banks, psychosocial support like counselling and workshops, a street address for receiving mail and welfare cheques, and advocacy. Access to these services, many of which are daily necessities, may be one reason that people stay in or near Cabot Square. But most of them cater to people whose housing and income situations are already precarious, and who are already in Montreal. The vast majority of people I spoke to in Cabot Square, however, are from elsewhere originally; from the North, from the Maritimes, from Ontario, from B.C., from the Caribbean. Understanding places as processual also requires understanding the life histories of people emplaced in them, and resisting the view that the poor or homeless simply spring up, fully-formed, in urban environments. As I am focusing here on Inuit who come to the Square, I must pay attention to some of the initial forces that push or pull people away from communities in the North in order to understand their trajectories, which, we must also remember, are still in process.

Services: The Northern Module and the Montreal Children's Hospital

A colleague and I sit across from Elaine and Michelle, two outreach workers at the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal. The women have both worked at the Shelter for many years, and their jobs include advocacy, crisis intervention, psychosocial support, and facilitating workshops centred on healthy lifestyles and Aboriginal

father-figure to others in the park and had been spending time there as long as thirty years ago.

[29] Allison Reid of the Cabot Square Project, for example, cites a lack of Aboriginal-specific services in Montreal but especially in the west.

cultures at the Shelter's undisclosed location, as well as 'reaching out' to clients in Cabot Square and the surrounding neighbourhood. I ask what brings people to the park.

Elaine explains. "The Northern Module is right next door. They're coming because their kids are going for treatment." She adds that a relative used to work at the Montreal Children's Hospital: "She saw a lot of Inuit people coming because they were bringing their babies down, so this has been happening for years."

The Northern Module, or *Module du Nord de Québec* (MNQ), is a patient care centre operated in Montreal by the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS). Although most of the services they administer are located in the northern Quebec region of Nunavik, the Northern Module offers lodging, food, interpretation services, and transportation for Inuit who are referred to the city for medical reasons. The current location of the patients' residence is on Tupper Street in a building owned by the YMCA, and it was only long after meeting Josie that I realized what she meant when she said the YMCA — whose main building is closer to the centre of downtown — was nearby, citing it as one of the most important spokes of the wheel surrounding the Square. Most of the hundreds of Inuit who are brought to Montreal each year to benefit from the specialists and equipment available in the city stay in this residence, along with their 'escorts', friends or family members who accompany them on the long and trying journey (Northern Québec Module 2011).

But the Module has only been using the YMCA building as its primary residence since 2011 (George 2011). So while links were often made by interviewees and service providers around Cabot Square between the Module du Nord and the population in the park, the longevity of this relationship — for according to regulars, their occupation of the park goes back decades — still needs an explanation. Prior to 2011, although there were overflow areas in various other locations, most people stayed at Nunavik House, located in the west Montreal neighbourhood of Nôtre-Dame-de-Grace on Rue St. Jacques at Beaconsfield, just north of Autoroute 20 and the Lachine Canal (George 2000). Prior even to that one finds references to Baffin House, a similar patients' residence operated through the McGill Baffin program, a partnership between McGill University and the Department of Northern Affairs dating back to 1964 (Bell 1997; Bourgeois 1997; Baxter 2006). Baffin House itself opened in 1985, but was finally closed, along with the McGill Baffin program, in 1997-98 when health services for Baffin residents were moved from Montreal to Ottawa.

As of this writing, I have yet to verify the exact location of Baffin House, but others have also wondered whether it was in proximity to Cabot Square; further research is required, but one possible location is in what used to be the Clarion Hotel on de Maisonneuve Boulevard, just two blocks away. What is more certain is that Inuit from Nunavik have been coming to the Montreal Children's Hospital to give birth and obtain medical treatment for their children for decades, with or without access to the MNQ or another patients' residence. But since stays at the Northern Module are supposed to be temporary, the question remains: what is the relationship between Inuit who come south for medical treatment and Inuit who find themselves in situations of precarity in and around Cabot Square?

Family and Friends

One explanation claims that area 'predators', specifically drug dealers and pimps, prey on a 'vulnerable' population and draw them into a life of hardship. Allison Reid explains a view held by some area outreach workers that "there's a lot of predators that have imposed themselves on a very vulnerable group, who are literally just meeting to gather as friends and family and to have fun, so it's a very unfortunate thing. And of course a lot of people are not coming with no baggage at all." She acknowledges that many people in the Square come from 'homes', that is, group homes in the north and the south designed to rehabilitate young offenders, and that many suffer from addictions and the psychosocial effects of violent trauma.

This line runs parallel, although with a shift in accountability, to another proposal that Inuit, already suffering from alcoholism and past trauma, are drawn by their own inner demons into the 'party lifestyle' of the big city, from which they find it difficult to return. Caleb Clark, director of the Open Door day shelter, illustrates one view of the relationship between the MNQ and the Square: "Regrettably, with the Northern Module right there, where Cabot Square has already been a bit of a meeting point for the Inuit population, that adds another flow into Cabot Square, which I know they're not crazy about, for the bad reasons—"

"Oh, the Northern Module staff aren't crazy about it?" I clarify.

"Yeah."

"Because they lose people?"

"Yeah, they lose people. 'Cause you're not allowed to go and stay in the Northern Module if you're drunk. So people get sucked into the party lifestyle of Montreal and Cabot Square."

Zero-tolerance policies for drugs and alcohol in many shelters around the city, while an understandable measure, do act as a deterrent for people who would rather stay on the street if it means they can drink. Clark's own day shelter, the Open Door, is the only place in the neighbourhood where intoxicated people can go to eat, sleep, and find reprieve from the elements, and so has been singled out as a particularly important resource by the group of service providers and other interested partners affiliated with the Network's Cabot Square Project.

While there is some truth to these views, they both tend to neglect the agency of individuals who may choose to spend time in or around Cabot Square for reasons unrelated to drug and alcohol addictions. Regulars and outreach workers alike consistently told me that the park is a meeting place for friends and family. Elaine and Michelle, supported this claim.

“It’s just a meeting place, because they know that’s where—”

“Their friends go.” Elaine finished Michelle’s sentence, and they both nodded.

“Especially the Inuit,” Michelle continued. “The Inuit often go there, and so they know that that’s the place to go and meet other Inuit people.”

For people living transient lifestyles with limited access to telephones and the internet, and no fixed address, a public place like Cabot Square can become an important resource for connecting with others. Cabot Square as such is a hub, both for Native and non-Native people experiencing homelessness or other forms of marginalization, and for their families. It is a central node in a network of relationship that extends back to home

places in the North and elsewhere.

Clark told me a story about family connections in Cabot Square.

"There's one individual who I saw in the park," he began. "It was a time when I was just walking through there to head to the metro, and people started talking to me and all of this, and then I turned around and there's an Inuit gentleman there with his mom. And she doesn't speak English, but he explains, introduces us to each other and kind of explains each who the other one is, and once he's saying, oh this is who I am, she's like oh, *nakuurmik, nakuurmik*[30], and—"

He paused briefly in the narrative to try to remember how to say 'you're welcome' in Inuktitut. I reminded him: *ilali.* He laughed.

"I responded with *ilali* and she just like, lost it! She's saying something to her son, and he's like, she wants to know how your know our language, and I'm like, I don't really, I just know a little bit, she's like, how does this white man know our language?" Our laughter subsided after a moment. "And that's someone who brought his mom to come visit Cabot Square. Like, it's so much a part of his life, his community, his sphere of relevance in his life, that his mom came to visit him. And he was completely sober, he wasn't hanging out there for any other, you know, bad reason, it was legitimately just to show his mom, this is my reality."

Clark's story illustrates not only the tendency for family to visit in Cabot Square, but also the importance of another material practice, the use of Inuktitut. I entered the field equipped with a single Inuktitut phrase, which meant, according to the former student from Nunavut who taught it to me a few years ago, 'I do not speak Inuktitut'. When I first met Josie, after we had been sitting and talking for a while, I tried it out: her response was to grab my face with both hands, beam at me with some phrases that fell outside my limited vocabulary, and pull me in for a vigorous hug. During the course of my fieldwork, I often heard Inuktitut spoken in the Square, mumbled quietly in intimate conversation or thrown across the park in greeting. I also learned that some non-Inuit regulars had learned the language; Dominic, a regular around the park and a volunteer at the Open Door, to my ear sounded as fluent as an Inuk, and credited a long line of Inuit ex-girlfriends for his proficiency. Caleb once told me that Inuktitut might be even more useful as a second language than French for working at the Open Door.

A Place to Gather

People come from the North and from elsewhere to Montreal in order to access health services through the Module du Nord, or simply to leave home communities or other places where shortages of food and housing (as in Nunavik) or other factors make it unpleasant to stay. If they are already in situations of transience and suffer from drug or alcohol addictions, they often use the services provided around Cabot Square — day shelters, training programs, crisis intervention, counselling, logistical services for dealing with situations of income and housing precarity — and they return (or stay) because of a desire to connect with friends, family, and a kind of community, even if it is an ambivalent community of disjuncture. Cabot Square has become known as a

[30] Thank you (Inuktitut).

gathering place for these reasons, but one must not overlook the most obvious: the very materiality of the space invites and makes possible the kinds of uses to which it is put by regulars.

'Gathering' could be invoked as a kind of euphemism for social connectedness. But after all, the term only goes as far as to indicate a bringing together of the disparate; it says very little about what happens while this takes place. The 'content' of gatherings in Cabot Square may seem mundane, but reveals the ways in which the built environment shapes human interaction. When people gather in the Square, they are not doing so in the abstract: they are sitting, walking, standing, sleeping, eating, drinking, smoking, buying, selling, sharing, talking, laughing, commiserating. And all of this is happening, significantly and without exception, in *place*. People sitting need somewhere to sit; people sharing food need somewhere to lay it out. Access to spaces that facilitate these kinds of gatherings is dependent both on the material aspects of a space and on the ways in which certain uses of the space are restricted or enforced.

While Cabot Square provides ample material space[31] for many kinds of activity — grass on which to sit, picnic tables across which to share meals and stories, metro and bus shelters in which to sleep or find warmth — it also restricts certain uses through ticketing, the results of which are fines or jail time. Regulars told me they were ticketed for loitering, for public drunkenness, and sometimes even for being present in the park, as some of them have received court orders to stay away.

Michelle and Elaine were quick to point out what they perceived as legal hypocrisy in these law enforcement practices. "It's a gathering place," said Elaine. "Isn't that what a park is supposed to be? I even brought up that thing about loitering because it was on the list as problematic—"

"They're ticketing them for loitering," explained Michelle.

"Loitering! Excuse me, it's a park."

"What else do you do in a park, besides loiter?"

Beth became exasperated at one point during our interview with the limitations imposed on people in the park. "Homelessness is not illegal," she said, "but every act you commit because you're homeless and you have no other choice is illegal. So you know, half the time, I just wish they would come out and just make that statement." She paused to punctuate her sarcasm with a clap. "Tell me that being homeless is illegal, please. Please just do that for me. Because they're not allowed to loiter, they're not allowed to sit around, they're not allowed to sleep inside of the metros. So just tell me that it's illegal, it's illegal to not have a home and need somewhere to sleep."

Indeed, many activities that might be acceptable for others become illicit or illegal for the regulars in Cabot Square. This is partly because they are performed in public space, where certain practices and even some subjectivities are legitimized by the state and others are not (Razack 2002:10), whether or not individuals have access to private spaces in which to perform them. According to the outreach workers I interviewed, for example, socio-economic status is a factor which determines the appropriateness of drinking in public: "There's

[31] I am referring here to the material arrangement of Cabot Square during my fieldwork period between 2012 and 2014. The redevelopment project that will have closed off the Square by the time of the publication of this thesis will have repercussions for the material space which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

people in their backyards and they've been drinking way more than [the regulars]," said Beth. "I mean, let's not forget that a lot of us do these things in our homes, okay? And we do these things at the festivals. As long as it's in a plastic cup and you stay within your couple block radius, you're allowed to do it!" Elaine and Michelle pointed out that drinking is acceptable at weddings, parades, and other public celebrations, not to mention after bars let out on Ste. Catherine Street in the early hours of the morning. "The homeless drunk person is different from the rich drunk person, I guess," said Michelle, followed by a sarcastic "There we go, hallelujah," from Elaine.

Although loitering and public drunkenness provide one lens through which to see material practices in Cabot Square — and it must be said that this is a lens frequently adopted by journalists and writers of letters to the editor — they leave out another side to the story, one in which material practices like talking, sharing affection, and as Ramirez suggests, bridging the gaps between home places and the urban centre with visits from friends and family. To focus only on illicit activities, what the Borough in its development reports calls 'les incivilités', is to ignore the relational nature of Cabot Square as a place where connections to self and others can be created and reaffirmed.

