HOW OBJECTS IN SPACES HELP PEOPLE IN PLACES:

Material Object Interactions Affecting Adults' Informal Learning:

Arts-Informed Research using Sculptural Mobile Forms

a thesis submitted to the

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ABSTRACT

This work is a wide-ranging exploration into the ways adults can be supported to learn informally through material object interactions in public places. In keeping with my methodological lens of arts-informed research, I use a mobile kinetic sculpture to represent entwined strands of thought relating to adults' informal learning, material object composition, and places' spatial and historical changes.

The design consisted of qualitative interviews and a focus group, in addition to creatively-inspired hand-drawn maps and crafted models, to gather insights from 6 adult participants with lived experiences of 4 public place sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The resulting collection of voices, impressions, and images revealed 3 themes–time, tensions, and change–showing attitudes and awarenesses about adults' informal learning understandings, material objects' literal and symbolic associations, and public places' learning opportunities.

Enquiry elements proved deceptively complex, revealing that Halifax's public places are rarely visited for learning purposes, that people value public places reflecting broad social concerns and changes over time, and that visually stimulating displays and features may prompt public place informal learning. Major findings show that

- adults rarely connect learning with material object interactions, and generally do not expect to learn in public places, yet are not resistant to these learning possibilities;
- public places' ongoing evident and hidden changes permit balanced tensions that allow different learners' needs to be accommodated in shared space;
- adults who are assisted in imagining places' size and historical reach through activities like walking or artistic representations are better equipped to recognize materialities connected to buried narratives fostering expanded knowledges; and,
- arts-informed research fits this enquiry because entangled ideas are celebrated and because the mobile form permits layers of meaning-making in representing findings, demonstrating research process, and affording adults' informal learning as itself a material object for interaction.

Constructivist positionalities, ecological and new materialisms theories, and stylistic influences from postmodernism and feminisms fashion this writing, producing a bricolage of effects and wayfinding and discovery mirrored in textual author intrusions and literary vignettes.

This work adds to knowledge about adults' informal learning made possible in everyday spaces, and is methodologically significant as a model of interconnected research practice and artful forms.

Plus: cats.

Acknowledgements

In equal measure, I am from and of and with

my family:	my constant companions:
Deborah	the more-than-human
Ross	Egypt and Smudge
Joanne	
(I love and miss you;	
thanks for the dimes)	
and	

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A Note to the Reader...

As a doctoral dissertation, this work might be expected to read as the product of scientific process, in which data are analyzed through pre-determined frameworks and findings are disseminated in fixed sections in order to generate a reliable conclusion that can be replicated repeatedly to forge a body of unassailable knowledge.

As the reader of a doctoral dissertation, you might understandably approach this work with these expectations.

As the writer of this work, I feel you might be baffled in doing so.

For this work holds forth, stipulates, and struggles to articulate; it digresses and confesses as it elaborates and activates; it muddles through and befuddles, too, its writing turns out a double-you; it hints at tints and squints askew; it tries and applies, obfuscates and generates; it perplexes and vexes and makes more complexes as it shows and knows and comes to a close.

But it is the design, process, reflection, and embodiment of PhD study, for all that.

Like the essential mobile art form that emerged well after this research was underway, I share with you in this work's writing the processes of discovery as they occurred for me, and when they did so. Mobile sculptures became integral as this enquiry revealed deep and significant points for synthesis, and I chose to honour that unfolding with writing that mimics, not just communicates, coming into knowing.

I explain early and continually my decision-making for what may appear to be unusual choices of structure and articulation for this work, for the work I have crafted into being. But: if you prefer a more straightforward course, I can direct you:

<div align="center">

Turn to **Chapter 1: Materialize** for topics, style, and measures

Turn to **Chapter 3: Artful Methodology** for research design, positionalities, and methods

Turn to **Chapter 9: Reincarnation** for findings, conclusions, and future steps

(the **Abstract** is pretty good for that, too)

</div>

Or:

Wait for me. Trust that I will bring you to points of understanding, several of them, even as we find meaning in distraction and difference. Have patience for discovery. Scientific method was once that, too.

these stories, our stories, are shape-fluid and because they are, they possess infinite possibilities of forms aside from the initial artifact: forms that become visible in other ways with the

help

of the beholder[1]

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[1] Liu, R.Z., & Sunstein, B.S. (2016). Writing as alchemy: Turning objects into stories, stories into objects. *Journal of Folklore and Education, 3*, 60-76. p.60

The First Time

So simple.

Just a crisscrossed set of bars, a couple of straight lines hanging down, a couple of inkblots on the ends.

On a hanging mobile sculpture, everything swings, which is at least interesting and dynamically complex, but still, I regarded mobiles as symmetrical and uninspiring.

I worried that mobiles were too simple.

The arts-informed approach I took for my PhD study made it clear that a form for sharing research non-academically must make sense with research explorations. All the while as I designed my research, defended its proposal, and spoke with participants about adults' informal learning in public place, I had been searching for an exciting, potent art form to colour my research along methodological lines and awe onlookers with its representational facility and vibrancy. A form that would make accessible my research enquiry and evoke knowledge production fused with aesthetic curiosity.

Deep in the throes of analysis, I mused whether mobiles, those hanging decorations, could meet those demands. My initial reaction was that mobiles were too unsophisticated. I did not think they could withstand the complexities of my proposed research.

Then, I thought about the fact that they moved, in a manner of speaking; I could imagine the arms standing for the branches of knowledge along which I wanted to travel. Mobiles change angles and sides without relocating, which was an interesting paradox. And those inkblots were infinite in variety, too. Nor did mobiles require technical mastery for their creation; no need for consistent ratios of paint mixture or helter-skelter emergencies of dramatic performance.

Maybe–there was more of a connection there, to this research, to learning, than I first thought.

Perhaps I could lighten up just a bit and celebrate mobiles' symbolic qualities in portraying my research. They looked easy to make; in fact, I would save that fun little project of mobile-making until I was finished the taxing analysis I was currently undertaking.

I could, I thought, knock out a great-looking mobile in half an hour.

First, I needed to do some exploring, and find out about mobiles: their etymology, their constituent parts, their artistic tradition, their artist associations, and their principles and mechanics. Then I could decide whether it would enhance the research I was producing on adults' informal learning, and if so, I could quickly assemble the first of many examples of it.

Mobiles: so easy to build up (or down, as I came to know).

MOBILES

    Etymology

The terminology of mobiles refers to both what they mean and how they move. In 1932, artist Marcel Duchamp noticed that his friend, sculptor Alexander Calder, needed a name to put to the suspended sculptures Calder had developed that were pushed about by mechanics or air currents. Duchamp proposed the term 'mobile', which means not only capacity for movement but also, in French, 'motive'[1] or reason. Jean Arp, another painter-sculptor, dubbed Calder's grounded sculptural works 'stabiles', similarly inspired by their fixed natures.[2]

    Parts

Although I anticipated several examples of clearly-labelled mobile diagrams to be revealed through my research, I did not locate any description or image identifying the constituent elements of a mobile. A mobile's parts are referred to most often by their materials: the framework hinges on "main armatures"[3], "wire coat hangers or … stiff wire"[4], "steel wires"[5] or "an arm (a piece of wire, a stick or whatever you choose)."[6] Hanging from these arms, most commonly, are lengths of thread, twine, fishing line, or galvanized wire. As for the inkblot shapes on the ends of the branches, "Anything goes from here. Use whatever you want for weights or to connect the pieces. The possibilities are infinite."[7] There is no argot for mobiles' parts, a realization that slightly disappointed but did not surprise me.

    As I thought at the time: mobiles are so easy.

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[1] Toll, S.I. (2010). My way: Calder in Paris. *The Sewanee Review, 118*(4), 589-602. Retrieved 25 Jul, 2019, from https://muse.jhu.edu/article/401460/pdf p.601

[2] Lemon, R. (27 Feb, 1965). The soaring art of Alexander Calder. *Saturday Evening Post, 238*(4), 30-35. p.31

[3] Schroeder, L. (May 1994). Exploring kinetic art. *Arts & Activities, 115*(4), 29. p.29

[4] Hoyum, K. (2019). Instructions to make a hanging mobile. Retrieved 8 Jul, 2019, from https://www.ehow.com/way_5568164_instructions-make-hanging-mobile.html n.p.

[5] Chen, G.-D., Lin, C.-W., & Fan, H.-W. (2015). The history and evolution of kinetic art. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity, 5*(11), 922-930. p.925

[6] Mahler, M. (8 Dec, 2014). From the artist: How to make a real mobile. Retrieved 8 Jul, 2019, from https://www.houzz.com/magazine/from-the-artist-how-to-make-a-real-mobile-stsetivw-vs~34452702

[7] Mahler, M. (2019-a.). How to build/make mobiles/kinetic sculptures. Retrieved 8 Jul, 2019, from https://www.marcomahler.com/how-to-make-mobiles/ n.p.

Artistic discipline

Mobiles are part of kinetic art tradition, which "contains movement perceivable by the viewer or that relies on motion for its effect."[8] Early twentieth-century Dadaist and Constructivist artists' portrayals of dynamism led to art forms with "movable elements"[9], such as Naum Gabo's 1919-1920 *Kinetic Construction (Standing Wave)*, "an electrically powered strip of wire which oscillated rapidly from side to side, creating the illusion of solid matter and thus simulating the replacement of volume by space."[10]

Figure 1. Dynamism in repose: Naum Gabo's *Kinetic Construction (Standing Wave)*. 1920. The Work of Naum Gabo © Nina & Graham Williams / Tate, 2019. CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported)

Artists

The name Alexander Calder emerged in connection with mobiles immediately and almost exclusively in English-language literatures. Calder (1898-1976)[11] was an American engineer prior to studying art in New York, where he became interested in constructing wire sculptures. In a 1930 visit to painter Piet Mondrian's Paris apartment, Calder was taken with Mondrian's coloured paper rectangles, visualizing them in fluid movement. A year later he constructed a model for a hand-operated kinetic sculpture.

> The first of these objects moved by systems of cranks and motors … Calder soon abandoned the mechanical aspects of these works when he realized he could fashion mobiles that would undulate on their own with the air's currents.[12]

Calder's mobiles appear to me to be variously sized, consisting of wire appendages often looking preposterously off-kilter, tipped with abstract shapes that seem too ready to float off into the breeze. One critic wrote of a Calder retrospective that the natural analogies of his pieces are impossible to

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[8] Stewart, S. (27 Mar, 2017). Art history: The evolution of hypnotic kinetic sculptures. Retrieved 9 Jul, 2019, from https://mymodernmet.com/kinetic-sculpture-art-history/ n.p.

[9] Anonymous. (2019). Beginnings of kinetic art. *The Art Story.* Retrieved 9 Jul, 2019, from https://www.theartstory.org/movement-kinetic-art-history-and-concepts.htm n.p.

[10] Anonymous. (n.d.-a.). Kinetic art: 1920s onwards–History and development. *Encyclopedia of Art History*. Retrieved 9 Jul, 2019, from http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/kinetic-art.htm n.p.

[11] Anonymous. (n.d.-b.). Calder's life. Retrieved 8 Jul, 2019, from http://www.calder.org/life/biography n.p.

[12] Anonymous, n.d.-b., n.p.

resist.[13] Later, Calder came to favour "acentric, 'stellar' designs, where elements could work both independently and in conjunction with others."[14]

"Hmmmm," I thought, "these remarks sound like figurative descriptions for research establishing creative connections between material objects and adults' informal learning fostered in public place sites."

Calder overwhelmingly dominates discussion about mobiles, at least in terms of the form's history; less information is available on other artists with mobile

Figure 2. The deceptive balance of a Calder mobile: Alexander Calder's *Boomerangs*, 1941. © 2020 Calder Foundation, New York / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOCAN, Montreal.

pieces, such as Naum Gabo and Vladimir Tatlin, and virtually no research exists on female mobile artists. I have not viewed Calder's work in person/in movement, nor do I have an education in art that would help me better understand mobiles' craft and synergies with other forms or techniques. Fortunately, this research sets out to do something different: find inspiration for qualitative research process and practice in mobile elements.

Mobiles certainly do not seem to require more than I am capable of in their construction.

Principles

Kinetic sculpture locates mobiles as "three-dimensional works that include moving elements and a balance of objects."[15] My pursuit of principles of mobiles' suspension and movement force upon me a belated introduction to physics for fuller understanding.

In effect, "a mobile is a cascade of levers. Each lever is suspended from above and has objects or other levers suspended from its ends."[16] Equilibrium is achieved when the load (weight on one end of the lever) and effort (the force necessary to move the other end of the lever) are equal.[17] However, "If the fulcrum (pivot point) does not occur at the center of the [lever], then the center of mass must be

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[13] Raine, C. (13-19 Nov, 2015). Man on a wire: The playful simplicity of Alexander Calder. *New Statesman,* 50-51; 53. p.53

[14] Barry, D., & Rerup, C. (2006). Going mobile: Aesthetic design considerations from Calder and the Constructivists. *Organization Science, 17*(2), 262-276. p.266

[15] John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. (2019). Alexander Calder: The master of balance. Retrieved 8 Jul, 2019, from https://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-5/Alexander_Calder_Master_of_Balance#Instruction n.p.

[16] John F. Kennedy Center, 2019, n.p.

[17] John F. Kennedy Center, 2019, n.p.

factored into the problem."[18] For this reason, apparently, mobiles need not always be symmetrical, as long as the balancing point is closest to the heavier load, as is noticeable in Calder's mobiles:

Figure 3. A Calder stabile in equilibrium: Alexander Calder's *Untitled*. c. 1965. Reprinted from the Journal of Antiques & Collectibles, 7 Jun, 2017. © 2020 Calder Foundation, New York / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOCAN, Montreal.
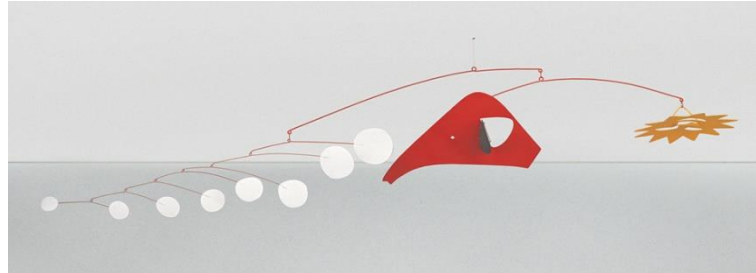
Figure 4. Moving the balance point: Alexander Calder's *Happy Family*. 1955. © 2020 Calder Foundation, New York / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOCAN, Montreal.
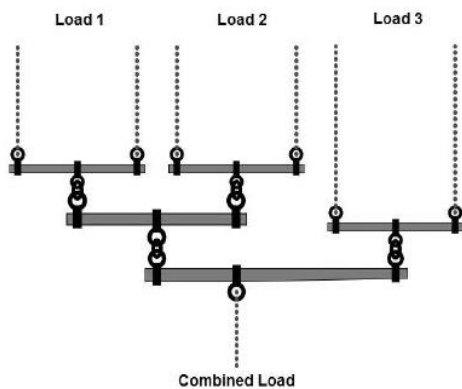
Figure 5. How a whiffletree works. By J.P. Gray & F. Campagna (April 2011). Human-like characteristics for high degree of freedom robotic door-opening end-effector. Copyright of GFBrandenburg.

Mobiles can be designed using a whippletree or whiffletree mechanism, from the verb 'to whiffle' or "change back and forth."[19] A whiffletree mechanism allows equal distribution of a load through multiple cascading connections.

These details give me an idea of mobiles' mechanics; so, too, I read, are considerations of torque, force, and something called the principle of moments, which deals with equal clockwise and counterclockwise movements around a point that is already in balance.

I read that Calder's engineering expertise is evident in his mobiles, despite his abandonment of cranks activating mobile movement. He preferred to rely upon the happenstance of environment:

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[18] Anonymous. (2006). Torque. Retrieved 8 Jul, 2019, from https://www.wappingersschools.org/cms/lib/NY01001463/Centricity/Domain/1439/Torque.ppt n.p.
[19] Bal-tec. (n.d.). The whiffletree. Retrieved 8 Jul, 2019, from https://www.precisionballs.com/Whiffletree.php n.p.

> From 1934, Calder's mobiles became unpowered; they were usually driven by the wind. 'The important thing ', Calder said, 'is that the mobile should catch the wind, whether it be good or bad' (Calder, 1959). And hence a new element was introduced, that of chance and unpredictability.[20]

The impact of the air in fully realized mobiles is sometimes underrated as an element of their design: "Mobiles are structures made of thin metal coloured slices, installed in a complex system of balance and counterweight, where the pieces are floating in the air and moving rhythmically when they are simply actioned by slight air hits."[21] Air's imperceptibility, argues ecologist and philosopher David Abram, is its power: "the awesomeness of the air had resided precisely in its ubiquitous and yet unseen nature, its capacity to grant movement and life to visible nature while remaining, in itself, invisible and ungraspable."[22] Perhaps Calder gained formal inspiration from this breath of fresh air.

I see in the combined knowledges of mobiles' name, constituent parts, artistic traditions, artists, and operational principles a useful analogy for aligned yet disjunctive ideas that keep opposing forces connected and balanced. Through this learning, I see a growing complexity in mobiles' creation and significance that appropriately reflects my research intentions. There may be a need for me to draw in mobile movements to enrich my investigation into adults' informal learning and public places, which is an emerging aspect I had not at first entertained.

PLAUSIBILITY

Perhaps I was incited to turn towards the accessibility of mobiles by virtue of the intensity of research analysis, which was the point at which this connection emerged for me. Gradually I became more confident in their formal affinities with this enquiry, and just as slowly did I recognize that writing about these likenesses could stylistically reflect this growing understanding. I liked the playful unexpectedness of Calder's mobile forms, which I might be able to emulate in writing. And even with a simple design, mobiles are multilayered just as I believe my research is, too.

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[20] Zeki, S., & Lamb, M. (1994). The neurology of kinetic art. *Brain: A Journal of Neurology, 117(3),* 607-636. p.629

[21] Herranz-Pascual, Y., Pastor-Bravo, J. & Moldes, B.-R. (2013). Representing the movement / presenting the movable. *Arte, Individuo y Sociedad, 25*(3), 459-477. p.469

[22] Abram, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more-than-human world.* New York, NY: Vintage Books. p.252

I can make some observations by juxtaposing the representational possibilities of mobiles to display material object interactions affecting adults' informal learning in public place sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia. For one, it seems that mobiles, whose movement is realized by wind and air, fit with an exploration into places and their latent informal learning avenues. There is potential for a mobile to be about a place as well as in a place, buffeted by whatever forces are there.

For another, in learning that Calder's work evokes nature associations, I begin to envision an holistic ecosystem, where different systems–for example, adults' informal learning nestled within lifelong learning understanding, or material objects' compositions and locations–are joined in a web of ideas.

Finally, I am also growing fond of the notion that with mobiles, change is not just happening: it is an intentional and destabilizing inevitability through which mobiles are realized as fully as possible.

> To the spectator, there is no definite meaning that can be attached to the [mobile] form and the sum of the forms does not add up to a more complex form. Rather, the simple rectangular and triangular forms keep changing their position and appearance with the consequence that the overwhelming impression is that of motion.[23]

These ideas reassure me that mobiles align with my research, and afford structural and formal elements unique and fitting to represent this work. I shall just have to challenge myself in the making to construct somehow more complicated mobiles. My reservations are few at this stage.

But I stress that these understandings unfolded slowly, contrary perhaps to this section's impression that research began with the mobile comparison in place. I composed this writing from memories of my early considerations about mobiles, and because, now that this work has been completed, I know more of mobiles' relevant etymology, parts, traditions, artist associations, and mechanical principles. This does not change the fact that I approached mobiles first cautiously, nor that mobiles increased in significance for this work over time: at the stage I refer to here, these questions were pressing-fresh.

CONSTRUCTION

I anticipate a short and focused time spent in creating several mobiles after the bulk of analysis and writing has transpired; I have, after all, watched a video or two about creating and hanging them, to which I can now add intellectual knowledge of their physics design and operation.

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[23] Zeki & Lamb, 1994, 628

To show the significance of places for my research, I will construct my first mobile from natural materials. Varying-sized branches will be used for the arms, rustic twine for the strings, and gathered rocks and pebbles will provide the hanging shapes and balance the mobile overall.

I envision a homespun, roughly textured and uncommonly-shaped mobile, two to four feet in circumference, that will later hang in the world outside on my front porch.

After all, it should only take about a half hour to make.

It is that simple.

MATERIALIZE

A slow gentle impulse, as though one were moving a barge, is almost infallible.
In any case, gentle is the word.[1]

I write this as I sit at my desk of two tables, one grey and the other a butterrich yellow; pictures and mathoms are strewn across them. Occasionally, a cat springs atop one of the tables and demands I turn my attention to something more feline-related.

This is the place I plan to be when I type the last letter of this writing, where these things, these places and the moments in them are carried with me and leave their mark on my learning. At times slowly unfolding, and in other moments springing into view, plus every manifestation in between, the materialities of the world colours this research and this writing.

I favour a slow approach into this writing, where I cautiously choose my next step and patiently allow for knowledges to unfold–this seems to me a softer welcome. I appreciate, however, that others may prefer readiness, and prepare for travel with an understanding of the destination at the end. To encourage readers to persevere through this writing that can seem disparate in content and form, I would do well to provide a description of its movement, so that any of its meanderings are made meaningful. I offer a roadmap of this research below, which charts the peaks and valleys on this trek, although, if one feels so inclined, this summary can be bypassed; we get there, all in good time.

RESEARCH ROADMAP

This work examines the interactions of material objects affecting adults' informal learning in public place sites located in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I have embedded this enquiry in the interpretivist qualitative research contours of arts-informed methodology, whose qualities of goodness and representational possibilities open avenues into creatively gathering, displaying, and sharing this information. The positionalities I bring to this research value multiplicities, knowledges based in experiences, and metaphor as a tool for understanding; theoretical ground is covered by a constructivist mist hovering

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[1] Masterworks Fine Art Gallery. (n.d.). The mobiles of Alexander Calder. Retrieved 22 Jul, 2019, from https://news.masterworksfineart.com/2017/10/19/the-mobiles-of-alexander-calder

over the ecological groundscape and a gust of new materialism on and in the air. Postmodernism and feminisms offer sound and resonant artful stylings of expression.

I designed this research to focus attention on 4 public place sites in Halifax: the Halifax Central Library, Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, Shubie Park, and Nocturne: Art at Night (though Nocturne is more properly regarded as an event consisting of numerous art installations that are site-specific; that is, "designed to exist only in a certain location."[2]) Through recruitment efforts for participants aged 18+ who spoke English and had purposefully visited at least one of these sites, I confirmed a total of 6 individuals (4 women and 2 men) to take part in this research. Information was gathered through individual interviews and a focus group, in which I asked participants about informal learning and artistic methods of gathering information. I also invited them to draw meaningful objects in each site on blank maps, and, during the focus group, welcomed them to fashion 3D models recreating a meaningful object of their choice. I kept all materials, mindful of display possibilities they offered.

Transcribed interviews showed conceptualizations and evidence of informal learning in public places; I explored these for notions of self, intention, and awareness, which showed little understanding about material object affordances for public place informal learning. Similarly, I applied public place and site conceptualizations, material object composition, and transformative learning to participants' public places understandings, discovering ongoing changes and walking's meaningfulness in knowing place.

Mindful of methodological imperatives for representational form, I eventually found that hanging mobile sculptures made this scholarship accessible and stood for its claims of process and interrelation, despite arriving at this realization after the end of information-gathering stages. To such an extent did I believe in the mobile form, that I made it my personal informal learning undertaking to produce one in conjunction with this research. These unique challenges are described in particular sections in this work, and highlight what emerged as research themes: time, in terms of the historical stretch between present and past; tensions, as dynamic energies made possible through contrasting interrelationships; and, change, acting as ongoing shifts between states of being.

This research revealed that attributes of multiplicities, imaginative reach through scale and scope, and varying transformations enrich material object interactions with ramifications for adults' informal

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[2] theartists.org. (2018). Site specific art. Retrieved 27 Feb, 2020, from https://www.the-artists.org/site-specific-art/

learning and Halifax public place sites; furthermore, they relate the facility of arts representations to display this research's entangled elements.

The import of this research is in the addition of understanding about adults' informal learning in shared public space, and in substantiating methodological process that depicts research findings represented in like artful forms. I draw attention to intra-active material objects, paradoxical informal learning ends, and public place site ruptures, and in connecting these elements, provide valuable information to the field of education that sees new knowledges emerge from innovative methodological research design.

Such is the A-Z reckoning of this research, although just a roadmap is not a journey, nor is my writing a straight line. I unpack these approaches and interpretations through inspection and elaboration in the coming chapters, in the same ways that it occurred to me, through insight or practice, to arrive at ideas and associations. This work expands like learning over time expands, and asks of written form similar consideration, and of research convention open-mindedness. In the following section, I signal how this dissertation may diverge from customary expectations of qualitative research: arts-informed methodological distinctions, artworks/art education misperceptions, and slowly unfolding knowledges.

DIVERGENCES

Arts-informed research methodology

In adopting arts-informed research methodology to assemble this enquiry, I found a sympathy in differently-forged research practices and knowledge production. In recounting their arrival at this new branch of qualitative research, Cole and Knowles (2008) write that

> We continued to push boundaries of what was then possible in inquiry and representation (i.e., marginally acceptable as scholarship), trying to get closer and closer to human experience and to communicate it in a way that seemed truer to its original form and to those who may be involved.[3]

The methodology's attention to authenticity required a distinct system of evaluation; Cole and Knowles set out qualities of goodness towards increased understanding of the human condition and more

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[3] Cole, A.L, & J.G. Knowles. (2008). Arts-informed research. In J.G. Knowles & A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* (pp. 55-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. p.58

accessible scholarship by way of "alternative (to conventional) processes and representational forms of inquiry … reaching multiple audiences."[4] I have borne in mind these qualities–intentionality, researcher presence, aesthetic quality, methodological commitment, holistic quality, communicability, knowledge advancement, and contributions[5]–in constructing this research, and invite readers to approach and assess this work through them. While this is credible, rigourous qualitative research, I chose instead to fete underexamined arts-informed research process to contribute to methodological understanding. I recognize this focus unsettles customary qualitative practice; let this statement serve notice as reassurance of the careful planning and overall endeavour nonetheless carried out.

Nor is this declaration of my intent misplaced: arts-informed research calls forth a researcher presence explicit and reflexive in its self-account, felt in the work, and allusive in textual and representational form.[6] This prevailing sensibility results in writing supported methodologically in its first-person voice usage and in continually re-situated positionalities impacting on material object significance, adults' informal learning elements, and Halifax's public place environments. Associated author-based approaches, such as phenomenology or narrative accounts, can sometimes be mistaken for arts-informed research's thorough weighting of researcher experience and enquiry understanding, although the mode of broadly accessible, socialized scholarship underpinning arts-informed research is distinct.

Arts-informed research is examined in Chapter 3: Artful Methodology, and is shown to fit not only with this research on material objects' interactions for adults' informal learning in Halifax's public place sites, but also to facilitate the birth of the representational mobile form satisfying the methodological contract for accessible and community-conducive research scholarship. I would, however, be remiss if I were to allow any impressions that this research is determined by the strength of artworks or art education.

Artworks/Art education

Arts-informed research distinguishes itself from other branches–"arts-based research, art-based inquiry, image-based research, and visual sociology"[7]–by studying qualitative research practice, not art itself. In this methodology, forms of art are research outputs directed towards non-academic communities. Artistic practices and processes illuminate understandings produced in this research, resulting here in a

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[4] Cole & Knowles, 2008, p.65
[5] Cole & Knowles, 2008, pp.65-68
[6] Cole & Knowles, 2008, p.66
[7] Cole & Knowles, 2008, p.59

mobile representational form with "methodological integrity"[8] that embodies "the relationship between the form and substance of the research text and the inquiry process reflected in the text."[9]

This work is distinct from art education, disciplinary histories, or particular artists' *oeuvre*s. Aligned skills of craft that represent this research's wayfindings into knowledge are the main drivers of art's presence here. And these wayfindings are occasionally necessitated: the timeframes in which these wayfindings unfold are a final reminder of this dissertation's potentially confounding expectations.

Unfolding knowledges

My more than 4-years-acquaintance with this research has allowed my understanding to progress gradually, and to a point I depict that unfurling in this writing. I chose specific instances of passive versus active voice, meant to signify a lingering over thought or prolonged encounter to reach clarity, though they may appear to upset academic style without basis. Sporadic sentence fragments are not meant to alienate readers, but to ask them to draw on other knowings and resonances in fashioning understanding; I hope that from time to time, they fall gracefully from a potent idea like the string from a mobile. I pay attention to written expression in as many of its forms as I can, from punctuation to spacing to poetry to symbolism, because of my beliefs in the importance of symbolic meaning-making; the quotation introducing this chapter evokes the slow inhale-exhale of consideration-realization that has marked my longstanding consideration of this research and its composition.

I make a point of this attribute because I rarely encounter conversational, even to an extent playful, tone in doctoral-level work. Rather than positing myself as an unreliable narrator or deficient researcher, I find this style to be the genuine amalgamation of the composite selves I bring to this work. I write in this way because it aids me in understanding associated ideas, finding means of connection, and bringing to bear the influences of experience on my life long with learning. Again, I am mindful that such choices may be objectionable to those expecting qualitative research custom arising from positivist tradition, but they are not undertaken lightly, nor are they without signification for this work or my projection of the researcher I am continuing to become. In the interests of supporting readers to move both backward and forward in this writing, however, I offer a chapter summary for orientation.

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[8] Cole & Knowles, 2008, p.61
[9] Cole & Knowles, 2008, p.61

CHAPTER LISTING

This chapter is unique amongst the others in recounting participants' informal learning moments; with it, I convey informal learning's expanse, where and how it happens, and with what, if any, materials and places key to those moments. Yet this motif is not continued through the dissertation: here sharing participant stories fulfills a narrative purpose to make known the style of this work. I recognize this may again generate confusion, as participants' individual characteristics and situated positionalities are customarily a property of qualitative research; however, in this work asking, "How do material object interactions affect adults' informal learning in Halifax, Nova Scotia's public place sites?", the emphasis lies with characterizations and tendencies based on a gathered sample of instances rather than individual distinctions.

The writing to come is summarized as follows:

- Chapter 1, **Materialize**, relates various adults' informal learning experiences, and describes the research design exploring material objects' effects on adults' informal learning in Halifax, Nova Scotia's public place sites.

- Chapter 2, **Informal Learning Knowledges**, examines adult learning through key figures and relevant theoretical relations to organize adults' informal learning in relation to material objects and Halifax's public places.

- Chapter 3, **Artful Methodology**, describes proponents and related theories of arts-informed research methodology, as well as this research's methods and the mobile representational form.

- Chapter 4, **Public Places' Overview**, contains and highlights key issues in public place literature, and explores this research's sites for their informal learning and artful representation possibilities.

- Chapter 5, **Study Sites' Material Objects**, describes information from participants about each Halifax site, viewed through a framework of recurring ideas that emerge as research themes.

- Chapter 6, **Interim**, is the sole author-intrusive chapter, pausing the research to alert the reader to ensuing challenges that complicate and enrich straightforward concepts and understandings.

- Chapter 7**, Informal Learning Complications**, re-explores pertinent adults' informal learning definitions and elements in order to embed geographical approaches and artful considerations.

- Chapter 8, **Reshaping Public Places**, re-examines public places concepts of shared space and describes recent Halifax site changes; public places are resonant with symbolic material objects and emplaced walking.

- Chapter 9, **Incarnation**, summarizes this work's findings and insights in themes of time, tensions, and change, and relates results of material object interactions for adults' informal learning in changeable public place through artful representational facilities.

I add to this list three separate sections appearing at the beginning, middle, and end of this work. They are reflections on my informal learning attempts to make a mobile, and show my informal learning concomitances with this research process. These sections–The First Time, Encountering Tensions, and Changes Emerge–respectively address my preconceptions, challenges, and learnings with mobile forms.

> *Of his mobiles, Calder said, "they are created to interact with the world around them…*
>
> *a dynamic expression in space."*[10]

Like the ground against which my cats crouch to leap: this is the base. I am familiar with this research and what may appear to be its detours in ways that others are not; I no longer need an invitation to enter this work or survey the public places stated or meet the people who have collaborated in its knowledge production.

But others will.

In approaching this research with Calder's advised 'slow, gentle impulse', I bring forward these six informal learning encounters related to me by participants to begin identifying patterns and trends rather than individual characters; the collection establishes the variety of adults' informal learning experiences and the meaningfulness of the places where they occurred. I acknowledge participants' generosities in sharing with me their stories of moment and awkwardness and shift, before I give full weight to adults' informal learning in the coming chapters. From the corner of the yellow table, the cat blinks slowly in the afternoon beams of the sun. I take this as her tacit approval to continue.

> [Video: How to Balance a Calder Style Cascading Mobile Sculpture](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZARheDlf_c)[11]
> "…we always start at the bottom and work our way up…."

To achieve cantilevered balance, one end pulls up
while
the other pulls down.[12]

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[10] Masterworks, n.d.
[11] Gibbons, E. (2017, Oct 27). How to balance a Calder style cascading mobile sculpture. Retrieved 22 Jul, 2019, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZARheDlf_c
[12] Gibbons, 2017, n.p.

SHARED STORIES

The woman's wide vowels were as broad as a West Coast stroll. "*I train for marathons, and I had to find places to run…*", explaining her connection with Shubie Park. Running is her passion and (to her, underdeveloped) expertise.

"I'm struggling with it! I've been struggling with it…" she laughs, strain bisecting her voice. 'It' is the 42.2 kilometre Blue Nose Marathon in Halifax, for which she believes her running training partners are more prepared: *"They've been running more, and they haven't had injuries, and they're just faster! [Laughs] They're just faster! I was going away from [training], feeling beat up, and [thinking] 'What the hell is wrong with you? Why aren't you running? They're so much faster than you…'"*

Her group ran so quickly along downtown Halifax's Birmingham Street one day that she realized she simply could not maintain their pace. Inwardly, she responded, '*F&%$ it. You're on your own; just run on your own.*' As she continued to run "*in a bad mood*", she fell. *"I didn't trip, I fell."*

"And what's funny is that it was right at the moment I said, 'Okay, pull your s#%^ together!' … Five seconds later, I'm on my face." Her reaction seemed to me a courageous act of self-compassion: *"I [thought] 'You know what? That's what you get for talking bad to yourself!' [Laughs] . . . .That kind of set the course for…reassessing – how I talk to myself."* She considered whether this kind of critical self-talk may be rooted in previous experience–*"Let's not rule it out!"*–and ponders how she could understand that better.

She feels now that her running training group is simply more advanced, and *"maybe that's not where I am. Right now."* She identified her informal learning as, in fact, a resistance: learning to avoid comparing herself to others.

The woman later spoke matter-of-factly about her future as a runner: *"After that big fall, [I thought], 'Well, you either quit or you just figure out Plan B.' So, we're on Plan B; it hasn't been figured out yet."*

* * *

This man is tall, habitually pulling at his chin for the right word. He tugs at his face again as he explains that he thought it would "*sound… cool*" to "*go around the entire [Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm] and … find random things to record.*"

The idea was based on his knowledge of sound recording, which he found in a studio environment was insular, tedious, and based on individual effort: *"What I wanted to do was actually be able to go and have a semi-uncontrolled environment, and then add different textures to my recordings."* Because he loves live instruments, and recording, and sounds, *"I was…trying to bridge the gap between … my background in recording audio and then also … the idea that the space itself was available, and has … any infinite amount of sounds that you could actually record."*

He said his equipment allowed him to embrace different perspectives: *"When you have these recorders, and you plug them into headphones, and you put the headphones on, it heightens the sounds that are around you. The microphones are pretty sensitive, so they'll pick up … specific sounds. You can turn the volume up, and all of a sudden, 'Oh, I can hear those crickets, five times louder than they were before.'"* On one circuit around the Farm, he sought out percussive sounds. Another time, *"There were other things that I hit that reminded me of … cowbells"*; he also recorded the children's garden sandbox and its tools and rakes in use.

This pursuit—*"taking … my handheld recorder … and going out into different parks and different places outside"*—led him to run a workshop on technology and its possible uses to attendees at the Farm. He then lent out five or six recorders for people to *"record whatever they found."* He wanted to run an informal, unstructured exercise drawing on people's interest; he recognized few people possessed his audio recording skills or Farm familiarity.

He reflects that he tried his best to explain the activity clearly to ensure a successful exercise, but admitted this approach contrasted with the spirit of exploration, *"Just saying, 'Hey, let's go wherever we want to'."*

"What worked for me was the idea of … spontaneity, and being able to move around and actually physically explore the space. . . . but then not recognizing there were actually other programs going on." The activity clashed with other Farm activities: *"a larger number of people … had a negative impact on other programs. Because people would [laughs] just get into other people's spaces."* The man smiles now, although it was likely frustrating at the time: *"it's literally the intention of the program … to be like a child, but as soon as I gave all these adults this technology to be children, they acted like children!"*

Perhaps he was mindful of this experience in later speaking about one of his favourite topics, the value of the arts. The arts, he finds, allow non-linear processes and self-direction and learning from one's mistakes; as an example, he cites the subjectivity of audio recording: *"I know there are points where*

you're hearing [something uncomfortable] … 'I don't want to hear fingernails on a chalkboard; that's a bad sound' … but there's just so many other sounds where people … might connect to it more than others and think, 'I actually really enjoyed that one' versus this other sound that we made." The workshop attendees heard the final recordings from their selected sounds: "*I chopped out different pieces of the recordings, then sent them a link to … be able to hear what they had recorded."*

Nor was this the only use he made of the recordings; he is pleased to say these recordings appear in several of his music projects. "*It's helped … give the recordings a bit more of … a natural feel to them … versus something that's so rigid and controlled."* Overall, he dislikes an overly formal setting for sound recording: *"If you give it too much of a structure … the outcome is only gonna be x, y or z, versus – all these other options."*

This informal learning experience has changed his perspective about his music: *"Now I'm looking at [a] stool and [think] 'Oh, I can record that,' or 'That could be something … I could use that.'"*

* * *

The second man I spoke with arrived with a clipboard under his arm and was excessively polite, almost deferential. He continually apologized for only telling me stories, concerned that this would not give me any useful information. Yet his stories indicated a deep passion for learning, formal and informal.

He revealed he was studying at Dalhousie University to become a Master Gardener because he wanted "*something in writing that says I know [about gardening] [Chuckles]. I know I know, but I want somebody else, with authority, to say 'He knows', you know?"* This will allow him to work in horticulture, "*telling people how to garden right."* He will earn his certificate in 2019, once he completes the minimum four-course requirement.

His formal learning predates his Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm experiences: "*When I first came to Halifax, not knowing anybody … I wanted something to do to keep me occupied. So I applied to Dalhousie to … become a student at the Landscape Architecture class. . . .I was accepted in the course, and I was so happy."*

As can be the case, however, with educational schedules, "*the course was starting in September, and I had to travel …I couldn't attend it. So I thought I'll postpone it, and attend in January. And then they said, 'Sorry, this kind of course, you only can come in in the fall. You cannot come in[to it] in winter.'"* After waiting another year to start the course, "*I decided I don't want to spend four years driving to [the*

agricultural campus in] Truro [Chuckles]." He registered instead for the Master Gardener course, "*more what I really want.*"

Simultaneously, he was volunteering at the Farm, which he saw as applying his university learning: "*I'm doing a Master Gardener course, and this … practical work. Doing the course online and then actually being there, physically, doing the work.*" He decided against doing his program's experiential learning class "*because I've done more [hands-on gardening] than what they would tell me.*" Through the Atlantic Master Gardeners' Association, to which he subscribes, he assists with public library talks.

He seems surprised to hear that this involvement demonstrates several formal and informal learning principles. He pauses, as he does often in this interview, before he responds: "*Most of what I have learned during the few months I spent at the Farm wasn't formal in any way; like, asking if this is a weed or this is a plant, and somebody will tell you why it's a weed, or, if it's a plant, why we want to keep it, because it's fixing nitrogen, or you should put it with the compost because it's already given up seeds, and you don't want the seeds to come back to the soil. . . . So there's a lot of knowledge that was transferred from the people who were working there or helping out, without it being official. Like, nothing written down, or there's no schedule; nothing academic about it.*"

He dislikes valuing one type of learning over another, attributing his initiative to personal passion: "*I'm getting myself involved in gardening. Maybe … I'm not quite yet [expert] at the moment. . . .[But] I was learning a lot because I was interested in learning.*" The combination of online learning and practice experience "*actually helped me to get where I want quicker. I was learning, probably, as fast as I could, because I already have interest in gardening.*"

He will return to the Farm as a steward again next year, and is planning how to share what he has learned. "*I'm going to have some more trips this summer, at the Farm, and you can come and watch and listen, if you want to. And everybody's welcome.*"

* * *

One woman quickly took to the idea of making a 3D model of one of the site's memorable features during the focus group. In the ensuing conversation, it emerged that she undertakes frequent do-it-yourself projects at home, sometimes with her father's help: "*My friend's mother was redoing her house, and she just lives down the street, and I often help her out because her kids live elsewhere. She had all this garbage wood in her yard, so I said I'll take that away for you if you need me to take it away. I take it, and then my father and I come up with weird ideas about making stuff together.*"

She used that scrap wood to create a basement barn door, proudly showing an 'after' picture and admitting, "*It took us a long time to get that barn door to work, because it wasn't… being functional.*"

Generally self-deprecating about her impressive range of talents, this woman credited her father with "*skills; I don't have skills…*", in operating a tablesaw and other machinery, but the shared project construction and vision is simply "*what my dad and I do.*"

Several other projects are imminent, she reports: clocks made from saw blades, and "*[she] found some really cool stones that [my dad] is going to slice [in two]. . . .I bought the stone, didn't know what to do with it, came up with the project [to repurpose an old dresser], painted the dresser, put the stone on it as a handle, loved it. And I … [asked], 'Well, couldn't we do that with something else?' He [said], 'I have a diamond blade saw; yeah, just go get some stones,' so I'm currently stone-hunting.*"

She is furnishing a home studio for these and other projects, reflecting that "*The other thing I inherited from my father is 'Don't throw stuff out.'*" Scattered on the soon-to-be-studio's large table are the makings of seaglass art: "*My sister and I have always [gathered seaglass], and I [thought], 'Well, why don't I just make something with it?' But that didn't go so well … I made…4 or 5 projects. But my nemesis was glue: they all turned out beautifully, and then a couple months later--[sad noise]. I had them framed and everything. And then, they'd fallen off, one by one.*" In the brilliant glare of the sun in the window at the wonder'neath studio, host of our focus group and 3D model construction process, she affixed a small foam wave to a strip of balsa wood.

Showing me pictures on her phone, she points to a small parson's bench–"*That was a window out of my dad's house, that we took scrap wood, and I bought some little hooks, and…*"–proving her rich relationship with her father in more ways than one. "*I just keep coming up with crazy things, and he says, 'Yeah, let's do it.'*"

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

It came as a disappointment to one man that the wonder'neath studio supplies did not include scraps of wood. For this man, engaged like the other participants in creating 3D models of meaningful site features, the activity was hampered because "*I would have liked to do it out of wood…*"

His fondness for the material–"*Uh, I like wood, full stop*"–makes it his building material of choice: "*being amongst wooden structures is definitely, for me, much more interesting than being in the middle of concrete or metal stuff.*" During the focus group, he shared photos of a wooden trellis he built "*from*

scratch," along with a swing made from "*all scrap wood*" that sits in his backyard, although some of his projects he gives away to friends.

Part of his fondness for working as a Farm steward stems from his appreciation of its wooden structures: "*I think that's the nicest part of the garden*". His recall of emplaced wooden objects is incredibly detailed: "*These structures have about four by four inch posts, and … some of them have … tilted covers; others are open space at the top, and some of them we had put up some shading materials. Some of the seats, which were also wooden, were in the form of either benches, which were straight benches, or these conventional garden benches where they have handles … they even put up some wooden barrels to collect rainwater so they can use it for watering and when we need some extra water.*"

He spoke of helping build the Farm's accessible raised gardening beds with Home Depot employees: "*they had already pre-cut the wood to size, so [the construction consisted of] just fixing it and making sure it's the right angle and just putting the screws in. . . . they already have the things prepared. Like, they were quite organized, having the right tools, the right size of screws, and the material exactly to size*". As a self-described woodworker, he found it a basic process*: "I liked what they did; I learnt how they did it, but it wasn't a big invention. I would have been able to do it on my own.*"

But he was not on his own: "*There was a few more volunteers … probably two or three there, too. . . . we had some coffee and something to eat in between. It was enjoyable. . . .I was happy doing it, and seeing how other people do it first.*" He reported that eight beds were made in the space of three hours.

The social aspects of the construction, another common learning practice, meshed with the recognition of his own abilities. He chuckled about the Farm coordinators' safety concerns, "*worried about us handling power tools … [instead the coordinator said], 'You can help us, you can carry the wood..' and she was worried that we would handle nails or [the] electric drill or whatever. Well, I went along at the beginning, but then I couldn't just sit and watch; I have to do something, you know? So I just started picking up screws and doing it myself*".

* * *

One participant who helped present a temporary art installation during the evening Nocturne: Art at Night festival, almost absent-mindedly mentioned the hostility of an encounter in the site's public space. In fall 2017, the participant took part in an installation based at Victoria Park, *"Park Vic",* a small square between downtown Halifax's South Park Street and Cathedral Lane. The group decided to do a "*campfire-inspired*" exhibit stemming from his friends' experiences working at summer camps.

He narrated the exhibit's set-up as he drew a map of the site: "*Right around the corner, we got South Park [drawing]… and then, South Park's leading up here [drawing]. So over here, we would have actually Park Vic … Park Vic has, in my mind, a little underutilized courtyard area [that] leads back out to the space or the park [drawing] where we had our exhibit. … There's random paths that go through here that seem [like they're] weaving and ducking [drawing], but on the little patch of grass over here: that's … where we set up our TVs.*"

Close to the "*stage area*" beside the square's Robbie Burns statue, the group plugged in TVs to outdoor power outlets: "*we had a tape of … fire that we had recorded … looping. We … stacked all the TVs up and then people would show up and then informally we would start singing songs…*", as if people were singing around a campfire. In front of the TVs were picnic coolers, and "*inside we put … scarves that were … smoky? That we had … put over a fire … so they had … the scent of the campfire to give it… [Laughs] More of an in-the-city, kind of outdoor experience.*" The "*pretty informal*" exhibit went on for the six-hour duration of the Nocturne festival.

He is diffident in describing both the exhibit's visitors and the group's purpose as he continues to a draw his Nocturne site: "*There would be people coming in over here [drawing], walking up to the TVs, and then we would be standing in front of them, so we had an intentional space, where people were drawn towards the TVs, and they were curious, [asking] 'What are you guys doing here?'*"

As it turned out, not only did Nocturne visitors have an interest in the group's presence: "*we were yelled at a whole bunch of times by people that were just sitting or lying on the benches.*" This was a surprising encounter, at least for this participant: "*I've never – thought of that space as something that's public, in a way, because … it doesn't seem like a safe space all the time. And it's totally underutilized, where it's … close to Spring Garden –*" . The participant's recognition of his feelings and expectations for the area intimate complicated discussions around public space and for whom it is meant: "*[The park residents shouted] 'This is my park.' So there's almost an entitlement, where people [shouted], 'This is my park,'; this is my side of the street. It didn't feel very welcoming.*"

Park Victoria, for this participant, is "*one of those areas that's super central that should be more – inviting, or more – open for people*", a potentially pleasant area that was not meeting its potential. "*If you were to take a photo of it, it's a great little park … but then, beautiful hot summer day, you don't see people lying down in Park Vic; you see people going to Citadel Hill or somewhere else, you know?*"

The 'somewhere else' is always in plentiful supply.

ENTRY INTO THIS RESEARCH

I find these experiences delightful in the tenor of their realizations for these people: occasionally positive but not always, somewhat surprising but not entirely, from time to time fruitful but not necessarily epiphanic. It is as though their understandings are in motion, brought about by their movements in the world and the movements of the world. This makes for different shapes of informal learning, carved in part by the places in which they occur and prompted by the interplay of objects appearing there. I picture, on the basis of these stories and with the strengths of this work, connections between the shapes of informal learning and the groundedness of the public places where these interactions are embodied. I see these links jostling for position, exploring how the shapes and place and lines support, enervate, misalign and resist one another. The cluster begins to look like a mobile; a kinetic hanging sculpture comprising elements of space, air, figure, frame, and pattern.

As these anecdotes reveal, adults' informal learning is differentiated by conceptualizations, evidence, duration, recognition, and reflection, which is why a unified definition of it does not appear here; later chapters address this challenge. Similarly problematic are efforts towards explaining public places, though I articulate the criteria used to select specific research sites in Halifax. The material objects of this enquiry consist of participant-identified physical matter, from handheld items to furnishings, structures and fauna, garden beds and lights, or paintings and computers. This, too, generates a burden of clarity I address in chapters suiting necessarily in-depth discussions of composition, entanglement, and material intra-activity.

The written and visual techniques in these chapters illustrate meaning and associations. Included are informal, poetic-like commentary inserted into the writing as they have helped foster in me understandings of difficult trains of thought. I have explored aligned discourse by adding to this work stand-alone vignettes of this research's public place sites cobbled from fieldnotes sketches and overheard phrases. Finally, I added participants' meaningful objects drawn by hand behind this text, emerging and gradually darkening into more solid understandings. To aid the reader, I introduce these techniques as they appear, but their presences resonate thematically and methodologically, as well as stylistically. They have also provided me with fun in this endeavour, which has been more helpful to me than I can recount. I reach out a hand to pet my cat: she carefully bites her paw, and says nothing.

These textual encroachments also serve to highlight this dissertation's wide-ranging, informed conversation in which threads of ideas are introduced, set aside, re-examined and interrogated, dismissed or made prominent, and reconsidered before a more conclusive position is reached. For this reason, no one chapter is dedicated to reviewing literature, nor to explaining method decision-making; these necessities are suffused throughout the writing, as the information has made its way to me and as I have made it into this enquiry. Introduced ideas are subject to more intense scrutiny in later chapters. This work has been crafted, meaningfully, carefully, into being, but it is replete for all that.

REPRESENTATION OF FORM

Much as my cats are drawn to twisting, twirling forms, I like the mobile's structural capacity to represent a complex, intertwined extension of ideas unconstrained by space. And mobiles are akin to other understandings about material objects, adults' informal learning, and Halifax's public place sites gleaned from hand-drawn site maps and 3D models. The arts-informed research methodology underpinning this work expects information-finding of this character, and I offer this accessibility in its scholarship. This reciprocated connection between material objects and adults' informal learning and Halifax's public act as a twisting, swinging mobile that yet holds the sculpture firm as it traces arcs upon the air.

Out of different masses,
tight, heavy, middling
– indicated by variations of size or colour –
direction line – vectors which represent speeds, velocities, accelerations, forces, etc. . . .
– these directions making between them
meaningful angles,
and senses,
together defining one big conclusion
or many.[13]
I know it is time to draw to a close when the cat on the table stretches and comes over to butt my hand, careful nonetheless to avoid the keyboard. It is her invitation to play, and it is time.

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[13] Savanah Design. (n.d.). Alexander Calder. Retrieved 22 Jul, 2019, from http://www.savanahdesign.com.au/blog/alexander-calder/

INFORMAL LEARNING KNOWLEDGES

If you are
Heating up food
In a microwave,
Make a   *hole*
In the middle
Of your food.
It will heat   *e   v   e   n   l   y   .*

Like other outlier observations throughout this research, the statement above demonstrates one technique I adopted to develop different avenues of understanding with this work: insertions, as I lovingly named their subversive pryings. Distinguished by an italic font, erratic spacing, and non-non-sequiturial pronouncements, insertions serve as touchstones for my personal informal learning and elsewhere afford metaphorical connections to the contents of this research.

The appearance of insertions is meaningful on several fronts: methodological fit in "consciously deploy[ing] a range of creative processes as part of the ensemble of research practices"[1]; application of Schugurensky's findings about eliciting tacit informal learning when people "illustrate their learning claims with stories, anecdotes and examples, and to reflect on their learning experiences in other settings"[2]; and, access to evocative associations that engage readers and complement my writing style. As I was crafting this work, these insertions gave me a metonymic device for summarizing complex ideas in the manner of informality here explored. With them, this writing shows modes of belonging with "internal consistency and coherence that represents a strong and seamless relationship between purpose and method (process and form)."[3] Insertions are untraceable and unreported, therefore the depositions of documentation–quotation marks, references, and dates–are missing. They appear randomly, much like 'real life' insights, occasionally linking to a deep emotional memory that coalesces

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[1] Sullivan, G. (2006). Research acts in art practice. *Studies in Art Education, 48*(1), 19-35. p.24
[2] Schugurensky, D. (2006). Strategies to elicit informal learning and tacit knowledge: Methodological notes from the field. WALL Working Paper 19-2000. Presented at the Rethinking work and learning: Research findings and policy challenges Conference, June 4-5. n.p.
[3] Cole, A.L, & J.G. Knowles. (2008). Arts-informed research. In J.G. Knowles & A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* (pp. 55-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp.66-67

my understanding. In particular, they are relevant to this chapter that explores mine and others' interests in learning and what is known as informal learning.

My interest in exploring learning grew out of my beliefs about intelligence and my passion to 'find out' about things. When my older-by-three-years sister was away at 'big school' for the day, I would pester my mother at home for pictures to colour or books to read so that I could be 'in school', too. I could not wait to do all that learning. As a student, I leaned towards creativities, and my favourite English and art subjects stayed with me throughout high school and directed my university days (more than 12 years of them, at this point). Overall, I enjoyed school. I was fortunate to have positive education experiences, supported by creatively bonkers teachers, extraordinary advanced study opportunities, and a solid academic foundation. I can see my privilege in this educational capital, and I have tried to honour it with empathy, support, and encouragement for other learners and their chosen pursuits.

However, I also encountered incredible disappointments in education, crying through math classes, first-year university performance pressures that threatened my life when unmet, and a heart-break-ing rejection from supervisors claiming I lacked the intellectual wherewithal for doctoral work in literature. These challenges have wrought in me a more cautious approach towards the institution and how educational systems and structures struggle to reflect existence's strangenesses and surprises.

In middle age, I find myself instead taking up with informal learning and its unteachable yet nonetheless passionate knowledges. My experiences of living in a different country, navigating personal relationships, and sitting in the front row during my father's and then my mother's funeral fostered my development as an adult who treasures moments of transition and reaction more often found in the world than are specialized educational protocols and cultures. I have grown sensitive to informal learning's socialist, reflective, and ongoing understandings while working at a PhD level, a paradox that produces an ironic chuckle from me. Classical conventions of education permit my intense examination of its antithesis, informal learning; there are more ways than one for this work to show its craftiness.

I want to celebrate informal learning with this research, producing well-designed and robust results while democratizing other knowledge-producing endeavours. I look forward to expanding research understanding so that co-produced, community-shared, and artfully represented research is more widely undertaken.

the back of your ear and pull the

to wrap the cord around

Apparently, the proper way to wear earbud-type headphones is

buds down from the top

of your ears and

insert *them*

[IT DEFINITELY MAKES THE BASS LOUDER]

I bring to this work intersectional positionalities as a Caucasian, English-speaking, middle-class, educated Canadian woman (with cats), identifying with a marginalized community, and with postsecondary as well as professional adult teaching and facilitation experience. These overlapping perspectives and my receptivity to non-educational learning have borne in me tendencies towards constructivism, in which accumulated knowledges emerge from experiences connected to understanding. In Chapter 3: Artful Methodology, I discuss in full the constructivist, feminist, postmodern, new materialist, and ecological theories informing this work, including analysis of the information gathered; at this time, I concentrate on examining lifelong learning (formerly adult education) literature and its offshoot, informal learning.

Many cats get sleepy after eating, so: prevent kitties from working out in the wee hours of the morn by feeding them just before you turn in*.

* Unless you have the only cat in existence who becomes active after eating. But you won't have the only cat in existence who becomes active after eating. Because I do. I have her.

LIFELONG LEARNING

In this chapter, I report on the wider lifelong learning field within which informal learning's histories and influences appear. After some consideration, I chose not to conduct a comprehensive historical investigation because I could not make room for the epistemological meanings of this work against such a factual backdrop. Additionally, with this research focused on informal learning, where unrecorded, passed-on knowledges thrive, a review of published and therefore sanctioned understanding moves further away from my interest in exploring amorphous know-how. I note where significant adult education figures and realizations overlap with theoretical or positional concerns relevant for this work, but I remain committed to informal learning as the area of consideration in this enquiry.

Terminology

Adult education

The concept of education for adults may be said to have started in Canada with Adelaide Hoodless: in an 1897 speech in Ontario, she proposed forming a group for women to improve families' quality of life through domestic education, family health, and community service.[4] This group, eventually known as Women's Institutes, was by 1913 active in most Canadian provinces and "centered on adult education, mostly regarding home making skills"[5], which Hoodless adapted from her experiences founding the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).[6] Also at this time, a young Presbyterian minister, Alfred Fitzpatrick, saw a need to provide lumberjacks and bushworkers with literacy skills; in 1899, he and Queens University students began delivering reading materials instruction in "camps, mines, and railway lines"[7], founding Frontier College and initiating "a still-lingering adult education tradition based on the pre-determined need to serve workers in remote locations."[8]

In the United States, adult education is linked with the American Association for Adult Education[9], founded in 1926 to affiliate "the total array of community facilities available to meet the needs of the adult learner", including, in addition to schools and colleges, "lyceums, theater and art groups, libraries,

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[4] Women's Institutes (WI) Canada. (2020). Story of WI Canada. Retrieved 10 Dec, 2019, from https://www.fwic.ca/history
[5] Harvie, D. (13 Mar, 2013). Women's Institute boasts long history in Pictou County. *The Advocate*. 4
[6] Historica Canada. (n.d.). Young Women's Christian Association. Retrieved 10 Dec, 2019, from https://web.archive.org/web/20151208064203/http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/young-womens-christian-association/
[7] Frontier College. (2016). Our history. Retrieved 10 Dec, 2019, from https://www.frontiercollege.ca/About-Us/History
[8] Terry, M. (2001). Philosophies of adult education movements in 20th century Canada: Implications for current literacy educators. *Canadian Journal for Studies in Adult Education, 15*(2), 61-78. p.65
[9] Courtney, S. (1989). Defining adult and continuing education. In S. B. Merriam & P. M. Cunningham (Eds.), *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* (pp.15-25). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. p.16

museums, clubs, and voluntary associations."[10] In 1929, Basil Yeaxlee recruited educational speakers to give talks to returning soldiers in relaxed settings through his work with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)[11], and noted that

> Much adult education will never know itself as such, and will be recognized only by leaders and teachers of real insight. It will go on in clubs, churches, cinemas, theatres, concert rooms, trade unions, political societies, and in the homes of the people where there are books, newspapers, music, wireless sets, workshops, gardens and groups of friends.[12]

I want to make clear the point that places for delivery, and their characteristics, bridge a gap between nascent adult education in North America and this enquiry into informal learning. Although adult education came to refer to professional development practices, in its infancy, educators were sensitive to the significance of places for learning for adults. Other considerations in these examples–that is, emphasis on lived experiences and purpose-driven learning–are also reminiscent of lifelong learning.

Eduard Lindeman's 1926 book *The Meaning of Adult Education* proposed new attitudes towards education that still resonate with contemporary ideas of adult learning: education was meant to assist one in living life rather than preparing to do so; education included goals unrelated to one's vocation; situations or experiences, not subjects, defined adult education; and, experiences act as the greatest learning resource.[13] Lindeman also suggested adult education's purpose as a life imbued with greater meaning through learning.[14]

The journal *Adult Education's* 1955 request to several authors for a unified definition of adult education definition produced instead a list of shared qualities: "the voluntariness of learning, the commitment to growth, and the deliberate structuring of activities."[15] During World War II and following, adult education became associated with workplace education and training program traditions[16], and from it emerged a separate field, 'continuing education', acknowledged as the "ongoing and advanced

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[10] Courtney, 1989, 16
[11] Smith, M.K. (2007). Basil Yeaxlee, lifelong learning and informal education. Retrieved 14 April, 2019, from http://infed.org/mobi/basil-yeaxlee-lifelong-learning-and-informal-education/
[12] Yeaxlee, B.A. (1929). *Lifelong education.* London, UK: Cassell. p.155
[13] Warren, C. (1989). Andragogy and N. F. S. Grundtvig: A critical link. *Adult Education Quarterly, 39*(4), 173-187. p.174
[14] Smith, M.K. (1996, 2001). Lifelong learning. *The encyclopedia of informal education*. Retrieved 8 April, 2019, from http://www.infed.org/lifelonglearning/b-life.htm
[15] Courtney, 1989, 17
[16] Courtney, 1989, 16

education necessary for professionals to stay abreast of … knowledge."[17] Even in shifting towards career development, adult education nonetheless maintained its association with learning for adults distinguished by the places in which it was delivered or implemented.

During the mid- to late-twentieth-century, civil rights organizations and social justice initiatives were in political foment. Many of these groups and meeting spaces were fashioned into atypical adult education program incubators devoted to citizenship responsibilities and social benefits.[18]

Andragogy

Pertaining to study specifically for adults, the term 'andragogy' appeared in print earlier than did explicit references to adult education. First cited in Alexander Kapp's 1833 book *Platon's Erziehungslehre (Plato's Educational Ideas)*[19], in which Kapp argued that education, self-reflection, and character betterment are humanity's primary values; that outer, objective competencies could be demonstrated through training or skills; and that self-reflection and life experiences producing learning that could not be realized only by 'teaching' adults.[20]

Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, in his 1920s work on adult learning in Germany, saw in andragogy a turn towards social progress, "developing the adult's sensibility for the spirit of the age and motivating him/her to take action with the purpose of improving society."[21] Writing on andragogy appeared throughout the 1940s and 1950s in Switzerland, Germany, Yugoslavia and the Netherlands[22]; in Britain in 1964, J.A. Simpson named those studying adult education as students of andragogy.[23] Andragogy is subdivided, for instance, into geragogy, humanagogy, and metagogy[24], but the concept maintains a belief in learning suited to adults and distinct from education for children.

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[17] Hatfield, T.H. (1989). Four-year colleges and universities. In S. B. Merriam & P. M. Cunningham (Eds.), *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* (pp.303-315). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. p.304
[17] Courtney, 1989, 16
[18] Stubblefield, H.W., & Keane, P. (1989). The history of adult and continuing education. In S. B. Merriam & P. M. Cunningham (Eds.), *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* (pp.26-36). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. p.34
[19] Henschke, J.A. (2016). A history of andragogy and its documents as they pertain to adult basic and literacy education. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning, 25,* 1-28. p.2
[20] Henschke, 2016, 2
[21] Loeng, S. (2018). Various ways of understanding the concept of andragogy. *Cogent Education, 5,* 1-15. Retrieved 10 April, 2019, from https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2018.1496643
[22] Loeng, 2018, 3
[23] Henschke, 2016, 3
[24] Peterson, C.M., & Ray, C.M. (2013). Andragogy and metagogy: The evolution of neologisms. *Journal of Adult Education, 42*(2), 82-85.

Lifelong learning

A mixture of characteristics, values, sites, and goals from adult education and andragogy are found in conceptualizations of lifelong learning, though the term itself emerged somewhat recently. In 1972, Edgar Faure and the International Commission on the Development of Education produced a report entitled *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow.*[25] This report, commissioned by UNESCO to understand the causes of international student demonstrations in 1967 and 1968[26], alludes to a system of 'lifelong education' in which "[individuals] should no longer assiduously acquire knowledge once and for all, but learn how to build up a continually evolving body of knowledge all through life."[27] The phrase 'life-long learners' appeared for the first time in a 1993 mission statement written by Leslie Watkins and Superintendent Clint Taylor for the Temple City Unified School District in California[28]; now the term is a discourse in itself.[29]

Lifelong learning in current parlance indicates the continued gathering of skills or knowledges through assorted attitudes, practices, and endeavours. Reactive in its composition–citizenry- and volunteer-focused in the 1970s, neoliberal economies-laden in the 1980s, and social-policy-driven in the 1990s[30]– lifelong learning encompasses different aims and influences, such as adult education and andragogy, as well as different formal, non-formal, and informal means of learning so that knowledge is envisioned throughout the spectrum of life. Here is a strong point of connection with socially-acquired knowledges of craft practice and art tradition:

> folklore includes quilts and fiddle tunes, but it also includes all that we learn informally in everyday life: skateboarding tricks, how to set a table, texting, jokes, cyberlore, even classroom conduct. . . . We learn traditions in our various cultural groups…Some traditions are new, some are old. Innovation and variation keep them alive. Folk arts include oral

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[25] Faure, E., Herrera, F., Kaddoura, A.-R., Lopes, H., Petrovsky, A.V., Rahnema, M., & Ward, F.C. (1972). *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow.* Paris, FR: UNESCO.

[26] Ouane, A. (2011). Evolution of and perspectives on lifelong learning. In J. Yang and R. Valdés-Cotera (Eds.), *Conceptual evolution and policy developments in lifelong learning* (pp. 24-39). Hamburg, DE: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. p.25

[27] Faure et al., 1972, vi

[28] Wikipedia. (1 Mar, 2019). Lifelong learning. Retrieved 8 April, 2019, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lifelong_learning

[29] Welton, M.R. (2006). Intimations of a just learning society: From the United Farmers of Alberta to Henson's provincial plan in Nova Scotia. In T. Fenwick, T. Nesbit, & B. Spencer (Eds.), *Contexts of adult education: Canadian perspectives* (pp. 24-35). Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing.

[30] Rubenson, K., & Walker, J. (2006). The political economy of adult learning in Canada. In T. Fenwick, T. Nesbit, & B. Spencer (Eds.), *Contexts of adult education: Canadian perspectives* (pp. 173-186). Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing.

narratives like stories, jokes, anecdotes; music; movement and dance; beliefs; customs; and material culture, what folklorists call "stuff" like food, hairstyles, or crafts.[31]

Regardless of its label, learning by adults features a handful of common qualities: community organizations' (and their places) significance, meaning or personal fulfillment, willingness for learning, and an ongoing social compact. I see in the term 'lifelong learning' different conceptualizations of maturity, and learning that speaks to teacher-led instruction and predetermined curricula equitably with personal interests and intermittent understanding. Additionally, as I noted in this chapter's beginning, while my education has given me interpretive and analytic acumen, it was through my life and others' deaths that I happened upon compassion and *per diem* perceptions infusing my ken. Lifelong learning, for me, holds room for the latter.

Always listen, and give people the chance to speak.
More than you think is necessary.
Because if you think it's necessary
Chances are, you can't imagine how much people have to say.

Notable theorists and authors work in the speciality of lifelong learning and offer insights relevant to this research's informal learning, which is helpful, since the often invisible nature of informal learning paradoxically resists widespread championing. As elsewhere, these figures appear here because of their meaningfulness for this enquiry; interrogating their positionalities in other work and life areas is a subject for a different type of study.

Figures

John Dewey

Philosopher, educator, and author John Dewey's proposed educational reforms in the early 1900s emphasized learners' contributions in developing their own understanding. The ideal learner for Dewey was the adult who engaged in learning activities[32] by bringing their interests and questions from personal experiences to the learning process; this connection between interactions and knowledge is

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[31] Local Learning Network. (n.d.). Folk arts and folklore. Retrieved Jan 14, 2020, from https://www.locallearningnetwork.org/about-local-learning/folk-arts-and-folklore/
[32] Hein, G.E., (October 1991). The museum and the needs of the people. Retrieved 9 April, 2019, from https://www.exploratorium.edu/education/ifi/constructivist-learning

typical of a constructivist learning approach and one which I apply to this work, although I do acknowledge the problematic essentialism of the ways in which a learner can be 'ideal.' Dewey assigns to educators the responsibility to consider all circumstances of a learning encounter, including setting:

> they [must] not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience
> by environing conditions, but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings
> are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth. Above all, they should know how
> to utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all that
> they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worth while.[33]

Dewey refused to condone dualism distinguishing experience from nature: "experience is of as well as in nature. It is not experience which is experienced, but nature, stones, plants, animals, diseases, health, temperature, electricity, and so on. Experience thus reaches down into nature; it has depth."[34] Dewey's approach preceded ecological awarenesses of knowing relying on embodied sensations, such as those espoused by David Abram, in his book *The Spell of the Sensuous*: "my experience of the world is not fragmented; I do not commonly experience the visible appearance of the world as in any way separatable from … the myriad textures that offer themselves to my touch."[35] Nature, or the term 'environment' I use in this work, is implicated in experiences and therefore knowledge production; the notion that nature has (subterranean) depth is also significant in constructing public places' strata, and I examine this impact in Chapter 8: Reshaping Public Places.

For art as for education, Dewey saw generative meaning in iteration and interplay. In his 1934 publication *Art as Experience*, Dewey writes of frictions between organisms and their surroundings that produce exciting and creative forces in the frisson of life:

> Here in germ are balance and harmony attained through rhythm. Equilibrium comes about
> not mechanically and inertly but out of, and because of, tension. There is in nature, even
> below the level of life, something more than mere flux and change. Form is arrived
> whenever a stable, even though moving, equilibrium is reached. Changes interlock and
> sustain one another. Wherever there is this coherence there is endurance. Order is not
> imposed from without but is made out of the relations of harmonious interactions that

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[33] Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Macmillan. n.p.

[34] Dewey, J. (1929). *Experience and nature*. London, UK: George Allen and Unwin. p.4a

[35] Abram, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more-than-human world*. New York, NY: Vintage Books. p.125

> energies bear to one another. Because it is active (not anything static because foreign to what goes on) order itself develops. It comes to include within its balanced movement a greater variety of changes.[36]

It is not for the ecologically-sensitive capacities of tensions alone that I value this Dewey quotation; it is also because Doreen Massey and Karen Barad echo Dewey's shifts within place, so geographers and physicists and educators are joined in recognizing that a degree of motion is necessary to generate change. Such a kinetic brand of knowledge has resonance with this work: in ongoing learning intertwined with interactions in a world constantly overwriting/over-righting itself, and in the mobile representational form impacted by conditions of a place in which a mobile might be hung.

