

Alley Atlas: from *non-place* to *place* in six maps

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Abstract

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Activators and the general public view commercial alleyways as “non-places”—they seem to lack a sense of history, relationality, and identity, and therefore a sense of place (Augé, 1995). In this study, I use a phenomenological understanding of place to explore the potential place-ness of the Bishop/Mackay alleyway, a commercial backstreet in downtown Montreal. I use the same concept to map personal stories associated with this alleyway and to better understand the deeper sense of place this particular alley holds. Using a research-creation process, ethnographic methods, inductive visualisation, and deep mapping lead me to my Alley Atlas. Through it, I argue that the alley’s meaning consists of its ability to house shadow-like expressions of the human condition, and connect people and places. Because of its non-judgemental quality, this alley creates a safe haven for a myriad of taboo behaviours, like crying, having a mental breakdown, smoking, using drugs, drinking alcohol, and spray-painting. Secondly, I argue that inductive visualisation and deep mapping are compelling and complementary approaches to the visualisation of meaning in an alleyway; while the former functions as a method of extracting meaning and visualising it, the latter creates a container within which to move from superficial to deeper representations and understandings of place, housing both place and non-place qualities. Finally, I arrive at the conclusion that, while the alley’s identity depends on who is looking at it and how, viewers of my Alley Atlas might see that it is inherently a place.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

“No place” is where [psychological and social] elements are unknown or invisible, but in fact every place has them. “Placelessness”, then, may simply be place ignored, unseen or unknown. (Lippard, 1997, p. 9)

I have memories strewn all over Montreal. My most burnt-in ones live on street corners, windowsills, storefronts, benches, and street curbs. The pavement, brick and steel tell me tales as I walk by—or over—they, sometimes gently, other times with such fervor that I’m forced to quicken my gait—*my ears are going to explode*. Other people don’t remember that phone call, or that bad date, or the way we laughed. *The city must whisper other things to them*, I think.

That’s what I was pondering the first time I stood in the alleyway¹ between Bishop and Mackay. Umbrella in one hand, plastic orange cone in the other, I shooed a plastic chair to the church’s brick wall with my foot, trying not to get run over by the cars who wheeled in every few minutes. We were supposed to be imagining benches and people reading on them; live music and warm lighting. As I made wet sketches of where I’d placed each chair and cone, I watched, from the corner of my eye, the smokers laughing in the covered terrace, and the cyclist sliding by, clad in yellow. I looked around at the buildings that surrounded me and thought, *what’s this place whispering?*

¹ While I mostly employ the term *alleyway* when speaking of a narrow passage between buildings (either to the side or at the back of them), I do sometimes use the term *alley*, *backstreet*, or the more British/Australian *lane* to mean the same thing. In the charrette and other events surrounding Bishop/Mackay, it has been called an *alleyway* or the French *ruelle*.

1.1 Study Background

In Fall 2016, I took part in a charrette (a community planning session) that Concordia University organized to re-envision the alleyway running east to west between Bishop Street and Mackay Street in downtown Montreal. The meeting was meant to include students, faculty, members of the community, and other stakeholders in the immediate vicinity (St. Jax Anglican Church, McKibbin's Irish Pub, Mei Chinese Restaurant, L'Auberge Apéro, and others), but the first group was in the majority. The initiating factor in this charrette was the Ville-Marie Borough's proposal to, through ephemeral events and permanent designs, activate five downtown alleyways for Montreal's 375th anniversary (Arrondissement de Ville-Marie, 2017). I initially participated in the event because I was curious about the charrette process, and at the end of the day it was very productive; various exciting ideas about how to activate the space arose: greenery, dangling structures, seasonal events, and the removal of parking lots. Yet, throughout the day, what I had been thinking as I stood in the alleyway holding my umbrella and bright orange cone kept coming back to me: *what's already here?* I realized that, though the process of activation was enthralling, it came with the assumption that this space really meant nothing (apart from its use as a delivery zone) to nobody. To date, the literature on commercial alleys and the processes around them have largely assumed that little or no existing sense of place exists.

It's easy for those involved in alleyway activation to overlook the existing relevance of some sites beyond their obvious utilitarian nature. Stephenson (2010) notes that in planning "...There is limited consideration of the impact of development on the current "sense of place" or on enhancing existing embedded qualities" (p. 15). Though community-focused planners are beginning to change this as the effects of gentrification become apparent (Project for Public

Spaces, 2015; Curran & Hamilton, 2012), commercial alleyways (which, unlike residential alleys, do not usually include children playing or people fixing their cars) rarely receive this focus. Because the urban imagination—at least in the Western context—views them almost exclusively as short cut routes, delivery zones, and hives of dangerous criminal activity with no value to the “front side” (Cameron, 2013; Seymour & Trindle, 2015; Wolch et al., 2010; Sidebottom et al., 2018), alleyways set for redesign have *tabula rasa* status: designers tend to approach them as more or less empty slates. As Mona Seymour & Theodora B. Trindle (2015) explain, “The redesign of alleyways located in commercial districts is typically undertaken to affect economic development and *to develop a sense of community and a sense of place* [emphasis added] through these spaces” (p. 586). Activators²’ assumptions that commercial alleyways are generally empty of meaning may have already fueled the erasure of potentially valuable information in the form of memories, place attachments, significant experiences, and hidden histories, amongst others. If emphasized, this information could both uncover a sense of place (by extracting it from a current one) and strengthen the existing users’ ownership of the space. David Harvey defines the *right to the city* as the right “to claim some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and re-made...” (2003, p. 2). Paying careful attention to what already exists could create fodder for a claim to the “right to the alleyway”, so to speak.

While there is a lack of deep examination of the sense of place in commercial alleyways, there have been calls for it: Zelinka and Beattie (2003) state in their guide to turning “Alleys into Allies”, that alley activators should “Learn the local history”, including considering, “What is the

² “Activators” refers to those urban planners, designers, city officials, event managers, and the like who engage in the activation of alleyways.

history of the area surrounding the alley, its nearby buildings and businesses, and the community as a whole?” (p. 25). Their call begins to touch on existing identity but stays focused on what surrounds the space, not the alley itself. However, Mark C. Childs (2008) insists that “municipal urban designers should create anthologies of neighbourhoods’ stories to help inform projects” (p. 185). The same approach could be used in alleyway activation. While these intimate details may seem subjective and therefore “irrational” in physical planning processes (Kearns & Collins, 2012, p. 941), they in fact hold some of our deepest, most vivid connections with place. So why do most of us assume that commercial alleyways have nothing (or nothing “good”) going on?

1.2 Non-Place

To the urban imaginary, commercial alleyways are *non-places*. In these, Marc Augé contends, “There is no room for history, for the focus is entirely on the present moment, itself expressed as a series of reoccurring utilitarian events—the robotic gestures of our everyday urban lives” (1995, p. 102). However, this non-place identity is only definite insofar as nobody explores it. In his research on airports (one of Augé’s key non-place examples) Maximiliano E. Korstanje finds that some people, like the homeless sleeping in them, have greater attachments to (and therefore memories surrounding) the spaces than Augé had originally imagined (2015). While leaving some non-places unexamined can provide the safety of invisibility for those who desire that, non-place users, as Korstanje underlines, have no rights. If simply for this reason, it is worth exploring some of these sites. In this thesis’ introductory quote, Lucy Lippard argues that it is the action of looking or not looking that creates the difference between space and place. By looking at and questioning non-place identity, we can better understand the significance of the “empty” spaces that surround us. The attachments and histories we may uncover could help

to legitimize populations, activities, and/or stories that may not normally have space in official narratives.

1.3 Research Questions

So, wanting to call into question the Bishop/Mackay alleyway's (and most other commercial alleyways') non-place narrative while answering Child's call for the creation of anthologies before in-situ interventions, I arrive at my research question: "Is the Bishop/Mackay alleyway a non-place?" In order to more thoroughly investigate this topic, I break it down into three questions: (1) "What kinds of experiences have people had in the Bishop/Mackay alleyway?", (2) "What meaning do these experiences hold for these individuals?", and (2) "How can this be visually represented?" I aim to identify how a deeper perspective on the alleyway can enrich an understanding of the space (for community members and designers alike). Hayden (1995) explains that for spaces, "Discovering their meanings and stories requires a community-based process which may involve planners, public historians, landscape architects, urban geographers and archaeologists working together with those for whom the place resonates with collective or personal significance" (1995, p. 76). As a cultural geographer, an interviewer, and an artist, I attempt to lend my voice to the goal of understanding Bishop/Mackay. Michael David Martin notes that "The alley is not typically the realm of the outsider, so the alley's local 'meaning' may not be evident to that outsider" (2002, p. 146). That said, as someone who rarely uses the alleyway, developing an understanding of the Bishop/Mackay alleyway requires me to employ a more sensitive and subtle approach to my research—a phenomenological one.

1.4 Literature Review

To address these questions, I will start by contextualizing my project within the broader literature on alleyways and a phenomenological perspective on place. From there, I will move into inductive visualization, deep mapping, and the atlas form as ways to think about place.

1.4.1 A Phenomenological Perspective on Place. My understanding of place and non-place are rooted in phenomenology's emphasis on the non-physical realm. Tim Cresswell (2013) provides a succinct discussion of the concept of "place" in his book, *Place: An Introduction*, and from that I place myself at the intersection between a humanistic and social understanding of place. He applauds the phenomenologists (Yi-Fu Tuan, Edward Relph, etc.) for creating a "distinction between an abstract realm of space and an experienced and felt world of place" (p. 4). This emotional, difficult-to-pin-down definition, along with Cresswell's declaration that "Whatever kinds of places are constructed they are never truly finished and always open to question and transformation" (p. 6) create the understanding of place I proceed with in this thesis. One of this definition's most celebrated proponents, Yi-Fu Tuan (1977), insists that to look for something that can't be seen, we need to get intimate with place, for it is "intimate experiences, not being dressed up, [that] easily escape our attention" (p. 143). With this in mind, I enter this study focused not on the metanarratives, but on the small stories. To date, scholars have not examined commercial alleyways from this perspective.

1.4.2 Deep Mapping and Inductive Visualisation. In order to address my research questions, I have chosen to take a deep mapping (Bodenhamer, Corrigan & Harris., 2013) approach to the Bishop/Mackay alleyway. I believe that a visualization of the space is necessary in order to both understand its stories, which are located in space, and to provide a practical tool for those who may work with the space in the future. Because of their focus on places rather than spaces, deep maps are a strong choice. The deep mapping approach, which can incorporate both

quantitative and qualitative data, creates a space to work with narrative and other non-classical data in such a way that there is a conversation between space and story, location and content. In order to arrive at this reimagining of the alleyway, I propose the incorporation of “inductive visualisation” (Knowles, Westerveld & Strom, 2015), a data-focused method of map-making, to move from data to map. This approach, originally used with Holocaust survivors, is appropriate for cartographers that seek to put place experiences and meaning in first place. Through the combination of deep mapping and inductive visualisation, I engage in alternative atlas-making to tell a different story of Bishop/Mackay.

1.5 Methodology

In the third chapter of this text, I address my methodological tools, which, framed by research-creation, include ethnographic methods and artistic practice.

1.5.1 Research-for-Creation. Research-creation, with its focus on “creating problems”, “thinking in movement” and “reworking emergences” (Springgay & Truman, 2016) is fitting for engagement with spaces that have hidden identities, particularly ones that lie on the edge of lawfulness or polite society. Research-creation has the potential to radically rework the commercial alleyway’s identity as an inherently place-less urban public space, making it possible to tell different stories. The practice’s focus on *doing* also allows me to engage in the making of place (apart from place-making as a potentially gentrifying force) through my artistic exploration. Using “research-for-creation” (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012, p. 15), I engage in a mixed-methods “gathering” approach consisting of participant observation, interviewing, and historical analysis. Through my 10.5 hours of observation, six interviews, and time spent researching the history of the space, I then engage in exploratory, intuition-led map-making

using a variety of media: pen, pencil, watercolour, acrylic, and digital. My year of exploration and map development ends in six maps, which I present in the following chapter.

1.6 Alley Atlas

The fourth chapter of this thesis displays the results of my research-for-creation: Alley Atlas. This alternative atlas, complete with an introduction, shows the results of my inductive visualisation and deep mapping approach to the alleyway. There, I examine themes like death, community, crime, and shortcutting in six maps, creating an alternative perspective on the space. A description and explanation of my design choices precede each map, and personal narratives follow some.

1.7 Discussion

In Chapter 5, I discuss Alley Atlas in the context of my original research questions. Most significantly, I explore whether my research has shown Bishop/Mackay to be a non-place (according to Augé's three-fold definition), or if it is, in fact, a place. Within this, I also examine traditional perspectives on commercial vs. residential alleyways, and show how Bishop/Mackay both does and does not fit into the former. The term *shadow-place* arises as an essential part of the alley's value. Finally, I assess the combination of deep mapping and inductive visualisation for the exploration of place and non-place in a commercial alleyway.

1.8 Conclusion

In the final chapter of this thesis, I underscore research-creation's goal of reaching wide audiences and outline the next steps I will take to make Alley Atlas public. I also return to alleyway activation and comment on the value of my research and approaches like it to current and future laneway projects. Focusing on what I have learnt in my examination of

Bishop/Mackay's existing sense of place, I finish with suggestions of how designers could capitalize on my research results to create meaningful designs grounded in the site's identity.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

In this chapter, I examine the theoretical basis of my research in Bishop/Mackay, and look into existing creative approaches towards alleyways and the expression of the subtleties of place. First, I look at alleyways as a valuable cultural asset, particularly in Montreal. Next, I juxtapose this with the common perception of downtown and commercial alleyways. Arguing that they may have just as much place-potential as residential ones, I move into phenomenology as a way to consider what exists beneath the surface. The concepts of non-place and placelessness help create a framework from which to approach this. Next, I dive into collected (rather than collective) memory as one way to uncover potentially existing place and show several creative approaches to this end. Finally, I make the case for deep mapping, inductive visualisation, and atlas-making as ways to anthologize place meaning and assess existing place before interventions (may) occur.

2.1 Alleyway Value

Back alleys, neglected courtyards, and stairways may escape our notice...yet if they are claimed, and owned...they can be harnessed to strengthen and enrich their communities. (Project for Public Spaces, 2012, p. 1)

Several researchers have noted alleyways' potential for fostering community-building (Boontharm, 2016; Ford, 2001; Martin, 2002). In residential areas, Michael D. Martin explains, "Back-alleys link the informal backyards of a particular block together, providing a form of semi-public "commons" which has no counterpart in neighbourhoods without accessible rear-side open space" (2002, p. 146). That "commons" expresses itself as a ball hockey rink, basketball court, art studio, automobile and bicycle repair shop, and neighbourly chit-chat spot

(Wan Ismail & Ching, 2016). Wolch et al. (2010) note that “Residential back alleys are thus complex cultural landscapes, existing on both the *back side* and the *inside* of the neighbourhood” (p. 2876). A high density of inhabitants (particularly long-term renters and owners) creating *eyes on the [back] street* (Jacobs, 1961) and the presence of children create a sense of comfort and casual revelry. In Montreal’s more family-oriented neighbourhoods, local governments have long seen the advantage of claiming these spaces.

2.2 Montreal Alleyways

The largely residential and family-friendly neighbourhoods of Rosemont, Le Plateau-Mont-Royal and Saint-Henri have made use of alleyways both formally and informally. There, citizens view alleyways with attachment (Habiter Montreal, 2012). The Ruelles Vertes (Green Alleyways) Program accepts greening requests from citizens, assisting them in building garden plots and planting indigenous florae (Regroupement des Éco Quartiers, 2017). Other alleyways across the city house street art, both legal (like in the Montréal Mural Festival), and otherwise. Until 2015 when the borough dismantled it, Burner Alley in le Plateau-Mont-Royal was a colourful community space boasting kid-friendly gardens, vibrant artwork, and plentiful seating. Today, locals turn at least one Plateau-Mont-Royal alleyway into a haunted corridor for children during Halloween every year. Nearby, Santropol Roulant, a bicycle co-operative, uses its alley as a space to help teach people how to repair their bicycles for a \$10 yearly fee. To the north, Article, an artist-run centre, has hosted its Mile End Festival in an adjacent alleyway for the past five years. Since 2015, Shows de Ruelle (Alley Shows) has put on wildly popular concerts in Alleyway Gaboury on the city’s eastside, in Hochelaga. Finally, in Rosemont, Canettes de Ruelle, an alleyway-focused graffiti and mural festival, is now in its third year. These examples

are but a fraction of the festivals, events, and activities that abound in Montreal's residential alleyways.

Yet, both in Montreal and across North America, commercial alleyways (which most downtown alleyways are) do not seem to carry these same connotations. In the city's downtown neighbourhood, alleyway projects are still quite rare (save for a few murals). Although it has the least green space of any area in Montreal, and despite its name, the downtown neighbourhood le Quartier des Grands Jardins (The Neighbourhood of Great Gardens) does not host any green alleyways. This may in large part be due to the area's transient nature (it is home to two large Anglophone universities—Concordia and McGill—and houses the business district). The city's disproportionate focus on residential alleyways over commercial ones accentuates a deeper issue: people don't think commercial alleyways hold cultural value.