The sharing of country food described in the Introduction is only one type of material practice engaged in by the regulars in Cabot Square, but it is a significant one that speaks both to the importance of certain concrete elements — picnic tables, a central location, a public space in which one need not make a purchase to linger — and to the ways these material practices consist of and reinforce relationships to self, identity, and community. Indeed, Cabot Square exists as a social reality that is shaped and re-shaped by the relationships that form in connection with it. These relationships stretch out like spokes in a wheel to cover a broad spatial territory — not only does Cabot Square extend by way of social networks throughout the surrounding neighbourhood, city, and region, it includes connections with a comparatively far-away 'North' by way of seal meat brought down by a cousin or an aunt and shared on a picnic table under the steely gaze of Giovanni Caboto. An analysis that focuses on lived experiences rooted in place serves to highlight these connections and the ways in which relationality is enacted through embodied material practice, even when the relation being affirmed is long-distance.

Many people I spoke to throughout the course of my fieldwork appeared to have ambivalent feelings about the gatherings that take place in Cabot Square. For some, the park is simultaneously — or perhaps at different times and in different company — a place of safety and a place of danger, a home place and a strange place, a place of comfort and a place of violence. To assume that drugs, alcohol, and prostitution are the main draws to the Square would be both to deny the agency of people who choose to spend time there, and to overlook the importance of gathering, meeting friends and family, and affirming connectedness with self and community in embodied and enacted ways. It would also ignore important factors like the structure of settler-colonial health care systems which require Inuit to travel south for medical treatment, and food and housing crises in the North that make life in the villages of Nunavik challenging. Gatherings in Cabot Square take many forms: drinking, fighting, and taking drugs certainly occur and are part of relational practice, but regulars engage in a variety of

creative ways with each other and with the material environment, and a focus on the relationality of place encourages us to understand and affirm the full range of practice and experience in the Square.

Chapter 4

Home Places and Green Spaces: Making Meaning in the Square

The previous chapter illustrated what might be revealed by understanding Cabot Square as a relational nexus created and reinforced by material practices, and compared it to Ramirez and Roberts' conception of the 'Native hub' (Ramirez 2007). Understanding place as both relational and a phenomenon of embodied experience leads us beyond material practices and into a consideration of the layers of meaning attributed to places. What places mean highlights another aspect of placial relationality: the relationship between subjects experiencing a place and the place itself. This relationship is surely grounded in materiality and sensory experience, as explored in the previous chapter, but can be understood more deeply by attending to meaning, that is, adopting a material-semiotic approach to place (Gieryn 2000; Lagopoulos 2009).

What does Cabot Square mean? It may be a truism to say simply many different things to many different people. Since certain discourses enjoy special privileges and are more readily accessible, such as views presented by politicians and journalists, I will not focus on them here, but instead turn to a perhaps lesser-known story about meaning in Cabot Square articulated by service workers and people in the park. My goal is to place these views alongside more powerful narratives, and to give them a chance to speak for themselves.

Many themes emerged in conversation with regulars, outreach workers, and others about Cabot Square, but two were especially conspicuous: first, Cabot Square is experienced by many as a *home place*, especially by regulars; second, others tend to think of the Square as a *green space*, a pocket of reprieve from the concrete city. A third layer of meaning attributed to the Square has to do with its perceived role as a *gateway*, both to downtown Montreal and to future economic prosperity and growth; this view, I argue, exists in contrast to the notions of home place and a green space, and is thus a fundamental source of contest over materiality and meaning in the Square. I will address it in the final chapter.

Here I will explore the first two stories through my experiences volunteering at the Open Door, a day shelter adjacent to the Square, my interviews with various outreach workers, and the narrative of my friend William, a regular in the area since the 1990s.

Cabot Square as a “home for the homeless”

The Open Door is a day shelter located within the old stone walls of St. Stephen's Anglican Church, at the corner of Atwater and Dorchester, which places it across the wide intersection diagonally from Cabot Square. The church has been there for more than a century, and the Open Door was founded in 1988 to meet perceived needs of a local population who would knock on church door and ask for assistance. Today it provides food, clothing, laundry services, referrals, spiritual counselling, workshops, access to a phone and the internet, breakfast and a hot lunch each weekday during its opening hours of 8:30AM to 2:00PM. One of the most important things it provides, according to my own observations and to director Caleb Clark — but which is not mentioned on the website — is a place to sleep during the day. This important service, along with the serving of meals and the

close interactions between regular clients, contributes to a feeling of domesticity in the Open Door; indeed, on its website it declares itself a "Home to the Homeless" (The Open Door 2010). This characterization of the Open Door as a home place runs parallel to a similar sentiment about Cabot Square itself; and the two are not only in close proximity, but emplace many of the same individuals, who move from church to park and back frequently and fluidly.

What follows is my first impression of the Open Door. I arrived on an October morning in 2013.

I walk past Cabot Square down the hill to the tall Anglican Church that houses the Open Door. A couple of men are standing on the stairway outside the big wooden doors when I arrive, and we smile and greet each other. As I enter, I notice the traffic noise from the street outside disappear, and it is mostly quiet. A few people are milling around or sitting at fold-out wooden tables over a piece of toast. To my left is a white desk with a man standing behind it, who greets me when I walk in. I say I am looking for the co-director. He nods and walks down the side aisle along the length of the chapel to a doorway in the far left corner. He reappears in a moment and says she should be around somewhere. I tell him my name and that I'm here to volunteer.

As I wait, I take in the chapel. I am two increasingly secular generations removed from the most devout Christians in my family, but nonetheless I feel a sense of peace and stillness here. The large vault-ceilinged room is spaciously quiet, stained glass windows glowing behind wooden rafters. There are several people sleeping in the pews; they have gathered pillows and blankets and coats to make cozy nests. Occasionally I hear a soft snore or two.

A woman walks down the centre aisle between the pews where a few people are resting, lifting up the yellow cord tied between two wooden columns to walk underneath it towards the foyer. She is maybe five or ten years older than me, wearing a sweater and jeans, with a quick smile. She shakes my hand and I introduce myself. 'Oh, you're Sara! Come with me, we'll talk in the office.' I follow her down the side of the chapel to a small room in the back just past a set of wooden stairs leading down.

We chat for a few minutes about my research project, and about how things run at the Open Door. She tells me that at 8:30 in the morning, the doors open — we make the inevitable joke about the organization's name — and there are usually a few people already waiting outside who come in right away. She says they often haven't slept the night before, and are looking to get in out of the cold and find a quiet place to sleep for the morning. They put on a pot of coffee, and set out breakfast in the form of a tray piled with slices of bread, as well as a few whole bags of bread left intact for people to take with them, and then anything else that has been donated or is about to expire. Then the volunteers in the kitchen start preparing a hot meal for lunch.

At one point an old friend from my work with Right to the City, one of the first regulars I met in the Square, enters the office chatting with the director, Caleb. I haven't seen him in over a year, but he says he remembers me.

After the office chat, the co-director gives me the tour. In the basement is the food room, full of neatly-stacked packages of pasta and cereal, flats of cans, and fridges holding yoghurt and milk. I follow her out a small door in the basement to the church's backyard, where three volunteers are standing around rubbermaid

tubs and peeling potatoes. The former manse, just a few steps from the church, now functions as a laundry room; she shows me around and I take in the smell of detergent and fabric softener, along with the sight of piles of clothes and other donations that are being processed and will eventually be given to clients. Finally, she takes me back into the church, across the chapel, and into the tiny kitchen, and suggests that I stay for one round of lunch serving, just to get my feet wet. Along with the kitchen volunteers, I stay and serve about twenty people with big spoonfuls of tuna casserole through a small window between the kitchen and the chapel, a few more of whom I recognize from the previous summer in Cabot Square.

—Excerpt from field notes, October 10, 2013

My immediate impression of the Open Door was that it simply extended the social world of Cabot Square; I saw many of the same people there, and much of the same activity. There were fewer Inuit, fewer women, and a more controlled social environment: I often witnessed Caleb speaking quietly and calmly to people whose conversations had escalated into yelling matches, and although they had no official rules about intoxication, people were occasionally asked to leave if they seemed to present a danger to others. These situations were exceptional, however. Most of the time people simply chatted, slept, ate, or kept to themselves. Sometimes there was music when someone would bring in a guitar or take the dust cover off the piano at the front of the chapel.

I asked Caleb Clark about the relationship between the Open Door and Cabot Square in our interview a few months later.

"In terms of the vulnerable population in this area of downtown, I kind of see Cabot Square as the heartbeat of it. So everything else, then, slowly filters away from there," he explains, illustrating his point with hand gestures. "So with us being so close in proximity, and being an all-inclusive centre— one of the services that, if Cabot Square wasn't there, some of the people who were consuming in Cabot Square wouldn't have a safe place to come during the day. Because, you know, some wake up at nine in the morning and drink there, or earlier." I nodded. This was consistent with what I had seen and heard in the Square. "It's just where a lot of people come here, you know, just to hang out, to find friends, and a number of them feel safer in Cabot Square than most other places around Montreal. Even though the general population doesn't feel that way," he smiled ironically, "but it's interesting that the most vulnerable people feel safe in what everyone else calls the least safe place to be. But it's 'cause their friends are there."

The Open Door, along with other organizations like Chez Doris, forms the closest level of hub around Cabot Square's central 'heartbeat'. From the point of view of the lived trajectories of regulars in the area, these spaces are in fact continuous with one another, not separate as they might appear on a map or in a directory. It was within this circuit of connectivity between the park and the shelter that I was able to reconnect with William, who would forcefully articulate — echoing many others' informal testimony — the function of Cabot Square as a home place.

“Everybody's looking for that hometown feeling”

William was one of the regulars I met during my first few weeks of fieldwork back in 2012, when I was working with Right to the City and the People's Potato and handing out soup and sandwiches in the Square. I remember sitting on the steps of the John Cabot monument in the dappled summer sunlight, listening to stories about his childhood, always told with conviction, the occasional indelicate comment, and a lot of humour. When I started volunteering at the Open Door in 2013, I was not surprised to see him there, and we picked up where we left off. He would stand across from me at the reception table chatting animatedly, exchanging greetings or teasing quips with the other clients, and occasionally doodling abstract designs with a ballpoint pen in the attendance booklet.

When I began looking for interviewees, I thought of William immediately. I knew he would have something to say. In fact, the first time I approached him about doing an interview, he pulled me over to a table inside the Open Door, sat down in the church pew and started talking a mile a minute; I quickly had to scramble for my pen and notebook, and then explain that I was hoping we could schedule the interview for another time, not carry it out on the spot. The actual logistics of the interview were somewhat more complicated, consisting of a few missed connections and reschedulings[32], but finally we sat down together amidst the polished wooden pews at the Open Door — his preferred location for the interview — and started talking.

We try to find a place where we won't disturb the people sleeping in the pews, but no matter where we go we are still surrounded by the soft, muffled sounds of snoring. It seems to be an average day at the Open Door, not too full, but busy enough that the computer stations are all in use at the far end of the church, and the tables crowded around the kitchen are mostly occupied with styrofoam plates of spaghetti and their owners. We sit down and I run through the consent form procedure, and turn on the microphone. Then, somewhat awkwardly and out of character for our conversations, I take the initiative and ask where he's from and how he ended up in Montreal.

"I left home when I was twelve years old and I jumped on a train, and I ended up in Edmonton, going, 'you're not in Kansas now, Dorothy!'" He laughs. He is sitting easily, reclining into the wall with one arm resting on the pew back. He has a baseball cap pulled over long black hair tied into a ponytail. His dark eyes are surrounded by crinkled, well-worn laugh lines. "I lived in every city in Canada. I hitchhiked across Canada, it took me seventeen years to get across Canada. But I did a lot of stuff in between. I had a fuckin' great life, I have a great life. And then I came here."

He explains that home is a northern community in western Canada, and that he came to Montreal after spending some time in Ottawa: "The reason that I went to Ottawa is because on the HP sauce bottle there's a picture of the parliament, and when we were kids we used to eat steak, and I always looked at that picture and wondered where the fuck it was. And I'd say, I'm gonna go there one of these days. And I did." He tells me a

[32] William, like some (but not all) regulars and clients at the Open Door, does not have a cell phone. Even some of the people I got to know in the Square who did have cell phones were difficult to meet up with; meetings seemed to occur at a different, more ad hoc or relaxed, pace in the park. That the park is well-known, open, and central may contribute to its usefulness as a meeting point for people whose mobility and routines are relatively precarious.

brief story about visiting Parliament Hill, and seeing a statue of an "Indian warrior" on the grounds; he said he was standing there admiring it, and some tourists turned to him and said, 'it looks just like you!'

I try to pick up on this. "So you identify as First Nations?"

"No, I'm white."

I wait for the punchline.

"Actually on my birth registry— because my grandfather was from France, my grandmother was an Indian, my mother's French and my dad's French, so on my birth registry form it actually says I'm white. But because my grandmother was an Indian, I can be an Indian." William is Blood Nation, or Káínawa, a group from southern Alberta near the Rocky Mountains, he says. He was born and grew up in a different province, but this is where he traces his Indigenous heritage.

William considers himself "transient[33]" and is currently living on welfare, but in his younger life he says he held many different jobs. When he came to Montreal, he had a sales job and an apartment overlooking Park Lafontaine. I ask him about the first time he came to Cabot Square, a story he has told me before.