Dewey described the purpose of art as acknowledging process rather than the ensuing product[37], which justifies this research's information-gathering activities that rely not on technical skill but on discovery through creative expression. Finally, in describing learning as a continuous venture, Dewey provides me with a framework for understanding my experiences of qualitative research methodology informed by knowledges of arts practice, interminable in themselves. That endeavour is incomplete because the idea of completion stifles and halts movement that begets experience; those experiences lead in this instance both to my formal learning through doctoral accreditation and to my informal learning in more ways than I can hope to prescribe.

Zipper won't stay up?
Flick that zip
Point down

Malcom Knowles

Another well-known figure in education, Malcolm Knowles characterized adult learning in 1968[38] as self-directed, supporting learning by drawing on experiences, using social roles to guide learning, and preferring immediate learning application[39]; later, he added another item, internal motivation.[40] With these traits, Knowles defined and developed his theory of andragogy, "the art and science of helping

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[36] Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York, NY: Minton, Balch & Company. p.13
[37] Dewey, 1934
[38] Knowles, M. (1968). Andragogy, not pedagogy. *Adult Leadership, 16*(10), 350-352.
[39] Knowles, M. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy*. Rev. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge-Prentice Hall. p.44-45
[40] Smith, M.K. (2002). Malcolm Knowles, informal adult education, self-direction and andragogy. Retrieved 10 April, 2019, from http://infed.org/mobi/malcolm-knowles-informal-adult-education-self-direction-and-andragogy/

adults learn."[41] Andragogy fields radical differences in philosophy, education, and agency, and debate about Knowles' characteristics caused him later to adapt his paradigm into a spectrum of learning practices along which traits leaned more towards pedagogical or andragogical sensibilities.[42]

Like Dewey, Knowles ascribed significance to adult learning environments, down to the point of unflinching honesty about accompanying challenges for the agèd learner:

> The physical environment should be one in which adults feel at ease. Furnishings and equipment should be adult-sized and comfortable; meeting rooms should be arranged informally and should be decorated according to adult tastes; and acoustics and lighting should take into account declining audiovisual acuity.[43]

Knowles added that the place of learning should be temperamentally suited to adults by offering support, respect, mutuality, and freedom of expression: "People tend to feel more 'adult' in an atmosphere that is friendly and informal, in which they are known by name and valued as unique individuals, than in the traditional school atmosphere."[44] This research's four public place sites–Halifax Central Library, Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, Shubie Park, and Nocturne: Art at Night–make it possible to enact Knowles' conditions for adult learning. Even forty years ago, Knowles recognized that one barrier to adult learning is eradicated "by having the meetings in non-academic locations."[45]

Knowles has been criticized for his interest in self-directed learning that valorizes those individuals who can independently recognize, express, and satisfy their learning needs: "[Self-directed learning] can be difficult for adults with low-level literacy skills who may lack independence, confidence, internal motivation, or resources."[46] Such opportunities are frequently divided by sex, race, culture, economic capacity, or educational capital, leading to substantial inequities that Knowles failed to situate in his writing and that impact participants in this research, although here the yet-to-be-complicated material object interactions affecting adults' informal learning in public places take precedence.

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[41] Knowles, 1980, 43
[42] Peterson & Ray, 2013
[43] Knowles, 1980, 46
[44] Knowles, 1980, 47
[45] Knowles, 1980, 46
[46] TEAL (Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy) Center Staff. (2011). Adult learning theories. Retrieved 16 April, 2019, from https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/11_%20TEAL_Adult_Learning_Theory.pdf

A Johari window is helpful in depicting Knowles' claims that self-directed learning permits learners to recognize such opportunities comprehensively ('Known to [the] Self' / 'Area of Free Activity'), or choose not to take up these opportunities while still realizing their existence ('Known to [the] Self' / 'Avoided or Hidden Area'). However, this research examines adult learning shown by the 'Not Known to Self' column:
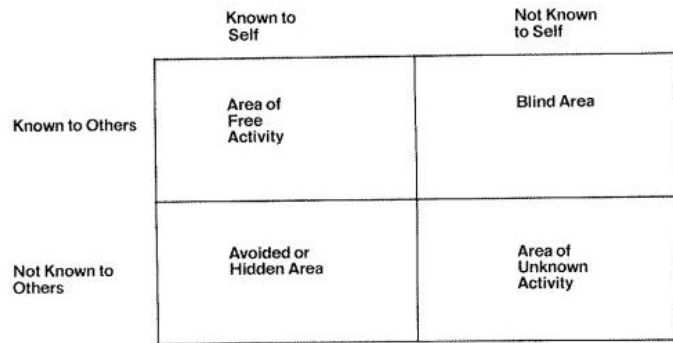
Figure 1. Johari window. By Joseph Luft. (1982). The Johari window: A graphic model of awareness in interpersonal relations. *National Training Laboratories' (NTL) Reading book for human relations training*. pp.34-35. Reprinted from NTL's *Human Relations Training News,* 1961, *5*(1), pp.6-7.

informal learning through material object interactions in public places is either imperceptible ('Blind Area') or incomprehensible ('Area of Unknown Activity'). Later in this chapter and in Chapter 7: Informal Learning Complications, I examine related types of informal learning, including self-directed learning, and their tensions of intention and awareness. While Knowles' recognition of meaningful adult-centered learning environments lends support for this research, his assumptions about learners' resources and understanding is limited in its outlook.

My friend's close friend died recently, and she was struggling with
her own feelings as well as her strong desire to support his widow.
I told my friend to just show up at the widow's house now and then,
with a coffee or dessert,
unannounced,
or for my friend to tell the widow that they would be going out,
if only for a drive two times around the block.
Because sometimes being asked
how to be helped
is beyond
you.

In addition to John Dewey and Malcolm Knowles, other figures contribute aspects of lifelong learning to this research on adults' informal learning; in particular, I refer to complications presented by Donald

Schön's writing on reflection-in- and on-action[47], and David Kolb's experiential learning cycle brought about by a concrete experience.[48] These discussions arise in conjunction with a more nuanced exploration of informal learning, brought about by this research's findings, and so I embark now on a review of corresponding informal learning history and activities.

INFORMAL LEARNING

Literature on informal learning presents *context-specific taxonomies–on-the-job learning, online interactions, intergenerational dialogue–as well as* abundant and overlapping terminology, 'discipline creep', and stark division between theory and practice. In this profusion I see evidence of a robust and undercharted area of study to which this research adds. Reckoning, in my examination of literature on informal learning, and realization, in the form of the mobile representational form, both contribute to greater understanding and point to the multiplicities of informal learning.

    Emergence

Like other elements of this research, informal learning comprises overlapping philosophies, principles, interactions, and activities. Its first documented reference is elusive: threads of its ideas are found in activities of early Canadian adult educators, and later in writing by Dewey and Knowles, among others, so that the concept is not cited so much as it emerges.

From a historical perspective, the roots of informal learning can be seen in models of guilds and their apprentices in the Middle Ages who learned tradecraft from observation, practice, and dialogue with experienced masters.[49] The industrial revolution saw smaller guilds join forces so that they could produce work on a larger scale and draw from a larger labour pool of apprentices; this change affected apprenticeships in Canada, too, so that in the early 1900s, responsibility for an apprentice's well-being slowly shifted from an individual master onto schools and institutions run by the church and temperance

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[47] Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
[48] McLeod, S.A. (2017, Oct 24). *Kolb – learning styles.* Retrieved 16 April, 2019, from https://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html
[49] Perrin, C.D. (2017). The apprenticeship model: A journey towards mastery. *ClassicalU: Classical Academic Press*. Retrieved 15 Jan, 2020, from https://www.classicalu.com/the-apprenticeship-model-three-levels-to-mastery/

groups teaching social behaviours and vocational skills.[50] Attention to the circumstances at hand and discussion with others were informal learning elements present in these early instances.

In 1951, Knowles wrote that informal classes hosted by *organizations like the YMCA/YWCA and carried out in community centres, churches, and labour union and industry meeting spaces*[51] *were transitory, flexible, non-obligatory, and multiple- rather than single-subject-focused.*[52] *In an often-cited reference acknowledged by authors as the first instance of documented informal learning, a 1974 book on Senegalese farmers' vocational training activities juxtaposes* "a highly institutionalized, full-time residential training program"[53] favoured by the International Labour Organization with the *country's Rural* Artisan Training program, which "devised its own standards of performance and does not attempt to achieve equivalence with urban training. Progress is assessed on a continuing basis; there is no final examination."[54] Immediate learning application and continuous learning are two lifelong learning principles here used in an informal learning context.

Like adult education's common attributes in lieu of a comprehensive definition, informal learning is understood generally through shared qualities based on setting, non-institutionalism, and considerably various content. These traits are evident in the informal learning definitions I found:

> any kind of learning which does not take place within, or follow from, a formally organised learning programme or event.[55]

> any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria.[56]

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[50] Hardy, J.-P., & Ruddel, D. (2006/2015). Apprenticeship in early Canada. Rev. 4 Mar, 2015. *The Canadian Encyclopedia.* Retrieved 15 Jan, 2020, from https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/apprenticeship-in-early-canada

[51] Knowles, M. (1951). *Informal adult education: A guide for administrators, leaders, and teachers.* New York, NY: Association Press. p.22

[52] Knowles, 1951, 22-23

[53] Coombs, P.H., & Ahmed, M. (1974). *Attacking rural poverty: How nonformal education can help*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press. p.56

[54] Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, 55

[55] Eraut, M. (2000). Non-formal learning and tacit knowledge in professional work. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 70*, 113-136. p.114

[56] Livingstone, D. (2001). *Adults' informal learning: Definitions, findings, gaps and future research.* NALL Working Paper #21. Toronto, ON: Ontario Inst. for Studies in Education.

learning that is neither formal learning (occurring in the context of the formal education system) nor non-formal learning (occurring through planned, structured training or education outside of the formal education system).[57]

In confirming the purview of these examples, I looked up the definition of 'any': "applies to everyone or everything."[58] I find this cosmic allowance and inclusiveness reassuring in showing me that defining informal learning is as fruitful as searching for the haystack-hidden needle: it simply misses the point.

*I recognize my imperative in this research to clarify informal learning, yet I see a paradox in the searching. That is, informal learning resists structure, "*is never organised, has no set objective in terms of learning outcomes and is never intentional from the learner's standpoint. Often it is referred to as learning by experience or just as experience … the simple fact of existing constantly exposes the individual to learning situations, at work, at home or during leisure time."[59] Informal learning's omnipotence is a departure from arrangement, and I have come to informal learning valuing its disarray as I do those episodes of life, which are elusive to note but not without import.

This research rests largely on participants' epistemological understandings about adults' informal learning; their interpretations are vital to this work. In Chapter 3: Artful Methodology, I itemize this enquiry's methods and information-gathering procedures, including the provision of an informal learning definition to participants, but explain my encouragement to them to forge their own ideas of informal learning (adults quickly grasp the concept of informal learning but rarely endow their activities with the name[60]). I read in the examples they shared with me a wide-ranging spirit and generous approach that liberates the possibilities of what informal learning can mean.

Bend at the knees
And turn
To throw an uppercut.
Socket your elbow into the curve of your hip.
Then rise from the knees
With your fist lifting

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[57] Wihak, C., & Hall, G. (2011). Work-related informal learning. Retrieved 18 April, 2019, from http://www.workplaceskills.ca/c4ws_research_report_single8_0.pdf

[58] Any. [Definition]. (2019). In the Macmillan Dictionary. Retrieved 18 April, 2019, from https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/any

[59] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2019). Recognition of non-formal and informal learning – Home. Retrieved 18 April, 2019, from http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/recognitionofnon-formalandinformallearning-home.htm

[60] Tough, A. (1971). *The adult's learning projects: A fresh approach to theory and practice in adult learning.* 2nd Ed. Toronto, CA: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. p.15

An instant
after your chin.

     Figures

A handful of recurring authors are named in connection with informal learning research. For instance, Allen Tough, a researcher at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, conducted interviews with adults in the 1960s about learning outside of formal education; his research found that "about 90% of all women and men initiate and conduct at least one major deliberate learning effort a year"[61] equating to about 500 hours per person annually.[62] Tough was also recognized for his methods to elicit information through learning efforts recorded by people in their diaries,[63] a non-structured yet useful form of documentation. His undertaking spread internationally and sparked interest in exploring informal learning beyond moral development or career gains.

David Livingstone, also with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, carried out a survey in 1998 for the National Research Network on New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL) "to identify the extent of adult learning, the existence of social barriers to learning, and more effective means of linking learning with work."[64] The NALL survey was the first of its kind in Canada and extensive in its coverage of formal education, continuing education, and informal learning.[65] Its findings indicated that the number of weekly hours adults spent in informal learning identified by Tough in the 1960s had increased[66], demonstrating the breadth of informal learning pursuits: "humans inherently cope with their changing environment by learning and that informal learning can be done anytime, anywhere."[67]

Daniel Schugurensky has contributed to this work with his three-branch framework of informal learning: self-directed learning, or purposeful attention to acquiring knowledge; incidental learning, a consequence of efforts in a different direction; and tacit learning (also known as socialization), those

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[61] Tough, A. (1979). *Choosing to learn*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Inst. for Studies in Education. p.3

[62] Livingstone, D. (1999). Exploring the icebergs of adult learning: Findings of the first Canadian survey of informal learning practices. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, 13*(2), 49-72.

[63] Tough, A. (1999). *Reflections on the study of adult learning.* WALL Working Paper No. 8. Toronto, ON: Ontario Inst. for Studies in Education.

[64] Livingstone, 1999, 4

[65] Livingstone, 1999, 4

[66] Livingstone, D. (2006). Informal learning: Conceptual distinctions and preliminary findings. In Z. Bekerman, N.C. Burbules, & D. Silberman-Keller (Eds.), *Learning in places: The informal education reader* (pp.203-227). New York, NY: Peter Lang. p.215

[67] Livingstone, D.W., and Raykov, M. (2013). *Adult learning trends in Canada: Basic findings of the WALL 1998, 2004 and 2010 surveys*. Toronto, CA: Ontario Inst. for Studies in Education. p.8

daily behaviours, routines and customs often unnoticed but learned nonetheless.[68] Schugurensky's categories have reached the status of convention across informal learning literature. This research addresses incidental learning and self-directed learning because I wanted to evoke awarenesses of informal learning occurring through material object interactions in specific Halifax public place sites. While tacit learning may be invoked in this work, I designed the research for participants to more easily recall and share their learning acquired incidentally or through self-direction.

The other influential informal learning author for this enquiry is Michael Eraut, whose categorizations offer insight despite his focus on workplace settings. Eraut refers to implicit learning, in which there is "no intention to learn and no awareness of learning at the time it takes place"[69]; reactive learning, in which learning simultaneously occurs and is recognized; and deliberative learning, in which the learner sets aside time to consider the implications of their learning.[70] In early research stages, I combined Schugurensky's incidental learning and Eraut's reactive learning, seeking from participants informal learning by-products acknowledged at that point in time; gathering this information, however, required from participants Eraut's deliberative learning. Eraut sees complexities of duration and confirmation in these categories and understands classification to be a limiting tool: "Tidy maps of knowledge and learning are usually deceptive."[71] In Chapter 7: Informal Learning Complications, I share how Eraut offers a way through an impasse of learning intentionalities that aligns conspicuously with changes in places.

Other authors' work–Donald Schön and Michael Polyani, notably–informs this research, although their ideas are better suited to later discussions where informal learning literature is examined in light of participants' stories and insights. Given informal learning's ubiquity, many other candidates have produced work illuminating this research, but Tough, Livingstone, Schugurensky, and Eraut have had the most impact on this enquiry's shape. For example, I excluded Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave's communities of practice theory from this work. Composed of "people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour,"[72] communities of practice form around "shared histories of learning"[73] and would thus misrepresent this research. A more likely assist would

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[68] Schugurensky, D. (2000). The forms of informal learning: Towards a conceptualization of the field. WALL Working Paper 19-2000. Presented at the New Approaches for Lifelong Learning (NALL) Fourth Annual Conference, October 6-8. pp.3-4

[69] Eraut, 2000, 115

[70] Eraut, 2000, 115

[71] Eraut, 2000, 133

[72] Wenger-Trayner, E., & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015). Introduction to communities of practice: A brief overview of the concept and its uses. Retrieved 10 Dec, 2019, from https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/

[73] Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

come from Wenger's notion of boundary objects, but these are purposeful artifacts designed with the goal of connection; instead, here I explore whether material objects have a role to play in fostering informal learning, and if so, what mode of connection may ensue.

Affinity spaces, while overlapping, are also exempt from this research, because their adherents are interested in mutual hobbies or goals, and because an affinity space places less emphasis on material place than on virtual gathering spaces.[74] The materiality of objects for adults' informal learning is, moreover, responsible for my decision to exclude online learning from this research: the physical experience of objects in space is primary to this work. I base the use of adults' informal learning in this research mainly on Schugurensky's and Eraut's informal learning categories, supported by Livingstone's idiosyncratic examples and Tough's recording modes.

> *My sister knows how to repair a waterlogged book.*
> *Something-something--*
> *"You put it in the freezer with [something in between –]"*
> *But I forget*
> *What she told me.*

In this chapter's two remaining sections, I explore participants' contributions to making informal learning known, and divulge my public place site fieldnotes indicating my informal learning and fulfilling arts-informed research's structural requirements of form. In order to confine the discussion here to enriching meanings of informal learning, I list and investigate the material objects activating these knowings in the following chapter.

PARTICIPANTS' UNDERSTANDINGS

During individual interviews, I provided participants with an informal learning definition by Michael Eraut: "any kind of learning which does not take place within, or follow from, a formally organised learning programme"[75], and asked them to provide me with a personal example. I favoured this explanation because its educational frame of reference was one I thought would be familiar to most participants, and because its inclusive emphasis on learning in any form might prompt participants to

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[74] Gee, J.P. (2005). Semiotic social spaces and affinity spaces: From the age of mythology to today's schools. In D. Barton & K. Tusting (Eds.), *Beyond communities of practice: Language, power, and social context* (pp. 214–232). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge.
[75] Eraut, 2000, 114

choose from a wider selection of moments where they felt informal learning occurred. I divided their responses into three groups: informal learning conceptualizations, informal learning sources, and informal learning evidence in places.

Participant Responses: Conceptualizations

Within the category of conceptualization, participants' references to their informal learning encounters revealed descriptions, deliberation, and validation.

<u>*Descriptions*</u>

Some participants seemed knowledgeable about informal learning's distinguishing characteristics in general and in relation to personal encounters. The informal learning trait from literature, often derived from lifelong learning characteristics, appears in bold font in the following list:

Emphasizes personal interests: "For me, painting is a hobby. Where I'm a full-time Engineering student, I can't really focus that much time on it, so it's something that I do when I go home during breaks."

Demonstrates the desire to learn (voluntary learning): "To learn something new, you've got to be into it; you have to have the interest, first of all. If you don't have the interest, and you walk into a place, then you just don't feel you're interested in doing anything, [and] then you probably won't learn."

Frequently unintentional (incidental): "When you go into [Shubie Park], you don't think 'I'm going in there to learn something today,' you know?"

Able to be planned (self-directed): "I feel like a lot of the time I go in there with intention; I'm looking for A, B & C. I know how to find A, B & C, based on the information that's provided in the [Halifax Central] Library. I can look it up on one of their little programs at the end of the bookshelf, and see what floor I need to go on to find the books that I'm looking for."

Connects to prior experiences: "I often think, how can I incorporate this into my life? If it's something that I really enjoy, how can I make this more accessible in my own life?"

Manifests ongoing/continuous practice (lifelong): "Maybe that's the thing with informal learning: it's not a you-memorize-something-and-you've-arrived, like, either you memorize it or you don't. Informal learning is ongoing, right? It's not you learn[ing] something and boom! It's there and [you say] 'Okay, let's move on.' It's ongoing."

Implying they knew of some reasons for and benefits to informal learning, participants listed among its purposes and outcomes to keep busy, to enrich an experience, to apply formally-acquired knowledge, to

acquire information, to improve memory, and to contribute to one's entire life experience. I was surprised by participants' informed theoretical and practical understanding of informal learning.

When you wind a string onto a spool,

> *You actually twist the string as well.*

> > *That's why*

> > > *When you want to pack up the kite you're flying,*

> > > > *Pull the string in hand-over-hand and drop it on the ground*

> > > *As you walk in a zig-zag pattern.*

> > *Then flip the zig-zags over*

> *To wind the string.*

No twists.

Deliberation

Participants made reference to the need for time to reflect upon informal learning. In one case, a participant wanted to prepare for and revisit information in order to realize fully their informal learning, in line with Eraut's deliberative informal learning where "time [is] specifically set aside for [learning]."[76] Deliberative informal learning was common: participants found time and repetition maximizes and embeds informal learning. Another participant saw a correlation between long-term knowledge acquisition and application, so that the more one was exposed to information, the greater the learning that took place. She also stated that informal learning occurred 'as you go', invoking Eraut's reactive learning made clear over time. This synchronic and diachronic paradox in adults' informal learning scope is typical of this research's patterns where elements balance and hold one another in check.

The management of expectations was also related to deliberations about adults' informal learning; preparation and advance notice of an endeavour or unfamiliar place is a distinct advantage. I believe prior information about unknown situations or places is reassuring, and produces Schugurensky's tacit learning and even incidental learning. With their impressions that adults' informal learning unfolds over time and is related to anticipation and reflection, participants showed that the extent of adults' informal learning bears consideration of more factors than single incidents would indicate.

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[76] Eraut, 2000, 115

Validation

Adults' informal learning's lack of external measurements or proof renders it profoundly self-determined: "The basic terms of informal learning (e.g., objectives, content, means and processes of acquisition, duration, evaluation of outcomes, applications) are determined by the individuals and groups that choose to engage in it."[77] Several participants remarked on their own awareness verifying informal learning, pointing to internalized knowledge, conscious reflection, or changed perspectives. Tough found it helpful to ask adults to record 'episodes', a "well-defined period of time"[78] with a constant intent or pursuit, and noted that in recounting their learning, most people referred to episodes in order to relay "all the different things they learned and all the ways they learned."[79] While the recounting of episodes would not have fit with this research about material object interactions fostering generally incidental informal learning, I find it interesting that Tough's work on learning was sorted by periods of time; I return to this theme in examining public places.

Eraut identified difficulties in validating informal learning, and tacit knowledge in particular, in research:

> On the one hand Polanyi (1967) defined it as 'that which we know but cannot tell', while on the other a whole string of authors talk about making tacit knowledge explicit: this can mean either that the knower learns to tell or that the researcher tells and then seeks respondent verification. There are two aspects of this problem, awareness and representation.[80]

Eraut's definition of 'awareness' is misleading because individually-known awareness can differ from externally-revealed awareness, thus so can their methods of validation. This research sees value in adults' informal learning that is, in Schugurensky's words, "undertaken on [one's] own"[81], and operates on the premise that material objects can make knowledges explicit or at least accessible.

Resources to 'test' informal learning are few, although one participant liked to check her understanding against a map or other points of reference. Participants noted generally that adults dislike being wrong, but they also commented that being wrong does not prevent informal learning.

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[77] Livingstone, 1999, 2
[78] Tough, 1971, 8
[79] Tough, 1971, 8
[80] Eraut, 2000, 118
[81] Livingstone, 2006, 206; 207

If you put your hand mid-chest over your heart, the dopamine that is released makes it feel just like a
(((hug)))

Participant Responses: Sources

The sources participants identified as meaningful within the four Halifax public place sites did not consistently indicate a connection to informal learning, but revealed each site's noteworthy organic and inorganic items: shelter, a view, artworks, a canal, information signs, segues, hammocks, garden beds, seating, walking routes, trails, supplies, insect sounds, lighting, crickets, photographs, gardening, bulletin boards, books, computers, maps, displays, food, kayaks, graphic design, volunteers, social media, circular spaces, city streets, edible plants, percussive noises, water tank, planters, toolshed, canteen, office space, pathways, hose, stage, pamphlets, compost pile, wooden structures, traffic, architecture, café, recording studio, stairs, lamps, bike stands, camp cooler, installations, projections, leafblowers, TVs, bridges, visitor centre, birds, animals, duck pond, dam, washrooms, locks, picnic area, and oars. With the exception of material objects acting as intermediary resources and travel guides, this assortment is too unwieldy to characterize; I include it to show the range of material objects furnishing or related exclusively to the Halifax Central Library, Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, Shubie Park, and Nocturne: Art at Night.

In many instances, those material objects participants cited in relation to their informal learning serve other pastimes' needs. The Halifax Central Library offers themed decorative displays, electronic public events notices, software applications contributing to new digital skills acquisition, and the e-book lending program to meet people's requests for information or suggested reading. At the Farm, gardening tools and the site's layout were resources for informal learning about particular gardening practices and styles; Shubie Park made participants think of its trails, historical and information displays, and the canal and its dock as objects supporting knowledge-building about the area's history and natural growth. Nocturne: Art at Night encouraged exploration of themes and skills, and transformed Halifax space through art installations, gallery displays, and artistic practices.

The other aspect of informal learning sources arising from this research are those objects assisting with site understanding or navigation. Participants referred to maps and visual orientation (signs, arrows, and direction markers) as spurring learning. I do not explore, but acknowledge, that material objects may be

received different through aesthetic preferences: differences in literacies, conditions of sight, or participation by way of design decisions may hamper informal learning through material objects. Though such considerations are not primary to this research, they are associated methodologically through my chosen methods of drawing and sculpting for information-gathering.

Participant Responses: Evidence in Places

Early in this research, I despaired of finding stable categories of classification, and wondered if I would only ever substantiate that both adults' informal learning and public places are in constant change. This impression was borne out in literature and participants' responses, providing one of this research's themes of change: flux is inherent in adults' informal learning and public places.

Conflicts between capacity and use. People's specific purposes for visiting public places may cause them to ignore new or divergent information, participants reported. One participant's desire for an onsite cooking workshop at the Farm is impossible with the site's existing infrastructure.

Preferences for familiar and unfamiliar stimuli. Some participants preferred new environments with different stimuli to incite learning; others found more learning from known spaces. In a familiar space, "You're not wondering if this is safe or should I go down his trail or where does that take you … because you just know." One participant, an expert kayaker, seeks out new waterways on which to paddle; in this way, the familiar and unfamiliar combine to foster informal learning.

Benefits of reinvented places. One participant spoke positively of reinvented Halifax public places during Nocturne: Art at Night's temporary art installations. Reinvented places for one participant represents collective effort and enjoyable experiences, but whether in regard to the process or outcome of reinvention was unclear. The idea of reinvented places was also expressed as transformation, yet not easily achieved due to competing priorities, issues of status or access, and origins.

[When writing a dissertation,] In other words, you set yourself a sloppy topic, ask yourself a question to get you thinking along certain lines, and try to focus your scope from the whole world down to the issues.[82]

With participants' comments differently conceptualizing adults' informal learning (based on descriptions of purpose, indicators of deliberation, and types of validation), listing noteworthy material objects in service of other efforts and navigational emplacing, and finally demonstrating flux through evidence of conflicts in public place, I see the richness of adults' informal learning. Participants' remarks agree with and resist related literature; in Chapter 7: Informal Learning Complications, I unpack these interpretations after elaborating on this research's public place elements. I can only turn to one other source for illumination on this enquiry. That is, after having addressed adults' informal learning literature, theories, and positionalities related to this research, and participants' responses to adults' informal learning, I cannot turn anywhere else for additional information–except me.

AUTHORIAL INFORMAL LEARNING

My informal learning encounters are found variously in this writing, most visibly through insertions and mobile-making reflective sections, but also through the composition of vignettes presenting an affective responses to this research's sites. While this work is not auto-ethnographic, the methodological obligation to situate my research self within my approach to and understanding of this enquiry[83] finds room for me here. The choices of language and voice representing my presence also makes clear arts-informed research's methodological tool of form as structuring element:

> the literal or metaphorical arrangements of theoretical constructs, narratives, experiences, and their various representations, so that there is a coherent articulation of a particular perspective that illustrates knowledge production and purposeful communication.[84]

One of the perspectives I adopt in this research permits affective responses contributing to meaning-making, and holds place for emotional epistemologies. I realized that I had to account for my prior knowledges in this research design, framing alongside my frequent visits to the Halifax Central Library

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[82] Bolker, J. (1998). *Writing your dissertation in fifteen minutes a day: A guide to starting, revising, and finishing your doctoral thesis*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.
[83] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 61
[84] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 62

and Nocturne: Art at Night my encounters with Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, of which I knew little, and Shubie Park, of which I knew nothing. I dismissed other potential candidate sites, with the exception of wonder'neath studio, where I held his research's focus group in order to make use of its craft supplies and so facilitate the method of 3D model construction.

Fieldnotes/Vignettes

Doctoral coursework illuminated for me that information could be gathered for a place while in a place; using this ethnographic lens, my notes in these fields encouraged collection of "images, or figures, standing for analytical abstractions. The abstractions refer to basic processes of recording and constructing cultural accounts in the field."[85] I was less scientifically-motivated, simply trying to track and remember entrances, exits, landmarks, and subjective points of interest informally gained and among which I could locate public places aspects connected to adults' informal learning.

I visited each site at least twice and during different seasons and times of day to develop a multi-faceted picture of its scenery or buildings, visitors, objects, and unique features. Favouring the written word as I do, I brought on these visits a blank sketchbook and coloured pens for writing and sketching; I also photographed each site extensively, though those photos were only to jog mine and participants' memories of the sites.

On visits, I gathered in my sketchbook a collage of site conversations, inner monologue commentary, drawings, sketches, facts, and my reactions: these fieldnotes later became a representational archive, reminding me how I felt about the day's weather, or the ground underfoot, or the features to which I was drawn, evidenced by the images I hastily sketched in different and intuitive colours. Tough cites as useful in recollecting learning the prompt to "think of certain recent activities: reading, television, travel, meetings [that] may have formed part of a recent learning project"[86]; in the learning project that is this research, my fieldnotes provide material for reading, and conjure travel, and even relay visual information. On my supervisor's good counsel, I fashioned an alternate point of entry into this enquiry by composing short written works from my feel'd-notes, interwoven with participants' comments and other assembled details. I call these pieces 'vignettes', one for each public place site in this research.

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[85] Clifford, J. (1990). Notes on (field)notes. In R. Sanjek (Ed.), *Fieldnotes: The makings of anthropology* (pp. 47-70). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
[86] Tough, 1971, 15

I became more adept at connecting figurative and literal writing, along with images and spaces, through these vignettes that are rich in feeling as well as content. The vignettes helped to familiarize me with potential site aspects related by participants to adults' informal learning. Furthermore, they encouraged my postmodern style and constructivist approach. And simply as an exercise, artful writing alleviated some of my anxiety about the unbelievably prolonged process of dissertation writing.

Now I reflect on the vignettes for my informal learning just as participants admitted to enjoying time to consider their informal learning encounters. I realized self-directed and incidental learning during site visits, like discovering at Shubie Park the Latin name for a resident Bluejay, or Halifax Central Library's vast free programming. Writing the vignettes opened up possibilities of license and creativity; they may well have lain dormant until birthing the cognitive and artful fusion with research analysis where mobiles could be revealed and "reflected in elements of the creative research process and in the representation of the research 'text.'"[87]

Two vignettes—for Halifax Central Library and the Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm—of the four total demonstrate my informal learning to close this chapter.

VIGNETTE: HALIFAX CENTRAL LIBRARY

The windows tell a story of a supernatural librarian who has magiked the contents of all of the books onto glass: translucent letter stencils both advertise the building's function and protect its collections. This philosopher's stone comes in the building blocks of language.
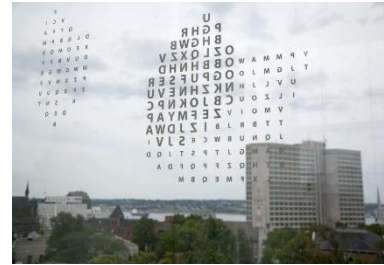
August 2017 - Halifax Central Program Listings: "OPERA FROM SCRATCH. **What's Opera Doc?**: "Dalhousie University music professor Dr. Jennifer Bain explores the elements that make opera different from other types of musical performance. Using audiovisual examples, Dr. Bain will take her audience on an historical highlights tour, from an early medieval proto-opera to a modern cartoon spoof, which stars Bugs Bunny and is titled *What's Opera Doc?* In partnership with Vocalypse Productions. **Mon, Aug 14/2 PM – 3.30 PM**

We'll go first floor, so there's … seating [crayon tapping]… and there's a big curtain… that closes off the space. There is an exit through here; I know 'cause I've gone through it [giggles], when we saw Saachi Cole. And when you first go in, there's the… book return machine [giggles; crayon tapping]. And there's a little seating area, so there's all these little kinda noodley seats in here, tables and things, magazines.. [crayon tapping].

Exquisite, much-loved, safe, and the most welcoming place in Halifax are phrases describing the city's relocated/renovated library. The new Halifax Central Library opened in 2014, pre-emptively branded as "the city's living room"[89], and drew just under two million visitors in 2016.[90] In an article tracing libraries' evolution, entitled "Notes from the Hippest Place in the World", Halifax Central Library's CEO and Chief Librarian Åsa Kachan pointed out that "We were in the business of putting items categorically on a shelf. Our diligence was once our strong suit and it was now getting in the way. . . .

We realized that we actually needed to hand over the library to the people. That meant removing rules (like) eating food or needing to be quiet in the space. If it belongs to the people, we have to let the people do what they want with it."[91] Among the designated spaces of its five floors are the Books of Remembrance, Media Studios, First Nations Circle, and the Living Room. The building is vast and unrestricted: the abovehead outside softlight strews down, intersecting with floor-to-ceiling windows at every level.

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[88] Macneill, K.H. (2014, Aug 9). Step inside the new Halifax Central Library. Photo. Retrieved from http://atlanticbookstoday.ca/halifax-central-library/

[89] Taber, J. (17 Aug, 2014). Halifax looks forward to the opening of its very own library of the future. *The Globe and Mail*, 17 Aug, 2014. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/halifax-looks-forward-to-the-opening-of-its-very-own-library-of-the-future/article20090514/

[90] Halifax Public Libraries. (2016). Central Library – About. Blog. Retrieved 7 Oct, 2019, from https://www.halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/about-central-library/

[91] Ross, N. (2018, Dec 13). Notes from the hippest place in the world. Retrieved from https://capacoa.ca/en/news/field/1704-notes-from-the-hippest-place?platform=hootsuite

There's this open ⌐ *space in the middle, open to all the other floors; you can see the other floors, and*
they've got these | *bridges you can cross from one side to the other. There's so much glass around*
that you can sit, ⌐ *whether it's sunny or watching the rain, or whatever, so you can really look*
outside. You're not restricted; you're not sitting in an office, like this one [indicates interview room; both
chuckle], where there's only walls around you.

The armchairs are squared off, cushiony, in the fall green and gold colours rampant on the East Coast.
Moving about constantly rearranged tables and chairs is serpentine navigation: curving straight lines.

5,000 cards from library catalogues are mounted behind the circulation desk and on the fifth
floor, in an art installation by Cliff Eyland.

<div style="border:1px solid">

FOLKLORE – NOVA S●COTIA

7.15.6 RobertsoN, Marion

Old Settlers' Remedies

Pub. Lancelot Press, c. 1960 (4th

(NO AIDS REMEDIES HERE)   (printing 1974):(for the Cape Sable

Historical Society,

34 p. photo Barrington, N.S.

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109-Do not give over any part of your
thinking to professionals
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</div>

I remember thumbing through such cards, fingertip-smooth. I liked the compression of
information they held, encoding and knowledge and place within their worn whiff of learning.

The other drawback–its noise–is a people-based conundrum: "*I do find myself wishing that they did have*
specific quiet sections, and they did have spaces that were more – conducive to sitting there and working
with a laptop, because I know that's what a lot of people go there to do. But it doesn't seem necessarily
that the Library was designed for that."

As the only building in this research, Halifax Central Library stands apart, although underutilizing its
outdoor spaces, participants agree. Nonetheless, it is an interior that aspires to eliminate the indoor-
outdoor distinction, the private behaviour-public conduct division, and the individual need-social
benefits binary. Within the Library; without it; these markers may be eroding.

I found out through someone at the library that you can download ebooks onto
your phone through a program called Overdrive for free. As long as you have a
library card, you can download ebooks … And it's the same – you [check out a
book] for 14 days and it returns, right? Or you can renew it – it's the same as
taking out a physical book. These programs … this is all information that you're
finding in the Library, but it's services that are also outside of the space, that are
associated with the space, too? It doesn't just stop in the space.

_____

VIGNETTE: COMMON ROOTS URBAN FARM/THE FARM

COMMON ROOTS
Volunteer hrs   Tu-Su 3-6
        Late   We
Market   Tu-Th 11³-5³
        Late   We
Dropin 3-6 pm (not Mon)
Staff on Tu-Fr 9-5
Email urbanfarmers@partnerforcare.ca
                        s?

Actually, I volunteered to work at Common Roots without knowing what it is. They had a volunteer fair at ISANS [Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia], and I'm a client at ISANS . . . .I'm interested in gardening, so I thought, 'Sure, I would like to participate.' So I went to the first few meetings, before even seeing the garden; I didn't know what it looked like, I didn't know what I was supposed to do except that I'll be doing some gardening … I think it was probably the end of April, beginning of May, my first trip to the farm – we call it a farm – it was still snow[-covered]. Everything was still under snow; I could hardly see the raised beds, you know?

Gardening is the purpose and the meaning and the joy in this place. The site hosts a children's garden, accessible beds built on raised wooden frames, a market stand for produce purchase, coloured stakes indicating free-range-eating fruits and vegetables, a bee hotel, and a long trellised arbour, in addition to beds, tools, hoses, buckets, sheeting, watercans, twine and straw:

A lot of times when you go to gardens, there is a particular order. . . .a lot of gardeners have a very structured way of doing things: 'This is where the water is', 'This is where the tall things are', 'This is where the low things are', and everything has to be in its place. Everything is not in its place here.

Shortly the idea of place will come to mean differently for Common Roots Urban Farm: the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre's redevelopment will break ground on the site, necessitating the Farm's relocation to an as-yet-undetermined greenspace.

To an extent, I have an atavistic revulsion for horticulture (plants' non-verbal sentience frightens me), yet even I enjoyed the triffid-like sunflowers, turgid strawberries and dropsied tomatoes. Plot owners can include "Poem Moments" on cards inserted into metal stakes in the beds – a quotation, a poem, a reminder to stop and breathe.

The outside of the library, like, being stacks of books that are laid out in a different way is so beautiful; the library's so great, really. Um, but – I belonged more to the garden, to the farm, you know? I like the library as a physical place, but I was much happier when I was in the farm.

I definitely think about the Common Roots space. I think about that design, and, sort of, when I'm there, it feels like it's – sheltering, from what else is going on? And, as soon as I step into that space, it feels – really relaxed, or like, really calming.

Sep 21/17 -- 4.21 pm

I feel mindful and minded – the greenery is taller and somehow weighted down: the noise of the road quiets like cicadas finally coming to grips with frost … I'm tired today. My mom has had bouts of vomiting dried blood (so I hear by text from my sister in Ontario), and it's made me worried, though I feel someplace elemental that my mother has a year or two left in her yet. I think of my mom and dad's last visit to Halifax: even then, excursions were brief, on smooth surfaces and lots of rest breaks. I wouldn't have brought her here–outdoors was not her thing. My gardener dad would have liked it. I can picture him deadheading flowers or wheelbarrowing the dirt. He was the earthier of the two.

My mother died two days later. Her beautiful coffin spray was given to a non-profit organization who dismantled the flowers and gave them to nursing home residents. One flower in the spray–the rose or the sunflower–dipped its head to me as I walked away from her burial plot; I don't remember which.

In the garden, it was really comfortable having all these people around, having the same interest, and being generous. Some would come up to you and say, 'Here, I have too many tomatoes today; please take them.'

- *an all-encompassing space*
- *awareness of people with mobility issues*
- *also the understanding that there's different cultures and immigrants coming in that want to be involved in the city somehow…*

The Farm's opportunities for learning seem obvious; during interviews, these were reported as building wooden structures, square-foot gardening, and an onsite sound recording exercise and subsequent workshop. Too, temporary plants labels, to be verified later in the flowering, and learning about the food cycle and destinations for CRUF produce.

Aug 26/17 -- 4.23 pm

There's a tall flag at the top of the farmer's market stand, but no one there. The screenprinted, reusable tote bags I presume are for sale are cute.

I'm going to buy a chili pepper, even though I won't eat it. Because it just feels nice to be a part of something.

CODA

The mutable natures of adults' informal learning is variously acknowledged in these public place sites, not objectively but affectively evoked in the vignettes I composed while emplaced there; these sites lay the groundwork for the themes of time, tensions, and change relayed by this research.

Earlier educators and theorists found that adults want to develop and grow, and, as it emerges, so do and are these sites. It is possible that adults may intentionally seek out or inadvertently acquire learning within them. My researcher understanding, too, has expanded beyond formal education to the ways and means of realizing informal learning, all the while those unforgettable moments of my life unfurled and gave to me different and intensely individual mill-grist. The methodological underpinnings of this research claim the same; this is therefore an appropriate juncture to continue by exploring arts-informed research methodology and its affordances for adults' informal learning through material object interactions within Halifax, Nova Scotia's public place sites.

If you are lost in the woods of Nova Scotia,
find a birch bark tree and light its trunk.
Apparently, the entire tree alights,
Shooting flames beyond the canopy

[known ecologically as the 'habitat zone']

So that search-and-rescue parties
Can easily
Spot your location
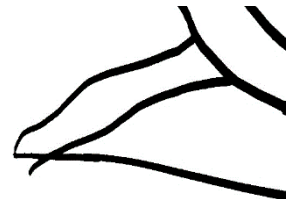
ARTFUL METHODOLOGY

After my father died, and my mother was nearly constantly adrift in a sea of foggy memory and sodden incapacity, my sister and I were left to sort through their closets and files. In doing so, we uncovered scores of school report cards and old assignments my mother thought fit for saving; my share consisted mostly of poems in simple ABCB quatrains about spring or my contact lenses, and stories, one involving a Kafkian protagonist left to purgatory for a series of minor sins.

Nearly everything preserved from my childhood involved writing or some benignly disturbing creativity. In one assignment that I had carefully hAndLEtterDED when I was eight years old, I addressed the assigned topic: "What makes you feel happy?" The first worrying sentence, *I feel happy when my teacher comes up and bangs me on the head with a book,* required contextual explanation of my second-grade teacher's teasing.

The next sentence, about getting new pets (no further elaboration for cats or dogs), was more reassuring. But the third and fourth sentences gave me a start when I re-encountered them amongst the foolscap and notebooks on the floor of my parents' bedroom:

I feel happy when we do art in school.

I feel happy when I learn to do something.

Because damn if I would not have written exactly the same thing, exactly at that moment. Art and writing and learning are at the quick of me, in education and travel and survival capacities that I sometimes forget are choices for others, or can be. Any authentic research foray I lead involves these enmeshed pursuits.

Artful means of generating and representing understanding supports this research, although I did not identify the mobile artistic form to "frame and define the inquiry process and 'text'"[1] until much later in the process (41 months after the start of my PhD journey; or, a much quicker 12 months from proposal approval; or, a lightspeed 7 months after information gathering was finished). Only by happenstance at that time did I come across a picture in a do-it-yourself craft book of a homemade mobile composed of

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[1] Cole, A.L, & J.G. Knowles. (2008). Arts-informed research. In J.G. Knowles & A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* (pp. 55-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. p.61

colourful shapes. Not having an education in art history or its forms, I was at a disadvantage in lacking knowledge of mobiles' origins, construction, and principles; moreover, my literature searches in relation to mobiles connected them to highly specialized engineering[2] and neurological[3] inquiries with which I was completely unfamiliar. Rather, in the movements and composition of mobiles, I wanted to trace the artistic affinities that fit methodologically with this work and felt meaningful to me. In establishing that Alexander Calder (1898-1976) is the artist credited with popularizing mobiles, and in his words about this form, I find language that aligns with process and discovery:

> I begin at the small ends, then balance in progression until I think I've found the point of support. This is crucial, as there is only one such point and it must be right if the object is to hang or pivot freely. I usually test out this point with strings to make sure before bending the wires. The size and angle of the shapes and how to use them is a matter of taste and what you have in mind.[4]

I see similar 'point[s] of support' brought about by situating theories and positionalities within this writing, though here these points are multiplied. In all other respects–hanging pivots freely, testing supports, and adjusting shapes' sizes and angles–this quotation guides me in assembling this research's methodology. Calder's observations and my deeper exploration of mobiles produced revelations about mobiles' formal possibilities to represent research process, as well as afford space, adaptation, movement, tension, balance, and context. I survey mobiles' history, significance and examples at the end of this chapter, where the methodology helps this form to emerge. I am led to believe that a bonk on the head from a mobile is definitely softer than one from a book.

ARTS-INFORMED RESEARCH

I found in arts-informed research methodology a turn away from formulaic inquiry, where its handful of principles, characteristics and values in this vein allow for the freedom of movement like an unencumbered mobile:

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[2] Kwauk, M. (1999). Geometric mobiles: From conceptualizations of motion in space to rational design. *Leonardo, 32*(4), 293-298.

[3] Zeki, S., & Lamb, M. (1994). The neurology of kinetic art. *Brain, 117*, 607-636.

[4] National Gallery of Art. (2018). Calder's balancing acts. Retrieved 25 Jul, 2019, from https://www.nga.gov/education/teachers/lessons-activities/counting-art/calder.html

> Arts-informed research is a way of redefining research form and representation and creating new understandings of process, spirit, purpose, subjectivities, emotion, responsiveness, and the ethical dimensions of inquiry. This redefinition reflects an explicit challenge to logical positivism and technical rationality as the only acceptable guides to explaining human behavior and understanding.[5]

My doctoral coursework experiences strongly emphasized the positivist paradigm Cole and Knowles note here; my supervisor is familiar with my panic arising from comparisons of my research interests with those of health and scientist colleagues. To reassure myself that qualitative research informed by arts practice was a well-founded approach, I recalled an analogy shared by my university drama professor. In distinguishing realist from naturalist drama, he explained that realist drama was similar to a photograph in its lifelike detail, while naturalist drama was closer to a painted image coloured by shades, tones, and highlights. Both are equally credible, 'truthful' depictions that demand differences in expression. My choice for this work is naturalist, reflecting a mixed palette and storied *pentimenti* style*.*

With that choice, I emphasize throughout this work the implicit nature of knowledges. For individual researchers, collaborators, and institutions, the benefits to "creating new understandings of process, spirit, purpose, subjectivities, emotion, responsiveness, and the ethical dimensions of inquiry"[6] are copious, expanding notions of significance, valuing respective understandings, and fostering innovative knowledge production. This creation is the methodological import of this research.

Arts-informed research methodology is an alternative to more conventional inquiry forms[7] and brings forward more voices of knowing. Eliot Eisner, who was perhaps one of the first researchers to suggest that art could enrich research process, saw new opportunities for meaning through their combination:

> What we think it means to do research has to do with our conception of meaning, our view of cognition, and our beliefs about the forms of consciousness that we are willing to say advance human understanding–an aim, I take it, that defines the primary mission of research. What succeeds in deepening meaning, expanding awareness, and enlarging understanding is, in the end, a community decision.[8]

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[5] Cole & Knowles, 2008
[6] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 59
[7] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 59
[8] Eisner, E. (1997). The promise and perils of alternative forms of data representation. *Educational Researcher, 26*(6), 4-10. pp.5-6

Eisner's vision of a community decision has its echo in Cole and Knowles's explanation that arts-informed research makes use of lived experience to enrich academic knowledge production:

> To shift the dominant paradigmatic view that keeps the academy and community separated: to acknowledge the multiple dimensions that constitute and form the human condition–physical, emotional, spiritual, social, cultural–and the myriad ways of engaging in the world–oral, literal, visual embodied. That is, to connect the work of the academy with the life and lives of communities through research that is accessible, evocative, embodied, empathic, and provocative.[9]

I am excited to ground myself within this newly formed/forming approach to meaning-making.

Framework

Cole and Knowles' chapter cautions against gauging arts-informed research through conventional social science evaluation; instead, quality resides in principles and characteristics like "Defining Elements & Form"[10], and several possible "Ways and Means of Finding Form."[11] Discovery is paradoxically inherent in this methodology, which aims to find out "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world"[12], but, as with all its features, arts-informed research rests on harmonious elements that fit the research enquiry, its practices, and its formal representation(s). This delicate liminality gave me the combination of structural solidity and creative wayfinding that continues to imbue my world.

My understanding of learning is built from satisfactorily uncertain outcomes. My parents' excitement at hearing from my grade five science teacher that I was interested in scientific investigation was mitigated when they found my enjoyment came from writing up experiments; to me, it was simply another brand of storywriting. I later complained in high school chemistry that 'experiments' with predetermined stages and correct results were not properly experimental at all. I work best in ambiguous circumstances where my journey moves apace, is sometimes halted, sometimes is hidden from my view, but always yields depth and richness. I am, in the searching, like Calder, "an adventurous spirit in attacking the

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[9] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 60-61
[10] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 60
[11] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 64
[12] Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* Rev. Ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. p.13

unfamiliar or unknown. . . .Symmetry and order do not make a composition."[13] In opening up methodology to the arts-informed elements helpful in defining it, and suggestions for finding related form, Cole and Knowles produce a framework liberating for the multiple ways in which research aspects can be assembled and complementary.

Assessment

I find in arts-informed research an appealing configuration of measures, although none are espoused, at least in that sensibility. In what reads like an origin story of the methodology, Cole writes of amending her vision of a researcher's imperative:

> To more fully portray the complexities of the human condition to broader audiences, and to invite even an approximation of the kind of holistic, full-bodied engagement … experienced through art. Research, like art, could be accessible, evocative, embodied, empathic, provocative.[14]

I felt an immense relief upon discovering that recognizing and identifying well-executed, impactful work in an arts-informed research vein was not based on a uniform system or aims of objectivity, and that paradox can equally produce understanding in this vein. Instead, arts-informed research is scrutinized for its "qualities of goodness", which include intentionality, researcher presence, aesthetic quality, methodological commitment, holistic quality, communicability, knowledge advancement, and contributions[15], which are "neither prescriptive nor codified"[16] but which are related to this research work throughout discussions of adults' informal learning, material objects, and Halifax's public place sites. I emphasize these accompanying qualities as they emerge, running along spectra of intensity, articulation and extent like the outstretched arms of a mobile brushed by the air.

Challenges

Which is not to claim that arts-informed research is free from methodological challenge. After some time conducting research in this mode, I realized that forward movement was occasionally impossible to incite. Epiphanies aligning form and findings arose of their own volition, and inspiration for relevant

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[13] Toll, S.I. (2010). My way – Calder in Paris. *Sewanee Review, 118*(4), 589-602. Retrieved 25 Jul, 2019, from https://muse.jhu.edu/article/401460/pdf p.601-602

[14] Cole, A. (2004). Provoked by art. In A.L. Cole, L. Neilsen, J.G. Knowles, & T.C. Luciani (Eds.), *Provoked by art: Theorizing arts-informed research* (pp. 11-17). Halifax, NS, Canada: Backalong Books. p.16

[15] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 65-68

[16] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 65

theoretical insights could not be hoped into being. I found in Sullivan an observation that conventional social science frameworks assume information is always to hand, if not evident, in ways fundamentally different from arts-informed research's divinations: "The role of lived experience, subjectivity, and memory are seen as agents in knowledge construction and strategies such as self-study, collaborations, and textual critiques are used to reveal important insights unable to be recovered by more traditional research methods."[17] The perceptions to which Sullivan refers arrive unannounced, which can make for unpredictable research process. Well-meaning friends found it confusing that I could not, with this research, imagine chapter start and end points without writing them into being, or satisfy myself about acquired knowledge by carrying out a literature review. Arts-informed research is unpredictable in substance and schedule, producing in me occasional frustration only somewhat tempered by remembering my seven-year-old self's fondness for "learn[ing] to do something", for finding out, rather than finishing.

Arts-informed research tries to expand notions of practice and product beyond institutionally-approved and conventional research results and forms. This trans-lated/-formed undertaking can be met with resistance when expectations for research work differ:

> We now live in an age of 'scientism'. The incommensurable success of technology as a way of managing human life is taken to imply that the natural sciences are the arbiters of knowledge claims and that claims from other disciplines are justified only to the extent that they strive to make themselves 'scientific'.[18]

Positivist knowledges are deliberate, orderly, and above all quantifiable, compelling other types of understanding to fit the mould; in contrast, arts-informed research suggests reshaping the container. To publish in a recent set of conference proceedings, I was provided with a template for submission of my presentation. This presupposition of language's interchangeability across modes was tiresome–to my mind, presentation and publication modes could hardly be more different–but *de rigueur*. Pressure to re-package arts-informed research into customary configurations minimizes its innovative potential:

> 2. *Inquiry and knowing through the arts are whole, alive, embodied*
> The usual split between ontology and epistemology, or between mind and body, may not apply. Our fully-present, sense-making selves embody and in / form the art: we are the

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[17] Sullivan, G. (2006). Research acts in art practice. *Studies in Art Education, 48*(1), 19-35. p.24
[18] Forrest, M. (2007). A reflection on arts-based research. *Padeusis, 16*(2), 3-13. p.9

poem, the painting, whether or not we hold the pen or the brush. *The dizzy, dancing way you feel.*[19]

I am fortunate to carry out this research at a time when the academy recognizes opportunities presented by non-conformity and finds value in divergence, reconsidering everything from a thesis form to researcher-community partnerships. On my desk are stacked books whose titles testify to this hard-earned acknowledgement: *The Handbook of Arts-Based Research; Performing Scholartistry; Creating Together: Participatory, Community-Based, and Collaborative Arts Practices and Scholarship Across Canada; Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice; Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Informed Perspectives; Contemplative and Artful Openings;* and, of course, *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research.* Every publication diversifies and strengthens research enquiry supported by arts practices, and affords more opportunities for this and other research that admits artful re-imaginings in content and form.

This section shows the reflexive self-accounting, researcher presence, and researcher-artist signature[20] necessary to reach arts-informed research's aims of enhancing human understanding and making scholarship accessible. These intentions and recollections, strongly felt by me in the writing, fashion a subtext for myself as a researcher who favours learning as I go; my attempts at mobile creation indicate as much. But other traditions exist amongst which I need to position myself. What follows are the theoretical understandings I interpret and apply to this work coloured by my perspectives.

I feel happy

/when

I

learn/

to do something.

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[19] Neilsen, L. (2004). Aesthetics and knowing: Ephemeral principles for a groundless theory. In A.L. Cole, L. Neilsen, J.G. Knowles, & T.C. Luciani (Eds.), *Provoked by art: Theorizing arts-informed research* (pp. 44-51). Halifax, NS: Backalong Books & Centre for Arts-informed Research. p.46

[20] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 66

ARTS POSITIONALITIES

Arts-informed research satisfies for me the need to acknowledge and navigate different knowledges in the creation of understanding. It also calls for a facility in transferring thoughts into creative endeavours through inquiry. Self-awareness, a desire for communication, performativity, and perhaps a stylized *élan*–the methodological elements reach out like tendrils from a postmodern conceptualization.

Postmodernism

It proved difficult for me move from a semantics of postmodernism, which I explored and delighted in with my Literature Masters degree on playwright Tom Stoppard's metaphors, to an aesthetics of postmodernism, in this research invoking reimagined materialities and social science enquiry. Among its loosely defined principles, similar to arts-informed research, postmodernism is known to reject hegemonic 'grand narratives.' I retain that impulse by expanding informal learning's accepted understandings and adopting arts-informed research's penchant for collaborative meaning-making.

> To provide a basis for understanding its cultural and political insights, we want to argue that postmodernism in the broadest sense refers to an intellectual position, a form of cultural criticism, as well as to an emerging set of social, cultural, and economic conditions that have come to characterize the age of global capitalism and industrialism.[21]

This quotation acknowledges that complex and interconnecting circumstances of an age signal not just a cognitive response, but a frame for viewing. The authors conclude by claiming that critical postmodernism deconstructs an orbit of life otherwise arrived at by merely "expanding fields of information."[22] I find here two relevant theoretical considerations: one, that to see this research's sites fully contextually known requires me to see the conditions of those place as enmeshed; and two, that simply adding more points of investigation does not facilitate understanding. This enquiry into adults' informal learning affected by material object interactions in Halifax's public places is better addressed by insight into the networks of these spaces and their material objects, and not by appending sites or objects to those noted here.

Still, I must tread carefully around this quotation because its critical outlook is not reflected in this work shaped by epistemological concerns. I fashioned this enquiry by relying on theoretical positionings and

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[21] Aronowitz, S., & Giroux, H.A. (1991). *Postmodern education: Politics, culture & social criticism.* Minneapolis, MS: University of Minnesota Press. p.62
[22] Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, 187

arts practice inspiration to gather and analyze information, and then finding likenesses with mobile forms that reinforced emerging themes. I am, to accept my chemistry textbook's dissembling invitation to "Note results in [my] own words", contributing to adults' informal learning understanding and methodological possibilities through this work. In that light, rather than operating from a critical paradigm, or observing theoretical characteristics of postmodernism, I instead identify postmodernism as an influence of style on this work.

Several postmodern elements are evident in this dissertation: devised terms, evocative language, punctuation interventions, and literary absconsions have made their case to my internal editor and were successful. As a Dalhousie University student, I read the entirety of Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* during the 32-hour train voyage from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to London, Ontario, over Thanksgiving. I relished not only the story, but my first encounter of wordsound and -look that held meaning outside of definition.

> I think the *shape* of words brings a response from the reader – a tiny, subconscious, unacknowledged but definite response. "OK" studs a sentence. "Okay" is a more mellow flowing word when read silently. "Bluegreen" is a meld, conveying a colour neither blue nor green but both: "blue-green" is a two-colour mix.[23]

I finished that Masters degree the following year, and fifteen years later another Masters degree in Education, writing for both in a voice that felt to me to be acceptable but enervated. Only during my PhD did I make space for compositional inspiration similar to Hulme; wading into the strange currents of her language sea gave me this work's expression. Sometimes this writing sacrifices the active voice in order to fit the slow birth of an idea through passive sentence construction; elsewhere, line breaks and spacing show in visual form a rupture of thinking I underwent in drawing together this enquiry. The words I use carry out dual roles of meaning and representation, both conceits found in the "supple category"[24] of postmodernism's decentering work.

Hulme is one of several female authors whose writing I admire and strive to emulate in their use of first-person narration and storyhood valued for its telling, not its veracity. Amongst these are Jane Jacobs' literary descriptions of lived-in neighbourhoods, and Ardra Cole's and Karen Barad's academic addresses

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[23] Hulme, K. (1983). *The Bone People*. Preface to the first edition: Standards in a non-standard book. Great Britain, UK: Hunt Barnard Printing.
[24] St. Pierre, E.A. (2002). "Science" rejects postmodernism. *Educational Researcher, 31*(8), 25-27. p.25

intertwined with experiences. Another, Susan Walsh, questions the possibilities for research if one consciously swerves to avoid customary institutional heroes and write from all of our selved-nesses:

> What does it mean to research and be aware that we are *not* holding the world at a distance? To think differently about our relationships with&in sentient beings and the world? To acknowledge the ways in which we *engage with*, rather than *look at* the world? To consciously *be* differently in relation to the world and sentient beings? To engage heartfully in what unfolds, moment by moment?[25]

These explorations and endeavours provide the lifeblood for my writing voice and this work's style.

An affinity exists between postmodern principles and this work in mobiles' various structural elements attuned to shift; for instance, the mobile structure is not mass-produced[26] but customizable, and mobiles historically depict abstract shapes because "where the masses will float in space, how long the wires are, and where the fulcrums wind up are largely dictated by the mechanics of balance."[27] I recognize that mobiles are constant in their inert materials, but mobiles' movement[28] in space is among its artistic heritage and evident contributions: "Dynamics becomes the major content, while the structural forms of works become secondary. What viewers appreciate is no longer work forms, but the motions in time and space."[29] Postmodernism's stylistic and expressive capabilities help shape this research and variously articulate the other lenses with which I situate this work.

THEORETICAL POSITIONALITIES

    Constructivism

I include constructivism among the positionalities I bring to this research for its valuing of accumulated experiences, influences, and resources tied to prior knowledge that develop and enhance understanding.[30] Constructivism is helpful in characterizing how some material object interactions serve

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[25] Walsh, S.C. (2018). *Contemplative and artful openings: Researching women and teaching*. New York, NY: Routledge. p.8
[26] Kordic, A. (11 Jul, 2016). Significance of mobile art: What is art mobile? *Widewalls*. Retrieved March 27, 2019, from https://www.widewalls.ch/mita-textile-design-exhibition-miami/
[27] Brand, M. (n.d.). About kinetic mobiles. Retrieved March 27, 2019, from http://alumni.media.mit.edu/~brand/about-mobiles.html
[28] Brand, n.d.
[29] Chen, G.-D., Lin, C.-W., & Fan, H.-W. (2015). The history and evolution of kinetic art. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity, 5*(11), 922-930. p.925
[30] Ozmon, H.A. (2012). *Philosophical foundations of education.* 9th Ed. Boston, MA: Pearson. p.204

self-directed goals for learning, and in describing the ways that adults' informal learning comprises assembled elements. As it transpires, mobiles can be created from impressions and recreations of specific environments:

> Calder cited several inspirations for the inception of his mobiles: a red sunrise accompanying a full moon while working on a ship off of Guatemala, the kinetic modern dance of a dancer he admired, and a visit to his friend Piet Mondrian's studio where he suggested the abstract art would look even more striking if it were in motion.[31]

Constructivism's development of a facilitated dialogue between an informed but not directive teacher and an engaged student[32] changed the transmission model of learning; now the student was largely responsible for perceiving and acquiring knowledges. Eduard Lindeman, John Dewey, and Malcolm Knowles all favour this autonomous learner, although contemporary intersectional understandings generally problematize this idealized isolation. Social constructivism sees co-created knowledge contracts in relationships between people who are instructed and in turn instruct others, similar to the collaborative efforts of meaning-making within arts-informed research methodology.

As a learning approach, constructivism considers the learning setting, and so fits with this research's material significance:

> in order to promote student learning it is necessary to create learning environments that directly expose the learner to the material being studied. For only by experiencing the world directly can the learner derive meaning from them. This gives rise to the view that constructivist learning must take place within a suitable constructivist learning environment.[33]

Constructivist elements are stitched together like a quilt of instances and enactments, connected to wider spheres. I was similarly excited in reading Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* when protagonist Morag recollects an aural echo of Shakespeare's polemical King Lear in an argument with her husband about separating: "Add two more *nevers* and it might be Lear at the death of Cordelia."[34] I was

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[31] Montague, D. (2015). Alexander Calder & the history of mobiles. Retrieved 29 March, 2019, from http://montaguemobiles.com/history-of-mobiles/

[32] Ruey, S. (2010). A case study of constructivist instructional strategies for adult online learning. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 41*(5), 706-720. p.707

[33] Bada, S.O. (2015). Constructivism learning theory: A paradigm for teaching and learning. *IOSR-Journal of Research & Method in Education, 5*(6), 66-70. p.67

[34] Laurence, M. (1974). *The Diviners.* Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart. p.299

overjoyed to find that texts, too, talk to one another. In borrowing and re-using knowledges, constructivism runs parallel to arts-informed research, "sufficiently fluid and flexible to serve either as a methodological enhancement to other research approaches or as a stand-alone qualitative methodology."[35] These linkages are also characteristic of ecological theory, to which I turn shortly.

This research's challenges to constructivism are ontological: maintaining constructivist belief that only individual perceptions are possible cancels out the presence of an external material world. However, I believe reality as the mind constructs it is equal in influence to the outside world: "mental representations have 'real' ontological status just as the 'world out there' does."[36] The examples of informal learning shared by participants that appear in Chapter 1: Materialize reveal rich and persuasive inner worlds that generate as strong an effect on understanding as does the external environment; the combination of these spheres strengthens, not undermines, realizations. Nor does the materiality of the world solely embody truth: no version of informal learning bears a singular standard of accuracy in every instance, and so none is found here.

The collection of postmodernist and constructivist techniques and references in this writing convey my belief in multiple meanings. I have found and recognize that adults' informal learning encompasses formal education, additional qualifications, training or skills development, lived experiences, personal relationships, and assorted hobbies and interests. I observe the interconnectedness of positionalities that in themselves support variety, like this research design's borrowings across fields, practices, behaviours, rationales, and inspirations. In reading for my undergraduate class, "Studies in Poetics", delivered in Western's University College building with its stained glass windows and darkwood pillars, I learned that the literary etymology of 'inspiration' derived from the breath of the gods whispered into mortal ears, engendering men's (and only men's) ensuing creation of otherworldly-enraptured writing. Such a concept, that insights are extended to me through participants'/known and intuitive/unknown sources, conveys my vision for the positionalities of this work.

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[35] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 60

[36] Wilson, B.G. (1996). Reflections on constructivism and instructional design. In C. Dills & A. Romiszowski (Eds.), *Instructional Development* (pp.63-80)*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications. p.3

I have to take a short breakhere. I am panting and sighing, and my shoulders are glued to my earlobes: such are the physical effects of my attempts to justify theoretical understanding. I know there is an indispensable need to ground this research in rational thought using scholastic tradition.

But   I am an outlier. I lean towards my own discoveries.

As a researcher, I have a debt to the knowledges of those who have gone before me

But   I have a way to go,

too.

    Feminisms

I infuse feminisms throughout this work for its illumination of interpretive knowledge production:

> Qualitative research has provided essential insights into the reasons behind women's
> continued lagging progress in attaining full social, economic, and educational equality in
> Canadian society. Narrative, auto-ethnography, and life-history approaches reveal the
> complex factors that articulate women's experiences in living and learning.[37]

Participants' storied experiences allowed me to gather information on those complex factors, emphasized in Chapter 4: Public Places' Overview as highlighting political, economic, cultural, and activist considerations of Halifax's public place sites. Feminisms' harried power relationships appear in this work through underexamined adults' informal learning, material objects' selection and organization, and often ahistorical and decontextualized public place sites:

> Power is neither perfect nor ineffable, neither secure nor consciously manipulable by
> individuals or groups, churches or elites, however well placed or apparently lacking in
> strategic position or resources. Its functioning cannot be explained by universal laws or
> general rules, for it is haphazard, expedient, calculating (and thus also prone to
> miscalculation). Neither hidden nor clandestine, power always functions openly (if we know
> how to recognize it), through its modes of material constitution, arrangement, organization,

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[37] Taber, N., & Gouthro, P.A. (2006). Women and adult education in Canadian society. In T. Fenwick, T. Nesbit, & B. Spencer (Eds.), *Contexts of adult education: Canadian perspectives* (pp.58-67). Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing. p.60

...

distribution, administration and regulation of objects, subjects, practices, events and institutions. It produces sites of particularly intense investment, and correlatively, sites of relative underinvestment which vary historically, culturally and geographically.[38]

Design and access are particularly realized as tools of power: the interrogation of those priorities that determine what public places look like, how material objects influence us, and the exploration of explicit and implicit permissions to reach and enjoy public places. Who can enter? How do objects entice or repulse us? Whose behaviours are constrained there? Who decides what interactions are possible that may lead to informal learning? These are the feminist probes enriching this research, celebrating the potential of learning and objects and places to mean apart from, and despite, vantage points of power.

> We need to learn in our bodies, endowed with primate color and stereoscopic vision, how to attach the objective to our theoretical and political scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name.[39]

While not explicitly an intention of this research, public place politics are a contributing factor and face scrutiny particularly in Chapter 8: Reshaping Public Place, where acts of congregation and intra-activity make for changing abstract and material compositions of this research's sites. Thus are partial knowledges realized and marginalized communities made space for within such places.

I would be remiss if I were not to acknowledge writing-as-inquiry as a relation of feminist epistemology crucial to this work, introduced to me through an article by Richardson and St. Pierre:

> I had been taught, as perhaps you were as well, not to write until I knew what I wanted to say, that is, until my points were organized and outlined. But I did not like writing that way. I felt constrained and bored. When I thought about those writing instructions, I realized that they cohered with mechanistic scientism and quantitative research. I recognized that those writing instructions were themselves a sociohistorical invention of our 19th-century foreparents. Foisting those instructions on qualitative researchers created serious problems; they undercut writing as a dynamic creative process, they undermined the

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[38] Grosz, E. (2003). Histories of the present and future: Feminism, power, bodies. In J.J. Cohen & Weiss, G. (Eds.), *Thinking the limits of the body* (pp. 13-24). New York, NY: SUNY Press. p.105

[39] Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies, 14*(3), 575-599. p.582

confidence of beginning qualitative researchers because their experience of research was inconsistent with the writing model, and they contributed to the flotilla of qualitative writing that was simply not interesting to read because writers wrote in the homogenized voice of "science."[40]

There is nothing I do not enjoy or endorse about this passage: the plain language, the unusual admission of preferences, the even more unusual admission of boredom, the recognition that paradigms intruded on exploration, and the Scrabblewinning use of the word 'flotilla.' Writing to understand one's thoughts is an authentic representation of my personhood, prior to and evident in my researcher self. I appreciate that from time to time in this work, my writing progresses slowly, moving indirectly between insertions and quotations, and infrequently getting write to the point. Yet I have intended, down to the wordsound, every expressive characteristic that appears here, so that I emulate my thinking process and its often slow or meandering unfurling with my writing choices and their intentionally symbolic and figurative explanations. Distinct from narrative methodology, writing my way into thinking is how I am in the world, and through it I share my voice that runs the gamut from ardor to zeal.