2.3 The Perception of Commercial Alleyways

Surrounded by businesses, governmental buildings and high-rise apartment blocks, commercial alleyways seem to be devoid of the charms of residential backstreet life noted above. A case study in Los Angeles showed that fear of gang violence, sexual assault and the like prevented many residents, particularly women, from using them (Wolch et al., 2010). The way that urban public spaces—and perhaps alleyways more than any—are gendered is not to be underestimated (Massey, 1993). Yet, the same case study proved that the vast majority (80%) of that city's laneways are peaceful and tidy (Wolch et al., 2010). Negative perceptions of alleyways also abound in Cameron's (2013) analysis of the laneways on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, (un)popularly known as "Canada's poorest area code". In the media, going so far back as 1937, they are depicted as being full of "squalor, immorality and crime" (Vancouver Province, 1937 in Cameron, 2013, p. 25). While Cameron himself attests to a near mugging in one lane,

this maze of backstreets also functions as sleeping quarters for a homeless population the city does not care for, and as a drawing board for local graffiti artists. While some fears are warranted, Hollywood's depiction of alleyways as purely sites of violence and delinquency does not give the whole picture. These spaces are not always the most welcoming, but they may carry a wider variety of experiences that warrant exploration. That information has the potential to show commercial alleyways' existing meaning and give communities the opportunity to decide what to do with that meaning. Opening our minds to alternative stories requires challenging the current metanarrative that views them as non-places.

2.4 Non-Place

The concepts of non-place (Augé, 1995) and placelessness (Relph, 1976) play key roles in the common interpretation of commercial alleyways as spaces that do not carry any cultural or affective meaning. In his book *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Marc Augé asserts that, "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical or concerned with identity will be a non-place," (1995, p. 78). On first glance, commercial alleyways fit into the latter because their main purpose is utilitarian (they often act as delivery zones and short cut routes). They are not often in the spotlight as spaces of historical value (because their independent history is rarely recorded), they do not receive focus for their relationality (as opposed to residential ones, which do), and they are the antithesis of the streets and building that surround them—they are without name, without identity. Yet, in his book *Place and Placelessness* (1976), Relph underlines the different levels of insiderness and outsiderness one can have in relation to a place, and how the identity of that place changes depending on a person's

proximity. Thus, for those standing in the “official” realm—the streets with their names, the buildings with their licensed businesses, the government offices—commercial alleyways are not places. Yet, for someone standing a bit closer, they may well be.

One aspect of Augés concept actually exposes commercial alleyways’ potential place quality: “As anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality” (1995, p. 94). While some aspects of commercial alleyways are contractual (like the rules of the road drivers follow when shortcutting through them) and the repetitive throwing out of garbage, they can also make space for spontaneity and organic socialization (those socializing may not, however, be welcome). Ultimately, Augé underlines, “Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed” (1995, p. 79). And so, commercial alleyways may be both seemingly empty of history, relationality, and identity, as well as full of the potential for just that. At a time when alleyway activation is gaining popularity, urban space is shrinking, and homelessness is increasingly criminalized, an exploration of commercial alleys’ potential place-ness is justifiable. However, it requires an angle that sees beyond the metanarrative that undoubtedly surrounds them.

2.5 A Phenomenological Perspective on Place

One of phenomenology’s great strengths is seeking out what is obvious but unquestioned and thereby questioning it. (Seamon & Sowers, 2008, p. 1)

Phenomenology is a worthwhile lens through which to explore place and non-place. Looking through it can help guide perspectives that do not fall in line with the idea that commercial alleyways are *terra nullius* (nobody’s land) and *tabula rasa*. David Seamon explains

that in phenomenology, place is “...any environmental locus that gathers human experiences, actions, and meanings spatially and temporally” (Seamon, 2013, p. 150). This definition is particularly useful in approaching an understanding of alleyway life because “[Phenomenology’s]...aim is to examine and clarify human situations, events, meanings and experiences as they are known in everyday life but typically unnoticed beneath the level of conscious awareness” (Seamon & Sowers, 2008, p. 44). In the alleyway, the level of conscious awareness refers to the way officials and planners may view it, but also to how everyday users, unaware of their common stories, may understand it as well. In his 1977 *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Tuan points out that

Trees are planted for aesthetic effect, deliberately, but their real value may lie as stations for poignant, unplanned human encounters. Highway lamps are functional, yet at sundown their vapor lights can produce colors of dizzying beauty, “the most beautiful things in the United States.” The trough of dust under the swing and the bare earth packed firm by human feet are not planned, but they can be touching. (1977, pp. 142-143)

Expanding into these details and subtle meanings and resisting the metanarratives, sociologist de Certeau explains in his seminal work, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), is vital in order to reconnect with one’s environment on an emotional level (1980). The author emphasizes that everyone’s “...story begins on ground level, with footsteps” (p. 97), with Coverley adding that that is “where the history of the city is written” (2010, p. 105). Taking these small stories—and memories, emotions, etc.—into account can be a potent way to potentially uncover an alternative history. These small memories and nuanced feelings are the very things that carry with them so much of our connection to place (Jones & Evans, 2012).

Hence, a phenomenological approach to the Bishop/Mackay alleyway can create opportunities for unnoticed or unappreciated components of that place, like memories, emotions, and hidden histories to arise.

2.6 Memory and Place

Because of commercial alleys' lack of official history, memory is a key component of a critical examination of them as "non-places". Though larger stories can help, it is the intimate histories—*collected*, not collective (Young, 1993) that can help to make sense of the alleyway's fuller identity. Part of my aim is to look upon the alleyway through individual memories—through the intimate details Tuan and the phenomenologists point to as makers of place. Mowla (2004) poeticizes that "Inasmuch as we fill the physical outline of a person with what we know of them, we fill space with the memories of our experiences there" (p. 2). Young (1993) delves into this further, clarifying that

A society's memory, in this context, might be regarded as an aggregate collection of its members' many, often competing memories...For a society's memory cannot exist outside of those people who do the remembering—even if such memory happens to be at the society' bidding, in its name. (p. xi)

This approach to place memories is particularly suitable for spaces that don't have official histories because the only way to remember them is by collecting individual ones. Yet, it is not only about telling stories. Karen E. Till (2008) reminds us that, "As remembered, place are thus conserved" (p. 108). Jones and Evans (2012) take this sentiment into action in their discussion of "Rescue Geography", which focuses on capturing existing place connections. The approach is "not an argument for blanket preservation" or a way to "reify the local and valorise it over and against external pressure for change," the authors explain, but "an alternative *modus operandi* for

urban transformation through which local place mediates (rather than ‘resists’) urban transformation” (p. 2327). This concept’s value for alley activation projects and community planning is palpable, particularly when expressed creatively. Vivant (2018) notes “the importance of taking the sensible and affective dimensions into account to understand the psychological, emotional, and existential attachments to the urban space,” and argues that artists can “afford a new understanding of spaces for different uses or even for planning purposes” (p. 60). The value of approaching place-ness and memory from alternative angles shows in Vivant’s exploration of a Paris suburb:

The commissioner disagreed with our proposal. According to him: “I take it, I scan through it, I look at the pictures. There’s above all a lot of text that’s really interesting to read, yet at the same time...For a form to be received, it has to be presented in a way that’s receivable...Paper serves no purpose other than peeling potatoes. At some point, it also saturates the space.” (p. 65)

In beginning to develop a perspective on Bishop/Mackay that focuses on the invisible aspects of the space, traditional research simply won’t do. Leonie Sandercock writes, “We have to be able to tell our stories skillfully enough to capture the imagination of a broader and more political audience than our colleagues alone” (2003, p. 20). She reminds us that, “Good stories have qualities such as dramatic timing, humor, irony, evocativeness and suspense, in which [most] social researchers are untrained” (p. 20).

2.7 Memory-Based Interventions

Some artists, scholars, and thinkers-about-place have engaged in memory-focused spatial interventions that touch on their subtler phenomenological value. Across Europe (beginning in Germany), Gunter Demnig’s *Stolpersteine*, or “Stumbling Stones” (Figure 1) commemorate the

victims of Nazism. Meant as both tributes to the dead and subtle, everyday (nearly unnoticed) reminders of the Nazi legacy, *stolpersteine* bring the personal to the public by marking the last address of those who passed. This artwork uses the city fabric to present the hidden or erased value of the locations of the stones. In Philadelphia, Lily Godspeed collects stories from locals and prints them onto “sticker” plaques (Figure 3) in her project, *Plaque to the Future*. From there, Godspeed sticks them onto the locations where they occurred. This project gives honour to the small occurrences in people’s lives. In a more official approach, San Francisco’s *Leather Memoir* in Ringold Alley (Figure 2) presents bronze boot prints as a memoir of the gay men who used the area surrounding it, “Miracle Mile” as a place to cruise for lovers. Similar to the Stolpersteine, the bootprints are a subtle way to imbue the site—an alley in this case—with the memory and identities of those people who used it.



Figure 1. O'Connor (n.d.). *A set of Stolpersteine in Berlin commemorating one family* [Photograph]. The Guardian. Retrieved Sept. 5, 2018 from <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/feb/18/stumbling-stones-a-different-vision-of-holocaust-remembrance>



Figure 2. Miller (2017). *Unique sidewalk plaques in the form of boot prints memorialize 28 people important to San Francisco's leather history* [Photograph]. Medium. Retrieved Sept. 5, 2018 from <https://medium.com/@laurapaul/memories-of-leather-public-art-sets-in-stone-san-franciscos-leather-history-4a4a56433ac2>



Figure 3. Kohlstedt 2017). *Plaque to the Future: Memorial Stickers Commemorate Everyday People and Places* [Photograph]. 99 Percent Invisible. Retrieved Sept. 5, 2018 from <https://99percentinvisible.org/article/plaque-future-memorial-stickers-commemorate-everyday-people-places/>

Each of the three installations uses otherwise unnoticed aspects of the urban fabric—concrete, cobblestones, mailboxes—to tell the otherwise silent (or in some cases, ignored) personal stories set in public space. This approach is tempting, but in this thesis, I am choosing to approach memory and place in Bishop/Mackay a bit differently. Because of the lack of information on commercial alleyway history, I am proposing a tactic that anthologizes alleyway meaning so that future intervention-makers can have the most information to work from. Deep mapping, an emerging tool for the alternative imagining of space—and place—is an exciting way to do this.

2.8 Deep Mapping

“...cultural maps are artifacts...forms of social action, foundations for advocacy, and, sometimes, works of art.” (Duxbury, Garrett-Petts, and Longley, 2019, p. 3)

As familiar objects, maps can communicate place meaning to neighbours, city officials, urban designers, and people walking by. Deep mapping's width and breadth make it helpful for the exposure of existing place. Deep mapping is pertinent for exploring both (1) an alleyway as the topic of a map, and (2) the hidden meanings of an alleyway. Though various definitions of deep mapping abound, I align myself here with Les Robert's explanation of deep mapping as "as much a process of archaeology as it is cartography" (2016, p. 6). Robert's focus on verticality and the exploration of time as a concept in maps lends itself well to exploring meaning in a spatial context. His understanding of deep mapping is one that flip-flops between people and space: "Deep mapping can be looked upon as an embodied and reflexive immersion in a life that is lived and performed spatially" (p. 6).

Other geographers look at deep mapping slightly differently: Bodenhamer, Corrigan & Harris (2015) approach deep maps as gathering social, emotional, and historical information to tell the multifaceted story of a place. They explain that "Deep maps do not explicitly seek authority or objectivity but provoke negotiation between insiders and outsiders, experts and contributors, over what is represented and how" (p. 4). This is in stark contrast to the cartography of classical geographers, urban planners, and even architects—often coming to life in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and the like—which is authoritative. Here, community members should have a say in representation. Bloom and Sacramento (2018) underline that, "Deep Maps are expansive tools that put back on the table (and on the map) the many lives, names, perspectives and positions of the ones that, according to dominant forces, do not belong there" (p. 18). With the contentions between private vs. public, legal vs. criminal, and more, commercial alleyways are in dire need of an analysis that does precisely this.

Bloom and Sacramento also offer that “Deep Mapping is about doing things differently from ordinary cartography, shifting away from large ex-panses of territory. Rather, it is about the small, the subjective, the embodied, the thick, and the porous. It is about digging deeply rather than gazing widely” (p. 20). They insist to the reader, “Start by investigating something small scale and close to you, like a street, a bridge, an allotment, a town square, a field or a forest” (p. 20). Or how about an alleyway? For its focus on the small, the local, the hands-on, deep mapping is a more-than-fitting approach to understanding alleyway life—backstreets are physically, politically, and cognitively small. With that in mind, this approach seems fitting for the reshaping of an alley’s identity away from a metanarrative and into a grounded image of what it actually is.

Yet, in the literature to date, no deep mapping project has focused on a commercial (or residential, for that matter) alleyway. The closest exploration comes from Thai scholar Davisi Boontharm’s exploration of Thai *soi* (2016). In that text, Boontharm maps her family’s narratives of Bangkok’s alleyways. She uses illustration and text to show key memories based around certain alleyways for each herself, her elder brother, and her eldest brother. Some of the memories she illustrates include: “learning to ride a bicycle”, “a fierce goose”, and “the walk to my grandmother’s house” (p. 49). Boontharm’s exploration begins to look vertically at her alleyways of focus, but is not in-depth or thorough enough to fall under deep mapping. A deep North American perspective of an alleyway—Bishop/Mackay—could be a positive contribution to this field. Since Bishop/Mackay has a multitude of stakeholders and users and has been the focus of a community planning session, deep mapping as a grassroots cartographic approach can also be the beginning of a more equal conversation between the community and the borough.

While this non-traditional approach towards data; horizontality and verticality; and representation are crucial to my work, so is the actual design of the maps themselves. Roberts argues that deep mapping is “Cartography as art rather than science (not that there is any neat binary between the two),” and that “the most notable traffic of activity conducted under the banner of deep mapping has been initiated by visual and performance artists” (p. 3). The artistic openness of deep mapping can create genuine representations of meaning, no matter how irrelevant they would otherwise seem in a traditional map form. Yet, to get to those artistic representations, a more hands-on tactic is necessary. Inductive visualisation is a natural option that scholars have not yet used in concurrently with deep mapping.

2.9 Inductive Visualization

While deep mapping serves as a way to look at a space alternatively, inductive visualisation functions to actually make the maps. In particular, the research question “What kinds of experiences have people had here, and what does it mean to them?” requires a method of visualizing spatial data that is more intimate and on-the-ground. In *Inductive Visualization: A Humanistic Alternative to GIS* (2015), Knowles, Westerveld & Strom set GIS aside in favour of visualization based in grounded theory. “Rarely...do the symbolic points that stand for places, lines that stand for routes or borders, and polygons that stand for larger areas evoke rich or complex meanings,” the authors explain, for “GIS is ideal for studying representations of space but has limited utility for studying spatial practice” (p. 238). Hence, the authors use “inductive visualization”: “a creative, experimental exploration of the structure, content, and meaning of source material” (p. 244) to map Holocaust survivors’ experiences of place. What follows is a series of maps that focus not as much on built environments as on how the survivors talked about places and the things they went through in them. The maps use concepts like story bubbles, pin

diagrams, and timeline compressions to visualize different people's memories and their meanings. They do not attempt to be accurate in their spatial measurements because, the authors say, "...humans' spatial perceptions are acute but imprecise. We perceive proximity and distance, intimacy and estrangement, vastness and crowding, and many other spatial qualities of our social lives, and our experiences of place, in topological terms" (p. 255).

In my work, inductive visualization is crucial as a way to not only uncover the meaning in Bishop/Mackay, but actually represent those potential hidden memories, histories, and meanings in space. Inductive visualization's "iterative, exploratory practice" devoid of "a priori structures or parameters" (p. 254) is critical in breaking apart the metanarrative of a commercial alleyway as a culturally valueless non-place to find what else may exist. Rather than use symbols and structures that traditionally appear on roads or in parks (the front-side of the city), I can develop a set of symbols that arises from and for an alleyway. As such, I can show an alternative vision of the space, and what better way to do this than through an atlas?

2.10 Alternative Atlas

Atlases are big, serious books—or at least that's the way I have always thought of them. I have memories of sitting on my couch as a child, an atlas half the size of me weighing my legs down. I learned about gross domestic products and soil varieties, altitudes and dialects: *important* things. Historically, atlases have been reserved for scientific, quantitative information and colonial ways of seeing things, and have certainly not included the lived experience of place.