"I went there one day after work, and I was looking to get some things," he begins, pausing to wink at me. He is also a self-identified alcoholic and drug addict, but he left which 'things' he was looking for to my imagination. "And I met Nukka.[34] And that was since 2000, and I never left yet. I've lost maybe four of the best girlfriends I have in my life because of that park. They tell me, 'you love that fuckin' park more than you love me!' I say, yeah, but the thing about that park is that it's my home. My family's there. You know, the people that go there, the people that actually congregate there— that place just draws people for some reason. I don't know what it is about that place, but it brings people together. And just the interaction between them, I mean, it bonds them. It brings them together. Because we all started out as not even knowing who we are, and now we're fucking family."

He comes back to the familiar narrative I have heard before, about visiting the park with a wad of cash tucked into his salesman's suit. "The first week I was there I got robbed," he recalls. He stayed there all night, inebriated, and woke up in the morning missing most of his money. But he stayed because of what happened next. "I woke up on the bench all fuckin' hung over and all fuckin' broke and broke and broke, and one by one they all came by and, you know," — he affects a friendly, innocuous tone of voice — "'William, you want this?' 'Hey, William, you want that?' 'Hey, William, you want—'" He trails off. "And basically, that's it." His new friends in the park — some of whom, he acknowledges, may have been the same people who robbed him — took care of him, shared their food and drink, and adopted him like 'family'. He speaks especially highly of the Inuit in the park, saying that they are the kindest and most generous people one could hope to find on the street.

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[33] William uses the word ‘transient’, rather than ‘homeless’, to describe himself. While the word has some negative connotations, I think his choice of self-descriptor indicates that he does, indeed, have a home, both in the sense of having access to a private space — he says he owns land on a western Canadian province — and more importantly in the sense in which he refers to Cabot Square as ‘a home away from home’, or ‘a home for the homeless.’ His situation was not unique among the regulars I got to know, which leads me to question the accuracy and usefulness of the term ‘homeless’ in the context of Cabot Square.

[34] Another regular and mutual acquaintance, an Inuk woman who has spent thirty years in and around the park. Most everyone I talked to throughout the course of my research seemed to know her.

"They're my family," he says. "When I'm broken, when I'm fuckin' fucked up, they're my family, they'll take care of me. You know? You don't get that anywhere. Some people need that."

Sleep emerged as a recurring theme of some importance in the narratives of outreach workers and of regulars. Finding a good place to sleep — warm, safe, relatively comfortable — is a preoccupation of people without stable access to private homes, and Cabot Square seems to offer some opportunities to fulfill this basic need. Many claim that the Open Door is so vital a resource largely because it provides a place to sleep during the day, especially for people who are drunk or high and thus unwelcome in other shelters; this is corroborated by my observations as an Open Door volunteer.

William had his own story about sleeping in Cabot Square. "We used to sleep above the doors in the metro station," he tells me, explaining that this was before they put in a sheet of plexiglass blocking off his former hideout. "There was nine of us, and we'd camp out. You could fit nine people above that fuckin' door, eh? And we'd camp out there, we'd go out there before they closed the doors at night. They'd lock the doors, and they'd lock us in, and we'd just sleep."

As far as I know, the STM no longer locks the doors in the metro shelter, but I did hear rumours that they stopped heating it in the winter only two or three years ago. People still try to sleep there, but if they are caught, they are roused from their slumber and risk getting a ticket.

"Nobody actually knew. We slept up there for two fucking years, and nobody knew we were there. At night time we made a rule: never come down at night time, you know what I mean? If you needed to go pee there was pop bottles or, you know, something like that. The girls had to pee before they went up. And nobody knew we were there, you know?" William often told me about these good old days of sleeping in the metro shelter, but didn't specify when they were. I surmised it was probably in the early 2000s, after the new metro shelter was built, and only shortly after William came to Montreal. But it didn't last forever.

"So then one day one of the girls got mad 'cause she couldn't climb the thing, and we wouldn't come down and push her up, so she started throwing wine bottles at us. And then they discovered we were all up there. The police came in and said okay, we know you're up there William, come on down! And they couldn't believe nine people crawled outta there. They were like, holy fuck, how many of you are up there? I was like, nine. They were like, nine?! I was like, it's really deep!" Here he breaks into his infectious laughter.

I ask William about what people actually do in the Square. What is a typical day like? I ask it imagining that there are certain parts of the answer he won't want to share with me.

"Well, the first thing we used to do is, everybody'd get up at, like, seven o'clock in the morning, and our favourite question was 'how much you got?' And we'd all ask each other, 'how much you got?' 'how much you got?' And we'd put all our money together and buy beer. And everybody, you know, even if you put ten cents you'd get a sip anyway, you know what I mean?"

I nod. Almost all the regulars I'd talked to over the course of my fieldwork had told me at some point that they were alcoholics, sometimes like an affirmation, others like a confession. Extra-large bottles of cheap beer

were a common sight, sometimes furtively hidden in a bag or a coat, sometimes waved around in good-natured nonchalance, always shared[35].

For William, the drinking was rote, but the sharing was key. "So it became like that," he continued,"and the friendship just grew out of that common bonding. And some of them— I learned to care about a lot of people there, more than I usually care about people, 'cause I really *don't* care about people. But I mean, I used to go and steal food every day just to feed some of them, just 'cause I knew they were hungry. You know? I'd just know. So I'd go swipe food. Every morning they'd be like, 'William, whatcha got, whatcha got', you know? I'd bring them food."

I think back to my weekly trips to the Square in 2012, pushing a trolley loaded with soup and bread or carrying a backpack full of sandwiches. People would often tell me who needed them most. They'd say I should take the rest of them to so-and-so over by the Forum, or some friends in the metro shelter they knew were hungry. They did seem to be looking out for each other in the way William described. Sometimes, if we had to leave, they would take what was left and promise to redistribute the food for us. Occasionally a sandwich or two ended up feeding the pigeons instead, but I suspect this had something to do with the lack of proper meat and the overabundance of quinoa.

Later in the interview, we return to the subject of what goes on in the Square. William speaks with even more passion and conviction than usual. "It's our meeting ground. It's our centre. Because you know, they come from up north, they come, anybody that's ever been to Cabot Square will always come back to Cabot Square. And whenever they come to Montreal, that's where they're gonna go, 'cause that's where everybody is, and that's our zone." He had told me earlier that every city has a place like Cabot Square, rattling off a list of place names in Edmonton, Toronto, and Ottawa. He claims that other parts of the urban landscape may change, but those stay the same, remaining places where the transient or mobile can find each other without having to make an appointment.

"And if we lose that, we're gonna lose each other. We'll lose each other, 'cause we won't have that centre, we won't have that place to always go home to."

I let that comment sit for a moment. "What do people do there? I mean, I know they drink, and they smoke __"

"Yeah, that's not all we do. We celebrate birthdays, we discuss politics, we discuss religion, you know. We fight. We live. It's like, it's our living room, it's our movie studio. I mean if I had a fuckin' video camera I'd be a rich motherfucker, you know? 'Cause I've seen some amazing and some pretty nasty shit going on in this park. But it's a movie unto itself, it's fucking amazing. It's amazingly fucked up, but it's home. It is a good place."

This statement brought up memories of many similar sentiments of ambivalence towards the Square, articulated by various regulars I encountered throughout my fieldwork. No one was singing the Square's unequivocal praises; there was always a dark side, and in fact many regulars were not opposed to the idea of the park being redeveloped or cleaned up. They simply didn't want to be forced out. As Josie said, “we're not gonna

[35] When I visited the Square, especially on sandwich duty with the Right to the City, these bottles would often disappear as I approached. I was told this was 'out of respect'.

leave." After all, what is a home place? Not always a safe place, as much as we might wish it to be. The idea of home seems to be intimately bound up in feelings of belonging. William and many others felt they belonged in the park, and that the park belonged to them.

People had articulated similar feelings of ownership over the monument to Caboto, unlikely as that may seem. I heard it referred to as 'our statue' or 'our guy'. William had his own take on this phenomenon.

When I ask his opinion about why people come to the Square in the first place, he chalks it up at first to an inexplicable force, but quickly develops a theory. "People from all over come there," he muses, "and they don't leave. There's something about it that just— it's like, I think it has to do with that statue. It's kinda symbolic because everybody that comes there is trying to go somewhere, but they don't know where. And the statue guy, he's like, he's got a map in his fuckin' hand, and he's goin', you know he's got his hand up and he's like, looking north, you know?"

As he works through this, he poses in a good imitation of the Cabot monument, one hand grasping an invisible map, the other raised over his eyes with the determination of an explorer. We joke about which direction the statue is actually facing — it's 'Montreal north', north according to the grid of streets, but since those are skewed along the path carved out by the river, it's more like northwest — but this is not the first time I've heard this reverence for the statue. It is an important landmark and distinguishing feature of the park, no doubt, but for some regulars it seems to be more. While I was an activist with the Right to the City, we wondered at the irony of a monument to colonization at the heart of an urban Indigenous gathering place. But it has acquired layers of meaning that are rooted firmly in the present, not so much obscuring its colonial symbolism, but transfiguring it. After all, the monument is in 'their' park. Not everyone knows or cares who Giovanni Caboto was or what he is supposed to represent, but everyone in the park is familiar with the statue's irrefutable material presence, and people relate to it in diverse ways shaped by their own trajectories to and from the Square.

William and I have spoken before about the borough's plans to close the Square for redevelopment. Like many others, he has insisted that the regulars will find somewhere else to gather. During this interview, however, his usual determination is tainted by cynicism and concern about what might happen if they really are 'dispersed'[36] by the redevelopment project.

"You know they're gonna close down the park for a while—" I begin.

"That ain't gonna stop people from hanging out there," he counters with a laugh. "Unless they put big fuckin' walls around it."

"Well, I think they might, actually." I explain about the construction barricades that will surround the park. Then I tell him what little I know of the redesign: that they will remove the grass and replace it with low-growing shrubs, that they will install new pavement on the paths, that they will take out the picnic tables.

[36] As opposed to displaced; Allison Reid points out that the distinction is important. Displaced people might stick together and gather somewhere else; dispersed people will be scattered, fewer in number, and more difficult to find for outreach workers (see Chapter 5).

"Oh," William says, rolling his eyes in disdain, "like a *modern* park. One of those kind you can't use. Yeah, it's gonna be like a travel-through, have a look at the park, and leave. How wonderful."

William's articulation of this problem — and his derisive remark about the 'modern' — amounts to a very compelling theory about the uses of the park to which I will return in the following chapter. What he is pointing to, I would argue, is the difference between Cabot Square as a place, that is, the condition for unpredictable things to happen, for diverse trajectories to converge, where the challenge of space can arise, and as a thoroughfare, a gateway, or simply a strategic box on a map that represents the emptiness through which we travel according to the modernist logic of transport (Ingold 2009). The space between point A and point B, according to this logic, is not important in and of itself, and certainly nothing more than the passage of time and distance is supposed to happen there. Places, on the other hand, as processual, relational, and political phenomena, can be more difficult to plan and organize.

"I imagine we'll find a place to— we'll work around that, of course," he continues. "We'll just bring blankets and put 'em everywhere! I think that's one of the reasons that they want to close that park, is 'cause people just, you know, it's our living room, man! It's our living room, it's like, we *live* there! People are like, fuck you, get the fuck out. You know, like we own this shit. 'Cause you know, I've been there twenty fuckin' years. That's my park. That's my fuckin' park. I can go in there and just basically do what—" he pauses briefly. "You know, I could say it's my park, but then, it's everybody's park, you know? Everybody that comes there has that feeling. This is my park. Everybody that goes there has that feeling. They take ownership for it. They take responsibility for that."

He goes on to explain that he and some of his friends often clean up the park, picking up broken bottles and garbage and encouraging each other to keep things in order.

"Is there anything they could do to be helpful? Or should the city just leave the park alone?"

"I think they should just bomb all the way around the park, like, bomb everything around the park, and leave it one big empty space, and everybody leave us alone." He pauses here, deadpan, waiting for a reaction. I don't give him one, as I'm too busy trying to decide whether he's serious or not. Then he continues: "No, I'm not sure what I would say about that."

As it turns out, he does find something to say; he has a proposal that he thinks would solve a lot of problems for the homeless. "I know exactly what kind of centre they need to fix all of those problems at the same time. Because homeless people, y'see, they don't want to travel here and there and here and there and here and there. And it's a real hassle to be on the fuckin' metro, and to go here, and to go there, and to go here, and to go there." He gestures with his hands, jabbing them out one way and then another. " I mean, you know, do all this, do all that, it's too much work for one fuckin' day for somebody that doesn't have a bus pass."

He explains what he has in mind: a big warehouse full of kiosks and service points, where people can access everything they need in one place. "Bring them to one centre. One place where people can just go and you have your little open door, you know what I mean? You have your Open Door here, but, you got people that talk about health, or people there to get employment, and you got a clothes bin, and you got a fuckin' food bin, and that's in one unit. That's the fastest way in. And a telephone, and access to the rental board, and stuff like that,

and computers. So people got resources in one stop."

