

Buried localities: archaeological exploration of a Toronto dump and wilderness refuge

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The Leslie Street Spit is best known as an urban wilderness refuge but it has a fascinating, although obscure, social history. Archaeological methods are used here to uncover the material associations between the Leslie Street Spit and the City of Toronto. This approach reveals that the Spit reflects the past planning practice and creative destruction of the city. The Spit is found to contain artifacts of the past such as domestic items and rubble that resulted from slum clearing practices of the 1960s and development-driven planning practice of the 1980s. In its present state, the Leslie Street Spit acts as the romanticised ruins of the City of Toronto, composed of the material elements of the city that were discarded so that new and “up-to-date” forms of architecture could take their place.

Keywords: Toronto; creative destruction; planning; archaeology; ruins

The Leslie Street Spit is a 5-km manufactured peninsula that extends from Toronto’s old industrial lands into Lake Ontario. It is composed of construction debris, and is a world-class birding site that hosts rare and endangered species. This paper examines the discarded and buried artifacts that underlie this celebrated post-industrial landscape and discovers that these artifacts, when contextualised through archaeological research methods, tell a story that previously had been obscured. It is a story about urban development processes, the destruction of the built heritage of Toronto, displacement of poor communities that got in the way of modernist ideals, and the ability of nature to transform industrial space into romanticised ruins. In this case, the act of memory suppression is performed in two specific ways: by omission and misrepresentation of the contents of refuse transported to the Spit from policy and planning records, and by the power of nature to distract civic attention from critical awareness of what has actually been destroyed.

The Toronto Harbour Commissioners (now the Toronto Port Authority) began dumping construction rubble and lake dredgeate on the edge of Lake Ontario in 1959. The dumping continues today, and the Leslie Street Spit is now over 500 hectares in size (Toronto Region and Conservation Authority 2010). Over time, this landmass has been gradually colonised by seeds and plant matter dispersed by wind, birds, water, and deposited material. Through

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this process, and in concert with ecological restoration efforts, the Spit boasts wildflower meadows, cottonwood forests, coastal marshes, cobble beaches, and sand dunes (Yokohari and Amati 2005, p. 55). Over 390 plant species and 290 animal species have colonised the Leslie Street Spit (Yokohari and Amati 2005, p. 55). Described as an “inspired accident” by Fulford (1995), the Leslie Street Spit is celebrated as a symbol of wilderness in the city given its impressive array of wildlife and rich ecology (Foster and Sandberg 2004, p. 191). Even more remarkable, the Spit’s rich ecological profile coincides with active construction waste dumping during the week, when recreational park users are prohibited. Currently accepted materials at the Spit include unreinforced concrete, broken concrete, brick, ceramic tiles, and clean porcelain materials (Toronto Port Authority 2012). These materials are considered clean fill and are allowed to be dumped at the Spit during the week when recreational use of the park is restricted. Despite limited access, the Spit is fiercely protected from development by a highly organised network of concerned citizens. Much of the appeal of the Spit lies in popular appreciation for what is perceived as an untamed, sublime, and feral aesthetic, where nature is able to heal the scars of industrialisation. As Foster (2007) explains, “It juxtaposes a degraded and discarded city with fertile and vigorous ecology, a place where nature has colonized the post-industrial urban spoils” (p. 122).

While the diverse wildlife and rich ecology have become the defining features of the Spit, it also has a fascinating, although lesser known, social history that is embedded in the rubble that forms the material foundation of the landscape. Reconstructing this history is like a puzzle where we know the outcome of over 60 years of dumping into Lake Ontario, but not the role that the chunks of concrete and brick played in the City of Toronto before their deposition at the Spit. Reconnecting the rubble of the Spit and the destroyed elements of the city helps build insight into the history of what was destroyed, who was displaced, and what was constructed to fill the void created by the demolition of Toronto’s built heritage. Understanding the history of this landscape and giving context to the rubble of the Leslie Street Spit is the main intent of this research.