However, in recent years, geographers, artists, and map-lovers have begun to use atlases to tell more qualitative, anti-colonial, and heartfelt stories. One such person is Rebecca Solnit, famed feminist author and atlas-maker. Her trilogy of atlases on New York, New Orleans, and

San Francisco take the macro to the micro (2010; 2013; 2016). In each map, Solnit's cartographers juxtapose seemingly unrelated topics like queer spaces and butterfly habitats in "Monarchs and Queens" to give the viewer a different perspective of a city they think they know well. In her New York atlas, *Non-Stop Metropolis*, one map honours the feminist history of the city by replacing subway stops with the names of impactful female figures. Other atlas-makers focus on less obvious spaces: Chandler O'Leary, an American graphic artist, recently published *The Best Coast - A Road Trip Atlas: Illustrated Adventures Along the West Coast's Historic Highways* (2019). In this atlas, O'Leary uses the big, important form of the atlas to tell stories about highways and the things that surround them. Her approach venerates the road—an oft taken for granted component of our landscape—through its thorough examination in maps and the official atlas form. In "Fred Harvey and His Chain of Harvey Houses" she carefully illustrates the locations of the first restaurant chain in America, all along Route 66. Other atlas-makers have moved away from print versions, instead using the internet to present their alternative perspectives on place. One such set of cartographers is that of the website *Decolonial Atlas*. They use the atlas form as a way to flip history and politics on their heads. There, maps like "Alternative History: Europe as the New World" take what the viewer is used to seeing—the cartographic form—and shift its perspective to that of an imaginary world where Indigenous peoples have conquered Europeans, the latter's continent covered in Mayan hieroglyphs. Though untraditional in the sense that it is digitized, this atlas still uses the "big and important" code to infiltrate and subvert the official atlas form.

My approach uses inductive visualization and deep mapping (as an archaeological exercise) to create an alternative atlas. Using the "serious" form of the atlas, I focus in on one small, seemingly unimportant strip of urban space in order to show how it may or may not be a

place. In this case, simply creating an atlas of an alleyway is in itself alternative. However, my examination of affective data like narratives also takes a different approach to a regular atlas.

2.11 Conclusion

I have analyzed the various perceptions of alleyways and how they exist in urban life, and have underlined phenomenology as a theoretical framework for challenging non-place-ness. Memory-focused approaches and rescue geography rose up as critical ways of honouring existing place identities, while more creative, intervention-based approaches showed themselves as exciting ways to connect people's experiences with physical space. Finally, I presented deep mapping, inductive visualization and the atlas form as compelling ways to approach alleyways before interventions take place. Next, I dig deeper into this approach, presenting and discussing my methodological choices.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Exploring a new topic—alleyways—in deep mapping, and proposing the novel union of that approach with inductive visualization requires a methodological process open to exploration, revision, and expression. As such, I position my project within the emerging conversation on research-creation. While the term has undergone considerable examination and is defined rather differently by various institutions and scholars (Barrett & Bolt, 2010; Leavy, 2009), I use Chapman & Sawchuck's definition of it as the investigation of a topic that “could not be addressed without engaging in some form of creative practice, such as the production of a video, performance, film, sound work, blog, or multimedia text” (2012, p. 12). Commercial alleyways' lack of official history, as well as the types of data I have uncovered, make a creative process necessary to this project. One other major motivator for my engagement with research-creation as opposed to the more classical or technical approaches normally taken in geography and urban studies is its potential to reach multiple audiences and forms of dissemination (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012). The visual nature of my project means that it has the potential to reach my audience not only in physical, printed form, but also digitally as a webpage or on social media like Instagram.

In this chapter, with research-creation as a backdrop, I move into my data collection process, including a description of participant observation, historical analysis, and recruitment and interviewing of participants. Finally, I arrive at my map-making process using inductive visualization as a way to use data to dictate the design, content, and usability of maps.

3.1 Data Collection

The form of research-creation that I have elected to use is “research-for-creation” (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012). That is, according to the authors, “the gathering of material, ideas, concepts, collaborators, technologies, et cetera,” (p. 15) (which can include finding information on new practices and approaches) in order to create. I gathered data in the form of interviews, observations, and archival material in order to then move into map-making. What follows is a description of what I gathered and how.

3.1.1 Participant Observation. As the beginning of my “gathering” for creation, participant observation created a base from which I began to examine the alleyway. The Ville-Marie Borough—through the urban design firm it hired, Nippaysage—had already conducted some observation prior to the beginning of this study. The public document *Transformation des Ruelles* (Arrondissement de Ville-Marie, 2017) uses arrows and circles to present the circulation of pedestrians through the alleyway and its surrounding arteries, and the intersection of those lines. This information can aid design, but it leaves much to the imagination. While we know where people are going, we don’t know who they are, how they go there, or why. And what about those who stand still? Understanding the ways in which people engage with the alleyway, and the meaning that engagement may or may not have for their lives requires an ethnographic eye attuned to context, manner, and meaning.

As a starting point and contextualizing method, I opted to conduct participant observation over a period of six months, from May 16, 2017 to November 17, 2018. I observed for a total of 10.5 hours, with most observation taking place in July (when there is a lower number of students) and September (when the alley is full of students). My 22 observation sessions took anywhere between 10 minutes and one hour, and I sometimes took notes from a café overlooking the site. At other times, I sat, eating or drinking coffee (at times with a notebook) in the covered

smoking area in the alley. The frequency of my visits helped me see a diversity of users and uses at different times of day and night. While I originally intended to observe at night, an uncomfortable experience (during which I was harassed by a man drinking with a group on a bench next to mine) on a Sunday afternoon dissuaded me from entering it at another time when students were not present. My desire to spend time in the space taking observations greatly declined after this experience as well. Instead, I set my focus on recruiting and interviewing participants who I hoped would give context to and insight on the things I saw.

3.1.2 Oral History Interviewing. As a core ethnographic method and antithesis of classical map-making and planning practices, I saw oral-history interviewing as an opportunity to get a step deeper. In order to access unknown meaning, I needed to engage with the experiences of people's lives, and interviewing was the most intimate way to do just that.

Though I had originally intended to speak to 10 individuals, I found recruitment difficult in a transient, non-place. In order to find participants, I designed and pasted posters on campus and in neighbouring establishments, sent email blasts to department secretaries (particularly those departments surrounding the alley), and actively advertised my project through word-of-mouth. While I engaged in conversation with individuals from Concordia University and St. Jax Church (as well as one employee from McKibbin's Irish Pub), the other stakeholders immediately around the alley—Auberge L'Apéro, Mei Chinese Restaurant, Myriad Coffee, and McKibbin's as an establishment—did not want to participate. A language barrier may have played into this for some. Hence, my data does not include those perspectives. Of my six participants, I recruited two through posters, two by word-of-mouth, and two through email blasts. Two participants were male and all others female. All were between the ages of approximately 30 and 60. They were: Robbie, an undergraduate student; Nancy, a graduate

student; Marina and Niki, university employees; Jennifer, a recent graduate; and Geneviève, a church employee. I received written consent from all of these participants, some of whom requested their names be changed. While some participants were Francophone (and others bilingual), the interviews occurred in English. This may have influenced how one or more of them expressed themselves. The imbalance in gender and the heightened age demographic also certainly skew the image of the alleyway, and yet I underline that my research is the beginning of the story and not a complete or ultimate understanding of this space.

Upon making contact with participants and briefly explaining the purpose and scope of my research and the interviews, we arranged to meet. Though I originally intended to do all interviews on-site, this was not always possible because of weather and/or participant's time constraints. However, as my interviews went on, I came to realize that a combination of off-site and on-site interviewing was best for this project. Though on-site interviews allowed us to recreate the physical experience of their event and point out certain aspects of the space, the alley's coldness inhibited the comfortable retelling of an emotional experience: that was much better done in cafés and personal offices. Hence, as the project went on, I underlined the physical movement in the space less and less. This certainly impacted the connectedness to the space, and also created food for thought in terms of alley activation.

Every interview began with my saying, "Okay, so tell me what happened here (in the alleyway)." I engaged in a form of interviewing based in deep listening and intuitive question-asking aimed at getting to the heart of the story. Normally, the participant would tell their five to ten-minute story as they had, perhaps, prepared to prior to the interview. As they ended with a nervous "So yeah, that's what happened," I would take them back to the details of the story, asking questions about context ("Where were you working at the time?"), connection ("Had that

ever happened to you before?”), and more. As an interviewer (both in this project and others) I believe in a reciprocal relationship between question-asker and answer-giver. Because the interviewees were giving me their time, trust, and stories, I tried to give some of myself as well, offering personal asides about similar things that had happened to me. This made the conversation more even and also put me into a place of vulnerability that attuned me to what it was like to be on the other side. The most challenging aspect of the work was where and when to push for further information (particularly emotional), and when not to. Gently saying, “I don’t mean to pry or push, but I’m curious about _____. Do you feel comfortable telling me about that?” was the most fruitful and respectful way of getting through that hurdle. At the end of the interview process, I transcribed each interview and emailed it to each participant for comments and/or approval. Of those interviewed, all responded but one: Robbie, who in his interview told me “If I said it, you can publish it”. Over the coming months, I emailed the participants once or twice to update them on the project and thank them for their continued participation.

3.1.3 Historical Analysis. Through the interview process, I began to learn about the politics of the space and the buildings that surround it. Particularly, conversations with a church employee, hostel owner and shelter director uncovered the existence of an interesting political framework in the surrounding area—the Dumf family (owners of the empty lot and business on the corner of Mackay and Ste. Catherine streets) being the key actors. This family owns various properties in Montreal, and, according to some participants, does not put great emphasis on maintaining the cleanliness or safety of the area (the empty lot attached to the alleyway is full of refuse and drug paraphernalia). This family also owns the Mei Restaurant building, and has been trying to sell the lot for condo development for some time. The City has blocked this in an attempt to save the property for the creation of a park (Geneviève, personal communication,

August 8th, 2017). With this in mind, I embarked on a mission to learn as much as I could about the history of the Bishop/Mackay alleyway, or at least what surrounds it. Doing so meant that I would better understand the context of its current meaning and how that meaning may have developed over time.

In order to develop an understanding of the alleyway (hi)stories that are present yet invisible, I conducted historical research. Though I looked into the Indigenous history of the area, it was very challenging to find any specific information. Hence, the historical perspective I have gathered is, unfortunately, primarily colonial. The archives I looked into were: St. Jax Church, the McCord Museum, Concordia University, the City of Montreal, the Montreal Police, and BANQ (Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec). I also conducted internet research which led to historical findings from various websites, including McKibbin's Irish Pub. I then began to look at fire insurance maps through the BANQ digital archive. These maps showed the existence of private homes to the north of the alley, and the continuing presence of the church to the south. Through the years, the occupancy of the Mei Restaurant/L' Auberge Apéro building changed continuously—hair salon, insurance agency, etc.

With this backdrop, I began to consider who owns and has owned the surrounding buildings, and so moved forward with the Quebec Land Registry. While I knew that the church had existed since 1864, the timeline of the Mei Restaurant building and the buildings that existed prior to the creation of the J.W. McConnell Building were unclear. In order to elucidate this, I visited the Concordia Archives.

In April 2018, I visited the archives of St. Jax Church. There, I was able to file through various materials—architectural drawings from the '70s, photographs from 2007, and more. Particularly useful to me were the 100-year anniversary documents—“The History of St. James

the Apostle Anglican Church” (St. Jax Anglican Church Archives, 1964) and others. There, I obtained key points of information about the various phases of construction the church went through since its conception, as well as other interesting tidbits, like its nickname, *St. Crickets of the Field*. The congregation called it this, I read, because of the cricket field that lay directly to the north. That field was also the space where the Victoria Rifle Regiment trained. Curious about the relationship between that field, the church and the surrounding area, I went to the McCord Museum to find out more about the Victoria Rifle. At the McCord archives, I was able to look through scrapbooks, photographs, military magazines and the like to begin to create a cohesive story of who the Victoria Rifle regiment were, and in particular what their relationship to the field (and hence, alleyway) was. From my interview with a church staff member, I received information that the alleyway had been the scene of a murder—a beating leading to death—just two years prior. With this knowledge in mind, I approached the Montreal Police with an “Access to Information Request” so as to better understand the incident and try to find further accounts of incidents in the alleyway. I wanted to understand just how “dangerous” it really was, but unfortunately, my request was not approved. Yet, the historical information I was able to obtain created both a rich socio-political background for the stories I would obtain through interviewing, and contributed greatly to how I understood them for map-making.

3.2 Map-Making Creation

With the end of my data collection came my jump into the “creation” part of research-creation. Chapman & Sawchuk (2012) underline that

“the role of intuition and “feeling” presents itself as one of the strongest reasons why those who pursue research-creation are committed to the methods they promote, as it is

only through working theoretically and artistically, or creatively, with their research topics that they become invested and engaged in a process that is right for them,” (p. 12).

Intuition was a large part of my movement from data to maps. In Fall 2018, I began to reflect on my interview experiences, transcripts, observation notes, and the historical data I had gathered (I tried to visit the alley whenever it was convenient so that I could retain a connection to it as a physical space, but that was often challenging as fall moved to winter). From this mess of information, I allowed myself to explore images—rats, smoke—themes—villains, darkness—and media—ink, watercolour, Photoshop—that resonated (Appendix B). Early on, I wasn’t sure how to make sense of some of the longer interviews, like Nancy’s and Robbie’s (at five and 13 single-spaced pages each). Both stories contained multiple sub-stories, locations that extended beyond the alleyway, and rich storytelling. I wanted to respect their generosity of spirit and the stories they shared with me while staying focused on Bishop/Mackay. When I was examining personal narratives, I started with my experience of speaking with the person: were they happy, agitated, or emotional? Where did they get quiet, and where did they get excited? *What is the core story here?* I asked myself. My focus was on the meaning their story had for them, and I used not only the story, but the actual person to inform how I designed my map. Then, I dissected their narrative, looking for sub-stories and details that stood out. From there, I intuited meaning from how they told the story. This was similar to Knowles, Westerveld & Strom’s question, “How do survivors speak of their experiences of place?” (2015, p. 247) My process involved 1) finding key themes and 2) designing maps, but this process went back and forth in the time that it took me to develop the six maps (appx. one year).

On Oct. 4th, 2018, I was lucky enough to have my research as the topic of a mapping workshop led by Concordia's Geomedia Lab and visiting literary scholar and creative cartographer Barbara Piatti. In the workshop, participants took my early map themes (delivered in a table) and brainstormed ideas of how to visualize them. The workshop was very helpful. From there, I spent the next year exploring, trying things, and developing maps. While I developed six, many other ideas fell by the way side as I determined key themes and how to visualize them. On the theme of rats, I drew the creatures in watercolour, paint, pencil and pen before reaching an image I felt represented the story. I explain the majority of my decision making around the maps that *did* make it in Chapter 4, the atlas itself.

While I would have liked to use more participatory means of mapping, my own newness to the field and immersion in the research-creation process meant that it took a long time for me to have a grasp of each map. Hence, the participant feedback process occurred at the end of my map-making, when I sent each person the map or maps that their data was in. Three of the participants responded, all with positive remarks.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I've examined my use of research-creation, participant observation, oral history interviewing, and archival work to gather data on the Bishop/Mackay alleyway. Those methods were crucial in developing a vision of the space that extended from the past into the present. They also allowed me to dig into the space vertically, as Les Roberts says, by beginning with more surface-level or obvious notes and then moving into experiences and meaning through interviewing. Finally, my explorations through map-making provided a means through which to sift all of this data, and consider it spatially as well as visually. The product of my gathering and

exploration is my Alley Atlas. In the following chapter, I present the atlas, including six maps and descriptions for each. Every map follows a theme and stems from different data I gathered. The design of each map arose inductively.

ALLEY

ATLAS

Introduction

At first glance, Bishop/Mackay is like any other alleyway—filthy, monotonous, and uncomfortable at night. Apart from the Ville-Marie Borough’s (as of yet unrealized) plan to “activate” it, it doesn’t seem to hold any real value. In this atlas, I call into question this taken-for-grantedness, this assumption that there’s nothing to see. I wanted to go deeper, to delve into the assumed everydayness of the smokers, and the deliveries, and the vomit-stained pavement. I wanted to, for a while, give it the kind of focus usually reserved for important places like cathedrals, music halls, and manicured parks. Through six maps, I take a look at the Bishop/Mackay alleyway in all its monotony and exception, winding my way through personal narratives, things I witnessed, and what I read in the history books.

History

An understanding of Bishop/Mackay is not complete without first understanding where this alleyway—and most all alleyways in the area—came from. First off, I want to say that this atlas does not, unfortunately, delve into the Indigenous history of the area. However, it is important to acknowledge that:

Bishop/Mackay is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien’kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples.

Colonial History

The earliest record of the space after colonization comes in 1842 when Charles Phillips owned the land the alley now lies on. It was used as “a 32-acre farm which in 1842 produced 500 bushels of barley, 40 bushels of Indian corn, and 1000 potatoes, as well as being home to 3 cows, 4 horses, and 5 hogs”³. At that time, many local farms made use of old French streets for access to their lands. Because the lands went north-south, the “alleys” did, too.⁴ The raising of livestock and crops continued in the area until the 1850s, when the Phillips family rented it to the cricket club.⁵ With many “fine young men” taking part in the game, this was no doubt a noble use for the land. It became even nobler after 1861, when the American Civil War threatened to spill over onto this side of the border.