Some service providers in the Cabot Square area, like the Open Door, do offer many of these services — computers, a telephone, food, clothing, laundry, a place to sleep. But what seems to be missing for William is the coordination of these so-called 'frontline' services with the structures of the city and state, like health services, employment services, and the rental board. He is not referring to logistical coordination, which to some extent already exists in the form of information sharing and referrals, but *spatial* coordination. These services, which may exist in a sort of intangible, information-based network, must be brought into very real proximity in order to meet the needs of people for whom space and mobility are not trivial matters.

Somewhere around the middle of our interview, after we had discussed William's own history with the park, the redevelopment plans, and harmful stereotypes about homelessness, he articulated a sentiment that brings together many of the things I had heard and seen in my two years in and around Cabot Square. Unprompted by me, he returned to the importance of the Square as a place to gather.

"That's our centre. That's our nucleus. That's— I don't know what it is that brings us all there, but it brings us all there, and when you get that feeling, you know you belong there."

William's assertions seem to weave back and forth between claiming the park for the regulars and recognizing its openness to everyone as a public space. Somehow, as in the utterances of other regulars like Josie, these two claims do not seem to be mutually exclusive. In any case, here William tends towards inclusiveness.

"Everybody belongs there; you know you belong there. Because most people, it doesn't matter if you're fuckin' homeless or whatever you are, people just need a place like that to go. You need that in a downtown city setting." He shifts slightly and continues in a determined tone: "That's what the problem is right there. Y'see, cities— me and my grandfather had a discussion about cities, 'cause me, I'm a country kid, you know. I grew up, our neighbours were like a fucking quarter mile away, you know? You had to ride the horse or drive the tractor to get there. In a city you have *no where to go*," he says, emphasizing each syllable. "It's all about business. And the high buildings, they drown out the sun. So people are just depressed. All over. All day, every day, just depressed, because there's no fuckin' sunshine, 'cause there's no trees, there's no— you know, like one tree every sixty-five fuckin' blocks, but I mean it's like, you know, in a pothole in the sidewalk—" This last bit is delivered for the humour of its hyperbole, but passionately nonetheless. "How fuckin' lame is that? That's not a life, it's just a big commerce centre. And if you're not in commerce or something connected to commerce, you're fucked. People congregate in places like that because that's where they need to go."

These statements echo the frustration I have heard from many people in the park who are acutely aware of being surrounded by the trappings of an economic system that excludes them. When I first did fieldwork as an undergraduate, I took an inventory of 'local language', words and phrases used often and with specific meanings understood by regulars. One phrase that came up frequently was "money talks, bullshit walks". I linked this to theories about neoliberal policies of privatization and commercialization in urban spaces, which increasingly reduce access to space for the urban poor (Ruben 2001; Mitchell 2003). William has apparently also noticed this

trend. What is especially interesting about William's formulation is the link he makes between the urban landscape, disillusionment with the economic system, and people's need to gather in a place of belonging.

Later, he expresses some bitterness that also hints at the feeling of socioeconomic exclusion: "Homeless people, even just regular common folk, we just, we need that kind of place. 'Cause you know, you already took every fuckin' thing else from us, you know, what else do you want?" He doesn't specify which 'you' he is addressing. My first assumption is that this is in reference to the colonization of Indigenous territory, but something about William's consistent refusal to speak in these terms makes me think it is a broader 'you', a 'you' perhaps complicit in colonialism but whose power extends into current political and economic configurations that result, in combination with the features of past and ongoing coloniality, in the marginalization of people like William.

For William, Cabot Square is a home place anchored by the relationships that emerge within it. The bonds that develop between regulars are like the bonds between family members, and people depend on each other for survival. All of this serves to domesticate the space, to make it a "living room". Like other domestic spaces, it is not always or completely safe; "nasty shit" does happen, and although he does not elaborate in the interview, I know from other conversations that this includes rapes, assaults, drug overdoses, and other altercations. Still, William emphasizes the important role of Cabot Square as a home place, a place to belong, and a “home for the homeless”, especially in an urban environment where many of his friends are far from the places they once called home.

He articulates this search for a sense of belonging another way, one that again calls to mind the potential unfamiliarity and placelessness of the urban landscape: "Everybody's looking for that hometown feeling. 'Cause it's not your hometown, you know? But everybody wants that hometown feeling. They need to belong somewhere. And if you take that away from them, they're fucked."

William articulated many ways in which Cabot Square is associated with a home place. For him and for some other regulars, it is a place to belong, a place to feel cared for by friends and adopted family, and a place to return to. The other layer of meaning I wish to discuss, present in William's narrative and also in the narratives of many others, is that of Cabot Square as a green space. William mentioned the importance of trees, especially in a city where they are few and far between. The very notion of 'green space', perhaps rooted in romantic ideals of bringing the city back to nature (Lagopoulos 2009:192), has become a key point of articulation for arguments about the function of Cabot Square, and, like the Square itself, means different things to different people.

“Give them their green space back”

“It was all green grass, with nice little shrubs around.” Pale spring light filters through the office window, picking out motes of dust as they float by and outlining Elaine — the elder of the two outreach workers[37] seated next to one another for their joint interview — as she reminisces about Cabot Square in “the old days.” Her tone is confident and matter-of-fact, and like a practiced storyteller, she narrates memories of her time growing up in

[37] Both outreach workers identify as Aboriginal women, but to maintain their anonymity I will refrain from naming their Nations and home communities.

a Montreal suburb and taking frequent bus trips into the "concrete jungle" of the *centre-ville*.

"I'd be all over the place, and going to movies and going to Alexis Nihon, and we'd run through there. So I was about ten when I was first going through the park and I don't remember anything shocking, and people were playing frisbee."

I ask about a name I had heard thrown around by other outreach workers: Pigeon Park, not Cabot Square. She tells me it was never official. "It was called Pigeon Park because the amount of pigeons that were in there! Everybody fed the pigeons. I don't even think there's very many pigeons in there now. But there was a lot of pigeons, because everybody would be feeding them."

The second outreach worker, Michelle, agrees that she had long known Cabot Square by other names, including Pigeon Park and Atwater Park. In fact, both women confess that they had not known it as Cabot Square until quite recently, sometime in the last two to five years, about the time the park became an area of renewed interest to city planners. Both women also remember Pigeon Park as a greener, more populated, and better maintained public space.

"Everybody hung out there, everybody, you know?" Elaine says, leaning forward and gesturing with her hands. "The people just sitting on the grass having a picnic. And there was kids and there was moms and there was— so that was the place, there was moms, there was kids, there was strollers, 'cause you know the hospital being close by, and it was green! It was green and it was bright and it was beautiful."

Michelle's earliest memories of the park are linked to visits to the Montreal Children's Hospital. "I remember more families hanging out in the park, like I remember it being more of a green space, and that, you know, you could hang out in the park before your appointment or after your appointment and get an ice cream, and it wasn't the same atmosphere as it is now. Like now it seems to be, nobody— people for some reason don't want to be in the park, just because there's homeless people there."

In making the case for a return to the idyllic green space of Pigeon Park, they explain that the so-called 'homeless population' is not responsible for what Elaine calls Cabot Square's "disarray" — the patchy grass, the broken-down water fountains, the boarded-up vespasienne. Rather, the city's lack of maintenance of the park has created a place which now more selectively gathers a certain group of people in its midst. While the picnicking families and frisbee-players of the seventies and eighties are now dissuaded by the lack of green grass and clean space, there are other people whose reasons for gathering there trump the affective dissonance of an unkempt lawn. As I have previously argued, these people are there because it is a place to meet friends and family, to maintain links with culture and community, to create a hub of connection in the heart of the city.

I ask about their own experiences doing 'frontline' work in the park. Both women have worked for many years in and around Cabot Square, providing services like the distribution of clothing, pillows, blankets, toothbrushes, snack foods, and harm reduction items like clean syringes and crack pipes; performing emergency medical interventions, from applying bandages for minor cuts and abrasions to calling ambulances and accompanying people on hospital visits; and of equal importance, talking, "comforting", "just really getting down on the ground sitting next to the people, you know. We've had people crying, telling their story, and they thank us, thank you for being here. We give them our phone number, our card, just call us, call us, you know."

I ask about the ambivalence I have encountered in people who seem to understand Cabot Square on one hand as an important gathering place, but on the other as a run-down park in need of improvement. Michelle's answer touches on both this ambivalence and the cultural links that Ramirez asserts are essential to the process of hub-making:

"Yeah, it's not a positive gathering space in, I mean in the mainstream sense of positive. For them it's positive in that they have a link to their culture and some of them have said, when you ask them why they hang out there, we just wanna talk to other people, who look like me, who speak my language, and so it's just— but when you— in terms of what mainstream would say was positive, well no, the majority are drinking, and if they're not drinking, they're with a group of people who are drinking all day, right? So, you know, when you look at that in terms of positive, well, it's probably not so positive if that's the label that people need to put on it, but they're getting something out of it, they're getting that cultural connection. They have people who are similar to them, who have similar beliefs, who grew up in a similar way, who speak the same language, and so they have that kind of friendship there. And they look out for each other, and they protect each other, and they feel safe there, like it's— it's where they want to be."

I ask, "What's your sense of the importance of having access to that place to gather?"

"For sure it's important," says Michelle.

"Oh, one hundred percent. It's gotta be there," agrees Elaine.

"I don't know why they think that they have to develop it into, I mean if they feel that this is like a homeless park, then let it be a homeless park! I don't understand why they need to try to kick them out to bring other people in. There's other parks that other people can go to and if they don't feel safe in that park, there's nothing happening in terms of crime, it's not like, you know what I mean? Like it's not an unsafe situation right now, and so, let them have their space! I don't get it."

"I often wonder," Elaine adds, returning to the now-familiar theme of the aesthetic dimensions of the park, "if it's just at the point like there's no maintenance done in the park, and I read somewhere they cut the bushes down so that they could see in, and I don't even think there's bushes any more—

Michelle interjects: "There's hedge, there's hedges along where the buses are."

"—so it really is an ugly park, it's really become grey and dreary. And it's, you know, like, maintain it, then! You know?

"But they want to redevelop it without grass or something like that?"

I venture in to the conversation with the scraps of knowledge I gleaned from the CCA meeting the previous year: the grass will be gone and replaced with low-lying shrubs, the pathways paved with pebbles or a hard, durable surface, and the picnic tables removed. The two women nod sagely, murmuring their disapproval and commenting, "that's just ridiculous."

"Nobody's using it," protests Michelle, "except it seems that this homeless or marginalized group of people is using it, but it doesn't seem like anyone else is using it—"

"Because they're not prejudiced against the fact that it's ugly, because they wanna meet with people, you know? I mean I don't know, someone else with a child, why would a mom with a child wanna sit on gravel? You

know? They're going to the hospital to have a treatment or whatever, and they're, let's go for a walk in the park! Well you're gonna have somebody sit on the grass like they used to in the old days, with a blanket and have your sandwich. Who wants to put a blanket on gravel?

Later on, Elaine returns to her point with an example: "Let's say, hypothetically speaking, a family comes out of this condo." She hums a little tune to help us picture the scene. "Walks out, walks over with their two kids, goes to McDonald's. Now when they walk back with their little bag of McDonald's, okay, in two-thousand-fourteen," she says, spelling it out for emphasis, "are they gonna go, oh look at the pretty park because it's got nice green grass and it's a sunny day and the beautiful trees will give us shade? Is it because of the physical disarray of the park that they're not gonna go and sit in the park? Or they're gonna say, oh well you know what, there's a group of people over there, I don't feel safe. *Seriously*. You're gonna have to walk back with your two-year-old and three-year-old to eat at McDonald's 'cause you can't sit on the ground that's dirty! Because nobody's maintained the ground—"

"The grass is just mud," says Michelle, nodding.

"So you know, it's like you're making a judgement right away that it's that group of people over there, I'm not gonna go in. Baloney. It's 'cause there's no frickin' grass to sit on!"

We all start laughing at Elaine's enthusiastic testimony, and she apologizes for "getting so revved up here." But she soon returns to making her point: the problem with Cabot Square is not the people in it or the way it is used by those people, but the maintenance of the physical space.

Elaine sums it up: "We're doing our part, we're reaching out to the people that frequent the park. Now it's like, why don't you clean it up? This next step. Clean it up, make the area nice. It's not just the park, it was the whole area. They've just done renovations in Alexis Nihon, right? But it— when you look at it it's almost like a garden that's now starting to grow, with more buildings around, you know? I mean the Children's Hospital, big beautiful old building, but very dangerous, knock it down, rebuild it. Rebuild the park the way it was. Give people their green space back. That's what I would say. Give it back to them! And give it back to whoever wants to use it."