New materialisms

[M]atter and meaning are not separate elements that intersect now and again. They are inextricably fused together, and no event, no matter how energetic, can tear them asunder. They cannot be dissociated, not by chemical processing, or centrifuge, or nuclear blast.[41]

Karen Barad uses physics analogies to explain the intertwined atomic behaviour of an observer and what is observed, asserting that "what we commonly take to be individual entities are not separate determinately bounded and propertied objects, but rather are (entangled 'parts of') phenomena (material-discursive intra-actions) that extend across (what we commonly take to be separate places and moments in) space and time."[42] The 'new' adjective is significant; otherwise, this research would be moulded into positivist ontologies decrying variety. I acknowledge the transitions that reciprocally affect

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[40] Richardson, L., & St. Pierre, E.A. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 959-978). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd. p.960

[41] Barad, K. (2010). Quantum entanglements and hauntological relations of inheritance: Dis/continuities, spacetime enfoldings, and justice-to-come. *Derrida Today, 3*(2), 240-268. p.242

[42] Barad, K. (2011). Nature's queer performativity. (the authorized version). *Kvinder, Køn og forskning/ Women, Gender and Research* (Copenhagen, 2012), No. 1-2, 25-53. p.32

material objects and adults and public place sites using this new materialist lens, no longer focused on the steel nuts and bolts of Frankenstein's monster but instead remarking on its embodied soul.

The reciprocities of intra-actions align with a wholly ecological sensibility:

> when my body thus responds to the mute solicitation of another being, that being responds in turn, disclosing to my senses some new aspect or dimension that in turn invites further exploration. . . .In this manner the simplest thing may become a world for me, as, conversely, the thing or being comes to take its place more deeply in *my* world.[43]

New materialisms "asks the researcher to pay close attention to what it is that things *do* with us, not merely what they *mean*"[44], and is a useful means of discovering and expressing the effects material objects' interactions have on adults' informal learning. It also affords the advantage of assigning the capacity for agency to what Jane Bennett refers to as 'thing-power': "the rubric of material agency is likely to be a stronger counter to human exceptionalism, to, that is, the human tendency to understate the degrees to which people, animals, artifacts, technologies, and elemental forces share powers and operate in dissonant conjunction with one another."[45] Power is thus, in a feminist reclamation and redistribution, cited/sited in material objects.

Part of Barad's relevance for this work is that co-constituted material objects are made so by participants' presences:

> Instead of there being a separation of subject and object, there is an entanglement of subject and object. . . .we come up with a different way of thinking about what insights the Sciences, the Humanities, the Arts, the Social Sciences, and let's not forget insights derived outside of academia, can bring to one another by diffractively reading them through one another for their various entanglements, and by being attentive to what gets excluded as well as what comes to matter.[46]

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[43] Abram, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more-than-human world.* New York, NY: Vintage Books. p.52

[44] Hood, E.J., & Kraehe, A.M. (2017). Creative matter: New materialism in art education research, teaching, and learning, *Art Education, 70*(2), 32-38. p.33

[45] Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p.34

[46] Dolphijn, R., & van der Tuin, I. (2009). 3. "Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers"–Interview with Karen Barad. *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*. Retrieved 19 April, 2019, from http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/ohp.11515701.0001.001

This reading enmeshes adults with material objects and public place sites, jointly forging meanings that are possible because of the entanglement of agents, because texts speak to one another. I also favour Barad's admission in this quotation that value emerges from non-academic insights, which esteems informal learning's knowledges, and that recognizing absence is a feminist-centered awareness of invisible presences.

I draw on Barad's perceptions of becoming; that is, the changing shape that this research depicts now, at the moment of writing, is in its morphing a kind of mutual constitution that Barad uses to define intra-activity: "There is no independent or separate 'something', 'out there', because there is nothing 'there' as a determinate 'something', before or independently of its being intra-actively articulated in and through a phenomenon, of which the agencies of observation are an inseparable part."[47] Without the pre-existing ideas that produce this research enquiry, I could not be to investigate them; without the physical act of sitting at a computer to hit buttons that type these words, this research would be underfulfilled, or less-than-realized, or dis-materialized. Their exploration gives me researcher status, and my attention makes these ideas worthy of import.

New materialisms are easier to conceptualize than to materialize, similar in this way to postmodernism, but helpful in picturing the fusion of elements generally regarded as distinct. Barad's influences are at their strongest in public place discussions, such as this work's Chapter 8: Reshaping Public Place, but new materialisms also affect the mobile representational form. Her recognition of matter interwoven with a distinct observer-other mirrors mobiles actualized by movement initiated by environment. Deciphering physics principles in Barad's work has proven difficult: whereas undoubtedly an understanding of levers, balance and torque would hasten my mobile explorations, I choose instead to reposition these processes as arts-informed, substituting analogy for algebra.

WHEN I CAN'T SLEEP
I TRY TO NAME
ALL THE CHARACTERS OF THE SIMPSONS
AND I USUALLY Get to about forty-sev..en or sometimes forty-

Ecological theory

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[47] Hammerström, M. (2010). On the concepts of transaction and intra-action. The Third Nordic Pragmatism Conference, 1-2 June 2010. Retrieved 19 April, 2019, from https://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/11515701.0001.001/1:4.3/--new-materialism-interviews-cartographies?rgn=div2;view=fulltext

Theories of ecology are valuable for other learning and theoretical positionalities in this research; for example, like new materialism, ecological theory recognizes enmeshed actors and settings:

> It is perhaps more important at this late stage to emphasize that humanity depends critically upon the complexity and variety of life, that human well-being and survival rest upon a long evolution of organisms into increasingly complex and interdependent forms.[48]

Ecological theory celebrates the "living conditions of organisms in interaction with each other and with the surroundings, organic as well as inorganic."[49] In this research, material objects and public place sites are organic and inorganic, and, from a new materialist standpoint, mutually affect a network of influences whose elements cannot be unraveled without detriment:

> We have at last come to realize that neither the soils, the oceans, not the atmosphere can be comprehended without taking into account the participation of innumerable organisms, from the lichens that crumble rocks, and the bacterial entities that decompose organic detritus, to all the respiring plants and animals exchanging vital gases with the air.[50]

Ecologies are living, diverse systems populated by self-organizing and flexible agents[51], but in non-environmental instances focusing on increased social interrelationship knowledges, human actors and their desires tend to be prioritized in entangled people-animal-organism webs; to redress this power imbalance through a feminist lens, I framed this enquiry to explore material objects' effects on adults' informal learning. Although interactive, the association of object and adult learner is nonetheless intra-active, and shifts the emphasis onto an entangled material, rather than cognitively-determined, world. Jane Bennett wrote of the surprising embarrassment Jacques Derrida recounted when his cat observed him naked in his bathroom, and how Derrida failed to consider "an alternative form of engagement" that could have resulted in his 'becoming-with' *felis catus*: "Incurious, he missed a possible invitation, a possible introduction to Other-worlding."[52] Unlike Derrida, I am highly attuned to the effect of my two cats on this work: I am fe-ligned to their moods and needs and boxnaps and frequent bathroom sojourns, and hope to gain their wordless approval through their in-tangled inscription in this work.

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[48] Bookchin, M. (1980). *Toward an ecological society*. Montréal, QC: Black Rose Books. p.36
[49] Naess, A., & Rothenberg, D. (1989). *Ecology, community and lifestyle: Outline of an ecosophy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
[50] Abram, 1996, 85
[51] Jackson, N.J. (2013). The concept of learning ecologies. In N. Jackson and G.B. Cooper (Eds.), *Lifewide learning, education and personal development*. 1-21. Retrieved 15 Dec, 2019, from http://www.lifewideebook.co.uk/
[52] Haraway, D. (2008). *When species meet.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p.20

As with other theoretical positionings, an ecological framework brings with it disagreements, tensions, and scrutiny. For instance, elaborately interconnected elements can make finding a point of origin or isolating a material object from its surroundings prohibitively difficult. The networks function like a spiderweb, where one small vibration resonates across other strands. This is a rich characteristic for informal learning instances and artful influences, but makes for challenges in attributing particularly effective interactions for informal learning.

I make use of ecological theories in one unique fashion: you see on this writing's pages a faint imprint of a smudge or gloss (what is behind the text materially in the present as you read) that gradually sharpens and takes form, deepening into the outlines of an amorphous shape revealed on each chapter's final page. These shapes are the drawings of participants from the public place site maps gathered for information in this research. I want to reflect their meaning tied to all of the elements of this work: adults' informal learning, material objects, public place sites, and artful representation. Later in this chapter I refer to the gathered impact of these shapes, and their movement towards language, or at least signs of meaning. This writing is connected to those shapes, and I show them in the shapes coming forward to claim their space and role in this work equivalent to other forms of knowledge production.

The lengths to which ecological connections extend is potentially infinite, an exhilarating if frightening possibility. At what point ought I end this research's sphere of concern if its effects are construed as limitless? Perhaps, like adults' informal learning, an ecological approach considers nearly everything to be of import, and instead of worrying over where it no longer has bearing, I take pains to ensure that that end is not reached.

The array of stylistic and theoretical positionalities in this research approximates the pieces and principles forming a mobile sculpture's "cascade of levers."[53] Methodologically, this creates a fit with mobiles more apt than any I could have foreseen during research planning; for one instance, it braces my own informal learning in attempting to create a mobile sculpture representing this research. With this understanding, I now lay out a characterization of this enquiry's material objects honed by these positionalities and, as it emerges, meaningful for adults' informal learning in public places.

From "Alexander Calder: Master of Balance" [ARTSEDGE Lessons for Elementary School]:

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[53] Brand, n.d.

1. Introduce a simple machine called a lever. Explain that levers are often used to do work with less effort, such as lifting heavy objects.[54]

now

the heavy lifting

is mostly

through

MATERIAL OBJECTS

In this research, I characterize material objects as external, tangible items composed of matter, which has mass and takes up space[55], but are otherwise undefined. Participants' selections of self-determined material objects meet these broad criteria: leafblowers, pamphlets, crickets, computers, seating, percussive noises, walking trails, and many others besides. Jane Bennett describes this menagerie as an assemblage, whose collection of items produces "uneven topographies" and unequal power distributions across a non-governable and "open-ended collective."[56] From the outset, I align with Barad's new materialist sensibilities that this matter fluctuates and is made by space as much as it takes up space, and also with ecological philosopher David Abram's temporal awareness: "like myself, the bowl is a temporal being, an entity shifting and changing in time, although the rhythm of its changes may be far slower than my own."[57] Like informal learning, materiality offers both perception and sensation, personal and social: others encounter the same object without determining an identical understanding for it. Relying on materiality's potential for multiple compositions and understandings, I refer to material objects in this research as undergoing constant re-making and re-meaning.

Interactions with material objects can vary; in this research, three reasons describes participants' purposes for interactions: to engage with a material object directly as itself, to serve another material object or distinct idea, and to demonstrate symbolic understanding of the material object. For example, in speaking about his experience using the square-foot gardening method, one participant had engaged directly with the garden bed through touch. In another instance, a participant habitually read through

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[54] John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. (2019). Alexander Calder: The master of balance. Retrieved 8 Jul, 2019, from https://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-5/AlexanderCalder_Master_of_Balance#Instruction
[55] Bagley, M. (11 Apr, 2016). Matter: Definition & the five states of matter. Retrieved 7 Jun, 2019, from https://www.livescience.com/46506-states-of-matter.html
[56] Bennett, 2010, 22
[57] Abram, 1996, 51

the posters at the Halifax Central Library's community events board in order to learn about upcoming events; the flyers were her source of information for other activities. For another participant, her interest in the Shubie Park signs identifying local foliage was a connection to her symbolic identification of Nova Scotia as home after emigrating from British Columbia. This last category formed the basis for one of the findings of this work: that material objects acting as symbols connect intertwined past and present narratives capable of enriching public places.

Place's material qualities are recognized as similarly meaningful with their social constructions: "Place is a function of the performance of objects, not just of patterns of social behaviour; it exists as a consequence of the entanglement of people, nonhumans, material objects, ideas, norms, and technologies."[58] Material objects' capacities for the different types of interaction noted above represent similar multiplicities, connectivities, and flexibilities as adults' informal learning and public places:

> What we know about objects is not limited to what we see: our knowledge comes not only from perceptive stimuli; it is also produced within assemblages where actions are the outcome of contingent collaborations. Affordances, in other words, can be 'discovered' or 'figured out' by means of associations, depending upon the stability and quality of the networks where objects are (provisionally) located, and knowledge is produced.[59]

James Gibson's theory of affordances was regarded by him as an ecological approach towards environments. An affordance is an object's or feature's potential for use, "what it *offers … provides* or *furnishes*"[60], and characterizes material object contributions in this research. One participant realized during her interview that some things she found insignificant, such as Shubie Park's resident ducks, could afford learning for others: "Actually, now that I'm thinking about it, [becoming interested in a public place object] is one of those weird things that people do … without actually planning or thinking about it. But it totally is a method – like, a learning opportunity." For Gibson, affordances were found both in the observer and the observed, intra-active in the style of Barad's new materialism:

> An important fact about the affordances of the environment is that they are in a sense objective, real, and physical, unlike values and meanings, which are often supposed to be subjective, phenomenal, and mental. But, actually, an affordance is neither an objective property nor a subjective property; or it is both if you like. An affordance cuts across the

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[58] Lieto, L. (2017). How material objects become *urban things*? *City, 21*(5), 568-579. p.570
[59] Lieto, 2017, 574
[60] Gibson, J.J. (1979/1986). *The ecological approach to visual perception*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group. p. 127

dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a

fact of the environment and a fact of behavior. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither.

An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer.[61]

Because of material objects' intertwined and fluctuating natures, they are in this research situated, arising at least partially from the viewer's embroiled meaning-making knowledges, experiences, and processes. Material objects cannot be disentangled from influences and understandings, particularly within places and interactions of always already constructed space and beings.

> *Evelyn Harrison Public School, 1988: Our*
> *eighth-grade class planted a stand of*
> *trees in the schoolyard some distance*
> *away from the second-best baseball*
> *diamond. If I remember correctly, Nate*
> *Moss got in trouble for already trying to*
> *carve his name in the sapling's bark.*
>
> *Let there be more trees, in places where*
> *trees aren't.*

To an extent, childhood education may inhibit adults' abilities to learn informally through material object interaction, because of the heritage of formal education requiring students sit in classrooms and observe teachers demonstrating principles using material objects: "We understand these objects as knowledge objects because they embody the knowledge that has to be learned. The objects themselves unveil a phenomenon and are at the centre of attention."[62] Without the discursive markers of education that are not generally found in public places, material objects are unlikely to be interpreted as assisting with informal learning. Other considerations include aesthetic qualities rendering material objects more or less appealing–think poster designs and colours–that could eliminate opportunities for interactions conducive to adults' informal learning, and objects' functions that may be easily decipherable only to

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[61] Gibson, 1979/1986, 44

[62] Kalthoff, H., & Roehl, T. (2011). Interobjectivity and interactivity: Material objects and discourse in class. *Human Studies, 34*, 451-469. p.457

some, yet afford more investigative potential to those without those knowledges: an arbor is built in an urban garden to allow grapevines to grow taller, yet is more often visited for its seating and shade.

Material objects are fruitful in their representative possibilities for this research, and offer a methodological rapport with arts-informed research that resists "research representations wrung dry of life—of emotion, of sensuality, of physicality."[63] In the next section, I show how material objects, and the positionalities through which this research came to be, were realized in the methods of information gathering and analysis I selected to discover effects of material object interactions on adults' informal learning in Halifax's public place sites, and represented by the mobile sculpture form that visually intertwines these elements.

Mr. Sharpe, my homeroom English teacher from grade 9,
gave me Jean Anouilh's play Antigone *to read and report to him the definition of tragedy*
(among others, "one question too many"),
and from then on, he wrote and left on my desk
Foolscap
replete with
poetic paraphernalia:
the explanation of flight; the path from Plato to Cyndi Lauper; a supplicatory goat-footed balloonMan in
*   e.e. cummings' "in Just – spring"*
And later, a copy of Stephen Hawking's "A Brief History of Time."
I didn't know what they meant, all together. All I knew
was that I liked them,
and sometimes caught a glimpse of their
companionship
with/in my world.

INFORMATION GATHERING

In gathering information for this research, I was motivated by what Cole and Knowles refer to as emergent qualitative research through a "creative inquiry process" guided by "an openness to the expansive possibilities of the human imagination."[64] The methods noted below are less in the vein of conventional structures for relaying research and closer to a collection of intuited techniques in homage to creative and imaginative capacities. I enjoy the finding-out-as-I-go-along just as much as anyone else.

    Sites selection

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[63] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 57
[64] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 61

In determining specific sites through which to investigate public places, I selected those lending themselves towards complex interpretations in order to diversify and enrich explorations on place. In keeping with this research's description, candidate sites had to meet the following criteria:

- Admitting the public (as opposed to private or members only)

- Available for individuals' and communities' multi-purpose use

- Free of charge

- Physically accessible

- Geographically feasible to visit

- Afford various pursuits or pastimes that could indicate informal learning

- Afford multiple responses to their functions or attractions

- Capacity for artistic reimagination of space or activities therein

These criteria reflect my researcher values of attainability, flexibility, materiality, and creativity, yet they were not prescriptive. A wide list of sites fit this criteria; I finalized four public place sites by adding other parameters comprising indoor and outdoor sites, expected and atypical learning sites, Halifax and Dartmouth site locations, and in-demand and underutilized spaces. These conditions intimated the likely inclusion of a library, a park or garden, and also an artistically-associated site, with which survey a wide range of personal pursuits can motivate adults' learning: "though subconscious forces deep within the person and the external environment affect the decision to learn, in most learning efforts the person's clear anticipation of certain likely benefits is even more important."[65] The sites manifested in this enquiry as the following: Halifax Central Library, Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, Shubie Park, and Nocturne: Art at Night.

My decision in naming Nocturne: Art at Night as a site of this research bears clarification. Continuing the tradition started in 1989 by "The Night of the Arts" festival in Helsinki, which celebrated art and performances in late-closing bookstores and museums[66], Halifax's Nocturne is an "annual event [that] showcases and celebrates the visual arts scene"[67] through displayed projects based in a location or

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[65] Tough, A. (1979). *Choosing to learn*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Inst. for Studies in Education. pp.7-8

[66] Nyberg, N. (2 Aug, 2019). Everything you need to know about Night of the Arts in Helsinki. *Globuzzer*. Retrieved 27 Feb, 2020, from https://globuzzer.mn.co/posts/everything-you-need-to-know-about-night-of-the-arts-in-helsinki n.p.

[67] Nocturne Halifax. (n.d.). What is Nocturne? Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/about/what-is-nocturne n.p.

venue.[68] Artists applying to Nocturne must submit venue information in order "to be site specific"[69]; therefore, the event Nocturne is made up of numerous sites. However, in this qualitative research enquiry, I use the term 'site' to refer to a geographically-evident setting of the enquiry: "Qualitative researchers often collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study."[70] Because I sought an overall *gestalt* from Nocturne as an event, rather than particular recall of individual site-specific art installations, I refer to Nocturne as a research site, while recognizing this shift in terminology is less than exact from the point of view of artistic vocabulary.

Fieldnotes

I visited each site at least twice to familiarize myself with these places, and wrote fieldnotes in which I gleaned settings, activities, visitors, and material objects in varying conditions. My creative expression habits saw me writing and drawing impressions in cartoon sketches and caPITAL LETTERS and *cursive* handwriting that act as my own shorthand to meaning: "there is no reason why those empirical details cannot be noted and contemplated by means of drawings or other visual creations before finding ultimate form in worded works."[71] I am mindful of Richardson's leanings towards a text in which artfulness is fused with kineticism (in this sense the force of writing that spurs readers towards action); in this hybrid text is found the "construction of minor themes or minor characters so that they mirror, foreshadow, aftershadow the problems, demands, issues, [and] central concerns."[72] I acknowledge my desire to produce fieldnotes where these echo-logical connections are evident.

My perceptions alone direct these fieldnotes, a situated understanding emphasizing particular details and omitting others: "Fieldnotes embody cultural facts under the control of their inscriber."[73] Regardless of their artistic quality, drawings are made from culturally constructed[74] marks on a page; only during analysis did I understand the partiality of those perspectives. Methodologically, this documentation is acceptable in "conceptual artistry and creative and aesthetic sensibilities"[75], but likely led to pertinent site details filtered through my awarenesses. As noted and displayed in Chapter 2: Informal Learning

[68] Nocturne: Art at Night. (2019-c.). Nocturne – Call for projects. Retrieved 18 May, 2019, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/apply/callForProjects n.p.

[69] Nocturne, 2019-c., n.p.

[70] Creswell, J. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* 5th Ed. London, UK: Sage. p.45

[71] Hendrickson, C. (2008). Visual field notes: Drawing insights in the Yucatan. *Visual Anthropology Review, 24*(2), 117-132. p.123

[72] Richardson, L., & Lockridge, E. (1998). Fiction and ethnography: A conversation. *Qualitative Inquiry, 4*(3), 328-336. p.334

[73] Clifford, J. (1990). Notes on (field)notes. In R. Sanjek (Ed.), *Fieldnotes: The makings of anthropology* (pp. 47-70). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. p.55

[74] Hendrickson, 2008, p.123

[75] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 61

Knowledges, fieldnotes lend themselves to the composition of site vignettes and convey a lived sensibility of the sites to a degree beyond description, thick or otherwise.

Recruitment

In 2017, I received Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board approval to carry out research. I used random participant sampling to recruit 6 English-speaking adults aged 19 or older who intentionally visited at least one of the four sites in the past year[76] in order to gather information about "the relationships between public places in Halifax and adults' informal learning through an arts-informed perspective."[77] Participant criteria was based on English-speaking adults because I am unilingual and limited by age because lived experiences outside of formal education was crucial to exploring adults' informal learning.

Recruitment posters were hung in each site and distributed through site organizations and networks with site coordinators' assistance. My supervisory committee member, Professor Barbara Lounder, also recommended to me potential participants. During January and February 2018, I received expressions of interest in person and by email from 6 participants through the Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm's newsletter (2 participants), the Halifax Central Library's notice board (1 participant), and snowball sampling (3 participants). All 6 participants–4 women and 2 men–met the participant criteria, confirmed their understanding and returned signed consent forms. There were no other participants expressing interest in participating.

I knew I had seen research writing format somewhere before: Data Collection, Analysis, Discussion, Limitations, etc., etc.

It was in the worksheets Mrs. Smith gave out in grade 5 science class to document our schoolyard soil pH experiments, except her list was: Purpose, Equipment, Method, Discussion, Results, Conclusion.

Right now, I feel an uncanny timedoubling. Have I really spent 19 years in formal education

just to

finish Mrs. Smith's list?

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[76] Mason, S. (2017). Recruitment poster. Standard application for research ethics clearance – Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board.
[77] Mason, 2017

Interviews and focus group

I carried out audio-recorded individual interviews with all participants between February 26 and March 19, 2018, writing pre- and post-interview notes. The semi-structured interviews consisted of ten questions across three sections: informal learning and public places general impressions; creative placemaking impressions and a hand-drawn map activity; and map activity reflections contextualized as the effectiveness of information gathering through artistic means.

In the second section of questions, I provided participants with 5 photos of creative placemaking activities to elicit their impressions about public place activities and to spark their creativity for the hand-drawn map activity. Next I presented participants with easel pad sheets on which I had outlined each site's property boundaries, and asked them to draw that site's memorable features and suggestions for change; they could fill in none or some or all of the sites as they wished. I devised this map activity to focus attention on materiality and place and informal learning possibilities.

> Visual representations are not transfixed; there are no limits to their capacity for luminosity, their capacity for meaning. Meanings embedded in visual imagery are illuminated as the reader becomes immersed in aesthetic descriptions that fuse the intellectual realm of ideas with the sensual realm of flesh[78].

Eleven hand-drawn maps were created in total: four of Halifax Central Library, three of Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, and two each of Shubie Park and Nocturne: Art at Night.

I transcribed interviews during April and May 2018, prior to and following the research focus group in order to mine the transcripts for areas conducive to more exploration. I member-checked transcripts with participants; responses and non-responses returned no requests for changes. I circulated seven questions to participants in advance of the focus group to prepare them for specific discussions arising from interview comments and to notify them of a model-making art activity that would occur there.

To host the April 2018 focus group, I contacted the owners of wonder'neath community art studio in Halifax to book their multipurpose studio space with its available craft resources. Prior to the group, I decorated the studio with site photographs and participants' anonymous hand-drawn maps to evoke in participants their material recollections. During the audio-recorded and transcribed focus group, I

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[78] Thomas, S. (2004). Art-making and theorizing through the language of imagery. In A.L. Cole, L. Neilsen, J.G. Knowles, & T.C. Luciani (Eds.), *Provoked by art: Theorizing arts-informed research* (pp. 62-70). Halifax, Nova Scotia, CA: Backalong Books & Centre for Arts-informed Research. pp. 67-68

facilitated discussion amongst the 3 participants present about public places in Halifax and in general, and for the art activity requested that participants select a specific memorable site feature to fashion into a 3D model using the studio's supplies. The three models that were produced consisted of the Common Roots Urban Farm's/the Farm's toolshed, the Farm's arbor, and the kayak launch dock in Shubie Park. I retained the models for possible use in presentations depicting this research.

<div align="center">

Inexperiences

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I was pleased with the nature and diversity of information gathered, despite my inexperience with social science interview and focus group process; occasionally, I neglected to prompt participants for details. I recognized these missed opportunities when reading transcripts, which revealed intermittent confusion and distraction in participants' responses as well as my information-gathering abilities. These gaps I now regard as the 'uninvited guest,' identified by my university theatre instructor as the unknown and therefore unanticipated presence of the element of surprise that can derail a live performance.

I discovered in me tendencies towards exhortation, congratulating participants on their successes and verbally appreciative of their research contributions. This conflicts with interview protocol that advises against "getting involved in a 'real' conversation in which the interviewer answers questions asked by the respondent or provides personal opinions on the matters discussed."[79] Yet I refute such protocol, emboldened by a feminist sensibility to value instead "a 'real' conversation with give and take and shared empathetic understanding."[80] I have faith in information gathered through supportive and co-created discussion; I simply look to be more practiced at the currents of conversation.

In attempting to alleviate participants' uncertainty about the map-making activity, I engaged in longer but not clearer explanations in subsequent interviews, to no avail. Participants were anxious about my expectations (though I spoke of having none), their artistic abilities, orienting themselves to the maps, the level of detail, and the inclusion of objects within and without the map boundary (or, in the case of the Halifax Central Library, which floor of the five was the correct one to draw). I incorrectly assumed that open-ended directions would encourage creative license, when it instead seemed that this confused participants and made them anxious about their artwork quality.

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[79] Fontana, A. & Frey, J.H. (2005). The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 695-727). 3rd Ed. London, UK: Sage. p.713
[80] Fontana & Frey, 2005, 713

I became strongly aware of my affinities for people open to learning and arts practices. I suspected as much in my recruitment posters emphasizing learning experiences and affirming an art activity "featuring handmade drawings of maps"[81], in the stating of which I presumed participants would be forewarned or intrigued. While all participants appeared to share these interests, one participant requested the destruction of her hand-drawn map because she did not want it ever to be displayed. While awarenesses of my learning and artistic favourings is a methodological strength in arts-informed research, I may have overvalued these preferences during information gathering. In retrospect, I see my impact on this research as "interpretive *bricoleur* [who] understands that research is an interactive process shaped by [my] own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting."[82] I am confident I gathered worthwhile information, but likewise acknowledge, constructively, that I prize ongoing learning and development that participants may not have shared. My positionalities in feminisms, new materialisms, and ecological theory allow for complicated and entwined expertise capable of further development so that I may carry out qualitative research informed by arts practices that hold and shape co-constructed meaning.

> HOW TO MAKE A REAL MOBILE
>
> 1. Take two objects and connect them with an arm (a piece of wire, a stick or whatever you choose). Find the balance point on that arm. You can find it by simply holding the arm between your finger and thumb and adjusting their position as needed. If you'd like to be more exact, tie a string to the arm and move the string to the left and right until it strikes the balance you're after.[83]

Arts' effectiveness

Ultimately, results about arts' usefulness for research were not fruitful. While I sought to offer "various visual, dramatic, and textual practices … productive in terms of exploring issues during inquiry"[84], participants were generally less engaged in discussions of arts' effectiveness in research. This may have

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[81] Mason, 2017

[82] Denzin, N.K., & Y.S. Lincoln. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-32). 3rd Ed. London, UK: Sage. p.6

[83] Mahler, M. (8 Dec, 2014). From the artist: How to make a real mobile. Retrieved 8 Jul, 2019, from https://www.houzz.com/magazine/from-the-artist-how-to-make-a-real-mobile-stsetivw-vs~34452702 n.p.

[84] Walsh, S. (2006). An Irigarayan framework and resymbolization in an arts-informed research process. *Qualitative Inquiry, 12*(5), 976-993. p.977

been due to participants' unfamiliarity with research process, or because they had already indicated their implicit belief in research informed by the arts through their participation in this enquiry.

Nearly all participants believed individuals have different artistic skill levels; one participant felt the hand-drawn map activity would benefit those with a stronger (innate) artistic ability. Another participant suggested advance notice of an artistic activity is preferable and affects the activity's outcome. Surprisingly, all participants but one recounted personal creative hobbies—'upcycling', photography, audio recordings, woodworking, and painting—but did not identify these as artistic pursuits. These diverse abilities, managed expectations, and non-labelled learning are also found in lifelong learning and informal learning.

Participants appreciated attending to sites' design and visual representation: one participant saw 'value' in 'showing the physical attributes of the [Farm]' because it made him "think about…what [he] physically enjoyed, or the design." The same participant claimed the map-making activity let him think about 'how the space is laid out.' Another participant commented that drawing engages different parts of the brain, enabling one to 'get to other places or think of things [one] might not remember' about a place.

Participants indicated learning processes are supported by art activities: working in the arts enhances one's ability to shift perceptions; enables discovery; permits engagement with different understanding and expressions; promotes critical thinking and problem-solving; introduces new multi-use materials and tools; allows people to 'figure things out for themselves'; and, creates a pressure-free environment (for some participants). Participants also spoke of art as focusing political awareness about public places, improving public places through studio space or installations offering engagement, as well as people's pleasure at being in artistic environments and having their knowledges enriched by the arts. While not effective to similar degrees, nor necessarily required, research informed by the arts was found by participants to produce meaningful understanding.

Creative placemaking

I felt strongly at the outset of this research that creative placemaking was a relevant phenomenon for this enquiry, yet I struggled to assign research purposes to it: as information circulation, inspiration, or exemplar, but ultimately I only used creative placemaking to elicit participants' comments on public places in general and this research's Halifax sites in particular. A creative placemaking approach employs

grassroots efforts to redesign public places through artistic activities[85,86]. The combination of Jane Jacobs' strong support for purpose-built neighbourhood green spaces and gathering areas[87] in America during the 1950s, the notion of spaces affording flexibility and congregation amid anti-corporate sentiment and entrepreneurial arts attitudes in the 1980s and 1990s[88], and the results of William Whyte's urban space behavioural research eventually emerging as the Project for Public Spaces organization are regarded as the primary strands that connect creative placemaking.

During interviews, I provided participants with a creative placemaking definition for clarity and displayed 5 creative placemaking photographs (Figure 1) from Providence, RI; Halifax, NS; Christchurch, NZ; Haymarket, WI; and, Winnipeg, MB to elicit impressions. Participant responses to the photos were equitably positive ("inviting", "comfortable", "relaxing", "cool" and "nice"), neutral ("space beautification", "urban renewal", "collective efforts", "community development", and "planning"), and negative ("too organized" or requiring "too much energy").

While the creative placemaking activities in the photos may have inspired participants' hand-drawn maps, as I had hooped, the results produced by this section were minimal. More properly suited to a critical paradigm, my question about impressions of creative placemaking misled participants in offering suggestions for change rather than interpretations of meaning in the sites. Furthermore, asking participants to draw hypothetical changes on the same maps as recalled objects made for sometimes indistinguishable maps. I could have offered a more clear explanation, or omitted my request for improvements, to produce more insightful information from participants about creative placemaking. As it is, these results do not contribute to the major findings of this research.

In the conjunction of the information-gathering methods and the methodological sensibilities of this work, there emerged realized ideas towards this research's themes of time, tensions, and change, and an unexpected work of art formed by the collection of material objects drawn by hand. Paradoxically brought about by research process derived from documentation, they are emergent and revelatory,

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[85] Artplace America. (2015). Field building. Retrieved 25 Jul, 2019, from http://www.artplaceamerica.org/our-work/field-building/introduction

[86] Markusen, A., & Gadwa, A. (2010). *Creative placemaking*. Washington, DC: Markusen Economic Research Services and Metris Arts Consulting.

[87] Jacobs, J. (April, 1958). Downtown is for the people. Editor's introduction (pp.124-131). The exploding metropolis by the editors of *Fortune* (1st Ed.). Garden City, NY: Doubleday. p.125

[88] Aravot, I. (2002). Back to phenomenological placemaking. *Journal of Urban Design, 7*(2), 201-212.

bringing into focus my arts-informed enquiry process within which plays out "commonsense decision

making, intuition, and a general responsiveness to the natural flow of events and experiences."[89]

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[89] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 61

Figure 1. Creative placemaking photos provided to participants (clockwise from top: Waterfire Festival, Rhode Island. 2018. By Matthew Huang; Photos from Black Street and Northwood Placemaking, Halifax. 2012; Placemaking the Plaza. By Thom Fountain. Volume One. 24 Oct, 2013; GapFiller Trust. 2019. GapFiller Dance-o-Mat, New Zealand, February 2012; Daygazer, Creative Placemaking Challenge, Winnipeg. By Emily Bews and Ashley James. 19 Aug, 2014.)

METHODOLOGICAL ELEMENTS

I devised the map-making and model-making activities for this research as "selected art form[s that] … frame and define the inquiry process and 'text.'"[90] With these elements, participants could express themselves in interviews through visual means as well as verbal responses. I prepared 4 blank site maps (Figure 2) for each participant (incorrectly scaled, as one participant noted), consisting of property boundaries and one orienting feature, on which they were invited to draw meaningful objects and recommendations for site improvements. 5 participants produced 11 hand-drawn maps in total. Focus group participants selected one feature to represent in a 3D model; this resulted in 3 completed models.
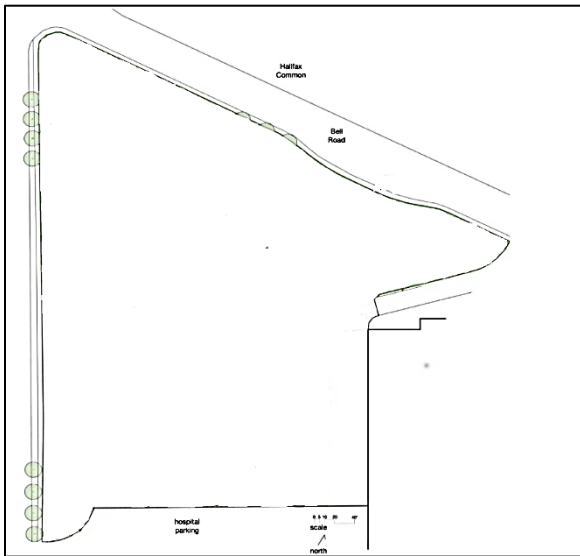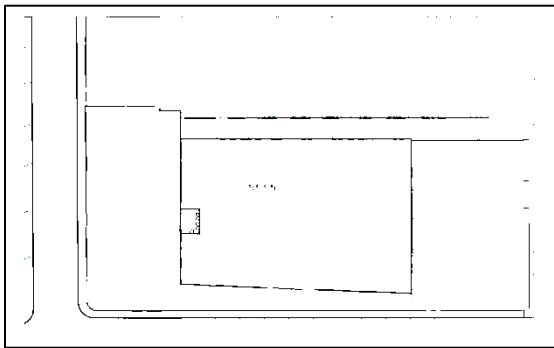
Figure 2. Site maps prepared for participants (counterclockwise from top left): Halifax Central Library, Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, and Shubie Park.
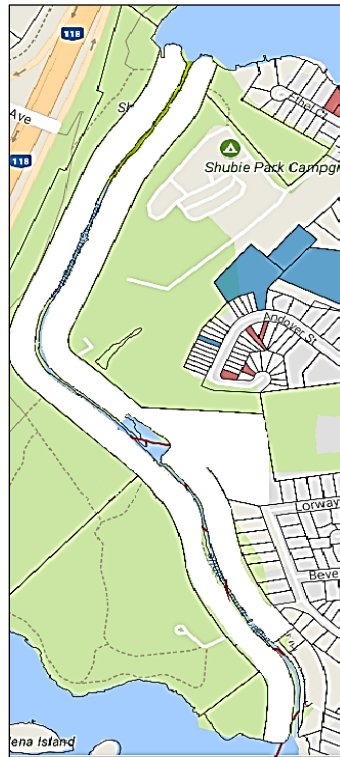
Maps

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[90] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 61

Participants were invited to fill in blank site maps with memorable objects and features for the Halifax Central Library, Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, and Shubie Park; I offered an empty easel pad sheet if they chose to draw a map for Nocturne: Art at Night. Participants could draw on the maps using different colours of crayons and markers I provided, in any order, for as many sites as they wished. I reminded participants that maps would be anonymous, and that the quality of these drawings was irrelevant. There was no time limit for the activity. I gathered and stored the maps after each interview.

Participants variously narrated their drawings, subsequently explained them, and/or remained silent while drawing. I was excited to watch their drawings take shape, and after the first interview abandoned my intent to co-create maps with participants by adding my own contributions. A wonderfully rich aesthetics emerged out of all 11 maps and their more than 60 distinct object drawings, depicting the "consideration of the enduring principles of form and composition, of weight and light, of color and line, of texture and tone."[91]

I examined each map's hand-drawn objects to consider participants' perceptions about each site's material objects affording interactions. Individually, the drawings reveal feelings through line weight, colour, texture, size (especially in relation to other shapes), and adherence to a 'realistic' depiction. When I gathered the object drawings together (Figure 3), the cumulative effect astonished me: it was as though a version of language began to develop, one meaningful for representation, but also sculptured in relief, carved into participants' minds and bodies. Here are intra-active material object interactions between participants and their cognitive and embodied informal learning processes: "Creation does not imply a making something out of nothing. It has to do with reshaping, renewing the materials at hand, very often the materials of our own lives, our experiences, our memories"[92].

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[91] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 63

[92] Greene, M. (2001). Charting our own ways toward meaning in various works of art. In M. Greene (Ed.), *Variations on a blue guitar: The Lincoln Center Institute lectures on aesthetic education* (pp.92-97). New York, NY and London, UK: Teachers College Press. p.21
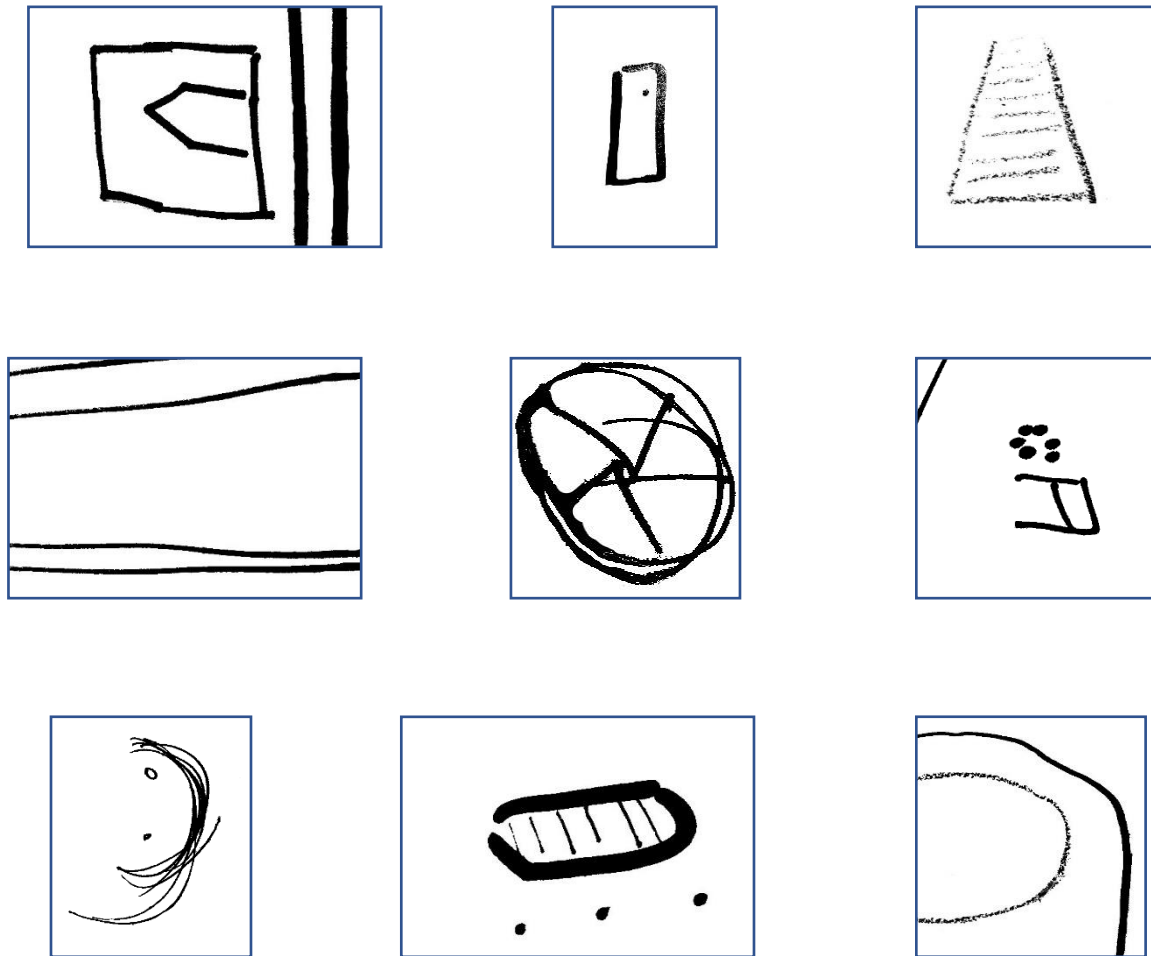
Figure 3. A random sampling of participants' hand-drawn objects signifying memorable features in one of the four public place sites.

In just this small collection, I find a remarkable amalgam of layered, diverse, and thought-provoking figures, associations, and materialities. The shapes mock my intention, quickly abandoned, to identify and label the drawings to match participants' descriptions; in other words, to assign them meaning. One author, writing of responsive art therapy practice, claims that "images are the vehicle of investigation, as well as its synthesis. They inform me as a teacher, supervisor, and advocate as I present and write about what I have learned."[93] My own learning, as a researcher and arts enthusiast, is activated when I see these shapes together: is this a language coming into being? An inchoate grasp of what is stable? Is it semaphore or cipher? Like the doctoral coursework presentation where I substituted Wingdings for the

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[93] Fish, B.J. (2018). Drawing and painting as research. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *Handbook of Arts-Based Research* (pp.336-354). New York, NY: Guildford Press. p.339

default digital font, I want to elicit reaction more so than meaning, for which reason these shapes help compose this text as well as the overall mobile form representing this work.

These shapes prompted me to experiment with their textual appearances, leading me to 'ground' them in this research so that their lines are visible first as smudgemarked background images behind this writing. Then they emerge, full-sized and darkly tinted, to accompany the text. In doing so, I depict my belief that these shapes are literally the elements behind and through and at this work.

In research projects involving visual arts creation, "[amateurs] cannot be expected to possess artistic ability or training. Therefore in participatory projects the aesthetic quality of the resulting visual art takes a back seat to the other advantages of the methodology."[94] Yet I want to bring 'the aesthetic quality of the resulting visual art' forward, where these shapes apparate through the words of this writing like a Birnam that would not be resisted. They produce shared meaning-making not technically expert but complementary to awareness and insight, and are a research discovery I value highly.

At this point in my research conduct, I was seeking an appropriate form to support this research's ideas, exploring suncatchers, mobiles, and other sculpted pieces. In encountering an image of a mobile, I allowed a quiet procession of connections with this form to float atop my consciousness; I did not so much decide as agree on the simpatico I sensed. The benefit of participants' hand-drawn maps were in the shapes representing meaningful material objects, and have since comprised the elements suspended from mobiles' arms. Although the maps were useful to enter into public place discussions, they were not strongly relevant, aside from the shapes, for information gathering.

3D models

During the focus group, I read aloud a list of material objects culled from transcripts to prompt participants' memories and asked them to select one object to create in 3D form. All models were made from cardboard, wood, felt, and fibre materials available in the wonder'neath studio space. From the Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, a toolshed and an arbor was recreated; from Shubie Park, the kayak launch dock was recreated. I stored the 3 models and later photographed them on their own and also within their corresponding research site (Figure 4).

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[94] Leavy, P. (2009). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice.* New York, NY: Guildford Press. pp.227-228

Figure 4. Shubie Park and the kayak dock, and Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm's trellis and (overleaf) toolshed

– I struggle to articulate my feelings in knowing, at the later date of revising this dissertation, that the Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm's arbor and toolshed no longer exist as these photographs show. At one point, whether due to the Farm's relocation progress, the beginnings of a new hospital constructed on this ground, or the aftermath of fall hurricane, the arbor was dilapidated, its seemingly strong posts missing on one side, like a fighter struggling to stand after an eight count. The toolshed was missing entirely. Although I am cognitively reassured by Massey's and Barad's certainties that even past forms leave traces, at the moment, these transformations simply make me sad.

Once I was praised by Mr. Harvey in front of my third-grade class for an elaborate story I had written, although in losing my concentration towards its end, I concluded the story with,

"It turned out everything was a dream."

Mr. Harvey was disappointed, and, it turned out, so was I.

I planned to exhibit these 3D models, and their photographs, to disseminate this research's findings. However, I concluded that participants' informal learning during the model-making activity was a more significant processural element. The focus group transcript revealed a casual discussion amongst the participants during this period of making, where knowledges of art, place, gardening, and walking trails were easily shared. I realized later that the benefit of this activity played out during model construction

where learning transpired dynamically, rather than resting on the resulting models, emplaced but static. The model-making activity is better suited to understanding informal learning experiences, incidental and deliberative, than as an artifact-driven task designed to generate art products for display.

The hand-drawn maps and 3D models comprise this arts-informed research's methodological formal elements; it then remains only to consider the mobile representational form to conclude this discussion. This survey is distinct in style from the three sections in this work that recount my informal learning efforts towards creating a mobile: this section is not experiential but offers a pastiche of various knowledges and relevant practices. Although fewer key figures are associated with mobiles, these artists' oeuvre are not examined here as they would be in a discussion of art education; it is the form, not the creator, that furthers this enquiry. I turn now to an overview of the history, development, construction, and artists working with mobiles in order to show fitness with this research exploring material objects' effects on adults' informal learning in public place sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

MOBILES

Figure 5. *Portrait of Fra Luca Pacioli and an Unknown Young Man*. (c. 1495). Jacopo de' Barbari.

Little is documented about the first mobiles; sculptor Marco Mahler sees early forms in ancient Chinese, Japanese, and Roman windchimes.[95] He also invokes Finnish *himmelis*, decorative straw objects ensuring a bountiful crop.[96] Jacopo de Barbaris's 1496 painting *Rittrato Di Fra Luca Paciali* is regarded as one of the earliest artistic depictions of mobiles.

Kinetic movement is depicted in French

Figure 6. *Fun with Himmelis!* K. Streib. (7 Apr 2015). Croft House.

paintings 20,000-30,000 years old[97], while archaeological discoveries of Egypt's Cult of Osiris from

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[95] Mahler, M. (2019-b.). Marco Mahler: Mobiles and music. Retrieved 3 April, 2019, from https://www.marcomahler.com/
[96] Mahler, M. (2019-c.). Mobiles before Calder – who invented mobiles? – a history of mobiles (part I). Retrieved 3 April, 2019, from https://www.marcomahler.com/mobiles-before-calder-who-invented-mobiles-history/
[97] Chen, Lin, & Fan, 2015, 922

around 2000 BC revealed doll-like figures capable of motion.[98] Kinetic machines reappeared in musical instruments of the 1300s[99], but only in the 20th century did these forms and kineticism combine.
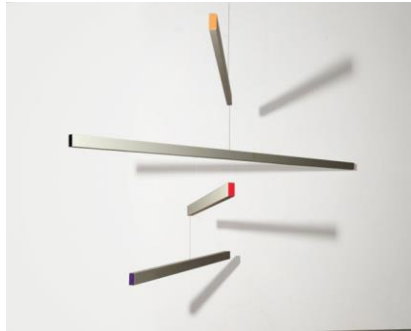
Figure 7. "Useless Machines", Munari's Childhood Memories. c. 1930s-1940s. By Bruno Munari. Italian Ways.

In the 1920s, Vladimir Tatlin–known as a constructivist, which in artistic traditions denotes the artist-as-engineer whose "geometric vocabulary … developed into a rational, materialist, utilitarian approach to socially committed art"[100]–first "'sculpted space' in a dynamic construction"[101] by suspending wires between buildings from which hung counter reliefs. Mahler also refers to Aleksandr Rodchenko's and Naum Gabo's[102] work in the development of kinetic sculpture forms akin to mobiles.

The intersection of art, technology, science, and surreal Dadaist play throughout the 1920s contextualizes artist Man Ray's conjoined coat hangers "in a balanced figuration which he named an 'object of obstruction.'"[103] Such a work is known as a 'readymade', or everyday object repositioned or realigned and offered

Figure 8. Holzel, D. (6 May, 2015). Oy Ray! Obstruction. 1964. By Man Ray. Photo by Avshalom Avital, courtesy of The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

as a work of art; 'readymades' were precursors of mobile designs.

László Moholy-Nagy was a 1920s Futurist artist emphasizing sharp angles and precise lines[104] amidst depictions of speed and dynamism[105], and pioneered light and shape incorporated into sculpting kinetics: "the use of light was something that connected that sense of dematerialization with a sense of motion, of a world in flux, because it momentarily subverted the solidity of objects or shapes."[106] In

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[98] Chen, Lin, & Fan, 2015, 922
[99] Chen, Lin, & Fan, 2015, 923
[100] The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation (n.d.). Constructivism. Retrieved 3 April, 2019, from https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/movement/constructivism
[101] Gabriel, 1985, 39
[102] Mahler, 2019-c., Mobiles before Calder
[103] Gabriel, 1985, 40
[104] Chen, Lin, & Fan, 2015, 924
[105] The Art Story Contributors. (2019, 5 Feb). Futurism movement overview and analysis. Retrieved April 3, 2019, from https://www.theartstory.org/movement-futurism.htm.
[106] Rycroft, S. (2012). Art and micro-cosmos: Kinetic art and mid-20th-century cosmology. *Cultural Geographies, 19*(4), 447-467. p.458

1927, Bruno Munari, another Futurist, created sculptures he called "useless machines (*macchine inutili*)", or "pieces of art that could interact with their environment (much like mobiles)."[107]

Mobiles owe their biggest debt to Alexander Calder, an American sculptor who originally studied mechanical engineering. Calder was a prolific artist whose work was "incredibly varied, ranging from wire sculptures, Mobiles, Stabiles and Constellations to lesser-known motorized sculptures, paintings and functional works such as tapestries, wallpaper and toys."[108] In 1930, after visiting his friend Piet Mondrian in Paris and seeing Mondrian's geometric paintings, Calder claimed he "felt the urge to make living, paintings, shapes in motion."[109] Initially creating colourful, oscillating metal structures that moved by way of cranks and motors, Calder later dismissed these mechanics and, "in favour of more natural catalysts: air, light, humidity and touch"[110], became known for hanging mobiles of abstract shapes, "created to interact with the world around them", "a dynamic expression in space."[111]

Mobiles today may be more recognized as a decoration activating infants' developmental abilities; among them, visual stimulation skills, motor skills, recognition of colours, sizes and shapes, and other coordination capacities.[112] Calder is not the only artist to work with mobiles, but as its "first artisan"[113], he legitimized the form for serious consideration. Because mobiles are the subject of other work by artists including Jean Tinguely, Julio LeParc, George Rickey, Lynn Chadwick, Jerome Kirk, and Tim Prentice, it is evident that their conglomeration of influences and sources are constructivist in ways similar to adults' informal learning in this enquiry. This form is what captured my interest, and proved most fitting for this research.

Relevant elements

Several mobile elements have resonance for this research. Calder's favouring of abstract shapes, to some, has cosmological import[114], although Calder himself appeared to be unconcerned about elements'

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[107] Mahler, 2019-c., Mobiles before Calder
[108] Malloy, V.V. (2012). Rethinking Alexander Calder's universes and mobiles: The influences of Einsteinian physics and modern astronomy. *Immediations, 3*(1), 1-18. p.3
[109] Mahler, 2019-c., Mobiles before Calder
[110] Cohen, A. (2018, Aug 20). 7 artists who created innovative mobiles-beyond Alexander Calder. Retrieved Apr 3, 2019, from https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-7-artists-created-innovative-mobiles-alexander-calder
[111] Masterworks Fine Art Gallery. (n.d.). The mobiles of Alexander Calder. Retrieved 22 Jul, 2019, from https://news.masterworksfineart.com/2017/10/19/the-mobiles-of-alexander-calder
[112] Jui, S. (17 Jun, 2018). How baby mobiles play an essential role in baby brain development. *MyBestCribs.com*. Retrieved 17 Jan, 2020, from https://www.mybestcribs.com/baby-brain-development/
[113] Gabriel, 1985, 41
[114] Malloy, 2012

precise interpretation: "*That others grasp what I have in mind seems unessential … as long as they have something else in theirs.*"[115] *I see in this quotation an affinity with adults' informal learning as a constructed gathering of experiences, understandings, and knowledges with personal relevance for their own pursuits and ends. Mobiles offer an accessibility and avenue into this research that "reach[es] multiple audiences.*"[116]

From an understanding of motion, shapes that hang from a mobile's arms are constant in their representation but fluid and generally unpredictable in their movements.[117] Participants' meaningful objects were identified consistently (i.e., bridge, staircase, installation, etc.), but drawn differently. Alike movement with this representational import is found in the range of material object interactions supporting informal learning.

A primary strength of the mobile form, tension, is a relevant theme for this research. Tension is a unique force in the study of physics, demonstrated by material objects in contact with one another when "one of the objects … happens to be a rope, string, chain, or cable."[118] Such a definition helps explain the interplay of arms and strings in a mobile sculpture. As a technical necessity in constructing mobiles, tension is crucial so that "the balance of the volumes and corresponding weights of the parts, as well as the mechanics of lever calculation, must all contribute to make mobiles coherent works of art."[119] What may be less evident about tension is the energy generated by its "two pulling forces, directly opposing each other, that stretch an object and try to pull it apart."[120] In this energy, I read a reverberating interconnection despite a straining towards separation.

As a theme of this research, the concept of tension is enriched by definitions from both artistic design and literary conceit. In design vocabulary,

> Balancing a composition involves arranging both positive elements and negative space in
> such a way that no one area of the design overpowers other areas. Everything works

[115] Dougall, H. (17 Oct, 2017). Review – Calder on paper: 1960-1976 at the Saatchi Gallery. *The London Magazine*. Retrieved 17 Dec, 2019, from https://www.thelondonmagazine.org/review-calder-paper-1960-1976-saatchi-gallery/

[116] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 59

[117] Brand, n.d.

[118] Khan Academy. (2020). Tension – What is tension? *Forces and Newton's laws of motion.* Retrieved 25 Feb, 2020, from https://www.khanacademy.org/science/physics/forces-newtons-laws/tension-tutorial n.p.

[119] Gabriel, 1985, 40

[120] Worcester Polytechnic Institute. (2005/2013). Exploring the forces of tension. *Teach Engineering.* Retrieved 26 Feb, 2020, from https://www.teachengineering.org/lessons/view/tension n.p.

together and fits together in a seamless whole. The individual parts contribute to their sum but don't try to become the sum. An unbalanced composition can lead to tension.[121]

In this regard, tension represents a weakness of cohesion, unless the effects of visual tension–creating directional energy for a viewer to follow[122]–are desired. In contrast, the New Criticisms school of literary theory sees equilibrium in oppositions generated by tension; there, it is

> the quality of balanced opposites that can provide form and unity to a literary work of diverse components. This sort of tension exists between the literal and metaphorical meanings of a work, between what is written and what the text implies, between the serious and the ironic, between contradictions in the text that the reader must resolve without authorial discussion.[123]

Given my academic background in literature, and with my constructivist and feminist affordances for multiplicities, I merge these definitions in which friction made possible through tension produces dynamic understanding. Without seeking to reconcile these meanings' disparities, I maintain that they all reflect tensions' rich and deep information connecting complexities of form, design, and idea.

Mobiles' material and metaphorical tensions are difficult to account for; after all, "it can be quite hard to make a mobile look 'as intended.'"[124] Of the mobile, a holistic form that has no prescriptive constituent parts, Calder himself said, "Nothing at all of this is fixed. Each element able to move, to stir, to oscillate, to come and go in its relationship with the other elements in its universe. It must not be just a fleeting moment but a physical bond between the varying events in life."[125] Calder's words are a fitting endpoint for this methodological discussion and a useful analogy for this research: out of many ideas and influences comes a whirling mass whose divergences make for interesting perspectives, forming an aligned whole and a disparate series of moments.

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[121] Bradley, S. (2015, Jun 29). Design principles: Compositional, symmetrical, and asymmetrical balance. *Smashing Magazine.* Retrieved 25 Feb, 2020, from https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2015/06/design-principles-compositional-balance-symmetry-asymmetry/ n.p.

[122] Bradley, S. (2012, Jan 10). How to create visual tension in your designs. *Vanseo Designs*. Retrieved 25 Feb, 2020, from https://vanseodesign.com/web-design/visual-tension/ n.p.

[123] Wheeler, L.K. (2018). Literary terms and definitions: T. – Tension. Retrieved 25 Feb, 2020, from https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_T.html n.p.

[124] Brand, n.d.

[125] Calder, A. (1932). Comment réaliser l'art?*' Abstraction-Création, Art Non Figuratif, 1,* 6.

I feel happy

/when I

learn /

to do something.

PUBLIC PLACES' OVERVIEW

It is difficult for things to remain in place. This research's areas of concern are proving hard to locate: adults' informal learning suggests multiplicities apparent in the literature and participants' comments and recollected encounters, and the methodological underpinnings of this work align with differing qualities of goodness and metamorphosizing resonances of method and form. So, then, to this chapter, in which public places reveal equally dynamic qualities.

The passenger door pocket of my 2006 Toyota Corolla holds assorted papers upon which are scribbled directions to towns and addresses across Nova Scotia. I plan my journey and handwrite the directions, to be checked while driving and afterwards stuffed back into the door pocket, should I want to return there. In my hasty direction-transcribing, however, I tend not to identify the actual destination, so none amongst the rabble of pages actually shows where I will arrive. Phrases like "*Back to Northwest Arm but stay straight and LEFT at Lights*" and "**Carter Rd on left**

6 houses in is a clump of mailboxes on the left

Granny house at the back" instruct me exactly in reaching a place I cannot remember. I have several years of these mystery maps, which I sometimes scan to see if the directions help me remember the destination; surprisingly frequently, they do not, and I am left with an absent point of arrival. Occasionally I consider choosing a random page and following its directions, wayfinding like a hobbit, with an overnight bag in the car and extra food left out for the cats. This scenario lives between my desire for order and my penchant for discovery, which are difficult qualities to reconcile in research. That–this endeavour–is like a car trip: directions firmly in hand, I am nonetheless tempted by detours, and from time to time I stop to stretch my legs and dump out the chip bags. One ought always have a moment to take in the view, which I do in Chapter 6.5: Interim.

I see in public places a pattern alternating between broad, encompassing sensibilities and small, private actions; I want to move between these scaled meanings, which offer thematic resonance with adults' informal learning made possible materially. This chapter investigates public places' definitions and concepts, situating them amongst researchers and theorists writing in relevant fields. I also introduce cartographies and geographies of place where land is represented and contested. I examine Halifax, the setting for this research, and the four study sites' details, histories, and relations in domains concerned

with economics, environment, and activisms; the final two site vignettes afford other methodologically-supported knowings of these places and draw this chapter to a close.

Amidst these place learnings, I continue the conceit of insertions, directed in this chapter towards material objects I recall in public places; it affords me another avenue of alignment with participant encounters and lets me reflect on the role of public places in which material object interactions occur.

"go right–stay right. Follow that for 5 mins–(rough road)–then head out of town"

PUBLIC PLACES

Definitions

My efforts to define public places produced three distinct, unsuccessful attempts: the range of interpretations was too staggering. Quotations kept accumulating, and I kept losing my place. It would be a task beyond this chapter to claim definitive understanding about public places. Relevant literature from the last fifty years produces phrases associated with different theoretical approaches and therefore unique terminologies–'public imaginary', 'public narratives', 'public history', and 'public sphere.' Place is simultaneously the purview of historians, sociologists, politicians, artists, semioticians, while literature searches combining 'public place' with 'education' produce results for health, religion, transportation, women's issues, housing, geography, planning, and environment. It is as though the car I am in is on autopilot and takes me down roads of its own choosing.

Most public place literature recognizes this resistance to definition even at its most uncomplicated:

> The idea of "place" turns out to be a multilayered and messy geographical concept. To begin with, we use many generic terms, such as *place, region, area, territory,* and *locality*, to identify a distinctive and usually bounded space as if it is a relatively permanent and separable entity endowed with particular and distinctive qualities.[1]

Urban historian and poet Dolores Hayden writes that

> "Place" is one of the trickiest words in the English language, a suitcase so overfilled one can never shut the lid. It carries the resonance of homestead, location, and open space in the

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[1] Harvey, D. (2009). *Cosmopolitanism and the geographies of freedom*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press. p.169

city as well as a position in a social hierarchy. The authors of books on architecture, photography, cultural geography, poetry, and travel rely on "sense of place" as an aesthetic concept but often settle for "the personality of a location" as a way of defining it.[2]

The governing legal definition in Canada finds "public place" to be "any place to which the public have access as of right or by invitation, express or implied."[3] Tuan believes "places are centers of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest, and procreation, are satisfied."[4] These explanations suggest geographical as well as emotional determination of place.

The Montréal Metro automatic ticket dispenser, where I could not figure out how to buy a single-trip fare and ended up paying $8 to ride 11 blocks

To alleviate these complexities, I sought to offer a juxtaposition through defining 'space' instead. That plan, however, was not to be realized: some literature suggests place and space are intertwined[5], or at least hyphenated[6] in the fashion of academic insecurity with which I strongly identified in this quest for definition. For some authors, space is always already before place[7], while others see them as entangled–"place is space filled up by people, practices, objects, and representations"[8]–or even causal –"With meaning making understood as a practice, how are spatial meanings established? Who has the power to make places of spaces? Who contests this?"[9] Comparing space with place in order to define either is indicative only of multiple meanings respectively and in correlation with one another. The profusion of meanings for place and their often overlapping elements models the ecological theoretical framework in this enquiry, but does not offer a point of origin.

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[2] Hayden, D. (1995) *The power of place: Urban landscapes as public history.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. n.p.

[3] Government of Canada. (10 April, 2019). Justice laws website. Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46). Retrieved 6 May, 2019, from https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/section-213.html?pedisable=false

[4] Tuan, Y.-F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p.4

[5] Tuan, 1977

[6] Massey, D. (1991). A global sense of place. *Marxism Today,* 38, 24-29. Retrieved 7 May, 2019, from http://aughty.org/pdf/global_sense_place.pdf n.p.

[7] Gupta, A., & Ferguson, J. (1992). Beyond "culture": Space, identity, and the politics of difference. *Cultural Anthropology, 7*(1), 6-23.

[8] Gieryn, T.F. (2000). A space for place in sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology, 26,* 463-496. p.465

[9] Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, 11

My difficulties in circumscribing place's contested definitions and terminologies made me abandon any notion of a single, unified understanding. It appears that sometimes it is necessary to accept that one is a little lost, and go by way of the ring road instead.

> *The clock tower at the University of Auckland is white in colour, made of who knows what kind of stone, and its tower is filigreed, a delicate lace etched out against a southernblue sky.*

Given the challenges of defining places, public or otherwise, I instead gathered their shared qualities, much like the list of adults' shared learning characteristics. During the information-gathering phase, I did not specify for participants how to identify public places in general; I assumed participants understood the term. Had I been pressed to explain, I would have referred to those shared areas outside the home available for visiting to any end. I start here by claiming that public place, universally defined, is hard to come by; what is meant by public place seems to point to any given road on which one is travelling.

Concepts

A few qualities unite public places across different interpretations and purposes. For instance, a precise theoretical lens or disciplinary convention tends to frame approaches to public places. That is, my review of the literature shows that a psychological approach to place draws attention to issues of identity[10], a design approach emphasizes communities' needs and policy decisions[11], and a historical approach looks at preserving archaeological sites and the lineages of indigenous peoples in relation to made place.[12] Distinct attitudes are revealed towards public places depending on the research paradigm or tradition; in the field of lifelong learning, and informal learning in particular, places tend to offer a background for learning situations.[13]

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[10] Proshansky, H.M., Fabian, A.K., & Kaminoff, R. (1983). Place-identity: Physical world socialization of the self. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 3*, 57-83.

[11] Gaffikin, F., McEldowney, M., & Sterrett, K. (2010). Creating shared public space in the contested city: The role of urban design. *Journal of Urban Design, 15*(4), 493-513.

[12] Opp, J. (2011). Public history and the fragments of place: Archaeology, history and heritage site development in southern Alberta. *Rethinking History, 15*(2), 241-267.

[13] Schugurensky, D. (2000). The forms of informal learning: Towards a conceptualization of the field. *WALL Working Paper 19-2000*. Presented at the New Approaches for Lifelong Learning (NALL) Fourth Annual Conference, October 6-8.

Another shared quality between public place meanings is the importance of social behaviours in forging and sustaining them.

> In American urban design theory the concept of "everyday space" defines ordinary places that function as connective tissue in the dispersal urban morphology of the modern city. These spaces can be ambiguous, obvious, banal, un-designed or invisible but with the potential to foster new forms of social interaction even if they work as collective places only a few hours during the day or only a few days during the week or the month.[14]

Elwood, Lawson, and Nowak demonstrate how collective social identities endorsed by way of neighbourhood placemaking, like creative placemaking, both create and restrict poverty and political affiliation.[15] In one case study, public areas in Toronto afforded intercultural communication and social inclusion to the extent that public life superseded public space.[16] Wallace Stegner, writing in "The Sense of Place", explores personal and national identities forged by place and the people we find or are there: "Indifferent to, or contemptuous of, or afraid to commit ourselves to, our physical and social surroundings, always hopeful of something better, hooked on change, a lot of us have never stayed in one place long enough to learn it, or have learned it only to leave it."[17] There are as many references to social behaviours in public places as there are different behaviours.

The other prominent shared quality of public places pertains to corporate- or government-approved areas for public use (and generally profit). David Harvey describes this neoliberal micromanagement as "the powers of developers backed by finance, corporate capital, and an increasingly entrepreneurially minded local state apparatus" compromising the "ideals of urban identity, citizenship and belonging."[18] Parkinson makes the point that desire lines, those pathways forged by pedestrian traffic that differ from design intentions, will eventually shift if the preferred access points are moved.[19] Even in sites with services for the social good, such as libraries, pressures arise from

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[14] Bravo, L. (2013). Open spaces, public spaces, publics, open-minded places. *Ricerche e progetti per il territorio, la città e l'architettura, 1*, 1-3. pp. 2-3

[15] Elwood, S., Lawson, V., & Nowak, S. (2015). Middle-class poverty politics: Making place, making people. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *105*(1), 123-143.

[16] Galanakis, M. (2013). Intercultural public spaces in multicultural Toronto. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research, 22*(1), 67-89.

[17] Stegner, W. (1992). "The sense of place." *The sense of place.* New York, NY: Random House. n.p.

[18] Harvey, D. (2008). The right to the city. 23-40. Retrieved 8 May, 2019, from https://kompreser.espivblogs.net/files/2012/11/David-Harvey-The-Right-To-The-City-full.pdf

[19] Parkinson, J.R. (2012). *Democracy and public space: The physical sites of democratic performance.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. pp.78-79

the corporate model of a cost-cutting, profit-making (or at least self-sustaining) business enterprise. Public libraries today engage in a wide array of commercially oriented ventures that were virtually unheard of even two decades ago. In-house bookstores, gift shops, the selling of T-shirts, mugs, book bags, postcards, and food are some of the ways libraries are forced to help finance themselves in light of diminishing public funds.[20]

"Through processes of privatization and commercialization of social life, the public realm has been compromised or diminished"[21], rendering non-intentional purposes of public places extinct.

The public ice rink in London's Victoria Park is horrible (I was told by a cute hockey player when I was 14): it's not resurfaced nearly enough, and the snow atop is inches thick from little kids' blades and clumsy adults' falls

Contemporary public places are controlled to an extraordinary extent, in the views of researchers writing about public places from various perspectives; I explore the relevant consequences of this monitoring in Chapter 8: Reshaping Public Places. I notice that these common characteristics of public places permit an intervention that crosses disciplinary specificity, socially-determined behaviours and practices, and corporate/political control. This intervention is placemaking, to which I referred in a creative capacity previously, and it offers residents the opportunity to shape public places.