That year, Americans attacked a British ship (the RMS Trent) near Cuba, taking two officers hostage. The event sparked panic in the British, and they immediately sent word for troops to prepare themselves. The Montreal cricketers, hearing the call, created the Victoria Rifle Volunteer Regiment in the cricket field that is now, in part, our alley.⁶ When the threat died down and it became obvious the U.S. would not attack, the regiment moved on to help the British in various international crises.

³ Metcalfe, 1978, p. 220

⁴ 375 Alive, 2015

⁵ Metcalfe, 1978, p. 157

⁶ St. James the Apostle Anglican Church, 1964

It wasn't until 1864, though, that the alley really became what it is today. That's the year that the St. James the Apostle Anglican Church (now known as St. Jax) was built, right here where it stands today. Yet, it was only in the 1880s that other buildings began to surround it. That's when the Phillips family gave their lands surrounding the church up for the private development of terraced houses. The development was part of the first Montreal planning committee's (many members were rich land owners themselves) initiative to rid the area of St. Antoine Ward of the poor and less desirable. Instead, they initiated the building of wealthy homes.⁷

One such home was the London House, which prominent architect Robert Findlay designed. At 1426 Bishop St. (today's McKibbin's Pub), the home housed a bright couple: Octavia Grace Ritchie and her husband, Frank Richardson England, a surgeon. Ms. Ritchie is one of the earlier characters in Quebec's feminist history: the first valedictorian of a class of women at McGill University and the first woman in the province to be accepted into and graduate from medical school at Bishop's⁸. Originally refused from McGill's medical school on the basis of gender, she fought for suffrage, became assistant gynecologist at Bishop's Hospital, and was a staunch advocate for women's rights.⁹

How might have Ms. Ritchie used the alleyway in the 1800s? How might have the St. James Literary Society, a gathering of intellectuals not based on race or religion, used the alley? They have met regularly for the last 122 years in the church's basement—the one with windows looking onto our backstreet.

These are questions we may never get the answers to, but they are a great place to begin thinking about how everyday people's experiences can tell us more about places than the capital "H" History we know so well. We may never know the name of the farmer who used the alley to move from plot to plot. We may never know which other warriors of gender equality may have walked through it to meet Ms. Ritchie, or the things those early intellectuals witnessed from the safety of their underground meeting place. But we can start looking at people's stories today. We can start building an understanding of the alleyway by piecing together people's personal experiences, activities, and insights. In the maps that follow, I present these contemporary histories, attempting to tell the alley's story as genuinely as I can.

⁷ MacLeod, 1961

⁸ Gillett, 1981

⁹ Gillett, 1981

Passing Through

What's in a shortcut? Hurry. Responsibilities. Deadlines. Absentmindedness. Habit. As the first look at the Bishop/Mackay alleyway, *Passing Through* stays on the surface—it seems to be superficial. In fact, it ignores the alley—as a set of walls—all together. This map looks at the space in the way most passers-by see it: as a short-cut route. Putting aside the walls, the history, the lingering, and the stories, this map presents all of the people I saw use the alley as a short cut route. Yet, it's a critical place to start because it sets the scene for the deeper perspectives that follow.

For the shortcutters, the alleyway is the shortest path from point A to point B. So, its real value in this situation is as a means to an end. The map, then, wouldn't be complete without a focus on those origins. Nearby, we see a list of places people may be going to or coming from. The map invites the viewer to imagine the people passing, their needs and desires. Was a young mother cutting through from the library to the metro to pick up her child from daycare? Was a student cutting from Mackay to Bishop to have a couple pints at McKibbin's? Maybe that one line was a homeless man, doing his daily route looking for spare change.

While pedestrians and cyclists have varying reasons for cutting through the space, their vehicular counterparts monopolize it. The shortcutting by people in cars is symbolized by the colours red and pink in the map. Those shortcutters, going either East or West, take a great deal of space and often drive speedily. Dominating the alley, people in cars solidify the existence of Bishop/Mackay for vehicular use. This map also serves as evidence to the inequality in spatial ownership between pedestrians and cars.

CAFE MYRIAD

MACKAY ST.

RESTAURANT

PARKING

LIBRARY
TIM HORTON'S

PARKING
SMOKING AREA

PASSING THROUGH

MCKIBBIN'S
PUB

BISHOP ST.

Figure 4. Just Passing Through [Map].

Alley Usage

Any analysis of a space begins with a basic question: What happens here? And so, I entered my research on the Bishop/Mackay alleyway by simply observing the people who use it. At times, I sat in the neighbouring Café Myriad, taking notes in my journal while I sipped on a latté or nibbled chomped on a *croissant aux amandes*. On other occasions, I ventured into the alley's smoking area and jotted things down on my phone, pretending to text so the smokers wouldn't catch on to what I was doing (though I think some did anyways). Needless to say, evading second-hand smoke was a big part of my work those few first months—from July to November, I hung around the alleyway three hours a week on average.

My assumptions aside, I wanted to understand what kind of activities really happen in the space. Smoking was an overwhelming part of what I observed (and so I delve into it in a separate map of its own) and what I expected to observe, but other things surprised me: the casual way students caught up on readings before rushing off to class, how working groups gathered there to plan events and exchange ideas, and how a homeless woman read her newspaper in the tiny green space, two feet by two feet large, at the southeast end of the alley.

Then there were the uses I hadn't expected: the man not-so-quietly sobbing on a bench in the smoking area, the two students spray-painting T-shirts for Frosh Week (I asked them why they'd chosen to do it there and they told me they'd been kicked off every other outdoor space on campus), and the group of guys watching the much-hyped McGregor vs. Mayweather boxing match, complete with colour commentary. It quickly became clear to me that yes, this was just any old commercial alleyway, but there was something more to it than meets the eye: the alley also nourished activities and behaviours that were harder to take part in anywhere else.

I decided to present the basic uses of the alleyway by criss-crossing the official architectural narrative of the space—the way that the City and designers might view it—with the more fluid activities that take place there. To create this, I hand-drew a clean, three-dimensional architectural drawing of the space in black ink, outlining the building sizes and major sections of the space. Over this, I blotted various watercolours, which symbolize the uses that took place there. Each blot identifies one person, and their location is congruent with the location of the uses. However, people don't stand still, so the bleeding of the watercolour mimics the movement of the users. As one use (colour) overlaps the other, they create new colours and shapes just as the blending of various uses creates a new ambiance, a new identity for the space. This ambiance is ever-changing, and so this map is simply a snapshot of what I observed in those few months, blended together.

ALLEY USAGE

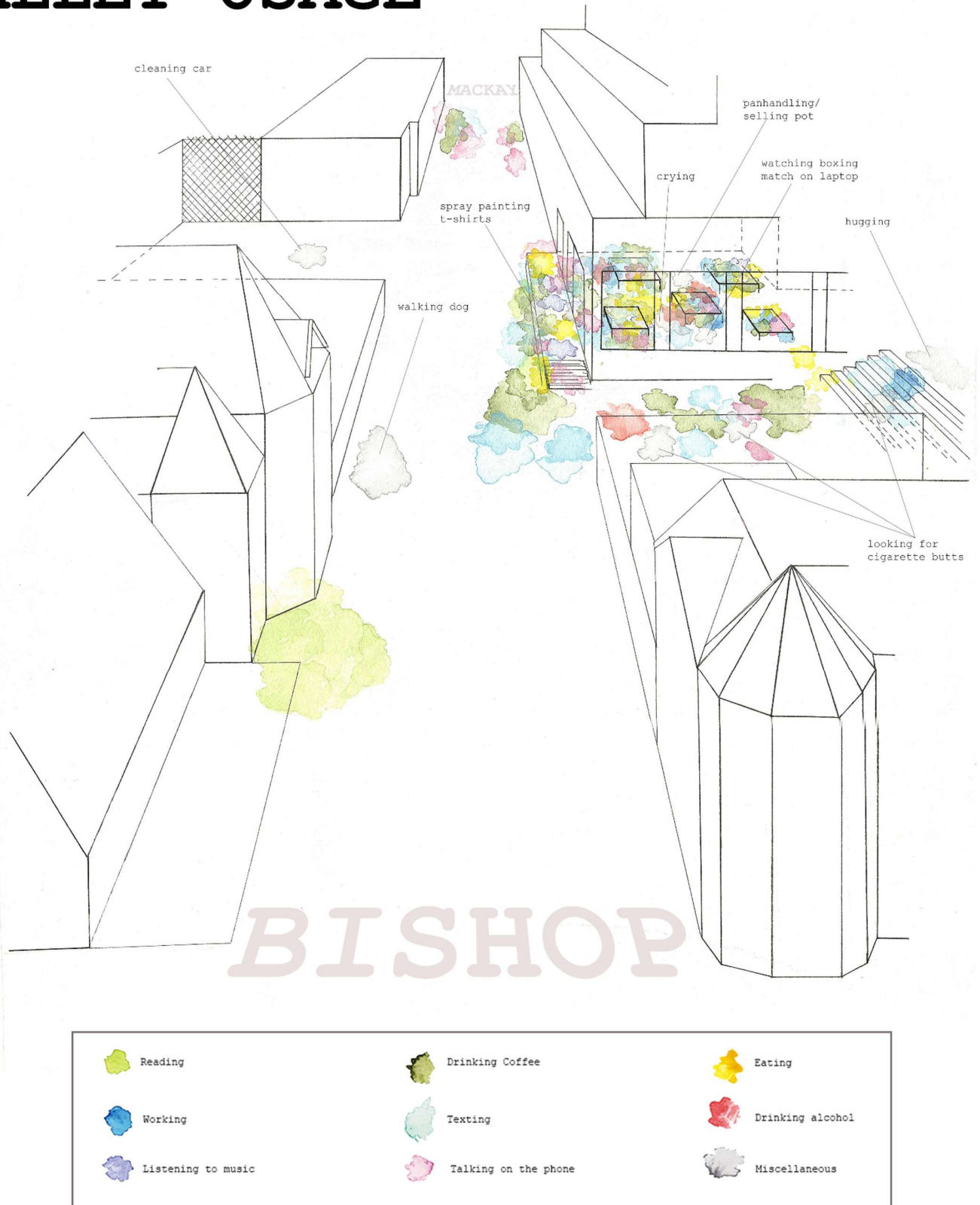


Figure 5. Alley Usage [Map].

Not a Villain Alone: Smoking & Chatting

By far, the alley's largest use is for smoking. Inhaling the toxic fumes, I sat in the covered smoking area watching people light up, ask one another for rolling papers or lighters, and connect over a shared (bad) habit. Though smoking is usually seen as negative, dirty, unhealthy and irresponsible, in the alleyway, it is a point of connection. One participant told me:

I went outside and I couldn't believe that in such a huge building there was not a smoking section, right. I mean, I can't be the only person in this whole building that actually still does such a *terrible* thing. At least here, I'm not a villain alone.

-Niki

All of the people I interviewed about smoking highlighted one thing: the alley is their refuge. A refuge from their work, their exams, their loneliness. By entering this dirty, godforsaken place, they actually received the gift of community. Another participant, a former student said:

Over here, this whole smoking area, we used to come here when we were freezing. We used to come out to smoke because that's the fan from the metro, so it's warmer. And also because it's got the walls it's also less windy, so it became known as the smoking area.

-Marina

So, the smoking area's physical structure added to its notoriety as a place for smokers to relax and connect. She continues:

I was coming a lot by myself but sometimes with a friend. We'd go study at the library and take a cigarette break. We'd go get a coffee at Timmy's, have a cigarette. The benches used to be cleaner, but they were always there, and you could just sit down, enjoy your coffee. In the summer it's also quiet. It's a nice, chill space, but I'd see people Friday nights, Saturday nights, because people are studying so late, right? The library is open 24/7.

-Marina

In *Not a Villain Alone*, I pictured the alley—the same one as the Usage map—as dark—much darker than the rest of the area. This darkness is symbolic of the way smokers are brushed away into the recesses of the city's fabric. Yet, this darkness is enclosed in a circle of protection, showing its symbolism as a place of refuge. On it, ghostly white beings wiggle in and out of one another's spaces, reminiscent of the watercolour splotches in "Alley Usage". These are the smokers, symbolized by the puffs of white coming out of their cigarettes. Some of them are filled in with pink—the colour of community, of shared insights, updates on the weekend, and lighthearted debate. These filled-in smokers are in conversation with others around them. In front, Niki talks about the St. Patrick's day parade and a little dog wearing a Canadiens jersey. They, too, are made of smoke. They, too, connect this group of loosely affiliated "villains".

NOT A VILLAIN ALONE: SMOKING & CHATTING

That's one thing about people that have terrible habits: they're also very social. And we weren't there because of our jobs, we were there because of—okay, our addiction—but also because we wanted to take a break and relax and chat. Being a smoker is very much about being in kind of dumb places. They put us in these little spots, but what happens is that you're like a band of really great laugh because one year it was the St. Patrick's we'd all have major conversations about language and stuff. One of the sweetest things that happened was during the playoffs—I'm not a hockey fan—but the Canadians had gone all the way to the finals, so there's a lot of hockey fans. So everybody was talking about hockey and they got their jerseys, and then this homeless person who we'll often see down on Ste. Catherine comes down the back way and he's got his dog who's wearing his jersey and the dog does tricks, and it was really nice. He wasn't asking for money which was kind of nice, and—it was really fun. It was a fun moment. I think that's what we often—the smokers—would say: people can laugh at us because we're freezing our asses off, but they don't have these moments.



brothers after. And we always have a we're freezing our butts off! One Day Parade. It was too English so and stuff. One of the sweetest

Figure 6. Not a Villain Alone: Smoking and Chatting [Map].

A Note on Night

When I first started taking notes in the alleyway, nighttime was a big focus. I saw the vomit stains and beer cans strewn through the space in the mornings and thought, “I’ve got to see this in action!” And so, I quickly started venturing into the space at night, but soon found it much darker and much more uncomfortable than I’d originally thought it would be (I thought about bringing someone along, but walking through a dark alleyway after midnight is not everyone’s idea of a good time). I found myself scurrying through it quickly, noting people smoking or crossing the main space, before I quickly grabbed the metro home. I didn’t look in nooks and crannies; I didn’t stop to look in the dark areas like the restaurant parking lot. *Maybe I’ll focus on daytime first*, I thought.

But then, one sunny Sunday afternoon, with the space empty of students and workers, I sat down on a bench in the smoking area to take notes, my then-partner sitting on a ledge nearby. As I journaled, two men approached me, one of them making lewd comments, and insisting to know what I was writing. “I’m just journaling”, I told him. “You’re like a princess”, he told me, amongst other things. Finally, as my partner came over, he moved to another bench, and started drinking beer with three inebriated men, only to return again and hassle me more, even with my partner now beside me. I decided after that experience that I wasn’t so into hanging in the alley when business hours were over—it wasn’t worth the stress.

And so, A Note on Night is (mostly) not an observation map. It is map of second-hand accounts—stories people told me about their own experiences of night. Hence, it’s also coloured by my own decision to avoid it, and that decision highlights the difficulty of “off-hours”, including night. The lack of daylight may create a sense of security for those people who are routinely kept out of public space: drug users, the homeless, and others—but makes it unsafe for others, namely women. Without “eyes on the street” (Jane Jacob’s oft-repeated phrase) during off-hours, the lane can be uncomfortable.

The dangerousness of alleyways has long been documented. Yet, in my interviews I discovered that this particular alleyway both does and doesn’t live up to that stereotype. It has the potential to be dangerous (and at times is), but it also has the potential to be many other things: Marina told me, “I’ve never felt unsafe crossing alleys or whatever. I’ve never heard of someone being attacked because they went through an alley. I think that’s a misconception from American films”. Yet, Geneviève, explained:

I’m here mostly in the day; I don’t come here often at night—it’s a bit spooky. It’s like a dark, dark space where there’s someone hiding. You really feel that the vibe is very different. Around 11 at night, 2 or 3 AM, I would not want to be in this place. I even had workers who would work late at night and I would tell them, “Be careful here”—and they’re guys. So if I said, “Oh yes, I’m gonna have a group of little girls [in the church]” I’d want that to be done before 9pm.

This variety of experiences and perceptions is what I wanted to present in A Note on Night. Beginning with a crosshatching technique, I mapped out the lighter and darker areas of the alleyway (I should say here that when I returned to the alley at night to map this a year later, I found it much brighter than I had at the start of my research: perception is everything). I chose cross-hatching both for its ability to show dark and light, as well as for its more metaphorical “dark” qualities as a technique favoured in the dark ages. Over this cross hatch, I drew icons representing the various stories people had told me. Each is labeled with a letter that corresponds to the interview excerpt on the right, which tells the story in more detail. The map mimics a detective’s report, retaining a level of darkness whether it presents a murder or a friendly raccoon named Clive.