Archaeological research and practice has not yet been explored in environmental justice scholarship. In many cases, and especially in instances where communities are completely displaced from urban landscapes, archaeological research may provide the only entry point for understanding previous landscape relationships. Sometimes the only traces of displaced livelihoods are buried in dumps. As documented by Rathje and Murphy, using archaeological methods to study dumps and refuse sites is a well-established practice and can lend insight to social conditions that are otherwise inaccessible through other modes of research (2001). In this case, the appeal of the Spit hinges on a popular understanding of the space as composed of construction waste (anonymous and benign materials) and as opposed to personal artifacts (evoking human subjects dissociated from their households). Using archaeological research methods allows us to challenge this notion and better appreciate the underlying nature of the landscape.

This research aims to give a general historic context to the Leslie Street Spit by coupling sections of the Leslie Street Spit with contemporary planning practice and urban development projects in the City of Toronto. In particular, the activities of the City during the years 1964 and 1980 are studied and linked to specific sections of the Leslie Street Spit. The exercise reveals that the Spit is linked to slum clearance and urban renewal initiatives of the 1960s and the development-driven construction boom of the 1980s. Most surprisingly, this research finds that the 1960s’ deposits contain high levels of personal artifacts, suggesting that whole households were demolished and dumped at the Spit. This discovery challenges the claim that the Leslie Street Spit is solely composed of “clean fill” and rather suggests that early dumping activities

included food waste, personal items, and household debris in addition to construction rubble. The key findings of this research illustrate that the Leslie Street Spit is not just a landscape defined by its wilderness, but is also a landscape defined by the development, destruction, and renewal of the built form of the city.

Archaeological research, displaced context, and creative destruction

The rubble that forms the Leslie Street Spit has an obvious relationship with the city, but this relationship is obscure since it has no specific ties to its former use and historical context. In archaeological theory and practice, it is crucially important to understand the context of an artifact in order to reconstruct past human activity, as it is the associations between artifacts that give a site meaning, not just the artifacts themselves. A great amount of information about the society that produced a site can be determined by examining the associations between artifacts (Renfrew and Bahn 2004, p. 55). In this sense, the Leslie Street Spit is a landscape that is entirely out of context. All of the rubble originated kilometres away and was transported to the Spit to be mixed with rubble that may or may not have anything to do with its former use in the city. While the majority of material found at the Spit cannot be linked to the city, some individual pieces, such as marked brick and the makers mark on a teacup, can be traced and dated. This is further aided by the fact that the Leslie Street Spit was constructed in a linear manner with cumulative dumping radiating from the headlands into Lake Ontario so that a general time period of material accumulation can be assigned to each section of the landscape (Figure 1). The chronological deposition of the materials at the Spit is key to assigning historical context to the rubble.

A central concern for this research is understanding the particular acts of demolition and planning trends within the City during the years 1964 and 1980. Studying the urban development activities of these two years gives clues to the possible origins of the rubble at the Spit. To better understand these processes, David Harvey's concept of "creative destruction" is used to articulate of the processes of urban construction and demolition that are evident at the Spit. Examining these discarded pieces of the built form of Toronto through a lens of creative destruction helps us to understand the political context that shaped Toronto and, in turn, the Leslie Street Spit. Harvey writes,

One of the myths of modernity is that it constitutes a radical break with the past. The break is supposedly of such an order as to make it possible to see the world as a *tabula rasa*, upon which the new can be inscribed without reference to the past, or, if the past gets in the way, through its obliteration. Modernity is, therefore, always about "creative destruction," be it of the gentle and democratic, or the revolutionary, traumatic, and authoritarian kind. (Harvey 2006, p. 1)

In other words, elements of the older or vernacular built form of a city need to be destroyed in order for new architecture to overlay the city's identity. This process is used to signify that a city is up-to-date and willing to evolve with the times, and can be used to justify socio-political projects aimed at enhancing municipal prosperity by facilitating capital investment and removing obstacles to wealth accumulation such as working class or slum neighbourhoods in prime real estate.

Following Harvey's lead, the rubble of the Leslie Street Spit can be interpreted as the elements of the city that were destroyed to accommodate creation of new architectural forms that resulted from the process of creative destruction. Harvey's analysis of creative destruction focuses principally on neoliberal economic transitions, where states welcome



Figure 1. Layout of the Leslie Street Spit.