Placemaking

Through placemaking, area residents can take control of how public place is accessed, perceived, equipped, and enjoyed (the moniker 'creative' is applied if these measures are inspired by or realized in a creative fashion). Multiuse neighbourhood public places gain or strengthen community meaning and connection through placemaking, in contrast to planning interventions imposed without a sense of an area's unique composition:

In orthodox city planning, neighbourhood open spaces are venerated in an amazingly uncritical fashion, much as savages venerate magical fetishes. Ask a houser how his planned

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[20] Leckie, G.J., & Hopkins, J. (2002). The public place of central libraries: Findings from Toronto and Vancouver. *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy, 72*(3), 326-372. p.357
[21] Gaffikin, McEldowney, & Sterrett, 2010, 498

neighbourhood improves on the old city and he will cite, as a self-evident virtue, More
Open Space. Ask a zoner about the improvements in progressive codes and he will cite,
again as a self-evident virtue, their incentives toward leaving More Open Space. More Open
Space for what? For muggings? For bleak vacuums between buildings? Or for ordinary
people to use and enjoy? But people do not use city open space just because it is there and
because city planners or designers wish they would.[22]

Residents, organizations, and government departments collaborate through placemaking in order to
"strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region."[23] Like
other elements of this research, placemaking is understood as a collection of principles and related
activities. Placemaking can include small measures, such as Jacobs' advocacy for greenspaces, or
Whyte's favoured moveable seating, through to substantial construction or cosmetic improvements. A
number of organizations, such as the Project for Public Spaces and Artscape, offer placemaking
resources and support in the United States[24] and Canada.[25]

Placemaking affords opportunities for inclusion, a valuable aspect of determining and fostering public
places: "small-scale [creative placemaking] efforts involving non-profits can engage communities in
planning processes and include marginalized voices that otherwise might not be considered"[26]; a March
2016 report on Canadian placemaking features the phrases 'grassroots' organization, 'social justice',
'activists' and advocacy.[27] The processes of placemaking provide social belonging through concerns
around materiality: "Place based responses to social problems emerge from the policies that the
physical environment can positively influence wellbeing and quality of life."[28] Yet placemaking is not a
panacea for improving public places: community-driven actions to make over shared spaces may actively
distort or hide accessibility, gentrification, decisionmaking process, and accountability.

Furthermore, the literature does not offer placemaking's options for supporting and sustaining adults'
informal learning, despite emphasizing design and new or repurposed material objects. I am aware, on

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[22] Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of great American cities.* New York, NY: Random House. p.90

[23] Markusen, A., & Gadwa, A. (2010). *Creative placemaking*. Washington, DC: Markusen Economic Research Services and Metris Arts Consulting. p.3

[24] Project for Public Spaces. (2019). About. Retrieved 20 May, 2019, from https://www.pps.org/about

[25] Toronto Artscape Inc. (2019). Artscape. Retrieved 20 May, 2019, from https://www.artscape.ca/

[26] Rhayn, D. (3 Dec, 2018). Nonprofits use creative placemaking to address public safety. *Nonprofit Quarterly.* Retrieved 20 May, 2019, from https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2018/12/03/nonprofits-use-creative-placemaking-to-address-public-safety/

[27] Co*Lab. (March 2016). Canadian placemaking: Overview and action. Retrieved 20 May, 2019, from https://mcconnellfoundation.ca/what-is-placemaking-3/

[28] Karacor, E.K. (2014). PlaceMaking approach to accomplish social sustainability. *European Journal of Sustainable Development, 3*(4), 253-262. p.255

this point, that construction work is on the road ahead, so I proceed with exploring the relationships between public places and learning and informal learning.

I keep getting flummoxed by the path to the ravine in Hemlock Ravine Park in Halifax: I can see a path, the map shows there's a path, but—the path just suddenly isn't. Maybe it continues behind the huge tree trunk completely obstructing the path, or maybe the tree trunk marks the end of the path, or maybe I'm not on the path anymore, but: where did the path go?

PUBLIC PLACES AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Learning opportunities in different types of public places is a relevant subsection of place literature, despite a gap about public places' informal learning potential. In the same way that adults' informal learning comprises overlapping cultural, social, and economic spheres of influence, and that public places are composed of various domains, beliefs, politicizations, and manifestations, numerous attitudes and beliefs about learning or more frequently, education, are displayed in public places.

A wealth of literature exists about public places and education where learning is not just implicit but expected, such as libraries or galleries.[29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35] So strong is the formal learning paradigm, however, that even this writing emphasizes academic or institutional libraries and galleries, and the ensuing educational capital acquired there. Other sources mention public places in the context of

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[29] Leckie & Hopkins, 2002

[30] Bundy, A. (2004). Places of connection: New public and academic library buildings in Australia and New Zealand. *Aplis, 17*(1), 32-47.

[31] Bryant, J., Matthews, G., & Walton, G. (2009). Academic libraries and social and learning space: A case study of Loughborough University Library, UK. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science, 41*(1), 7-18.

[32] Bilandzic, M., & Foth, M. (2013). Libraries as co-working spaces: Understanding user motivations and perceived barriers to social learning. *Library Hi Tech, 31*(2), 254-273.

[33] Bilandzic, M., & Foth, M. (2014). Learning beyond books—strategies for ambient media to improve libraries and collaboration spaces as interfaces for social learning. *Multimedia Tools and Applications, 71,* 77-95.

[34] Schauble, L., Leinhardt, G., & Martin, L. (1997). A framework for organizing a cumulative research agenda in informal learning contexts. *Journal of Museum Education, 22*(2-3), 3-8.

[35] Hammond, A., Berry, I., Conkelton, S., Corwin, S., Franks, P., Hart, K., Lynch-McWhite, W., Reeve, C., & Stomberg, J. (2006). The role of the university art museum and gallery. *Art Journal, 65*(3), 20-39.

environmental education[36,37, 38,39], while still others examine children and youth's learning in public places, and are therefore excluded from this research on adults' informal learning. Some literature connects public places and learning–constructivist public places, or adults' learning of site-specific skills or training, or art displays that enrich a setting–but overall, these elements are not found to be interconnected–are not 'mobile-ized'–as I have designed in this enquiry. Customarily, adults learning informally in public places are described as enacting social responsibility through citizenship and democracy[40], drawing attention to issues of immigration[41], activism[42], poverty[43], race[44] and participatory processes[45], which supports the historical emergences of adults' informal learning, but reframes learning as incidental. Since few theorists work in the intersections of public places and adults' informal learning, I refer to authors whose writing illuminates some public place aspect that impacts on this research.

   Figures

When I first contemplated how to approach public place, I recalled that the agora of Greek antiquity functioned as a social practice as well as a geographical space: "Selling and purchasing took place in the Agora, but so did playing, teaching and learning, arguing, philosophizing, and so on"[46], where "the idea of an interest beyond that of the individual"[47] took shape. While not a figure *per se*, the agora predates community-based scholarship, changing "relationship[s] between science and society and … the idea of a new logic and new social relationships between experts, scientific knowledge claims and society."[48] The agora were public places found in cities, where greater population density activated meeting areas rife with energy and purpose; urban settings may be positioned to benefit most from public places.

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[36] Wilson, R. (1997). A sense of place. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 24*(3), 191-194
[37] Grill, J.C. (2003). Natural settings, restorative environments, and adult learning. *Adult Learning, 14*(3), 20-23.
[38] Gradle, S. (2007). Ecology of place: Art education in a relational world. *Studies in Art Education, 48*(4), 392-411.
[39] Gradle, S. (2008). When vines talk: Community, art, and ecology. *Art Education, 61*(6), 6-12.
[40] Parkinson, 2012
[41] Bauder, H. (2015). Possibilities of urban belonging. *Antipode, 48*(2), 252–271.
[42] Martin, D. (2003). "Place-framing" as place-making: Constituting a neighborhood for organizing and activism. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 93*(3), 730-750.
[43] Elwood, Lawson, & Nowak, 2015
[44] May, J. (2015). 'Gone, leave, go, move, vanish': Race, public space and (in)visibilities. *Social Identities, 21*(5), 489-505.
[45] Brown-Sica, M., Sobel, K., & Rogers, E. (2010). Participatory action research in learning commons design planning. *New Library World, 111*(7/8), 302-319.
[46] Feinberg, W. (2012). The idea of a public education. *Review of Research in Education*, *36*(1), 1-22. p.2
[47] Feinberg, 2012, 2
[48] Frederiksen, L.F., Hansson, F., & Wenneberg, S.B. (2003). The *agora* and the role of research evaluation. *Evaluation, 9*(2), 149-172. p.153

Once, while taking the cat for a walk

*in the woods behind the Gristmill
Court apartments, I found a couple of
condoms*

and a bra

*tossdropped over a waist-high
boulder.*

"That–can't have been comfortable,"

I thought.

<u>Henri Lefebvre</u>

In *The Production of Space* (1974), Henri Lefebvre aligns the character of historical towns with the spaces they produce and therefore value and which will inevitably lead to capitalist reproduction. Space is, figuratively, the site of future growth:

> groups, classes or fractions of classes cannot constitute themselves, or recognize one another, as 'subjects' unless they generate (or produce) a space. Ideas, representations or values which do not succeed in making their mark on space, and thus generating (or producing) an appropriate morphology, will lose all pith and become mere signs, resolve themselves into abstract descriptions, or mutate into fantasies.[49]

While commodification of space is not a meaningful discussion in this research on material object interactions affecting adults' informal learning in public places, I understand the shaping of space as an investment into place not measured solely in financial terms.

This notion of jointly constructed public places underscores Lefebvre's 1968 book *Le droit à la ville*, named for 'the right to the city.' In contemporary use, the right to the city rallies around social justice movements concerned with urban equity and access to resources, including gathering places:

> [Lefebvre] may have meant something altogether novel, eschewing altogether the bourgeois conception of rights as entitlements and constraints, powers and privileges. Instead, perhaps Lefebvre understood the [right to the city] as describing a participatory

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[49] Lefebvre, H. (1974). *The production of space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

> socio-political process, inclusive of, in part constituted by (but not exhausted through) political struggle.[50]

Lefebvre's then-radical belief in property owners to be accountable for socially integrating the spaces they owned into collective life and activities[51] depicted a democratic right to the city that contrasted with economic privileges of ownership:

> users have a normative right to the space of the city. It is rightfully theirs. In this light, owners' claims to property rights are wrong, a claim to something that is not properly theirs. Appropriation is thus a way to rethink the concept of rightful ownership, to radically transform our notions about who rightfully owns the city. Not only does it refuse a property rights conception of ownership, it affirms a radical alternative: the city belongs to those who inhabit it.[52]

This viewpoint aligns with my conceptualization of public place in this research, in which these areas are understood to connect with adults' informal learning because they are spaces for the public and therefore available for any version of learning efforts by way of material objects emplaced there. Access to these places, and temporary appropriation of them through the act of walking, produces distinct and significant knowledges: of places, of selfhood, of research, and of art. In Chapter 8: Reshaping Public Places, I examine walking as a subject, as a method, and as an artful expression to acquaint oneself with constantly changing places. In Lefebvre's work, I see and champion access to public places so that they are collaboratively refigured as sites collectively owned and enjoyed by their citizens.

William H. Whyte

In contrast to theoretical public place concerns, William H. Whyte wrote of his research exploring and experiencing public places. Having received a grant in 1970 to explore New York street life, Whyte's constant observation of patterns created by pedestrian behaviours became known as the Street Life Project[53], focusing precisely on people's customary behaviours in relation to public places:

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[50] King, L.A. (2018). Henri Lefebvre and the right to the city. In S.M. Meagher, S. Noll & J.S. Biehl (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of philosophy of the city* (n.p.). New York, NY: Routledge.

[51] Purcell, M. (2014). Possible worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the right to the city. *Journal of Urban Affairs, 36*(1), 141-154.

[52] Purcell, 2014, 149

[53] Project for Public Spaces. (3 Jan, 2010). William H. Whyte. Retrieved 11 May, 2019, from https://www.pps.org/article/wwhyte

It was the 'eye-level view, the way people see it,' not the bird's-eye view favored by grand planners, that interested Whyte. Thanks to him, we now understand that people are not repelled by crowding – up to a point – but excited by it, eager and able to adapt to it.[54]

> *In Dunedin, New Zealand, the Speight's Brewery was built over a freshwater spring, so in the interests of merging its assets, the company installed a keg and tap in its iconic style that delivers fresh springwater to pedestrians on the sidewalk outside.*

In footage from Whyte's research films shot in New York City during the 10-year span of the project, comparisons with adults' informal learning seem apparent. For instance, Whyte provides a voice-over claiming that people in public place plazas are engaged in different activities: "The first thing that strikes you is the extraordinary diversity of activity: people reading, eating, talking, playing games."[55] The same can be said of areas of informal learning interest, seen in this research's participant interests in sound recording, painting, running, gardening, and woodworking. Whyte explains the need for movable chairs to foster casual conversation, which is a precept followed by the Halifax Central Library. He even remarks upon the ways that people cross spaces in a manner resounding with descriptions of a mobile's elements and fluidity: "The movement of people across it: choreography is wonderful, and choreography is the right word. The way people move, circle, stop, speed up, the colours they wear– there's a beauty that they themselves must often sense. You see none of this in architectural photographs."[56] Public places' motion and changeability that Whyte stresses is vital for street life are repeated themes in this research's informal learning understanding and public place characterization.

Jane Jacobs

Jane Jacobs, who was mentored by Whyte, believed that planning was unnecessary and often harmful to communities flourishing naturally without what she perceived as the interference of development. She was particularly scornful of *fait accompli* design changes masquerading as public consultation processes:

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[54] Glazer, N. (1999, Spring). The man who loved cities. *The Wilson Quarterly,* 27-33. p.32
[55] Jamese, J. (2018, Dec 30). *City spaces, human places: Based on research films by William H. Whyte* [video file]. Retrieved 22 Dec, 2019, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rW5KVb26Zt4
[56] Jamese, 2018

Jacobs had a good way of describing this. "There are two kinds of change, and you can symbolize them on the land," she told me years ago. "There is the kind of change in which the topsoil is being built up, and it is being made more fertile and is good husbandry of the land. The land is changing when you do that, but it is positive change. Then there's the kind of change that's just as definitely change—that's erosion. Gullies are being dug in the land, and the topsoil is being carried away and it's being made infertile. The fact that it's changed doesn't mean it's progress. It's ruin. But people were, for a long time, brainwashed into the idea that every sort of change in a city was progress. 'Well, yes, it's bad but that's progress.' No, that's erosion."[57]

I pause briefly in my journey to take in the attractions of Jacobs' ecological analogy and also her engaging writing on cities and 'greenspace'.

A sense of place is built up, in the end, from many little things too, some so small people take them for granted, and yet the lack of them takes the flavor out of the city: irregularities in level, so often bulldozed away; different kinds of paving, signs and fireplugs and street lights, white marble stoops.[58]

Like Whyte, Jacobs favoured observation and the authentic understanding of communities brought about by being in them: "You've got to get out and walk."[59] Jacobs' knowledge of planning practice was wholly informal; she was sensitive to daily rhythms of life that could not be reflected in city grids:

How large is a city street neighbourhood that functions capably? If we look at successful street-neighbourhood networks in real life, we find this is a meaningless question, because wherever they work best, street neighbourhoods have no beginnings and ends setting them apart as distinct units. The size even differs for different people from the same spot, because some people range father than others. Indeed, a great part of the success of these neighbourhoods of the streets depends on their overlapping and interweaving, turning the corners.[60]

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[57] Gratz, R.B. (4 July, 2016). The genius of Jane Jacobs. *Nation, 11,* 16-17. pp. 16-17
[58] Jacobs, J. (April, 1958). Downtown is for the people. Editor's introduction (pp.124-131). The exploding metropolis by the editors of *Fortune* (1st Ed.). Garden City, NY: Doubleday. p.130
[59] Jacobs, 1958, 127
[60] Jacobs, 1961, 12

Jacobs' work in cementing unique neighbourhood features, and her encouragement to their residents to contribute meaningfully to them, became enshrined in the practice of Jane's Walks, "a community-based approach to city building that uses citizen-led walking tours to make space for people to observe, reflect, share, question and re-imagine the places in which they live, work and play."[61] Jacobs' belief in not just acknowledging but cherishing the material idiosyncrasies of public places informs this research.

The neatly lined sunchairs and umbrellas
on the beach at Vouliagmeni
(near Athens)
was so relaxing I decided
to sunbathe topless like the locals, too
(But not for long, because
no way was I going to deal with a sunburn
there).

Doreen Massey

My advisory committee unanimously recommended to me the work of British cultural geographer Doreen Massey, whose late twentieth century work stressed that the social relations that helped construct places were far from unmediated. Writing from various viewpoints, most often Marxist and feminist, Massey investigates space and place troublings that cut across time, geographical boundaries, presumptions of essentialism, and identities forged in the worlds where we grew up and now reside.

Like the dynamics of shift in this research, Massey sees space as rife with movement and ongoing reconstitution while paradoxically locked into place, much like mobiles that move with the air but do not locomote: "'Space' is created out of the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities, of the interlocking and the non-interlocking, and the networks of relations at every scale from local to global. What makes a particular view of these social relations specifically spatial is their simultaneity. It is a simultaneity, also, which has extension and configuration. But simultaneity is absolutely not stasis."[62] Just as adults can regard identical material objects but construct differing interpretations, Massey's comments point to the ecological particularity of public place sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia, amongst public places' universal alterations and dis-placements.

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[61] Jane's Walk. (2019-a.). About Jane's Walk. Retrieved 11 May, 2019, from https://janeswalk.org/about/

[62] Massey, D. (1992). Politics and space/time. In C. Philo (Ed.), *Theory and methods: Critical essays in human geography (Contemporary foundations of space and place)* (pp.80-81). London, UK: Routledge. pp.80-81

Steel bands encircle wooden power poles in New Zealand, to stop possums from climbing up and chewing dead the wires overhead.

Massey also offers commentary on the postmodern doubling of boundaries of place:

> places, in fact, are always constructed out of articulations of social relations (trading connections, the unequal links of colonialism, thoughts of home) which are not only internal to that locale but which link them to elsewhere. Their 'local uniqueness' is always already a product of wider contacts; the local is always already a product in part of 'global' forces, where global in this context refers not necessarily to the planetary scale, but to the geographical beyond, the world beyond the place itself.[63]

During my forthcoming exploration into political considerations of this research's sites, Massey's understanding of actions affecting multiple contexts will prove insightful.

The deck Mom and Dad built over our old backyard patio on Sorrel Road. Before I left for Nova Scotia, I photographed our dogs on its top step: Fifty, our Cocker Spaniel, and Nessie, my sister's Scottie (both only sitting still for treats held just outside of the photo frame)

Other geographers and theorists–David Harvey, Edward Relph, Dorothy Hayden, Tim Cresswell–offer understanding into place-based discussions, but their contributions are not meaningful here to the same degree as are Jacobs and Massey in particular.

With a more informed understanding of place, including its opportunities and challenges, I am equipped to explore the city of Halifax where these sites are located, briefly examining its history and inhabitants for pertinent qualities on this study into material object interactions affecting adults' informal learning in its public place sites. I outline my rationale for selecting Halifax as a research location, closely examine the four study sites, and consider some contestations of place raised by authors I have noted thus far.

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[63] Massey, D. (1995). Places and their pasts. *History Workshop Journal, 39*, 182-192. p.183

Our car trip has reached the point where cramped joints are bothersome, the snacks have run out, and the landscape passing by the windows has been dispiritedly similar for some time. An intake of breath accompanies the carrying on–the road has not fully revealed itself yet.

HALIFAX AND RESEARCH SITES

Ancestors of the Mi'kmaq people hunted and gathered in Nova Scotia and parts east approximately 13,000 years ago[64]; archaeological evidence found along the Shubenacadie Canal shows Mi'kmaq using the waterway at least 4,000 years ago to move between Halifax Harbour and the Bay of Fundy.[65] A French colony, Acadia, initially occupied Halifax's city site, thanks to Samuel de Champlain's 1605 visit establishing a French fishing settlement there; in 1713, the area was ceded to the British through the Treaty of Utrecht[66] and in 1749, to mitigate the French influence at the Fortress of Louisburg[67], Captain General Edward Cornwallis and 2,500 settlers from Britain founded the city of Halifax. Dartmouth was founded one year later.[68] The city was named for George Dunk, Earl of Halifax and Chief Lord of Trade and Plantations, who oversaw the settlement.[69] Conflicts and tensions between the British, French, Acadians and Mi'kmaqi continued, with Cornwallis declaring a bounty on Mi'kmaq scalps and the British deporting Acadians in 1755[70]; significant numbers of Loyalists emigrating to Halifax during the American Revolutionary War gave the British sufficient military might to dispossess the Mi'kmaq of their lands in the 1780s. This list of dates and villages belies colonial practices of land claims and associated violence and hardships; the heritage of these decisions, while peripherally relevant to this research, is better explored in work by others focusing on these experiences of oppression and marginalization to which I cannot credibly speak.

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[64] The Canadian Encyclopedia. (2019). Halifax. Retrieved 12 May, 2019, from https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/halifax n.p.
[65] Shubenacadie Canal Commission. (2016-g.). The Mi'kmaq. Retrieved 12 May, 2019, from https://www.shubenacadiecanal.ca/the-mikmaq n.p.
[66] Belshaw, J.D. (n.d.). Chapter 6. Intercolonial rivalries, imperial ambitions, and the conquest. Retrieved 12 May, 2019, from https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/6-10-acadia-1713-1755/ n.p.
[67] McGillivray, B. (2019). Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved 12 May, 2019, from https://www.britannica.com/place/Halifax-Nova-Scotia n.p.
[68] McGillivray, 2019, n.p.
[69] Mccann, L.D. (24 Sep, 2012). Halifax. Rev. 7 Mar, 2019. Retrieved 12 May, 2019, from https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/halifax n.p.
[70] Mccann, 2012/2019, n.p.

Halifax became prominent as an international harbour and was incorporated as a city in 1841.[71] Despite losing much of its economic importance in 1867 when Canada's confederation instituted policies resulting in banks and financial institutions relocating to Toronto and Montréal[72], Halifax was recognized as the country's most significant naval base during both world wars.[73] From the 1950s onwards, the city's industries have comprised "a mix of private and public services, which provide a stable economic base. Trade, health care and social assistance, education, and public administration are major economic sectors, along with accommodation and food services, finance and construction."[74]

2016 census reports show that Halifax consisted of 403,390 residents[75], approximately 257,000 of whom are adults aged 19 years or older. Slightly more than 49,000[76] of those 15 or older hold no educational certificate, diploma or degree, while just over 85,000[77] of the 15+-year-old population holds a secondary (high) school diploma or equivalency certificate, making this research into adults' informal learning in Halifax sites a valuable contribution to alternative learning opportunities for residents.

Information on public places within Halifax is more difficult to find, likely due in part to complicating factors of public place definition. For instance, the 2014 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy for Halifax classifies parks by district, community, or neighbourhood. District parks serve 10,000 people[78] and offer "walking and cycling trails, sports fields, picnic areas, supervised beaches, and play facilities for children and areas intended for passive recreation uses that are left in a predominantly natural state"[79]; community parks per 1,200 persons[80] "may be designed for organized youth and recreational adult level sports but may also include facilities for play by children"[81]; and, neighbourhood parks serving between 80-120 households[82] afford "unorganized play activities for children, quiet seating or rest areas and/or

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[71] McGillivray, 2019, n.p.
[72] McGillivray, 2019, n.p.
[73] McGillivray, 2019, n.p.
[74] Mccann, 2012/2019, n.p.
[75] Statistics Canada. (3 Apr, 2019). Census profile, 2016 census. Halifax [Census metropolitan area], Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia [Province]. Retrieved 13 May, 2019, from https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CMACA&Code1=205&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=halifax&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1 n.p.
[76] Statistics Canada, 2019, n.p.
[77] Statistics Canada, 2019, n.p.
[78] Halifax. (25 Jun, 2014). Regional municipality planning strategy. Retrieved 13 May, 2019, from https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/about-the-city/regional-community-planning/RegionalMunicipalPlanningStrategy-03Nov2018-Case21331.pdf p.28
[79] Halifax, 2014, 28
[80] Halifax, 2014, 28
[81] Halifax, 2014, 28
[82] Halifax, 2014, 28

linear linkages between other municipal parks or open spaces."[83] As one type of public place, parks in Halifax indicate the city's attitude towards shared areas for people to visit, gather, or learn informally from material objects installed or featured there.

> *I've learned you can tell whether the tide is coming in or going out by the way the bow of a boat is positioned: the tide $_{is}$ coming in ^{when} the $_{bow\ is}$ moving all ^{over} the ^{place}; the tide is going out when the*
> *bow*
> *is*
> *pointed towards the shore, because conversely that is when the flow of water along the boatsides straightens its nose. This is nice for an Ontarian to know.*

However, the reasons why I chose Halifax as the location of this research grow more personal. From a pragmatic point of view, I believe that Canada's East Coast is in need of a creative approach to learning for adults, because formal education often poses economic barriers and population density cannot sustain institutional enrolments. Having moved to Halifax as an adult, I knew that the city, and more broadly Atlantic Canada in general, was not strongly affluent; the region produced below-average per-person national economic contributions during the last few decades.[84] This compounds financial hardships with a smaller proportionate working age population, low labour force participation rates, and high unemployment rates.[85] Provincial challenges are borne out in Halifax data: a 2018 report on poverty noted "14.7% of all HRM residents (vs 15.7% of Nova Scotians and 12.9% of Canadians) cannot afford to maintain a basic standard of living"[86], which suggests that perceived additional expenditures such as tuition costs are beyond reach for many in Nova Scotia. This research shows how the city of Halifax can support adults' informal learning by recognizing learning opportunities from material object interactions, as well as understanding that physical settings impact adults' informal learning.

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[83] Halifax, 2014, 28

[84] Polese, M. (2019). Regional economics in Canada. The Canadian Encyclopedia. Retrieved 13 May, 2019, from https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/regional-economics n.p.

[85] Polese, 2019, n.p.

[86] Halifax Regional Municipality. (2018). *Building poverty solutions: Ideas for action. A community report*. Retrieved 13 May, 2019, from https://www.unitedwayhalifax.ca/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=138-poverty-solutions-community-report&category_slug=community-impact-docs&Itemid=282 p.28

I offer these reasons to denote this research's implementation, but my occasional romanticizing of Halifax also played a part. This city is where I chose to complete postsecondary education; it turned out that the ocean setting suited my frequently windswept moods. I knew even while living in New Zealand that my return to Canada would see me settled on the country's East Coast. Though I occasionally stumble over calling Halifax my home, this is where I have lived for the last 14 years, and with this work I can contribute new ways of thinking about learning through the resources already in (public) place.

Among my favourite memories of Halifax are those in which I came to know its residential areas through long walks taken in every variation of the city's weather. Edward Street, Windsor Street, Gristmill Court, Connaught Avenue and Langbrae Drive became known to me as I strolled through their shortcuts, pathways, and pavement stamps, in addition to the kilometres I have walked through Halifax's downtown area. Nor am I a solitary pedestrian: in 2016, Halifax was among the top five similar census metropolitan areas whose residents walked or cycled to work in proportions greater than the national average.[87] My intimacy with Halifax grew as I walked it, and it resulted that most participants in this research did likewise.

Walking in Halifax

I associate Halifax with walking in many ways. Many nights in the late 1990s, I would meander through the neighbourhoods close to my residence housing, and endure a chilly spring downpour soaking my yellow Northern Reflections raincoat, and swelter in the unusually humid autumn nights wandering around campus and wondering at the trees' incandescence. Participants concurred that Halifax is a fairly walkable city, and its Walk Score rating of 70 is far above the provincial average of 52, indicating that "most errands can be accomplished on foot."[88]

De Certeau compares walking in the city–engaged in by "the ordinary practitioners of the city"[89]–to a speech act, extending the metaphor so that walking generates articulations of agency that seem to fragment the city, reassembled only by surprises of gradual encounter doubling as communication:

> The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations, no matter how panoptic they
> may be: it is neither foreign to them (it can take place only within them) nor in conformity

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[87] Statistics Canada. (29 Nov, 2017). Journey to work: Key results from the 2016 census. Retrieved 19 Jan, 2020, from https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171129/dq171129c-eng.htm

[88] Walk Score. (2019). Living in Halifax. Retrieved 14 May, 2019, from https://www.walkscore.com/CA-NS/Halifax

[89] De Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life.* Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. p.93

with them (it does not receive its identity from them). It creates shadows and ambiguities within them. It inserts its multitudinous references and citations into them (social models, cultural mores, personal factors). Within them it is itself the effect of successive encounters and occasions that constantly alter it and make it the other's blazon: in other words, it is like a peddler, carrying something surprising, transverse or attractive compared with the usual choice.[90]

This quotation, coupled with the surprising surge of participants' pedestrianship, opens for me possibilities that the act of walking is itself emplacing public places.

Writing and research into walking echoes several perspectives expressed by participants: for instance, aspects of personal comfort and safety affect urban walking patterns for women and men differently[91]; that public places' amenities or infrastructure–such as toilets, a café, gardens, wildlife and dogwalking supports–significantly increase the likelihood of walking to a public place[92]; and, that walking can assist with aesthetic and artistic inspiration.[93] This last point in particular evokes an ecological perspective wherein material aspects of an environment allow fresh understandings, like the way in which a mobile viewed from a different angle changes its design, and lends support for my claim that material object interactions affect adults' informal learning in public places.

Professor Barbara Lounder's work is in this vein. With a career spanning 40 years[94], Lounder is a visual artist in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia exploring the creative methodology of walking and public engagement, "sometimes utilizing prosthetics such as walking sticks, stilts, backpacks, blindfolds, locative devices and portable digital projectors."[95] As a member of the Narratives in Space+Time Society (NiS+TS), an "interdisciplinary creative research group working on projects involving mobile media and walking"[96], Lounder and colleagues walk through and amongst visual residue from the aftermath of Halifax's

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[90] De Certeau, 1984, 101

[91] Almahmood, M., Scharnhorst, E., Carstensen, T.A., Jørgensen, G., & Schulze, O. (2017). Mapping the gendered city: Investigating the socio-cultural influence on the practice of walking and the meaning of walkscapes among young Saudi adults in Riyadh. *Journal of Urban Design, 22*(2), 229-248.

[92] Sugiyama, T., Gunn, L.D., Christian, H., Francis, J., Foster, S., Hooper, P., Owen, N., & Giles-Corti, B. (2015). Quality of public open spaces and recreational walking. *American Journal of Public Health, 105*(12), 2490-2495. p.2491

[93] Vaughan, L. (2009). Walking the line: Affectively understanding and communicating the complexity of place. *The Cartographic Journal, 46*(4), 316-322.

[94] Lounder, B. (2019-b.). Barbara Lounder. Retrieved 17 May, 2019, from http://www.barbaralounder.ca/

[95] Lounder, B. (2019-a.). About. Retrieved 17 May, 2019, from http://www.barbaralounder.ca/bio/

[96] Narratives in Space+Time (NiS+T). (2019). Narratives in Space+Time. Retrieved 17 May, 2019, from http://www.narrativesinspaceandtime.ca/

December 6, 1917, explosion that left 2,000 people dead.[97] In 2013, the NiS+TS created the *Hippodrome Project (Notes from the Desire Paths)* to explore people, objects and movement through the abandoned Hippodrome site in Montréal; there they "used walking and other forms of self-propelled movement as heuristic methods for spatial investigations and interventions."[98]

Lounder recognizes that through her art practice, "simple, repetitive processes such as collecting, aligning, juxtaposing, walking and whittling, [make] new and open-ended experiences and meanings are possible."[99] Her work demonstrates walking as both subject of art and method of gaining inspiration from it: "Walking is repetitive and ordinary, but can also be surprising and transformative. . . .I think of walking sticks, for example, as prosthetic devices that extend human imagination and intent onto the topography, and that also act as sensors and conduits from the terrain up into the body and mind of the walker."[100] The intra-activity of walking and place, as well as this combination's contribution to research and learning, is explored to a greater extent in Chapter 8: Reshaping Public Places.

Unaccounted for in this research design, walking has become a meaningful link to this work's theoretical and methodological positionings. Based on 5 of the 6 participants' repeated references to walking through public places, and amongst this enquiry's four sites in particular, a close inspection of what those sites offer is due.

> *We once got trapped by Barrington Street when trying to reach*
>
> *Africville Park and read about its history in Halifax. Barrington Road, there, where trucks accelerate off the MacKay Bridge and cars whip around the onramp curve, is absolutely lethal to pedestrians.*

Sites' overview

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[97] NSCAD University Relations. (29 Aug, 2017). Remembering the Halifax explosion. Retrieved 18 May, 2019, from https://nscad.ca/post-title-6/

[98] Bean, R., Le Blanc, L., Lilley, B., Lounder, B., & Luka, M.E. Narratives in Space and Time Society (NiS+TS). The Hippodrome project. In M. Radice & A. Boudreault-Fournier (Eds.), *Urban encounters: Art and the public* (pp.100-125). Kingston, ON and Montréal, QC: McGill-Queens University Press.

[99] Hermes. (n.d.). Artists – Barbara Lounder. Retrieved 22 Dec, 2019, from http://www.hermeshfx.com/barbara-lounder

[100] Hermes, n.d.

Contrary to nebulous space or place, a site is "the exact placement of a settlement on the Earth"[101], to which definition I would add finally precise and GPS-centric, unusually for this research. In one of the collusions of language yet paradoxes in meaning whose serendipity beckons me onward, 'sites' within the kinetic art traditions of mobiles are mostly absent: "kinetic art is rarely found in galleries today. One is more likely to encounter it in the departure lounge of an airport or similarly large and anonymous interior spaces."[102] Here I explore the intertwined histories, narratives and shapings of the Halifax Central Library, Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, Shubie Park, and Nocturne: Art at Night, and their economic, environmental, and activist influences.

As I write on this day: I read an advertisement for an upcoming public forum into the development of the former Halifax Central Library site, across the street from its current site; the Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm is in the process of being transported to a new location and the site shown in most of this research's comments and images is fallow and lifeless; and, the 2019 application form for Nocturne: Art at Night offers a single empty line with which to "describe the ideal space for your project."[103] Maybe places

cannot be fixed.

The sites of this research are on the move in ways I had not anticipated; these permutations have generated problematics of shift and ongoing balance that I explore in the final third of this dissertation.

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[101] Learn By Doing Inc. (2018). What's the difference between site and situation in AP Human Geography. Retrieved 18 May, 2019, from https://www.albert.io/blog/difference-between-site-and-situation-ap-human-geography/

[102] Rycroft, S. (2012). Art and micro-cosmos: Kinetic art and mid-20th-century cosmology. *Cultural Geographies, 19*(4), 447-467. p.453

[103] Nocturne: Art at Night. (2019-c.). Nocturne – Call for projects. Retrieved 18 May, 2019, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/apply/callForProjects

The criteria for these sites' selection revealed that sites are difficult to qualify as promising in their capacity for material objects to affect adults' informal learning. In referring to 'site' as a particular historical type of artwork displayed and viewed in carefully chosen place, Kwon emphasizes sites' ecologically-complicated specificities: "The site comes to encompass a relay of several interrelated but different spaces and economies, including the studio, gallery, museum, art criticism, art history, the art market, that together constitute a system of practices that is not separate from but open to social, economic, and political pressures."[104] Sites in this research follow from Kwon's interrelated pressures, depicted in three domains: economic, environmental, and activist. Without claiming educational acumen of the factors comprising these domains, I nonetheless gesture towards the sort of public place challenges they produce, especially for material object interaction and adults' informal learning.

Economic domain

I understand the economic considerations of these sites as related to profits, ownership, and property management. All sites are overseen by a group, organization, or department with ties to municipal or provincial governments and their respective priorities or budget allocations. For instance, the Halifax Public Libraries' total 2019-2020 revenue consisted of $20+ million from Halifax Regional Municipality, just under $5 million from the Nova Scotia government, approximately $950k generated from library events and activities, and $765,000 in donations and gifts.[105] Therefore, ongoing fiscal considerations for the Halifax Central Library, one among the 14 regional branches[106] altogether, are affected by both municipal and provincial funding processes.

The Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm was run by Partners for Care, the operating name of the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre Auxiliary, which also runs the Back to our Roots Urban Farm at the Nova Scotia Hospital in Dartmouth.[107] The Farm's other major funders in 2017 were provincial departments of Labour & Advanced Education, and Community Services, with in-kind land donated by the Nova Scotia Health Authority.[108] Income streams were provided by charitable donations, revenue

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[104] Kwon, M. (1997). One place after another: Notes on site specificity. *October, 80*, 85-111. n.p.
[105] Halifax Public Libraries. (2019-a.). Annual Report 2018-2019. Retrieved 23 Dec, 2019, from https://d4804za1f1gw.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/50/2019/06/26111720/Annual-Report-2018-19.pdf
[106] Halifax Chamber of Commerce. (2019). Halifax Public Libraries. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://business.halifaxchamber.com/list/member/halifax-public-libraries-dartmouth-22989
[107] Common Roots Urban Farm. (2017-a.). 2017 Annual Report. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from http://commonrootsurbanfarm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Common-Roots-Urban-Farm-Annual-Report-Spreads-RGB.pdf p.3
[108] Common Roots Urban Farm, 2017-a., 24

from vegetable and manure sales, Partners for Care and other foundations' support, government-funded service delivery, and sponsorships.[109] The Farm's physical and oversight move to the Bi-Hi Park on Samuel Walker Drive in Halifax under Metroworks' guidance[110] suggest new means of profit generation and reporting are likely forthcoming.

Shubie Park lands are, for the most part, owned and operated by the Halifax Regional Municipality, with the exception of the Fairbanks Interpretive Centre, the parking lot on Locks Road, and 150 feet of property on either side of the Shubenacadie Canal, all of which is owned by the Shubenacadie Canal Commission (SCC).[111] A provincial Act established the SCC in 1986, which today is a registered charity of 15 members.[112] The SCC is funded by the provincial Department of Natural Resources and holds several land parcels, independently and in conjunction with the Halifax Regional Municipality, Crown land and Natural Resources department[113], in addition to selling merchandise online and through the Fairbanks Interpretive Centre.

Government partners of Nocturne: Art at Night include Heritage Canada, the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage, and Halifax Regional Municipality[114], as well as a number of galleries, community groups, and partners representing sponsors, community and media.[115] Contrary to the other sites, Nocturne places little to no emphasis on revenue, selling only branded t-shirts[116], and the non-profit organization's financial reports are not available online, though that may be due to the fact that the event was run entirely by volunteers until 2017.[117] Partnerships for Nocturne are more necessary in terms of possible installation venues during the event; these are available within municipally-owned spaces, galleries, universities, and businesses, allocated or at least confirmed by the Nocturne team during the proposal process.[118]

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[109] Common Roots Urban Farm, 2017-a., 21

[110] The Chronicle Herald. (6 Mar, 2019). Halifax's urban farm gets ok to move across town. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://www.thechronicleherald.ca/news/local/halifaxs-urban-farm-gets-ok-to-move-across-town-289759/

[111] Conrad, D. (20 Sep, 2017). Personal communication. Email.

[112] Shubenacadie Canal Commission. (2016-a.). About us. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://www.shubenacadiecanal.ca/about-us

[113] Shubenacadie Canal Commission. (2017-2018). Annual report April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2018. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d6e71d8419c24ffcec7d6d/t/5b4df9dd03ce64a718d75834/1531836899222/Annual+Report+2018+.pdf p.21

[114] Nocturne Halifax. (2018). Nocturne – Nomadic reciprocity. Media kit. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d6e71d8419c24ffcec7d6d/t/5b4df9dd03ce64a718d75834/1531836899222/Annual+Report+2018+.pdf p. 24

[115] Nocturne Halifax, 2018, 24

[116] Nocturne Halifax, 2018, 2

[117] Nocturne Halifax. (2019). Job & volunteer opportunities. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/about/job-opportunities

[118] Nocturne: Art at Night, 2019-c.

Multiple funders and overlapping responsibilities to municipal, provincial and federal bodies unite these sites through fiscal accountabilities. Navigating not only goals of profitability or operating costs revenue, these sites must also balance funding priority areas, application processes, reporting requirements, capital expenditures, and matching funds designations.

Environmental domain

A sense of natural environments is meaningful, if not elicited, in all sites. As noted, I chose indoor and outdoor sites in order to allow for architecture design and organic scenery to foster material object interaction. There is considerable design commentary on the Halifax Central Library from participants and the media; in general, very few references about that site do not invoke engineered space. The *Strategic Plan: Ideas to Action 2017-2021* commits the Halifax Public Libraries overall to "offer flexible and welcoming spaces" and "design innovative library spaces"[119], although specific attention to outdoor areas or environmental considerations is not included in the report.

The Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm relies on its natural setting for functioning as an urban farm: next to a love of gardening, spending time outside[120] was participants' most cited reason for taking part in the Farm's activities. The consultations and complexities around the Farm's relocation show intertwined concerns of public land, land suitable for gardening, and sustainability: next to access, the Farm's major relocation priority was securing a site for at least 7 years, while other suggestions recommended good growing conditions, amenities for shelter and water, and safety.[121]

Within Shubie Park, the Shubenacadie Canal Commission (SCC) has as its mission to preserve and restore the Canal's locks, to provide for waterway use, to provide site interpretation, and to ensure "park-like settings for residents and tourists."[122] The SCC's extensive website also features a section on 'Nature', with separate pages devoted to 'Plants & Trees', 'Wildlife', and 'Conservation.'[123] Shubie Park attracts

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[119] Halifax Public Libraries. (n.d.). Strategic plan: Ideas to action 2017-2021. Retrieved 23 Dec, 2019, from https://d4804za1f1gw.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/50/2018/02/30132648/HfxPublicLibraries-StratPlan-2017-web.pdf

[120] Common Roots Urban Farm. (2017-a.). 2017 Annual Report. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from http://commonrootsurbanfarm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Common-Roots-Urban-Farm-Annual-Report-Spreads-RGB.pdf p.9

[121] Melrose, J. (8 Jun, 2018). Results: Where will we grow. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from http://commonrootsurbanfarm.ca/2018/06/08/results-where-will-we-grow/

[122] Shubenacadie Canal Commission, 2016-a

[123] Shubenacadie Canal Commission. (2016-e.). Nature. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://www.shubenacadiecanal.ca/nature

many visitors looking for outdoor recreation; the city calls this site the 'Shubie Canal Greenway', counted among the 'Walking, biking and hiking trails in Halifax.'[124]

Nocturne: Art at Night is somewhere between built and natural spaces: its venues separated into zones are located in indoor and outdoor areas on Spring Garden Road & Universities, Downtown Halifax, the Waterfront, the North End, and Downtown Dartmouth.[125] Environmental themes are common in its installations, sometimes concurrent with a focus on Indigenous and Mi'kmaq experiences and knowings. Distinct from the other sites, Nocturne is implicitly regarded as a walking event, with the city providing a free shuttle bus between zones[126] and city maps scaled to walkable distances included in Nocturne publicity materials.[127] Though not as explicitly based in nature as is the Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm or Shubie Park, Nocturne does lean towards the consideration of environments in its themes and venues. This research's sites are constructed amongst and based in and sometimes celebrate and are occasionally stymied by the system of practices entangled with outdoor or natural features.

Last year I became embroiled in a disagreement with the municipality over what I thought was their unfeeling, poorly managed and late-service delivery of a tree planted in my mother's name at a local park. The planting occurred, about nine months later, but the department then emailed me that the tree was dying, and they might have to replace it. Five months after that, I received a phone call that the tree would be re-planted and the plaque installed 'soon.'

I have not been to that park since.

Activist domain

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[124] Halifax Regional Municipality. (2019). Shubie Canal Greenway. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://www.halifax.ca/recreation/parks-trails-gardens/trails/shubie-canal-greenway
[125] Nocturne: Art at Night. (2018). Nocturne Guide 2018. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/guide
[126] Nocturne Halifax, 2018, 4
[127] Nocturne Halifax, 2018, 4

Finally, community development practices rooted in activism pose differing challenges for each site. The Halifax Central Library is described as "a catalyst for the regeneration of the downtown area and the product of an extensive co-creation process involving monthly public consultations and workshops with various focus groups"[128], thereby extensively configured by and with the community. In fact, this library branch's origins lie in local activism: opened in 1951 as the Spring Garden Road Memorial Library, the former Central branch resulted from rallying community efforts to commemorate two world wars with a library as a "living memorial."[129] Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm's vision for "healthy people, connected to their food, each other, and the natural environment"[130] invokes community development in spirit, and the organization has links to local food activism initiatives[131] including community-supported agriculture and the Parker Street Food Bank.[132] Shubie Park hosts community events on outdoor education through its Adventure Earth Centre program[133], and permits community members build and hang birdfeeders, birdhouses, and memorials in the park. Nocturne "lends voice and agency to the Halifax arts community" in the ways it "enriches and enlivens communities through the creation and exhibition of thoughtful, well executed contemporary artworks."[134]

I do not stipulate these sites as activist nodes of resistance, but I emphasize close connections between political and social improvements and these public places, just as adults' informal learning in the early twentieth century occurred in sites more generally concerned with the delivery of social development mores. What I have constituted as these sites' economic, environmental, and activist domains are helpful in understanding how these public places face similar hurdles in fulfilling their functions explicitly and implicitly. However, this composite of domains does not encompass the multitudinous narratives showing the array of elements and their meanings in and for these sites. For this, I share the final two site vignettes based on my fieldnotes to offer other points of entry into these public places.

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[128] Canadian Architect. (2019). New Halifax Central Library establishes a landmark. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://www.canadianarchitect.com/new-halifax-central-library-establishes-a-civic-landmark/ n.p.

[129] Halifax Public Libraries. (2019-b.). The library as a living memorial. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://www.halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/local-and-family-history/military-history/living-memorial/

[130] Common Roots Urban Farm. (2017-d.). Our roots. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from http://commonrootsurbanfarm.ca/our-roots/

[131] Nova Scotia Environmental Network. (18 Feb, 2019). We must build community and food security. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://nsenvironmentalnetwork.com/category/food/

[132] Common Roots Urban Farm. (2017-c.). Common Roots Urban Farm's Food Bank CSA. Retrieved 3 October, 2019, from http://commonrootsurbanfarm.ca/food-bank-csa/

[133] Vocalocal Media. (29 Mar, 2018). Adventure Earth Centre program expands to Shubie Park. Haligonia.ca. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://haligonia.ca/adventure-earth-centre-program-expands-to-shubie-park-236214/

[134] Nocturne Halifax. (n.d.). What is Nocturne? Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/about/what-is-nocturne

SITE REPRESENTATIONS

    Vignettes

I conclude the colloquial vignettes of this research's sites in writing about Shubie Park and Nocturne: Art at Night. As I re-marked earlier, through my scribbled fieldnotes I re-discovered sensate recollections and material features that I thought were unchanging.

> In drawing I unpicked a mass of visual and physical intricacy and intimacy with its own textures and its own smells, in order to make it lie down flat on the paper. Drawing, like other embodied practices, is a form of corporeal knowing. What I had not foreseen was what it would reveal. At one moment I would find my pen whisking sharply along a steel rule as I sought to re-enact the lines of a rack of metal shelves or lighting unit, the next, the pen went wisping and wandering at an entirely different speed and pressure among the tendrils of a flowery boteh. The different physical engagements with the varied kinds of material elements in this complex site produced, as drawing often does, a bodily enactment[135].

These vignettes include images and precise measurements, coordinates, or replicated objects to stand in for the site's present-but-absent materialities through as many expressive means as I can construct.

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[135] Scalway, H. (2006). A patois of pattern: Pattern, memory and the cosmopolitan city. *Cultural Geographies in Practice, 13,* 451-457. p.456

VIGNETTE: SHUBIE PARK

There's no single way in; that much is clear.

It seems as though you can proceed on a path that winds along the right side of the water, or jink to the left and walk so that the narrow canal is on your right side, or even cross a short bridge and encounter similar options on the opposite bank. Shubie Park is a hive of possible entrances: from Locke Road, through John Brenton Drive, using Wright Avenue, or, still further, "I can park at Grahams' Grove and take the little bridge across and then hook up to the park that way," more suited to a marathoner looking to make the most of the park's 18.5 trail kilometres.

September 4, 2017; @ 1.37 p.m. Parking lot looks capacity full. Cars spilling out onto the road like leftover baubles in a sew-and-stitch kit

"And there's all kinds of trails once you get in, and so you can kind of go back and forth," murmured a participant as she deftly sketched crayon lines on a hand-drawn map of the grounds. Trees and trails: this combination pervades the memory palace that maps Shubie Park.

> *There's looping trails, there's shaded seating, there's different access points, there's different types of trails, so you would have open areas, you have accessible trails, you have trails that are not back country but not accessible to strollers or wheelchairs or–*

Even the waterway has trails; at one point boasting seven lakes, nine locks and two marine railways[136], the canal today is a corridor not for Mi'kmaq travellers, French missionaries or British merchants[137], but instead canoeists and kayakers. "Trails for activity," one visitor commented.

> *I think you do become intimate with a space, if you're there a lot. . . .You do become very much a part of it and it becomes a part of you; what it smells [like], what to expect; weather-wise, trail-wise–you know where all the bumps are, you know where all the tree roots are, you know where the chickadees are, you–just know where things are.*

<div align="right">

[360° view of the wharf at the Locke Road entrance](#)

</div>

Shubie Park's 4,000 year old history[138] is doubly unknown due to the ripped-away text on its interpretive panels across its 40 acres. I badly wanted to trace the archaeology of the area, but contented myself with the gloriously named panels: 13. Deep Cut, 12. Navvies Dwelling, and 10. A Fairbanks Solution.

> *I'm thinking of the canal and kayaking through it, you see remnants of stone walls, or [what] could have been possible structures at some point in time … you have a sense that you're walking through something historical.*

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136 Shubenacadie Canal Commission. (2016-d.). How the canal worked. Retrieved 7 Oct, 2019, from https://www.shubenacadiecanal.ca/how-the-canal-worked

137 Shubenacadie Canal Commission, 2016-d.

138 Halifax Trails. (n.d.). Shubie Park. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.halifaxtrails.ca/shubie-park/

I am fascinated by a carefully arranged stone pile that a nearby display tells me hints at a structure of unknown purpose. Still unknown, or just reluctant to disclose its function?

After about 20 mins in, the crowds have thinned out and I'm on my own. I'm warm but manageably so. There's a less used path, narrower, on my right, where I've stopped to write this note. Birds? Chipmunks? chatter around me, and the sun beams leafshadow onto these white pages.

> *Because I think the first time we went [to Shubie Park], we were new to Nova Scotia and so this was a good way to get to know some of the natural–greenage? Is that the right word? . . . . it just helped us–not integrate, but just get a better feel for our new environment.*

The park is home to beavers, squirrels, chipmunks, ospreys, frogs, turtles and ducks[139] (who "put on a little performance…they slide down [the locks into] the water"), but only the squirrels and chipmunks are provided housing:

People make homemade birdfeeders, and name them and put little things on them throughout the park, which I think is interesting as well. That people are taking the time to make these homemade crafts that are functional and put them up–

My favourite was the plain wooden box nailed to a tree and peanut-stuffed, a.k.a. "The Shubie Inn."

There's an "Animal of the Week." Now it's the blue jay. *Cyanocitia cristata*

Mostly there's consistent activity around the Locke Road entrance, near the Lemon Dogs canteen and the Fairbanks Interpretive Centre, named for MLA Charles R. Fairbanks who, apart from his vision of a waterway connecting the Halifax Harbour to the Bay of Fundy[140], was "a champion of public education."[141] The kayak launch pad is a popular spot both to feed the ducks and test the waters:

The dock itself, how it's positioned, it makes it easy for people learning not to feel like they're going to flip the boat on their first time in. . . . you can just literally put the boat in beside the dock and … scoot your bum from the dock to the boat. And then, learn how to paddle from there.

The park map, with trails, is posted next to free doggie bags and a notice for the 7th Annual Dahlia Days event–I am reassured by the many maps orienting me within Shubie Park and the routes to enter it.

Three older women walked by, all wearing wide-brimmed hats. One had a cane; the other two had Daschunds, short-haired and long-haired. The three stopped on the path up ahead as one ran her fingers gently up the stem of a flower. It seemed as though she knew what it was.

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[139] Shubenacadie Canal Commission. (2016-h.). Wildlife. Retrieved 7 Oct, 2019, from https://www.shubenacadiecanal.ca/wildlife
[140] Shubenacadie Canal Commission, 2016-h.
[141] Shubenacadie Canal Commission. (2016-f.). The Fairbanks Centre. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.shubenacadiecanal.ca/the-fairbanks-centre

VIGNETTE: NOCTURNE: ART AT NIGHT

I handprinted a Monarch butterfly postcard at the Museum of Natural History. The pressing ran true and I tucked the postcard away later to count the discal and postdiscal wing's negative spaces.

In 2017, the Nocturne: Art at Night theme was VANISH, "not erasure or removal, but an act of distancing or blurring. VANISH is slow magic — a camera lens slowly adjusting its focus."[142]

> *At Nocturne, I feel like at least half the time, I'm–questioning it. 'Oh, is the idea of the exhibit for me to not get it, to question it?', and that's how they accomplish their art? Is it to have it, go over my head [laughs], or something?*

Zone 1, the Halifax Public Gardens, was the Anchor Project site and encompassed Spring Garden Road and the universities. Zone 2 comprised Downtown Halifax, Zone 3 the Waterfront, Zone 4 Halifax's North End, and Zone 5 Downtown Dartmouth. I had mapped out my complete journey–all 21 of the installations I wanted to see–starting at the 'hub' in the parking lot of the Museum of Natural History.

| 126 | Mus Nat Hist | A HARBOUR LOST IN TIME |

Inside were set up a series of child-sized tables and crayons, pencilcrayons and markers and seemingly infinite black-and-white cut-outs of both lifelike and dreamscape animals. You chose a cut-out, coloured it, and taped it in its rightful place to one of the full-size wall drawings. Each drawing contained a myriad of unique animals and ocean-related images, but locating your own cut-out meant finding the only shape it matched; the same in all the difference.

> *I think the stronger [installations] are the ones that are either interactive, or that are outside in places that you don't expect, so you happen upon things. So you get a really interesting experience in a place that you weren't counting on.*

| 137 | Ralph Medjuck Bldg
: 5410 Spr Garden | SUNDER |

Only my mother knew that I once thought of becoming an architect; the Dalhousie School of Architecture installation allows me an affinity for the road I not at all travelled by. "Sunder" promised "a loss of autonomy as you navigate through an unfamiliar space that disorients your senses."[143] The small

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[142] Anonymous (2017-b.). Nocturne Ten – Guide Inside. Saturday, October 14. Retrieved 26 Nov, 2018, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/images/uploads/guide/NOC-Guide-2017-FINAL.pdf

[143] Anonymous. (2017-c.). Zone 1 – Spring Garden and Universities. 137. Sunder. Retrieved 26 Nov, 2018, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/images/uploads/guide/NOC-Guide-2017-FINAL.pdf

wooden frame covered in plastic sheeting was probably 15 feet long and about 12 feet high, gloaming a hypnotic purple from some distance away. One at a time, visitors entered the fog-shrouded structure and disappeared–on my turn, I was delighted to be misplaced immediately. Its exit led to the university building doors, inside which was a short labyrinth amongst bubble wrap for the popping.

Exhibit # 201–Monument to Ephemerality–was a structure of steel rebar, with a luminous circle embedded in the ground within.

A whale shark, suspended, swam in a vacant Portland Street lot at installation # 507.

The projection of Titanic footage at the Halifax Central Library's 5th floor, exhibit # 112, was nearly eclipsed by circular 2nd floor light fixture.

A lot of times, there might be information, but … you don't necessarily want to stand and try to read it. So, you just bypass all these things and quickly look at something; try to take from it whatever you immediately interpret, and then: you just kind of carry on to the next thing.

There we were, in the middle of a celebration of art-accessible, radical and every kind in between. That first Nocturne [in 2008] offered a previously unheard-of opportunity for anyone with an interest (plus a few bewildered downtown drinkers who happened to stumble upon the event) to experience the kind of communal glee that is usually reserved for hockey fans and concertgoers. Sort of a Hockey Night for the Rest of Us.[144]

The one I remember most clearly from the Public Gardens was these 4 sheets that were set up, and they had these very vivid pink colours projected onto them. It looked like maybe balloons or something. I remember there were circles of blue or green upon this pink … And you could hardly see all the other people around it. . .

106	Hfx Pub Gardens : Green space east of picnic	RED, GREEN, BLUE

"a sculptural installation that uses filtered light to animate nature. Drawing on broad references of horizon lines and landscape art, [artist Khan] Lee enables passers-by to visualize the wind.

SCULPTURE/3D • FAMILY FRIENDLY • LIT UP"[145]

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[144] Mombourquette, A. (3 Oct, 2014). Art after dark: Nocturne brings Halifax's art scene to the people-and pumps up the city's cool factor. *Halifax Magazine.* Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from http://halifaxmag.com/opinions/art-after-dark/
[145] Anonymous. (2017-a.). 106. RGB. Khan Lee. Retrieved 26 Nov, 2018, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/images/uploads/guide/NOC-Guide-2017-FINAL.pdf

Maps and mobiles

Site vignettes have given me another mode for speaking about space, and interspersed participant quotations help me forge a "research text … intended to involve the reader/audience in an active process of meaning making that is likely to have transformative potential."[146] A like serendipity emerged from participants' meaningful objects in their hand-drawn site maps: taken together, the collection of drawings produces a map not just of public place, but into and through public place meanings:

> Such imaginings find in places linked movements of gathering and dispersal that are akin to recent propositions for an ethos of assemblage. The spatialities and temporalities of such conceptual re-imaginations bring representational challenges and with them renewed methodological ambition, such that geographers seek alternative methods to research and re-present the textures and complexities of place.[147]
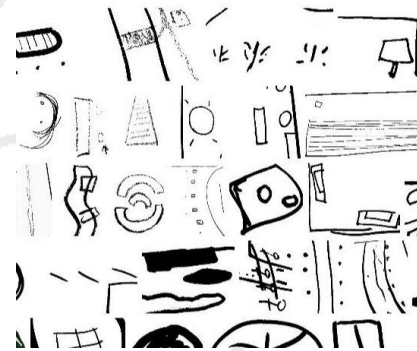
Figure 1. The composite 'meaningful feature' collection of hand-drawn images.

One can imagine finally getting out of the car and going for a walk amongst these images' thick lines and wavy stabmarks, balancing along the lines or jumping through the hoops of holes, crossing the tic-tac-who, and jumping the hopscotch along the chalk outlines of trees and plants and water and stairs. In the gathering, shapes act as both an under- and an over-view, connecting intra-actively with this research's thematic understandings of time, tensions, and change. Hence, I found the hand-drawn maps to be more resonant with this enquiry than the 3D model creations of meaningful objects, although the model-making activity revealed adults' informal learning during its process of creation.

Mobiles fit as the most methodologically sound representation of this research, based on their display capacities in places, in addition to depicting artfully the intertwined difficulties of overlapping domains affecting public place and informal learning understandings. As a material object itself, mobiles invoke movement across and between places while within them; as a representation, the form satisfies "the need for researchers to develop representations that address audiences in ways that do not pacify or

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[146] Cole, A.L, & J.G. Knowles. (2008). Arts-informed research. In J.G. Knowles & A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* (pp. 55-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. p.62
[147] Hawkins, H. (2015). Creative geographic methods: Knowing, representing, intervening. On composing place and page. *Cultural Geographies, 22*(2), 247-268. pp.251-252

indulge the senses but arouse them and the intellect to new heights of response and action."[148] The arms of a mobile reach out, like the distance between point A and point B; after all, the trip only starts by getting into the car.

> *My friend and I visit Peggy's Cove during the coldest month in Canada in remembrance of our fathers. We climb over the rocks, she more swiftly than my hamhocked lumbering, and count the number of visitors ignoring the signs to stay off the black rocks wet from saltspray (that's where the rogue waves hit). We don't go on the black rocks, save for one defiant toeprint, she more often than I.*

CODA

The ground this chapter has covered reminds me of that long–longer–longest car trip: bleary-eyed, I can see now that places are not contained in space, or time, or understanding. Place is conceptually vast, even within public places, even within Halifax, even within this research's sites, and even within the walking act that more fully acquaints us with place. This chapter has introduced the troubled and troubling capacity for not-knowings of place, despite efforts to convey their materiality. From a broad survey of public places overall, I move next to a precise investigation into this research's sites in Halifax through participants' understandings. In Chapter 8: Reshaping Public Places, I return to public places for an interrogation of knowledges based on both literature and learnings from this research. A more complex discussion of the ways in which place is open to reshaping appears there; here, only the (shifting) groundwork is laid.

I still get lost frequently when I am driving in Halifax. Nor do I use a cellphone application or satellite map to find my way around, due in part to my budget data plan, but also due to my belief that sometimes, getting lost puts one in the way of extraordinary encounters otherwise not chanced upon.

I wonder if getting lost puts you most closely where you need to be.

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[148] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 68

I have a favourite Nova Scotian beach. I managed to visit it, purposefully, mappedly, to take in a sandcastle festival. I return to it because the ocean throws up seaglass thick and crunchy, and because everytime I go there, something else, something new–animal and mineral, anyway–happens. My beach that never fails to invite me in, and always, always, gives me something back.

SITES' MATERIAL OBJECTS

I believe I was 7 when my family drove from Southwestern Ontario to the East Coast. Vacation photographs show my sister and me, chubby-cheeked and chubby-legged, standing with my mother in front of a wooden sailing ship at the Halifax waterfront; Muffin, our Scottish Terrier, pausing in her perambulation along the rocks at Peggy's Cove; again my sister and me, this time in our sporty nylon jackets, with my mother on the deck of the ferry to Prince Edward Island; finally, my dad in profile as he readies his camera for a shot out towards the Atlantic Ocean.

While we were travelling, I remember a promotion in which visiting an attraction like the Fortress of Louisburg or eating a lobster supper would earn you a stamp in a special passport. I was not wholly clear on the concept of a passport, although I did enjoy collecting the stamps. But my memories blur across any notion of boundary; I gathered a collage of sensations instead. The East Coast of Canada had oceans the colour of hollowblue, wood used as material in every kind of building, costume tricorn hats, and white picket fences that seemed to stretch forever.

I wanted participants to recall similar specificities in their descriptions of material objects and public place features in this study's sites. I hoped they too remembered curious objects, like the ones I had seen from the backseat of the family car: ropes with sailing knots twisted into them, park tour guides in historical costumes, signs warning of dangerous tides when swimming, and shipcaptain corn pipes. There always seemed to be so many colours and interesting things to look at and touch. When I designed this enquiry, I sought ways to evoke these material impressions, partially to act as a respite for the intense cognitive efforts of doctoral research but also to hold warm our feelings about places; I think those memories go into constructions of learning. More so than my encounters with geography and ocean currents, I remember my first taste of salty ocean water sipped from my father's cupped hand.

I shift the emphasis in this chapter from my memories to participants' material object recollections of Halifax Central Library, Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, Shubie Park, and Nocturne: Art at Night. Participants' interactions with memorable features or meaningful material objects occur for the three purposes I noted in Chapter 3: Artful Methodology; that is, in order to engage directly with an object, in order to serve another object or idea, and in order to demonstrate symbolic understanding of an object.

I set apart participants' comments in text boxes to distinguish their responses from my commentary; for quick identification of particular sites, I replicated each site's property boundary in forming these boxes. These same boundaries, with the exception of Nocturne: Art at Night, were prepared for participants to draw meaningful site objects within during the map-making activity of this research's information-gathering. These visual and stylized cues allude to this research's themes in showing spatial differences and how the ground permits and resists marking. That participants' words 'shape' their knowledges through sites' material object interactions is an awareness I want to make clear with this research.

- **Halifax Central Library** (Spring Garden Road and Queen Street, Halifax), opened in 2014 and visited by nearly 2 million participants in 2016[1];
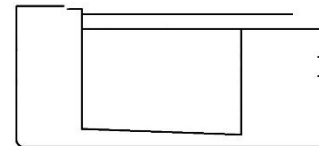
- **Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm** (Robie and Cogswell Streets, Halifax), a community garden offering 195 plots for individual and community group use[2];
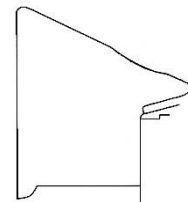
- **Shubie Park** (Locks Road, Dartmouth), through which runs [3] the Shubenacadie Canal and more than 18 kilometres of trails[4]; and,
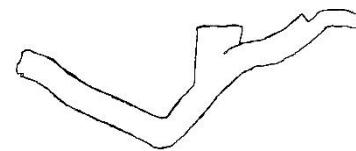
- **Nocturne: Art at Night** (Various, Halifax and Dartmouth), a free evening art festival of visual art installations and performances taking place in locations throughout Halifax Regional Municipality.[5]
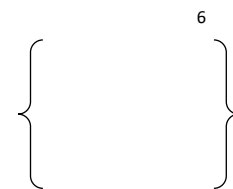
[6]

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[1] Laroche, J. (4 Jan, 2016). Halifax Public Libraries says it can manage with less city funding. CBC News – Nova Scotia. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/hfx-libraries-asking-for-funding-cuts-1.3388853

[2] Common Roots Urban Farm. (2017-d.). Our roots. Retrieved 19 May, 2019, from http://commonrootsurbanfarm.ca/our-roots/

[3] Although the Shubie Park shape of Shubie Park ought to be rotated clockwise 45 degrees to better capture participants' spatial awareness of the site, that layout makes participants' comments too difficult to read.

[4] Carey, S. (4 Mar, 2017). Walking Shubie Park-Fairbanks Interpretive Centre Trail. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://helloweekend.ca/walking-shubie-park-fairbanks-interpretive-centre/

[5] Anonymous. (n.d.). What is Nocturne? Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/about/what-is-nocturne

[6] These parentheses do not reflect Nocturne: Art at Night's geographical or spatial boundaries; rather, they are meant to indicate the loose collection of installations under the event's banner.

This discussion begins with participants' recollections of each site's memorable features, including but not limited to material objects; however, for clarity, I limit the included comments to descriptions of these alone. I also offer an unfolding of the analytic framework used to classify participants' comments, from which emerged a primary theme of tensions according to site function, nature, and design. At that point, I focus on adults' informal learning possibilities through each site's material object interactions. This chapter does not feature any insertions, because I am interested to learn what others make of places in Nova Scotia, and how these observations reflect learning, just as my 7-year-old self who was fascinated by the ways in which the Bay of Fundy sands became so coloured/red.

SITES' MEMORABLE FEATURES

Halifax Central Library

The Halifax Central Library moved from its original location on the north side of Spring Garden Road to open across the road in 2014. An extensive community consultation process lent considerable input into the design and features of the new building, so much so that it was touted as "the city's living room."[7]

Most participant comments about the Halifax Central Library are strongly positive: exquisite, a much-loved place, a safe place, unintimidating, and the most welcoming place in Halifax. Approval that the library is 'not a business' was repeated, in particular its several free forms of entertainment. Participants described the Halifax Central Library as enjoyable, a "comfortable and happy" place to work with lots of people in attendance and a generally busy spot.

Design/Space/Setting

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[7] Taber, J. (17 Aug, 2014). Halifax looks forward to the opening of its very own library of the future. *The Globe and Mail*, 17 Aug, 2014. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/halifax-looks-forward-to-the-opening-of-its-very-own-library-of-the-future/article20090514/

The library's planning process, design and building were widely hyped[8,9,10], and the collaborative architecture team behind its construction–Fowler, Bauld & Mitchell, and Schmidt Hammer Lassen Architects–was awarded a Governor General's Medal in Outstanding New Civic Building Design in 2016.[11] All participants, even one-time visitors, remarked favourably on the library's design and style.

> It's very clean, it's very new, it's very white, but it doesn't really feel like a clinical space. . . .it's a very modern design, has the colours orange and green throughout; it feels a very happy and welcoming place, based on the designs, and there's stencils of leaves and letters in the windows.

> The space … has a lot of different angles. . . .It winds around itself, but in a really angular way as you go up or down. Depending on where you are, you can really get some neat perspectives. As a painter, I really like composition, and when I'm looking around the Library, I'm looking for those different points of view that you can play with.

[8] Gorman, M. (19 May, 2016). Halifax Central Library architects win Governor General architecture medal. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/halifax-library-governor-general-medal-winner-1.3589796

[9] Fegan, H. (2014). Step inside the new Halifax Central Library. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from http://www.whitehots.com/halifax-central-library

[10] Canadian Consulting Engineer Magazine. (Oct-Nov 2015). Engineering a Better Canada Award: Halifax Central Library. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.canadianconsultingengineer.com/features/engineering-a-better-canada-award-halifax-central-library/

[11] Architect Magazine. (23 May, 2016). Halifax Central Library. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://raic.org/awards/governor-generals-medals-architecture-%E2%80%94-2016-recipient-5

Participants are fond of its relaxed seating, and the general design that permitted 'pockets' of space for people's use according to a variety of needs.

> It's a nice, bright, open, space; lots of little nooks and crannies where you can meet with people, quietly or more out in the open, but there's always something happening there, so even though we were in a meeting and having a private conversation, it didn't feel like anyone was eavesdropping, but we were all–we were still part of it.
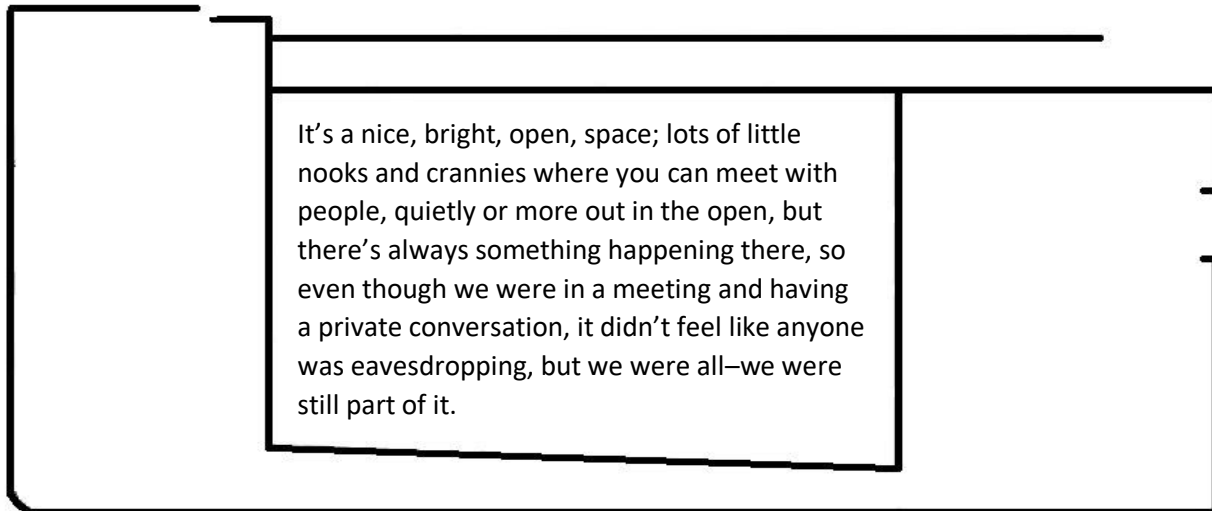
Among the library's memorable features are its books, professional-grade photocopiers, seasonal affective disorder lamps available for borrowing, a recording studio, frequently changed artwork, and the building's exterior where bike stands, planted beds and greenery is found.