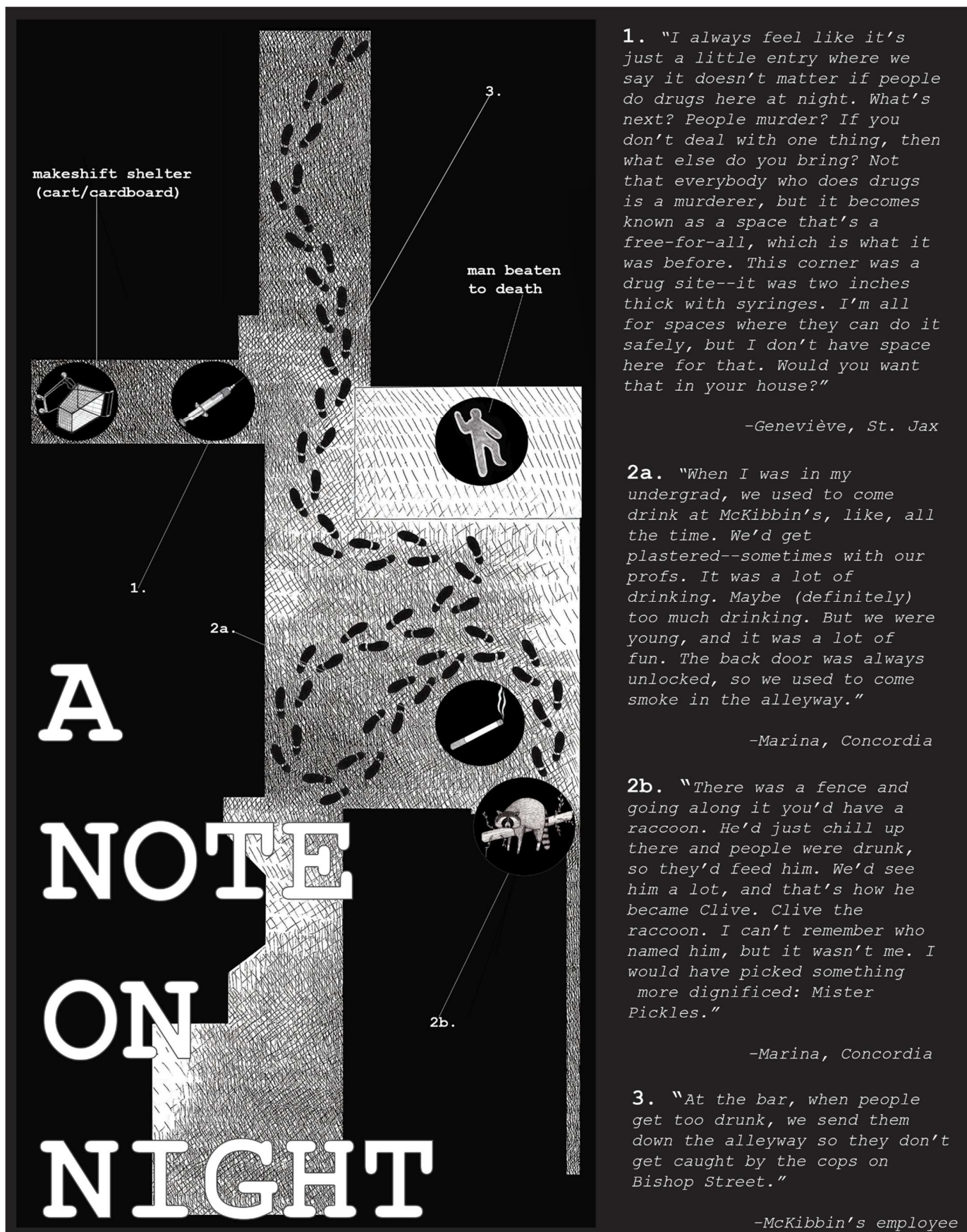


Figure 7. A Note on Night [Map].

Everything Deserves Respect

It's super uncomfortable, and it can be upsetting, but the rat, like death, has the right to be here and be respected. I'm just trying to grapple with that discomfort and pay respect at the same time. It's definitely a process; I'm not finished with it. -Nancy

A discomfort with death is common to all of us—at least in the West. Even if the steady deaths of pets and loved ones has acclimatized us to life's end, we can remember a time when we weren't so accepting. That moment, as children, when we first become aware of what death is and how sudden it can be one of life's scariest. Then, as we grow older, we make jokes about ageing "I'm almost dead!" or tripping over the cracks in the concrete "I nearly died!" But what do we really mean when we say *death*?

In *Everything Deserves Respect*, Nancy wrestles with a deep relationship to death and the animals that connect her to it—rats and mice. Everything begins—as we learn later in the stories that follow—in Bishop/Mackay, where she tries to save a dying rat.

Everything Deserves Respect is not a normal map. It goes underground, using the rat's world – the sewer—to tell the story of how Nancy connects and disconnects from death. Starting at Bishop/Mackay, we move through the various places (Toronto, Los Angeles, her dreams, Montreal) she encountered rats or mice in the locations, which I pictured as containers. In each container, we find the individual animals she saw, and the deaths that followed. Using a traditional symbol of death--the candle—and one of the many flowers associated with death—marigolds—I locate the passings as floating in the waters of her psyche.

Though this map uses the symbolism of a rat's world to go underground, its setting also represents the suppression of death both in Nancy's mind and in our collective (un)conscious. Living beneath her everyday interactions, these events nonetheless impact her experiences. The map can also be read chronologically, with her first rat sighting at the top, and the last (the mouse she caught in a live trap and freed) at the bottom. That last animal approaching the crack in the container is the one that frees her of this association, this pattern of connecting rats and mice with death. Perhaps this is where death frees her, permitting her to live above ground, the waters of her experiences seeping into the earth to be absorbed, and perhaps sprouting above.

In this map, I used ink and digital colouring to create an underground world for the alley. The rats, in white, are pure beings, unsullied by the waters. As we move past the map, we come to the stories associated with each set of rats and each location. Using a prayer card motif, I picture the rats and mice as creatures to revere. I borrow from the Catholic tradition, in which families make prayer cards of their deceased loved ones, complete with a prayer, to present Nancy's stories. In these cards, her narratives are the prayers, honouring each group of rats as symbols of death.

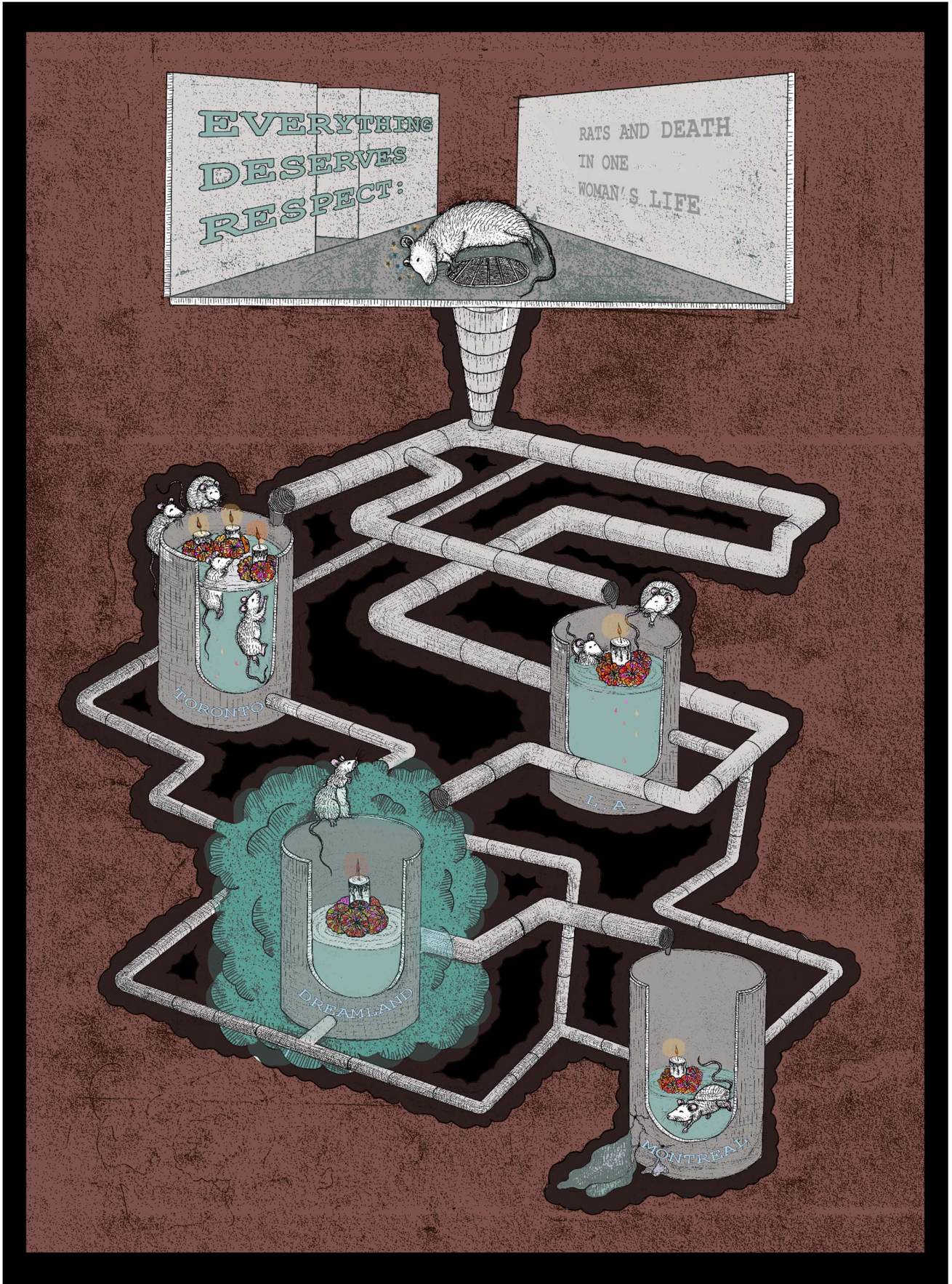
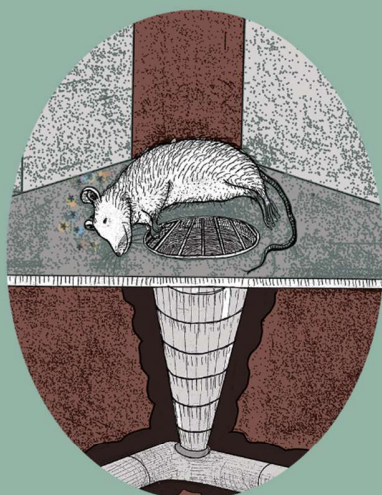


Figure 8. *Everything Deserves Respect: Rats and Death in One Woman's Life* [Map].



*The Dazed Rat of
Bishop/Mackay*

It had been raining, and the pavement was wet. I was cutting through from the EV building to the Library building—I always cut through the alleyway—and that day there were a number of students there. As I was walking up, I saw that there was an animal lying in the middle of the alleyway. It was injured or a bit confused, and moving really slowly. Maybe it had been hit by a car because it was very dazed, but it wasn't bleeding or anything. I do definitely know what rats look like and I have seen them numerous times since then, but I think this might have been my first encounter with one. It was big and its tail was a rat's tail, obviously, but I was like "Is this a rat? Is it a rat? I'm not sure." A lot of people were of course like, "Ew, gross!" and being really negative and aggressive towards it, so as a big animal person I instantly got crazy enraged and decided to stand protect the rat. Everything

deserves a little bit of respect, you know? If it's hurt, give it space, stop fucking around, don't be rude to it. If you were hurt and injured, would you want assholes yelling at you? I know it's a rat and we're not all like "Yay, let's kiss the rat!" but it was still a life that I didn't want suffering. I wanted to get it out of the middle of the alleyway, so I asked the man who worked at the Chinese restaurant and who was sitting and smoking on the stoop if I could use the tin he was using as an ashtray to put the rat into. Clearly there was a language barrier between me and the gentleman, but he very nonchalantly went in and got a box. He gave it to me and sort of placed it with me and helped me, and I then bumped the rat a little bit on the bum and it actually walked into the box very easily on its own. Then another student who was walking by gave me the sub he was eating to give to the rat. There's a little tree there, and I put the box facing the tree so that if it was gonna die at least it had some privacy (and it also had a sandwich), and I left. I don't know why that story has always stayed with me. Rats actually often appear in my life when bad news is about to come, but I'm like, Well, bad news also deserves respect, I guess. You can't ignore it, really. I don't remember what was happening in my life around that time and I can't remember if something bad news-ish happened after, but I have noticed since. I don't know if it's one of those coincidences and I don't mean to blame it on the rat, but I even thought about this before telling the story: By retelling it, am I calling on some bad news? Maybe I'm just letting it go.

Figure 9. *The Dazed Rat of Bishop/Mackay* [Story card].



*The Rats & Mice of the
Toronto Infestation*

Toronto equaled a lot of facing death for me. A lot of things [happened] when I lived in that apartment. My aunt had passed away in August, and from then to about November I had a really rough period just processing her death. I was actually with her when she died, and that was my first experience being with a loved one when they passed. I sort of felt like the death had touched me, and I was trying to get it out of me, and I was having such crazy dreams. Really it was just posttraumatic stress—it acts the same way. And when I went to the doctor about it they were like “It’s really normal to be working through trauma after you witness somebody die.” and I was like “Oh, thanks, that helps a lot, actually!” It was such a dark, creepy time though, and for some reason, I was seeing a lot of rats. I lived on a semi-busy street and I was just confronted with death a bit more for some reason during those three-four years. Like, a lot.

One time a little baby raccoon was hit outside my front door and laid dead in the street for so long someone put leaves on it. We had to call animal control so many times to come get it. Rats appeared in front of that apartment, and right around that time someone was murdered in a park close to my house, and the murderer was found across the street from me. My place became infested with mice. I would be lying in bed, like, feeling creepy, and I would see a mouse in my closet making eye contact with me and I was like, “Get the fuck out! Leave!” I think they were living in the wall behind my bed because I could hear them. I was in such a bad mental health state and unfortunately they were there, too, manifesting. It was really a big transition. So yeah, I kind of associate dumb mice with my issues, too. Then, right after my aunt died, like within two months, my cousin on the same side of the family overdosed. Hers was super by accident; she wasn’t even a drug addict or anything. She was just doing ecstasy and she died. It was just such a tragic mistake, you know? So that happened, and then five days later my landlord was like, “I’m so sorry, I have to ask you to leave,” because her mom was coming back and needed to live there. Of course it was stressful, but at the same time, it was a blessing in disguise. I needed that change.

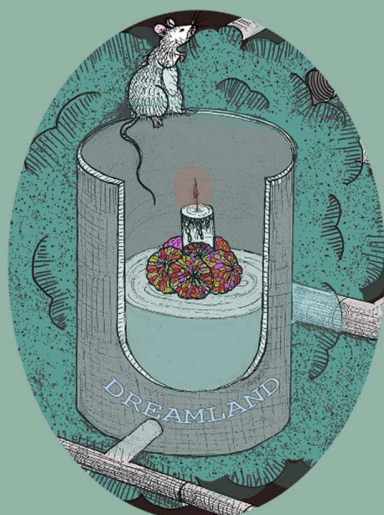
Figure 10. *The Rats and Death of the Toronto Infestation* [Story card].



*The Bush Rats of
Los Angeles*

"I was in L.A. this past winter for research, and my partner was visiting me. We had gone to the museum and we were walking to the metro after, and there was a rustling in the bush, and I looked over and I was like, "Oh my god, there's two rats in there!" And then I was like Uh-oh, rats. I have this weird thing with mice and rats: automatically I'll think they're cute, but I also know that they're often the bearers of bad news. It was the next day or the day after that his family called him to tell him that his grandma had passed. Even when the phone rang, I had a feeling. And I didn't bring up the rats again, [I didn't tell him], "That's why we saw the rats!" but in my head I was like Oh, that's why we saw the rats."

Figure 11. The Bush Rats of Los Angeles [Story card].



The Rat of Dreams

I dream about them sometimes. I had moved back to Montreal with my cat who at the time was 18, and I knew that her end of life was coming. It was this weird time; I was having such crazy dreams during this time. The most fucked up dream I ever had was that we had moved back to Montreal, but we were in a house that was like near a beach and shit, and my cat, she was outside on the porch and I was inside. Then a big rat came and was dividing us, and we literally had a stare down, me and the rat, and I was like "You are not fucking coming in!" and I was literally using my death powers, like "Get the fuck out!" So it was like a superhero dream, you know, where you have superpowers. Anyways, I won and I pretty much used all my energy to not let it come in the house, and then it left so that the cat could come in. Because my relationship with death was so fraught with fear and anxiety and everything like that, I did not want that for my

cat. I wanted it to be literally the most joyous, respectful, full of dignity, like, life celebration. I think that's what that dream was about. Like, no, death doesn't have to be dark and scary; it can also be a celebration. So leading up to her death, obviously I was full of anxiety—I lived with her for 18 years—but it was a lot different, my relationship with her passing than, say, my family members. But I think, also, she was ready to go.