While Elaine and Michelle were the most talkative on the subject of green space, it was mentioned, if more nonchalantly, in reference to the Square by the majority of people I spoke to over the course of my research. The concept of green space in the city, and its importance for the health of the urban environment and its occupants, has had centuries to ingrain itself into our urban imaginations, according to Lagopoulos (2009), who describes several paradigms that have emerged in urban design since the Enlightenment. One of the prevailing ideologies about urban space, which he calls the progressivist model, is founded on a modernist "faith in rationalism, science, technology, and progress" that "implies the idea of the existence of a universal man with universal properties" (192), not unlike the social contract upon which our settler-colonial models of law, governance, and the public and private are based. Progressivist models of the city also understand it as a kind of complex organism or machine:

> This conception guides the idea of the progressivist city as a functioning tool, an *organic* whole consisting of interrelated functional and functioning parts (the city has a 'heart,' its center; it has 'lungs,' the green spaces; it is provided with 'arteries'; it may be 'ill' and in need of 'curing'); it is a machine, but an organic one. For this approach the *city* itself is an organism. (Lagopoulos 2009:200)

Organic metaphors have indeed been applied to Cabot Square: Caleb Clark (and others) have called it "the heartbeat" of a certain kind of community, or even of the surrounding neighbourhood; Sophie Mayes, a city employee whose presentation on the redevelopment plans for the Square will be discussed in the following chapter, called it "a little lung", referring to the preciousness and oxygen-generating qualities of its green canopy in a sea of concrete buildings. But the meanings this metaphor holds for those who articulate it are still diverse. For Michelle and Elaine, green space is important for the benefit of families who might like to picnic in the shade of the trees, and perhaps also for the social life of the neighbourhood. Beth, an outreach worker at a different organization catering to people in the park, sees it in a differently nuanced light.

During our interview, Beth also mentioned the lack of maintenance in the park and the importance of green grass to sit on. But she went a step further, connecting the importance of green spaces to her Aboriginal identity, which she shares with many other users of the park: "Sometimes I just wanna sit and I wanna relax. And maybe I might buy something from one of these beautiful little stores inside, maybe get myself a iced coffee and sit in the grass. I think I'm entitled to do that. I think I'm entitled to have a long day at work, and be very tired and wait for a bus and sit in the grass. And I'm upset that I can't sit in the grass. I'm upset that there's a ton of Natives in that park, and we have a strong connection to nature, and the reason why there's probably no grass is because we trampled it because we were all sitting in it anyways!" She threw up her hands in exasperation for a moment, and we both laughed. Then she continued, explaining that she is also upset "that you aren't gonna have green spaces that we can interact with. Green spaces are not just to be pretty. And I think that's very unfortunate, that we can't have a green space that we can interact with, that we could be comfortable in, that we're not supposed to walk on or be near. That bothers me. Because this kinda teaches us that plants are just to be pretty, we don't need them, we don't need to touch them, which we do, because they're living just like we are, and they need interaction just like we do, and it's healthy, it's healthy for us to interact with nature, and to be reminded that this is where we come from, we come from the earth. So yeah, I have a problem with the fact that the green spaces are sectioned off and that we're not supposed to be on them. This upsets me greatly. So why have them, if I can't interact with them? Just take them away altogether."

Her discomfort with the idea of a look-but-don't-touch green space, one of the possible features of the plans to redevelop the Square, recalls William's sarcastic comment about the "modern park". Although William never put his own sense of alienation in the city in terms of his Aboriginal identity, Beth does not hesitate to do so, although I think her comments can be interpreted more broadly as well. For Beth, places, and especially green spaces like parks, are meant to be experienced, enjoyed, and interacted with. Her emphasis on interaction, not just with other people but with the built environment itself, is consistent with the view that places are

fundamentally relational when viewed from the perspective of lived experience. Once again, the notion of Cabot Square as a holistic and relational experience of emplacement is contrasted to the view that it is simply a thoroughfare, a means to an end, a mode of transport from one point to another.

Contested meanings

Cabot Square emplaces a multiplicity of social actors who in turn engage in diverse practices, and create meaning out of their interactions with each other and the material space. For some, like William, Cabot Square has become a home place because of connections built there between individuals who now think of themselves as family. The sense of domestic belonging is also constructed through everyday practices like sharing meals, sleeping, and talking to friends and family in the Square itself, and in continuous or adjacent spaces like the Open Door, Chez Doris, and others in the list elaborated by Josie. For others, the park is valuable for its green space, namely its grass and trees; greenery in a city imagined according to the progressivist model (Lagopoulos 2009:193) is a powerful symbol of health and vitality. While this symbolism may be at play in Cabot Square, the green space is particularly treasured for its capacity to emplace activities like family picnics, leisurely strolls, and interactions with nature that affirm urban Indigenous identities like Beth's.

Together with material practices enacted in Cabot Square, these layers of meaning are part of what Gieryn, explaining a material-semiotic approach to place, calls "an unwindable spiral of material form and interpretive understandings or experiences" (2000:471). The Square can be understood as such a spiral; the meanings attributed to it cannot be separated from the diverse ways people interact in, around, and with the material space. Since these interactions are as diverse as the people who find themselves emplaced in the Square, the meanings generated are also diverse; this range of divergent meanings, especially applied to a space that is nominally for the public, is precisely the recipe for the type of political contest described by Massey (1994; 2005), in which people struggle to define and contain what is meant by, and who belongs in, particular spaces.

The final chapter will explore the form that this contest has taken over the last few years, as the City of Montreal has begun to implement a redevelopment plan for the neighbourhood surrounding Cabot Square. This plan relies on an understanding of the Square as a *gateway* both geographically and symbolically, one which, once traversed, will lead to economic growth and prosperity in downtown Montreal.

Chapter 5
"We're into city business. We're not into social engineering": Revitalizing the Square

My acquaintance with Cabot Square arose through the anti-gentrification group Right to the City, whose founders wanted to address the complicity of the University in the gentrification of the neighbourhood, specifically the Seville condominium project. In 2011, they wrote and presented a *mémoire* to the *Table de concertations*, the committee overseeing a larger redevelopment project called the 'Quartier des grands jardins' Special Planning Program (SPP), which encompassed much of the neighbourhood surrounding the proposed condominium site:

> We wish for the council to recognize the fact that [homeless] groups, often victims of stigmatization, violence and marginalization, are indeed citizens and have equal rights to health, home and a say in these processes. We wish to challenge the position of many who view the homeless as a mere nuisance to be dealt with and call on the city and the table de concertation to take a progressive stance on the status and fate of the homeless in the area by revising plans for police presence, making sure that an adequate number of housing units remain available and accessible and that serious efforts are made to include community representatives and organizations in all processes of planning and decision making. (Pennington and Delisle L'Heureux 2011)

My research was thus framed by political struggle from the beginning. When I returned to Cabot Square in 2013, the condos had been built, but the next phase of the SPP was the revitalization of the Square itself. These plans had given rise to a more organized response than we had been capable of as a small student group, initiated by the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network, an umbrella organization with several working groups that address issues facing urban Aboriginals in Montreal. This response, called the Cabot Square Project and coordinated by Allison Reid, was attempting to draw on the expertise of the wide range of service providers and outreach workers surrounding Cabot Square in order to deal with its impending closure during redevelopment.

This chapter will outline the contours of the political contest over the future of Cabot Square as it has played out in relationship to the redevelopment initiative and the efforts of the Cabot Square Project. I will argue that the contest has emerged along lines that are structured by the neoliberal capitalist ideology of the settler-colonial city, which manifests in phenomena like reduced spending on low-income housing, public parks, and social programs, and neighbourhood 'revitalizations' through the quick construction of condos built through public-private partnership, like the Prével contract. These revitalizations — drawing on the metaphor of the city as an organism, in this case a sick one which needs to be cured — aim to attract higher-income residents to areas in economic decline; in a settler colonial context, all of this puts those already marginalized by colonial

relocation, subjugation, and trauma in an even more precarious position.

During my fieldwork, I was able to attend a public meeting to discuss the revitalization project. Below is an ethnographic account of one of these meetings, organized by the Borough of Ville-Marie, during which the tension between the multiple uses and meanings of the Square manifested in the dialogue between presenters and audience. What is interesting to me about the presentation is the way Cabot Square is framed by the official speakers, and then later, how this framing is challenged by people asking questions from the audience. The meeting is an instance both of the perpetuation of a certain discourse about the Square — namely, identifying its very spatial makeup as problematic, as if the presence of inebriated, precariously-housed Aboriginal people (for which 'problématique sociale' is a thinly-veiled euphemism) were inevitable given the features of the terrain — and of the friction that arises from the combinations of social actors working to generate meaning in and around the Square.

Cabot Square and 'la problématique sociale'

"We're into city business. We're not into social engineering."
Louis-François Monet, Division Chief of Projects, Ville-Marie Borough
September 25, 2013

The September air is crisp and chilly as I climb the steps of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, an imposing collection of buildings surrounded by trim green lawns and a high outer wall, only a few blocks from Cabot Square. I've been invited to a meeting about the future of the Square, during which the city will reveal its redevelopment plans to a public audience.

The choice of venue is telling. The CCA was founded in 1979 by Phyllis Lambert, a famous Montreal philanthropist, architect, and daughter of the wealthy Bronfman family. According to its website, the CCA's foundation rests "on the conviction that architecture is a public concern". Lambert's preservation work with several of Montreal's greystone heritage buildings is well-known, and she was also involved in the founding of the *Table de concertation du centre-ville ouest* in 2005 (CCA 2011), a roundtable working group that has previously hosted discussions about future development in the neighbourhood.

Security guards guide me through the CCA's white echoing hallways to a warmly-lit amphitheatre, built to hold some two hundred people in comfortable seats all facing a stage, which is presently set with a long table bearing cups and pitchers of water and small placards, five or six chairs, and a podium. The backdrop is a large pull-down projection screen.

The room is beginning to fill up, and I take a seat in the fourth row. By the time the lights are dimmed and the projection screen lit up, people have filled about a quarter of the seats. A procession of men in suits, and one older woman with short silver hair, arrive to fill the spaces reserved by paper signs taped to seatbacks in the front row. They had been milling around the edges of the room speaking to people in small clusters, and are still conversing amongst themselves when the presentation begins.

On the stage are seated two women and three men. The man seated at the centre, Alain Dufort, begins with introductions: on his far right is a young woman named Sophie Mayes, an architect working for the city; next to her is a middle-aged man named Louis-François Monet, a high-ranking public employee at the borough; on his left, someone who "needs no introduction"[38], is the current City Councillor for the Peter-McGill District, Sammy Forcillo[39]; and finally, Dominique Archambault, in charge of Sports and Leisure for the City of Montreal, sits at Dufort's far left. Dufort himself, I later learn, is the Director of the Borough of Ville-Marie, the borough that traces its roots to de Maisonneuve's settlement in 1642. Now it is the central municipal district of the city of Montreal; its local mayor is also the mayor of the whole city, and it comprises not only Cabot Square and the Forum, but most of the city's downtown core as well.

Councillor Forcillo takes over after Dufort's round of introductions, and commences extolling Cabot Square as "emblematic" and a "point of entry into downtown Montreal". He then acknowledges a few special members of the audience, as politicians do, and in his list of special thanks I catch a reference to 'Madame Lambert', at which point he gestures graciously towards the silver-haired woman in the front row. It does not occur to me until much later, even after she storms up to the microphone to deliver her vitriolic speech during the question period, that this is Phyllis Lambert, founder of the CCA.

Following a few more innocuous comments (after which Forcillo remains mostly silent for the remainder of the evening), it is Monet's turn to speak. The ease with which he relays information about the project — the park's closure between spring 2014 and summer 2015, the uncertain future of the Children's Hospital, the Square's prestige as one of the oldest in Montreal — belies both close involvement with the revitalization plans and long experience as a public servant. He says that the plans are simply to "civilize" the space, to turn it from a troubled neighbourhood that is just "not relaxing" into a beacon of the "sought-after quality of life" Montreal wants to offer its residents.

Forcillo's and Monet's words echo the City's urban planning document on the subject, which outlines a broad revitalization project covering a large portion of Shaughnessy Village, or what the City is attempting to re-christen the *Quartier des grands jardins*. This PPU document (*programme particulier d'urbanisme*, or special planning program in English) also refers to Cabot Square as a "gateway to downtown Montreal" which is "strategically situated" amidst several busy streets, including Atwater Avenue, Ste. Catherine Street, and René-Levesque Boulevard (Arrondissement 2008:21). The Square's "symbolic" and "strategic" value are highlighted, both in the PPU and in the speeches given by Councillor Forcillo and other officials; its history, linked with that of the Forum, is depicted as rich with cultural heritage (*patrimoine*) and deserving of respect. The problematic social element, namely the "homeless population", is implicitly framed as external to this history and heritage, a flaw in the design, a sign of unwanted and unexpected "deterioriation" (Arrondissement 2008:20). Homeless (or apparently homeless) Aboriginals are simultaneously 'matters out of place' (Douglas 2003; Phillips and Cole 2013), ultimately separable — through architectural and service-based intervention — from the urban landscape

[38] Most of the meeting took place in French, so some quotations that appear here in English are my translations.
[39] Forcillo was replaced in the 2013 municipal election by Steve Shanahan of Equipe Mélanie Joly, who I had occasion to meet while he was still a candidate (see below).

in which they situate themselves, and vaguely related to the lack of physical maintenance of the Square. Whether they are a cause or an effect of the Square's poor maintenance is fuzzy. What is very clear is that they are a problem which needs solving.