> It's a space people want to be in, not just a space that you need to go to get something from. . . .They've got nice, big, comfy chairs for you to sit in, and they face the windows, so you're getting that natural light. . . .They've got the self-service checkouts, they've got TVs down on the bottom floor right by the front entrance
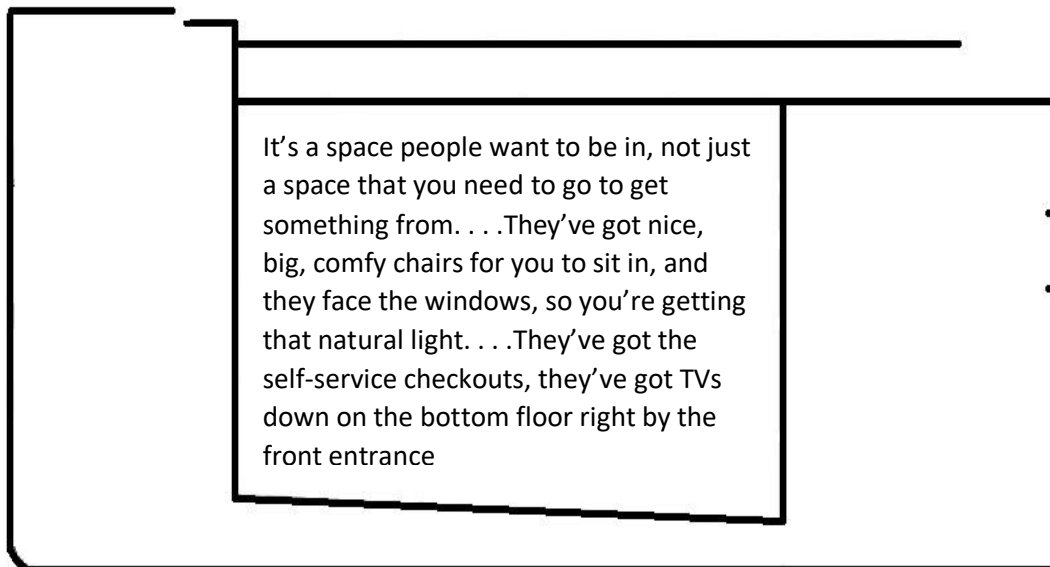
Other positive comments referenced the library's accessible design: child-height handrails, the elevator's extra-large font size showing floor numbers, and tactile flooring at the top of staircases for

visually-impaired patrons. Participants also favoured the library's outdoor seating, though they found the Queen Street rear of the building underutilized. Related somewhat to design, the view of the Halifax harbour and downtown area from the library's top floor was a notable attraction. These features add to perceptions of the Halifax Central Library as a well-designed and aesthetically pleasing public place.

Services and events

Participants lauded library-related services and special events made possible by the Library's material objects. Typical library functions are associated with the Library's main reception desk and check-out area, including self-service checkouts, a seating area adjacent to magazine racks, and a unique book return machine whose inner workings are on full display.

Participant drawing in the Library map:
And then you have a place where they put the holds, and you have a couple of seating areas there [sounds of pen scribbling], and you've got the computers [scribbling]; you've got a few shelves over here, and you've got leaflets on this side …
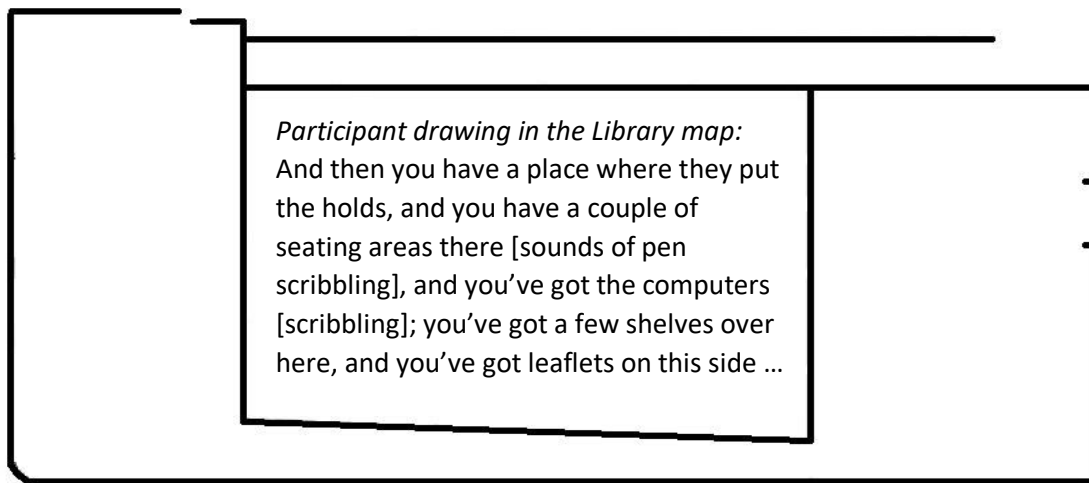
The library's Paul O'Regan Theatre Hall is favoured for its ample seating and ability to offer other media, film, audio and projection for information and entertainment.

> A big portion of what I really enjoy about the physical space in the Library is the theatre. I've gone to a lot of viewings and presentations there … we saw [Canadian singer] Lido Pimienta and she … did a presentation, really eye-opening, really great, so the fact that the Library's hosted those exhibits or presenters has been really great.

Participants enjoy the visual communication of the library's services and events. Information signs and screens helping patrons navigate the library space and services are particularly appreciated. Aiding in this information degustation are the main floor's topical book displays and related activities.

> They usually have, by the bottom of the stairs on the first floor, a little sign with things that are happening in the Library, or upcoming events. . . .There's usually information posted near the entrance about the events that are going on in there. They also have screens as you go up the stairs that shuffle through different things that are going on in the Library. And they have interlibrary software posted at the ends of bookshelves so you can look for things yourself, without having to refer to a librarian.

> When you go in, they always have books that are themed, so if there's a holiday or an event going on, they'll have a section of Christmas cookbooks, or things that are celebrating Yom Kippur, so you can dive into that stuff that the staff's pulled together.
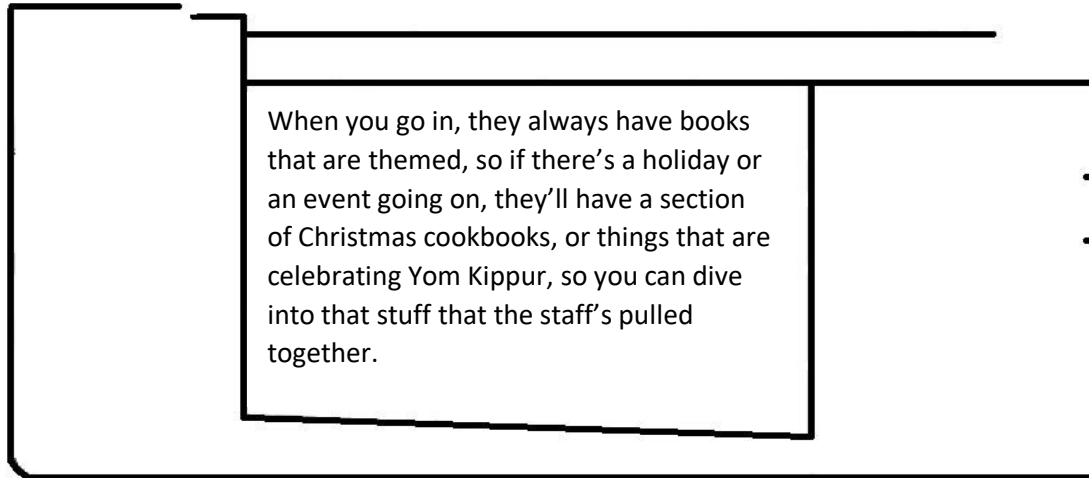
Other features mentioned frequently are the Library's chairs and tables, which can be rearranged for convenience, its two cafés, and a number of rooms available for gatherings. The opportunities for patrons to meet and work together reinforces the Halifax Central Library as "a new cultural hub for the region [with] a place for everyone".[12]

Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm

Since 2012, this community farm has worked "to promote healthy lifestyles and landscapes through hands-on education about growing and eating healthy food"[13] in order to realize their vision of "healthy people, connected to their food, each other, and the natural environment".[14] The Farm's garden beds or plots, measuring 4' x 12' x 1'[15], are available for an annual $40 fee[16] to individuals or organizations. The Farm is run by Partners for Care, a volunteer-based charitable partnership organization supporting Nova Scotia Health Authority patients[17] and the other community garden, Back to our Roots, on the Dartmouth Hospital grounds. In 2017, Common Roots Urban Farm (or the Farm) produced an average of $154 worth of food from its 195 plots, or $28,500 in food on a single acre.[18]

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[12] FBM people driven design. (2019). Halifax Central Library. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://fbm.ca/projects/halifax-central-library-interior/

[13] Common Roots Urban Farm, 2017-d., Roots

[14] Common Roots Urban Farm, 2017-d., Roots

[15] Common Roots Urban Farm. (2017-b.). Community garden. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from http://commonrootsurbanfarm.ca/community-garden/

[16] Common Roots Urban Farm. (2017-e.). Plot agreement 2017. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from http://commonrootsurbanfarm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Plot-Agreement-Ver-2_distributed.pdf

[17] Nova Scotia Health Authority. (n.d.). Partners for Care. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/system/files/sites/201/documents/partners-care-vendor-promo.pdf

[18] Common Roots Urban Farm. (2017-a.). 2017 Annual report. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from http://commonrootsurbanfarm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Common-Roots-Urban-Farm-Annual-Report-Spreads-RGB.pdf

Like the Halifax Central Library, participants' responses to the Farm were generally favourable. Regular Farm visitors find it relaxing, and spoke of a sense of belonging there. They appreciated its diversity and efforts to engage the community. The Farm is seen as welcoming, inviting within, sheltering, relaxing, offering opportunities to expand one's role in that place, and generating positive experiences.

Plots and layout

The Farm's predominant memorable feature is its plots: participants spoke of the dedicated children's garden and play area, designated fruit and vegetable plots for snacking (the "nibble garden"[19]), and accessible garden beds on raised wooden pillars. Included are onsite gardening supplies, including planters, seeds, a hose, water tank, compost pile, and coloured stakes to identify growing produce, along with "one or two beds [where] people can practice" gardening.

The
actual beds
[drawing] are over
on this side ... they've got
other beds [drawing] over on
this side, and then—I didn't leave much
space but there's actually a lot of beds over
here. What's taken up in the middle and
then over to the side are the general plots
[drawing] that are for the Food Bank, or
for other things run by the Farm. . . .The
personal plots for people are on this end,
near the corner, over by the shed ... that's
where I had my volunteer plot this year.

One active Farm participant recalled its several changes: formerly the Queen Elizabeth II High School (demolished in 2011), "it was an empty pit for a while" before he saw it "transform" into the Farm.

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[19] CBC. (2 Oct, 2015). Common Roots Urban Farm in Halifax faces funding shortfall. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/urban-farm-halifax-fundraising-1.3254724

The Farm's layout is especially noteworthy: participants mentioned gravel-lined pathways throughout. "Paths [are] everywhere", to quote one participant: "Lots of good, gravel walkways, and everything's pretty tidy … you know when you're on the paths [because] they're marked." Paving stones have been laid around the accessible gardens for wheelchairs to navigate the beds. For one visitor, the Farm's pathways generated a more exploratory journey.

Lots

of beds, and

they were not in any

particular order—some [beds]

were little, some were big [sounds of mark

making] … A lot of gardeners have a very structured way

of doing things: 'This is where the water is', 'This is where

the tall things are', 'This is where the low things

are', and everything has to be in its place.

Everything is not in its place here [at the

Farm]. This is people coming in, having

their own plots, and doing whatever

they want with them. Which is fantastic,

but just completely different.

One of the participants, a Farm host, described difficulties in explaining the Farm's location near the busy Willow Tree intersection to his friends: he often found himself telling them, "You probably walk past it every single day." Although this research's participants find the Farm friendly and welcoming, regulars recognize the public's uncertainty about whether the Farm is open for visiting. Some participants sketched the Farm's entrances and exits with ease during the map-making activity, noting the less evident access from Bell Road if one climbs the slight hill and heads south towards Robie Street.

[The

Farm is an]

'everyone's-welcome'

idea, and I don't know whether

people actually recognize that enough. I think

people passing think 'Oh, I'm not allowed to cut

through this path,' and things like that

… when you're in the space itself, I

think it's very welcoming and inviting,

but looking from a distance on Robie,

where there's the gate, it might look

as though it's a private property.
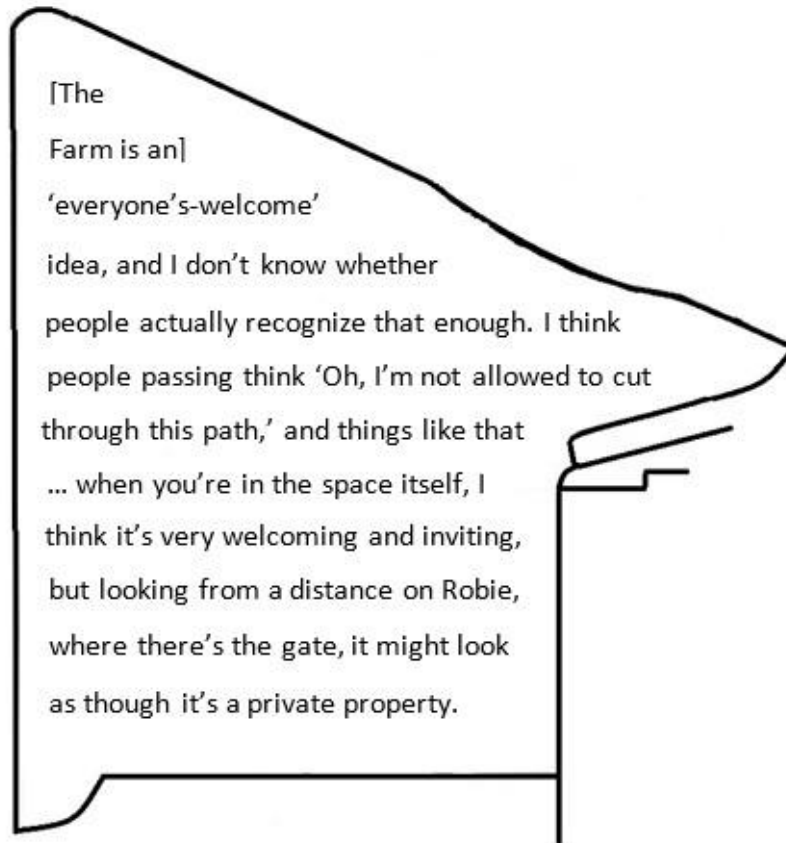
One participant claimed that drawing this sitemap engaged him to show the Farm's physical attributes and what he enjoyed about the Farm's design. The Farm's layout was for one participant erratic but charming nonetheless; she attributed its eccentricities to community decision-making.

> There
> was lots of
> winding trails around
> [sounds of markers being
> picked up], so there were a lot of people
> wandering around—and you
> weren't necessarily going in the
> same direction you thought you
> were going, and then you'd get
> lost and do something else.

The Farm is commonly described as an open space, again similar to the Halifax Central Library: one participant observed the Farm has a "lot of nice, open space" with its grounds unobstructed; another participant recommended workshops delivered in the unused Bell Road space; a participant who visited the Farm only once approved of its open space and design. Participants feel the Farm is not crowded, nor is it built up, and that these feelings of openness, visibility, and movability are communicated to visitors (the Farm's relocation, scheduled for April 2019, may alter these impressions).

Relocation

At the time of interviewing, participants were aware of the Farm's imminent relocation, due to the construction for new Queen Elizabeth II Hospital facilities[20] on the site; they even had some knowledge of proposed locations.

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[20] Woodford, Z. (6 Mar, 2019). Uprooted from current site, a Halifax urban farm gets a new place to grow. *The Star Halifax.* Retrieved 11 Mar, 2019, from https://www.thestar.com/halifax/2019/03/06/uprooted-from-current-site-a-halifax-urban-farm-gets-a-new-place-to-grow.html
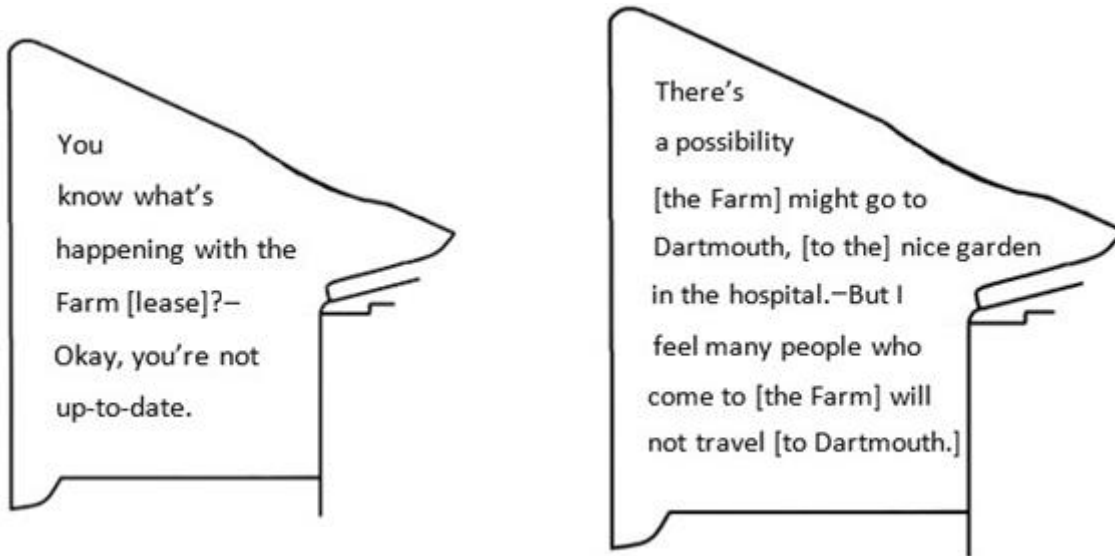
Under new partnership transferred from Partners for Care to Metroworks, the Farm relocated approximately half of its plots to a green space adjacent to Halifax's Bicentennial Highway in June 2019, and its remaining plots were transferred to other municipal community gardens sites.[21]

Structures

Participants describing the Farm's memorable features struggled to identify other features besides garden beds. The shelter space functioning as an office was mentioned, as was the garden market stall where produce was sold, marked for passersby with a flag.

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[21] Quon, A. (5 Mar, 2019). Halifax's Common Roots Urban Farm to have a new home after HRM vote. *Global News.* Retrieved 9 Mar, 2019, from https://globalnews.ca/news/5023234/common-roots-urban-farm-new-home/

I belonged

more to the

garden, to the Farm, you

know? I like the library as a physical

place, but I was much happier when I was in

the Farm. That's why I spent more time at the Farm,

although it doesn't have many structures. . . .

There weren't many physical[ly] attractive

things to [the Farm], apart from the plants,

of course. The plants—I wouldn't say they're

structures; they're living beings, but they're

different.
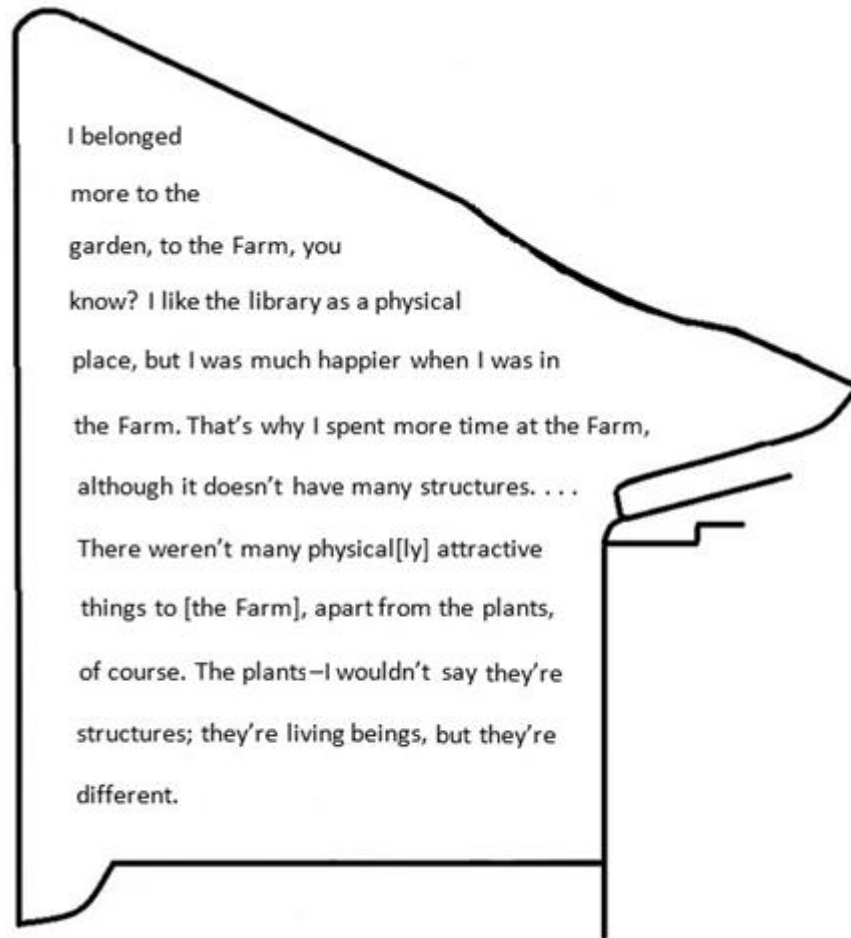
Two participants who were also Farm hosts spoke of the toolshed as a central gathering point, along with housing gardening tools and resources.
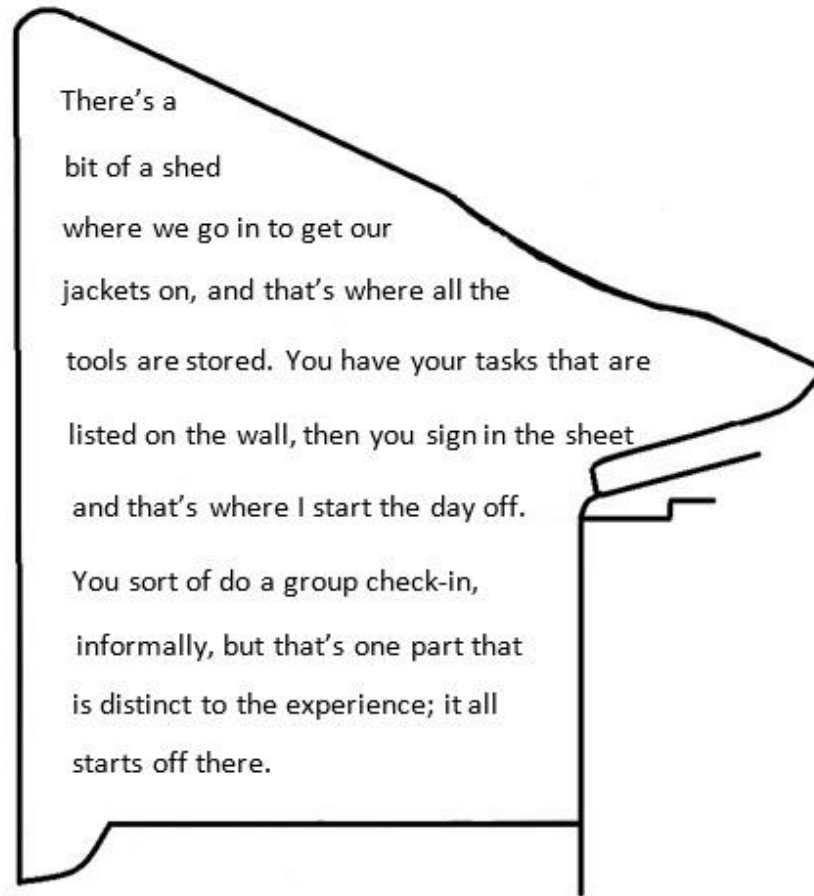
There's a

bit of a shed

where we go in to get our

jackets on, and that's where all the

tools are stored. You have your tasks that are

listed on the wall, then you sign in the sheet

and that's where I start the day off.

You sort of do a group check-in,

informally, but that's one part that

is distinct to the experience; it all

starts off there.

The Farm's wooden structures was referred to frequently: one woodworker participant and Farm host expressed a wish for more wood throughout the Farm. The wooden trellis, with its seating area and canopy of vines, was favourably noted; the Farm's toolshed and trellis represented 2 of the 3 models created during this research's 3D model-making activity.

I like wood,

full stop. [Both

chuckle] … Some of the

seats, which were also wooden,

were in the form of either benches, which

were straight benches or these conventional garden

benches where they have handles. They even

put up some wooden barrels to collect

rainwater. All in all, being amongst wooden

structures is definitely, for me, much more

interesting than being in the middle of

concrete or metal.

Shubie Park

The Shubenacadie Canal that runs through Shubie Park in Dartmouth is more than 110 kilometres long, and was built to deliver shipments more quickly between ports in Halifax and the Bay of Fundy.[22] The Shubenacadie Canal Commission (SCC) hosts several webpages describing the waterway's history, its use by the Mi'kmaq[23], Irish and Scottish immigrant workers who developed the canal in 1826 until its discontinuation in 1871[24], and archaeological findings of these activities.[25] The canal is only used today for park visitors' leisure activities, and is overseen by the SCC, as are the lands that extend 150 feet from

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[22] Thomson, A. (27 Sep, 2015). Shubenacadie Park in Dartmouth unearthed by archaeology enthusiasts. CBC News – Nova Scotia. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/shubie-park-dig-1.3246039

[23] Shubenacadie Canal Commission. (2016-g.). The Mi'kmaq. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.shubenacadiecanal.ca/the-mikmaq

[24] Shubenacadie Canal Commission. (2016-c.). Building the canal. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.shubenacadiecanal.ca/building-the-canal

[25] Shubenacadie Canal Commission. (2016-b.). Archaeology. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.shubenacadiecanal.ca/archaeology

either canal side, and the main parking lot on Locks Road[26]; Halifax Regional Municipality owns the remainder of the Shubie Park greenspace. The park's attractions include more than 18 kilometres of trails[27], a privately-owned campground, canoe and kayak rentals, an interpretive centre, picnic facilities, a seasonal café, and a popular off-leash dog park.

As with the other research sites, Shubie Park fosters in its visitors a strong emotional connection; a participant who visited only once remembered it as beautiful, while another participant explained that her lifelong interests in the outdoors, physical activity, and informal learning came together in this place.

Outdoor physical activity
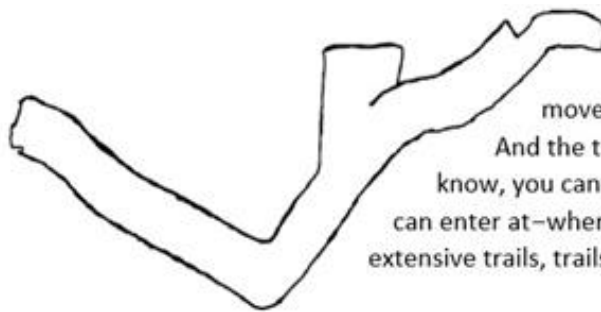
Shubie Park was recommended when we first moved here from Vancouver as a 'must-see' place to visit. And the trails are quite amazing, for activity, for running. You know, you can enter at, say, the Waverley Road entrance, or you can enter at–where the campground is and so it's fairly long, extensive trails, trails for activity.

Several of the reasons participants visited Shubie Park relate to the capacities of an outdoor space. It is "enjoyable to be outside" there, and the trees and foliage are appealing. Other reasons to visit include physical activities like walking, running, kayaking, dogwalking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. According to one frequent participant-visitor, in Shubie Park old wooded growth and endangered plants, such as Lady's Slippers, can flourish. The primary forest is another park attraction: one participant found the shade thrown by the old growth trees made a warm weather trip to Shubie Park more comfortable.

There's looping trails … different types of trails, so you have open areas, you have accessible trails, you have trails that are not back country but not accessible to strollers or wheelchairs–accessible would be a well-maintained and groomed trail, so these trails are gravel, wide, and there's room for people to pass … Shubie Park seem[s] to attempt to manicure their trails in a way that is more accessible than some other parks. There's other parts of the trails that are just beaten paths. . . .There's bike only trails, there's walking only trails, there's off-leash trails, and lots of signage indicating those things.

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[26] Conrad, D. (20 Sep, 2017). Personal communication. Email.
[27] Hello Halifax! (2017). Shubie Park. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from http://www.hellohalifax.ca/hiking/shubiepark.php

Shubie Park's most memorable feature appears to be its trails; the "looping, wooded trails" suitable for a range of ages and activities. Not all trails are accessible: one participant saw her colleague fail to push a wheelchair along one of the treeroot-exposed paths. Nonetheless, this trial-and-error approach proved valuable: "You gotta learn as you go; the more times you go, you learn those kind of things."

Participants listed several memorable features in Shubie Park: the canal and its exposed walls and dam structures, the calm waters of the duck pond, many birds and animals, the dock from which to launch kayaks and canoes, the off-leash dog park at one end of Shubie Park and the Shubie Park Campground at the other. The small bridge crossing the canal beside the Fairbanks Interpretive Centre is a popular meeting place, easily recognizable amongst the five park bridges by its central location.

Facilities

Participants particularly favour Shubie Park's amenities. The Fairbanks Interpretive Centre, named for the father and son who first proposed building the cana[28], houses exhibits and information about the canal's locks and the surrounding area. Many consider Fairbanks Interpretive Centre as the main Shubie Park entrance. The visitor parking lot spacious, which one participant claimed was necessary for her to bring and launch her kayak: "Parking's definitely an aspect that you're looking at when you're doing any kind of recreation activity."

In order for it to be a successful outing you have to connect things together. Having some amenities definitely makes a difference: a washroom, a changeroom, benches to sit on, because some people can't walk for that period of time and don't want to sit on the ground. The things that parks in Nova Scotia generally have are definitely beneficial. Because people want to be adventurous, but don't necessarily want to be lacking in any kind of amenity.

Accessible washroom facilities, plenty of seating, shelter from the elements, and direction and information signs are all present in Shubie Park; participants also appreciate the opportunity to buy refreshments at the onsite canteen. The launch dock was noted as a safe and secure point of departure for those learning how to kayak or canoe.

Visitor responsibility/ownership

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[28] Shubenacadie Canal Commission. (2016-f.). The Fairbanks Centre. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.shubenacadiecanal.ca/the-fairbanks-centre
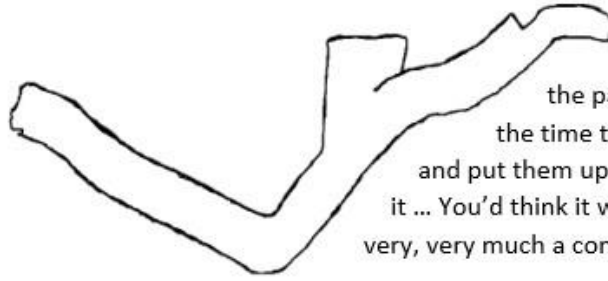
People make homemade birdfeeders and name them and put little things on them throughout the park. I think [it] is interesting, that people are taking the time to make these homemade crafts that are functional and put them up and maintain them; I've actually seen people doing it … You'd think it would be [regulated], but it doesn't appear to be. It's very, very much a community thing.

Visitors' attachment to Shubie Park is evident in the contributions people make to the park. In addition to forest trees decorated for Christmas, and children and older visitors feeding ducks, visitors can also feed the tamed chickadees from their hands. Characterized by one participant as a "very social place", Shubie Park features hand-made birdfeeders (sometimes in memory of family pets) installed throughout the park. The SCC seems to endorse this spirit of community ownership with events and activities such as the Shubie Classic 5k Fun Run[29] and the Family Winter Fest at Shubie Park.[30]

Nocturne: Art at Night

The only research site without a permanent location, Nocturne: Art at Night is a free annual visual arts festival where installations are publicly exhibited for one evening in Halifax and Dartmouth venues. Nocturne: Art at Night operates as a non-profit organization[31] run entirely by volunteers since its first venture in 2008.[32] A new curator holds the post annually and selects the festival's theme: 'scaffold' in 2019,[33] 'nomadic reciprocity' in 2018[34] and 'vanish' in 2017.[35] In 2018, there were more than 110[36] Nocturne: Art at Night installations throughout Halifax and Dartmouth. Halifax Central Library is a

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[29] RaceRoster. (2019). 3rd Annual Shubie Classic 5K Fun Run. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, at https://raceroster.com/events/2019/20950/3rd-annual-shubie-classic-5k-fun-run
[30] Family Fun Halifax. (2019). Family Winter Fest at Shubie Park. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://www.familyfuncanada.com/halifax/winter-fest/
[31] Nocturne: Art at Night. (2019-b.). Festival curator – Requests for expressions of interest. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from http://nocturnehalifax.ca/images/uploads/2019_Call-for-Curator.pdf
[32] Mombourquette, A. (3 Oct, 2014). Art after dark: Nocturne brings Halifax's art scene to the people – and pumps up the city's cool factor. *Halifax Magazine.* Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from http://halifaxmag.com/opinions/art-after-dark/
[33] Nocturne: Art at Night. (2019-a.). 2019 Theme: Scaffold. Retrieved 21 Sep, 2019, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/news/2019/nocturne-2019-scaffold
[34] Nocturne: Art at Night. (2018). Nocturne Guide 2018. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/guide
[35] Nocturne: Art at Night. (2017). Nocturne Guide 2017. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from https://nocturnehalifax.ca/images/uploads/guide/NOC-Guide-2017-FINAL.pdf
[36] Nocturne: Art at Night, 2018

popular Nocturne venue: three 2018 installations occurred in its courtyard, Paul O'Regan Hall, and 4th floor windows[37]; 2017[38] and 2016[39] each saw four installations here.

{ The stronger [installations] are the ones that are either interactive, or that are outside in places that you don't expect, so you happen upon things. You get a really interesting experience in a place that you weren't counting on; in a place, maybe, that you've been a thousand times, walking through, like the Public Gardens, and then you stop and there's something going on, like a soundscape, or something that totally shifts your perception in that area. Or the ones where you participate and get to be part of the art project, I think, are usually the strongest ones; that's what the point of Nocturne was in the beginning, you know? }

Participants generally visit Nocturne for a "unique" experience. Despite not being able to understand the meaning of every installation, participants find the event to be welcoming. Viewing installations is seen as an interesting, interactive experience, a "good time" and an opportunity for exploration. In some cases, participants chose to visit the festival because of installations placed in buildings and areas generally closed to the public. In particular, interactive installations and activities attract participants, with the event's "timing" and the "energy" garnering positive comments. Participants variously recalled past festivals and installations; one participant spoke at length about the light in a previous year's installation that made it seem as if the "installation [had] altered reality."

Downtown Area Association

Nocturne is unequivocally associated with downtown Halifax, as shown by five separate participant comments. Festival organizers assign installation zones by geographical area to facilitate visits within the event's 6-hour timeframe: in 2018, Zone 1 encompassed Spring Garden Road and nearby university campuses; Zone 2 was designated as downtown Halifax, or the area along Barrington Street; Zone 3 contained the Halifax waterfront; Zone 4 was in Halifax's North End, along Gottingen Street to Fern Lane in the north and Harvard Street in the west; and, Zone 5 took up downtown Dartmouth amongst Portland Street and Alderney Drive.[40]

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[37] Nocturne: Art at Night, 2018.
[38] Nocturne: Art at Night, 2017
[39] Nocturne: Art at Night. (2016). Nocturne Guide 2016. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from http://nocturnehalifax.ca/images/uploads/guide/Nocturne2016Guide.pdf
[40] Nocturne: Art at Night, 2018

Nocturne occupies a considerable area, with participants attributing its expansion to increased visitors and numbers of installations. One participant noted that this unfortunately limits visitors from taking in all zones in any given year. Participants expressed a desire to 'reimagine' Nocturne within a contained area, so that all installations could be visited.

Most Nocturne comments addressed its installations and respective locations. One participant recalled installations in Spring Garden Place, St. Matthew's Church, and the provincial Governor's House. Halifax Public Gardens was also a well-remembered installation location: participants recalled a balloon-like installation, and other exhibits made with large-scale light projections and synchronous typing that appeared on an oversized screen.

> [Nocturne is] more spread out every year, so walking around, if you're trying to see things, there's not [a good chance]. It used to be a little tighter-clustered, so that you'd happen upon more things in one area; I find now you really have to know what you're looking for, or where to go to find things.

The two participants who drew maps of Nocturne began with Spring Garden Road as the main thoroughfare; several stores and businesses in the area remain open to take advantage of the crowds: "[Nocturne] just–devolves into random streets downtown, different businesses have things open. It's not necessarily that they have an art installation happening; they really encourage people to come in, and it's a bright and happy atmosphere anyway." Halifax's compact downtown core is something of a challenge for hosting Nocturne, claimed one participant; a small downtown area, limited time, various installation locations, and visitor numbers make for logistical issues.

> Nocturne [could have] a more designated route for where things are, and it [could be] closer together in the city. . . .It does showcase the city and gives people the opportunity to explore spaces that they haven't necessarily been to. But Nocturne isn't a space you want to be driving around, you know? So a lot of installations probably get neglected, especially toward the Quinpool or North End areas, so having a very specific route for where everything is would be helpful, but it's also a problem because there are massive crowds at Nocturne. So, I guess the way Halifax has it is probably the best way to go, but at the same time, there are drawbacks to it.

Artist~participant roles

As with other research sites, Nocturne has participants who not only visit but contribute in some fashion. Of the three participants who had visited Nocturne, one volunteered at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia for Nocturne, one was a painter and art gallery employee whose gallery owner participated in and supported Nocturne, and the third also performed in a Nocturne installation.

I really enjoy when [the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia has] events going on, because it's a more exciting time; you get to see a lot of people come in, and even though that wasn't really my place in being there, they still come up to me and talk about the space that I'm in. I was there primarily to make sure people don't touch the artwork, but people still come up to you and talk about things. They don't know what your role is actually meant to be, so they start asking you about the art anyway, or what you know about the art pieces or the artist that are represented in that space.

In some cases, Nocturne produces moments of uncertainty about whether an activity is in fact a Nocturne installation: one participant could not decide whether a leaf-clearing task in the Halifax Public Gardens was an installation or simply shiftwork.

[My friends] were doing the majority of the work; I was out there to support them and lift the TVs, and help sing songs, so they did let me go and explore the exhibits as well, which was nice to see what everyone else was doing. . . .another part of Nocturne that I got to experience was actually on the Public Gardens side. I got to go and wander up there at some point [drawing], and going through the entrance over here [drawing], little gate – and then walked over [drawing] some water, [drawing] and then over to the gazebo. [drawing] There was sort of a projector that was on there. I guess they were live-typing, something like that, and then behind that, there were a couple other things.

The installation in which a participant performed was located at Park Victoria on Spring Garden Road. The performers stacked televisions, playing a looped campfire video, and invited passersby to join them in singing campfire songs. To add to the atmosphere, the performers also displayed a camp cooler in which they had stored scarves draped around a fire that retained their smokey aroma, so "the scent of the campfire [gave the installation] more of an in-the-city, outdoor experience."

Summary

These comments are culled from participants' responses to the interview question, "Select one of these places [i.e., of the four study sites] and tell me the physical attributes that stand out for you", and the

map-making activity question that asked participants to "draw or represent those particular physical landmarks, geographical features, objects, structures, tools, pathways, shapes, sights, sounds, colours, textures and points of interest that stood out for you." I use the phrase 'memorable features' to identify these combined responses. Although comments are not limited to material objects, such as mentions of Halifax Central Library's services, or Nocturne's association with downtown Halifax, quotations like these indicate how places are understood for their materialities, and how direct, indirect, or symbolic object interactions may contribute to adults' informal learning.

It was necessary to exclude other comments not germane to this enquiry in order to arrive at these categories. For instance, if each site acted as a primary unit of analysis, I would inspect their histories or traditions as comprehensively as possible; however, since the sites afford settings for material object interactions and places of adults' informal learning, that degree of examination is unnecessary. In the previous chapter, I offered a sophisticated analysis of the sites through economic, environmental, and activist domains, which discussions I will expand in Chapter 8: Reshaping Public Places, when I draw on literature, participants' commentary, and findings combined.

My understanding of these research design elements arose out of my attempts to understand and create a framework in which to situate participants' responses. The analytic framework I eventually produced guides this work and made clear to me the importance of oppositional forces somehow bound together, to the extent that tensions became a major thematic finding of this work. The framework also clarified for me how this research's sites and their emplaced material objects display a capacity for adults' informal learning.

ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

I began analysis by extracting material object examples from transcripts; initially, I set aside information gathered through map-making and 3D model construction, recognizing that arts products offered expansive and multiple meanings too broad at this stage of analysis. In retrospect, had I approached this stage with the image of a mobile firmly in mind, it may have hastened my understandings about material object composition viewed as the hanging elements of a mobile, or offered a means of sorting objects into different tiers or levels like the arms of a mobile, or even intimated for me sooner that changes in places could occur like the different visualizations of a swinging mobile. However, without this metaphorical association, I was working instead to put language to objects, therefore at a remove

from "the sensuous terrain—the material Earth as it meets our senses—[that] provides the inescapable template for our experience of every other world we devise or discover."[41] I believe using the mobile form to assist in making meaning of participant commentary would have abbreviated this process, although, perhaps, my discovery of entwined elements may have been overlooked.

It was difficult to resist coding transcripts by affective participant responses, which showed affinities but did not substantiate connections between material object interactions and adults' informal learning. I noted these challenges in my notebook, writing through my concerns like St. Pierre asking herself "why did I think words in interview transcripts and field notes could be data–the ground, the foundation of knowledge claims–given that I was thinking with Derrida who made it clear that meaning cannot be closed off and contained in language"[42] and seeking out my literature disciplinary heritage to find that, as I noted, "coding is simply pattern-finding", and analysis is "another version of reading a text."

With subsequent scrutiny, I grouped major topics: Public Place, Informal Learning, Methodology, Study Sites, and Tensions of Space (in this last category I collected instances of confusion, contraindication, and irreconcilable differences across all topics). I read from that related notebook entry that I struggled to distinguish Public Places' subsection 'Encounters', and its subdivisions 'What' and 'Expression', or Informal Learning's 'Environment' from 'People' through an intra-active, more-than-human sensibility I had not yet gleaned. This iteration helped me recognize my classification was over-complicated and not yielding the information I had sought in my research design.

Finally, in late 2018 my notebook reads:

EUREKA!!

Lightbulb.

Just a list of what things in space made people learn (or think of learning) didn't mean nearly as much as the interaction they permitted.

<u>PLUS</u>: my guiding questions asked 'how' things in places could foster IL, not 'what.'

With these epiphanies, I re-coded the transcripts, moving towards material objects' significance for informal learning. For example, I took the topics of Public Places and Informal Learning and created for both categories of 'People', 'Things', and 'Activities/Services', to eliminate 'People' as a learning source. Concurrently, I created subcategories for each site: 'Reasons to Visit', 'Memorable Features', 'Proposed

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[41] Abram, D. (2003). Earth in eclipse: An essay on the science of philosophy and ethics. *Tikkun Magazine, 18*(5), n.p.
[42] St. Pierre, E.A. (2017). Writing post qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry, 24*(9), 603-608. p.603
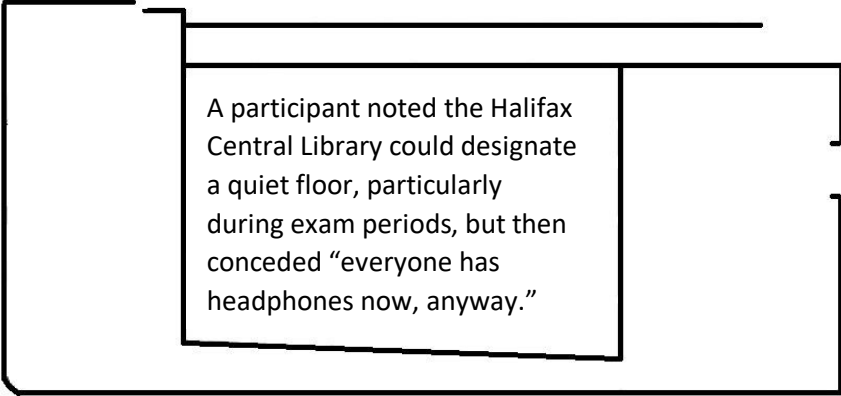
Changes', and 'Informal Learning Feasibility', thereby discarding 'Proposed Changes.' These divisions separated findings by topic and site, and helped me identify tensions in isolation or across topics and themes. Participants' fondness for walking in these sites was also established at this level. With this framework, I began to recognize material objects' significance and informal learning incidents in intersecting encounters that would generate meaning for this enquiry.

As noted, the Tensions of Space topic was reserved for instances of disconnect and misalignment, wherever they appeared. It became clear in this final framework that these sites' tensions, within and without, could impact material object interactions. Below, I identify tensions of function, nature, and design arising from participants' comments and generally operating across these sites. I return once more to this analytic framework to discuss capacities for adults' informal learning in these sites.

TENSIONS

> *Function*

Distinct and differing needs of people in public places make it difficult to serve everyone. One participant remembered a "private conversation" during a work meeting held at the Halifax Central Library; she felt that

> A participant noted the Halifax Central Library could designate a quiet floor, particularly during exam periods, but then conceded "everyone has headphones now, anyway."

despite their sequestration, she and her colleagues were "still kind of part of [the Library]." Another participant likes that, there, she can "sit in the open spaces, but still have your own conversations."

The library permits individual occupations within a wider shared space, noted one participant. She refers to the study booths as an instance of this, intended "if you need a little bit more space for yourself, to focus", while still enjoying the Halifax Central Library atmosphere.

> *Nature*

Some of this research's sites contrast a natural and built environment. Thee participant who performed at Nocturne described his co-performers' decision to create a campfire-themed installation that would evoke a rural-urban crossover event as an "in-the-city, outdoor experience."

You're taking advantage of the space that wouldn't ordinarily be used for a garden, and you're making it productive.
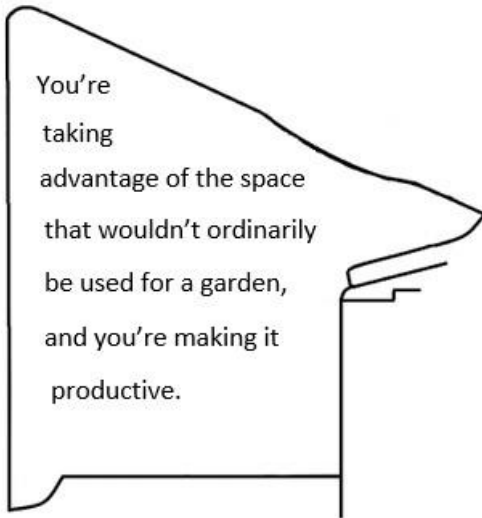
While creating her hand-drawn map of the Farm, a participant remembered the sounds of gardening, children's shouts, and people walking through the space, but also the street's "busyness" and its noise pollution from the 'cars' and 'traffic.'

One participant thinks the external space incorporated into the Halifax Central Library is 'nice', and notes that its rooftop filtration system is similar to Halifax's Seaport Garden Market, and yet is uncommon in most libraries.

Design

Tensions are also found in design choices for this research's sites. One participant spoke at length about engaging people meaningfully through design: that is, he would like to see a circular arrangement for gathering people at the Farm because of its convenience for speaking. He also describes a circle as "more welcoming" and "less formal" than a traditional "business-boardroom" layout.

What's worked for me is when you have that sort of circular formation. It's been really helpful, when you're addressing a group, and making things feel more collective.

Another participant pointed out the lack of descriptive historical panels at the Halifax Central Library site, under which rests the ruins of Bellevue House,[43] the home of the British Army's Commander-in-Chief for Halifax dating back to the 1800s. The
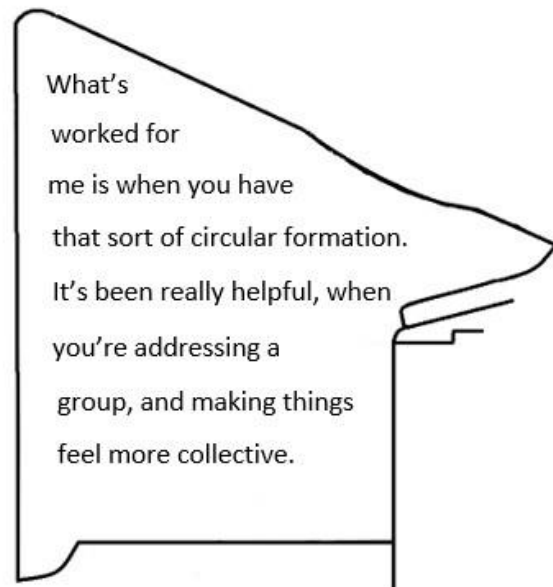
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[43] Halifax Regional Municipality. (13 Apr, 2011). Central Library update – Archaeological dig to begin in May. Retrieved 27 Jul, 2019, from http://halifaxcentrallibrary.ca/news/2011/2011-04-13-central-library-update-archaeological-dig.html

participant observed that the Halifax Central Library is now a "destination point", and that panels could be erected that describe not just historical information, but also general information about Halifax.

In these tensions of function, nature, and design, I recognize these sites are constantly negotiating the needs people bring with them into public places, whether those environments are natural or built, and decision-making related to the material space. This ongoing balance in which opposing ends of public place visits and in which informal learning occurs through material object interactions are held in check, like freely swinging but emplaced mobiles, and depicts tensions as a thematic finding of this research, accompanied by change and time.

This analytic framework isolates participants' comments about sites' capacities for informal learning: although there were few explicit comments about informal learning, participants had more to say when asked whether sites could support informal learning. This discussion concludes with the barriers participants found in sites that hampered adults' informal learning.

SITES' INFORMAL LEARNING

Halifax Central Library

There were few to no observations about possible adults' informal learning in the Halifax Central Library, perhaps because of assumptions that libraries are for learning: "It's a library, there's a connotation of learning, obviously, associated with it…"

> Usually [there's] books out there [on] a set theme, and there's something with information on top of that, and there's typically a banner right here where they encourage people to add information themselves. I would say that's an informal learning activity in itself.
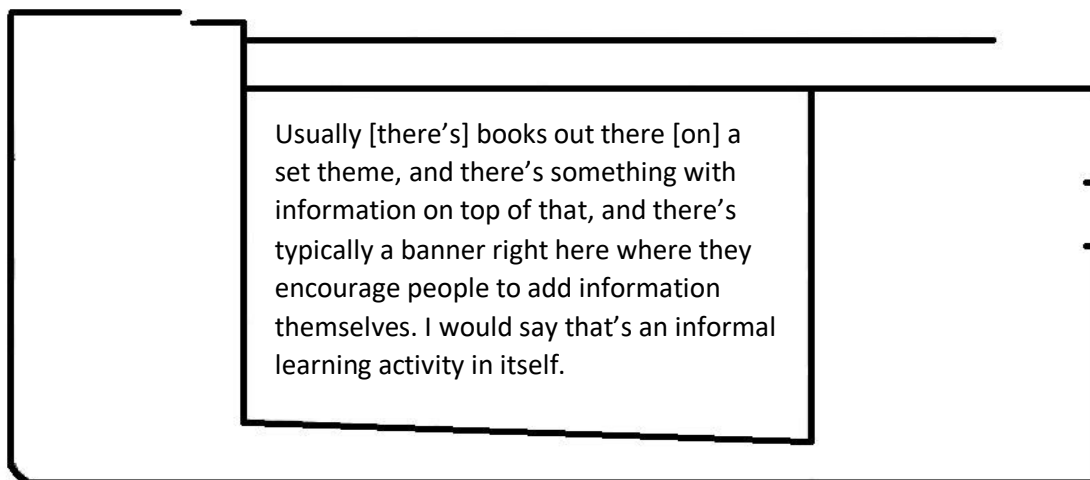
One participant pointed out that the information for Halifax Central Library patrons is spatially arranged so that one can literally direct their learning: for example, the first floor offers the quickest access to check-out services and kiosks, as well as the easily available computer terminals and magazine racks.
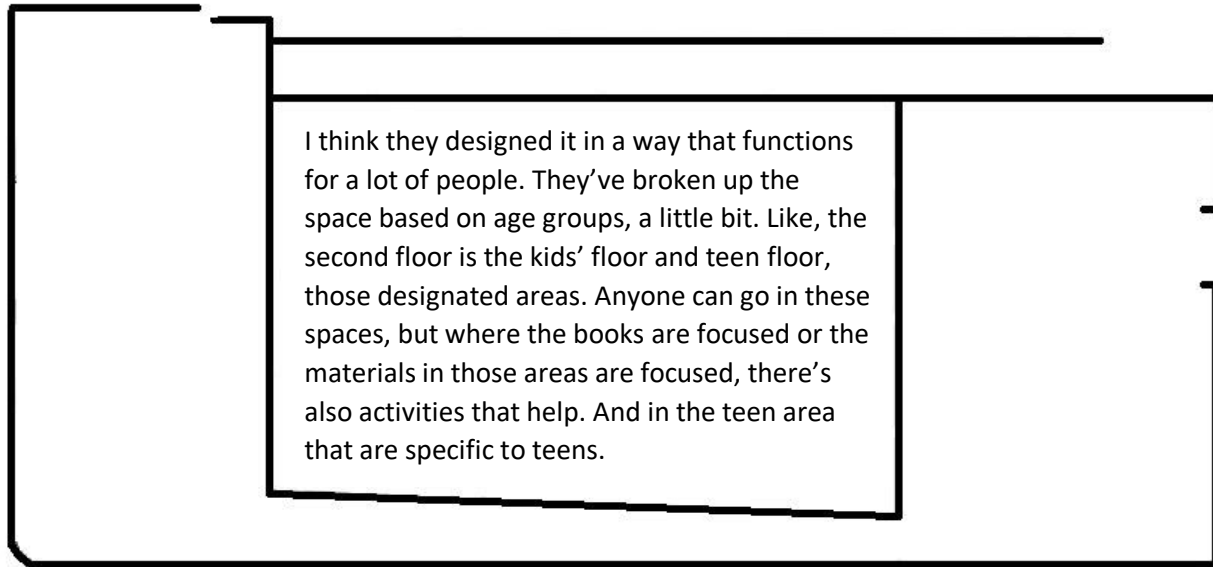
> I think they designed it in a way that functions for a lot of people. They've broken up the space based on age groups, a little bit. Like, the second floor is the kids' floor and teen floor, those designated areas. Anyone can go in these spaces, but where the books are focused or the materials in those areas are focused, there's also activities that help. And in the teen area that are specific to teens.

Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm

A desire was expressed for more Farm workshops and a greater variety of workshops; this would emphasize the learning "done in the spot."

If

we're talking

about how to, uh, till

the soil, we would be doing it,

actually, physically, so that's interesting.

And people would join around and they

can see. We had some people

explaining to us how things are done

in other countries, how they would

cover the crop and they would do

simple stuff [using] very inexpensive

material. . . .
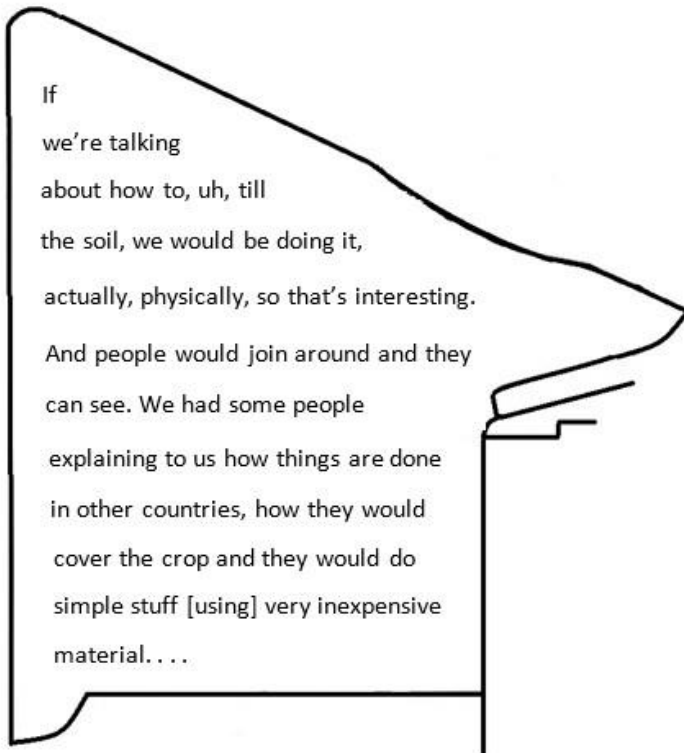
Participants felt that the Farm would benefit from a dedicated learning space or temporary shelter to facilitate learning. In addition to highly valued support from other members and the Farm's managers, participants spoke of learning made possible by Farm resources, consisting of information signs, gardening reference books, maps, and program pamphlets.

Specific tasks cited by participants afforded them learning opportunities: the process of building the Farm's wooden structures, assuming square-foot gardening responsibilities, and conducting an onsite sound recording exercise and subsequent workshop. Other measures supporting learning included the temporary labelling of plants, later to be checked against reference materials when the plants flowered, and learning about the food cycle and destinations for the Farm's produce.

Shubie Park

[Interviewer: You didn't connect that the duck is maybe a reason people want to be in that space, and they might be prompted to learn, 'Well, what kind of duck is that?']

No; no, exactly. But—actually, now that I'm thinking about it, it's one of those weird things that people do without actually planning or thinking about it. But it totally is a learning opportunity.
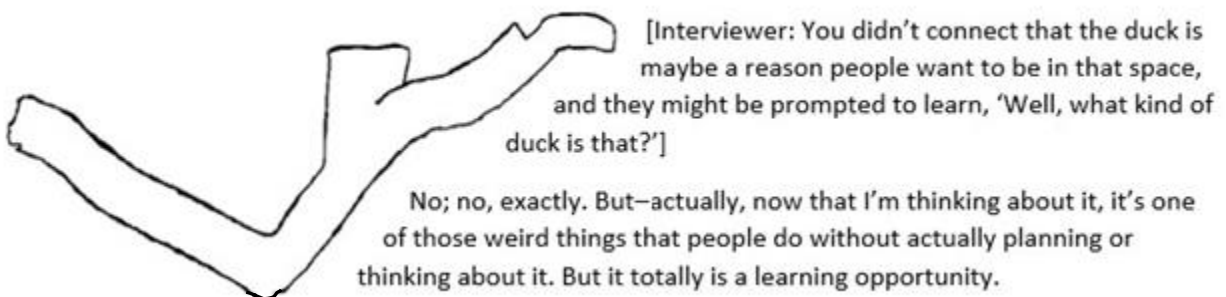
Possibilities for engagement and self-directed learning make it possible to enjoy informal learning at Shubie Park. The handmade birdfeeders and birdhouses installed throughout the park demonstrate skillsets appreciated by others. One participant spoke to a desire to manage her information intake independently: she revealed she had not visited the park's Fairbanks Interpretive Centre because "You

go in, and someone comes up to you and [says], 'Oh, can I tell you about the place?', and I [think] 'Just leave me alone; I just want to–figure it out on my own.'"

Some participants suggested that Shubie Park's information signs, its exposed structural ruins of canal workers' housing, and the canal itself provide points of interest about the park that prompt historical and geological interest, supported by displays in the Fairbanks Interpretive Centre: "[There is] a lot about the canal, the Mi'kmaq connection, and then the actual construction of the canals and what they were used for … there's definitely lots of relevant information."

When you go into the park, you don't think, 'I'm going in there to learn something today,' you know? [Laughs] So I don't know how to answer that question because when I go there, it's not like [I think], 'Well, I'm going to learn something new today.'

Inasmuch as learning is a given at the Halifax Central Library, Shubie Park seemed resistant to (formal) learning opportunities. Participants found it hard to recall impactful learning moments there: "Hmm. I can't think of it–I know it's happened; I'm just trying to think of how. Or what it involved."

Nocturne: Art at Night

Like Shubie Park, Nocturne visitors did not appear to associate the festival with informal learning. Perhaps, as noted by one participant, contemporary art installations are too abstract for engagement and interest in learning: "You don't necessarily understand a wealth of information from it."

I guess it's good that Halifax has the ability to reinvent [its] space, and I think that that has to happen more often, because I feel there's places, you know, Montréal, where they'll have art exhibits constantly, and have pressure for [the] arts to have events constantly. So Halifax gets a sliver of that…

Nocturne organizers may foster visitors' informal learning if an annual 'popular vote' installation were to become a permanent fixture, claimed one participant. The 'impermanence makes it unfortunate', and implies that Nocturne's short duration may not be conducive to informal learning.

Informal learning barriers

Participants offered few comments about adults' informal learning through material object interactions in public places. For instance, one participant felt that adults are accustomed to habitual, hard-to-disrupt ways of thinking that prevents informal learning even in new or stimulating interactions; another participant believed that informal learning is unlikely to be experienced in a public setting.

> Challenges that adults might have could relate to how you're set in your ways, how you've already thought of 'This is how I learn,' or 'This is how much I know,' and not being as open as a child would be to a new experience? If space could facilitate learning, I think it could be to remove those preconceived notions.

> Learning is so individualized, and people learn differently in different spaces. Learning is sometimes that 'Aha!' moment, and not life-changing, but it can be–significant. I could be out walking the dogs, and something happens, like, 'Oh!', that lightbulb moment. But I don't know how you would build a space to make, to encourage that.

> Just, actually, taking the time to take in new information: when people go somewhere, they tend to have a plan of what they're going to do, and they're not really open to unexpected experiences. So, if you go somewhere, and you're not looking to just wander around and take in new information, [then] having random signs around [or] any kind of information, people are very likely to just walk by, and not notice it or see how it could be of value to them.

> Doing something on your own, and having instruction, makes a world of difference for a lot of people. Because then they're not guessing. And then they're not making mistakes that they may find embarrassing, or uncomfortable, or that they're not physically able to do on their own.

Other explanations why adults' informal learning might be inhibited in public places are reminiscent of characteristics noted in Chapter 2: Informal Learning Knowledges: it is often self-directed and not suited to public encounters, it can be related to place but may not be caused by it, and it is difficult to recognize that informal learning occurred.

The final set of information gathered that illuminates these sites is taken from participants' maps. Their comments during drawing, and the site maps, show that material objects in public places can be connected to adults' informal learning. The maps are paradoxically more and less material than the sites they represent: more so for the individual documents that render participants' recollections, and less so

due to re-creations of place that rely on memory, ability, time, and spatial perception. This terminology also serves me well in exploring the tensions and evocations of mobiles in representing this research.

SITES' ARTFUL REPRESENTATIONS

   Maps

The blank maps of sites (Figure 1) in this research provided intriguing tensions of presence and absence, or reality and imagination; in the case of Nocturne, there was no map on which to emplace the festival:
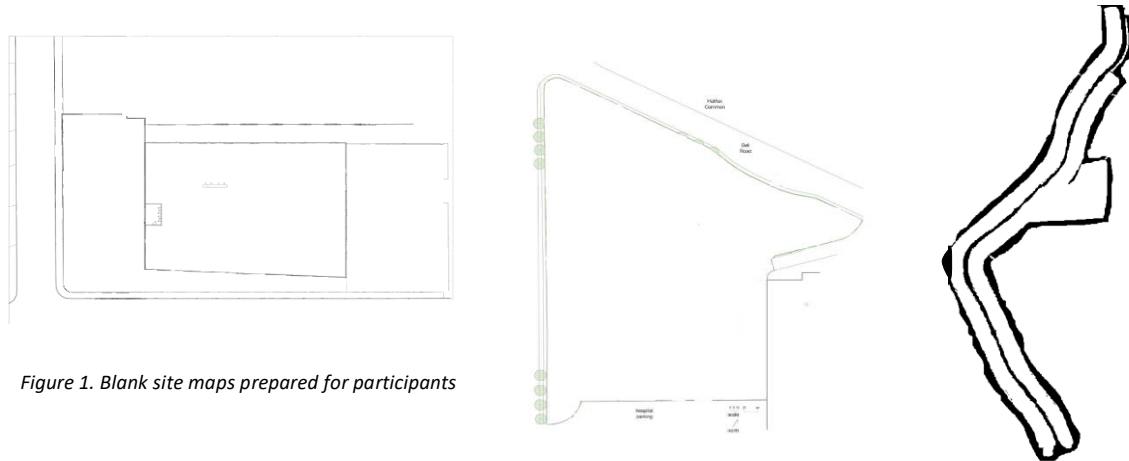
Figure 1. Blank site maps prepared for participants
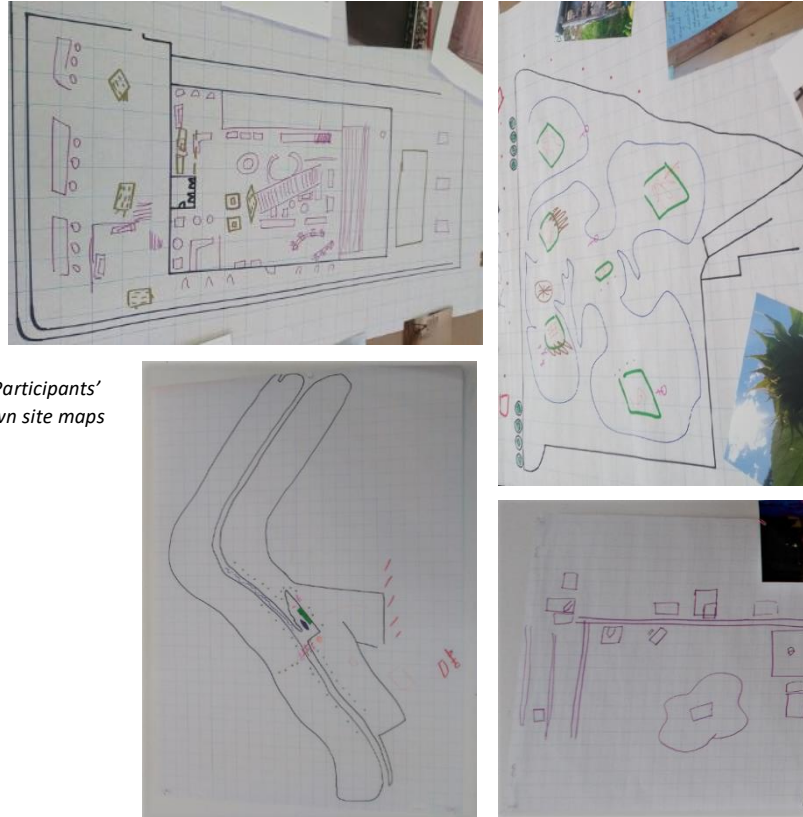
Figure 2. Participants' hand-drawn site maps

Across these sites and within them, maps are personalized (Figure 2) and recount individual discoveries of things. This curious cartography means differences in realism, representation, and the generation of a catalogue of material object shapes.

Halifax Central Library

The drawing of memorable features on hand-drawn maps of the Halifax Central Library revealed intentions towards verisimilitude; for some, the accuracy of their recollection was primary.

There's lots of lots of muddy paths, over here–
and they go like that [paper shuffling]. So this
must be Paul O'Regan [Hall] … We'll go first
floor, so there's seating [crayon tapping], and
there's a big curtain that closes off the space.
There is an exit through here; I know because
I've gone through it when we saw Saachi Cole.
There is the info desk here, like a half-circle,
and that's where you go pay your library fees–I
know from experience.

[Interviewer: I'm going to ask you to draw
things you remember about the space] Which
floor? [chuckles]

For other participants, there were brief questions or internal debates about including the outdoors
activity along Spring Garden Road, or indeed whether to draw both indoor and outdoor objects that
they could recall.

Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm

The major conceptual challenge of the Farm is its upcoming changes to layout following its relocation to
the Bi-Hi Park. These quotations, from two Farm hosts, show a thorough spatial recollection,
representing a substantial loss of knowledge based on the Farm's design and set-up for the past 7 years.

I know

this place by

heart. I'll draw it all for

you if you like. [Chuckles]

I forgot to draw a little outhouse [drawing], so

there's just one singular bathroom. This is the

children's garden [drawing]; there's a little sandbox over here; and then

next to the children's garden were actually workers in charge of the

market stand? So that's the area over here [drawing]

that's pretty–pronounced, open to a lot of people

because it's closer to the corner. And then there'd be a

big flag [drawing] that [announces] 'Market Stand!' over

here. . . .There's a pathway, with some sort of canopy

[drawing], a semi-shelter-slash-stage area? [drawing] It

has a bit of gravel in front of it [drawing], and people can

have picnics, and there's some benches over here

[drawing], but then [there's] a bike rack–getting quite

into the details, there!