Source: Base Map (Open Street Map 2013); Yearly divisions based on information from the Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan & Environmental Assessment (MTRCA 1992, p. 20).

new development by shifting to market-driven policies. We situate the physical destruction of entire neighbourhoods as a central element of Toronto's economic reform. Zukin (1991) illuminates the impact of market culture on sense of place, and in this case the process of accumulation and annihilation relates directly to replacement of working class homes and the nineteenth-century buildings with some of Toronto's most iconic modernist structures, ushering in a new relationship with development and developers. By linking creative destruction with the analysis of the Leslie Street Spit, we argue that archaeological methods may offer important insight into contemporary environmental justice concerns.

Research methods

Archaeological methods are here conjoined with research methodologies such as analysis of policy and planning documents, media materials and other records, archival research, and site analysis. Archival research is a key source of information in this study since much of the information about the origins of brick and aggregate activity in Toronto is not documented in a scholarly fashion. Rather, this information lies in old building reports, demolition reports, brick catalogues, business correspondence, historical photographs, maps, and indexes. Archival photographs and historic maps, in particular, are instrumental in understanding historic built forms of the city and in identifying individual structures and areas that have undergone dramatic change as a result of the process of creative destruction.

Fieldwork was conducted from May to July 2010 in order to identify traceable pieces of rubble at the Leslie Street Spit. Two sections of the landscape were selected for study based on the 1992 Tommy Thompson Master Plan from the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (MTRCA) (1992). The MTRCA report indicates that the years 1964, 1968, 1980, and 1981 were the most active in terms of the disposal of construction material. Of these four years, 1964 and 1980 proved ideal for visual survey since they both are zones of high disposal activity and are currently exposed along the eastern edge of the Spit. In order to determine the current locations of the 1964 and 1980 dumping zones, the MTRCA 1992 map was overlaid on a current aerial imagery of the Leslie Street Spit. Once the 1992 map was placed on the current map, four Global Positioning System (GPS) points were selected that represent the north/south borders of the 1964 and 1980 dumping zones (Figure 2). These points were then programmed into a GPS unit to signal the boundaries of the respective dumping zones.

Visual survey and photographic materials are used to document the material composition of the 1964 and 1980 dumping zones. Both zones were identified through GPS points, marked with flagging tape and then surveyed. Visual survey consisted of scanning the exposed, eastern edge of the 1964 and 1980 zones for any marked brick and/or concrete, and any objects of interest (for example, household debris, personal items, or other traceable artifacts). Additionally, photographs were taken of the stratigraphy and general composition of the study areas. Follow-up field work was conducted to trace any marked brick back to its source locations, the results of which form the basis of a separate study analysing the connections between the Leslie Street Spit, aggregate sites, brick factories, regional buildings, and the rubble that comprise the bulk of the Spit.

Archaeological findings

The 1964 deposition zone at the Leslie Street Spit is located on the headlands, approximately 325 m south-southeast of the foot of Leslie Street and Unwin Avenue. The rubble found along the eastern shore of the 1964 zone is not uniform and seems to go through a gradual change in material composition starting from the northern end and extending south towards the 1965 zone. The northern-most edge of the zone has fully exposed stratigraphy, heavily worn brick and concrete, and is mostly colonised by vegetation. The southern-most part of the 1964 shore is mainly composed of large, heavily worn concrete pieces (see Figures 3 and 4, for examples, of north and south boundaries).

It is likely that the large concrete pieces in the southern portion of the 1964 zone were deposited after 1964 in order to protect the eastern shore from erosion. This practice started in the mid-1970s when the Toronto Harbour Commission (THC) required haulers to separate rubble from earth fill and use larger aggregate materials on the exposed outer face of the