Figure 12. The Rat of Dreams [Story card].



The Free Rat of Montreal

Last September I saw a mouse in my apartment here, and I was like "No!" I saw it in my kitchen, and the next morning I got news that my best friend's mom had passed. I was like "Oh god!", so I kind of feel this way about mice. My landlord in my apartment now, she lives downstairs, and so she brought up an electric mouse trap. I know mice are super common here, but I've never had them because I've always had cats. Then literally during the debates between Hillary and Trump, like right when Trump started speaking—I was listening to it on the radio—I heard a mouse die, like literally scream as Trump was speaking. I was in my bed, terrified. It was so upsetting for me. I went to sleep that night and called my landlord the next morning and was like "Can you come upstairs? I think a mouse died and I can't do it myself." And she did and I was like, "You need

to take that away, I can't do it myself." I really could not stand the sound of the mouse dying. So after that I got a live trap and I caught another one and released it outside, and I literally screamed with joy. It was so much more exciting to see the little mouse run outside. I don't even care if it came right back in. I came back from L.A. last April and I saw another one, and I was like Oh shit, so I set up the trap and it came in, and I literally yelled in its face "You cannot be here!" I haven't seen one since.

Figure 13. *The Free Rat of Montreal* [Story card].

Alley Talk

“When I was growing up, I was a juvenile delinquent. I guess I’ve always felt comfortable in alleyways.”

-Robbie

The spaces we find ourselves in make us. They influence who we are, how we carry ourselves, and the choices we make. When we walk into a fancy restaurant, our movements are tighter, perhaps our gait more precise, our posture more upright. In a hole-in-the-wall pub, we might loosen our shoulders, walk wider, sit with our legs spread. The spaces we find ourselves in make us.

In *Alley Talk*, Robbie takes us through the alleyways of his life, and how they’ve made him who he is today. This story is about being a criminal, but it’s also about being a writer, an academic, and a human struggling with inner demons. From being a small-time thief off Sherbrooke in Notre-Dame-de-Grace, to selling heroin and running from the cops off Bishop, to meeting his mentor off Crescent, the experiences Robbie has had have been molded by the alleyways he’s spent his time in. When we get to Bishop/Mackay, though, all of those experiences come back to him, now a student of philosophy. As he wrestles with his past and the instincts it has created, he exists in two worlds—the front side and the back.

I’m very aware of it and I work really hard to play against type, because people will make assumptions seeing me, like “Oh, that guy is this.” And in fact I use it the other way, too. I was telling someone, if you have to go to court, your best bet is a sweater vest. A sweater vest is “I’m here, I’m innocent.” The more you look like that, the better chance you have in court, and just in life, I think.

Robbie’s focus on “playing against type” led the design of this map. I wanted to see how taboo topics could be presented in a fun, cute way. Using an 80s (his heyday) aesthetic, I mimicked the cartoonish style of a tourist map, which usually highlights key landmarks. In this case, it’s the alleys that are in focus. Speech bubbles burst out of the map to show what happened there—a face, a bloody hammer, a baggie of coke, a fist. This map flips the script. Rather than going with the theme of the stories, I mask them in pretty, feminine colours. What follows are five individual narratives connecting back to Robbie’s speech bubbles.

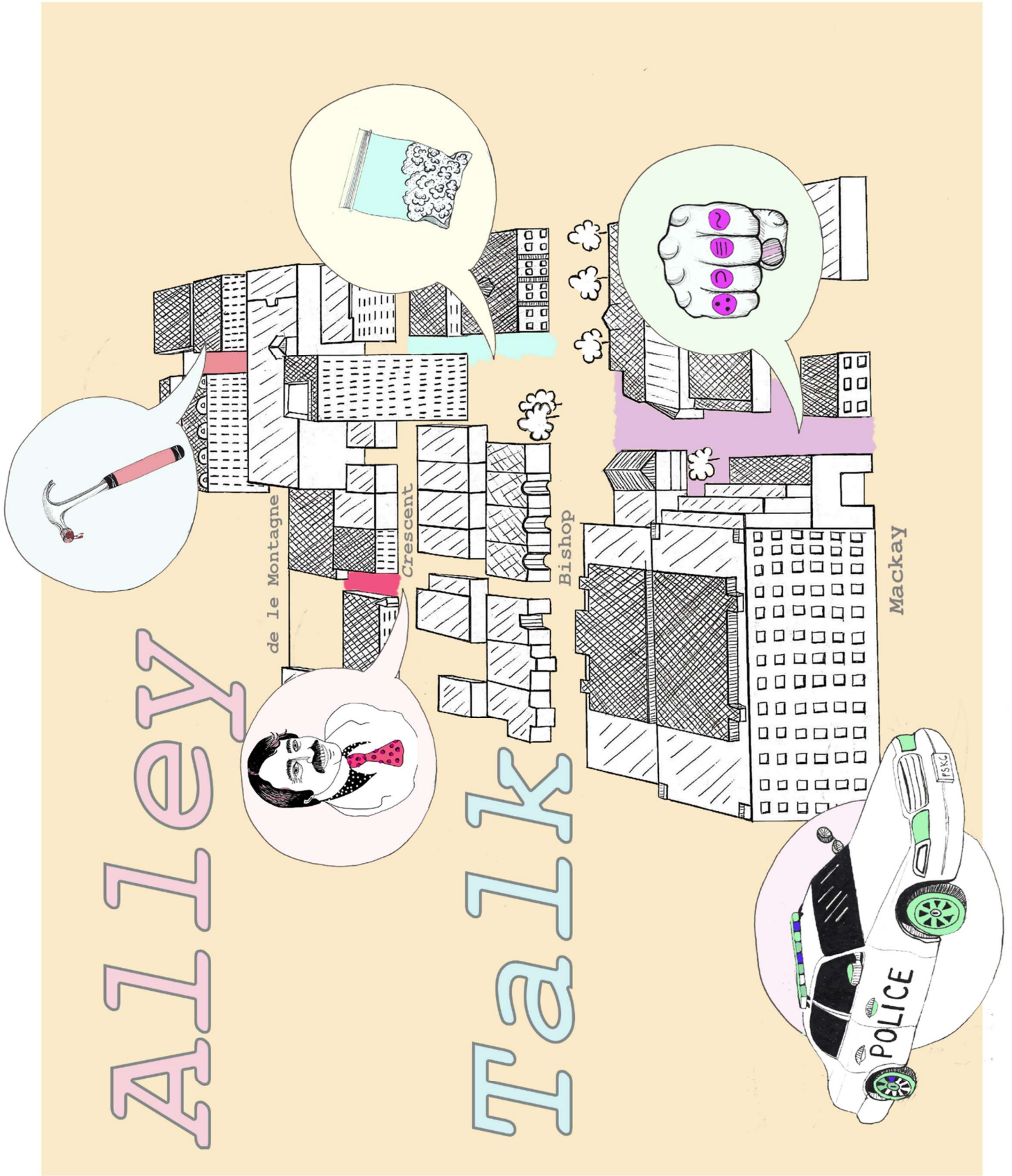
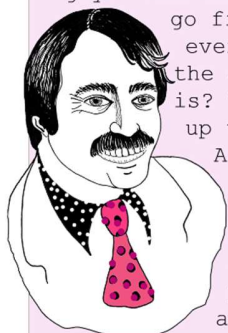


Figure 14. Alley Talk [Map].

So the guy who started me writing is this guy Nick Auf der Maur. He was this Montreal guy, and he was a city councilman and a newspaper columnist—a really interesting character in the history of Montreal. I met Nick in a bar once, and he thought I was smart, and I was very curious about writing for newspapers, so he said “Well, call this guy.” And then I had a whole career in writing for show business because of him. We would all go from this bar to that bar to that bar, you know, it was kind of a scene, and everybody knew everybody. That’s what we’d do every night, and sometimes you’d pass the alleyways. If you ever go just off Crescent—you know where the Winston Churchill is? There’s an alley that goes in between that and the old Thursday’s, and if you look up there’s a sign that says Ruelle Nick Auf der Mar, literally Nick Auf der Maur Alley. They wanted to name something after Nick, but he was really against the renaming of streets: he felt that it put too much strain on business owners. He wouldn’t have wanted a street named after him, so they named an alley after him instead. What really clinched the decision is that one night Nick was in that alleyway, and he decided he had to piss, and so he whipped it out, and he started peeing on the wall. The police pulled up and said “Hey! What are you doing there?” and he said “Go away, leave me alone!” and they said “No, no, no!” and they wrote him a fine, and it got publicized in the newspapers. It’s kind of very appropriate and touching that there’s an alleyway named after Nick Auf der Maur.



early on when the arcade was first put there, the basement was a pool hall. Pool was more popular then, but they weren’t really pool halls—they were heroin spots. That’s where everyone went down to score drugs. I mention it because at this point I’d moved on from breaking into stores and armed robberies and all this stuff, and my new thing now is drugs. A lot of money in drugs. I didn’t actually deal the cocaine to the customers. I would sit in the one bar where there was no cocaine allowed, and that’s how I become a writer (more on that later). So I used the peep show a lot (and not just for watching dirty movies). If I thought I was getting some kind of heat from the police, or that someone wanted to rip me off and I was being followed, I’d just go down into the peep show, through the back door, out into the alleyway and back out on Bishop. Nobody follows you through an alleyway unless following you. People would think, if they were watching, that I was just a chronic masturbator. “Fuck, this guy, he sees a lot of peep shows. He’s been there five times today!” Trade secret.



Figure 15. Nick Auf Der Mar [Story Card].

There were these police gazettes here in the 60s and 70s, and me and all my friends and members of my family were often in them. It’s very exploitative—they were called Allô Police and Photo Police, and it would be all this very sensational tabloid journalism, like, “A Murder!” and here’s a picture of the body. The guy who published these, he made a lot of money. One day, he’s walking up de la Montagne. It happened there was a guy who owed someone a lot of money for drugs and stuff—I think I actually might have been in jail with him—anyways, he ran out of Wanda’s, which is a strip club on the corner, ‘cause two guys came looking for him (I guess someone had tipped them off that he was there). Well, they chased him into the alleyway behind, I guess it’s a Forever 21 now, and they beat him to death with hammers. Now the interesting thing is, the only witness is this guy who had been the publisher of Photo Police and Allô Police and had been putting all this crap into the world for decades. The only witness was this guy, and he was completely traumatized. The newspapers interviewed him, and he said “I did this stuff all my life, but seeing it in real life, you can’t imagine how horrifying it is.”

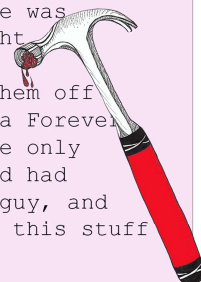


Figure 16. Police Gazettes [Story Card].

People are often nervous around me. Even if you didn't know my background or my reputation, I probably look a little scary. I'm very aware of it, though, and I work really hard to play against type. University has been really good 'cause it's given me a lot of tools to avoid conflict. In my 20s, I'd walk down Sainte Catherine Street and see a group of people posturing, gearing up for a fight. I'd walk right in the middle and go "What's going on here? You guys want to fight?!" I literally was a lunatic, oh my god. Yeah, over there just on Bishop, I got kicked in the head. I was fighting two guys who were both cracked up and I got kicked in the back of the head cause it's very hard to fight two guys. I was in a mini coma the whole night. Yeah, I have to stop doing that.

So I have this look and this sound, and I've come back to university to get this degree in philosophy, and I enjoy it. And part of philosophy is you have to do formal logic. You know, all the funny symbols and stuff? Okay, so I'm pretty good. I should have got an A+, but I only got an A—that's my fault. Anyways, doesn't matter. So, classes a pretty big part of my social life. Otherwise I'm at home, me and my cat, or I'm out watching UFC. I probably shouldn't have gone to the tutorials, but I enjoy school and the whole process, so I would go. I'd pretty much have this logic shit down, but it's very stressful for some people, and I fully admit I wasn't completely sensitive to how much people might be struggling and freaking out.

I would go to the tutorials and I'd end up joking around with my friend and sort of bugging the T.A. We'd just mess with him. He was trying to explain logic and he'd go "Well, steak is not a vegetable..." and we'd go (this is stupid): "Well, what if it's a steak plant?" and things. We probably shouldn't have been doing that because there were people who were really struggling, really freaking out, and we were fucking taking up the class time with our bullshit, right. So I'm in the tutorial and the T.A. said, "Translate this, translate it back to natural language, translate it back to logic." And I was like, "Why would you do that? You already have the natural language." And I didn't understand what he was getting at, and I think he thought I was arguing on some super abstract philosophical level. I just kept asking the question, and all of a sudden he just turns around and yells "Well, why even fucking study logic at all?!" and he gets very red faced, and starts screaming at me.

So class ends, and when I walk out of the Hall building, he's outside and smoking a cigarette. And now he knows: we have clear this up. He probably wants to avoid it, but I'm like *Hey, I'm not really gonna just let you yell at me* and then I approach him and I say "Look, I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to cause a big problem. I get it, I'm kind of annoying". And he said, "Yeah, I guess I just did it 'cause I knew that I could get away with it." I never thought of it that way: yeah, I'm the kind of person people feel comfortable yelling at. I'm not gonna go running away.

So anyways, he's walking now, and I think he just wants to get away from me, but I haven't resolved this, quite. So I'm walking and I'm sort of apologizing, but at the same time I also want to hear that we're cool, that we're alright—so we walk. We get to the corner, and he goes "Oh, okay then" and he sort of goes to turn off Mackay into the alley (I guess he lives somewhere down that way), and the conversation, for him, is over. But it's not quite over for me.

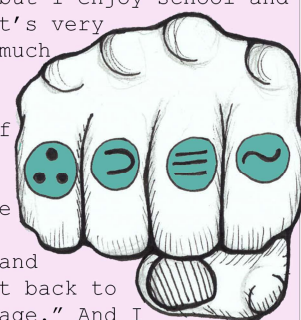


Figure 17. *People are Often Nervous Around Me [Story Card]*.

I'm not aggressive or anything, but the way I look and the way I talk make me a threat when I'm not necessarily intending to be. I can see he's looking at me really nervously, but I'm not quite picking up on that because I want to get my point across. I go "Look, I hope you're not gonna yell at any other people", but I'm also saying "But it's okay, it's okay; I know, I know. I shouldn't have done that. I feel really bad. I hope we're not gonna have any more problems; I don't have any problems with you." He's looking around and his responses are getting shorter and shorter, and he just wants to get out of there. You know when someone's like, "Uh huh, yeah, uh huh, okay," like they just can't deal with the conversation right now? I'm not completely aware of this at the time, but as we got to the end of the alleyway, and he saw that we're back on the street, I see that he kind of relaxed and I realize *Oh, he really thought I was gonna jump him.* But it was never an issue for me. He just said, "Yeah, yeah, it's all good, don't worry about it." And he shook my hand and walked off.

This is a philosophy nerd. He's probably not even used to verbal confrontation, let alone physical. And he's a big guy, like 6-foot-something, but it wouldn't have been a big problem for me to beat him up. He wasn't the kind of guy who was gonna yell at me anywhere else except in the classroom where he has some kind of authority. It's almost like in his mind, he's on my turf, like alleyways are my thing. Considering the stories I started with, they're a place where I'm very comfortable.

If someone yells at me, there is a part of me that does want to kick the shit out of them, so how I resolve that sometimes is by, like, working it out. I'll say, "Look, I'm sorry," and I'll apologize profusely, but if someone continues and goes "Fuck your apology," well *then* we're gonna go. And I should really stop doing that 'cause I'm getting old, and I have a lot of concussions. Fuck, way too many. The next one I'll just be a vegetable. If it's not resolved for me, I'm gonna hang onto it. I'm gonna have fantasies about beating him up and stuff. If somebody cuts me off in traffic, or if somebody gave me the finger, like, 10 years ago, I don't forget it. I would never forget it, and I wouldn't be able to find that guy. I'm a fighter. I just can't not fight.

People make assumptions seeing me: I'll be in the history department and I literally have conversations where people go, "Ah, you're not that tough. I could probably take you." It's like, *Well, okay, let's try! Maybe not.* And then there's another side to it where people assume that if you look a certain way and you're involved in things like boxing and fighting and stuff, you must be kind of an idiot. And when I feel threatened, which isn't very often, I go to this place of like "Yeah, okay, I can be a very violent and dangerous person and I will fuck you up," but most of the time I want to work shit out without ever going there. I've never been educated; I dropped out of school when I was 14, but I have this pretty powerful IQ, so I can think very quickly and I'm not unread--I've read a lot of books. Then when I get around men, they're obviously not looking for any physical challenge, but they go "Oh, this guy's some kind of thug." And they start saying things that they think are over my head and flaunting their intellect because "Oh, you might be a thug, and that kind of threatens me, but I'm so much smarter than you." But I'm also doing that alpha thing so I'll be like, "Oh, really? Oh, because you read this book? Guess what? I read that book, too." I'm not letting you win this thing. 🤖

Chapter 5. Discussion

By making Alley Atlas, my aim was to identify the Bishop/Mackay alleyway's deeper meaning and to visualise it. In doing so, I sought to understand whether or not it was a non-place. In this chapter, I answer my research questions and reflect upon inductive visualisation and deep mapping as a research-creation framework for identifying place meaning in a commercial alleyway.