After a few more words from Monet, the floor is turned over to Sophie Mayes, who walks to the podium and starts a slide presentation on the large backdrop screen. Its title is "Square Cabot: un projet intégré". The first part of her presentation consists of an overview of Cabot Square's history[40] which emphasizes the changing structure of the Square and its various architectural incarnations, now with a fence, now with English-style gardens, now with a mixture of English and French design influences that generate the gentle curves in the pathways that encircle the Cabot monument. But the Square has always been home to an "urban forest", and this remains one of its crowning features, she explains. Her history includes a great deal of landscaping detail, with precise measurements of each new structure, each change in the undulation of the path, each modification of the bus shelters; what is missing — indeed, what would seem out of place in a presentation like this — is its social history, the events and gatherings it has emplaced, the stories of how the structures and spaces have been used by the people of the city. History, for the purposes of this type of urban planning, is reduced at best to an inanimate materiality, and at worst to a history of concepts and designs.

Mayes continues, saying that the long-term goals for redevelopment in this area are to affirm "the importance of green spaces" and create a line of greenery that stretches from the mountain to the river, cutting a swath through the city's concrete and asphalt and merging with Cabot Square at its centre. For this reason, and because it will "become the pivot for the [economic] recovery of Ste. Catherine street", Cabot Square has been designated as a "priority intervention area" by the City and the Borough. They envision a Square that balances three important functions: to welcome residents as a "neighbourhood park", to help revitalize the metropolitan area, and to continue serving commuters as a transportation hub.

Mayes clicks the button on her wireless remote and looks at the screen. The subsequent slides are populated with schematic diagrams of ground cover, sample photographs of foliage varieties, and mockups of the new and improved Square. Her descriptions are filled with professionalized language: the deteriorating sod in the Square will be replaced with oval-shaped islands ("ovoïdes") of shade-resistant underbrush and flowering plants, rooted in soil protected by a special retention net, and the pathways will be paved with a permeable "stabilized rock dust." An LED lighting system and new "street furniture" — sleek-looking segmented benches, if the mockups are to be believed — will contribute to the Square's new identity as "light and transparent"; the lighting would be not only practical, illuminating the pathways after sunset for late-night commuters or residents out for an after-dinner walk, but aesthetic as well, casting a literal spotlight on the bronze-and-marble *patrimoine* of the Cabot monument. The vespasienne will be liberated from its undulating purple awning and outfitted as a florist, café, and information kiosk to "attract clientele" and accommodate park-goers who attend the arts and culture programming that will animate the Square in the summer months. "The Square will belong to the

[40] Interestingly she covered the square's history only from the early 20th century; highlights were the addition of the Cabot statue and the design contribution of Frederick Todd in the 1930s, the transition from tramway to bus routes in 1956, and the installation of the new metro system in 1966.

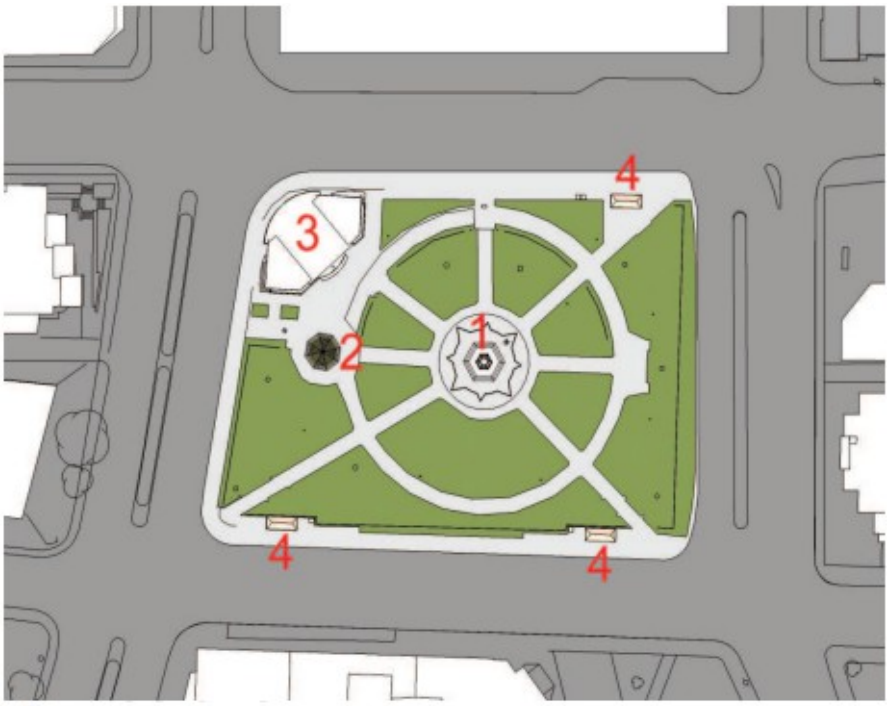
populace, to pedestrians, not to vehicles," Mayes explains, in reference to the current ongoing intrusion of police cruisers and city maintenance trucks into the middle of the Square, which many blame (somewhat ironically) for its poor upkeep. This intrusion will be discouraged by the design of the new Square, she continues, which will see that waste bins are placed around the park's perimeter. Finally, she suggests that space has been envisioned for a stage or a screen, so that the Square can be fully realized as a locale for public events, including an inaugural re-opening event in summer 2015. As Mayes talks and flips through slides, reactions from the audience are varied; some nod, others shake their heads, some lean over to whisper in a colleague's ear. This is what people have been waiting to hear, and many appear to have an opinion.

Next, I renew my grip on pen and notebook as Mayes promises an overview of the "main issues" surrounding revitalization of the Square. To my surprise, only one of these issues has to do with the euphemistic 'problématique sociale'; three are matters of design or engineering. First, Mayes explains, the dual function of the Square as a park and a transit hub have implications for its design. Second, there is the matter of the types and durabilities of surfaces used in the Square, and the issue of "wear and tear", for which the proposed renovations promise innovative solutions. Third, true to the city's conviction about the importance of urban forests, comes the issue of protecting the tree cover which functions as a "little lung" nestled in the urban landscape.

Then Mayes raises the final issue: "illicit activity, incivility, and disorderly conduct". A murmur arises in the audience as she changes the slide, and calls up a colleague from the City, Annie Gauthier, who briefly takes over to outline the plans for addressing the social impact of renovation. "Most importantly," says an enthusiastic Gauthier after climbing to the stage and taking the podium, "there will be a communication plan for marginalized people and people experiencing homelessness." Although the Square will be surrounded by a workfence enclosure for more than a year, she insists that the city is working to mitigate the displacement and keep lines of communication open with "Aboriginal people, Inuit, and others as well," with a focus on continued access to services and the promotion of "cohabitation." She refers to a collaboration with the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Strategy Network, which over the following months would become known the Cabot Square Project, coordinated by Allison Reid, a young, energetic woman seated in the row ahead of mine. When Mayes returns to finish the presentation, she reiterates the focus on cohabitation, which is quickly becoming the catchphrase of the evening; earlier, she had stated that an important measure of success would be the "reappropriation by all the community" of the Square upon its reopening. Now she adds that another goal is the "diminution d'incivilités." I wonder about the relationship between the two. Mayes returns to give a summary of the presentation in English, consistently using the term "disenfranchised population" to refer to the problematic social presence in the Square.

A clear narrative is emerging from the discourse of the presentation: the Square is currently a problem area in need of a designed solution, and once it is successfully revitalized, will be able to function, according to its 'highest and best use' (Blomley 2007), as a *gateway* or *pivot* to spur on economic development. Cabot Square is

presented as an object of urban planning and design. The presentation transports us to the top of de Certeau's skyscraper to gaze down upon the city as an orderly world of grids and predictable traffic, distanced from the messiness of everyday life (de Certeau 1984). And in fact, the result of the urban planner's gaze is a top-down view of Cabot Square represented by a stylized map much like the following, versions of which crop up in various revitalization project documents as well as in Mayes' slideshow:



LÉGENDE

1 – Monument à Giovanni Caboto
2 – Vespasienne
3 – Édicule du métro Atwater
4 – Abribus

Source: Énonce d'intérêt patrimonial, Square Cabot. Ville de Montréal, July 2013 (online).

Here, Cabot Square is a site which can be labelled, managed, designed and redesigned. Its various spatial elements have been catalogued and identified. That the 'problématique sociale' is not evident on the map serves the notion that it is temporary, incidental, and must be removed in order for the ideal Square to exist. This discourse depends on a view of space that denies its processual, relational, and political qualities. Mayes' slides depicting a newly-renovated Cabot Square, while presenting a street-level view filled with people rather than numbers and arrows, retain a slant towards the ethereal: Cabot Square is a concept, enhanced by the affluent lifestyles we project onto the stock photography models pasted into the foreground, but ultimately devoid of the challenge brought forth by gritty multiplicity and lived encounter.

I do not mean to suggest that Mayes, Gauthier and other official representatives are devoid of compassion

for people experiencing homelessness or other hardships in Cabot Square. On the contrary, the City's work with the Aboriginal Strategy Network, which will be discussed later on, might be an important step towards more compassionate and just urban development policies in the future. What I do mean to suggest is that as long as the Concept-city, the Cabot Square of maps and diagrams, remains divorced from the social realities that populate it, and city bureaucrats stay out of "social engineering" for the sake of liability, such revitalization projects will fail to address the real needs of the community.

The question period begins with no pause for taking stock; Phyllis Lambert is on her feet and gliding to the microphone in the corner of the room almost before the presentation has finished. When she arrives, her voice is commanding, and the room holds its breath.

Her first few questions are fairly routine: she indicates concern about narrowing the sidewalks, asks about metro accessibility, and wants more specific information about the future of the vespasienne. Then her tone becomes even more emphatic: "A big question we've been discussing since 2005 is what is happening in the area around the Square?" She speaks in French with a heavy English accent, which makes her easy for me to understand. She invokes the Children's Hospital, asks about the east side of the Square in particular, mentioning the abandoned Shell Station and the evangelist church. Then she draws a breath. "And as for the design of the Square, I have the impression that you are trying to control the Inuit," she continues. She decries the redesign as "cold" and uninviting, and the motives behind it as "aberrant" and "malpris." "You talk about cohabitation and living together, but really you are going to—" Here she switches, perhaps out of frustration, into English—"Scare the shit out of the Inuits!" The crowd, already buzzing, reacts to this statement with a brief, excited crescendo. Glances are exchanged on stage. She concludes her speech by saying that she knows of other cities, Toronto for example, that have dealt with similar issues well, but that "Montreal is doing it very, very poorly."

Monet is the first to respond. He says they are making a "huge effort at integration and to improve quality of life" in the neighbourhood, but that there are many things to consider. Social workers, the police, elderly residents who no longer feel safe in the park because of drug-dealing: all envision something different for the space, and have conflicting needs and desires. He says the City has not been inactive on homelessness[41]. Dufort adds that the municipality's main concern is for "public health", and that dealing with Aboriginal homelessness is really the affair of the federal government.

The questions that ensue are, to my surprise, mostly along the same script initiated by Lambert, although sometimes coloured with disgruntlement. One man suggests the removal of the metro exit altogether: "It's not really used as an exit, but it is used for drug dealing and begging and taking a leak." More optimistic speakers offer other suggestions: why not employ the homeless population of the Square in its maintenance, solving two problems at once? Why not turn the vespasienne into a service point for Aboriginal people in the area, rather than a "coffee and banana" stand? People ask about the impact of the renovation on this 'marginalized' population; one young man even asks how the City might "recognize the history of colonialism and

[41] A few weeks after this meeting, a new municipal government was elected, headed by Mayor Denis Coderre, who has since kept homelessness at the top of his social welfare priorities list (Curran 2014).

acknowledge the Indigenous claim to the land on which the Square was built? How might we say 'this is your land too' and acknowledge its complicated history?" Monet's response to this stresses that his hands are tied, and that Cabot Square cannot be treated any differently than any other public space in downtown Montreal. Municipal workers are municipal workers, public space is public space, and it cannot cater specifically to one "ethnic group" over others. "We're into city business," he explains, "we're not into social engineering."

Despite this comment, it should be noted that people on the panel stressed prioritizing communication with marginalized groups, minimizing the impact of displacement, and promoting cohabitation, and actually appeared open to a number of ideas from the audience; it remains to be seen if any of them will be implemented. One of the last speakers, however, raised questions that were more difficult to answer, and commanded nearly as much rapt attention as Phyllis Lambert.

Near the end of the evening, a tall woman with an air of confidence approaches the microphone. She introduces herself in Mohawk, and then in English, as Mohawk from Kahnawake. "Historically, you are on Mohawk territory," she begins. "What are your plans to acknowledge this in Cabot Square? Will a Mohawk leader be invited to the re-opening ceremony? Will Indian or Inuit art be included in the Square? Will Indian or Inuit cultural programming be part of the scheduled events and activities? Why not hold a powwow?" Members of the panel look to one another, some nod their heads. "Your panel looks very monochromatic," she says (later she jokes to me that this is a word she's been using a lot lately). She says she's concerned about the lack of diversity, and wonders why the redevelopment plans aren't including more voices, sharing the power, and bringing more people to the table. Then she talks about the Aboriginal presence in the Square itself. "This is still their land, and [Cabot Square] is clearly a gathering place for them. Why not look at that history, the history going back thousands of years before colonization? The statue is of a man called Giovanni Caboto, but now we call him John Cabot because his name has been anglicized or francisized. When do we indigenize this territory? You think of every culture in the world, except the culture of the people whose land you've built your country on."