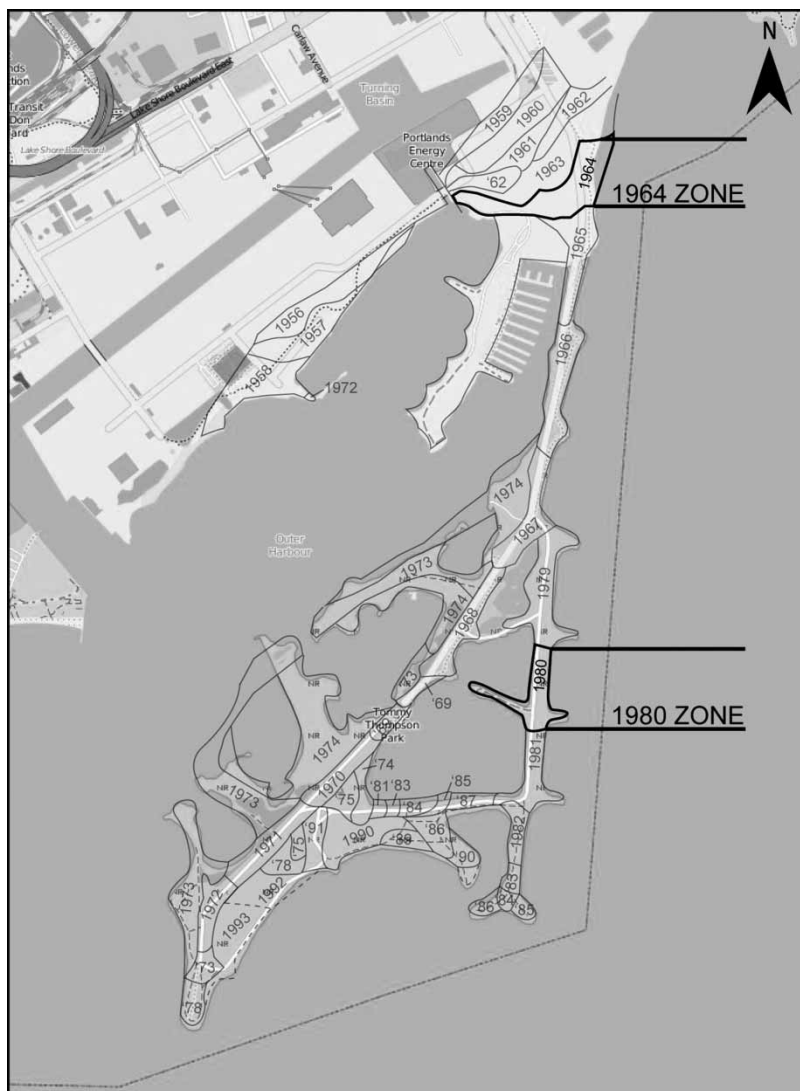


Figure 2. Locations of the 1964 and 1980 zones at the Leslie Street Spit.

Source: Base Map (Open Street Map [2013](#)); Yearly divisions based on information from the Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan & Environmental Assessment (MTRCA [1992](#), p. 20).

Spit to guard against erosion (Ontario Ministry of the Environment [1982](#), p. 4). In light of this, the exposed stratigraphy at the northern end of the 1964 zone reveals the most about the dumping activities during this year since it can confidently be assigned to this year only. Another interesting feature of the 1964 zone is the vegetation that dominates the landscape. With the exception of the exposed eastern shore, there is little exposed rubble on the surface of this zone since the bulk of this area is covered by grasses, trees, wildflowers, and other forms of wildlife have colonised the Spit over time.

One of the most interesting features of the 1964 zone is the exposed stratigraphic profile near the northern end of the zone, since this stratigraphy demonstrates the loose (if non-existent) dumping controls during this time period. High levels of household debris and



Figure 3. South end of the 1964 zone. The concrete pieces were likely deposited after 1964 to protect the shore from erosion.

personal items protrude from the eroding wall, including teacups, bits of glass, medicine bottles, plates, diapers, electrical wire, rusted metal, eye glasses, toothpaste tubes, and even food waste (Figures 5 and 6).

The collection of material at this location on the Spit suggests that full houses with belongings still inside were demolished, compacted, and then dumped in Lake Ontario. Finding household debris, personal items, and food waste does not support the claim that the Spit is only composed of “clean fill”. The loose standards of early dumping at the Spit are explained in the Ministry of the Environment’s (MOE 1982) report, *Lakefill Quality Study: Leslie Street Spit*. Though household materials remain unacknowledged, the report reads, “Originally the quality of the fill materials was not of concern and, at the earliest stages of the lake filling, the materials were comprised mostly of excavated earth, construction rubble, dredge spoils, and miscellaneous solid waste” (MOE 1982,



Figure 4. North end of the 1964 zone. The stratigraphy is compacted and can be assigned to a specific year of deposition with confidence.

p. 4). It was not until 1979 that any quality control system was put in place by the THC and even then, the only requirement was that trucks with fill materials had to pass a visual and olfactory inspection (MOE 1982, p. 4). In other words, the material just had to look and smell passable in order to be deemed suitable for dumping at the Spit. These controls, however, were not satisfactory in restricting contaminated materials from being dumped into Lake Ontario. It reads,

Inspections by the W.D. Wilkins and Associates field staff of the trucked material dumped onto the Spit revealed that the visual and/or olfactory inspections of the THC were not effective in preventing contaminated materials from gaining access to the Leslie Street Spit and possibly Lake Ontario. (MOE 1982, p. 9)



Figure 5. Bottom of a teacup that is compacted in the 1964 rubble.