5.1 Bishop/Mackay: A Non-Place?

In Chapter 2, I described the common perception of commercial alleyways as non-places that are not relational, historical, or concerned with identity. After my exploration through alley atlas, I've discovered that the Bishop/Mackay alleyway is in fact a place consisting of all three components. Though it does contain "the robotic gestures of our everyday urban lives" (p. 102), as we see in "Passing Through", it also contains more than that. As we move along in the atlas, the non-place perception of a commercial alleyway slowly begins to crumble.

5.1.1 Relational. According to Augé, one of the three key components of a place is that it is relational. Contrary to popular belief, Alley Atlas has shown that connection abounds in Bishop/Mackay. From the conversations happening between smokers in "Not a Villain Alone" to the sometimes silent sharing of space in "Alley Usage", people connect on various level. In fact, those maps show how the alley's scruffiness actually works to break barriers between people who might not otherwise interact. Niki, a departmental employee, talks about sharing cigarette breaks with faculty, staff, and students. In the university, these three groups may not otherwise interact outside of official bounds. In "Not a Villain Alone", her narrative tells us about the homeless man and his little dog (clad in a Canadiens jersey) doing tricks for her and the other

smokers. Though they were connecting over hockey, these two groups may not have otherwise had exchanges in more official, “front-side” spaces. Mixing across position, status, and social realms occurred in other instances, as well. I often saw the construction workers from Bishop St. eating their lunches and drinking coffee amongst the university crowd. While the covered nature of the smoking area is certainly appealing, it is its location in the alley that makes it “open” to people unaffiliated with the university. In “Everything Deserves Respect”, Nancy received help from the restaurant worker (who didn’t speak English) and a passing student carrying a sub sandwich. In the light of the wounded rat, people disrespecting it, and Nancy stepping into action, the alley became the site of a drama, complete with villains and heroes. This community-oriented action is also evident in “A Note on Night”, where footsteps take our imaginary drunken person to the safety of the metro, away from potential arrest. Hence, not only does Alley Atlas show that commercial alleyways can be relational, but also that, like residential alleyways, they are “complex cultural landscapes” (Wolch et al., 2010). Although Bishop/Mackay links parking lots—3 to be exact—of private and public institutions—not backyards—the commercial alleyway is, like its residential equivalent, a “semi-public commons” (Martin, 2002). There, belonging occurs in relation to various entities that surround the space—construction sites, the university, restaurants, a church and a pub. People may not be playing roller hockey with their kids, but they are sharing lights and conversations, like in “Not a Villain Alone”; projects, coffee breaks, and lunches, like in “Alley Usage”; and experiences, like in “Everything Deserves Respect”.

5.1.2 Historical. The second component of Augé’s “place” is that it is historical. Before my data collection and then creation of Alley Atlas, it seemed that the Bishop/Mackay alleyway did not have much history. However, through research-creation, I’ve uncovered that the space

has both *collective and collected* history. Though I did not delve into it visually, I wrote about the collective history of the space (apart from its Indigenous history) from farm to practice battle-field to backyard of a feminist figure. I discovered that the alley has both its own history and a history in relation to the buildings that have surrounded it.

Further, the stories in *Alley Atlas* have created an understanding of the alley's collected history. Throughout the text, from the third map in, memories and experiences begin to populate the cartography. In "Not a Villain Alone", Niki reminisces about finding belonging in the space after being a stay-at-home mom. "A Note on Night" shows Marina remembering the good 'ol days getting drunk and smoking cigarettes with her colleagues and professors. In the same map, Geneviève remembers how the restaurant parking space used to be a drug site (one she cleaned up herself), and the time she came to work to find a murder had occurred the night before. As we move on, the "thicker" maps, "Everything Deserves Respect" and "Alley Talk", are entirely based on personal memories. In them, the speakers reminisce about difficult experiences in the alley, in both cases tied to occurrences elsewhere. All of the speakers' perceptions of the space are coloured by what happened for them there. In *Alley Atlas*, the mixing of a more official history with a collected one has shown that the alley is indeed historical.

5.1.3. Concerned with Identity

"I like that it's lived in. It's used. It looks a bit like our generation—it's kind of messy, it's kind of dirty, it smokes and drinks a lot, but it kind of works somehow"

-Marina

Augé's final marker of place is that it be concerned with identity, and Bishop/Mackay absolutely is. At differing times of day or night, there are people who belong there and others

who do not. However, through this study, I have come to see that the alley's core identity lies in its non-judgemental nature. As the photo-negative of the institutions (a university, a church) and establishments that surround it, it creates space for behaviours, personality components, and experiences that might not be welcome on the "front-side".

The alley houses both positive and negative expression as a *shadow-place* (not to be confused with Val Plumwood's (2008) "shadow spaces"). The psychologist Carl Jung (1969) coined the term "shadow" as the dark side of the ego. Jung said that the shadow "is that hidden, repressed, for the most part inferior and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back into the realm of our animal ancestors." (1969, p. 265). Yet, Jung notes, it "does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses etc." (p. 265). In the same way as a person may consist of these various personality components—the self, the animus, the persona, the shadow—so too can the city. There are parts of the city—our workplaces, parks, restaurants—where socially acceptable (1) people and (2) parts of ourselves go, and others where we put (sometimes unconsciously) the (1) people and (2) parts of ourselves we feel less proud of (In a particularly frustrating time of my life, I had a favourite "scream forest" where I would go to punch and kick the air whilst bellowing loudly).

While the area sees use by students, establishment employees and passing panhandlers (amongst others) during the day, off-hours obscure this ownership of space. Though students are still present, as Marina describes, they are fewer in number. The same goes for weekends, even during the day. When classes are not in session, the alleyway becomes a place to do other things. For example, while the shopping cart lean-to, complete with a name written on the side of it, was present during many of my months of research, I never saw anyone in it. However, Geneviève

made it clear that she had spoken to the person, who was sleeping there. My own experience of harassment on a Sunday afternoon showed me that five men who had gathered—some already inebriated—to drink malt liquor on benches normally occupied by construction workers, students, and university staff were, at that time, the owners of the space. A woman had been drinking coffee and listening to music, but quickly left when they began to hassle her. Hence, Wolch et al.'s (2010) description of women's fear of alleyways is understandable. Geneviève also underlines how uncomfortable she is with girls being in the space at night. Yet, Marina sees it as all a Hollywood construction. Either way, off-hours create a different sense of belonging in the space that can shift its level of comfort for certain populations, like women. The darker side of this shadow-place identity is that it fits the description of “squalor, immorality, and crime” (Vancouver Province, 1937 in Cameron, 2013, p. 25) associated with commercial alleyways. The map “A Note on Night” shows how inebriation, injection-drug use, and murder have been part of the space after dark.

Yet, the space's shadow-like identity also serves a necessary purpose. In my time doing research there, I witnessed a man crying on a bench, and another drinking beer from a paper bag (while everyone else drank their morning coffees). Neither person bothered anyone else. Yet, they both felt that they could come to the alleyway and do things that the “front-side” might look down on. In one interview that didn't make it into map form, I spoke to Jennifer, who recounted her friend's mental breakdown:

If there were a definition for, “a ball of nerves”, that's what it was like. She was just, like, vibrating in, “holy shit”. That's what she was vibrating: fear and nervousness and *stress*. So we come down the elevator and I'm like, “So what's going on?” and she couldn't carry on a conversation. She was like “Um. Um. I'm not okay. I'm not okay”. So I said,

“Okay, you’re on a break right now, so let’s just, like, take a second. Let’s breathe. Do you want Tim Horton’s? A donut or something?” And she was like “No, no, no, no. I just need to walk outside.” So we walk outside, and we didn’t know where to go, so we went to the alleyway.

In that story, the alleyway serves as a container for a difficult experience—one that the “front side”—in this case, academics—are not supposed to see; it had a starkly contrasting identity to that of the prim and proper veneer of the university. Jennifer noted that her friend had reverted to child-like state, completely consumed with anxiety; it was this “inferior” side of her that she wasn’t willing to show out front. In her time of crisis, the alley became a refuge—a non-judgemental space to engage in a “bad” habit (she chain smoked when there) and anxiously check emails for a supervisor’s comments. In another example, “Alley Talk” shows Robbie confronted with his shadow, an aspect of himself he works to play against. In the alley, he encounters a mirror of himself in the fear felt by the much younger, much physically weaker teacher’s assistant. On the front side of the campus, Robbie is a scholar, a straight-A student (He says, “I should have got an A plus—I only got an A. That’s my fault”), but drawn into the setting of many of his younger experiences—violent, social, criminal and otherwise—both he and his walking partner become starkly aware of that side of him. Attempting to express the new ways he deals with conflict, his shadow side comes out in the space, or is reflected in it. While personal, Robbie’s experience reflects Bishop/Mackay’s multi-dimensional identity and social codes. Without a doubt, this is a place.

5.2 Inductive Visualization and Deep Mapping as Frameworks for Analyzing Place in Commercial Alleyways

This research-creation project was as much an analysis of the Bishop/Mackay alleyway as an exploration of how to understand and visualise its meaning. As a framework, the combination of deep mapping and inductive visualisation—as yet unexplored in the literature—was both productive and touching. The way that these two came together was as follows: deep mapping (through the form of the atlas) created a holistic vision of the space, while inductive visualisation expressed the meaning in each data set.

5.2.1 Inductive Visualisation. Using inductive visualisation as an “iterative, exploratory practice” (Knowles, Westerveld & Strom, 2015, p. 254) was particularly useful for exploring place meaning because it maintained my sense of responsibility towards the data, those who had provided it to me, and my own truth. For example, I initially explored using my quantitative observations of women to create a garden map of the space (Appendix A), likening women’s use of the space to the native flowers of the area in order to argue that even though it’s not common place to think so, women inherently belong there. However, as I explored my interview transcripts and reflected on my own experiences as a woman in the space, I saw that there were both glaringly positive and glaringly negative experiences there. Seeing commonalities in night theme from other points of data I had gathered (like the anecdote from a McKibbin’s employee), I recognized the value of embedding some women’s stories into the “A Note on Night”. In this way, women’s use of the space became one critical angle of my understanding of night, rather than a separate map of its own. In hindsight, my exploration of the garden map was too disconnected from the actual data (I hadn’t collected anything on flowers). Hence, inductive visualisation kept me true to what I had gathered, and thus to the meaning of the place. Though I wanted to create a more positive, forward-thinking vision of women’s use of the space, the reality was that, depending on the time of day, it wasn’t necessarily positive. In another map, I

initially tried to impose a metro-based theme on daily activities in the space, even though none of my data spoke directly to that theme (Appendix A)—I quickly abandoned that idea. Overall, my use of hand-drawn methods retained my—the cartographer’s—presence as a filter for understanding the site. However, even with hand-drawn methods, the engagement of mapping techniques that are superimposed onto the data would not have picked up on the sometimes difficult realities the cartographer—or those they are employed by—might like to ignore.

In a similar vein, inductive visualisation pushed the maps from *theme* to *meaning*. It’s one thing to map a narrative, its timeline, arcs, and setting. It’s quite another to find the point of the narrative (its meaning) that flashes in the teller’s head as soon as they enter the space, and map that. That is what I tried to do using inductive visualisation. This difference arose most clearly in “Everything Deserves Respect” and “Alley Stories”. In the former, I decided to do a sewer map because of the rats she discussed. Yet, it was Nancy’s comment about respecting death that drove me to put it below ground, shrouded in religious imagery. The *theme* was rats, but the *meaning* was the tension between fear and respect. In “Alley Stories”, the narrative tied to Bishop/Mackay is the least electrifying—compared to heroin dealing and thievery, at least. In it, he talks about an argument with a teacher’s assistant. The *theme* of the map is his comfort in alleyways, but the *meaning* was his effort to work against his past, his aggression, and what people expected of him. Hence, inductive visualisation gave me the opportunity to get to the core of the story.

5.2.2 Deep Mapping. Though inductive visualisation helped me find and visually represent the genuine meaning of various experiences people have had in Bishop/Mackay, it was deep mapping that disturbed the alley’s non-place-ness. The exploration and tying together of the various themes mentioned above—using both quantitative and qualitative data—created a multi-

faceted narrative of the place, an “immersion in a life that is lived and performed spatially” (Roberts, 2016, p. 6). Acting like GIS layers, the maps in Alley Atlas come together to give different perspectives of the same geographical area, the relationship between them creating a sense of place. Both during and at the end of my inductive visualisation process, I began to see both “non-place” and “place” qualities in Bishop/Mackay. However, my decision to include people’s voices in the map or not greatly influenced this. Hence, I set the atlas up to move from non-place to place. Beginning with the rather shallow, utilitarian “Passing Through”, we move to “Daily Activities”, which, though still quantitative, begins to scratch the surface (What’s that person doing reading all alone at the end of the alley? Why is that person crying?). Using the same architectural perspective of the space, I placed “Not a Villain Alone” immediately after. That map mixes quantitative information on people smoking and chatting with drawings of a dog and hat, followed by Niki’s story. Thus, the viewer sees a more structured, zoomed-out version of the alley from Alley Usage suddenly become more intimate, memory-based, and warm. Next, “A Note on Night” takes multiple personal narratives and mixes them with observations. There are things here we probably didn’t know before (There was a murder? Someone sleeps here? Why’s his name Clive?). As we move on to “Everything Deserves Respect” and finally “Alley Stories”, the alley is no longer just the short-cut route we saw in the first map—it has been transformed. We’re on the inside now, as Edward Relph would say, and can see that it’s a place.

In that sense, it serves as a container for the multi-element identity of the Bishop/Mackay alleyway. It creates a way of looking at the space that both sees its utilitarian nature and dives more deeply into what is unseen. Deep mapping is a compelling way of exploring non-place and place because of its flexibility and breadth as well as its depth. When dealing with contested, liminal, marginalized or undervalued spaces—particularly ones that hold populations of a similar

nature—it is a way of holding multiple perspectives and experiences and grounding them in physical space.

5.3 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the Bishop/Mackay alleyway is in fact a place. It is relational, historical, and concerned with identity. We've seen that it is also, like many residential alleyways, a complex cultural landscape and semi-public commons. Finally, my research has brought inductive visualisation and deep mapping into the fore as strong approaches—particularly in concert—for the visualisation of a commercial alleyway's meaning and ultimate place-ness. In the final chapter of this thesis, I expand on what the project means for the future of the alleyway, and my next steps in Bishop/Mackay.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

My exploration of a commercial alleyway in downtown Montreal generated compelling insights for the fields of alternative mapping—particularly deep mapping and inductive visualisation. What arose from the exploration of data through map-making was a different, deeper understanding of a seeming non-place. While there were limitations to my research, particularly in the lack of Indigenous data and narrowness of participants, it opened the conversation on commercial alleyways and their meaning. Having said that, in the vein of research creation, it is essential to me that Alley Atlas live outside the context of academia. Both as a public document and an archive of meaning, as well as a potential tool for activators, it is meant to exist in the public realm. In this final chapter, I outline how I plan to make it available to the public and underscore the potential of my approach for alleyway projects in Montreal and beyond.

6.1 Next Steps. This thesis developed a methodology using inductive visualisation and deep mapping as potent tools for the uncovering of existing place in commercial alleyways. While the six maps I designed have begun the conversation, I want to continue to develop the identity of this alleyway. Upon completion of this thesis, I plan to create a few more maps to add to those in Alley Atlas. Some of the map-themes I may explore are labour, mental health, politics, and history. The richness of data I collected through my ethnographic fieldwork extended beyond the scope of this thesis, and hence provides me with further fodder from which to create. As deep mapping is constantly in process and a map is never complete, the addition of these themes will only enrich the existing understanding of Bishop/Mackay. Once completed, I intend to publish Alley Atlas as a text that can be disseminated to the public (though dependent on costs and time, I would also like to translate the text into French). In the process, some of the

maps will appear on my website and Instagram account. I intend to continue to meet with the Geomedia Lab and workshop my maps with my colleagues.

6.2 Alley Atlas in the Context of Alleyway Activation. Though this thesis was based in research-creation, its initiation was triggered by my experiences in and reflection on a charrette aimed at activating the Bishop/Mackay alleyway. That planning session occurred in Fall 2016, three years before the completion of this thesis. While the city released their new plan (only slightly reminiscent of what came out of the charrette) shortly after, to date, there has been no physical change in Bishop/Mackay. My understanding is that this is largely due to an inability for the stakeholders to agree on who is responsible for the alleyway's management. While it is unclear if there are existing plans to follow through with the original design, I believe that my research can act as an alternative understanding of the space, maybe even inspiring future designs of that alleyway (or others). In particular, I think that designers could engage with the identity of the space as a multi-dimensional refuge—a judgement-free *shadow-place*. Certainly, some things I have discovered are undesirable (depending on who is speaking), but as master creators, designers can explore ways to enhance positives while being thoughtful of “negatives”.