Shubie Park

Knowledge of the area, generally indistinguishable between property owned and operated by the
Shubenacadie Canal Commission (SCC) and Halifax municipality, produced different participant maps for
Shubie Park. Thorough accounts, presentations, articles and displays about the history of the Shubie
Park canal can also be considered for representation, along with all of the land use, ownership, and
rights of the Mi'kmaq making use of the waterway "since time immemorial."[44]

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[44] Shubenacadie Canal Commission, 2016-g., Mi'kmaq

You can [run trails in] different combinations...you come out of Shubie Park and you can run past the mall, hook up to ... Lake Banook. I kind of see [the park] as, not a hub, but you can branch out in different sections that are actually not part of Shubie Park.

[Interviewer: And Shubie Park permits (people to make and install birdfeeders)? They don't take them down?] I don't think so; I've actually seen people doing it. I've interviewed some of their staff for my other project, and not specifically about that, but it doesn't seem to be an issue, and it's a municipal park, so ...

Nocturne: Art at Night

Perhaps the most abstract and perpetual re-mapping of any site, Nocturne's sanctioned impermanence makes its reconfiguration a matter of succession; with each festival, Nocturne occupies different public places within the city limits of Halifax and Dartmouth.

The Nocturne map is essentially just a map of Halifax.

I could probably plot out *where* [Nocturne] would be, like, areas, but not anything specific.

Nocturne's lack of a bounded area makes the annual program guide a necessity for planning a route through, unless, as one participant noted, "you just kind of wander around and see what's going on."

In asking participants to draw these sites' material objects, I had hoped to see images grounded–literally–in the world, its stairwind and vegetabletouch and greenleaf and artshow. As I noted in Chapter 3: Artful Methodology and Chapter 4: Public Places' Overview, I am spellbound by the figurative expression of these shapes that resulted. Their collection was the first point at which I speculated that these shapes compel movement and motion, just as do the constructions and elements of mobiles.

MOBILES

My first notebook entry about mobiles appeared on November 21, 2018: there appears a sketch of an object with several arms radiating out from a hanging centre, labelled 'light' and 'heavy' on either end,

with a quickly scrawled accompanied note reading, "Tension(s) also maintain balance…". While tension can be perceived negatively, I see rather in its opposing forces a stretching towards different possibilities that makes a violin string sing, or a written phrase demonstrate an unfolding process rather than describing it. The tensions of public places have correlations with a mobile form, which requires unique and carefully weighted shapes activated by purpose or happenstance amongst its environment.

The occasionally unnerving serendipity of the mobile for this research allows me to articulate the thinking behind this work as well as its representation, and participants' hand-drawn shapes are a gift of elements that hang from its frame(work). Like Calder, who "plays with forms, colours, lines, movements"[45], I move amongst the traits of public places, these sites, participants' comments, material object examples, tensions, and informal learning opportunities and challenges in constructing this research. Process-wise, I am in a like frame of mind to Calder:

> "I paint with shapes," he says, describing his methods. "I put them down on the table and move them around. It's sort of like *objets trouvés* [the art of making a composition with ready-made objects and ends], only I've made the objects."[43]
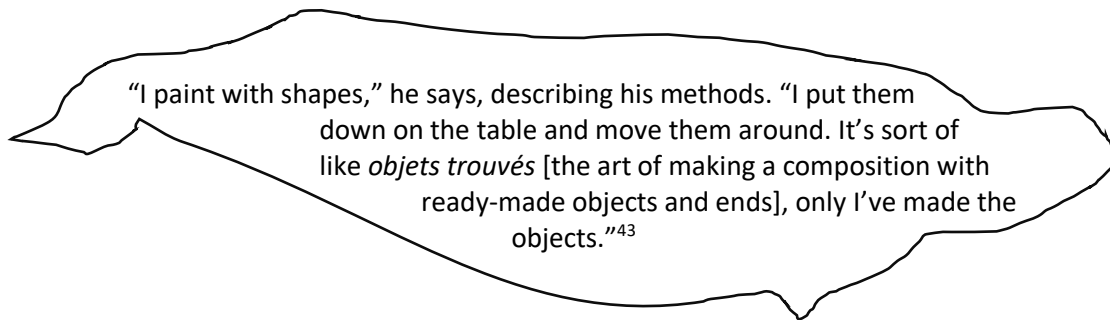
Neither the participants' shapes standing for material objects, nor my non-scaled blank site maps, are uniform in style, colour, line weight, position, angle, size or complexity. Mobiles also embrace this uniqueness, consistent in mechanical making[46] while allowing differences to emerge. The sites in this research fit with the capacity of mobiles to represent, as well as be found in, a range of public places and activated by distinct interactions, or by-products of them, that generate adults' informal learning.

CODA

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[45] Toll, S.I. (2010). My way – Calder in Paris. *Sewanee Review, 118*(4), 589-602. Retrieved 25 Jul, 2019, from https://muse.jhu.edu/article/401460/pdf

[43] Lemon, R. (27 Feb, 1965). The soaring art of Alex Calder. *Saturday Evening Post, 4,* 30-35. p.33

[46] Kwauk, M. (1999). Geometric mobiles: From conceptualization of motion in space to rational design. *Leonardo, 32*(4), 293-298. pp.293-294.

In Chapter 2: Informal Learning Knowledges, I explored informal learning in general for its relevance to this research; here, with participants' comments on adults' informal learning, precise findings are revealed relating to organization, engagement/contributions, designed space, and maintained tensions. From discussions about material objects in specific sites, blank maps have been filled in; out of those shapes has come a congruence with expression and form that enriches the mobile representational form of this research.

The sites have become more familiar to me in the conduct of this research, merging with and enfolding my memories within them: in the old Halifax Central Library, stepping on to the silent history of the second floor archives transformed me into an awed religious supplicant; the somehow ominous façade of the former Queen Elizabeth High School would later hang like a Halifax ghost in the air over the Common Roots Urban Farm; the simply mythic dimension that was Dartmouth when I was a Dalhousie student; and, the Nocturne festival where I feverishly gathered resources and details while fighting the hollow in my heart that was my mother's death a month earlier.

These places are etched on my brain and in my heart, as they are for the participants in this research, and I acknowledge their gift of experiences for my knowing. Like their memories, like my memories, kindnesses and provocations lie dormant in these places, which, in addressing, I believe is emblematic of this research's confusions and complications. Holding all of these parts–material objects, adults' informal learning, study sites, public places, mobile representations–is no small task, but the size of these ideas is both meaningless and simultaneously everything to know about the city of Halifax.

> *The balance of the volumes and corresponding weights of the parts, as well as the mechanics of lever calculation, must all contribute to make mobiles coherent works of art.*[47]

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[47] Gabriel, H. (1985). The hanging mobile: A historical review. *Leonardo, 18*(1), 39-44.

INTERIM

I was always intrigued as a child by the 'pause' button that would temporarily stop electronics in their tracks. I liked being able to hold action, operative but arrested, like the activated air of a switched-on microphone. The pause button seemed sentient to me, sweating, struggling, to bear time; it was grateful when I finally selected the forward movement of 'play' or the antithetical stasis of 'stop.' That juxtaposition of states, I thought, in a later attempt at articulation, must be hard. As hard as it is to continue thinking and writing about a single enquiry for years: it seems that one simply lives in stasis.

I want to halt the discussion to this point, even as its ideas remain live on the air.

As I did with the precursive Note to the Reader beginning this work, again I step outside of subjectivity to offer an objective commentary in the middle(ish) of this writing.

It is important I reinforce the ways in which this work meets and resists qualitative research convention, not to disrespect or malign the discourse but to expand and invigorate its effects. I use the reimagining of overlapping chapters' form and style, and my emerging authority through methodological alignment, to ask readers for an openness in understanding not just the content but the course of this enquiry.

In the interim–in this interim–I can, I believe, hold this work's advance and standstill together.

In the pause: equilibrium.

In addition to the various positionings, manifold presences, and resonant representations previously encountered, here I add still another: the botherations of this research. What I mean by this is the introduction of more intricate arguments and understandings beyond and outside of the references and definitions and conceptual determinations necessary to establish this work. Predominantly, chapters prior to this point express the literature and participant remarks about material objects, adults' informal learning, public places, and sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The purpose of those chapters was to communicate existing knowledge clearly and to embed influential historical antecedents in order to demonstrate diligent research process indicative of this level of academic achievement.

And yet–

There have already been conceits, such as insertions, where my personal anecdotes and memories interrupt information transmission, and my writing displays convolution in keeping with the spirit of enquiry. There was and will continue to be a still questioning tone that I intend does not undermine this work, but esteems the spirit of discovery regardless of paradigm. Where passive sentences drag on, I want a similar unfurling into understanding to resonate in the reader; where ample white space appears, I want there room for still more possibilities to be sensed. My growing understanding of ways to interrogate and subvert and trouble routine knowledges is in accord with challenge and growth and inspiration infusing every aspect of this work.

[I think the pause button seeks to move onwards more so than ending. Doesn't it?]

DEMANDING BOTHERATION

This hiatus has the potential to be troublesome: why is it necessary? Why are investigations into adults' informal learning, or public places, not contained in a single chapter? Why must ideas be disparate and revisited on more than one occasion? Here I explain my choices of working and writing in this manner.

In the chapters to come, I continue and intensify this enquiry's botherations. Intentionally, meaningfully, I reflect on ideas and associations with an eye to ruffling their surface: uncomfortable questions can be asked, and formal manifestations can be contested, and contradictions can be highlighted. Nothing, from accepted literature to this research's findings, is sacrosanct.

This is because I cannot fathom how knowledge can be at once shared and upset. In Chapter 1: Materialize, I declared that the methodological imperatives of arts-informed research are distinct from traditional qualitative research evaluation, and that a reader approaching this work with typical design or formal expectations may find themselves confounded. Information, once known, can be reshaped, like a material object recreated through drawing. With this work, I want to demonstrate my aptitude for research practice, but not constrain opportunities for expression and understanding due to its customs.

After all, I see the world in its complexities and possible, and my research construction deserves this prism for those perspectives. At this stage in my academic career, and my life, where I feel capable of building complex investigations and simultaneously questioning easy answers, this research would not be well served by anything else. The theoretical and methodological possibilities I have drawn out also reach out in this way; the ideas fit with the asking and the art.

Positivism's negatives

A positivist system of research and writing demands precision: the more exact an idea, the more highly it is regarded. Yet my constructivist leanings produce in me the feeling that even the most indisputable information has gaps through which one can peer; even an ecological lens senses this: "ecologically considered, it is not primarily our verbal statements that are 'true' or 'false', but rather the kind of relations that we sustain with the rest of nature."[1] I find the arrangement of existing literature into a chapter praised for its coherence and totality is artificial in comparison to the ways learning occurs and is recognized. Adults' informal learning alone has shown me that it is preposterous to make an absolute claim for conveying all knowledge of a topic in one forty-page discussion. Like mobiles, one element needs its opposite to hang in the balance. With my skills and tools to hand, my positionalities, my understanding, and my socio-cultural context, the best I can hope is to achieve a thorough though incomplete collection of information matched by a more progressive and unwieldly exploration at a later point. The chapters in this dissertation reflect that arrangement: first the basics are established, and then the opportunity to deviate, insinuate, and complicate is earned.

Even this exercise may sit uneasily with readers, if they operate from critical approaches accounting for gender, culture, race, class, and other hegemonies affecting intersectional identities. In this research, these considerations appear as characteristics played out through public places and particular Halifax sites, rather than participant attributes. Since this work was not designed to elicit information about individuals, these considerations are present but differently than may be expected, which could unsettle readers used to more directly relational intersectionalities. My decisions around this manner of address show that certainties do not serve this work most appropriately.

I want to stress that I am not antithetical to academic process: I cannot fathom how I would have moulded this research without extensive and rigourous knowledges found in literature, writing, practices, and expert insight. Definitions, conceptualizations, and structures allowed me to understand material objects and adults' informal learning and public places and arts-informed research methodology. Doing so has given me far greater understanding of strengths and issues, and makes this research compatible with original knowledge production. These elements did not, however, provide me with a basis for like expression with the experimental outlook of this enquiry.

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[1] Abram, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more-than-human world.* New York, NY: Vintage Books. p.172

My own terms

The same destabilizations of accepted knowledges appear in the languages of this research. Writing is too important to me to consist of a single-style fealty with invariable decisions about vocabulary or comma-conventions. My love of language demands occasions during which I re-compose grammar in order to channel a more authentic expression: this would not be welcome if only academic convention, set out by the latest APA publication manual, were permissible. With any research, one attempts to find out; therefore, I must surely begin by being unaware of what may be found. That is a process of experimentation, one that I feel does not stop at the edges of writing. If I am to discover effects of material objects on adults' informal learning, etc., etc., etc., that have not yet been reached, how can I expect to use in the searching language that is itself fixed and bounded?

Not content with one way to say something, I want to offer as many versions of communication as possible, so that someone finding one expression impenetrable has recourse to others. Speech acts, as with other acts, comprise constructions of knowledges and experiences, so I have carefully designed participants' comments for formal as well as meaningful impact. These decisions are, I hope, not overly directive but more akin to a collaboration in co-created dialogue, methodologically enmeshed in showing language as adequate but not encyclopedic.

After all, I have done the same in co-creating insertions with the literature of this research, prompted by its ideas and their imprint on my figurative capacities. With these insertions, like the shaped boxes of text offering in-site from participants, I begin to counteract the expectations of social scientific enquiry and restrictions on language. These insertions have also, as my supervisor and I agreed, afforded me the opportunity to emerge from the depths of uncertain research waters and take deep breaths before re-immersing myself. My frustration at tracing philosophical filaments beneath adults' informal learning, or grapples with planning's geographical nuances, can only be borne for a short time before I need a linguistic diversion. Hence, they afford me playfulness, too, in the delight of forging and strengthening new knowledges described in puckish wordplay. The botherations of certainties and languages give me license to guide this research in a genuine fashion.

[*This pause was more necessary than I realized: I needed to acknowledge becoming more*
caesura
myself]

Open sources

Armed with the knowledge that standard research tasks are concluded at this stage of this enquiry, and that there will be no more writing based solely on institutional convention, what remains for this dissertation? Revisions and scrutiny of two sources: research literature and learning experiences.

I return to specific points of obfuscation, contention, and underexplored abundance arising from previous chapters in which I explored adults' informal learning and public places. For instance, I explore shortly the extent to which intentionality characterizes adults' informal learning, and that historical public places nevertheless carry contemporary presences; these alluring and profound contemplations did not dovetail with dates and descriptions of authorial interests. I extract and highlight areas like these for renewed attention and botheration.

I also connect participants' experiences to instances in the literature, inspecting these relationships for complementarity or refutation or something in between. In doing so, I see new materialist intra-activity in how people make and are made by material object interactions and adults' informal learning and public place sites in Halifax; it is an ecological symbiosis beyond constructivism.

Information in this research gathered through methods of visual arts activities has been significant in this respect, too. I am awash in artifacts that reach towards participants' informal learning experiences: maps both literally and figuratively showing in participants' own hands those meaningful material objects, the extraordinary variety of shapes emerging from these, and 3D models prompting casual conversation resulting in participants' shared knowledges. The import of materialities for this research design grounds mobiles as an evocative representational form, fitting for an arts-informed methodology where form and insight and expression are conduits of meaning.

METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSITIONS

I was taken by the opportunities presented by arts research methodologies when I entered this doctoral programme, but tasked myself to entertain other systems of thought, finding useful moments illuminating how others and I conceptualized the world. There was, however, no better fit than arts-informed research to hold my approach to life and writing and discovery and sharing. Arts-informed research cultivates deft shadings of emphasis and foundation by turns, and sits easily beside what may appear to be confusion or paradox. What it will not brook is disconnection undermining its artistic, aesthetic, and knowledge-making co-production values. This is the tempest on which this research is tos't [and continues to ask much of the pause button amid sometimes stormy seas].

I found a suitable embodiment of this superposition of knowings and knowings-in-progress in kinetic mobile sculptures. For instance, *making and hanging a mobile requires constant adjustment to find the balance point as arms are added. One must work with a mobile's elements so that their interactions are exposed but their tensions remain intact. Care is in the construction so that movement can occur freely even as pieces turn in proximity with one another. The total effect shows repose and energy in check.* Broadly familiar, mobiles are nonetheless unique in the emanations they produce for this work, which is in the final instance a composition of *material objects* and *adults' informal learning in public places*. There must be spaces within and between elements, as well as frictions across them, for these variations even to be recognized. Rather than restoring order to divergent ideas, arts-informed research makes a spectacle of the disarray.

[*With such a long pause as this, I wonder if I ought better to have used the 'stop' button instead. But holding on isn't the same as quitting…*]

UNEARTHING FINDINGS

The outlines of ideas, like participants' hand-drawn shapes coming into focus on the pages of this work, are beginning to stand for this research's findings; it took me one or two passes to glean them myself. But they are there, and in the interests of preparing for upcoming chapters in which I problematize some of the assumptions brought out in this research, I can sketch them here.

     Material objects

The profuse number of material object examples noted by participants suggests no shortage of interactions possible in public places that may affect adults' informal learning. What is less clear is whether material objects are equally connected to adults' informal learning through the purposes they serve (i.e., a bridge is a means to cross a body of water, or a beautiful view contributes to an enjoyable day out), or the symbolic significance of what they betoken (i.e., that same bridge suggests visitors' safety and mobility has been anticipated and therefore comfort is a priority in that space). I do find reassurance in the kinship between material objects and the representational mobile that makes their suspension in space and time a work of art.

     Public places/Halifax sites

The literature, and to a lesser extent, participants' comments show that public places generally are a complicated mix of influences, familiarities, tensions, and meanings; participants' relationships to Halifax sites underscore this confusion. Yet to be explored in depth are the numerous and surprising depictions of change evidenced in just these four sites, and to what extent their modulations may bear on emplaced material objects for adults' informal learning.

Adults' informal learning

There seems to be no instant connection between material objects in public places and adults' informal learning, indicating more need for investigation into these interactions to foster connections with knowledge production. For the most part, time, featured in participants' learning recollections and the opportunity for instant confirmation of learning, is a substantive component still to be addressed.

Methodology

While no longer a focus of information-gathering in this research, arts-informed research is nonetheless emphatically revealed as more than a suitable methodology; it is actually providing justification for the formal representation of results through mobiles. Its propensity for multiple elements, effects for those beyond a small research community, and aesthetically constructed recreations makes arts-informed research methodology a good facilitator of this enquiry.

These concerns are examined, expanded, and proven substantial in the coming chapters. To some degree, each of these topics asks of the reader an openness in understanding divergent research process and material impacts. In the previous chapters, I recounted ideas and situations literally and specifically; now, I concentrate on pressing forward to exhibit the paradoxes this research presents.

PARADOXES

My interpretations have been relatively uncomplicated: material objects in public place are, like the shapes of a mobile, sharp in their relief, and generally uncomplicated in their design. But these ideas have heretofore unexplored intricacies and do not consistently work in tandem. The paradox of opposing forces holding tension in a mobile also reflects contrasting needs in public places, while informal learning cannot seem to contain both intentionality and awareness. Time, too, and changes

reveal co-existing states that cannot possibly be, but are, held in conjunction. Far from this recognition of absurdity dismantling this research, it refracts the work, stretching and swelling its affects beyond the simple research question regarding interactions with material objects in Halifax's public place sites bearing on adults' informal learning. The complications and balances required now are more complex.

With that complexity comes difference and change and unpredictability in knowing and understanding, but only made possible by you, dear reader, exerting patience and open-mindedness that the evolution of this work is still advancing. I am pleased that this work is full of oubliettes and contradictions, giving it the richness of experience and frisson of wayfinding, because such has been my experience writing it.

Not to depose the academic writing and research skills that have allowed me to reach this point, but I choose now to complement them with skepticism and resistance, to explore ideas to a greater depth.

I choose now to sit contentedly with incompleteness, to create the space for further inquiry.

I choose now to nurture inconstancies, to invite the opportunity for collaborations.

I choose now to relish complexities, to appreciate the unrestrained proliferation of meanings.

In what follows, I analyze the complications of adults' informal learning understandings, and reshape the impressions of public places. Issues of representation in mobile form are visited for the final time. The final chapter summarizes established and emerging research on adults' informal learning in public places made possible by material object interactions, relaying understanding through sometimes fractious arts-informed formal representations. I follow the plenty of their promise with intention and care.

I believe, too, that, unusually, beginning to conclude this work with difficulties points to this research's generative capacities. My notion of the end simply permits more inquiry, further inquiries, as-yet inconceivable inquiries. More so than contributing something of importance to the field, I want to contribute something of impermanence, a morass whose depth is difficult to discern so that the area itself becomes associated with exploration and discovery.

And now: back to "Play."

Encountering tensions

How difficult can it be to make a mobile?

Just tie everything on, balance it, and hang it.

For my own informal learning and material encounter with the representational mobile form of this research, I wanted to make a mobile. I had a good understanding of how and why mobiles worked, courtesy of literature and instructional videos, and looked forward to the activity informing my enquiry, particularly in contrast to research design, information-gathering, and doctoral dissertation writing.

I had all my materials ready: 15 or so differently-sized branches, 25 or so differently-shaped stones, a roll of jute twine, scissors, a ruler, and a pencil. I have a hook in my living room ceiling from which I could hang this work-in-progress, and the ongoing company of my cats to witness its creation.

After all, the whole thing is straightforward enough, and can be accomplished in a couple of easy steps.

So I thought.

–now, however: I think differently.

THE ATTEMPT

My first mobile-making attempt, some 6 months after I found the form's affinities for this work, was catastrophic. The branches and rocks survived, but the form I wrestled into being was not long for this world.

What went wrong?

- I decided to create a mobile using offset cascading levers instead of a whiffletree design, perhaps feeling I was as skilled as Alexander Calder (that is, an artist trained in engineering who had spent forty years developing this form and style).

Figure 1. Alexander Calder's "Maripose" (1960) does not entirely resemble my mobile nearest its point of completion. By Perls Gallery, 1976. © 2020 Calder Foundation, New York / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOCAN, Montreal.

- To allow for adjustments to the centre of balance, I lightly tied the twine knots holding one branch to the next; these knots frequently came undone.

- I used stones instead of paper or lightweight shapes at the end of the arms. Tight knots I tied around each stone caused the loose branch knots to unravel (once or twice, falling stones came close to clocking my cat, sitting comfortably on the ottoman underneath, square on her squishy little face).

- I could not slide knots along the arms to adjust the centre of balance because of the rough and knobbled bark of the branches. My attempts to re-tie the knot in the proper place usually unbalanced the next level down, then I would have to rebalance the mobile again.

- I used larger, heavier stones on the lower arms and smaller, lighter stones on the upper arms, which hampered freeflowing mobile movement.

- Ensuring the stones' and arms' unlimited movement around other stones and arms was nearly impossible.

- I found it difficult to anticipate whether to tie a knot connecting to a lower-level arm to the one above closer to the centre of balance or further from it.

Figure 2: Of my first mobile-making attempt, all that remains…

I pulled the entire contraption down after the eighth precariously affixed and tilted arm: it was becoming an unwieldy octopus that stretched out awkwardly and shifted threateningly. Plus, I feared for my cat.

I was utterly flummoxed about how difficult it was to make and hang a mobile; that I had made the process particularly challenging in using rough branches for arms, differently-weighted stones, and without a strong vision of the final form was a clarity I only later gained. It had become materially, irreversibly obvious to me that a mobile's construction and movements were incredibly intricate. I wrote down these reflections on what I felt was a failed experiment in order to glean any learning I could about complex movements, especially when there was a presumption of smooth sailing ahead.

This episode occurred two years into my research on material objects' affects on adults' informal learning in Halifax, Nova Scotia's public place sites. By this time, I was no longer struggling to begin this research, or pull its elements together, or describe the enquiry process; I was pretty much set.

But this activity completely undid me. Why, when I had everything to hand and understood the process, was it still so difficult? How were things not as easy to manage as they appeared to be? And what could I do differently to make the form work? I bid a bitter farewell to my earlier presumptions, which now seemed absurdly naïve, about mobiles' simple construction.

It was almost as if, I thought gradually, the mobile-making activity I attempted was similar to the progression of my dissertation. Although my arm, string, and shape materials were lined up, just like my enquiry elements; although I watched and mimicked mobile-making instructional videos, in the same way I emulated the stages of academic argument; although I could tie stones to branches with strings, like connecting my informal learning positionalities; although mobile-making and dissertation-writing processes were similar—

—well… it got complicated.

And with that realization, I saw the way forward for both undertakings.

REALIZATIONS

　　　Simplicity

Whatever mobiles I planned to make had to be guided by the composition of my research, simple designs, smooth arms, and equally-weighted shapes; only then could the form resonantly allow for

> More of the unpredictable … than in any other human creation. No human brain, not even their creator's, could possibly foresee all the complex combinations of which [mobiles] are capable.[1]

To reveal mobiles' complexities, I had to keep their principles and materials elementary rather than stretching towards heterogeneous elements. The same approach underpins this dissertation: in the first two-thirds of the writing, I examine literal meanings and authoritative understandings of adults' informal learning and material objects interactions, public places, and sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia; but, in the final third I problematize these assumptions, which alchemy is essential in producing entwined and sophisticated research outcomes.

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[1] Sartre, J.P. (1963). The mobiles of Calder. In. J.P. Sartre (Ed.), *Essays in Aesthetics* (pp.123-127). New York, NY: Washington Square Press. p.123

Interconnections

I radically underestimated a mobile's sensitive interconnections. The use of natural materials was inconsequential if I changed the distance between branch and stone and string half a centimetre too far, disrupting its equally weighted forces reaching upwards and stretching downwards. The tensions of a mobile have ramifications not just for a single branch or hanging shape, but for multiple levels and the total structure. That holistic unity comprises this dissertation, in which elaborate analysis pursuant to several layers of understanding shifts the thoughts of the overall work.

Shapes' sizes/weights

I wish I had recognized the non-singularity of shapes in general when gathering variously-sized and - weighted stones to hang from the mobile; that is, any object is sufficiently complex when considering a mobile's composition. Trying to offset stones of different heft or curvature in order to achieve equilibrium was highly frustrating. Similar puzzling complexities arose in my research on informal learning's occurrences and place's definitions and materiality's meanings: underexamined and taken-for-granted concepts are intricate and rich, and entirely sufficient matter for considerable inspection.

Construction stages

I dismissed experts' advice, on two occasions, to build a mobile from the bottom up. Securing the lowest arm and achieving balance at a point closest to the earth and moving upwards one level at a time makes a mobile function. I wanted to work intuitively from the smallest consideration (the highest arm) and make adjustments as I moved downwards, but of course the experts were entirely correct: one establishes a base first. Thus is a hanging mobile paradoxically 'grounded.' This understanding mimics in this dissertation my conceptual clarifications and shared characteristics of elements across fields or schools of thought. Discussions, therefore, are expansive, but grow from a stable base of pertinent information and interconnections.

These realizations contextualized the learning of my early attempts at mobile-making, materializing the co-existing tensions necessary for me to undergo like the challenges and achievements of writing a dissertation. My struggle to make a functioning mobile reframed some of my views about learning underpinned by art practice.

REFRAMING MAKING

    Base erasure

It is difficult to create an artistic work that does not have a base. Sculptures tend to be "presented on a raised base, forming a transition between the ground plane and the work"[2], yet mostly mobiles are suspended in the air. Base-less artwork in modernist sculpture, writes Kwon, "sever[s] its connection to or express[es] its indifference to the site, rendering itself more autonomous and self-referential, and thus transportable, placeless, and nomadic."[3] Conversely, Krauss characterizes sculpture as "commemorative representation"[4] found in monument and site historicity: "the historian/critic simply performed a more extended sleight-of-hand and began to construct his [art] genealogies out of the data of millennia rather than decades." Without a base on which to rest, mobile sculptural forms float adrift on the breeze but are nonetheless tethered to a past with meaning for the present. This is an apt description of my love of metaphor and figurative language to express the making of my dissertation.

    Material breadth & depth

I wonder how mobiles can signify historical considerations. Figuratively, I suppose a mobile's arms–which are layered like the geological formations revealed by an archaeological dig–can reach out to different points in time, but the only idea I have to indicate this expanse is to increase the area covered. I see in Calder's mobiles intimations towards four- as well as three-dimensional space (that is, history and duration as well as presence); this effect grows with a wider mobile reach. Materiality helps extend making by requiring more of the surrounding environment, just as this dissertation calls forth my lived histories through insertions of trips and teachers and cats.

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[2] Höffner Design Studio. (30 Sep, 2016). Meeting the earth: Installation issues with modern sculpture. Blog. Retrieved 11 Jul, 2019, from http://www.hoffnerdesignstudio.com/blog/2016/9/15/meeting-the-earth-architectural-problems-with-modernity-in-sculpture

[3] Kwon, M. (1997). One place after another: Notes on site specificity. *October, 80*, 85-111. n.p.

[4] Krauss, R. (1979). Sculpture in the expanded field. *October, 8,* 30-44. p.33
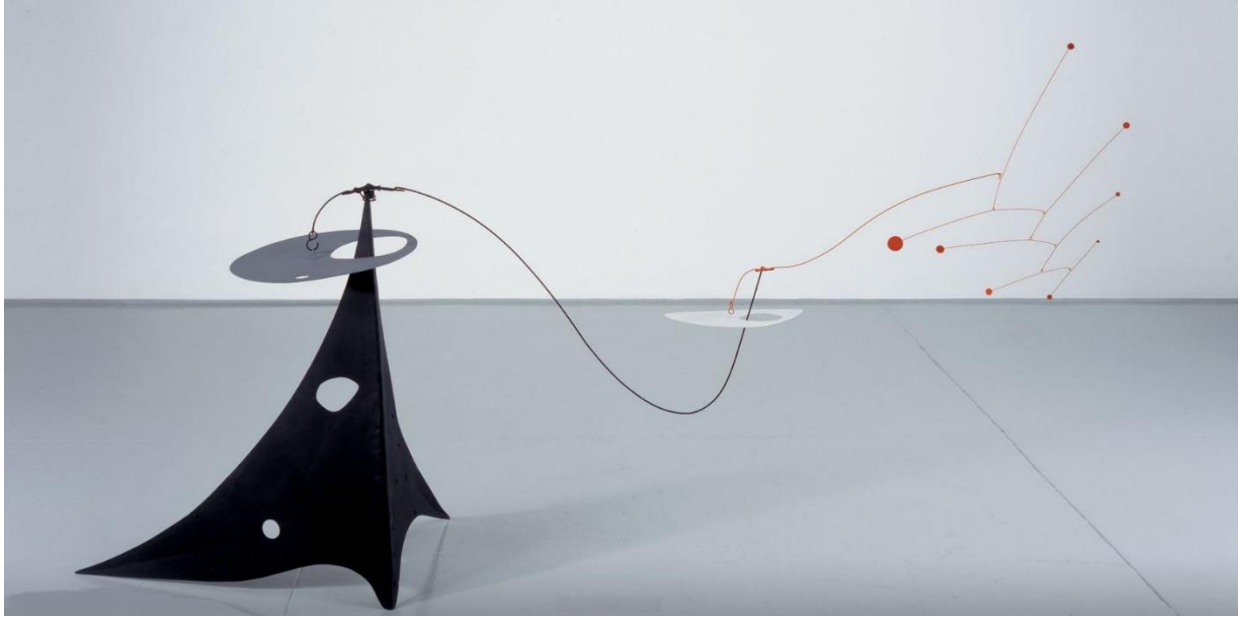
Figure 3: The extension and numerous points of elongated connection in this Calder stabile makes me think of breadth and depth: Parasite.
By Artists Rights Society (ARS), 1947. © 2020 Calder Foundation, New York / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOCAN, Montreal.

Reviewing my first mobile-making attempt is enlightening in helping me understand where I was underinformed or fell short in required tasks to enable the mobile's vast and complex range of motion. The process also conjured a less-than-literal recounting of my dissertation writing path and perplexities. In retrospect, my mobile-making failure was perhaps more fruitful because without it, I might not have found further expression of my research progress, nor would I have been prompted to explore tensions I encountered as thoroughly. Making a mobile and writing a dissertation both model for me the contradictory realization that complexity can arise out of simplicity. I recognize the adjustments I need to carry out in order to make mobiles, and this dissertation, work.

ADJUSTMENTS

   Grounding

I will attempt a mobile construction again, but use basic materials in a simple design consisting of uniform shapes and weights; only after I create a functioning mobile with these elements will I consider advanced construction. Likewise, this dissertation begins with necessary definitions and situated understandings, from which I reach out to create sophisticated and compelling arguments.

Balance

I will achieve balanced mobile arms through precise measurement, or pre-weighted shapes, or trial-and-error testing. To those ends, I reveal in the dissertation that tensions play out in exploring material objects' effects on adults' informal learning in Halifax, Nova Scotia's public place sites. These tensions are held in check by competing perspectives of function, nature, and design.

Chronology

I will explore opportunities to evoke a sense of chronological time interpolated with a mobile form, perhaps through a broader physical area, to indicate past and present layers within places' meaningful tensions. I address more fully adults' informal learning as a condition of time, and embed my own learning progressions through this research and encounters with unsatisfactory mobile-making.

Testing

I mean by testing that mobiles require monitoring during construction, to be sure that all parts hang freely, that the arms achieve equilibrium, and that movement is unencumbered to allow for interaction between the work and its environment. I will endeavour to devote more time to these adjustments. Similarly, I produce in this dissertation arguments that have their corollary, and ideas initially untested are revisited to be interrogated and revised. As I maintain: nothing of this work is steadfast; instead, it is continually repositioning itself according to the space in which it is found.

With so many considerations, any mobiles I make and the dissertation I write benefit from a compact focus on connecting pieces, weighing common forms, and overseeing the process. I feel differently about making because of discoveries around historicities and size and depth, and I intend to ground, balance, and test these ideas to produce and articulate a better sense of their complex movements.

And now I know how difficult that can be.

INFORMAL LEARNING COMPLICATIONS

As a teaching assistant for undergraduate English classes at a New Zealand university, I often thought that struggling students would benefit from a practical set of axioms to help them understand and apply principles of composition, thereby improving their textual comprehension and sensitivity to form. This holy grail-like quest ignored the intertwined effects of culture, equity, institutionalism, and so on, but I was certain that I could instill knowledge by distilling rhetoric. I told first-year students that, in order to write successful papers, all they really needed to do was to follow this basic instruction:

Discuss what makes the pattern, and what breaks the pattern.

In other words:

Explain the conventions of the genre or style, and indicate how the author observed those conventions using examples and quotations.

However, a top-notch paper demonstrates how the author flouts convention and for what reasons. By showing your command of expectations, and also how those expectations go unmet, you are simultaneously well-versed in tradition and critical of it.

Sometimes I still, when writing, whisper under my breath, "Make the pattern; break the pattern." The statement is simultaneously a reliable formula and liberating invitation in which one can bestride a horse and ride madly off in all directions. To help the reader transition between these patterns, I signify the semi-colon through Chapter 6: Interim. Prior to that chapter, I examined the appropriate disciplinary fields, amongst the literature, carefully informed by philosophical and theoretical positioning. This was the pattern that was made.

But throughout that writing, as I strove to recount systems, structures, and facts accurately that proves my understandings of the people and ideas shaping this enquiry, I have dreamed of arriving at this point: the pattern broken wide open.

I favour arts-informed research methodology's emphasis on "alignment"; 'congruent', 'coherence' and formal elements of good inquiry that 'work together in harmony'[1] are to me references to the fit of

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[1] Cole, A.L, & J.G. Knowles. (2008). Arts-informed research. In J.G. Knowles & A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* (pp. 55-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

things, a mobile in repose and a Tetris-inspired attention to alongsided ideas and techniques. They are the making of a pattern, and embrace a fit that does not preclude complications.

But moving from pattern fit to pattern fragments is not as quick as a lightswitch turned from off to on. Transitioning–in the etymological sense derived from French or Latin *transire*, 'to go across'[2]–between these discussions requires structure, language, and style changes; the actions that suit complications. To embed this transition, here I respond, through insertions, to my own informal learning insertions from Chapter 2: Informal Learning Knowledges. Thus I demonstrate complicating knowledges, arguing with, augmenting, or simply resisting my previous and perhaps unexamined learnings. Even they can benefit from deep questioning and a stronger, wider base of more recent knowledge.

Well, it's all very good
To set a birch tree on fire
(If you are lost in the woods, that is
As a beacon to indicate your location),
But what about tinderdry forests in a drought?
Would you willingly set a forest alight?
Could you–could others–could wildlife get out in time?
Whom–what–do you preserve?

In this chapter, various terminologies, historical associations, and personages contribute to an understanding of adults' informal learning, in addition to qualities of setting, autonomy, meaningfulness, and social development: these are facts, or at least beliefs communally recognized by those with in-depth knowledge of the field. This pattern is established.

But in the navigation of this research, the pattern shifts, and the mobile turns on the breeze to present a new face to the world. Ideas are reinforced, on occasion, but through a form that behaves slightly differently with / in the world surrounding it. And with that, here, the pattern

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INFORMAL LEARNING RECONSIDERED

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[2] Transire. [Origin]. (n.d.). In English Oxford Living Dictionaries. Retrieved 27 April, 2019, from
https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/transition

To interrogate concepts and offer a fuller understanding of adults' informal learning from this research, I consider a handful of areas specific to insight from participants' responses to adults' informal learning: characterizing the self, overarching conditions, and the constancy of change (or flux).

Characterizing self

The self is implicitly and explicitly found again and again in participants' comments: skills arise in conjunction with self-doubts, or failing to reach a goal results in negative self-talk, or a participant proud of his construction skills remarks ruefully that his Farm arbor model is the worst thing he has ever created. Participants were eager to speak about their own informal learning experiences, but hesitated to draw from this generalizations or assume their experiences were shared by others.

Invoking the self is key to Alexander Kapp's 1833 claims for andragogy: "education, self-reflection, and educating the character."[3] Malcolm Knowles characterizes learning maturity as the progression from a dependent state to an independent state, so that learning responsibilities move from the external other to the individual self.[4] In 1999, Livingstone observed that criteria for recognizing informal learning has occurred is determined by "self-recognition"[5] and the learner's own perceptions. The presumption of a consistent, observant, and homogeneous self is strongly woven into adults' informal learning.

What this presumption fails to account for is a constructivist sense of self: multiple, multi-layered, sometimes known and sometimes not, affected by and affecting change. To claim that informal learning is a project of the self is to assume unilateral efforts, interests, capabilities and purposes, regardless of endeavour. I recognize a number of different, uniquely positioned selves in me–after all, the cat has its nine lives for a reason–each of which has supported this work distinctly, so to lay informal learning challenges at the foot of a single entity would diminish the array of informal learning elements and dismiss the constantly emerging and receding iterations of self that manage the concerns of life.

Moreover, an autonomous self is a misnomer: feminist knowledges show us that our situatedness activates any number of power relations through our behaviours and interactions; breaking the pattern is liberatory in this regard. De-situating the self in the early 21st century is a position of privilege, and suggests it is possible not only to survive but thrive without durable ties to community and resources.

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[3] Henschke, J.A. (2016). A history of andragogy and its documents as they pertain to adult basic and literacy education. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning, 25,* 1-28. p.2

[4] Knowles, M.S. (1968). Andragogy, not pedagogy. *Adult Leadership, 16*(10), 350-352. p.43

[5] Livingstone, D. (1999). Exploring the icebergs of adult learning: Findings of the first Canadian survey of informal learning practices. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, 13*(2), 49-72. p.59

Separation like this tends to minimize others' contributions, which this research showed to be pervasive for adults' informal learning. Positing the self as a disconnected yet still somehow influential, autonomous agent of learning furthermore attenuates any factors of setting or place, such as the effect of material objects on adults' informal learning in the four Halifax sites explored in this enquiry.

Complicating understandings of self allows for two distinct claims from this research: for one, the nature of the interactions between material objects and adults in place is rendered more diverse because interacting selves are multidimensional and serve any number of different purposes or needs. Although I have indicated that material object interactions are direct, indirect, or symbolic, and therefore systematic, we bring to interactions our heterogeneous and complex selves with the capacity, therefore, to produce infinite versions of interactions.

The other reason to muddy the conceptual waters of self is because informal learning presents frightening prospects. Participants noted risks, physical and psychological, in attempting a new activity or increasing the intensity of a familiar activity. The threat posed by new information gained through informal learning poses harm to self-image in asking questions of our skills and proficiencies. An expert woodworker, for instance, struggles to understand new and different gardening practices in Canada, and an experienced kayaker encounters difficulties in building a barn door for her basement. Recognizing not a self, but selves, differently competent in more than one area, could better instill confidence in adults and manage anxieties as well as encourage them towards new activities. Adults' informal learning benefits from a self that is not always expert, but is instead variously competent, wizard, beginner, comfortable, and unsettled by turns.

Building on visions of multidimensional, sometimes unqualified selves for informal learning complicates matters. To add to these refashionings of selves, I explore one of informal learning's most commonly-accepted distinctions, self-directed learning, and trouble out its threads, too.

Self-directed learning

In self-directed learning, the concept of the self is predominant. I have contributes to this emphasis on the preceding page, but I focus my concern on the inordinate attention paid to the self compared to depictions of directedness in adults' informal learning.

Malcolm Knowles characterized the adult learner as one who is "self-directed"[6]; Daniel Schugurensky identified among his three informal learning categories one of self-directed learning, or those "'learning projects' undertaken by individuals (alone or as part of a group) without the assistance of an 'educator' (teacher, instructor, facilitator), but it can include the presence of a 'resource person.'"[7] Considerations persist even when the term has been deconstructed into its unique concerns:

> self-direction as the independent pursuit of learning opportunities without institutional support or affiliation (referred to as autodidaxy); self-direction as a way of organizing instruction (learner-control); and self-direction as a personal quality of attribute (personal autonomy). (p. 27)[8]

Even in these categories, perceptions of the self precede distinctions: self pursues opportunities, self organizes information, and self drives decision-making. The individual is centrally figured in the what and how and why of informal learning. I complicate this assurance, and so break a pattern, by refocusing attention on the direction of informal learning.

Self-directed informal learning that prioritizes direction can brandish a materially-based pathway and features (such as material objects) along the route, not just selves and their abstract cognitive formation. In this research, informal learning with direction implies movement across a space, and a heading, and bearings, thus materiality. One participant praised the Halifax Central Library's mounted screens that guide patrons to service areas and information, which provide an example of informal learning directing place. A participant drawing a map of her Nocturne experiences traced her route for viewing installations among certain streets, until "Nocturne kind of disperses into the North End." Not only is Nocturne's informal learning directed by city streets, even its dissipation occurs in physical space.

Furthermore, if directions of learning are embodied, then the metaphor of navigation and how we move through spaces is more than apt. Informal learning can be undertaken for any number of reasons: but how are these impulses towards learning directed, if not on occasion by restrictions and opportunities–access to gardening tools and resources, or the opportunity to view paintings, or an art festival known for its temporary exhibits–manifested in the physical world? This research fills that gap in understanding

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[6] Knowles, 1968

[7] Schugurensky, D. (2000). The forms of informal learning: Towards a conceptualization of the field. WALL Working Paper 19-2000. Presented at the New Approaches for Lifelong Learning (NALL) Fourth Annual Conference, October 6-8. p.3

[8] Merriam, S.B., & Caffarella, R.S. (1991). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. p.221

that self-directed informal learning efforts can be dictated by the presence of materialities in objects and places around us.

> *In the 1930s, a sales campaign began for children's clothing featuring zippers. The campaign advocated zippers as a way to promote self-reliance in young children as the devices made it possible for them to dress in self-help clothing.*[9]

This research has inspired more complicated and manifold understandings of self, its degrees of coherence, and its prominence in adults' self-directed informal learning. It makes sense, it matters, at this point to move in the direction of the ways in which the self–contradictory, enmeshed, and materially guided–identifies informal learning moments by means of intention and awareness.

Intention

In the spirit of complication, informal learning literature repeatedly stresses that intention largely determines whether informal learning has occurred[10], and that informal learning can be either intentional or unintentional. In self-directed learning, "the individual has the purpose of learning something even before the learning process begins"[11]; in this research, such examples featured reading about provenance to inform volunteer work in an art gallery, or learning about municipal off-leash dog park regulations in order to lobby for one close to a participant's home.

In contrast, Schugurensky's taxonomy acknowledges informal learning not purposefully sought as incidental learning: "The learner did not have any previous intention of learning something out of that experience, but after the experience she or he becomes aware that some learning has taken place."[12] I anticipated mostly incidental learning through this research, where participants realized information was acquired through onsite material object interactions, although that interaction was not their reason for visiting. Schugurensky himself has pointed out that learnings acquired through any of the three informal learning types "can reinforce or contradict the learnings acquired through the other two."[13] Incidental learning occurred for the participant who saw in the Farm's underused spaces the opportunity for Farm hosts to socialize and connect in a meaningful, circular arrangement; it also

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[9] Bellis, M. (28 Jan, 2019). The history of the zipper. *ThoughtCo.* Retrieved 28 April, 2019, from https://www.thoughtco.com/history-of-the-zipper-4066245

[10] Eraut, M. (2000). Non-formal learning and tacit knowledge in professional work. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 70*, 113-136. p.115

[11] Schugurensky, 2000, 3

[12] Schugurensky, 2000, 4

[13] Schugurensky, 2000, 6

occurred for the participant whose job at an art gallery provided for her a wealth of discussions related to visual arts, painting, and even colour composition. These inconsistencies reveal that intention on its own is insufficient in determining adults' informal learning.

Furthermore, if material objects in public places were to be purposefully created or installed to support adults' informal learning in a self-directed fashion, then material objects' opportunities to afford incidental learning are minimized or eradicated. Self-directed learning, intentional in nature, redirects the agency of incidental learning towards premeditation, and troubles instantaneous discovery or gradual reveal of information. Additionally, material objects germane to self-directed learning would need to be overtly indicated, which moves towards a system of formalizing learning and therefore departs substantially from informal learning. For my research, this would mean that public place visits would be accompanied by the recognition of explicit educational motives and pressures, and potentially hamper leisure pursuits by way of obligatory information transmission, like a labelled mobile instructing one as to the intention rather than the interaction. In summary, if self-directed learning is the nature of the informal learning explored here, then incidental learning through material object interactions is only a secondary outcome that may not be realized at all; but, if incidental learning makes up the character of this research's informal learning, then it is impossible for adults to choose to make use of material objects in public places through interacting with them for learning efforts. I am left with a paradox of intentionality; a broken pattern folded back on itself.

Awareness

Closely related to this dichotomy of intention are the uncertainties around awareness of informal learning. Along with intentionality, Schugurensky found awareness to be crucial in identifying adults' informal learning,[14] and he specified that this awareness (consciousness) was immediately perceived during the learning encounter. In keeping with other research findings related to adults' preference for caution, emerging understanding, progress over time, and continuous learning, Schugurensky's claims for instantaneous informal learning seem suspect, although a small number of participants did characterize adults' informal learning as epiphanic, impromptu, and instantly recognizable.

Livingstone provides a contrasting perspective for adults' informal learning awareness by degrees. Non-explicit informal learning requires new forms, different comprehension, and also a recognizable process:

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[14] Schugurensky, 2000, 3

Explicit informal learning is distinguished from everyday perceptions, general socialization and other tacit learning by peoples' conscious identification of the activity as significant learning. The important criteria that distinguish explicit informal learning are the retrospective recognition of both a new significant form of knowledge, understanding or skill acquired on one's own initiative and also recognition of the process of acquisition.[15]

Livingstone's retrospective timeframe to recognize knowledge is problematic: if recognition occurs at the end of processing acquisition, then how acquisition is transmuted into recognition, and how long that transmutation can take, is unknown. Referring to recognition as 'retrospective' allows for recent, as well as gradual, prolonged, in progress, or blocked awareness, each of which has implications for adults' informal learning. If informal learning awareness can indeed occur in stages, this makes a stronger case for material objects interactions affecting adults' informal learning in public places, since knowledge would be recognized through ongoing encounters, less self-directed and more frequently occurring incidentally, not specified within a particular timeframe.

Eraut's deliberative learning was closest to modelling my elicitation of informal learning through participants' recollections of memorable features in the study sites, but it appeared that participants did not actively set aside time to reflect on any learning that may have emerged. If the realization was not immediate, it seemed to be difficult to recall or confirm: one participant spoke of her immediate departure from a Nocturne display due to line-ups, crowds, and poorly placed installation information: "try to take from it whatever it is you immediately interpret, and carry on." Her informal learning awareness was explicit, spontaneous or as close to it as possible, and not a subject for future reflection.

Realization and reflection

The same somewhat agitated vein of multiple selves recurs in intentionality and awareness of adults' informal learning; more so is the struggle to identify the realization that informal learning has occurred. Ideally for this research, material object interactions would be evidently, intentionally responsible for participants' realizations of informal learning. Unfortunately, that explanation does not permit realization to occur anywhere besides the interaction site, which suggests a version of compartmentalized learning that does not seem to be borne out in experience (and was certainly not apparent in my slowly emerging belief that mobiles were formally appropriate for this enquiry). My second explanation consists of realization made known through a formal learning framework of critical

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[15] Livingstone, 1999, 50

thinking, problem solving, and other cognitive skills. Yet, that locates informal learning as beholden to formal education; moreover, it does not account for informal learning understandings producing skilled but unschooled craftspeople, athletes, or artists. In fact, in folk art traditions, knowledges are generally passed down, historically inscribed, along familial lines, through social gatherings or casual mentorships.

> The folk art bear witness to the powers of informal learning. Basket making, traditional singing, storytelling, wit and humor in conversation, needlework, cooking, games, and pastimes—these skills are learned in the academies of the street, home, the park, the woods. And the masters are the people rooted in community and history. They acquire their skills for the most part informally from others, and with those skills they acquire deeply felt values, standards of excellence, and a resonant sense of who they are and where they are.[16]

Formally-acquired knowledges are not the arbiters of informally-generated learning.

My preference for realization is its generation through expressive means, represented in and by arts activities or practices. This may be a chicken-and-egg scenario for realizing informal learning: since one can recall a meaningful encounter, one feels compelled to create a 3D model relating to that moment; or, because of drawing a site map and its objects, one comes to see their understanding laid out before them. This catch-22 is indicative of this research's tensions, and also positions reflection as necessary to realizing adults' informal learning, which is not a new idea but one shaped differently through an arts-informed methodological lens where accessible research representation for non-academic audiences is paramount. Adults' informal learning is capable of realization reflected in arts-informed methods, because "reflection is concerned with discerning new meanings about our everyday experiences."[17]

At this point, I both introduce and trouble Donald Schön's pertinent theory of reflection-in-action. Schön's attempt to relay how a practitioner gains awareness about their instinctive actions spurred his explorations of reflection-in-action:

> When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is

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[16] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (1983). An accessible aesthetic: The role of folk arts and the folk artist in the curriculum. Folklore: *The Journal of the New York Folklore Society, 9*(3-4), 9-18. p.1

[17] Garrick, J. (1996). Informal learning: Some underlying philosophies. *Canadian Journal for Studies in Adult Education, 10*(1), 21-46. p.31

> that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing.[18]

Schön's description is similar to some participants' experiences; one participant reasoned that in the case of informal learning, where no formal objective was to be achieved, nothing could confirm that learning had occurred. I find it interesting that Schön names this facility as an art, and one that he characterizes as inexpressibly known and deftly handled by a practitioner navigating "uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict"[19]; a description like this seems almost coincidentally similar to arts-informed research through which methodology I am navigating.

Schön posited a complementary practice in reflection-on-action, and it is subject to the same troublesome ideas of intention and awareness, and time, with which Schugurensky and Livingstone struggle; perhaps even more so, as reflection-on-action implies a constant refreshing of introspection and self-assessment. Without knowing how often, or to what extent, to reflect on one's activities, there is a danger of "infinite regress"[20] and a focus on introspective theorizing over material practice.

What reflection-on-action offers is

> an activity of reconstruction of an experience, based on what we can remember about it. It is an effort of stepping back into the experience, exploring our memory, retrieving what we remember for expressing and organizing those fragmented elements with the purpose of understanding what has happened and draw lessons from the experience.[21]

Here, of course, is the challenge of memory: a participant who regularly visits Shubie Park admitted that she is unsure whether the park registers enough on her memory to draw its features. For her, the pattern is made, and broken, continuously. If the reconstructed experience/memory one is bringing forth is faded or incomplete, and one is not onsite to interact with material objects, the reflection-on-action will be tenuous, and opportunities for adults' informal learning may be missed.

> *Now that you have an un-twisted kite string*
> *You will have to absorb*
> *The contra-indicated muscle memory*

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[18] Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York, NY: Basic Books. p.49
[19] Schön, 1983, 50
[20] Schön, 1983, 278
[21] Ferreira, S. (n.d.). Reflecting in and on action. Retrieved 29 April, 2019, from http://web.mit.edu/cil/web_scripts/www/work/Reflecting%20in%20and%20on%20Action%20CoLab.pdf p.8

Of raising your hands that makes you think
The kite will shoot up into the air
                    (ready as a |||FIREWORK|||)
Instead: hold the string taut
And push your hands _{down}

One other advantage offered by reflection-on-action is a more considered estimation of expectations. A participant who enjoys taking friends on outdoor expeditions noted that preparation and planning is useful in relaxing adults about to engage in physical activity. With expectations set up and met, the reflection-on-action process provides a frame of reference to inform a similar or subsequent encounter.

> Reflection-on-action is also a way of getting awareness of our cognitive habits and of acquiring new ones, a way of changing how we are approaching the situations, for being capable of reframing those approaches during the process of the action, increasing both our cognitive flexibility and our effectiveness when addressing complex problems, at real time and in the future.[22]

 As ever, having stated that reflection-on-action offers security through managed expectations, I confound this claim via a participant who feels keenly that the arts are a fertile source of learning and practice: "If you don't get to play with your hands, and you don't get to be a bit creative with things—if you're just doing the technical side of things and not the application/open/discovery things, you don't lead to something new. You're only going to get what you expect to get, you know? And the unexpected is where new, magical things happen." Expectations can limit the enjoyable, permissible, and potential encounters and experiences that adults may find through informal learning.

Challenges posed by reflection-on-action relate to its cycle of re-encounter: while reflection-on-action is useful in changing, reframing, and increasing our adaptability to new information and different ideas, it may be too arduous a task to affix to the often casual nature of adults' informal learning. Its emphasis on areas for improvement could generate too much pressure on a leisurely and informative endeavour. In this cycle, again, is time invoked: reflection-on-action requires at least two interactive touchpoints, the moment of activity and the reflection on that activity. But with constant re-examination of both of those situations, the perception of discovery may become ossified through over-repetition.

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[22] Ferreira, n.d., p.8

The imperatives of discovery also form the culmination of Michael Polyani's comments on tacit knowing. Polyani claimed that tacit knowing consists of sureties, or particularities, we cannot articulate plus outcomes arising from them.[23] That is, while it is difficult to identify understandings, processes or indicators of learning, we can yet generally see learning played out through acts with/in the world. Polyani recommends that "we incorporate [a thing] in our body – or extend our body to include it – so that we come to dwell in it."[24] Thus particularities are not an unreachable form of knowing; they are instead enveloped within an application of materiality entwined with what we think we know.

Polyani's arguments support this research in its clearer material depiction of informal learning through tacit knowing. In addressing particularities, we achieve total understanding featuring both the object that brings about knowing in ways we cannot say and the learning we gain from it.[25] In learning we cannot speak, borne from objects we can touch, Polyani finds an emergent paradox that is answered by dedication to discovery:

> To hold such knowledge [of an approaching discovery] is an act deeply committed to the conviction that there is something there to be discovered. It is personal, in the sense of involving the personality of him who holds it, and also in the sense of being, as a rule, solitary; but there is no trace in it of self-indulgence. The discoverer is filled with a compelling sense of responsibility for the pursuit of a hidden truth, which demands his services for revealing it.[26]

This observation moves away from reflection over time to reflection as a human imperative. Not only is adults' learning enmeshed in a practice of doing well in the world, but there may be a proviso to reflect on learning and how it is acquired, and then re-insert those understandings into the world, ecologically and intra-actively, through our duty of discovery: making the world material from its materialities; in effect, mobile-izing the world.

I have argued to this point for permutations of the self, its plural and situated positionalities and dominance over directed learning; I have also argued for conscious and recognized informal learning, and how artful representation may be the recourse for it; for reflection-in- and -on-action as worldbeing

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[23] Polyani, M. (1966). *The tacit dimension*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc. p.9
[24] Polyani, 1966, 16
[25] Polyani, 1966, 24
[26] Polyani, 1966, 25

and worldbelieving; and, for discovery of the materialities of learning as discovery. I am making new patterns for the breaking.

It's never okay to stop listening,
but it's okay to take up space
to speak
for
yourself.

From the prismatic colours and shapes of legion selves, the mobile-ities of selfhood, I now turn to the complicating overarching conditions that affect adults' informal learning. Putting forth conditions of adults' informal learning seems dangerously close to evaluation; however, I can at least comment on the circumstances indicated by this research that make adults' informal learning possible. These consist of comfort and safety, engagement, and experiences.

OVERARCHING CONDITIONS

    Comfort and safety

The first of these conditions, a desire for comfort, surprised me not only because it was unanticipated, but because the findings revealed it to be a widely-held concern. Adults' impressions of their material object interactions in this research emphatically and frequently invoked a desire for physical comfort:

> I'd look for comfort, like, being able to sit down or walk around…

> Lots of other buildings that are being constructed are multi-level, lots of natural light, they're multi-use, so those things really help making you feel comfortable.

> I think people will be more willing to go and participate when the environment is nice and comfortable and beautiful.

> I love the style of the [Halifax Central Library] building, I love the open spaces inside, and I just feel so comfortable and happy being there, you know?

> In the [Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm], it was really comfortable having all these people around, having the same interest, and being generous. Some of them would come up to you and say, 'Here, I have too many tomatoes today; please take them'—

I was unsure whether these interpretations were more appropriately the domain of social interactions. Being comfortable in a public place may show an outgoing personality, a strong social network, performative aspects, or some other immaterial (in this research's constructs) quality. But two arguments made me reconsider, and have reinforced the point that comfort is important in a physical dimension to support adults' informal learning.

The first is that earlier writing on adults' informal learning distinguished settings from its other traits. For instance, Knowles' list of adult learning conditions stipulates that "the learning environment is characterized by physical comfort"[27], separating feelings of trust, respect, and freedom of expression from the space in which they appeared. Additionally, as I noted in Chapter 2: Informal Learning Knowledges, early attempts at systematic understanding of adults' leisure activities bore in mind their locations: lyceums, libraries, museums, clubs[28]; churches, cinemas, concert rooms, and "in the homes of the people where there are books, newspapers, music, wireless sets, workshops, gardens…"[29] Environments, and their emplaced objects, where adults' informal learning was celebrated has been differentiated from informal learning issues and perceptions; the legacy of comfort in relation to learning, therefore, includes external physical sensations in addition to social factors.

The other point that resolved the question of comfort as materially-induced is brought about by extending the lines of comfort into more urgent territory of personal safety and security. Participants in this research referred to their need to feel free from harm in a public place because only then were they certain of their safety and able to relax to a point of taking in new information from their surroundings.

> You can enjoy [Shubie Park] on a different level because you're not wondering if this is safe or should I go down his trail or where does that take you, because none of those things matter because you just know.

> And I've never thought of that [Victoria Park Nocturne site] as something that's public, in a way, because it doesn't seem like a safe space all the time.

> In a place, in a public place, where I would feel comfortable, I would like to be safe; safety is important.

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[27] Knowles, M. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy.* Rev. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge-Prentice Hall. p.57

[28] Courtney, S. (1989). Defining adult and continuing education. In S. B. Merriam & P. M. Cunningham (Eds.), *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* (pp.15-25). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. p.16

[29] Yeaxlee, B.A. (1929). *Lifelong education.* London, UK: Cassell. p.155

According to participants, features and objects in public places contributing to a feeling of safety include signage or maps, direction signs, and information signs useful for orientation; bright or natural lights; open spaces in contrast to cramped or crowded sites; and, an approximately equal distribution of men and women. The material world can impair a sense of comfort and safety, yet also provide interactions for informal learning; it is simultaneously threat and reward, and one of the overarching conditions that allows adults' informal learning to occur.

Adults' comfort and safety in public places, or perceptions of these, seems as though it must be ensured to permit any interactions immediately or later resulting in adults' informal learning. Partaking in these interactions is a willingness to engage, and so I posit that adults must be engaged in order to become open to informal learning in public places.

Engagement

By engagement, I mean that the adult is in some manner involved with the information being acquired: "Knowing is a matter of participating in the pursuit of such enterprises [as singing in tune, discovering scientific facts, fixing machines, writing poetry…], that is, of active engagement in the world."[30] John Dewey wrote in 1916 that "To realize what an experience, or empirical situation, means, we have to call to mind the sort of situation that presents itself outside of school; the sort of occupations that interest and engage activity in ordinary life."[31] Put simply, engagement can refer to mindful presence, such as asking a reader "to participate in the enjoyable act of interpreting the meaning of things."[32] Engagement is a slightly unusual section in this chapter, as it is neither particularly difficult to grasp nor inherently contradictory and so may seem misplaced under the heading 'complications.' But it is the underexplored capacity of engagement to be realized materially for informal learning purposes that is fruitful for this research. One participant favours opportunities to engage as a more authentic means of participation:

> if you're just sitting in one of these municipal-led [or] provincial-led community information
> sessions, and somebody's talking at you and showing you slides, and you're politely
> nodding and taking in some of the information and wishing you were someplace else half
> the time–but then they put the map down in front of you of a place that you care about or

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[30] Wenger, E. (2009). A social theory of learning. In K. Illeris (Ed.), *Contemporary theories of learning* (pp. 238-248). London: Routledge. p.240

[31] Dewey, (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education.* New York, NY: Macmillan. p.181

[32] Glenn, J. & Hayes, C. (2007). *Taking things seriously: 75 objects with unexpected significance.* New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press. p.18

> *are* interested in, I will write or doodle or make comments, or point out things on a piece
> of paper that's in front of me.

Participants have variously referred to the visual arts as sparking their interest in a topic, and to asking questions of a well-known and therefore safe acquaintance, and to finding painting or repurposed buildings that generate a sense of fun for the area. Adults' informal learning therefore consists of engagement in one or more of its forms, such as displays of interest, participation, self-directed learning, and interest in one's surroundings; throughout all of these, a material component helps initiate the learning, continue it by way of ongoing resources, or reflect on the knowledge through memory or sense-recall. For these reasons, and that participants described their engagement frequently in connection with material objects, engagement is appropriate in a chapter addressing the complications of adults' informal learning.

Resonance exists, too, in engagement as a completion of art. In the late 1960s, international artists formed the group GRAV, which refigured objects as fulfilled only through the eye of the spectator[33], and included kinetic works taking shape as interactive games: "The interactivity of their art constituted so many attempts to transform habitual passive observation of the world into a more active engagement."[34] In their 1963 manifesto, GRAV demanded

<div align="center">

IT IS FORBIDDEN NOT TO PARTICIPATE

IT IS FORBIDDEN NOT TO TOUCH

IT IS FORBIDDEN NOT TO BREAK [THE WORK][35]

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Thus does engagement with kinetic art most thoroughly fulfill meaning through interaction; a pattern deconstructed to deliver realization.

When I began to develop this research, I described the interplay between adults and objects as 'relationships.' My supervisor at that time suggested that relationships tended to infer social bonds, whereas I was developing an enquiry into material object impacts more appropriately referred to as 'interactions.' While my focus is now on material object interactions throughout this research, I see

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[33] Busbea, L. (2013). Kineticism-spectacle-environment.* *October, 144,* 92-114. p.98
[34] Busbea, 2013, 99
[35] Busbea, 2013, 99

through its findings that engagement is a new materialist intra-activity implying reciprocity and connection, carried out through social entwinings as well as involvement with the material world.

My cats' sleeping postures reflect their state of contentment:

when the orange one sits with her nose pointed down, she is somewhat upset but handling it by disappearing into the nap/abyss;

when the dune-coloured tabby rests her chin on a blanket to stretch her neck upward, she is playfully relaxed, skirting over the sleep-surface and in general more kittenesque than when she is awake

and

slightly disappointed by most things I do.

Experience

The final condition guiding adults' informal learning in this research is experience, which is difficult to extract from learning in adults generally. Experiential learning, a cycle of encounter, reflection, conceptualization, and application credited to David Kolb, is aligned with this research through several equivalent stages: a constructivist perspective, understanding learning as an ongoing process, an incident for investigation known as a concrete experience, the opportunity for interaction and reflection, and knowledge creation after learning has occurred.[36] Where I differ from Kolb is in taking literally the meaning of an inciting incident as a 'concrete experience', through which adults may "involve themselves fully, openly, and without bias in new experiences"[37] reflected upon, conceptualized, and applied. If material object interaction is the concrete experience, then experiential learning is necessarily grounded in materiality, just as Polyani indicates that discovery is a revelation of and reintroduction to materiality.

Experience is an overarching condition for adults' informal learning because of its ecologically interconnected spheres of personal relationships and settings, professional relationships and settings, encounters, knowledges, skills, values, and behaviours: "the interaction of live creature and environing conditions is involved in the very process of living. . . .Things are experienced but not in such a way that

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[36] Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
[37] Kolb, 1984, 30

they are composed into *an* experience. There is distraction and dispersion; what we observe and what we think, what we desire and what we get, are at odds with each other."[38] Our experiences may demonstrate tensions, conflict with our expectations, be marred by memories of other unsatisfying encounters, and so on; the ordinariness of experiences does not prevent them from being fraught.

Experience, furthermore, does not remedy learning deficit with regard to material objects. We have not been taught how to apply understandings from our interactions with the material world, but instead abstract, rationalize, cognate and think of our encounters; we have not been given instruction in how to display this knowledge as sensate, physical, affective and somatic. In some ways, this inability is hinted at through public place design: one participant found the Halifax Central Library "all set up for purposes of learning different than many of our older libraries, how they had it all laid out, not makeshift, because a lot of libraries you go into are in a building that wasn't specifically for learning or for books or for any other programs that libraries do." She perceived that the physical library building was contributing to learning through its purposeful spaces and architecture of stacked books for the library floors.

Since we do not come to adulthood with a deep and rich material framework through which the possibilities of material objects for learning are afforded, we are left with mental structures that dominate thinking about information as opposed to actualizing information, as one participant found: "There's definitely value in showing the physical attributes of [the Farm], because it makes me think about what I physically enjoyed about it. Other than the assets of the people working there, or tools and things like that, but to think about how the space is laid out definitely influences learning for me." This research shows that embodied understandings are a significant source of wisdom, but without learning how to recognize and apply material understandings, experience becomes memories limited to review within a cognitive framework; hence, I take at face value Kolb's 'concrete experience' to kindle learning.

The capacity for degrees of comfort and safety, and engagement with the physical location of a learning encounter, and the experiences informing material object interactions are the overarching conditions revealed by this research for material object effects on adults' informal learning in public place sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. These conditions are united by their complications for adults' informal learning, and their attributes constantly in shift. Whether study sites, multiplicities of selves, or mobile

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[38] Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York, NY: Minton, Balch & Company. n.p.

movements: this research begets constant and ongoing change. I have referred to change as new knowledges; now, too, it is the capacity to be open to different understandings while on moving ground.

INHERENT FLUX

As the final section on adults' informal learning complications shown by this research, fluctuations may almost be taken for granted, since prior to this chapter, I made mention of ongoing tensions found within and across the function, nature, and design of this enquiry's sites. I want to emphasize fluctuations in adults' informal learning because a constructivist perspective is concomitant with changing learning circumstances, and because mutable information is always open to re-examination and reconnection, in which case, as I hope, this research would be part of a living, growing investigation into the sensuous world. The three observations I make about adults' informal learning in flux in this research are as follows: historical socially progressive adult learning qualities depict flux; intention bears revisiting as a counfounding factor in adults' informal learning; and, facets of transformative learning contribute in degrees to adults' informal learning brought about through material object interactions.

Historical social progressivism

In Chapter 2: Informal Learning Knowledges, I wrote that points of resonance between John Dewey and this research are the legitimizing of experience and engagement, and the significance of a developing and inquisitive adult, which both contribute to the production of better conditions for society. Recognizing that change is beneficial to learning, in 1922, Dewey wrote an educational reform article in which he suggested that bridge engineering could be improved because the practice was based in thinking and therefore receptive to change, whereas education was mired in habitual process and therefore less likely to shift or be shifted:

> Too much of what is called educational science and art only perpetuate a régime of wont and use by pretending to give scientific guidance and guarantees in advance. There is in existence knowledge which gives a compass to those who enter on the uncharted seas, but only a stupid insincerity will claim that a compass is a chart. The call is to the creative adventurous mind.[39]

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[39] Dewey, J. (1922/2009). Education as engineering. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 41*(1), 1-5. doi: 10.1080/00220270802169345. p.5

Dewey saw change as instrumental for moving knowledge ahead: malleable thinking is not a relativistically flawed, but a vital component that invigorates understanding.

Which, unfortunately, may mean that contradictions and complications are productive, yet ultimately un-locatable for this research. That is, if adults' informal learning is a concept constantly growing and adjusting, I am ineffectually attempting to clarify and locate a process that is heterogeneous and in motion. Despite my careful efforts to avoid locking in adults' informal learning through this research, I do want to know what open door I am entering.

Man, you look like a goon if you miss your opponent with your uppercut:
You have to get the right balance of
Being close enough to reach their chin with only half the normal length of your arm, and
Being distant enough to extend your elbow so that the full force of the blow registers.
Man, you look like a goon if you miss.
There's something soooooo frustrating

About punching   air.

If adults' informal learning is ever undergoing reshaping, as are the sites in which occur material object interactions, then versions of plans to accommodate this must be equally fluctuating, or so prolific as to resemble sand grains on a beach. It is equally incompatible to imagine that an approach to adults' informal learning and the effects of material object interactions in public places rests on the final outcome; throughout this work, there has been a growing indication that its elements are buoyed by the exploratory capacities of practice rather than product.