Figure 6. A sawn long bone compacted in the 1964 rubble. The bone is likely from an ungulate (e.g. cattle or pig).

This strongly suggests that the City was not careful in tracking the source and composition of the rubble being dumped at the Leslie Street Spit during the 1960s.

The bricks found in the 1964 zone display a variety of markings which give clues to the geographic locations of the source material and the companies that manufactured the brick.

These markings include: Domtar, Don, Don Valley, J.Price, Milton, Ontario P. B. Co, and Bessemer Block (Youngstown, Ohio). It should be noted that with the exception of Bessemer Block, which originates in Ohio, all these brick makers are local Ontario brick manufacturers with production facilities in Ontario.

The 1980 zone is located approximately 2.6 km south of the foot of Leslie Street and Unwin Street. The 1980 zone presents a very different landscape from the 1964 zone since there is little vegetation, and the construction rubble is plainly visible on the surface. The type of material found in the 1980 zone is also much more uniform and organised, suggesting that dumping had become standardised and regulated by this time. There is even a logic to the deposition of the materials. There is a small brick beach made up of worn brick surrounded by banks of concrete rubble that serve to divide the years of deposition and provide harbour-like conditions for any wildlife that may establish there (Figures 7 and 8). No personal or household artifacts were found in this section of the Spit. The rubble in the 1980 zone consisted mainly of brick, concrete, asphalt, ceramics, and rebar. The material found in this zone tells a different story from the 1964 zone.

The bricks in the 1980 zone boast a variety of markings which can be traced to either companies or specific geographic locations. The markings include: Cooksville, Cooksville Laprarie Brick, Domtar, J.Price, Toronto Brick, Don, T.B. Co., Toronto Brick Co. Ltd., Milton, Canada Brick-Ottawa, Hanson, Canada Brick, Phippen, and Beld. With the exceptions of Canada Brick-Ottawa, Phippen, and Beld, all of the brick is locally sourced.

Another notable feature of the 1980 zone is the active ecological restoration efforts in one of the aquatic waste holding cells, which is adjacent to the Endikement. In this zone, there are obvious efforts to create marsh habitat for birds, fish, and other wildlife (MTRCA 1992, p. 92). The difference between the levels of vegetation present in the 1980 zone and the 1964 zone highlights the distinct stages of ecological regeneration and rehabilitation in these two locations. In this area, we find intentional and strategic



Figure 7. The worn brick beach in the 1980 zone.



Figure 8. Concrete slabs arranged to create harbour-like conditions in the 1980 zone.

production of nature, through implementation of the *Tommy Thompson Park Terrestrial Natural Area Enhancement Master Plan* (TRCA 2006), a plan to create and groom habitat for species of concern.

Combined with archaeological fieldwork and analysis of policy and planning records, the fieldwork conducted for this research reveals historical transitions in the city. Inferences from the rubble of the Leslie Street Spit establish a link between the rubble found in the 1964 and 1980 zones and the activities of the City of Toronto during these two time periods. Illustrating the relationship between the rubble (what was destroyed) and the building trends (what was created) during these two years gives insight on the planning preoccupations and ambitions of the city. The stories behind the rubble of the Leslie Street Spit demonstrate that the landscape of the Spit is much more than a nondescript mass of construction waste, but rather a landscape full of memory about the removal of undesirable built resources of the city and their replacement with new forms of architecture.

Brick in the City of Toronto

The discovery of Ontario's aggregate resources through transportation and urban development had a profound influence on the built environment of Toronto, where easily accessible surface clays belonging to the Don and Scarborough beds provided the building materials for much of early construction in the city. Brick became the main construction material used in Toronto after wood buildings were outlawed in Toronto due to repeated fires and the Great Fire of 1904 (Yundt and Augaitis 1992, p. 2). Following the fire prevention by-laws, the widespread use of red and yellow brick as a building material became one of Toronto's most distinct architectural characteristics (Relph 1990, p. 33). The predominance of red and yellow brick in the city is reflected at the Leslie Street Spit where these materials comprise a large portion of the rubble that forms the landscape substrate. Despite its

importance to the history and architectural distinctiveness of Toronto, many significant brick buildings have been destroyed in order to clear the path for development and create space for new forms of architecture that reflect the progress of the city.