As Childs (2008) and Jones & Evans (2012) have argued, city and borough governments can benefit from examining existing place stories and using them to inform activation projects. Beyond Bishop/Mackay, the City of Montreal has invested a relatively large amount of resources into alleyway activation, and may better integrate those activations with existing memories and experiences of place through a stronger focus on what exists. From this they (and the communities in question) can create designs that are in line not only with what people *do* in the space, but what those actions and experiences *mean* to them. Ultimately, this leads to interventions that will more quickly develop place identity and be long-lasting and appropriate to

the communities they affect. While I know that most projects do not have three years to spend on the gathering and mapping of data, I believe that, as Hayden (1995) argued, a multi-disciplinary approach is most effective when dealing with the planning, design, and activation of urban public spaces. I do not believe that ever alley need be activated, but if it will be, we should not assume that it has no existing meaning, history, identity, or relationality. As my exploration into Bishop/Mackay has shown, if you look carefully—and deep enough—every space is a place to somebody.

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Appendix A: Maps not based on inductive visualization



Figure 4. Idea for "garden map" identifying native flowers and women's locations in the alley.

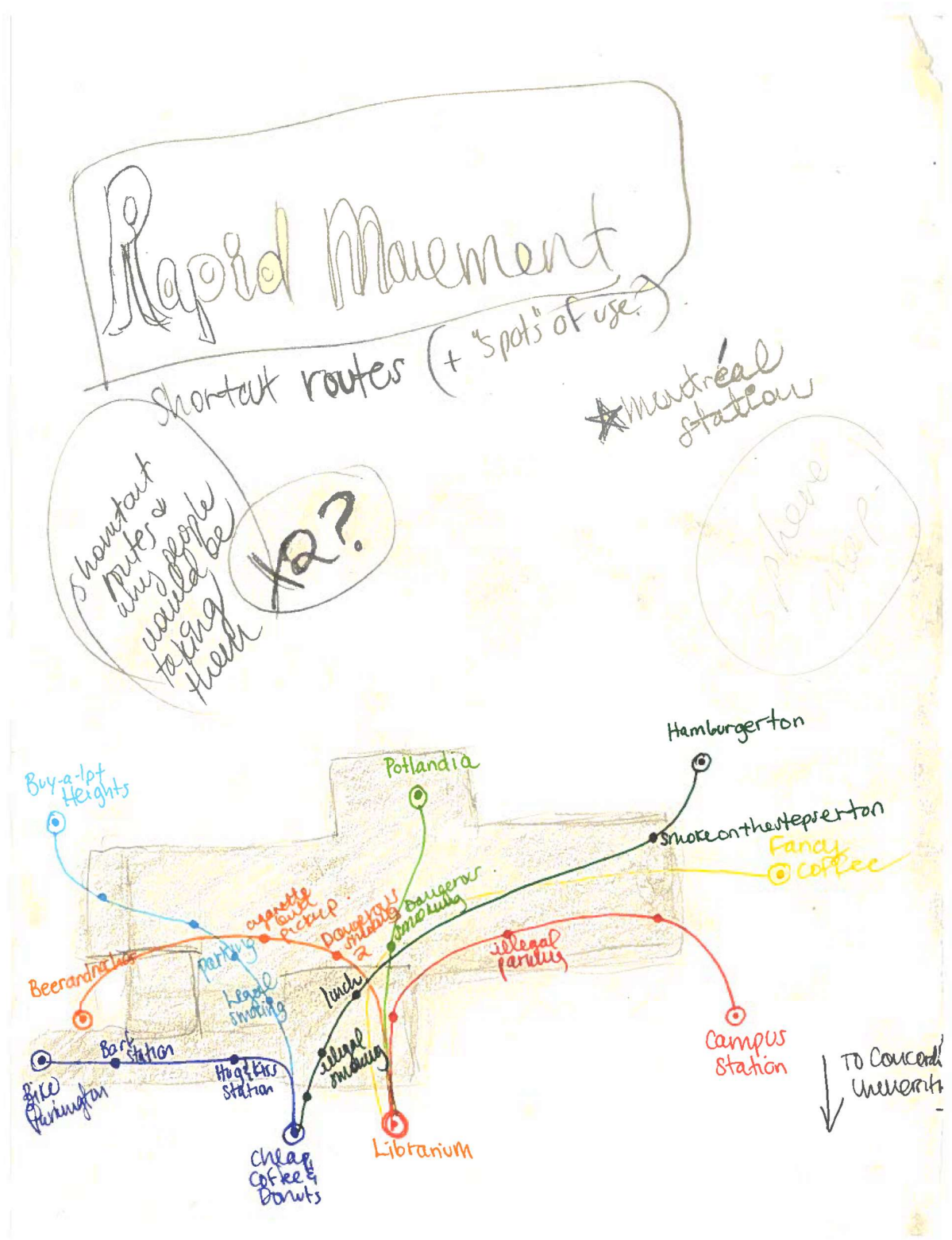


Figure 5. Idea for metro map identifying common uses of micro-areas of the alley.

Appendix B: Map-Making Exploration

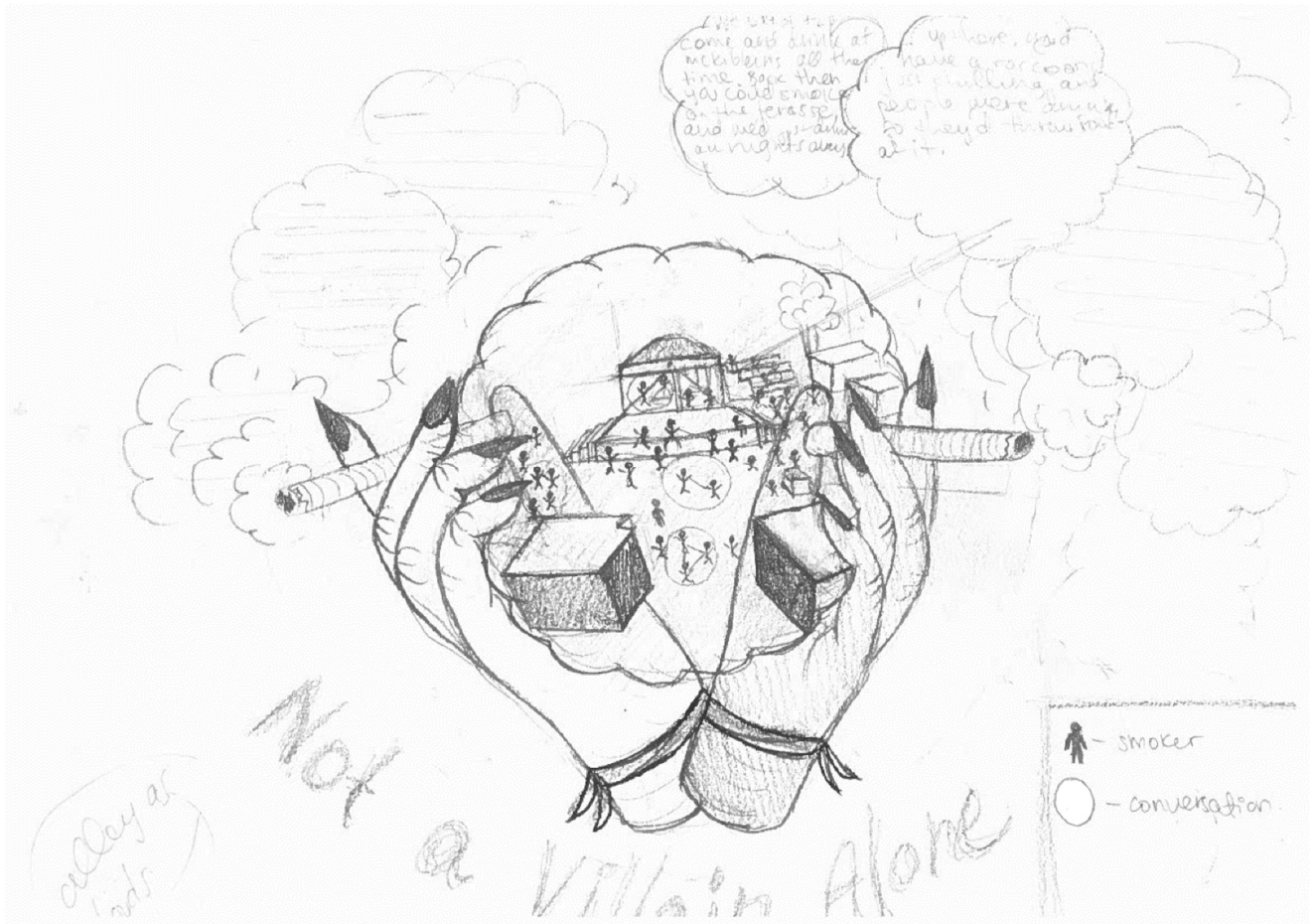


Figure 6. Early idea for Not a Villain Alone.

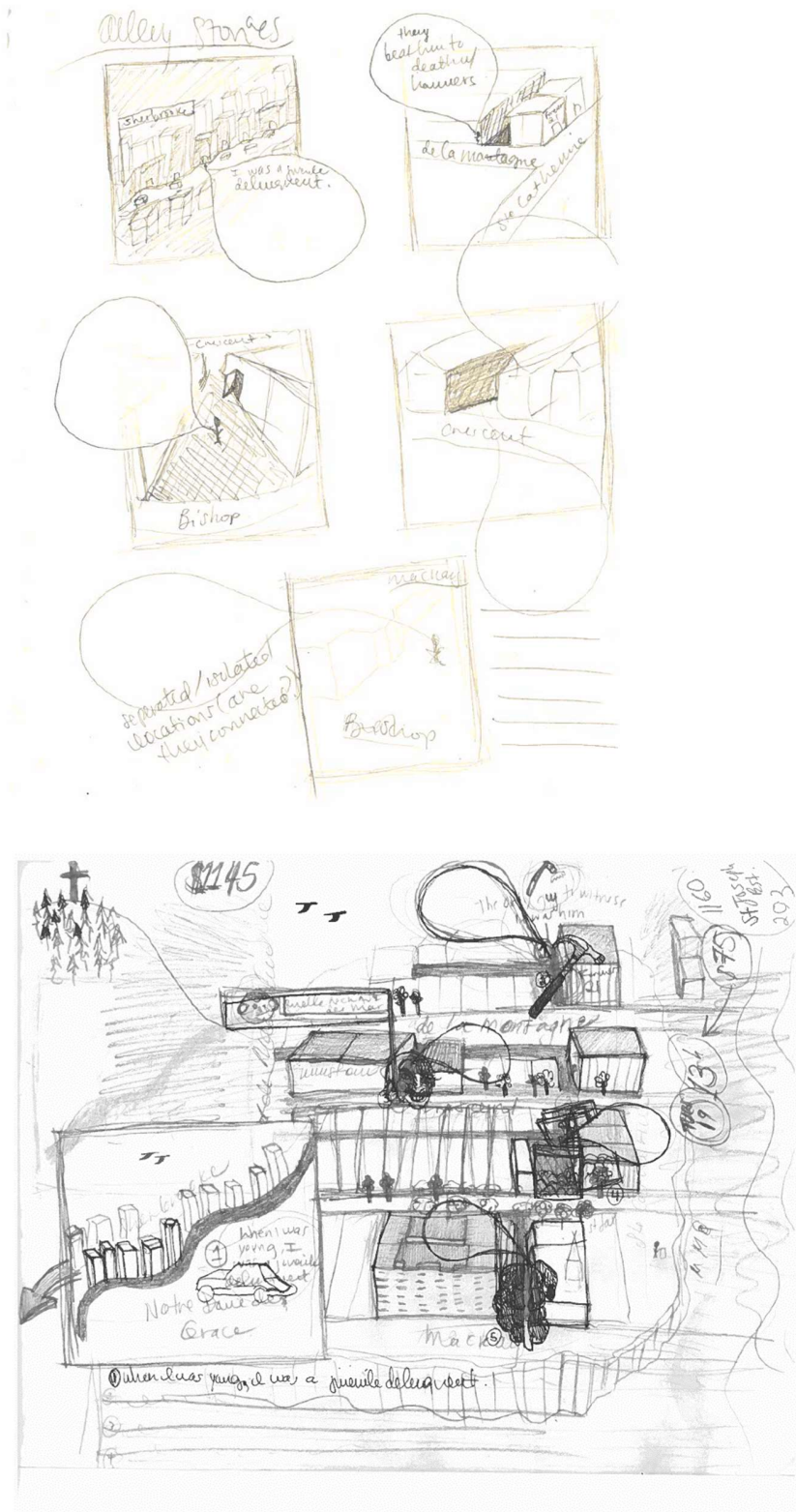


Figure 7. Early ideas for Alley Talk.



Figure 8. Early exploration mixing Nancy's story with my observations.

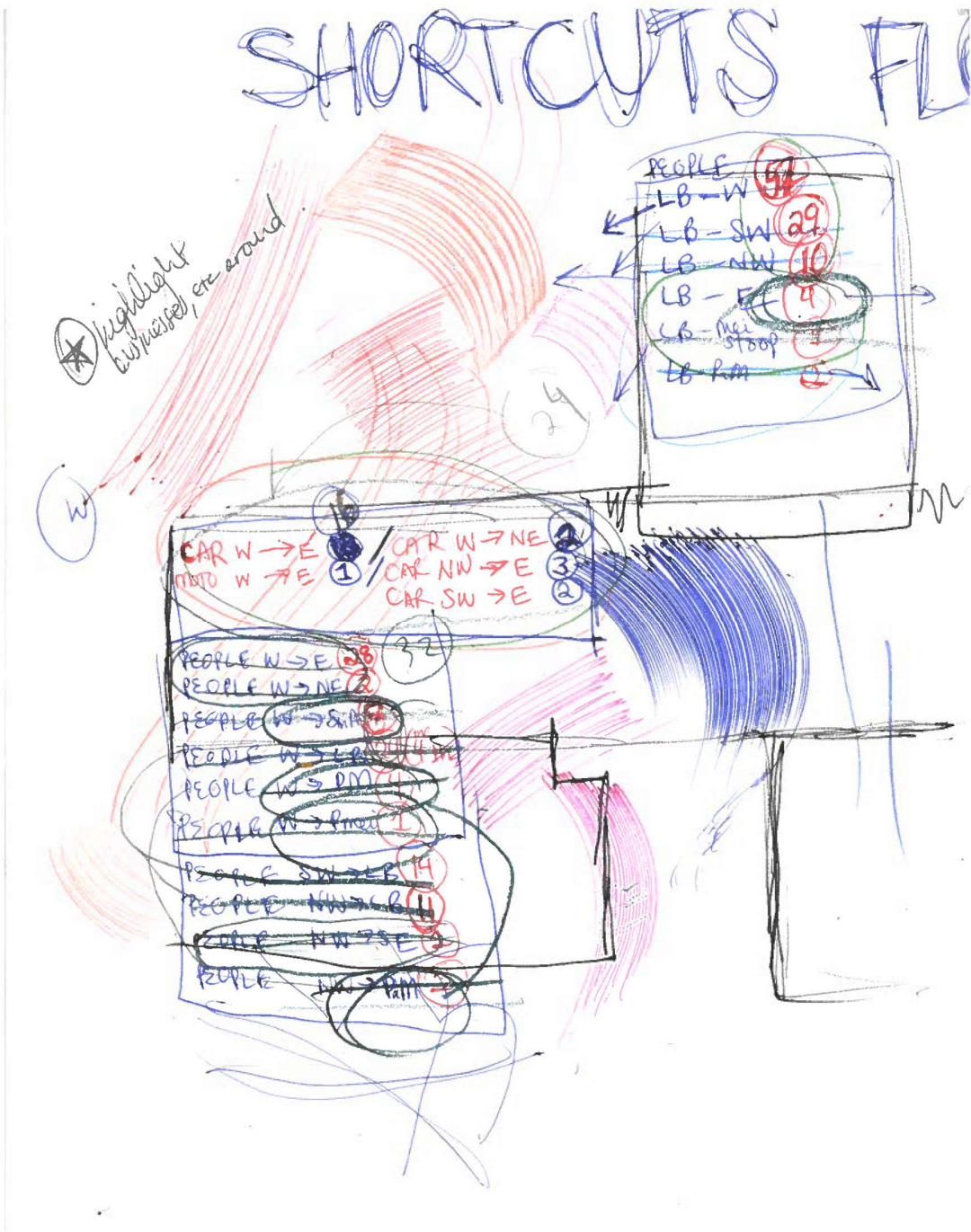


Figure 9. Counting people and cars for Just Passing Through.