Re:intention

A second type of fluctuating complication emerges when I return to intention and its movement towards learning purpose. Earlier in this chapter I referred to the impasse between self-directed (intentional) learning or incidental (unintentional) learning. Eraut, who uses the term 'planned' rather than 'intention' but synonymously, I believe, for anticipating learning, sees room in an emergent strategy for both types, based on Tough's 1971 findings about adults' informal learning projects: "using an emergent strategy for defining goals need not prevent a deliberative rather than reactive approach . . . . . *Eighty per cent* [of those surveyed] followed an emergent strategy which took advantage of learning opportunities as they arose: the intent and the learning activity were deliberative, but the recognition of

learning opportunities was reactive."[40] Adults' informal learning can be planned, but only in the moment confirmed as such, so that intention and reaction or response together are essential for realizing learning. Incipient change underpinning emergent perspectives can afford both forms of intentional and unintentional learning. Freed from questions of premeditation, adults' informal learning is permanently under re-construction, consequently and paradoxically enshrining flux in its composition.

Transformative learning

I contextualize a final complication in flux in relation to transformative learning, a theory of significant paradigm shifts, or what Jack Mezirow refers to as a "change in a *frame of reference*"[41], in an adult's life:

> Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience—associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life world. Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings . . . . When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience.[42]

Frames of reference rarely change, to the extent that Mezirow limits instances to major life transitions involving a "disorienting dilemma–a divorce, death of a loved one, change in job status, retirement"[43] or other metamorphosis. I do not anticipate material object interactions to produce anxieties on a par with disorientation, certainly not to the degree Mezirow emphasizes. Therefore, despite change as a fundamental component, transformative learning does not deeply reflect this research.

Yet: I do see a strand of thought connecting participant comments about reinvention that may invoke transformation, although remarks pertained to places undergoing a change in scenery or purpose:

> it's good that Halifax has the ability to reinvent that space [for Nocturne], and I think that that has to happen more often.

> I would piggyback off of Common Roots in terms of my favourite space–it opened up things in terms of a new activity and then also building those social networks and seeing a space

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[40] Eraut, 2000, 116
[41] Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education, 74*, 5-12. p.5
[42] Mezirow, 1997, 5
[43] Mezirow, J. (1990). *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. n.p.

that I was familiar with [being] reinvented? Because I remember when [the site was] the

old [Queen Elizabeth High School]…

It is interesting to speculate whether place can be 'reinvented' like an adult's learning experience can be transformative. Was the Farm's relocation similar to a transformation? Are the different installations of Nocturne transformative for Halifax city streets? These inquiries are more suited to the following chapter exploring the significance of public places.

I raise a related point of fluctuation, more so in the realm of speculation than realization. This shift in perception, which is a phrase I prefer here to Mezirow's frame of reference, to my learning came about from viewing the collection of participants' hand-drawn images standing for study sites' material objects. With this single picture made up of smaller images, I started to think differently about artifacts, and about research data. I noticed that representations of qualitative research can look incomprehensible, but nonetheless compelling and full of meaning. I began to understand research process differently, so that inspiration and wonderment propagate findings and conclusions.

I saw–I see–in them the audacity of new knowings.

I have framed and contextualized and affirmed these hand-drawn shapes in this work, supported by literature and participant commentary and insight, but they continue to resist explanation. What I can confirm is that they are resonant for the ways that I learn, not all of which I fully understand, even now. They have shifted my perceptions about evidence, about impact, and about potential, so that my learning is transformed by them, but into what, I struggle to say: the flux in me prevents a final answer.

I recognized at the start of this research that finding ways to address the sheer diversity of adults' informal learning pursuits was futile, but I did not expect that adults' informal learning would nevertheless be just as fragmentary, oppositional, and polyepistemological as its activities.

> *Earphones give you sounds*
> *to block out other sounds.*
> *Can sounds be s e p a r a t e d*
> > *like   that?*

Attempts in adults' informal learning to characterize the self, to identify overarching conditions, and to navigate flux produce variations and contradictions that deepen the layers of this research. What can

bear further scrutiny are the material objects that function to foster adults' informal learning; the next discussion addresses material objects in theoretical frameworks of ecologies and new materialisms in order to illuminate adults' informal learning in this research.

MATERIAL OBJECTS' FUNCTIONALITIES

In Chapter 2: Informal Learning Knowledges, I classified material object interactions as direct, indirect, and symbolic. Indirect material object interactions risk limiting affordances and therefore informal learning opportunities:

> [In Shubie Park] the dock itself [and] how it's positioned makes it easy for people learning not to feel like they're going to flip the boat on their first time in. If somebody doesn't want to get their feet wet, or doesn't want to flip, you can just literally put the boat in beside the dock and then learn how to paddle from there

> Art can be a tool, you know? Like, you might have gone through this painting, and it's a terrible painting, but you learn something about the way you used colour, or the way you applied paint, or the way you used a line, that you might not have gotten to if you were just trying to make something look nice.

Material objects that facilitate learning can be hampered by limiting their usefulness to tools or resources for other pursuits:

> the mass-produced artifacts of civilization, from milk cartons to washing machines to computers, draw our sense into a dance that endlessly reiterates itself *without variation*. To the sensing body these artifacts are, like all phenomena, animate and even alive, but their life is profoundly constrained by the specific 'functions' for which they were built.[44]

The Shubie Park dock is only capable of easing beginner kayakers into the water, or a painting is only ever a product. Casting material objects as intermediaries for knowledge production eradicates their own enmeshed possibilities for meaning. Yet, pragmatically, this presents problems: public places

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[44] Abram, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more-than-human world.* New York, NY: Vintage Books. p.64

cannot be furnished wholly with intermediary material objects always already meant to fulfill a secondary purpose, otherwise public place sites would begin to look alarmingly abstract.

Furthermore, material objects serving other goals of learning diminishes the capacity for imaginative use, for play-like discoveries of material objects themselves: "imagination is not a separate mental faculty (as we so often assume) but is rather the way the senses themselves have of throwing themselves beyond what is immediately given."[45] Dewey and Polyani espouse exploration as a vital learning force; I have no wish to interrupt such an ecologically aligned process by limiting a material object to its predetermined usefulness for another endeavour.

If the material objects in public places can fulfill more than one function to serve adults' informal learning–which I believe is possible, provided that their role to administer adults' informal learning activities is regarded equitably with their potential to afford new interaction opportunities–I am moving towards using a "genuinely ecological approach [that] does not work to attain a mentally envisioned future, but strives to enter, ever more deeply, into the sensorial present."[46]

Ecologies

The way in which I draw on ecological theory to model interactions in this research is seen in areas related to business relationships[47], health prevention[48], writing skills[49], and other fields of study. For this research, however, ecological theory is relevant conceptually, as well as formally. By that, I mean we can see in the connected layers of a mobile form that one arm is carefully balanced by the weight and support of arms above and below, and moves about by the weight of the shapes hanging from them.

Ecological theory understands systems comprising connections, so my use here is to re-emphasize the entwined elements of material objects as tied to adults' informal learning. Ecological theory lends itself to this research as an analogy for affect, demonstrating the impact of enjoined people and space and resources and environment:

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[45] Abram, 1996, 58
[46] Abram 1996, 272
[47] Musgrave, J., & Woodward, S. (2016). Ecological systems theory approach to corporate social responsibility: Contextual perspectives from meeting planners. *Event Management, 20,* 365-381.
[48] National Institutes of Health. (n.d.). Social and behavioral theories. Retrieved 2 May, 2019, from http://www.esourceresearch.org/Default.aspx?TabId=736
[49] Smidt, J. (2009). Developing discourse roles and positionings–an ecological theory of writing development. In R. Beard, D. Myhill, M. Nystrand, & J. Riley (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of writing development* (pp. 117-125). London, UK: Sage Publications.

> [Ecology] sees the balance and integrity of the biosphere as an end in itself. Natural
>
> diversity is to be cultivated not only because the more diversified the components that
>
> make up an ecosystem, the more stable the ecosystem, but diversity is desirable for its own
>
> sake, a value to be cherished as part of a spiritized notion of the living universe. Ecologists
>
> have already pointed out that the more simplified an ecosystem – as in arctic and desert
>
> biomes or in monocultural forms of food cultivation – the more fragile the ecosystem and
>
> more prone it is to instability, pest infestations, and possible catastrophes.[50]

But, as with other complicating factors, a paradox emerges in using ecological theory to account for

interactions between material objects and adults in public places. Although interactions offer new

pathways for knowledge, greater efficacy, and applications across scenarios, all of which demonstrate

'desirable diversity', they do hinder efforts to assign unique characteristics to one element, such as a

group of material objects. I want this option to be available, so that material objects' specificities are

celebrated as much as they contribute *en masse* to adults' informal learning.

Ecological theory, to this research, is a process for ideas operating in conjunction with one another,

whether through connections between people and the world or artistic forms. But this enquiry is

substantially based in materiality, which I want to show; to this end, new materialisms help reconfigure

material objects as affecting the world with their presences, and manifest in this research as specific

shapes formed into a mobile.

New materialisms

The most salient definition for new materialisms I have found conjures up discovery and possibility in

mutual affect: "By rejecting a distinction between the physical world and the social constructs of human

thoughts, meanings and desires, new materialism opens up the possibility to explore how each affects

the other, and how things other than humans (for instance, a tool, a technology or a building) can be

social 'agents', making things happen."[51] This 'agent' role helps designate material objects as capable of

generating and fulfilling interactions, whether directly, indirectly, or symbolically.

Adults experience materialities differently. In this research, although I resist generalizations as much as I

can, I recognize that I presume an identical capacity for interacting with material objects. This is too-

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[50] Bookchin, M. (1980). *Toward an ecological society*. Montréal, QC: Black Rose Books. p.59

[51] Fox, N.J., & Alldred, P. (2018). New materialism. In P.A. Atkinson, S. Delamont, M.A. Hardy, M.A. & M. Williams (Eds.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of research methods*. London, UK: Sage. p.3

tightly-woven a pattern, since these interactions can be substantially different for people who are differently abled, or who have sensory processing challenges, or whose resonances with encounters in the world are elsewise understood. One participant believes the Farm's founders and managers are inseparable from the earth they work: "That's not how Jayme and Sarah think, you know? These guys, they are–special people. They want to be there with the soil; if they had their choice, they would probably have their feet inside the beds." More options for interactions unfold in adults' multiple selves and differing interaction types, such as tactility, observation, reading, climbing, lighting, relocating, etc., so that more complicated adults' informal learning occurs.

I can't remember when it first came to me,

The idea that my deceased mother and father were

From some other ether

Sending me a dime to find on the ground

To let me know they were thinking of me,

But everytime I pick up a dime,

I smile.

(Maybe this is the opposite of a complication…)

The other major responsibility I assign to new materialisms in this research is in mobile forms, which depict intertwined meaning and matter through movement and material design, perhaps, even, how that movement and design is interpreted within space:

> "How can we visually formalize, once and for all, that thing which is defined only on the basis of placement changes in a given space?" . . . In order to get a progressively more perfect and accurate image of movement, artists have looked for the most appropriated poses and foreshortening, those ones able to suggest the successive stages of a temporal development–we can remember, for example, the classic by Myron: *Discobolus* or *The Dance* by Matisse. However, the maximum movement expression in art is presented when the work moves itself, when real mobility is inherent in the piece; this means: when art is mobile itself, then representing movement becomes presenting movement itself.[52]

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[52] Herranz-Pascual, Y., Pastor-Bravo, J. & Moldes, B.-R. (2013). Representing the movement / presenting the movable. *Arte, Individuo y Sociedad, 25*(3), 459-477. pp.460-461.

In artistic terms, it appears that art representing movement changes its state (or perhaps even trans-forms it) to wholly/only movement; this superposition of a mobile moved by its interaction with the world is that new materialist effect where the former distinctions of ontology and epistemology elide– the mobile is itself a world inasmuch as it is a representation of it. Like a trace uncaptured by the naked eye, "a mobile in motion leaves an invisible wake behind it."[53] This is a symbiosis that goes beyond materiality to a 'more-than-human' imperative: for mobiles, as for humanity, "it is the air that most directly envelops us; the air, in other words, is that element that we are most intimately *in.* As long as we experience the invisible depths that surround us as empty space, we will be able to deny, or repress, our thorough interdependence with the other animals, the plants, and the living land that sustains us." Perhaps this sensibility can be added to the ways in which research findings in an arts-informed research methodology have form: they are enmeshed, as a more holistic grasp of the sensate world could be, within the conditions surrounding a perceptibly simple mobile shape.

The cumulative effects of these complications are showing patterns are moving beyond breakage to disintegration. Amongst the competing functionalities of material objects as indirect and so resistant to discovery, to ecological overlap dissembling unique material object attributes, to different encounters with material objects, and finally intra-active mobile forms and world representations, material object functions extend beyond the boundaries of the places in which they are found: "The tree trunk of the telephone pole, the clay of the bricks from which the building is fashioned, the smooth metal alloy of the car door we lean against – all these still carry, like our bodies, the textures and rhythms of a pattern that we ourselves did not devise, and their quiet dynamism responds directly to our senses."[54]

Which brings me to a discussion of affinities of place with adults' informal learning–where I stop short.

As yet I have not explored a like chapter of complications pertaining to public place; that investigation into public places' and Halifax sites' inconsistencies is the basis of the following chapter. And so, I halt that examination for now, instead commenting only on one possibility offered by their connection: informal learning in place as a form of geographical knowing.

INFORMAL LEARNING~GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWING

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[53] Malloy, V.V. (2012). Rethinking Alexander Calder's universes and mobiles: The influences of Einsteinian physics and modern astronomy. *Immediations, 3*(1), 1-18. p.17
[54] Abram, 1996, 64

I considered sharing the results of this research with and in the communities from which it has grown through a Jane's Walk, part of

> a movement of free, citizen-led walking conversations inspired by Jane Jacobs. It encourages people to share stories about their neighbourhoods, discover unseen aspects of their communities, and use walking as a way to connect with their neighbours.[55]

Jacobs was an influential urban activist who "introduced ground-breaking ideas about how cities function, evolve, and fail that have become commonsense cannon [sic] for today's architects, planners, policymakers, activists, and other city builders."[56] What appeals to me about Jacobs' work, and writing by cultural geographers like Tim Ingold and Doreen Massey, is that walking becomes acts of knowing.

Ingold intuits this entanglement as embodied understandings of gait and geography:

> Walking along, then, is not the behavioural output of a mind encased within a pedestrian body. It is rather, in itself, a way of thinking and knowing … Like the dancer, the walker is thinking in movement. . . .The motional thought, however, runs along the ground. Thus the complex surface of the ground is inextricably caught up in the very process of thinking and knowing.[57]

Formal education is slowly catching up to this insight; qualitative researchers now explore new materialist possibilities for walking to elicit participant information: "It seems intuitively sensible for researchers to ask interviewees to talk about the places that they are interested in while they are in that place."[58] Authors Truman and Springgay make the case for walking as proposition: "De-familiarization shifts the practice of walking from humanist ethnographic orientations—such as lines, points, place names—to one in which the categorical divide between body/place, human/nature is displaced with a new kind of radical transversal relation that generates new modes of subjectivity"[59]; these ideas are traceable to de Certeau's version of a city generated and known by the act of walking within it.

Which is not to claim that that same ground is undisputed or even level. I began these complications by examining the self, and from there moved to outlining the overarching conditions of adults' informal

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[55] Jane's Walk. (2019-a.). About Jane's Walk. Retrieved 2 May, 2019, from https://janeswalk.org/about/

[56] Jane's Walk. (2019-b.). About Jane Jacobs. Retrieved 2 May, 2019, from http://janeswalk.org/about/about-jane-jacobs/

[57] Ingold, T. (2010). Footprints through the weather-world: Walking, breathing, knowing. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 16*, S121-S139. p.S135

[58] Evans, J., & Jones, P. (2011). The walking interview: Methodology, mobility and place. *Applied Geography, 31*, 849-858. p.849

[59] Truman, S., & Springgay, S. (2016). Propositions for walking research. In P. Burnard, E. Mackinlay, & K. Powell (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of intercultural arts research* (pp. 259-267). London, UK: Routledge. p.261

learning, and then to inspecting acts of flux characterizing this research, followed by the changing functionalities of material objects and on to informal learning grounded through geography. These complications are more than sufficient to fathom the complexities of this enquiry, but beyond the reach of this research lie other political, cultural, and economic development spheres of influence that continue to break adults' informal learning patterns.

POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEARNING

    Political development

The 1920s Antigonish movement in Canada was organized by labourers seeking better rural living and working conditions. Moses Coady and Father Jimmy Tompkins were well known to Cape Breton farmers and fishermen in establishing classes and co-operative businesses so that workers and small business owners could better understand their industries: "In addition to their daily occupations, the people must put in extra work on a program of study and enlightenment in order that they may create the institutions that will enable them to obtain control of the instruments of production."[60] The Antigonish Movement was borne out of a desire for knowledge in the hands of learners who celebrated and shared it, and resistance to unfair labour practices that constrained and diminished workers' contributions.

The Antigonish Movement and other social activist organizations across Canada in the early twentieth century largely consisted of grassroots attempts to develop non-institutional forms of learning and information-sharing; Coady remains a "formidable opponent of the soul- and body-destroying power of the capitalist mode of production. He actually dared to believe that ordinary, sometimes illiterate, people had the capacity to run their own enterprises."[61] This political theme–of practical solutions to problems "meaningful to the people's personal and collective lives"[62]–still resonates strongly in adults' informal learning, and enriches entwined social progressivist contracts and industrial production practices that are still felt in the cultural and economic concerns of adults' informal learning to this day.

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[60] Coady, M.M. (1939). *Masters of their own destiny: The story of the Antigonish movement of adult education through economic cooperation.* New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers. pp.17-18

[61] Welton, M.R. (2006). Intimations of a just learning society: From the United Farmers of Alberta to Henson's provincial plan in Nova Scotia. In T.J. Fenwick, T. Nesbit, & B. Spencer (Eds.), *Contexts of Adult Education: Canadian Perspectives* (pp.24-35). Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing Inc. p.24

[62] Terry, M. (2001). Philosophies of adult education movements in 20th century Canada: Implications for current literacy educators. *Canadian Journal for Studies in Adult Education, 15*(2), 61-78. p.72

Cultural development

Coady and other activists recognized adults' various backgrounds and approaches to learning, laying a foundation for embracing cultural diversity. Public places are open to visitors from all backgrounds and their lived experiences, traditions, and beliefs. At times, navigating these differences amongst adults' informal learning in public places may prove particularly challenging: one participant who emigrated to Canada and then joined the Farm in Halifax encountered such hardships.

> I got involved in a few activities and workshops, and then I started learning how–or what to do and what not to do, and how to say things, and when to say them, and oooh, that was a very good, very steep, learning curve. Right now, I'm being always very careful what I say; this is not me [*general laughter*]. But, I did learn a lot of things that I wasn't aware of: how to interact and what is it that I'm not expected to say or do, you know?

The same participant was careful in choosing his words during the interview: "[*Long pause*] I come from a different culture; my impressions, or my thoughts, might not be, um, what you're used to in Canada. [*pause*] So you have to keep this in mind."

I wondered if participants would call forth the substantive cultural history of Mi'kma'ki people in Nova Scotia, but this was the only response noting the Mi'kmaq Friendship Circle painted on the Halifax Central Library's third floor:

> There's also the Mi'kmaq Friendship Circle there, so you know they've thought about a community, not just the area that they're putting [the building] in, but the people who were here before us and who are still here.

Another participant made a reference to the interpretive centre in Shubie Park that houses the history of the Shubenacadie Canal and its Mi'kmaq origins, but there were no other mentions of Mi'kmaq peoples or Mi'kma'ki, "the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People."[63] The extent to which adults endeavour to learn about different cultures is not encompassed in this research, but entrenching those enquiries in public place sites offers undoubtedly rich areas for further exploration.

> *If the hand over your heart is cold*
> *It can take a while to warm up.*

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[63] Canadian Association of University Teachers. (2017, September). *CAUT Guide to Acknowledging First Peoples & Traditional Territory*. Retrieved 3 May, 2019, from https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/caut-guide-to-acknowledging-first-peoples-and-traditional-territory-2017-09.pdf

hand&heart.

Economic development

Economic inequalities of culturally diverse or oppressed populations are still evident in adults' informal learning. Whether through a lack of access to resources, language or literacy obstacles, expensive digital technologies or other economic barriers, these challenges generally overlap with one another or other political or cultural considerations such as stigma, profiling, housing and food insecurity, and so on, limiting economic development for marginalized populations.

The other substantial economic challenge to adults' informal learning is the tendency to recognize only formal licenses or credentials. Whereas formal education provides verification of learning in degree, diploma, or certificate form, adults' informal learning has no structure reflecting expertise, vocational skills, cognitive abilities, or professional experience. This limits wages and promotional opportunities. Many researchers have written about workplace informal learning[64, 65, 66], but struggle to identify a widely-adopted means of incorporating informal learning into professional capacity.

The political, cultural, and economic development of adults' informal learning highlights the effects of policies, regulations, and behaviours that can modify material object interactions in public places, as was shown sporadically throughout Chapter 5: Study Sites' Material Objects. Adults' informal learning is again complicated, and inextricably bound up with a handful of concurrent spheres of influence.

I've never minded reading
A waterlogged book
(Other than it wont lay flat–Flat! Geez–)
The words don't need to be dry
to work…

That interlacing enfolds what I find is the last complication of adults' informal learning: its meaning through representations of this research. In this final section, I examine adults' informal learning complications through the visual arts activities and representational mobile form of this research.

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[64] Wihak, C., & Hall, G. (2011). Work-related informal learning. Retrieved 14 July, 2014, from http://www.workplaceskills.ca/c4ws_research_report_single8_0.pdf
[65] Eraut, 2000
[66] Watkins, K.E., Marsick, V.J., Grant Wofford, M., & Ellinger, A.D. (2018). The evolving Marsick and Watkins (1990) theory of informal and incidental learning. *New directions for adult and continuing education, 159*, 21-36.

REPRESENTATIONS IN ART

Arts-informed research is accessible with its knowledges and audience-oriented in its communications:

> Foremost in arts-informed work are issues related to audience and the transformative
> potential of the work. Research that maximizes its communicative potential addresses
> concerns about the accessibility of the research account usually through the form and
> language in which it is written, performed, or otherwise presented. Accessibility is related
> to the potential for audience engagement and response. Such representations of research
> have the express purpose of connecting, in a holistic way, with the hearts, souls, and minds
> of the audience.[67]

Several words in this quotation–transformative, form, engagement, connection–resonate with other discussions in this chapter about adults' informal learning, and reflect adults' learning through "moral purpose"[68], here an attribute of arts-informed research "to make a difference through research, not only in the lives of ordinary citizens but also in the thinking and decisions of policymakers, politicians, legislators, and other key decision makers."[69] The aim of socially-responsible citizenry draws together adults' informal learning and arts-informed research methodology.

This research sought to evoke material objects meaningful for adults' informal learning through hand-drawn maps and 3D model creation; Lyn Butler-Kisber sees experimentation, perspectives, and insights increase when qualitative research makes use of such "artful portrayals."[70] Participants agreed that drawing and model-making effectively 'show[ed]' information, despite some struggling to produce artworks they found satisfactory:

> I'm not very artsy!
>
> That's the best I can do for representation.
>
> I have vivid memories of walking past everything, but I can't draw an accurate map of
> where everything is because I don't actually use all of the spaces along the street.

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[67] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 67
[68] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 60
[69] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 60
[70] Butler-Kisber, L. (2002). Artful portrayals in qualitative inquiry: The road to found poetry and beyond. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 48*(3), 229-239. p.239

> There is a pressure and tension [to drawing exercises], so while I think that activity would work for some people, for me it stressed me out.
>
> Making it interactive, I think, is really good? [Visual maps are] a good form of learning, and it's another–I guess it's another form of data as well.

I understand this variety of responses as enlarging the area of adults' informal learning; for the first time in this chapter, struggle is not complication but demonstration of representation's capacity for learning.

As it was for me. My shift in perception tantamount to a transformative disorienting dilemma occurred after I photographed participants' drawings, transferred them onto the computer, saved them in monochrome to highlight contrasts, and then viewed their thumbnails in a single folder, thus:
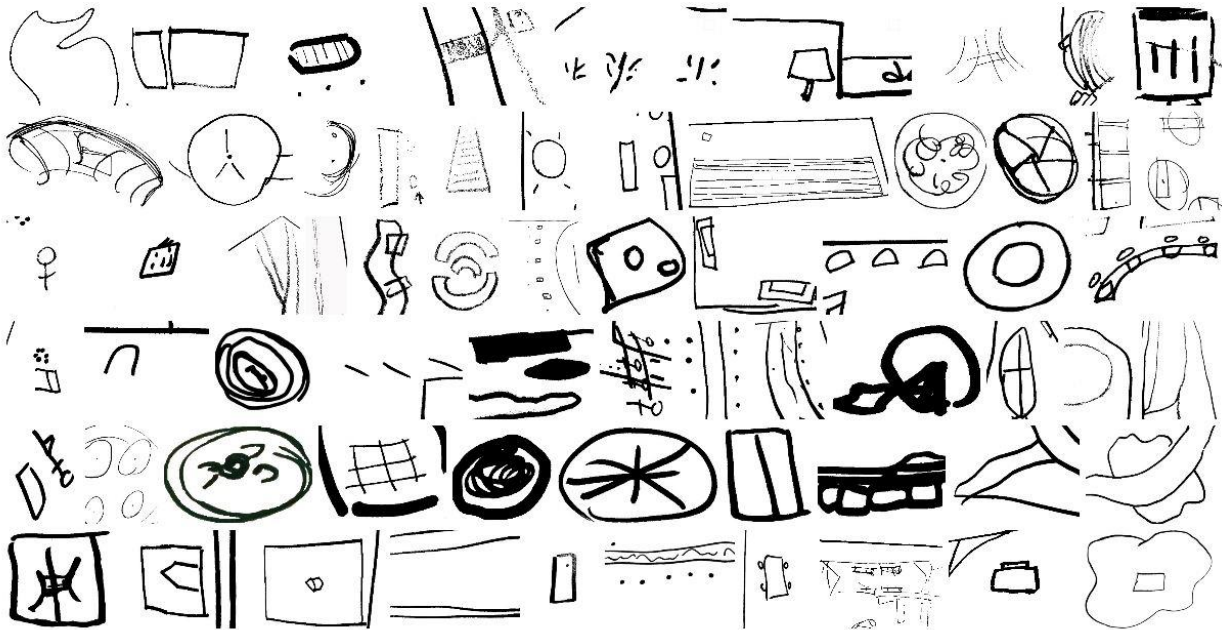
I am so taken by this composite that it hangs over my desk like an IKEA mobile, ready to be made. The Candyland-like sense of journey, the strokes and shapes, and the mythic/almost hieroglyphic lines–this is a Rosetta stone of contemporary expression. I cannot value more highly the changes in learning I sense it has wrought in me.

And it is a record of participants' interactions with meaningful material objects in public places; thoroughly deciphered, it is a map of adults' informal learning, no longer complicated but dense, rich, thick with texture and movement and joy. It is a pattern exquisitely, seductively and irreparably broken.

In other words, you set yourself a sloppy topic,
ask yourself a question
to get you thinking along certain lines, and
try to focus your scope
from the whole world
down to the issues[524]

'sloppy topic'*: check*

'certain lines'*: complications, I think*
'focus your scope'*: … I'm working on it…*

'the whole world
down to the issues'*: What in the world could those be /*
What could be those in the world?

Adults' informal learning is in alignment with arts-informed research methodology through moving outside academia, to demonstrating learning in experience, to casting material object in a different light. In this research, informal learning brought about by participants' memories, depictions, and representations creates a reflexive dialogue with artistically-conceived understanding. This relationship also makes this research entirely unique and completely particular, which is not exactly a complication; just a pattern mended/an amended pattern.

CODA

It has been some time since I have tested my 'makes the pattern/breaks the pattern' theorem; this writing is easily the most sustained use I have made of it. While I feel it captures the urges in this work to organize and to disrupt, the difficulty lies in its application to adults' informal learning.

Because adults' informal learning is resistant to any pattern, whether broken or intact. Its learning occurs outside of structure and guidance, and, considering the number of complications identified in this research alone, produces vast knowledges infinitely connected to other modes of thought, ways of being, and communication. This interpretation allows for complex and contradictory selves always in the making and changing, and for conditions of learning permitting physical safety and instinctual connection, and for fluctuations in knowledge that represent changing purposes and transformations. It associates material objects with places in the frameworks of ecologies and new materialisms, and politically pursuant in public places. Finally, the capacity of adults' informal learning to be expressible forms a connection to artful representations clearly a part of and epitomizing this research.

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[524] Bolker, J. (1998). *Writing your dissertation in fifteen minutes a day: A guide to starting, revising, and finishing your doctoral thesis*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.

Although I am pleased with the construction of these ideas, and their intertwinings and representations, I feel that my discussion of complications is still incomplete. Although I may be predisposed to find complications in the looking for them, adults' informal learning still feels uncharted.

Or it may be that adults' informal learning will continue to feel complicated until I represent these and other findings in a congruent form that relies on changes in the environment for realization? In my attempts to build a successful mobile, I am gaining ground…

…but the place where it will hang is as yet undiscovered territory. Let me chart those pathways next.

RESHAPING PUBLIC PLACES

I was going on a cultural exchange to Quebec the first time I left Ontario by plane. I was twelve years old and inordinately excited about flying. My flight, on the now defunct airline Air Ontario nicknamed 'The Great Shakes', underwent slight turbulence that upended an orange juice into my lap and crinkled my new cargo pants. But even the stickiness did not dispel my excitement about being on a plane. Every instant saw a new landscape come into view, and I was absorbed in Southwestern Ontario's farmlands that actually comprised squares and rectangles in precise, neat edges. Flying in and out of the cloudwisp showed a softened sky without end, just expanse, and then, looking down, glimpses of vast and richly greened forests, navy blue lakes, and razorstraight dunfields with unbelievably tiny combines drawing neat lines behind it like a picture traced in the sand.

I was astonished that maps were right: that lines separated kinds of land, and that roads really did run straight, mostly, and that while I was uphere, the world hummed along downthere so that people below stood and walked and drove in spaces already marked off for them. Seeing that in person was satisfying and distressing all at once.

I have since then flown many times–still not liking to watch when the plane travels over oceans, where no markers help with orientation–but each time the careful portioning, shaping, and redirecting of the land nonetheless captivates me. I think how lost things can get in a tract of trees, or whether the landowner knows that their property is jagged in one corner, or whether people intentionally decided that every third neighbour should have a pool. I think about how it is not possible to see these designs from the ground, that one has to recognize the scenery is different at eye level and extrapolate–or perhaps imagine–that sight tens of thousands of feet overhead.

This chapter has proven difficult to enter, because my earlier discussion about places in general and public places in particular made them out to be multilayered and various. I tried to consider all of the ways in which the literature suggests we can be in places, and repeated participant comments showing their feelings of place, and possible insertions remarking on my experiences in places, but none of these seemed to capture the spirit of iterative placelessness I wanted to convey in this chapter. Public place factors can be mined for further considerations and heretofore unmentioned secondary effects. In this chapter, the order of ideas replicates the sequence in Chapter 4: Public Places' Overview, so that I

examine places defined conceptually, relevant theorists and academics' writing, other aspects of Halifax and this research's sites, and significance of this work's methodologically represented public places.

The world and land and place is known partly by our abilities to connect with it, to build structures on it, and to walk through it using landmarks separating places from other places. I continue the conceit of insertions to show my experiences in and with public places, sometimes relevant to the point at hand and sometimes simply observational. Place we are in and on and of is accessible in some measure, however difficult it is to locate literally and figuratively. In this chapter, I juxtapose ideas about the layout of public places in our daily routine and knowing with a perspective from above, one alike and yet foreign to the ways that usually ground us. Place from a plane might be recognizable, but opportunities for seeing it that way are rare. ˙˙˙There˙˙˙ is where public places appear in the world of which we are part but currently separated; it is both material and immaterial.

As it has gone with this work, a structural contradiction appears in the form of participants' voices. The previous chapter on public places addressed a panoply of literature and left little room left to draw on this research's participants; here, I weave in participant commentary about public place understandings, encounters, and expectations and reflections creating impressions of public places. These observations produce a new set of perspectives, like the view of an area afforded by flying over it.

I emphasize, too, how we move within and through public places. I noted in Chapter 4: Public Places' Overview, that walking is a research method and an artistic endeavour; in Chapter 7: Informal Learning Complications, walking helped informal learning through geographical knowing. In this chapter, walking acquaints us with public places, seeing their irregularities and developments and reshaping their spaces.

Enough of the fly-by, I think; an approach can only last so long before the wheels hit the ground.

REDEFINING PUBLIC PLACES

Public places are constructed of complex influences and contradictory social, geographical, and material factors. Even a broad definition hints at pervasive contestations: "an area or place that is open and accessible to all peoples, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age or socio-economic level. These are public gathering spaces such as plazas, squares and parks. Connecting spaces, such as sidewalks and

streets, are also public spaces."[1] Perhaps the complications of place are due in part to our, the beholders', multiple positionalities: "Places, then, are particular constellations of material things that occupy a particular segment of space and have sets of meanings attached to them."[2] Those meanings, however, are not always within reach, particularly within cities providing public places but from which we may feel disassociated: "Literature on the city is filled with references to desolate placelessness and a yearning for place, for some solid connection to the earth, to the palpable physicality of cities and the everyday need for social contact."[3] Halifax, Nova Scotia, has a number of gathering spaces where meanings oscillate between being assigned, determined, and reclaimed. In this research, one participant described wistfully the ability to move about a public place, unhampered, as a kind of fruitful engagement, "using a space for people."

> *Halifax Central Library, 2006: My then-partner tried to sit on the stone steps of the outdoor entrance, and was moved along by a security guard.*
>
> *Let people sit on steps.*

I explore redefinitions of public places through third places' incompatibilities with adults' informal learning, public places' largely invisible means of control, the expectations of evident citizenhood in public places, as well as embodied materialities made possible in public places, like the first hint of turbulence in otherwise clear skies.

Third places

Public places are made up of entangled expectations about belonging and ownership; out of this entanglement comes the concept of third places. According to Ray Oldenburg, third places are neither residential settings nor workplace settings, but "a public setting accessible to its inhabitants and appropriated by them as their own,"[4] such as French cafés, English pubs, American taverns, and even streetfronts of locally-owned and generationally-frequented businesses. Third places are typically casual spaces where one finds regular visitors, relaxed conversation, a playful mood, and a sense of intimacy

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[1] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2017). Inclusion through access to public space – Definition. Retrieved 5 May, 2019, from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/urban-development/migrants-inclusion-in-cities/good-practices/inclusion-through-access-to-public-space/

[2] Cresswell, T. (2008). Place: Encountering geography as philosophy. *Geography, 93*(3), 132-139. p.135

[3] Friedmann, J. (2010). Place and place-making in cities: A global perspective. *Planning Theory and Practice, 11*(2), 149-165. p.150

[4] Oldenburg, R., & Brissett, D. (1982). The third place. *Qualitative Sociology, 5*(4), 265-284. p.269

and psychological comfort.[5] As I have shown for adults' informal learning, however, ensuring these qualities poses difficulties: "Third places … are only partially amenable to rational planning. Their key ingredients seem to remain elusive and emergent and these no doubt change with the shifting patterns of life style."[6]

In some respects, third places are helpful in describing this research's public places: public access, familiar settings, composite influences, leisure pursuits, changing behaviours, and intimate associations. Oldenburg offers commentary on third places' socio-political dimensions, but makes no reference to the possibilities for informal learning occurring there. In contrast, the aurally similar 'third spaces' concept offers a specific interest in learning: in third spaces, "teacher and student scripts–the formal and informal, the official and unofficial spaces of the learning environment–intersect, creating the potential for authentic interaction and a shift in the social organization of learning and what counts as knowledge"[7]; yet, third spaces are exempt from this research because of their emphasis on always already settings of learning and the social development, rather than the social engagement of third places, therein. I find better alignment, too, with this research in third places' emplaced materialities.

Third places emphasize purposeful socialization in a similar manner to self-directed learning: "public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work."[8] Oldenburg's 'regular' and 'happily anticipated' gatherings invoke intention through habitual social engagement and customary behaviours, leaving aside opportunities for incidental informal learning through discoveries borne of material object interactions in public places. With third places primarily affording social visits, I imagine that any insights into informal learning would stem from emplaced social networks, just as participants in this research noted that relationships with friends and acquaintances allow informal learning through suggestions, encouragement, and skills-sharing. Third places are prime candidates for future research situating adults' informal learning through these strong and recurring personal connections.

The social imperatives of third places may seem likely to position them as benignly influenced and widely accessible, but a deeper exploration into public places indicates that they are less often unfettered and more frequently regulated than may be first suspected:

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[5] Oldenburg, R. (1999). *The great good place: Cafés, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons, and other hangouts at the heart of a community*. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press. p.42
[6] Oldenburg & Brissett, 1982, 270
[7] Gutiérrez, K.D. (2008). Developing a sociocritical literacy in the third space. *Reading Research Quarterly, 43*(2), 148-164. p.152
[8] Oldbenburg, 1999, 16

> public space is associated with parks, playgrounds, or systems of open space that are
> obviously in the public realm. But not all open spaces are in the public realm, and for
> that matter not all public spaces may be open, in the sense of being either alfresco or
> accessible and free.[9]

The commercial overtones of third places hint at vested interests in public places that are not only to do with socially progressive adults' informal learning.

Public place control

Paddison and Sharp point to the mid-late 1800s cities as the first to designate purposeful park space: "Public spaces, and their adornment through the use of public art, were designed to reflect pride in the city, its progress and achievement; spaces which could appeal to a 'sense of civic place' that was ostensibly inclusive."[10] Over time, this approach morphed into invisible control of public places distinct from democratic input or collective ownership:

> it is in the ability of the supply, nature and regulation of public space to become controlled
> by particular interests that is the denial of its democratic publicness. Thus, modernist
> planning was to institutionalise the 'capture' of public space concealing the interests it
> served beneath normative ideals about the city, how it should be planned and the necessity
> to regulate activities in order to meet desired goals, yet within a process that espoused to
> be in the 'public interest'.[11]

Largely, participants' comments did not reflect this awareness: the composition and oversight of public places was inferred by one participant at his Nocturne installation in a contested space of Victoria Park on Spring Garden Road (although another participant's comment about tacit permission for visitors to install homemade bird feeders in Shubie Park may also apply). The fact there were few mentions about public place control could offer convincing evidence for unquestioned public place dominion: it is commonplace to the point of disregard. I was surprised that public place oversight was rarely mentioned, although participants may have been loathe to offer criticism in this interpretivist enquiry.

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[9] Bannerjee, T. (2001). The future of public space: Beyond invented streets and reinvented places. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 67*(1), 9-24.

[10] Paddison R., & Sharp, J. (2007). Questioning the end of public space: Reclaiming control of local banal spaces. *Scottish Geographical Journal, 123*(2), 87-106. p.94

[11] Paddison & Sharp, 2007, 94

The new materialist phenomenon of intra-activity is seen in behaviours circumscribed in (particularly urban) public places' design, and in the activities that disrupt these parameters: "the architecture of the city reflects systems of political and economic power that control human behavior and movement while human activity also reciprocally transforms and appropriates the urban landscape."[12] This co-affect is more evident in participants' commentary, such as this statement from a participant looking for a quiet setting in the Halifax Central Library:

> Usually when I'm there, there's people playing music out of their computers, or there's children screaming on the second floor. So I do really enjoy the library, but it does have its downsides because there doesn't seem to be very many rules to the library? Which is both a blessing and a curse of the space.

Conceptually, then, public places are rife with multiple complex influences and struggles to enact and maintain important decision-making processes, already contested simply at the level of how public place is built and for whose satisfaction; so arises related citizenship responsibilities towards public places as part of the social good.

> *University of Auckland, 2005: All graduates in full regalia process down a busy street in a city of more than one million. The car horns sound in celebration.*
>
> *Let traffic wait for people now and then.*

Citizenship responsibilities

Depictions of citizenhood in shared spaces overlap with public places' opportunities for learning. Gert Biesta writes in her article "Becoming Public: Public Pedagogy, Citizenship and the Public Sphere" that pedagogical interventions within the public domain result in three interpretations: first, that education often implicitly conveys valued compliant behaviours through regulations and policies that guide people in how to think and act publicly; second, that democratic practices foreground pedagogical work so that educators act as facilitators in espousing political involvement; and third, that the potential for collective

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[12] Miles, A.P., & Libersat, J.U. (2016). ROAM: Walking, mapping, and play: Wanderings in art and art education. *Studies in Art Education, 57*(4), 341-357. p.343

action distinct from instructing behaviour or political discourse reframes perceptions about 'public' as an aspect of location. [13] That is, it is not what is in public places that makes for learning; instead, it is the promise of gathering in support of multiple ways of being that makes places 'public.'

While somewhat of a departure from the emphasis in this research on material objects' affects on informal learning, I nonetheless see Biesta's argument as relevant in two respects. First, that places are forged constructively and have meaning communally regardless of citizenship imperatives; and second, that space is fashioned into place by being public, which to me reads as a new materialist intra-activity. If people become citizens by demonstrating citizenhood, for instance, then public places afford adults' informal learning by permitting informal learning activities, such as material object interaction, to be carried out publicly within them.

Biesta's insights into public place formulation are valuable, and her writing has resonance with Lindeman, Dewey, and other adult educators who share a belief in adult learners' moral development through citizenship and social responsibility. Yet her descriptions of public places are based in theoretical conceptualizations, not material realizations; for this emphasis, I turn to commentary on the ways in which the mind and the body mirror the materialities of environment.

Places' embodied materialities

Elizabeth Ellsworth, a media studies professor interested in public pedagogies, writes that some public places can "invite and support *unintentional, involuntary* experiences of the learning self"[14], a viewpoint similar to my perceptions of incidental learning, deliberative learning, and discovery in learning. She also recognizes the "imbrication of the *material* elements of mind/brain and body[15]:

> They are concerned with designing, building, and staging objects, mediated environments, events, performances, public projections, configured times, and spaces. They are concerned with making, for example, "prosessual paths" to be walked or "interrogative designs" to modulate and intensify the habits, dispositions, gestures, and speakings that make up the materiality of social relationships on an urban street.[16]

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[13] Biesta, G. (2012). Becoming public: Public pedagogy, citizenship and the public sphere. *Social & Cultural Geography, 13*(7), 683-697.

[14] Ellsworth, E. (2005). *Places of learning: Media, architecture, pedagogy*. New York, NY: Routledge. p.26

[15] Kennedy, 2003, 15, in Ellsworth, 2005, 27

[16] Ellsworth, 2005, 27

This quotation resounds with this research's areas of exploration (walking, urban streets), themes (time, modulation/change), and materialities (objects, environments, paths). I see an obvious alignment with material object interactions and Ellsworth's description of what she calls "new pedagogies of sensation"[17], in which people are bodies with interconnected systems of discerning and deciphering meaning on their own apart from cognitive processes. What intrigued me in this quotation was her mention of materiality as a point in time and place where learning occurs: combine a place made public by its capacity for public action, and bodies that host their own embodied methods of meaning-making, and interactions become much more intriguing in their happening and meaning.

> *Greece, 1997: Just too hot. Everywhere.*
>
> *Let there be shade. Everywhere.*

MATERIAL OBJECT INTERACTIONS

In this research, material objects are inorganic or organic items and features perceived by participants to be capable of interaction; these interactions, it has been shown, take the form of direct, indirect, or symbolic outcomes that are difficult to identify. Historically, material data has been underappreciated in research process due to privileged cognitive perspectives, language weighted equally to objects, presumptively neutral object interpretations, and anthropomorphized material objects revealing nothing.[18] In most respects, I argue, these same assumptions apply to other fields of enquiry in which material objects' capacities to mean are dismissed.

> *Evelyn Harrison Public School, 1988: Our eighth-grade class planted a stand of trees in the schoolyard near the second-best baseball diamond. If I remember, Nate Moss got in trouble for already carving his name in the sapling's bark.*

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[17] Ellsworth, 2012, 27

[18] Sandelowski, M. (2002). Reembodying qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Health Research, 12*(1), 104-115. p.110

Let there be more trees, in places where

trees aren't.

The interactions piece of this work is just as fraught as every other element, and once again variously composed. Interaction has been examined in the context of engagement for online, digital, or virtual learning involving personal and technological connections. But of objects themselves as the locus for interaction, there has been little written.

Nevile, Haddington, Heinemann and Rauniomaa caution that although objects still tend to be treated as enmeshed technical resources, interest is growing in the study of object interaction:

> Studies have begun to reveal how objects, as an important part of people's ordinary lives, can be tied to and constituent of the situated, embodied, material and spatial circumstances of social interaction, either in everyday domestic situations or in institutional and work settings. There is an emerging sense of how participants use or recruit objects, orient or refer to objects, create, manipulate and make sense of objects, and so on.[19]

Nevile et al. introduced to me potentially informative terms to describe how interactions can unfold– "objects are experienced, created or made sense of, for instance through manipulating, pointing, seeing, hearing, and referencing"[20]–that may have been useful in clarifying my questions to participants about interacting with public place objects. Eventually I chose instead to focus not on the mode of interaction, but instead its purpose: direct, indirect, or symbolic.

Once more, like other research elements, multiple avenues are preferred for interactions; I concur with Nevile et al.'s perspective of an "interactional ecology of objects: objects feature dynamically in richly organised relationships with aspects of talk, embodied conduct, and features of the surrounding environment."[21] With their reference to the 'dynamic' appearance of objects in place, and their commitment to situated objects that "support thinking, perception and learning, to facilitate views and interpretations of the world"[22], Nevile et al. point me in the direction of material objects not only

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[19] Nevile, M., Haddington, P., Heinemann, T., & Rauniomaa, M. (2014). On the interactional ecology of objects. In M. Nevile, P. Haddington, T. Heinemann, & M. Rauniomaa (Eds.), *Interacting with objects: Language, materiality, and social activity* (pp.3-26). Amsterdam, ND: John Benjamins Publishing Company. pp.12-13

[20] Nevile, Haddington, Heinemann, & Rauniomaa, 2014, 14

[21] Nevile, Haddington, Heinemann, & Rauniomaa, 2014, 17

[22] Nevile, Haddington, Heinemann, & Rauniomaa, 2014, 13

variously composed, but in flux within those compositions, just as adults' informal learning recurs and grows, a mobile twists in the wind, and public places are sites in sundry spatially, politically, and chronologically.

They are also strongly entangled in domains, spheres of influences, and other meaningful criteria we assign to objects in places. For example, the arts-informed methodological potential for representation carries receptivities that colour the nature of material object interactions in places. In recreating a West Indian front room complete with everyday material objects for an art installation, Noble calls out the reactions of visitors to the items in the room:

> The gasps of recognition and familiarity that the exhibition sparked were muted in comparison to the way in which the bright often gaudy objects in this room seemed to ignite individual memories that were also, it turns out, collective community or cultural memories. . . . Among the objects that most kindled personal memories for me were the brightly colored crochet doilies.[23]

The conversion of a front room/private space to a gallery installation/public place makes material object interactions valued in synthetic and transitional public places. Though the environments are stylized, the meaningfulness of the interactions are undiminished by their display. I believe I have respected the significance of material objects identified by participants as meaningful through this research, but representational considerations pose intriguing questions for future research.

Various interactions render material objects more germane for public places than simply occupying their spaces. Since material objects offer possibilities for understanding, engagement, and representation, they are primed to make over public places continually, cycling through tensions and change. The making over, or reshaping, of public places has similarities with transformative processes, and so I here address how transformative learning has significance for public places' transformation.

LEARNING TRANSFORMING PLACE

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[23] Noble, D. (2018). Material objects as sites of critical re-memorying and imaginative "knowing." *TEXTILE, 16*(2), 214-233. p.220

In his typology of transformative learning, Chad Hoggan departs from Jack Mezirow's paradigm-shifting model of transformative learning[24] in order to validate the ways we know how to be in the world:

> The very concept of transformation implies that a permanent change has occurred; it is irreversible. Two caveats to this notion of irreversibility are important. First, regardless of how a person learns new ways of experiencing, conceptualizing, and interacting with the world, former ways are not miraculously forgotten. Old habits remain in our repertoire of meaning-making processes and may resurface from time to time.[25]

Participants appeared to have acquired habits of interacting with sites' material objects: "I've painted the [Halifax Central] Library many times!"; "I did not visit [the Farm]; I spent all of last summer there."; "Fifteen years ago, I wouldn't notice ladyslippers [in Shubie Park] that have been popping up at a certain time of year; now, I look for them because I know they're there"; "that was a really unique perspective to see [Nocturne] in the Public Gardens, because they're typically closed at night." Material object interactions are enriched when it seems as if the world itself is shifting.

> *Paris, 2014: Perfect, just as it is.*
> *Let Paris infuse every city, place and*
> *people with its sensibilities–they are*
> *golden.*

While Hoggan sees transformative learning through changes to public places, Edmund O'Sullivan's attitude towards transformative learning is much more extreme, intimating a "radical restructuring of the dominant culture and a fundamental rupture with the past."[26] This restructure/rupture moves O'Sullivan past place even ecologically constructed, to a cosmological holism of life in our universe: "We must hold our world in consort with the wider biotic community and enter that world in the most intimate manner possible."[27] This research's findings suggest that entry into the world of a wider biotic community may occur through our interactions with material objects in public places, and it appears as though O'Sullivan may agree: "When I refer to the need for a culture of permanence, I am referring to a sense of continuity in one's environment where there are objects that have a sustained and lasting

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[24] Hoggan, C.D. (2016). Transformative learning as a metatheory: Definition, criteria, and typology. *Adult Education Quarterly, 66*(1), 57-75.

[25] Hoggan, 2016, 71

[26] O'Sullivan, E. (1999). *Transformative learning: Educational vision for the 21st century.* Toronto, CA: OISE/UT in association with the University of Toronto Press. p.5

[27] O'Sullivan, 1999, 237

human value and there is a community that has a deep sense of location and place."[28] In transforming our learning in places, O'Sullivan suggests we arrive at a deep and rich intertwined understanding of the world and ourselves, mediated through materiality.

> A greater engagement with the natural world in terms of its deep subjectivity opens up a new sense of intimacy. When intimacy with the natural world is cultivated, we begin to see a differentiated consciousness to the world outside the human. Sensitivities to the animal and plant world open up a consciousness that brings about a sensitivity to the deeper rhythms of the biotic world. Humans now are able to enter a relationship with the natural world that honours the deep subjectivity and interiority of all aspects of reality. With this wider differentiated consciousness there is the expanded capacity to see all of reality as both different and a subjective presence. With this expanded sensitivity and awareness we commence to develop an inner poise that allows a deep relational insight into everything that we may experience in and around us.[29]

This approach to transformative learning, fusing learning with material place, imbues this research with a far broader meaning than I first assumed. Now I understand more clearly that differently-composed material objects and our various interactions with them are brought about by what we bring to them, in the places where they are; the mobiles engaging/engaged by us. Nor is a spirit of playfulness pervading this work distinct from this interaction: to counter humanity's hierarchical hubris that materiality is subordinate, Jane Bennett calls for "the self-criticism of conceptualization, a sensory attentiveness to the qualitative singularities of the object, the exercise of an unrealistic imagination, and the courage of a clown".[30] With this ecologically sensuous vision of public places, I return to the work of researchers offering relevant public place conceptualizations for comparison.

PUBLIC PLACE CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

Space is one of Jane Jacobs' major concerns; Jacobs fought for walkable, pedestrian-centric cities, similar in affect to O'Sullivan's drive to achieve greater intimacy with the natural world through living in it. Among Jacobs' criticisms are power imbalances related to the ways places are made; she maintained

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[28] O'Sullivan, 1999, 244
[29] O'Sullivan, 1999, 258
[30] Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p.15

that "community needs for police stations, libraries, parks, and other public facilities can't be left to private decision-making. Thoughtful placement is a public concern."[31] The feminisms inherent in Jacobs' opinions garner a more collaborative and inclusive approach to understanding public places. Jacobs' work, however, does not extend communities' needs to include learning in public places. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities,* she notes that "Children in cities need a variety of places in which to play and to learn"[32], but these endeavours are not aimed at adults' inquiries with/in the world. It seems a strange omission for the normally radically liberal Jacobs to disregard democratic opportunities for informal learning through public place design.

But her obvious love of places inspires me differently; her colourful, engaging and resonant writing about life and place and their materialities has helped me shape this writing's structure and sensibilities:

> I make my first entrance a little after eight A.M. when I put out the garbage can. Around me, droves of junior-high-school students and people coming to work in the district walk by the center of the stage. While I sweep the sidewalk, I watch the signs and rituals of morning. Mr. Halpert unlocking his laundry hand-cart from its mooring to a cellar door, Joe Cornacchia's son-in-law stacking out empty crates from the delicatessen. The barber bringing out his sidewalk folding chair. Mr. Goldstein arranging coils of wire that proclaim the hardware store is open. The primary children, heading for St. Luke's to the south. The children for St. Veronica's heading west. The children for P.S. 41 heading east. Well-dressed and even elegant women, and men with briefcases, emerge now from doorways and side streets. Simultaneously numbers of women in house dresses emerge and pause for quick conversations. Longshoremen who are not working gather at the White Horse Tavern or the International Bar for beer and conversation.[33]

Like other female authors and academics–including Rebecca Solnit, Ardra Cole, and Doreen Massey–I cleave to Jacobs' warm, thoughtful, clear, and expressive writing voice in endeavouring to evoke a sense of place in all of its multilayered, embodied complexity. I am intent that writing about place should be in the devil of its details as much as possible.

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[31] Jacobs, J. (2001). Random comments. *Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review, 28*(4), 537-545. p.542
[32] Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of great American cities.* New York, NY: Random House. pp.80-81
[33] Jacobs, J. (14 Oct, 1961-a.). How city planners hurt cities. *Saturday Evening Post, 234*(41), 13-14. p.14

Whyte's work also explored urban life's patterns and flow, like Jacobs, but particularly for Whyte through pedestrian behaviours. Whyte's systematic approach to the movement of people in public place was widely hailed, and, unusually for the time, he defended the affordances for rearranged space:

> His research uncovered small but key details that draw people: movable seats are important, for example, and the availability of food and drink, even from a pushcart, is helpful. Any fixed seating–a designer's or architect's arrangement of space, whatever it was and whatever its formal virtues–imposed itself on those who tried to use the space. People wanted to feel in control[34].

His evidence bears out in comments from participants who enjoy the unique opportunity to rearrange the chairs and seating in the Halifax Central Library. The research team that Whyte formed in 1970 to conduct urban observation studies[35] included Fred Kent, who would go on to found the Project for Public Spaces in 1975[36], just one of the organizations that helped develop and popularize the placemaking phenomenon. Indirectly, Whyte brought the habits, wishes, and passage of people in public places to the fore in design discussions, and laid the groundwork for places suiting the needs of people who used them.

Cultural geographer Doreen Massey struggles to balance approaches to place, "On the one hand rejecting the parochialisms and the exclusivities that a commitment to place can generate and yet on the other hand wanting to hang on to a genuine appreciation of the specificity of local areas."[37] Much of Massey's writing on material processes of production, labour, location, and political outlook reconfigures understandings about the global world: simultaneously here and not here, local and distant, onsite and remote. The material objects in this research's sites, which are geographically situated in Halifax, Nova Scotia, are not different from objects in other places, yet they are at the same time entirely unique in their composition and affect specific to the East Coast of Canada.

One of Massey's insights relates to this research for the complex ecological connections that are also valuable singly, just as public places and its elements in this research have both communally rich and

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[34] Glazer, N. (1999). The man who loved cities. *The Wilson Quarterly,* 27-33. p.33
[35] Anonymous. (1993). Review: *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* and *City: Rediscovering the Center. Visitor Behavior, 8*(1), 17-18. Retrieved 11 Jun, 2019, from https://www.informalscience.org/sites/default/files/VSA-a0a1v6-a_5730.pdf
[36] Palmer, B. (November, 2008). Fred Kent: The place doctor. *Convene,* 54-62.
[37] Massey, D. (2006). Landscape as a provocation: Reflections on moving mountains. *Journal of Material Culture, 11*(1/2), 33-48. p.34

personally meaningful importance: we must be cautious when "the land itself, stripped of the particularizing stories that once sprouted from every cave and streamed and cluster of trees on its surface, begins to lose its multiplicitous power. The human senses, intercepted by the written word, are no longer gripped and fascinated by the expressive shapes and sounds of particular places."[38] In other words, Massey, with help from Abram, helps me to articulate that this research's connections are layered and constantly re-constructed between individual and cosmic consciousness.

Findings from this research do not allow me to claim a consequential link between material objects in public places and adults' informal learning: participants' comments showed that they did not recognize how material objects may have featured in their learning. Participants' material object mentions were rarely situated, mostly apolitical, and hardly culturally determined, just as Massey states is the case with things in the natural world: "While there is frequent anxiety about any approach to nature, and an insistence on the impossibility of immediate access to 'the real' (our natures are always culturally mediated), the products of culture themselves – artefacts, texts, discourses – are often approached without any such reservation."[39] In comparison, participants were significantly more conversant with versions of informal learning comprising several disparate influences.

Donna Haraway's work *When Species Meet* is an expression for a locus of belonging that paradoxically recognizes its unrealizability:

> *When Species Meet* strives to build attachment sites and tie sticky knots to bind intra-acting critters, including people, together in the kinds of response and regard that change the subject–and the object. Encounterings do not produce harmonious wholes, and smoothly preconstituted entities do not ever meet in the first place. Such things cannot touch, much less attach; there is no first place[40].

Similarly, Massey's writing reworks landscapes to offer insight into material object interactions affecting adults' informal learning in public places. She maintains that wholly constructed surfaces smooth over ruptures or contestations; below, writes Massey, competing narratives lie uneasily together: "Maybe the very notion of 'landscape' has on occasions worked to suture any underlying constitutive jarrings and discontinuities, and evoked a surface which renders that intertwining – of histories and geographies

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[38] Abram, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more-than-human world.* New York, NY: Vintage Books. p.184

[39] Massey, 2006, 36

[40] Haraway, D. (2008). *When species meet*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p.287

… – knowable and fully representable."[41] By recognizing that what we recognize in intra-active public places is only ever ensurfaced and partial, an opportunity is revealed for buried narratives to construct a link between material objects and adults' informal learning in public places.

Massey appeals for challenged/challenging stories beneath the surface to become known, in which case, public places transformed and reshaped is a fully liberatory act recognizing informal learning as one process amongst all its voices and sources: "stories hold, in their narrative layers, the sedimented knowledge accumulated by our progenitors."[42] Vaughan situates the nuances of a Masseyan landscape in writing that "One of our contemporary challenges with respect to place is to resist both the nostalgic vision of a static locality, bound by an objective [colonizers'] history, and the fashionable alternative, the belief that all is only flux, nomadism."[43] The answers do not lie entirely on the horizon, nor beneath it: instead, they are a complement of above, below, and across, intersecting like the arms of a mobile and viewed in its neat rows from the air above.

Understanding public places in this way, as a collection of influences known and unknown, seen and hidden, then material objects take on the function of an invitation to view the substrate. Material objects may be a catalyst for people to engage with places' problematics, even while recognizing that reshaping–allowing what is below to come to light in O'Sullivan's sense of restructure through rupture– is a necessity for public places to continue. No longer pursuing an explicit or implicit connection between material objects and adults' informal learning in public places, I begin to look instead for the capacities for revelation through material objects that will make public places more perceptible and knowings more deeply and broadly informed.

With the help of Massey, public places become distant from easy binaries, and material objects in them are not only emplaced but representative: of the potential for inquiry into dimensions of place that are not visible on the surface, and also of channels through which adults' informal learning can run.

> *Point Pleasant Park, 1998: A stranger came to sit down next to me as I was reading. He tried to engage me in conversation. I was recalcitrant. He*

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[41] Massey, 2006, 46
[42] Abram, 1996, 181
[43] Vaughan, K. (2015). Art, enchantment, and the urban forest: A step, a stitch, a sense of self. In L. Anders Sandberg, A. Bardekjian, & S. Butt (Eds.), *Urban forests, trees, and greenspace: A political ecology perspective* (pp.307-321). London, UK: Routledge. p.309

> *stripped down to a revealing Speedo*
> *bathing suit to "bake." I packed up and*
> *left.*

> *Let there be general understanding that*
> *reading is not an invitation to engage.*

It is particularly relevant at this stage, after having situated various positionalities and jarring public place terrains, that I embark on exploring dislocations and changes in this research's sites.

SITE CHANGES

In addition to meeting the site criteria, Nocturne: Art at Night was selected for inclusion because I reasoned change was institutionalized within it. Nocturne is a freeform festival limited to installation sites, recurring annually but only for six hours at a time, a temporary celebration of temporary art dismantled after a single evening. I calculated Nocturne would offer a contrast with other sites that were predictably staid. Little did I anticipate the sweeping and pervasive ongoing changes of public places in general, and this research's sites in particular. Only during participant interviews did I learn that the Common Roots Urban Farm's/the Farm's lease had expired and its site at Robie Street and Cogswell Road would be relocated. The Farm's unexpected (for me) relocation means that images gathered during my visits and features badly redrawn in my fieldnotes are no longer found in the material world; possibly, they may exist and emanate now as traces of where the Farm used to be. Barad would undoubtedly be familiar with this new materialist form of past presence:

> The mistaken assumptions of a classical ontology [is] based on the belief that individual
> determinately bounded and propertied objects are the actors on this stage, and the stage
> itself is the givenness of a container called space and a linear sequence of moments called
> time. But the evidence indicates that the world does not operate according to any such
> classical ontology, an ontology exorcised of ghosts.[44]

By ghosts, Barad means that the shadows of what went before that are entwined with what is now; she writes that we need to recognize that constant reworking of distinct, binary concepts–past/present,

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[44] Barad, K. (2010). Quantum entanglements and hauntological relations of inheritance: Dis/continuities, spacetime enfoldings, and justice-to-come. *Derrida Today, 3*(2), 240-268. p.260

space/time–are closer to evoking intra-activity in the world and acknowledges that what is buried and what is gone is also what is revealed and what is present.

> The past is never closed, never finished once and for all, but there is no taking it back, setting time aright, putting the world back on its axis. There is no erasure finally. The trace of all reconfigurings are written into the enfolded materialisations of what was/ is/ to-come. Time can't be fixed. To address the past (and future), to speak with ghosts, is not to entertain or reconstruct some narrative of the way it was, but to respond, to be responsible, to take responsibility for that which we inherit (from the past and the future), for the entangled relationalities of inheritance that 'we' are, to acknowledge and be responsive to the noncontemporaneity of the present, to put oneself at risk, to risk oneself (which is never one or self), to open oneself up to indeterminacy in moving towards what is to come.[45]

In these understandings, Barad and Massey envelop and rebuff one another, coming close in their establishment of immaterial ghosts and narratives' effects on and in place, but separating again in their respective claims of surface ruptures as constantly irrupting or smoothed over; they also move a step past O'Sullivan's rupture stipulated as a break with the past necessary for transformation to occur. As Abram notes,

> That which has been and that which is to come are not elsewhere – they are not autonomous dimensions independent of the encompassing present in which we dwell. They are, rather, the very depths of this living place – the hidden depth of its distances and the concealed depth on which we stand.[46]

 I feel as though Barad would be interested in the 'hauntological relations' of Nocturne, and the 'space/time enfoldings' of the Farm, as places where time can be reckoned as an active player reshaping our notions of how the world is understood. These concurrent reimaginings are only one aspect of changes to Halifax's and this research's sites; I also explore here how the sites continue to be contested through economic and environmental and now an additional democratic domain, and how the reshapings of public places afford informal learning by the act of walking through them.

   Domain contestations

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[45] Barad, 2010, 264
[46] Abram, 1996, 216

Economic and environmental

In Chapter 4: Public Places' Overview, I discussed economic, environmental, and activist domains affecting this research's sites; to those discussions I add the perspective of public place as comprising extant transformations of cosmological consequence and entangled presence/absence//presence/past. At literal ground level, these realizations are visible in the trials of placehood within this research's sites. A May 2019 article from a local Halifax publication itemized economic barriers hampering urban gardening projects: soil composition on the city's peninsula, which is "contaminated with lead and zinc paints, industrial emissions and naturally occurring high levels of arsenic from the bedrock the city is built on"[47]; grant application deadlines too early or late for supporting gardening activities in the East Coast's small growing season window; and, the limited-time use preventing long-term garden project planning on Halifax land: "On municipally owned property, a community garden can be built for personal use, donation to local food causes, generating revenue, the production of a floral or landscape display and instructional programming. The land-use agreement for these only lasts three years with the option to renew, though isn't guaranteed."[48]

Economic considerations of public places arise again in the province's 2013 report, *Our Parks and Protected Areas: A Plan for Nova Scotia*, identifying 9 contested and overlapping goals. Primarily environmental in their focus, the goals are designed to "collaborate with the Mi'kmaq", "deepen appreciation of the natural world", and "provide nature-based recreation", but also "market and promote our parks and protected areas."[49] This appeal to coterminous goals that do not necessarily align is one way in which these sites are disputed, and broadly hints at a political dimension problematic for undertaking democratic activity.

Political and democratic

The other contestation of public place worth noting is the way in which democracy is embodied there:

> Public space is a place within which a political movement can stake out the space that
> allows it to be *seen.* In public space, political organizations can represent themselves to a

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[47] Jefferd-Moore, K. (23 May, 2019). Getting urban garden projects off the ground is a challenge for local groups. *The Coast*. Retrieved 15 Jun, 2019, from https://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/getting-urban-garden-projects-off-the-ground-is-a-challenge-for-local-groups/Content?oid=21713207 n.p.

[48] Jefferd-Moore, 2019, n.p.

[49] Province of Nova Scotia. (2013). Our parks and protected areas: A plan for Nova Scotia. Retrieved 15 Jun, 2019, from https://novascotia.ca/parksandprotectedareas/pdf/Parks-Protected-Plan.pdf

larger population. By claiming space in public, by creating public spaces, social groups themselves become public.[50]

> *Any big city, any time: I like walking on crowded sidewalks in big cities; there's a dexterity and proactivity you have to develop to avoid bags and shoulders and spittle and street merchants, all the while knowing that others are doing the same.*
>
> *Let there be dances on the curbs to unheard music that pulses through the pavement…*

John Parkinson refers to three points showing material structures' impact on (political) behaviours and therefore democratic capacity: one, the arrangement of space to inhibit the expressions of rights and agency; two, physical arrangements circumscribing behaviour or enabling only a handful of actions; and, three, that "forms act as symbols, anchor points for memories and identities [which] help people to think that people like them are taken seriously by the collective, which in turn matters for political efficacy."[51] This last point to me suggests a kind of co-responsibility for public places, evident in this research through material objects, such as the Farm's hosts wanting to be one with the soil, and Shubie Park's visitors installing homemade birdfeeders there.

These democratic yet fractured contestations and circumscriptions were implied in participants' comments: referring to a Halifax public park's impeccably manicured gardens, a participant responded, "The result is good, but the effort and the expense and the visibility are more—we're all paying for people doing things against nature. I'm not going to get into politics, or the philosophy of it, but…". Another participant wondered about the restrictions placed on Halifax's public places:

> I've been thinking a lot about communal spaces, and collective spaces in Halifax. . . .There are still a lot of challenges. The amount of spaces that are being used that aren't public? That should be, in my mind? That goes into that whole other question of politics, but I think that there's a lot of value for communal and collective spaces.

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[50] Mitchell, D. (1995). The end of public space? People's Park, definitions of the public, and democracy. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 85*(1), 108-133. p.115

[51] Parkinson, J.R. (2012). *Democracy & public space: The physical sites of democratic performance.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. p.74

The smoothed landscape and hauntological reimaginings of public places, too, are indicative of people's contested narratives, experiences, and presences in these places. With our stories, and through material objects that project narratives of concern for public places, there appears an opportunity for re-shaping public places into what we would like them to be. In Biesta's parlance, this comprises the value of public places: they foster multiple avenues for gathering in support of multiple ways of being, hence multiple and ecological prospects of shaping them ensue.

With a fuller understanding of public places' breadth and depth comes the opportunity to make over these places, even at the individual level. I suggest walking as a means to do so, due in part to these changes, and in part to my growing realization that the journey of this research has been accomplished through a slow perambulation rather than a supersonic flight, with stopping points where I ponder what I have seen and what is to come.

PUBLIC PLACES' WALKINGS

Walking through public places is a political act because of the movement across and amidst contested spaces, and because it presents educational, embodied, spiritual, and artful opportunities in public places where informal learning plays out. Here I investigate to a greater extent the connection between walking and research, walking for personal growth, and walking as an artful method and subject.

Walking as research

I find an interesting parallelism between walking and the arts: both can be subject as well as method. For this research, walking emerged as a means of understanding public place in meaningful and material capacities. Contemporary research methods make use of new technologies to track and document walking routes, to an extent co-opting learning through walking as a scientific method, although some authors are cautious that researchers avoid becoming "overly seduced by the positivist potential"[52] of digital software maps marking places.

In their project comparing walking and sedentary interview methods, Evans and Jones found that visible features strongly influence people's discussions of urban landscapes; walking interviews elicit a greater number of place mentions than do sedentary interviews; and, "walking interviewees liked talking about specific buildings and environmental features and their use (57% of stories told), whereas the sedentary

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[52] Evans, J., & Jones, P. (2011). The walking interview: Methodology, mobility and place. *Applied Geography, 31*, 849-858. p.857

interviews tended to produce narratives that, although prompted by places, focused on people (58% of stories told)."[53] These findings are supported by observations and speculations in this research that material objects in places are meaningful to people, and that a more robust body of information about places and what is in them is produced simply by walking through places.