Many of Toronto's old buildings and streetscapes were sacrificed in an effort to become a modern city. Dendy and Kilbourn write,

In their enthusiasm for progress the rich and powerful of Toronto, the private and public patrons who have shaped this place over the past two centuries have let go many of our best buildings and streetscapes. Time and time again a lust for the grandest, the latest, or the most fashionable has led to casual neglect or cavalier destruction of our urban heritage. (1986, p. viii)

This sentiment is shared by Eric Arthur, an architectural historian writing during the time of the construction of the new city hall, who explains that “In the march of progress, we have ruthlessly destroyed almost all our older architecture; street names cherished for a hundred years or more have been altered to suit the whims of people on the street. . .” (Arthur 1964, p. xv). The dramatic alteration of the built environment of Toronto is especially evident in archival photographs depicting a predominance of nineteenth-century brick structures in the downtown core of the city, few of which remain today (Figures 9 and 10).

In terms of the rubble at the Leslie Street Spit, both 1964 and 1980 stand out as years with high levels of destruction, based on the MTRCA (1992) report. What was lost? What activities in the city warranted such high levels of destruction during these two years? The 1960s were a time of modernist planning that largely began with the establishment of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (Metro) in 1953 (Kipfer and Keil 2000, p. 29). In its early stages during the 1960s, the Metro regional government embraced modernist planning principles and used an expertise-based strategy in planning Toronto. As pointed out by



Figure 9. Looking north from 84 Yonge Street – photograph taken in 1897.

Source: City Engineer's Department, 1897 (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 376, File 1, Item 93).



Figure 10. Looking north from 84 Yonge Street – photograph taken in 2013.

Kipfer and Keil (2000), the modernist planning approach of this time endangered some of the historically significant areas in the inner city with slum clearance and urban renewal, meaning that many inner-city areas were demolished so that new and modern developments could be put in place (Lemon 1985, p. 151).

One particular example of slum clearance in the 1960s was the Alexandra Park scheme, which targeted an area near Dundas Street and Spadina Avenue for urban renewal. In brief, the Alexandra Park scheme demolished 200 houses on about 9 acres of land and replaced them with 380 units in new style building forms (Sewell 1993, p. 151). The redevelopment took place between 1964 and 1968, focusing on an area that is now bordered by Dundas Street on the north, Cameron Street on the east, Queen Street on the south, and Augusta Avenue on the west. The Alexandra Park scheme was carried out by demolishing the numerous wood and brick houses in the area and reworking the street network; particularly Vanauley Street. A series of photographs were taken in 1965 and 1966 to document the houses that were to be demolished in advance of the new Alexandra Park development. The photographs demonstrate that the row houses were constructed of wood and brick on narrow lots and suggest that they were in general disrepair (Figures 11 and 12), hallmarks of slum neighbourhoods at the time in Toronto.

Despite protests from residents of the area to save the neighbourhood, the proposal went ahead in 1964 and the demolition of the area began soon after (Sewell 1993, p. 154). It was not until the Expropriation Act of 1963 was changed in 1968 that the five-year stretch of urban renewal projects slowed (Lemon 1985, p. 152). Following the demolition of the nineteenth-century brick and wood housing in Alexandra Park, the area was redeveloped with the majority of the Vanauley Street and Cameron Street being reinvented as what is now the Atkinson Housing Co-op, which was constructed in 1968 (Atkinson Housing Co-operative 2012) (Figures 13 and 14). Alexandra Park is a 410 unit housing project that includes 140 apartments in two medium apartment buildings and 270 townhouses (Atkinson Housing Co-operative 2012).



Figure 11. Rear view of 15 Vanauley Street – photograph taken in 1966.
Source: Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department, 1966 (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 65, File 672, Item 2).



Figure 12. Rear view of 62–60 Cameron Street – photograph taken in 1965.
Source: Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department, 1965 (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 220, Series 65, File 662, Item 9).