The audience bursts into applause as she steps away from the microphone. This is the only applause of the evening. The panel nods, and someone says "We should be more inclusive." After the session is over and the crowd has begun to mill, I see Sophie Mayes descend from the stage to speak with various people who had asked questions, a look of concern on her face.

Talking Politics at the Atwater Library

Other public venues also existed for the discussion of issues surrounding Cabot Square. As I began my fieldwork in the late summer and fall of 2013, Montreal was preparing itself for a municipal election. The hot topics, not unpredictably, were infrastructure and corruption; the Charbonneau Commission was in full swing. But although most candidates were running with a slate that included a mayoral candidate and tried to carve out a unique political identity, at the level of borough districts, local issues still mattered.

Aiming for a sense of the political landscape around Cabot Square, I attended a candidate's forum at the Atwater Library on October 7, 2013, about two weeks after the meeting at the CCA. The library sits facing the Square across its western border of Atwater Street, a heavy and distinguished building of stone and marble. When I arrived, the sun was emerging from the pink-tinged clouds over Cabot Square as what had been a cool and blustery day became a warm, humid evening, and the two young librarians were holding the door open to enjoy the view. People trickled in through the high-ceilinged entryway, past the carved stone reception desk and up the wide wooden staircases on either side to a meeting room on the second floor, where chairs were arrayed in front of a cluttered stage, pausing to pick up coloured leaflets arrayed on tables at the back. By 7:00pm when the presentations started, there were about thirty people in the room.

To my surprise, the night's discussion frequently turned to Cabot Square, the proposed development plans, and the fate of the surrounding area. I had not been sure to what extent neighbourhood residents cared to involve themselves or thought of it as a local priority. The most vocal people were individuals I recognized from the meeting at the CCA, and later learned are involved in the Peter-McGill Community Council, the local community association for the district, but others spoke up as well. And although the discussion took place in the context of an impending election, that period of the political cycle during which the positions of would-be and incumbent politicians gravitate most heavily towards public opinion, at the very least I can surmise that Cabot Square and its environs feature prominently — both pragmatically and symbolically — in the district's sense of identity.

The four candidates — Jimmy Zoubris, Steve Shanahan, Damien Silès, and Nicole Trudeau — did not differ widely on the subject of the Square, or on very much else. There was general consensus, although some leaned on this more heavily than others, that the greatest danger to the Peter-McGill District was that of losing families to the suburbs. Various solutions were proposed in order to keep them: increasing the availability of reasonably-priced and even low-income housing (rather than continuing to build high-cost luxury condominium complexes, as in the case of 'Le Seville'); ensuring adequate access to green space in the neighbourhood; and creating some kind of community centre, possibly on the lot of the soon-to-relocate Children's Hospital. For Shanahan and Équipe Mélanie Joly, aiming to keep 30 000 families in the city through better housing and building schools in neighbourhoods like Peter-McGill was a broad strategy and key component of the slate's platform; Zoubris talked about building more family housing close to the canal; Trudeau pointed out that Montreal is one of the few cities in which people still live in the downtown core, and said she wants to keep it that way. Silès spoke specifically about Cabot Square in his introductory remarks, promising to bring his experience as founder of another socially-minded organization to reinvigorate the project, which he said should include stronger partnerships with the business sector. Shanahan also criticized the City for lack of movement on the Quartier des Grands Jardins redevelopment project. The consensus seemed to be that families (which as an unspoken rule seemed to include children) were the priority, and that Cabot Square's future lay in serving the families of Peter-McGill as a spot for picnics, ice cream stops, and playdates, surrounded by a neighbourhood replete with booming businesses and plentiful affordable housing.

My own question about the presence of First Nations and Inuit in Cabot Square drew the attention of

Shanahan and Silès, both of whom spoke with me after the official business was over. Shanahan had said he had an anecdote for me about Cabot Square. He and his wife had attended a public event with free food in Hector-Toe-Blake Park — a little patch of grass just south of Cabot Square — and he saw a group of Inuit there. “When there's free food, everyone comes,” he said. “I didn't know if they could even vote, but I wanted to talk to them anyway,” so he and his wife approached them. After a few minutes, a fight broke out with a man who had been complaining that he couldn't find a place to live because of how he looks, and Shanahan's wife was caught in the middle of it. He told me that this was an example of why people don't feel safe in the area, and he ended by talking about finding ways to encourage their economic participation, saying that he saw a woman wearing a beautiful traditional Inuit jacket and found out that she had made it herself. “Why can't they make things and sell them?” he wondered to me. Surely there was some way to bring them into the market economy. This comment reminded me of the suggestion from an audience member at the CCA to employ regulars for park maintenance, another way to integrate them as economically productive citizens. While these remarks are well-intentioned, they are not critical of the premise that everyone must be integrated into the capitalist system. Instead, they blame the 'problématique sociale', whose roots are in the violence of modern-colonial invasion, assimilation, and imposition of new economic systems, on an assumed failure of this very project; if assimilation and integration are simply completed as per the plan, the problems will disappear.

Cohabitation and the future of the Square

The presentation at the CCA casts Cabot Square in the role of gateway or thoroughfare, destined to facilitate the flow of people and capital through the city, but not to emplace encounters any more complex than stopping for a smoke or a coffee. The planned removal of picnic tables and grassy areas will limit the types of activity possible in the space; the sharing of *natsuiviniq* that I stumbled into, for example, will be much more difficult to enact without a surface upon which to spread out cardboard and newspaper. The questions asked during the question period are indicative of the type of conflict arising from a clash of different meanings attributed to the Square, as each implies and envisions different patterns of use. As a home place, Cabot Square can remain a gathering point for people experiencing problems with lack of housing, substance abuse, and low income, and it can remain a kind of 'Native hub' where Indigenous connections to self and community can be affirmed; as a green space, Cabot Square can be a place that gathers other people as well, a place for picnics, events, and a catalyst for neighbourhood solidarity. Both of these views focus on Cabot Square as a *place*, a destination, an event which can be inhabited; by contrast, Cabot Square as a gateway, both material and metaphorical, sidelines place and casts it in the role of thoroughfare, encouraging the kind of use it gets now from passers-through, but discouraging anyone who might like to linger. As William says, it will be a 'modern park'.

The political forum at Atwater Library highlighted another important dimension of the contest over the Square; some of the same residents who spoke up at the CCA in favour of support for marginalized people in the park seem also to be concerned about the ability of families (with children) to use the space. Here is a perspective from which Cabot Square as a home place and Cabot Square as a green space might encounter some

friction with each other, expressed through the troublesome notion of 'cohabitation'. While the interests of regulars and residents are not necessarily opposed, they overlap in ways that present challenges for everyone involved.

These challenges and the impact that the new 'modern' park will have on the lives of regulars has not gone totally unregarded. The City has been working with the NETWORK's Cabot Square Project to develop and implement a plan, as briefly explained at the CCA by Annie Gauthier, for the “marginalized” population of the Square. Allison Reid, the Project's coordinator, sat down with me in her apartment to talk about its goals and the challenges must address.

She tells me about the laborious process of developing a strategy for the Square, which involved research, surveys, and many meetings with the Project's numerous partner organizations, the expectations and concerns of which Allison must juggle and bring to some form of consensus. “What we realized in the strategy was that there was a very significant need for improving cohabitation between the users of the space,” she explains. “[There's] a lot of disrespect from one group to the other. I know that a lot of outreach workers might say that the disrespect is more one way — I would probably tend to agree with them — but I know a lot of residents who care a lot in the area as well, so there’s always going to be bad apples, it doesn’t mean that the general public is horrible either.” I nod, having come to terms with her point since my early days as an anti-gentrification activist. It is too tempting to see the contest over the Square as divided along the lines of housed residents and transient regulars, but in fact, many of their interests — seeing the park cleaned up, for example, and made a more pleasant place to inhabit — converge. Still, day to day conflicts can arise, and the tension that exists between people who use the space for leisure and those who use it because private home spaces are inaccessible or unbearable cannot be ignored.

Allison continues. “There’s a lot of work to be done to increase sharing of the space, ownership over the space. Well, you know the space is falling apart physically, and nobody’s really taking ownership of it or cares about what it looks like, and so until everyone feels like it’s their space then the space isn’t going to look nicer, and if it doesn’t look nicer it’s not going to *feel* nicer, and part of the feeling of insecurity that people described in the surveys was related to cleanliness and beauty and lack of maintenance.” The feeling of ownership she talks about is reminiscent of the claims I have heard — from William, from Josie, and from others — that Cabot Square belongs to the regulars. These claims, as in William's case, have often been followed by assertions that yes, of course, it is a public park, so it belongs to everybody. But it is 'our park too'. The idea of cohabitation, while perhaps sometimes used as a catch-all term in the discourse of 'city business' to indicate that attention is being paid to marginalized groups as well as the 'general public', is actually extremely complex. I am impressed with the Cabot Square Project's efforts to unravel the knot of what cohabitation might look like in Cabot Square, and anxious to see how it plays out in the future.

I ask Allison about what the Project is doing to prepare for the Square's impending closure. “We’re looking at the potential displacement and dispersement,” she says. “If it’s the displacement of a gathering group, it’s relatively easy, 'cause you can just locate the group easier ‘cause there are larger numbers. But it’s probably going to be more of a dispersement, in which case we might have a lot of trouble reaching them.” Dispersement,

whereby the larger group of gatherers in Cabot Square suddenly becomes smaller groups spread out around the city, is a real concern for outreach workers who also rely on the gathering capacity of Cabot Square, just as regulars do, to find people they are looking for. The effect might be something like the opposite of William's proposal to gather all the necessary resources in one place; what little spatial centralization already exists in Cabot Square as a hub in a network of neighbourhood services would disappear, and people would be forced to travel more to access the services they need.

Allison, however, is optimistic: "I have a feeling they're still gonna stay in the area because of Open Door, which is exactly what we want, and that's why we want to increase services at Open Door, or widen the hours at Open Door so there's more gathering time. So hopefully that still happens. But when we surveyed them last year, when we were doing the general portrait, we asked them, where do you think you're gonna go when the Square's closed? We told them, by the way, the Square is closing next year, and they were like, what? And they were like, I'm gonna stay right here. Some of them said that." I smile, remembering Josie's proclamation and many others like it. "Some of them said, I'm gonna go to that little park over there, the little Hector-Toe-Blake Park, and some of them said I'm gonna go to Place des Arts, some of them said Peace Park, some of them said the Old Port, like, there was no consensus. There was like seven or eight different areas."

Still, she says, even if the gathering location changes, she hopes their social networks will remain intact. "Cabot Square's the place they go to gather with friends, so hopefully they're still gonna gather with friends wherever they go."

Gateway, green space, home place: contested politics in Cabot Square

Cabot Square is a gathering place: like all places, it is a place that *gathers*. Over its 150 years of existence as an 'urban forest' (and before this as a patch of non-urban forest between the mountain and the river), it has gathered various things and people and activities in its midst. For the last thirty or forty years, that concoction of radical neighbourly heterogeneity has grown to consist of travellers, students, Inuit looking for family and friends and establishing a hub of connection to distant home places, people with substance abuse issues looking for support (in the form of services, community, and even the next fix), and residents in a neighbourhood that is in economic and demographic flux. All of them, in one way or another, except perhaps the travellers and commuters, want to call Cabot Square home. But home means different things to different people, and because Cabot Square is officially public, the struggle over who gets to call it home takes on political proportions. The current plans seem to favour not one group who stakes a claim to the Square over another, but the view that it need not be 'home' to anyone at all, and rather should exist only to facilitate those who pass through, whose wayfaring threads carry the least friction with them as they glide past one another through time and space.

If we wish to acknowledge the gathering power of places, their capacity to entangle us in particularly dense knots of interconnection, we must account for the difference between Cabot Square as a home place and green space, and Cabot Square as a thoroughfare. With Ingold, I am inclined to argue that we should understand people emplaced in Cabot Square as wayfarers rather than objects of transport (Ingold 2009). This highlights agency,

contingency, and also the effects of intersubjective engagement, for wayfarers don't simply pass through, they exist at every point on the line of their movement and engage with that point as a lived experience, not something suspended between a beginning and an end.