> *Plaza Mayor, Madrid, 2018: At first I loved the massive square–such an instinctive gathering place–until I visited a museum or two and read in the guidebooks of the atrocities committed there in the name of politics and religion. It was hard to enjoy after that.*
>
> *Let there be authenticity amidst the souvenir shops and overpriced tourist cafés.*

In contrast to Evans and Jones, Cutcher and Irwin write about the langourous knowledges of 'slow scholarship', in which their practice combining painting with daily walks produced the "minutiae of the journeying, the smaller spaces, and luscious painterly tracks [that] enabled another layer of walking— one in which we lingered: sensuously, aesthetically, and reflectively."[54] I appreciate here Cutcher and Irwin's implicit claim that walking is a function of time because of the gradual emergences into knowings to which I refer occasionally in this work, and because of its resonances with public places' historicized and present emanations.

Participants often and consistently associated being in public places with walking through them. Walking factored into impressions of sites they knew, places they did not know, and their hand-drawn maps:

> P1: For me right now, I want to go and look for somewhere to walk. I've been to Point Pleasant a few times, I've been to Frog Pond–there's so many places, but today I read, in your email–the one in Dartmouth?
>
> P2: Shubie Park!
>
> P1: I haven't heard of it before, so I Googled it, and I know where it is, and I'm planning to go and see it now!
>
> P2: You'll like it.

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[53] Evans & Jones, 2011, 856

[54] Cutcher, A.L., & Irwin, R.L. (2017). Walkings-through paint: A c/a/r/tography of slow scholarship. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*. Retrieved 30 Jul, 2019, from DOI: [10.1080/15505170.2017.1310680](10.1080/15505170.2017.1310680)

I walk every day, so it's a struggle for me to… I can't walk the same route, or the same place, every day; I have to mix it up.

I'm a guy who loves walking around the city [of Halifax]; I've grown up here since I was 8, so I realize it's such an easy city to get around, if you're hanging out on the peninsula

It looks like a place you would go for a walk. And I like that; I like walking. I like being outside, and in public spaces

Well, there was people walking [in the Farm], but definitely there was people doing garden stuff. [*sounds of mark making*] … And these are the people that are walking .. [*sounds of mark making*]

This is a considerable amount of unsolicited commentary about walking, especially as it was not a primary element of this research. The importance of walking through and in public places, and in the sites in this work particularly, substantiates the claims of Rebecca Solnit and others that walking can be meditative and metaphysical as well as informative for research process.

Walking as personal growth

In her extraordinary book, *Wanderlust*, Rebecca Solnit claims walking is a generally underrecognized means of connecting with places: "The most obvious and the most obscure thing in the world, this walking that wanders so readily into religion, philosophy, landscape, urban policy, anatomy, allegory and heartbreak."[55] Solnit captures the affinity for and aversion to known places, showing that worries shape our world even in our wandering:

Walking is about being outside, in public space, and public space is also being abandoned and eroded in older cities, eclipsed by technologies and services that don't require leaving home, and shadowed by fear in many places (and strange places are always more frightening than known ones, so the less one wanders the city the more alarming it seems, while the fewer the wanderers the more lonely and dangerous it really becomes).

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[55] Solnit, R. (2000). *Wanderlust: A history of walking.* New York, NY: Penguin Books. p.3

Meanwhile, in many new places, public space isn't even in in the design: what was once public space is designed to accommodate the privacy of automobiles; malls replace main streets; streets have no sidewalks; buildings are entered through their garages; city halls have no plazas; and everything has walls, bars, gates. Fear has created a whole style of architecture[56].

These comments are realized in participants' remarks about comfort and safety in public places:

I'll look for comfort, like being able to sit down or walk around … In a public place, where I would feel comfortable, I would like to be safe; safety is important…

A library seems like a safe space; a space where you can exchange ideas, or … the idea that you can have different perspectives.

Walking and reflective insights compare favourably to walking and different forms of thinking. Solnit ponders the devaluing of walking's emergent understandings on the altar of efficiency, even as her words evoke Massey's speculations about smoothed surfaces and vanishing fissures:

If there is a history of walking, then it too has come to a place where the road falls off, a place where there is no public space and the landscape is being paved over, where leisure is shrinking and being crushed under the anxiety to produce, where bodies are not in the world but only indoors in cars and buildings, and an apotheosis of speed makes those bodies seem anachronistic or feeble. In this context, walking is a subversive detour, the scenic route through a half-abandoned landscape of ideas and experiences.[57]

Tim Ingold sees possibility and profundity in knowing through walking:

By *becoming knowledgeable* I mean that knowledge is grown along the myriad paths we take as we make our ways through the world in the course of everyday activities, rather than assembled from information obtained from numerous fixed locations. Thus it is by walking along from place to place, and not by building up from local particulars, that we come to know what we do.[58]

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[56] Solnit, 2000, 10-11
[57] Solnit, 2000, 12
[58] Ingold, T. (2010). Footprints through the weather-world: Walking, breathing, knowing. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 16*, S121-S139. p.S121

References are readily found for achieving greater self-understanding through walking, but the potential is there for more information on walking as thinking[/knowing]. In one study exploring walking impact on professors' cognition, participants noted optimal speeds and personal rhythms "stirred their thoughts and immersed them in a field of novel perceptions and stimuli that gave rise to new, perhaps previously unknown, inner perspectives and thoughts."[59] Largely, research on walking as a means to inspire connections between ideas or spur original ideas for the purposes of adults' informal learning does not exist; this interplay could be investigated though research that explores embodied learning, or in research about recreation interventions with physical benefits other than health advantages.

From the growing popularity of walking as a research method, to the development of personal awarenesses engendered by walking, and even emergent cognitive possibilities established by the rhythms of walking, the capacities for creativity through travelling on foot offer a rich practice. For this work, the act of walking is representationally fecund.

Walking as artful method and subject

Walking is, like research process, both a subject of art and a method of producing art, seen in the work of Barbara Lounder:

> Lounder's more recent project, *Writing/Walking Sticks* (2011), brings together walking and writing, where participants collectively explore and inscribe the landscape with the traces of their movement. Each of her 26 yellow aluminium walking sticks have a different letter of the alphabet and a self-inking stamp pad on the tip, so they leave a mark each time they strike the ground.[60]

I am intrigued by Lounder's artfully inscriptive possibilities of walking in public places, which seem to traverse the networks of material objects and informal learning and public place. In another piece of/on place, artist Francis Alÿs collected cast-off objects on his magnetized shoes as he walked the streets of Havana, Cuba.[61] I note, too, the 2013 workshop experience hosted in the Montréal Hippodrome by the

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[59] Keinänen, M. (2016). Taking your mind for a walk: A qualitative investigation of walking and thinking among nine Norwegian academics. *Higher Education, 71*(4), 593-605. p.599

[60] Morrell, A. (2014). Barbara Lounder: Writing/Walking Sticks. *International Contemporary Art, 121,* 50.

[61] Adetty, P.M., & Libersat, J.U. (2016). ROAM: Walking, mapping, and play: Wanderings in art and art education. *Studies in Art Education*, *57*(4), 341-357.

Narratives in Space+Time Society (NiS+TS)[62] group that "collaborates with artists, planners, urbanists, and members of the public in creative explorations of living networks and narratives created by walking, simultaneously mapping spatial and temporal connections between on-the-ground experiences, contemplative moments, curiosity, and discovery."[63] In the workshop, "walking and other forms of self-propelled movement [were] heuristic methods for spatial investigations and interventions at the Hippodrome."[64] Writing about the project's implementation and reception, NiS+TS offers a theoretically embedded artwork reliant on walking equally meaningful for specificities of its site.

In a project drawing together her academic work, artistic practice, and new dog, Kathleen Vaughan writes of complementary joys from thinking and crafting and dog-rearing and walking:

> With his needs for regular walks, meals, and playtime, Auggie provided the kind of daily framework that I – previously a single, unencumbered, mobile, and ambitious adult – had neither needed nor established, nor even particularly valued. And with the structure, the routine-ized practices we enjoyed together, I found myself linked to the repetitive rhythms of urban life. Attached to the end of his leash, I follow him through our Toronto neighbourhood and the city's ravines and wildish spaces. I'd see the sample people and dogs in the same places over many days – and then months and then years. At a dog's sniffing pace, I'd see the places I'd previously not deeply considered in the process of change, through the seasons, through rhythms of use, abandon and dereliction or regeneration. And I'd have ample time to reflect on my own artwork, writing and teaching projects.[65]

Kaikoura, New Zealand, 2003: The town is popular
for whale-watching tours, or the mammals are
sometimes visible viewed from the town's
surrounding hills. Everyone in EnZed thought
tourist sights were '15 minutes away', so we
walked up the hill, 15 minutes, to see the whales:

[62] Boudreault-Fournier, A., Radice, M., Bean, R., Le Blanc, L., Lilley, B., Lounder, B., & Luka, M.E. (2017). Narratives in Space+Time Society (NiS+TS): The Hippodrome Project. In M. Radice & A. Boudreault-Fournier, (Eds.), *Urban encounters: Art and the public* (pp. 100-125). Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press.

[63] Boudreault-Fournier, Radice, Bean et al., 2017, 101

[64] Boudreault-Fournier, Radice, Bean et al., 2017, 102

[65] Vaughan, K. (2016). Dog dreams: A collage reflection on love, loss, poodles, art and academia. In A.L. Cole and S. Sbrocchi (Eds.), *Professorial paws: Dogs in scholars' lives and work* (pp.176-207). Big Tancook Island, NS: Backalong Books. p.177-178.

after the second hill, I had to rest, and then
climbed and rested again and again and again.

No whales.

Let there be fewer hills. Or stronger thighs.

These creative forms of walking and being in place produce insights into public places that are not only responsive to changes in landscape and architectural function; they represent an intra-active entangling of the body, which permits this movement through space, and the environment into supra-responsive em/in-bodiment:

> we might offer a more entangled interpretation of [landscape painting], moving through landscape, the interaction between the physical materiality of the body of the artists, the material of making and the material of place. We might reimagine the practice in terms of the material of the place being in collaboration with the materiality of mark-making in words and lines and of paint via that material constellation that is a body.[66]

Elizabeth St. Pierre wrote of the challenges in returning to her childhood home to collect ethnographic data.[67] She finds her writing stymied, not just by the place of which she writes, but of its time as well:

> since I am so anxious to return to the field to think some more and then write a different text, I have troubled these problems in mental spaces and am now trying to write my way into them in this textual space. However, poised on the edge of the field in this preface, I have discovered another complication as well: it is not just that I don't know where the field is, I don't know when it is either.[68]

So it would seem that walking in places is a fruitful art, and an evocative, if elusive, moment in time (like the temporality of jet lag) liable for representation. I am put in mind again of Barad's description of hauntological relations, wherein "spacetimematter can be productively reconfigured, as im/possibilities

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[66] Tarlo, H., & Tucker, J. (2017). 'Off path, counter path'–Contemporary walking collaborations in landscape, art and poetry. *Critical Survey, 29*(1), 105-132. p.113

[67] St. Pierre, E.A. (1997). Nomadic inquiry in the smooth spaces of the field: A preface. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 10*(3), 365-383.

[68] St. Pierre, 1997, 368

are reworked."[69] Walking as art subject and walking as art method invites innovative projects for movement through space and however it is entangled with/in time.

But walking to study or produce art is not always feasible; sometimes, a facsimile is necessary to retell the walking. For this, maps offer an accessible lingua franca. In her book, O'Rourke[70] catalogues scores of projects based in psychogeography, a term she credits to Guy-Ernest Debord in the 1950s that examines the geographical environment's precise impacts on individual behaviours and emotions. O'Rourke's aim is to produce an interactive, living map connecting psychogeographic art projects: a group of students collectively walking through Parisian streets encircled in an oversized rubber band, thirty-foot PVC pipes carried through crowds acting as conversation starters, and a gradually narrowing labyrinth trapping visitors in its centre.[71] In its own small way, this research similarly contributes representations of material objects in Halifax sites producing a surprising and engaging visual depiction. In keeping with this chapter's perspective, I want to explore how methods of recreating represented place–mapmaking and 3D models–complicate findings in this work: the walking world seen from above.

ARTFULLY EMPLACED METHODS

    Maps

Late in this research I encountered Edward Relph's book *Place and Placelessness*, because I wanted to account more accurately for the relationships between places and maps. Relph believes maps only ever imprecisely represent these encounters:

> Planning for the *experience* of total urban space has been meagre indeed, and the space of modern urban planning is primarily the two-dimensional, cognitive space of maps and plans. This is obvious in the widespread use of grids and curvilinear street patterns, in the careful separation of function categories of land-use, in the casual laying -down of transportation networks. Space is understood to be empty and undifferentiated and objectively manipulable . . . . In short, planning spaces does not involve direct or imaginative experience but order on maps and land-use efficiency. (23)

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[69] Barad, 2010, 266
[70] O'Rourke, K. (2013). *Walking and mapping: Artists as cartographers*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. p.7
[71] O'Rourke, 2013

Relph borrowed Christian Norberg-Schulz's eight categories of space relevant to the need for, and limitations of, maps. In the existential Norberg-Schulz spatial category, Relph describes vertical planes stretching from geography most broadly understood (the level of nations) down to "the level of the object – a material space in which the value of objects is determined by their significance as utensils, or a symbolic space in which the objects or things represent other spaces and experiences."[72] For Relph, these planes "reflect … both a change in scale from the largest to the smallest extent and an increasing humanisation of space. . . .in general it seems that we do live in terms of a variety of levels though at any one moment our attention is focused on just one level."[73] Relph thus joins Barad's intra-active enmeshed imaginary/reality, and Massey's submerged stories, and even further, the problem of scale for participants' hand-drawn maps.

I did not give great consideration to accurate drawings of map boundaries, though had I done so, I might have understood already I had impacted participants' impressions through their scale, which may in turn have carved their recollections from mine. A number of comments showed participants' awarenesses about representing the scale of material objects in public places:

> I'll start off with the first colour, I guess, kind of laying out what I recognize from the space?
>
> Do you want me to draw things outside, too?
>
> [*pause*] So–just write whatever?
>
> Yep. Actually, I'm going to turn them this way [*paper shuffling*]; visually, I'm aligning them this way, just for my brain…
>
> Okay. So I'm going to say this is the top of the building, and this is a…camera? Or should I be drawing a phone. [*Chuckles*]
>
> Is this [map] scaled? Is it sized? [*INTERVIEWER: No.*] I think this is smaller than what you show. This is a big area there, if that's a big area, it's a waste to be left without anything.

Given what I now recognize are sites in places imbued with countless elements, pressures, experiences, material objects, their interactions, and re-materialized space, I am relieved I did not inadvertently further trouble this activity; as it is, this under-prepared and -informed method eventuated in reshaped

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[72] Relph, E. (1976). *Place and placelessness.* London, UK: Pion Limited. p.20
[73] Relph, 1976, 20

public places and representative material objects and differently experienced adults' informal learning, in addition to discoveries of more than just scale and scope impacts.

> *Argyle Street, Halifax, 2015: One block is made over in a placemaking style, with widened sidewalks and planters. Down the middle of the road was painted an argyle pattern, making the street look like an dashing senior on a round of golf.*
>
> *Let there be more streets in argyle.*

The mapmaking method asks for a spatial understanding showing a bird's-eye view of what is commonly seen at eye level. The emphasis on walking as knowing places emerging from this research makes maps subject and method. Tim Ingold makes this point in differentiating between how paths are made by drawing them versus by walking them:

> The pedestrian is blind in a different way. It is not that he cannot see anything in the field of vision. One the contrary, since the ground is a fractal surface there is no limit to the variety it offers to his inspection. What he cannot see, however, either in his mind's eye or on the ground, is the overall pattern or design traced by his movement. This is due to the factor of scale. Relative to the expanse of his walking, the pedestrian's eyes are simply too close to the ground. To see the designs, he would have to fly with the birds … Ordinarily, however, the wayfarer is not a walker of shapes or outlines, and his vision unfolds at ground level, as he goes along, rather than from a superior and stationary vantage-point.[74]

This quotation's mention of shapes, at this point, is, I feel, an auspicious echo of methodological soundness and thematic roundness. Becoming familiar with a place by walking it is a different experience than coming to know it through maps, where the ruptures go un-represented; whether through scale or viewpoint, maps may be only disserving places in their scope, shape and meaning.

3D models

I decorated the wonder'neath art studio setting of this research's focus group to evoke sites' materialities, displaying participants' anonymous hand-drawn maps and my fieldnote photographs, and

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[74] Ingold, 2010, S127-S128

reading out material objects noted by participants to suggest ideas for their 3D models. Modelmaking was limited by the studio setting and emplaced art supplies within:

> I do need some glue. Hmm, what kind of glue should I use? Probably wood glue.

> I'm looking for–not, like a knife, or a blade … Have to do without it.

> I'm not a fan of the hot glue gun.

> I don't have enough supply of what I want: I would have liked to do it out of wood, but, you don't have enough tools… 's okay.

> You did a great job with those wooden [*i.e. cardboard*] columns.

> This is the worst thing I've ever built. [*general laughter*] This is the worst thing I've ever done in my life.

Participants tended to view their models as insufficiently realistic or crafted, whereas I saw the models for their significance in representation. I later photographed each 3D model in its respective site, within or near its material object exemplar, to emplace its representationality. Yet the mapmaking and modelmaking activities, and my photographs, could only gesture towards this research's sites; while not rendered inert, their materialities were left at a remove, a disjunctive irruption of place unaccountable even in the re-imagining.

No point is more resonant in ending this discussion than disclosing that the two Farm structures inspiring two 3D models have disappeared in the site's relocation. The ground is now uncomfortably exposed, entangled and presently absent amongst the residue of former activities. What forms these structures now take–that is, presence or trace, walked past or envisioned, on the roughly overturned earth or from the smoothly manicured sky–is pure conjecture, now; the practices of reshaping continue.

> *??, 2024: I want to be in a pop-up camper,*
> *one I own, or a one-room cabin. Yes, a*
> *cabin, and I want to step onto the front*
> *porch in my long-sleeved shirt and flannel*
> *overlayer, and lean on the balustrade with a*
> *steaming mug of coffee to assess the day.*

> *Let this be realized.*

With 'reshaping' in the title of this chapter, I am startled not by the changes here uncovered, but by their sheer pervasiveness in public places and material objects and adults' informal learning, in addition to intersecting factors of landscape and presence/past and walkings-as-knowledges. Public places are perpetually layered and reconstructed, and material objects there operate as informal learning catalysts and originators and even symbols that reach below the surface to call up narratives hidden but not buried in the earth. This chapter has helped to reshape, too, the themes in this research, indicating that time and tensions and change are necessary to understanding the complexities of public places and their material objects bearing on adults' informal learning in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada's public place sites.

CODA

I recently had the opportunity to fly west, from the Eastest of Coasts in Canada to Vancouver and the West Coast. I had never done so before, and it was only when we were over Alberta that I thought to lean over from my aisle seat and look at the Rockies below. It left me feeling almost nauseous, the vertigo I normally get when I stand at a very tall point and look upwards. The mountains were impossibly huge, surely incapable of being summitted or even crossed on foot. But I was viewing them from above, a radically fortunate and technologically recent ability to oversee what I could not from the ground. I remembered snippets of facts about volcanoes, and how, in New Zealand, the more rugged a peak, the greater chance of its recent birth, geologically speaking; smooth-topped ranges were the old growth of the earth.

It was easier to see from above that the face of the planet was changeable, changing, all the way down to the slant of the sun coming in my living room window that would be in just a slightly different position when I returned from my trip in four days' time. I thought of Yeats, coming again, for whom "things fall apart; the centre cannot hold"[75], and Eliot's barely mapped ramblings "through certain half-deserted streets"[76], foreshadowing the changeability of places worlds apart from a geographer's dictum:

> The present-day landscape has, in short, a generally comfortable and quite efficient
> geography, even though it lacks depth and variety and tends to eradicate past geographies.
> It is a landscape quite in accord with the dominant attitudes in present-day society. But

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[75] Yeats, W.B. (1919). The second coming. Poem. Retrieved 24 Jun, 2019, from
https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43290/the-second-coming
[76] Eliot, T.S. (1915). The love song of J. Alfred Prufrock. Poem. Retrieved 24 Jun, 2019, from
https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/44212/the-love-song-of-j-alfred-prufrock

whether we judge this landscape to be an ugly mess or to be the manifestation of a new age of prosperity, progress, and equality, one thing about it is apparent. It is a recent phenomenon and there is no reason to believe that its features will last for ever, that convenience and efficiency must necessarily involve absurdity and placelessness, or that there are no prospects for profoundly significant places within this present-day landscape.[77]

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[77] Relph, 1976, 140

Changes emerge

It was difficult to see any progress in my mobile-making abilities.

I was unable to affirm my growing expertise in making mobiles, even though, since I had come to see mobiles and dissertation as entwined halves of a whole, I had amassed many more pages of writing and simply assumed the same accrual of knowledge about the construction of mobiles. I desperately wanted to be able to say, "Well, that's that [method of finding the centre of balance/tool to weigh and balance shapes/formula to determine each level's distance, etc.] sorted, then...", and "Well, that's that [chapter finished], then..." I wanted to know what I was doing with mobiles, just as I was finally coming to understand what I wanted to do with this dissertation.

Mind you, I had stopped trying to make mobiles. I was concentrating on writing, trying to assemble the edges and ends of material objects and adults' informal learning and Halifax, Nova Scotia's public place sites. I was closer to fashioning research findings, so I may be forgiven for intuiting that I was moving equally towards adroit mobile aptitudes.

But: a mobile is in the making, I think (or rather, I form).

Deep down, somatically, I knew that.

So I chose to stop imagining that I would create an extraordinarily expert mobile; it would look like whatever it turned out to be. I gave time and space and quietude to my theoretically deepening mobile knowledges, to see whether that largesse would transform into embodied mobile-making aptitudes.

And when I tried again to make a mobile–it worked.

I made and hung in my apartment a symmetrical mobile that spins and swings and twists the thread tying the levels together (in the distant past, I had read that mobiles' movements can be caused by strong emotions or otherworldly emanations, even without air circulating–I watched this mobile closely for any such signs). The prolonged pause I took from mobile-breaking/making allowed my intuition tempered with understanding to emerge, as did my commitment to making a smaller mobile, with easily procured, identical shapes that were inherently complex already.

DIFFERENCES

These differences made a success of my second mobile-making attempt:

Openness

My first mobile attempt in April 2019 was a constricted affair: I was intent on making a mobile with hastily assembled, non-purposeful resources as quickly as possible in order to return to writing. On my subsequent attempts in July 2019, I invited all of my ideas and skills and knowledges to contribute to the process. In addition to constructing a simple, balanced mobile, I also drew on material objects' enmeshed receptivities, both immediate and gradual adults' informal learning awarenesses, public places' buried historicities, and the Halifax sites' gradual changes; all flowed into making a mobile no more than 30 centimetres wide. I tried to invoke Calder's *laissez-faire* artistic process: "I make a mobile without very much worry about how it's going to move. You trust to luck and the linking. Somehow things seem to work out rather pleasantly."[1] Drawing on the confidence I gained in gradually forging research contributions, and relaxing my expectations in favour of slow development, did in fact make things work out pleasantly.


Figure 1: Not very imaginative, but technically, it is a mobile

Patience

Also differently, for my second, third and fourth attempts I approached mobiles from a more mindful point of view. I have spent hours on other making endeavours: sewing tiny stitches onto a handmade pillow, and gluing four types of glitter onto my luck shrine, and, now, tying and retying the strings holding one mobile arm to another, and recalculating which two set-apart shapes would produce balance. Videos showing mobile-making produced finished products in as little as 14 minutes; I took a little more than 90. Embracing a contemplative frame of mind gave me the time and space to learn how to make a functioning mobile, as I hope my request to readers for their patience in pursuing the unfolding of this research also does.

Unmediated making

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[1] Lemon, R. (27 Feb, 1965). The soaring art of Alexander Calder. *Saturday Evening Post, 238*(4), 30-35. p.33

Figure 2: Barbapapa (above) and Whipple (below)

My research revealed that material object interactions for adults' informal learning are direct or show intermediary support or illustrate symbolic understanding. This resonated with my understanding of mobile elements: one took them as is, or they stood for something else near, or much farther away. I saw that my desire to reform elements–through cutting, sharpening, trimming, or incising their surfaces–was unnecessary and detrimental to the overall form. My successful second mobile was made of floral wire and paper clips, both adjusted but not fundamentally recast. Of Calder's work, people write: "Many of his … mobiles and stabiles, don't portray scenes or objects from the real world; they are just about themselves."[2] I refused the temptation to manipulate the core elements of this work; I realized better results when I let ideas and materials be themselves instead of forcing ill-fitting associations.

For my next mobile, #3, I attempted a Calder-inspired series of Barbapapa blobs, then a carefully-levelled whiffletree mobile for mobile #4. Neither are groundbreaking in design or technical expertise, yet they remain suspended, and hold their shapes lightly, and swing freely: they work, as a form and a process.

These forays do not make me anything close to an expert, or even experienced, maker, and I am life-voyages away from artist status. But I make no such claims: my skills lay in scrivening, not sculpting, and I put to rest my secret desire for prodigiousness in mobile-making. Besides, any immediate facility with mobile forms would undermine the persistence of this research; that expediency is the wrong outcome for this process of mine.

My learning is not due to haste, or convolution, or exemplars, or conventions. My learning consists of ongoing and close investigation of familiar elements differently combined to celebrate change and exploration. And they are work.

> [Calder] believed in working simply, in greatly respecting materials, and in doing it with "an adventurous spirit in attacking the unfamiliar or unknown. . . . Disparity in form, color, size, weight, motion is what makes a composition, and if this is allowed, then the number of

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[2] Lipman, J., with M. Aspinwall. (1981). *Alexander Calder and his magical mobiles.* New York, NY: Hudson Hills Press Inc. p.81

elements can be very few. . . . It is the apparent accident to regularity which the artist actually controls by which he makes or mars a work."[3]

And so, I keep practicing the knowledges I have acquired. I imagine research enquiry into visual languages of adults' informal learning, and irreverently-themed mobiles I make and give to friends as Christmas gifts; more than anything else, I persevere. The knowledges here continue in many directions, complete in themselves and still rich for the future. Jean-Paul Sartre was cavalier about Calder's mobiles *oeuvre*: "Calder's mobiles were 'little private' celebrations having no existence other than its movement that was perpetual and always becoming"[4]; my 'perpetual becomings' consist of the following demonstrations of movement.

MOVEMENTS

Mobiles' shapes

I envision mobiles showing participants' hand-drawn images of meaningful material objects from Halifax's public place sites hanging from a mobile's arms. I imagine representation grafted onto a fusion of meaning and form:

> Kinetic artistic works … mainly tried to imitate life going beyond the traditional conception of the static and motionless artistic object. The works identified themselves with movement, demonstrating metamorphosis and change. The kinetic work itself becomes movement, then, and occupies space in a new way of arts, unknown until that moment[5].

These shapes signify knowings depicted in a mobile form that offers a remarkable understanding of theoretical and embodied change.

Expansion

In a 1951 artist statement, Calder wrote that

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[3] Toll, S.I. (2010). My way: Calder in Paris. *Sewanee Review, 118*(4), 589-602. pp.601-602.

[4] Rycroft, S. (2012). Art and micro-cosmos: Kinetic art and mid-20th-century cosmology. *Cultural Geographies, 19*(4), 447-467. p.452

[5] Herranz-Pascual, Y., Pastor-Bravo, J. & Moldes, B.-R. (2013). Representing the movement / presenting the movable. *Arte, Individuo y Sociedad, 25*(3), 459-477. p.469

> The underlying sense of form in my work has been the system of the Universe, or part thereof. For that is a rather large model to work from…. When I have used spheres and discs, I have intended that they should represent more than what they just are.[6]

I read here Calder's awareness of imaginative space and size possibilities. His mobiles ranged from works to be constructed in foundries, to mobiles "flattened out [so] they can be mailed or shipped in surprisingly small packages. The smallest were made to fit into envelopes."[7] Mobiles' varying sizes[8] indicate their fluid form and representation, invoking any mass of ideas concurrently on any number of planes. This cosmic breadth and depth expanding ever outwards infuses this research's elements.

Repose

I like a mobile's dynamism: I like its movement, and sway, and twist of shapes and arms. I can see in it a fluctuating focal point, good for meditation[9], and soothing in its repetition, like the eternal sweep of waves over a pebbled shore. For Calder, this motion was crafted and intentional: "Just as one can compose colors, or forms, so one can compose motions."[10] Whether spiraling, tilting, twirling, or oscillating, mobiles carry their own movement within them. Once hung, a mobile moves independently, and its contradictions of motion and repose are compelling.

I was not prepared to become so attuned to the mobile form as a result of this research. It could have been expected, though, since my efforts at meaning-making stem from figurative associations, shown in this dissertation's writing. Calder himself saw his mobiles as modes in shift: he claimed to "paint with shapes"[11], making with his mobiles "a piece of poetry that dances with the joy of life and surprises."[12] I find that description serves this research's discoveries and deliveries as well.

I hope to make more mobiles, successfully, ones that canter oddly and brightly and seem as though they would not hang together, though they do. It has been the greatest transfiguration for me to come to

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[6] Calder, A. (5 Mar, 1965). Calder the mobile maker: The artist delights everybody. Mobile maker's giddy whirl. *Life, 58,* 47-53. p.50.

[7] Lipman with Aspinwall, 1981, 51

[8] Montague, D. (2015). Alexander Calder & the history of mobiles. Retrieved March 29, 2019, from http://montaguemobiles.com/history-of-mobiles/

[9] Montague, 2015

[10] Lipman with Aspinwall, 1981, 52

[11] Lemon, 1965, 33

[12] Toll, 2010, 601

and through this work; my learnings are vast and far-flung, shaped differently on the air moment by moment, yet nonetheless mesmerizing.

Where I live is filled with the graceful drop of mobiles, moving for no reason in the calm.

Still–

I touch to set them spinning as I go by.

REINCARNATION

First, I found I could not write a proper introduction to the dissertation since I could find no beginning to describe; later, I resisted writing an ending, since I did not know how to end something that had no beginning.[1]

How, exactly, to start an ending? My final words begin with a quotation from a female writer who does not believe that thoughts, feelings, and expressions can be dismembered, cleaver-through, into a before and after. This conclusion is only a stay for an enquiry I set up to have relevance and presence in the world after I met the formal accreditation requirements. Though I have carried out the research, it is no more mine than are these words I am typing now; I am simply selecting and re-ordering their pieces, de-signing them into tales about learning and places and objects, oh my.

Where I have been insecure about this work, the act/art of writing has settled me: having an idea to discuss, I feel safest starting with an "I", my mind's I, then generally some verb that I intend means 'to think', even if the word used is an emotion–feel, prefer, hope. Next, the idea, rarely if ever the short version, added on to like a snowball, tumbling down rocky commas and bouldered semi-colons to the gravity-halting period ending the sentence. Only then can I see what I think and believe, where the explanation falls short and where it leads. That sentence is followed by another, and another, perhaps a short one. For variety. Like a walk: but not a trek or a hike. And then a longer sentence centred on a carefully-selected word that judders in the silent aurality of my head, stopping a presumably smooth declarative process. Maybe, likely, next someone else's words, a quotation foreign to the body of language, like a cat's meow for supper, in which the meaning is nonetheless clear. Then more words, sentences; they stroll continuously wrapping across the expanse of screen so their weight and heft of notion and reaction and interpretation catch, and echo.

And then I do that again, did that again, 250+ pages long so that I mean, have meant, clearly.

But that routine is shortly not to be any longer, at least in service of this research, and pre-emptive nostalgia ensues.

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[1] St. Pierre, E.A. (1997). Nomadic inquiry in the smooth spaces of the field: A preface. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 10*(3), 365-383. p.367

I am a writer, and have been carefully picking out letters on the keyboard of my mother's new brown Smith-Corona electronic typewriter. I typed a prose poem—"What is SUMMER?"—on a ruled index card; the first line read, "A fragile, touching reunion between children and grandparents…" My first security in writing was speaking for others. When, where, how, and for what reasons I write is an odyssey for another illiad, when not identified here, but in doing this research I have recognized, in ways I have never before, my ongoing need and rage and dissatisfaction and exultation of writing to make known. This achievement is unparalleled for me, and I see and salute those cohorts with whom I now feel more closely aligned, whose expert unfurling of authorship in all walks of knowledge emanate. I stand behind them and intrude slowly, continually finding in me skills that are far from finished.

But this research is complete, and for that I have in this chapter obligations towards an ending. It takes the shape of a conceptual discussion exploring my positionalities and methodological decisions that affect material objects, adults' informal learning, and public place sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and the integral research themes of time, tensions, and change that illuminate this work. Following this re-situation, I report four major research findings pertaining to material objects, adults' informal learning, public places and Halifax study sites, and arts-informed research methodology. The findings foreground research representation, activated by maps and 3D models, and ultimately portrayed as mobiles.

I also reflect on conceptual, methodological, and researcher challenges. The final two sections address the significance of this research for pertinent fields and for myself, and my plans as a nascent researcher and field-tested writer: a walk through the woulds, indeed.

After which, I depart; a subordinate clause no longer.

PURPOSE

With this chapter, I bring together the assorted branches, roots, and outgrowths of this research. The crucial and contrasting understandings of literature, findings, and significance around which this work is formed are non-sequential; they float and bob, sink and press together, so that the best technique of gathering them is to hold their strings loosely in my hand, like balloons lifting into the sky. I do not fuse them into a single entity, as this research would not brook such absorption. Nevertheless, they must somewhere be all at once, and at this stage, it is my hand holding them in concert.

The other purpose of this chapter is to articulate this research's aligned findings and artful representations to share learning insights with others.

> The transformative potential of arts-informed research speaks to the need for researchers to develop representations that address audiences in ways that do not pacify or indulge the senses but arouse them and the intellect to new heights of response and action.[2]

Prior to that point, I reiterate this research's major elements, and the ways in which they have been conceptualized in and for this work. I present my arts and theoretical positionalities supporting this research, and review its arts-informed research methodology, and show through these combinations attributes of material objects, adults' informal learning, and public place sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Complete consensus about these elements does not occur–obviously–but my writing to make known my perspectives and interpretations is as strong a topic sentence as I can make it.

THEORETICAL POSITIONALITIES

Evident in my constant and far-reaching insertions and figurative examples, I examine this work through a constructivist lens recognizing the diverse sources that produce experience and understanding. The co-constitution of learning and lived encounters is a tenet of early and recent adult education authors like Hoodless, Lindeman and Dewey through to Livingstone, Schugurensky, and Eraut; I expand the work of these authors to focus on the settings in which multiple fruitful learning encounters can occur. Multiplicities abound, too, in my various researcher-subject positionalities acknowledged in this research to mould and colour the world through my writerly aspirations, artful affinities, and imaginative sensibilities.

Postmodernism offered a stylistic paradigm, paradoxically, for this work: I found it difficult to reconcile my beliefs in artifice and replica with this research's materialities, until I saw space for them held in the elements of arts-informed methodology. I used pastiche and bricolage techniques to embellish writing and observe my constructivist leanings, and to make available to me site vignettes' stylistic affinities of skeptical record and polyconnection: early exercises in writing and in representation.

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[2] Cole, A.L, & J.G. Knowles. (2008). Arts-informed research. In J.G. Knowles & A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* (pp. 55-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. p.68

Strong and recurring feminisms influences generously shared with me versions of academic writing and enquiry distinct from patriarchal research models and discourse, expanding my written vocal range and acknowledging supports from others on this journey. I hope to honour their legacy with this work by offering another feminist lens conceptualizing and disseminating arts-informed research, in which subverted female author and artist narratives become customary collaborators in academic research.

To an extent I did not understand until this moment of writing, and upholding my belief in iterative and emergent learning, I see this work's theoretical positionalities as cyclical: starting with constructivism, within which learning relies on and makes experiences, the theoretical basis of this work spreads outwards to form both artfully-inspired and historically dis-empowered pathways to alternative expressions. This interrelated growth of experience through alternative expressions simply breeds more of each, and their entwined activity is explained by ecological theory, showing that systems thrive and sensations abound due to any number of connected elements and are untraceable to a single origin. It offers a like analogy for the act of walking differently, meandering that generates fresh cognitive associations in and on artful content and artful forms and installations. Ecological theory helps to understand the dependent tangles: when one part shifts, the entire system is moved, thus generating new learning from new experiences.

Comparable to ecological theory, new materialisms help reconfigure how this research's elements resonate with one another. Though reluctant initially to invoke a theory of ontology, I came to find in new materialisms a reintroduction to the world. Material objects and people affect and change one another through intra-activity at the level of atoms, where growth is perpetual and the world is re-forming, so that learning in and of it transforms. The opportunity to reveal past conditions is always therefore present. With the expansive possibilities of new materialisms, the theoretical loop of this research returns to constructivism's varieties of experience and feminism's shared meaning-making capacities, leading to ecological theory's entwined impacts in complex environments that are in fact reshaped by new materialism's ongoing recasting of subject-object knowledges that transform what and how learning happens; all of which is expressed in the detached style of postmodern fragmentation.

The theoretical complement of this research has allowed me to envision a rich compound of ideas, influences, and representations. In alignment with these epistemologies is the arts-informed research methodology that guides this enquiry towards representational forms directed outside of academia.

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

My introduction to arts-informed research methodology occurred by the end of week three in this program, clarifying for me I did not want to research art but its qualitative research process affinities. This work relies on Cole and Knowles' 2008 chapter on arts-informed research methodology to act as a model of arts-inspired writing within qualitative research, and to convey deconstruction sensibilities, representational possibilities, and means of reckoning.

Qualities of goodness

As I continued to develop this enquiry, I found my explorations and implementations informed by the arts as indicative more of a practice than a resolute structure. That is, the "sufficiently fluid and flexible"[3] methodology "enhance[s] the possibilities"[4] open for proposing, designing, conducting, analyzing, and sharing research. I put forward ideas, reconsidered them, discussed them with others, reconfigured them, returned their underwhelming results, and reshaped them into expression and activities that better fit with the qualities and characteristics of the methodology.

I appreciate arts-informed research's expanses of fit and qualities of goodness[5], to which I have drawn attention in this work. I wanted my writing choices of tone, voice, and even content to reflect my aura within this work, ideally conveying my "conceptual artistry and creative and aesthetic sensibilities"[6] apart from an autoethnographic research design. Variously jocular and sombre insertions hint at subversive perspectives I sometimes adopt in academic research to up-set the institution. In style and content, the insertions "evidence of the presence and signature of the researcher,"[7] another of the defining elements of arts-informed research.

In committing to a particular art form, I have paid careful attention to information-gathering through drawings and models; in my own practices of mobile-making, I demonstrate "a particular art form … reflected in elements of the creative research process and in the representation of the research 'text.'"[8] The aesthetic qualities I realize in this research, somewhat analogous to my unorthodox writing style, are found in mobiles' communicative capacities to act as information 'sites' for adults' informal learning,

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[3] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 60
[4] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 60-61
[5] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 65-67
[6] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 61
[7] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 61
[8] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 61

to demonstrate ecological fashionings of public places, and to convey my attention to research practice and product. Participants' creations are incorporated into a mobile form, de-mediating their responses. Severally and jointly, this research's aesthetic qualities and representational form assist in the advancement of knowledge, intra-actively transformative in re-making the world through a "biocentric sense of reality and values."[9]

Finally, the internal consistency, coherence, and authenticity[10] of this work shows its "holistic quality"[11]: I have produced a work in which inner compatibility and unities are present by way of maintaining consistent writing conceits and tropes throughout coherent chapters referring both backwards and forwards to gradually complex ideas that align formally with mobiles. This research's authenticity is found in my honest disclosures of hardships and incomplete knowledges; the intimacy of this work tied to my identity as a writer does not allow me to do otherwise.

Shortly I will address the challenges posed for me by these methodological qualities of goodness in order to present a more balanced discussion of my methodological understandings. Prior to that discussion, however, I offer a summary of this enquiry, comprising theoretical positionalities and the methodological design support, and pointing towards results that demonstrate enhanced knowledges of material objects, adults' informal learning, and public place sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

ENQUIRY SUMMARY

Literature and findings indicated that material objects are difficult to ascertain as sources of adults' informal learning and as representations of abstract ideas. New materialist awarenesses of intra-activity help clarify how people engage with things and sheds light on continually reforming objects and understanding. This refashioning permits material objects in public places to have the capacity for direct, indirect, or symbolic connections with historical or underrepresented narratives not in evidence.

Adults' informal learning in this research is constructivist in valuing ongoing learning and the combination of knowledge acquisition with acquired or applied experiences. Divisions between self-directed (intentional) and incidental (unintentional) informal learning for adults in public places are

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[9] O'Sullivan, E. (1999). *Transformative learning: Educational vision for the 21st century.* Toronto, CA: OISE/UT in association with the University of Toronto Press. p.257
[10] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 67
[11] Cole & Knowles, 2008, 66

further complicated by various attitudes towards intention and awareness, remedied in part by accepting emergent knowledges.

I found that four public place sites in Halifax are meaningful in embodied and emotional ways, and that people seek out both familiar and unfamiliar environments to reinforce or initiate informal learning, even if not consciously identified as a goal. Expressed preferences for physical comfort, engagement, and constant tensions of function, nature, and design depict public places in flux; these changes are perpetually balanced in public places through material object interactions, shifts in physical settings over time, and abstract ideas of place. Material objects' effects on adults' informal learning in public place sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, are difficult to stabilize because of forces constantly on the move; mobiles effectively capture these intertwined effects and perpetual intra-activity while representing ongoing change and movement in a single form and location.

With the understanding that material object interactions can be differently realized, and adults' informal learning differently recognized over time, and Halifax sites and public places differently and infinitely reshaped, I arrived at the conclusion that this enquiry extends past how objects in spaces help people in places. Instead, I found that material objects as a resource for learning are unknown, and that a constant search is undergoing for balance in places continually changing, and that a broad cosmological understanding of the size and extent of the changing world past and present gives us material objects and public places for the learning, and that arts-informed methodological facility displays these entwined representations.

This enquiry does not produce the 'final word' in this research; rather, it looks for myriad techniques that beget more possibilities for understanding, so adults' informal learning in this research is about discernment, not definition. I anticipate future research into capacities for knowing through walking in places, or artful connections to symbolic associations with emplaced material objects, or the opportunities of representing landscapes invisibly ruptured. I open this enquiry to questions on the basis of these and other conceptual, methodological, or experiential conceptualizations. In close proximity to these prospects are the moments of unrealized knowings in the course of this work.

CHALLENGES ARISING

 Conceptual

The primary achievement of this work is a strengthened understanding of the ways in which adults learn informally through material object interactions in Halifax' public place sites, but I can imagine this causes potential perceptions of conceptual insufficiencies. For instance, a constructivist positionality is concomitant with this work's tenor and enquiry processes, but a positivist design approach may have resulted in more specific findings pertaining to material composition, placement, location, and so on as noted by Doreen Massey. My constructivist lens reflects a privileged perspective in exploring rather than specifying; furthermore, having the finances, security, resources, and opportunities to gain experiences useful for learning through public place visits is a fortunate set of circumstances I enjoy.

The incompatibility of postmodernism with material objects' effects in fostering adults' informal learning in public places may not be wholly assuaged by my use of postmodern aesthetics in this work's writing and artful styles of representations, nor even in the variously post-humanist composite of new materialisms as presented by Karen Barad. This written work would likely be more academically conventional, and certainly shorter, without postmodern influence, though I believe doing so would limit my collaborations, publications, installations, and (textual and material) display possibilities.

A final conceptual challenge of this work is in the overlapping reference to specific Halifax, Nova Scotia sites and public places in general. Participants were asked for their thoughts on the Halifax Central Library, the Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, Shubie Park, and Nocturne: Art at Night particularly, so their commentary may not apply to public places overall, or their impressions of well-known local sites may contrast with their abstract understandings of public places elsewhere. While a strongly 'grounded' approach to Halifax's public place sites permeates this research, and sites' specific elements of comfort, familiarity and engagement are significant, this work's findings are meaningful for sensuous attention (David Abram), thing-power (Jane Bennett) and becoming-with (Donna Haraway) that pools complex and entangled knowings of material objects, adults' informal learning, and public places.

Methodological

This research design involves a small number of participants, perhaps perceived by some as limiting the variety and sources of information gathered. The contribution of only six voices may be seen to be less significant than those of a larger group, however, from those participants came seven transcripts, three 3D model reconstructions, 11 hand-drawn maps, and more than 65 unique drawings of material objects across four sites: in terms of the richness and layers of information gathered, this research yielded extraordinarily complex commentary.

Additionally, I have encountered misunderstandings regarding my conversational tone, seen as unduly informal, if not ineffectual, for a dissertation. In response, I affirm my plan to satisfy formal education expectations by way of informal written expression, about an enquiry, after all, on informal learning. Insertions of my own learning process and relevant understandings are a model of adults' informal learning occurring and recognized variously, even possibly collected to create a mobile form. My fortune in finding a supervisor experienced in and supportive of this voice is extraordinary, and I am grateful for her openness in understanding my intentional choices of form and style.

In retrospect, I would have made three methodological adjustments during the course of this research. The first, in imagining participants would overlay drawings of suggested site changes onto their maps of meaningful objects, needed to be abandoned to fit with my interpretivist, rather than critical, approach (2 maps contain both these sets of drawings). The second adjustment arose out of my recognition of my unclear map activity explanation, to which I responded by carrying on with interview questions but elaborated differently on the activity for each participant; participants may have been unsure which 'meaningful features' to select for drawing. Related to this adjustment was my implicit preference for drawings over written labels or descriptions. The third adjustment consisted of my changed understandings about this research's representational possibilities; I expand on this adjustment in this chapter's section on research representation.

Researcher

I see clearly now the ways in which I was unprepared to navigate researcher challenges. At times I was frustrated in not moving forward with the research because of my uncertainties around justifications, design and methods choices, and methodologically-inspired descriptions of progress. I suspect that a stronger sense of my researcher self, supported by my writerly self-identification, may have paradoxically provide me with greater authority, as well as ongoing trust in unfolding process.

It also became clear to me that my artistic abilities are amateur at best, and that an education into the visual arts would have given me a better footing to comprehend methodological and representational possibilities of arts-informed research. I acknowledge this while realizing, in line with adults' informal learning, that passion can be a strong motivator and that my art interests substituted adequately for stronger knowings, but now I understand that related vocabularies, design principles, and tools of artistic critique could help me contribute more mindfully to enlarging and expanding research practices.

My other area of inexperience showed in interviews: I was aware that scientized expectations prompted participants treated identically, and those cautions interfered with my ability to remain present. On reading transcripts, I noticed areas for follow-up where elaboration or clarification might have been generated. Despite small improvements in this regard during the subsequent focus group–asking a participant to expand their answer, or re-phrasing their comments to affirm I understood the meaning–I would benefit considerably from more experience in eliciting participant responses. I regret that I was unable to give those instances their due, particularly because participants' voices are foundational to this enquiry. Without participants' oral and artistic contributions, along with shifts in perspectives they provided, I could not have created as robust or enriching a work.

I am not impeded by the lack of expertise these caveats suggest; on the contrary, I am pleased to identify areas to direct my energies for knowing. Just as my writing about this research, while good, is stuffed regardless with opportunities where better can emerge, this research offered me challenges pointing to aspects I can improve. These insufficiencies may affect the process of this research, yet they do not minimize its insights. This research has produced three themes characterizing this research's learnings, its prevailing messages, and the mobile form of representation: time, tensions, and change.

THEMES

I thought at first that perhaps the themes of this research were sequential, each predicated on the other through a linear relationship like an essay outline. But, in progressing through this work and recognizing my preconceived ideas went unmet or were repositioned, I realized that this research is like a novel, made interesting by its story rather than its plot. In the story of material objects fostering adults' informal learning in public places in Halifax, Nova Scotia, three themes illuminate and shade perceptions of each part of the enquiry.

Time

One of these themes, time, is almost prohibitively vast and difficult to grasp in relation to material objects and adult's informal learning. In the literature and from participants' responses, however, time is meaningful in understanding learning as 'lifelong'; that is, on a spectrum of different lengths for everyone. Time is difficult to notice adults' informal learning occurring and recognition: instantaneous, over time, gradual or emergent. For public places, time helps to establish a familiar version of public place, and also buried histories there. Walking, as a means to bring forth reflection or understanding of

different times and knowing, is measured in time as well as distance. Even the hand-drawn maps and 3D models of this research invoke accessed memories. Understanding time as a characteristic of scope expands possibilities for meaning in material object interactions connecting us to invisible or smoothed over narratives.

Tensions

Tensions, another of the themes, affect every facet of this research, alerting me early that complications and resistances could strengthen this work rather than undermine it. As one of the first thematic groupings arising from analysis, tensions were variously evident within and across all four public place sites. These manifested in ongoing, carefully maintained balances between individual and collective needs, between people-centered and architecturally-derived place design, and between natural and built environments. After some research, I also found that informal learning could equally hold, if not serve, distinctions in intentionality and awareness that appeared to be contradictory. There were even tensions noted in material object affordances, and tensions of time and place are ecologically interwoven into public places histories traced on/in the present. Perhaps most substantially, mobiles rely on tension and balance as mechanical principles of counterweighted contrasting shapes and sizes that allow mobiles to swing and move while suspended in the air.

Change

The third theme of change illustrates the interconnections between them. One of the constitutive factorings into time is a sense of change from one moment to another, while tension implies that change has been halted. I began to realize that change was a meaningful theme when I discovered its impression marking all research elements: material objects can incite us to change our planned activities or pathways through public places, and material objects can be moved, replaced, or encountered differently as a result of our interactions; furthermore, adults' informal learning can urge us into civic responsibilities resulting in positive social changes; public place sites of this research alone can and did change locations over the course of this research; methodological fit in research practice changes the conventions of acceptable research process; and finally, public places can alert us to their historical conditions and also the clearly bounded, present-day spaces with which we are familiar.

These examples of change are not the result of this research's recommendations; they are, instead, a more deeply grounded (figuratively and literally) awareness of change taking place atomically and universally, extending, as Tim Ingold shows, to numerous facets of our personal lives and shared

environments. When this distinction is combined with methodologically artful representations of hand-drawn maps and 3D models, the theme of change is transmuted into an awareness of scale and scope. Scale shows the difference between the size of some thing in real life and the size of that thing on a map, model or diagram[12], whereas scope refers to the range of a subject addressed in a book, program or class.[13] Scale and scope allow us to shift our vision and understanding physically, cognitively, and representationally in a perpetual awareness of changes to material objects, adults' informal learning, and public places.

With scale and scope more strongly featured in our awarenesses, we begin to develop a number of capacities. We begin to understand how material objects offer us frameworks to adapt spatially and historically to difference. We can start to recognize that adults' informal learning is variously yet simultaneously individually and socially determined, and expansive in influence rather than constrained by intention. We come to recognize that public places are as we find them and, moreover, also as they once were and will continue to come to be. And a form that depicts these fluctuations, holding all its elements taut even while swinging unencumbered, is a mobile nearly infinite in its possibilities for size and reach (or meaning of them).

While I confess to being motivated by the sound and echo of words as much as by their meaning on occasion, I see in these verbose explanations a wide, fascinating, and creative reply to an enquiry into the effects of material objects on adults' informal learning in public places in Halifax, Nova Scotia. At this stage, it is appropriate to share the findings that came out of this research, renamed by me as 'insights arising', in which these themes will likely become more apparent.

INSIGHTS ARISING

Whereas nearly every quotation I liked the look or sound of was a candidate to be an insight arising from the research, I was eventually able to distinguish the most salient points in order to gather these insights and their associations as follows.

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[12] Scale. [Definition]. (2019). In Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved 2 Jul, 2019, from
https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/scale
[13] Scope. [Definition]. (2019). In Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved 2 Jul, 2019, from
https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/scope

FINDING: **Adults were not taught how to learn using material objects, so struggle to learn informally through them, but are receptive to these possibilities.**

In this research, participants found it difficult to connect the four public place sites' material objects and opportunities for informal learning. When seeking information related to the site or a particular hobby or activity to be carried out in that site, participants relied on material objects offering written descriptions or instructions as evidence of direct interaction: posted maps, signs, resource books, and program guides. There was equal chance for material objects to serve in other capacities (indirect) or act in place of different place narratives or approaches (symbolic), but these went unrecognized by participants. Finally, within the sites, material objects and interactions were secondary to human encounters; adults were more aware of what they learned informally through conversation or other social experiences, demonstrating a lack of awareness of learning using material objects. The combined emphasis on textual, socially-derived knowledge acquisition through literal representation points to substantial gaps in making use of material objects in adults' informal learning.

FINDING: **Ongoing evident and hidden site changes permit balanced tensions that accommodate different needs for informal learning.**

The sites in this research underwent material changes to varying degrees, including their boundaries and locations, repairs or additions to physical infrastructure, building/structure/installation design, or access and use at different times of the year; the impact of these changes is tempered by participants' varying familiarities with sites. Based on participants' reasons for visiting, attitudes, expectations, and previous or hearsay encounters, the sites appear to sanction a simultaneous pulling in the direction of the past, with its buried narratives and meanings, and in the direction of the present and future, where material objects exist and can mean; these historicized changes can serve different learners' needs accordingly. Literature on public places, coupled with the variety of participants' experiences, beliefs, and behaviours in the research sites, indicates that responses to sites are entangled in shifting perspectives and continually adapted viewpoints. Lastly, new materialist paradigms regard materiality and idealism as entwined and producing changes in people and in places by means of intra-activity. The constant, if not easily visible, changes in places are reconfigured by minute and widescale adjustments to matter, setting, and interactions held in check by more of the same.

FINDING: **Equipping adults to imagine public places' reach physically or artistically causes material recognition of buried narratives that foster expanded knowledges.**

The act of walking can help us to engage with public place materialities, establishing attributes like landscape characteristics, distance, and expanse that would not be as easily attained through other types of views or movements across it. As indicated by the construction of meaningful features through 3D models, material objects in public places can be recreated in various sizes for artistic purposes of display and representation. This research, and adults' informal learning research, emphasizes time as a factor of adults' informal learning; both instantaneous and protracted recognition qualify. Finally, according to public places literatures, historical and marginalized past narratives of public places are nonetheless present; material objects can be used to symbolize these entwined past&present stories in new materialist sensibilities. Different embodied and artful means of understanding the physical extent of public places can be complemented by the act of walking and the readiness to regard prolonged and historical knowledges in order to inspire ways in which material objects in public places can support adults' informal learning.

> **FINDING:** **Arts-informed research fits this enquiry by celebrating entanglement and layering representational, demonstrated, and materialized meaning-making.**

As was found in this research, adults' informal learning and public places are more authentically represented ecologically, so that while a commitment to a specific art form in investigating this relationship is noticeable, influences appear from a range of artistic practices. Furthermore, arts-informed research has the capacity to produce research representations that are themselves fruitful as material objects for adults' informal learning, as evidenced by the mobile forms begotten by this research. Lastly, arts-informed research methodology can sustain changes to scale and scope in the materiality of artful representations, so that the Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm toolshed model instead sits on my closet shelf, and the kayak dock model from Shubie Park rests inside a plastic bag beside it. The four site maps rolled up beside my bookcase show different areas of space, but they exhibit generally uniform representational shapes drawn by participants to indicate meaningful site features. While mobiles resist ongoing expansion, thanks to their design, they can accommodate significant changes in size and complexity.

These findings illuminate this research enquiry, and indicate contributions to adults' informal learning, material objects, and public places literature and fields of practice. In order to completely carry out the constituent elements of this work, however, I turn now to representational aspects.

REPRESENTATION

In this research, I used information-gathering methods (map drawings and 3D model constructions) that overlap with research representations. I imagined I would gain rich information from participants narrating their map drawings, then offering feedback and reflection on this activity, so that I could glean methodological understanding of process. During analysis and at my supervisor's suggestion, I examined drawings individually and collectively for characteristics, patterns, and grouping–at which point a mobile made up of these shapes revealed itself to me as the most kindred representational form. To my surprise, maps were better suited as a product.

I carried through with my original intention to collect and then photograph each 3D model individually and emplaced, to fashion into collages I visualized adorning walls where this research was shared. But the photographs seemed static, and I understood there was actually very little complexity to them for the time and tensions and change ideas I was approaching. To resolve this dilemma, I returned to focus group transcripts, which revealed adults learning from one another through conversations about material resources for creative work, and self-directed learning, and historical and cultural knowledges relating to Halifax's public places. I found in participants' recorded conversations that the 3D model construction process demonstrated social connections for adults' informal learning.

Methodologically, I was prepared for the opposite outcomes of information-gathering and representation: hand-drawn maps are useful to fashion products, rather than generate process; and, 3D model creation is better suited to relay process instead of monumentalize products. The shapes appear throughout this text, moving into the foreground and acting as the building blocks of a language beyond words, is another formal representation. Within the collage of shapes, the black and white drawings seem imponderable but engaging. Nor am I interested in translating these symbols: their embodiment *en masse* is far better as a work of art.

I have made clear the theoretical and methodological associations with mobile forms throughout this work; in fact, I have laboured to thread their emergence throughout these chapters, just as their associations arose for me, sporadically, unsought, yet forceful nonetheless. As a composite of elements and techniques, constructivist approaches to adults' informal learning resonate with mobiles; to serve the methodological purpose of making scholarship accessible, the material mobile form is essential.

This research and my informal learning experiences places mobiles into the spaces between realization and representation and celebration. Clearly there exist other forms to represent this enquiry and its

findings, but I cannot conceive of one as integral to this research, and so suited to its themes of time, tensions, and change, nor as potentially interesting for various communities. It is an accessible art form that does not require an advanced vocabulary, or craft knowledge, or critical acumen, and for those reasons, it is uniquely suited to convey the information of this research.

Mobile-izing Knowledges

I was overwhelmed to consider the extraordinary number of opportunities for sharing this information with communities connected to the Halifax Central Library, Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm, Shubie Park, and Nocturne: Art at Night. Many options are equally relevant and inviting, but have been destabilized: a public talk proposal I issued has gone unanswered, and I would need to apply to host a site-specific Jane's Walk. Another option to host a talk in the new Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm setting is suspended at this cold and wet point of the year. I may submit an application to Nocturne for this work, although that is months from now; I could also offer a program through the Halifax Public Libraries system. Less obvious opportunities exist for me to share this research in makerspaces or through lunchtime talks in study sites. I am most mindful that sharing this information–its knowledge mobilization, a unique referent for this work's representation and spread–suit the informal topic and learning style I explored, and that mobiles feature in the spread of information.

As formal works, mobiles fill my mind with possibilities: guerilla mobile-making, where I create and stealthily hang mobiles throughout Halifax; a small-scale mobile-making workshop at the wonder'neath studio; mobiles I commission from valuable materials to send to site coordinators in recognition of their assistance and support; a walking activity in which participants create and inscribe mobiles with significant dates of informal learning encounters; even the instructions to make a mobile from this work, with its pages torn asunder and changed into some new form…

Such are the extensive non-academic settings in which to disseminate this research, but I have an obligation to situate this work within the academy, too. Though I have been party to these gradually materializing thoughts and connections for years, I recognize the need to clarify their significance for others, and outline this work's scholastic contributions.

SIGNIFICANCE

This research is significant in several respects, perhaps unsurprising considering the complexities revealed in material objects and adults' informal learning and public place understandings, of which undoubtedly more will be disclosed over time and through scope and scale not encompassed by this enquiry. For simplicity, I have divided these observations into research significance academically and personally/professionally.

Academic

This research adds to adults' informal learning knowledges through new understandings about material objects' potential use. New materialisms literature tends to favour online/virtual spaces rather than physical settings. Though this research indicates minimal effects from material objects on adults' informal learning, this is due to a lack of understanding about material objects' usefulness; when viewed as storied and historical conduits into public places whose scope has been expanded, material objects' potential to aid in adults' informal learning is made visible, even realized. These insights into material objects for informal learning can guide public place design in support of intentional and unintentional learning endeavours through a more informed and effective use of resources.

This research demonstrates ecological connections forming a composite of materialities, informal learning, public places, and artfulness. The research design I created that integrated these areas, and the resulting enquiry into material objects fostering adults' informal learning in public place sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia, is not found in literature or research. I offer with this work a model uniting disconnected and even contrasting strands of thought into an aligned, creative representation that is also rare, therefore generating conceptual as well as formal insights. Adding to knowledge about the ways discrete interests can be brought together and artfully represented is a substantial contribution.

Literature on public places benefits from this research showing competing priorities in public places. In chapters exploring site contestations, I describe economic, environmental, and activist roots that shape perceptions of places differently. Frequently these considerations overlap, despite their differences; in this research, such knowledges enhance one another, and bring to the fore new project opportunities featuring intertwined causes in multi-layered public places. While a human/cultural geographer or sociological perspective could explore such issues, the research conventions of those disciplines limit insights from adults' informal learning or arts-informed representations. This research depicts distinct knowledge formations combined into collectively-constructed public places that encourage transdisciplinary explorations.

I see in this research contributions to understanding about material objects, adults' informal learning, and public places through scale and scope's imaginative capacities. Like this research's themes of time, tensions, and change, the differences introduced by increasing the breadth and depth of contributing factors ultimately reshape our understandings. With these new, expanded understandings, material objects can help adults' informal learning to occur, and public places provide narratives that colour our reactions to their histories and presences. In terms of entering into creative processes, this research provides a demonstration of facilitated visionary work that is not found in discussions of these intertwined areas, and that will benefit creative inquiry work for researchers and students.

The final, not insubstantial, academic contribution of this work is its meaning for arts-informed research work. I continue to encounter conflated arts-based and arts-informed literature that fails to recognize the qualitative research contributions of its research design. Work like this helps clarify methodological distinctions related to researcher reflexivity, audience engagement, commitment to an art form, and so on. With this qualitative study of material objects' effects on adults' informal learning in public places represented formally in mobiles, this area gains another illustration of this work that strengthens methodological understanding.

I would like there to be still more instances in which this research offers valuable contributions to literature and learning about material objects, adults' informal learning, public places and sites within Halifax, as well as arts-informed research methodology; if I have otherwise anticipated every benefit, then this research's expansive effects are not what I wished them to be. These academic contributions are based in increasing knowledge and learning, in which adults engage informally for numerous reasons. Through increased understanding about perceptions of material objects in public places, and expanded interpretations of these objects and places, in addition to artistic representations of these understandings, adults engaged in these efforts can be more effectively supported both directly and indirectly in achieving the ends they themselves choose.

And I have benefited from this research, as well, exponentially and radically.

Professional

I was unaware of the skills, nuances, understandings, and sheer perseverance required to carry out social sciences research at a doctoral level. Now, I understand better what a thorough and aligned research design looks like, and a fruitful search for literature, not to mention the differences between an organized transcript and hastily-cobbled notes in the field. I have become progressively more adept at

describing this research, after countless hours imagining its pieces and connections, and can summarize its findings in different discourses for numerous purposes. My growth lies in my willingness to identify as a qualitative researcher moving towards experthood, and who is ready to share my knowledge of process, challenge, and fulfillment with students and peers. This positionality–a doctoral researcher–is an achievement I gladly and gratefully add to my keeping.

The other benefit I came to know through this work was developing tools with which to think, speak, and write about creative process and artful design. My excitement about multiple forms of expression stood me in good stead as I constructed and re-constructed research frameworks to analyze art, and interrogated representational forms, and sought the significance of different expressive modes. I came to credit myself as a creative person with growing strengths in the intersections of art and research. Before I officially embarked on this research, I constructed an interactive board as an artifact of my PhD progress, to which are pinned goals, encouragements, lists for entertaining and friendship, along with a yarn line tracking a tied knot showing progress. The handwritten notes on it have faded over several years, but I am still a writer, just now of more and different things. The knot has been moved along.

Concluding my discussion of this research's significance with an explanation of the benefits I have gained throughout its duration is a good transition into examining how this work can progress, and where I see my next steps as a researcher taking me.

NEXT STEPS

While I foresee many opportunities for this research to be developed and continued, I here identify only three future paths because I already recognize their capacities for evolutions of this work: investigations into sensate new materialist research, blended artful and walking research methodologies, and like representational mobile forms.

> *Future research*

My lack of familiarity with new materialisms before undertaking this research meant that my understandings of it were wholly original and situated within (and situating) the material objects, adults' informal learning, and public places elements of this work. But comments from colleagues and conference audience members have helped me to recognize that new materialist and intra-active perspectives have more to offer adults' informal learning by way of public places. A sensate awareness,

or sense work, would be an interesting foray into new materialist influences on learning in places; for instance, the sense impressions of the Common Roots Urban Farm/the Farm's gardens distinct from Nocturne: Art at Night's downtown installation spaces may produce learning affect/affect learning differently. I imagine, too, research opportunities for new materialist-informed tactility projects in public places leading to informal learning for adults. There are rich and fruitful possibilities.

I was also intrigued by the research potential of combined artful and walking methodologies. Whereas the literature examines walking as facilitating research and art, work that fuses art and walking through research design is a new direction for exploration. Perhaps adults could represent physical fitness activity in 'steps' placed along Shubie Park's walking trails, hanging up a shoe-shaped bird-feeder for ecological inscription of their progress. I see opportunities for a wealth of projects involving scale and scope that elicits research on adults' informal learning through embodied (walking) and expressive (artful) ways of viewing, being mindful, and engaging with public places.

I see plentiful representational possibilities for mobiles. The mobile structure models layers of ideas common in learning experiences, offering a way to recreate complex systems, and mobiles' neverending relationships with their environments permits examinations of different settings and factors synchronously and diachronically. Mobiles are eminently satisfying, artfully constructing multiplicity and constant movement, and therefore encourage analogies with other objects and learning and places.

Future research that can arise from this work is diverse, because of the multi-faceted areas, elements, and forms that characterize this research. I have undergone similar shifts, movement, and refashionings throughout the course of this work, affecting my ideas around career.

Career

Before I devoted myself to doctoral study, I worked as instructor and administrator for many years in academic settings, which has given me vast and differing educational capital. I want to continue developing these knowledges through a post-secondary faculty position with accompanying teaching, publication, and service opportunities. I enjoy helping others learn, and learn about writing in particular, and with this confirmation of my capacity for advanced research inquiry, I can display these skills as university researcher. I intend to apply for postdoctoral positions, or professor roles where I have the requisite experience, and continue to build on my passion for finding and expressing knowledges.

This is not to exclude other lines of work, however. Occasionally I take on health and education editing contracts to support myself and keep my writing skills sharp and adaptable; I picture myself carrying on

with those jobs. Recently a colleague suggested to me that consultancy work may be an option, by way of my abilities in facilitation and research and artfulness. This role would allow me to investigate other aspects of adults' informal learning and perhaps public places that may make for new partnerships across sectors; I find this prospect, brought about by this enquiry, exciting.

One unexpected advantage of working with arts-informed research I have found is a much stronger appreciation for the importance and forms of sharing findings with non-academic communities. If I were to find myself in a non-university setting, I feel this creative exercise would be most meaningful: to explore communicable means and representations of information derived from research into learning and my interests in expression. My preparation for this work would likely extend into areas of adults' participation, collaboration, and engagement through artistic styles and visual/written languages.

Because writing is not only what ties my interests together, it features heavily in my experiences, and has always been my preferred mode of expression. Regardless of what I may do in the future, what acts of meaning-making I may perform or uncover, it is simply not feasible that writing will not be a part of it. And with that, my once more final words, this time–again–in revision, call forth a memory of the first book I signed out all by myself from my school library: Carla Greene's book *Doctors and Nurses / What Do They Do*? It proved to be unsatisfying read, focusing on medical doctors instead of 'book-doctors.' A book-doctor was what I have always wanted to be. When I was not writing in pursuit of this degree, I was writing about the interrupted that prevented it. But this effort, this work, has salved over the fissure in my being where a 'not-smart-enough' scar lingers. And it has given me confidence in my abilities to find and develop and complete research. And it has reinforced in me my passions for art forms and their glow in the world. And it has presented me with a voice in writing I did not know was waiting to be discovered. These meanings are incomparable.

Writing has featured in my life personally and professionally, and given me extraordinary skills and understandings, including knowing a good place to stop when I see it.

Today my cats are asleep, tucked under a blanket on the bed and sprawled out on the couch, respectively. It is the second day of humid-high July temperatures[14], and their furry bodies cannot be

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[14] On this, a day of revision, it is 5 degrees, gray and rainy – but the cats sleep on nonetheless…

bothered to come and intrude on these final words. I am still typing these words on a computer on the yellow table, though, since starting this work, I have rearranged the room somewhat.

I stare at the screen, posture undoubtedly poor, and squinting in a manner I did not do formerly. I know this is not the end–endings rarely are that–but I am choked up nonetheless. Will I find more places to put the words that have become first nature for me? Should there be more here? Towards what do I point my writing now?

I want to repeat phrases, and reassert claims, and fashion aurally-pleasant phrases that miss the mark of meaning, somewhat. I cannot simply stop.

But: this is a stopping place. Throughout the chapters of the work and each unique conceit–the faded yellow table, my own informal learning, recollections of art and learning and school, car trips, my childhood visit to Nova Scotia, testing informal learning claims, and flights over places, not to mention the lofty goals of making mobiles myself–in the writing, I did not allow myself to imagine the end.

I think I deserve the final words, though my exposure to more and astonishing writers fills me with certainty that someone, somewhere, said it better. I give Rebecca Solnit the penultimate comment, when she refers to fairy tales, very tales, in which transformation is no more untoward than a midday snack: "the boundaries between the real and the represented were not particularly fixed, and magic happened when one crossed over."[15]

Now, when it is most important, I am inchoate about this magic. I only know I have been part of it, and something more.

I push back my chair, and reach towards the computer for the power button.

For an instant, I hover. Then–

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[15] Solnit, R. (2000). *Wanderlust: A history of walking*. New York, NY: Penguin. p.71

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