From the perspective of the city and those engaged in 'city business', it is inconvenient to see Cabot Square as anything other than a node of transport; for city planners, addressing it instead as a neighbourhood of agentive, interacting wayfarers engenders difficult and problematic scales of friction and difference. Difference, according to some interpretations of the social contract-based legal and political systems upon which our settler colonial society in Canada is founded, is best kept to the private sphere, or the margins, where it can be dealt with apolitically. Difference that appears in the public sphere becomes problematic: one need look no further than the recent Charter of Values debate to understand this phenomenon and the particular qualities it takes on in the context of Quebec[42]. The difference that manifests in Cabot Square hits on many pressure points of Canadian society simultaneously. It is socio-economic, making visible people with little income who may be experiencing homelessness; it is moral, again, because homelessness and addictions are often portrayed as moral failings; it is racial, because Inuit, First Nations, and nonwhite people like Caribbean immigrants are overrepresented; it is sexual, as many regulars in Cabot Square are women, compared to other urban gathering places; it is 'cultural' or at least perceived that way, as people coming from 'the North' live differently; it is linguistic, because English is predominantly spoken, followed closely by Inuktitut and French; and finally, it makes visible ongoing processes of colonization, which involve the exaltation of a particular subject, and the necessary devaluing of all others, especially nonwhite immigrants and Indigenous people.

The kinds of uses and meanings, and by consequence, the kinds of people, that are discouraged or disallowed in the redeveloped Square reveal of some of the conflicts that underpin Canadian society as a still-unfolding process of settler colonialism. People in the Square are mostly nonwhite or Indigenous and often women, which is not a flaw in the system but a consequence of a legal and political regime that 'exalts' white male Canadian subjects (Thobani 2007) and understands others as somehow less than full citizens. To bring it back to concepts of place, we can see that Cabot Square understood as an urban site destined for progress and development, or as a thoroughfare, a means to an end, a planar grid across which we move according to a logic of transport (Ingold 2009) is an empty space, a new *terra nullius*, whose current inhabitants don't really count and must be shuffled off elsewhere. If we instead understand Cabot Square as a place of complex interconnection, intersubjective encounter, rich material practice, wayfaring, inhabitation, and gathering, it comes suddenly to life.

[42] While I am not familiar with much literature, which would be quite recent, about the Charter of Values, the debate over 'reasonable accommodation' could be considered a precursor; in both cases what was apparently clash between religious freedoms and state ideals of gender equality and secularism was, to some, an attempt to control embodiments of diversity in the public sphere. For a nuanced analysis of reasonable accommodation, see Conway (2012).

Conclusion

On June 12, 2014, the Peter-McGill Community Council held a public event called the Forum on Homelessness at St. James the Apostle Church on Ste. Catherine Street. By then, a few blocks to the west, the benches and picnic tables had already been removed from Cabot Square in preparation for its impending redevelopment. The Community Council, whose members I had seen at various meetings regarding the future of the Square, as it is located within the Peter-McGill District of Borough Ville-Marie, had organized the event in partnership with a number of organizations, including the Native Women's Shelter, the YMCA, and the Aboriginal Strategy Network. The subtitle on the event posters read “Engaging diverse perspectives for better action”, and promised to open “a public space of dialogue around homelessness.”

It rained earlier that day, the heavy but brief rain of Montreal's hot and humid summers, so the entertainment portion of the Forum was held inside on a stage in a large hall rather than outside on the church lawn. When I arrived, a young man was rapping to pre-recorded beats, the sound broadcasting loud and tinny on the speakers outside, but resolving into clarity as I entered the hall. The space was crowded with people milling about between a buffet of cold dishes and several information kiosks set up by the partner organizations. I saw many people I knew, all of them organizers, coordinators, or outreach workers for the service centres in the neighbourhood. After the last of the performances — a hip-hop dance troupe and some Inuit throat singing — we were encouraged to sign up for workshops, and I followed a thin trickle of people into the church's spacious wood-and-stained-glass chapel for a discussion of 'holistic approaches'.

By the end of the session we had heard about a medical clinic specializing in the holistic treatment of addictions, and from a Mohawk spiritual healer who pointed out that homelessness of the body is not the same as homelessness of the spirit. I was reminded of William, and his home for the homeless in Cabot Square. Then the other workshop participants joined us in the chapel for a general debriefing, and we enlarged our circle with a scraping of chairs and a shuffling of purses. Only during this debriefing did a talkative middle-aged man sitting to my left reveal that he was, in fact, homeless, and that although he was not from the neighbourhood he had been accessing services there for the last several months. He confessed that he wasn't sure whether he would be welcome at the event. This was followed by a chorus of affirmations and a sea of nodding heads imploring him to feel welcome after all, but it was also acknowledged by the organizers that creating an inclusive environment and fostering a genuine dialogue of “diverse perspectives” can be more challenging than it might seem. It is one thing to put up a sign saying 'all are welcome'; it is another to create a space in which significant difference is really affirmed.

One way of doing this, I would argue, is to look at places where 'radical heterogeneity' already exists. Until recently, this was true of Cabot Square; although perhaps not a model of neighbourly cooperation, it was at least a place where encounters could happen between people on vastly different trajectories, wayfaring along paths that would meet up perhaps only once and only there. The narrowing of the meanings and uses of the Square that may happen because of redevelopment will also narrow the spectrum of possible encounters that can

be emplaced by it.

I received an e-mail notification on June 27 announcing that the project would go ahead in July, which it has. The e-mail included the photo below — a mockup of the future Square, with a few changes from the design I saw at the CCA in October — and an attached press release with crisis intervention information entitled “Pour une cohabitation harmonieuse” (Ville-Marie 2014), undoubtedly the work of the Cabot Square Project attempting to mitigate the effects of dispersement. The mockup image, however, leads me to wonder whether their efforts during the closure of the park will still be able to effect positive change once the Square reopens in 2015.

Source: Ville-Marie Borough Press Release (Ville-Marie 2014)

Here, Cabot Square is populated by ghostly figures whose trajectories touch the space so lightly that they are only half-there, so that the Square can still be imagined in a pristine and empty state, a new *terra nullius* into which ideal citizens can be projected. Everyone is on their way somewhere else; the picnic tables and grassy (or muddy) expanses are gone, and the Square has fulfilled its 'highest and best use' as a thoroughfare. Those who linger do so as consumers of coffee and snacks from the commercialized vespasienne; the press release claims that it will be restored “en respect avec son caractère original” (Ville de Montréal 2014), but clearly this refers to its aesthetic appearance, rather than its original function as a 'comfort station' free and open to the public.

For the time being, this is what the Square looks like:

The metro entrance remains accessible through the street-facing doors, but the Square is surrounded by a mesh workfence. The ground has been levelled, the cracked paving stones removed, and the trees protected with rings of wooden planks. Lately I have seen familiar faces a block or two away, gathering in doorways along Ste. Catherine Street, and as far away as the Place-des-Arts metro station at Jeanne-Mance and de Maisonneuve.

I wish to document this stage in the processual emergence of Cabot Square as a place shaped by the dynamics of the neoliberal, settler colonial city. The Square, or what is now the Square, has likely been a place of gathering for millennia, and it remains to be seen what form this gathering power may take when the redevelopment is complete. Perhaps it will fulfill its foreseen role as a thoroughfare, a conduit or gateway for

economic prosperity in downtown Montreal; perhaps people will also continue to use it in unforeseen ways, gathering there to form a hub at the centre of new networks of community and belonging.

Processual, Relational, Political

I have argued that Cabot Square, if understood from a critical perspective on space and place, is an emergent, embodied phenomenon created recursively by the interactions, imaginings, and practices of those who move through it and its own materiality. It is a hub of connectedness, drawing together a diverse range of actors and linking them to one another, to the surrounding neighbourhood, and even to identities and communities usually considered remote from the city. As a public square in the heart of settler colonial Montreal, it is also a site of political contest through which the meanings of citizenship, belonging, and community are constantly negotiated. I have also argued that by attending to the primacy of place (Casey 2013), rejecting the logic of transport in favour of wayfaring (Ingold 2009), and living up to the challenge of space (Massey 2005), places might be seen for what they most plainly are: that quality of the lifeworld which allows for all the complexity, messiness, conflict, and convergence of the encounter between self and other. As Massey explains, space and multiplicity are mutually constitutive and depend on each other to exist: “Without space, no multiplicity” (2005:9), and equally no conflict, no diversity, no politics, no community.

Admittedly, I have the luxury of this type of theoretical reflection, and it could be argued that policymakers and urban planners do not. Meeting the challenge of space, however, does not require a philosophy degree; it simply requires acknowledging urban spaces as *already full of life and meaning*, even, and perhaps especially, when that life and meaning diverge from the architect's expectations. It requires asking how spaces can best serve the communities that already flourish in and around them, rather than imagining new communities to replace the old for the sake of economic advance. The problem with this last view is not that economic growth should never be a priority for cities; it is the assumption that communities of people are spatially interchangeable, that they can be transplanted to a new sector without consequence. This assumption, of course, depends on a view of spaces themselves as interchangeable and fundamentally empty, as though emptiness is the purest state of the world, and it is simply filled after the fact with people and places and things. I would argue, along with my scholarly muses Casey, Ingold, and Massey, that place comes first, as a kind of *a priori* rootedness in the material world that is always the condition for our embodied experiences.

Another problem is the flawed proposal that “city business” is anything other than “social engineering”. I regret that M. Monet, whom I do not know personally, has been put in the hot seat for this comment, but it encapsulates so well the dangers of a political and legal system that does not recognize its own colonial heritage, inbuilt prejudices, and impact on the life of the city. Only by understanding that these systems — neoliberal capitalism, modernism, colonialism, urban gentrification — are interlocking and mutually constitutive can we hope to disentangle the trajectories of those who are marginalized by them. In an absence of such an approach to the redevelopment of Cabot Square, it falls to service organizations and groups like the Aboriginal Strategy Network to address the 'problématique sociale'.

While it cannot hope to address all of these problems, this thesis has endeavoured to sketch some of the trajectories along which people gather in Cabot Square, and to highlight local understandings of what the Square means and why it is important as a gathering place. The Square has been a place to sleep, to rest, to chat, to sit, to find friends and family, to engage with cultural practices like the sharing of country food, made possible because of the broad-ranging social network that connects people to distant homes and valued identities. It functions as a kind of hub, not fully conforming to the conceptualization of Ramirez and Roberts (2007), but at least anchoring a web of trajectories that fans out in layers: most closely it connects to day shelters like Chez Doris and the Open Door, the MNQ patient's residence, the Children's Hospital, and even the McDonald's at the mall across the street; then it stretches further into the suburbs of Lachine, Verdun, and Dorval, which are easily accessible along the worn grooves of Montreal's public transit system; and still further it reaches into home communities in the North and elsewhere, sometimes bringing friends and relatives to visit, sometimes freshly caught seal and arctic char to share.

What is important about the Square is that it emplaces the connections of all of these trajectories; and since they have emerged from the materiality of the Square itself — the central location, the easily-recognized monument to Caboto, the pleasant shade of the trees, the useful shelter of the metro station, the surfaces of the picnic tables and grassy lawns — they cannot be picked up and set back down in a new location. “To unravel the meshwork,” Ingold explains, “and to reassemble the resulting fragments on the basis of their intrinsic similarities and differences, is to destroy its very meaning and coherence” (2009:43). The life of the Square and the web of relations to which it gives shape are bound up in its placeness, its *thereness*, and cannot be separated from it without being irrevocably altered.

Of course, the immediate concerns of the people in the park and those who work with them are more concrete: without a place to congregate in Cabot Square, where will they go? As Allison explained, dispersement is a far greater threat to health and wellbeing than displacement. Again, if the gatherings in Cabot Square could somehow be transplanted, intact and still functioning, into a new place, the transition might be easier to deal with. But the gatherings emerge from the Square and when they move they will change. I have argued that understanding this linkage between emplaced material practices and places themselves is fundamentally important for redeveloping urban space in a way that respects and affirms the right of everyone to occupy it.

Directions for Future Research

The claim I have made that the Square's revitalization will not serve the people in the park is an informed hypothesis, but really still conjecture. In order to know what the specific impacts will be, a larger-scale longitudinal study would need to be conducted. The Aboriginal Strategy Network's Cabot Square Project will be carrying out a survey-based study to compare subjective assessments of safety and security before and after redevelopment, and this research could benefit from a participant-observation based ethnographic approach to supplement its results. An early version of my own research project included the recording of life histories of regulars in the park, something which would still be valuable for understanding how and why people come to

spend time there; elsewhere in the city, students and professors from Concordia have been creating walking tours based on place-based oral histories, which would be another interesting direction for future research in Cabot Square. Including oral histories which tell intergenerational stories from before the arrival of de Maisonneuve would be a potentially fruitful step towards decolonizing the settler city.

Cabot Square has been an important gathering place for a diverse and changing group of people, some of whom have called it home. At the time of this writing, it is in transition; for the regulars I met over the course of my fieldwork — Josie, Elisapie and John, William, and many others I could not mention here — it will remain inaccessible for at least a year, its capacity to gather curtailed by metal fences and special planning programs. My research in and around the Square came too late to effect any kind of change in the redevelopment plans, but I met many outreach workers and project coordinators like Michelle, Elaine, Caleb, Beth, and Allison, who are working to mitigate the negative impacts of displacement and dispersement for those already experiencing housing and income precarity. I am indebted to all of these people for guiding my trajectory into Cabot Square. My hope is that what I have learned from them might inspire others to consider public spaces in our settler colonial cities, and who enjoys access to them, both critically and with hope for a future in which all urban wayfarers might enjoy them together.

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