Figure 13. View of 85–89 Vanauley Street – photograph taken in 1939.
Source: Department of Public Works, 1939 (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 372, Sub-Series 33, Item 605).



Figure 14. Typical streetscape of the Atkinson Housing Co-op – photograph taken from the north-east corner of Vanauley Walk and Felician Place.

The Alexandra Park community is physically enclosed and presents a complete break from the bustle of adjacent neighbourhoods, which include Kensington Market, Chinatown,

and Queen West. The plans for the neighbourhood were made with the intention of grouping people with low income together and enclosing the community from traffic to create an environment that was focused on residents and children of the community (Pravosoudov 2010). The concentration of low income housing was accompanied by an influx of new immigrants to the area as well as a rise in racial tensions and increased violence and drug use. The Alexandra Park development became synonymous with an African–Canadian gang called the Project Originals (Pravosoudov 2010). The housing co-operative was formed in 1998 in an effort to address the crime and safety issues of the community. There is currently a development proposal for the revitalisation and redevelopment of Alexandra Park and the housing co-op. Once again, the master plan proposes to demolish and replace existing homes with a view to enhancing the social fabric and function of this neighbourhood (City of Toronto 2012).

While the rubble of the 1964 zone cannot be solely attributed to the Alexandra Park development, given the chronological symmetry between the clearance of this substantial residential neighbourhood and the massive dumping at the Spit, it stands to reason that artifacts from Alexandra Park constitute at least some of the “clean fill” at the Leslie Street Spit. These artifacts are evidence of household displacement and reflect the modernist planning principles that were used in the city during the 1960s. Current redevelopment plans for the Alexandra Park neighbourhood call for another round of demolitions, reminiscent of the initial demolition of the neighbourhood. In contrast, however, the current redevelopment of Alexandra Park is expected to take between 10 and 15 years to complete and has a particular focus on keeping the community intact through the process. This stands in stark contrast with the 1960s slum clearance initiatives, which took place in four years and resulted in the displacement of its residents and the near complete demolition of the built form of the neighbourhood.

The 1980s represent a very different period for planning in Toronto since the modernist principles that defined the 1960s no longer had strong support in the city (Sewell 1993, p. 174). The year 1980 falls into a boom period for the city where the downtown core experienced a great deal of development – particularly in the form of office towers (Filion 1999, p. 432). Between 1970 and 1980 four downtown landmarks were erected (the CN Tower, the Skydome, the Eaton Centre, and the Harbourfront Centre) and the office surface of the downtown increased by 78% (Filion 2000, p. 173). One block that experienced a great deal of development was the area bordered by Adelaide Street on the north, Yonge Street on the east, King Street on the south, and Bay Street on the west. This block is the site of the Scotia Plaza, a 68-storey office tower with a 14-storey atrium which was constructed in the 1980s and resulted in the demolition of a number of nineteenth-century brick buildings, the materials of which are consistent with the materials at the Spit.

While some brick facades of the nineteenth-century structures were kept, most of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century landmark buildings in this block have been demolished. Three buildings that have survived, at least in facade form, are the National Club, 100 Yonge Street (or the Fairweather building), and 104 Yonge Street. While the facades of these buildings remain, the interior block has been demolished and replaced by the Scotia Plaza and part of the PATH system, an underground pedestrian network that connects much of the downtown core. The Fairweather building and 104 Yonge Street are shown in Figures 15 and 16, which demonstrate how these historic buildings were incorporated into the Scotia Plaza development.

The demolition and construction of the Scotia Plaza are a reflection of Toronto’s 1980s pro-growth strategies that resulted in a construction boom where high-rise office towers



Figure 15. View of 100 and 104 Yonge Street during construction of the Scotia Plaza – photograph taken between 1972 and 1991.

Source: Ellis Wiley Fonds, 1972–1991 (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 124, File 3, Item 161).

began to dominate the downtown core. Art Eggleton, Toronto’s “business-friendly” mayor was elected in 1980 and during this time planning took an entrepreneurial stance wherein planners were preoccupied with “making deals” with developers and extracting density



Figure 16. View of 100 and 104 Yonge Street after being integrated into the Scotia Plaza development – photograph taken in 2013.

bonuses from the downtown office boom (Kipfer and Keil 2002, p. 239). This is also the period where Toronto's economic base became less diversified and more dependent on financial services (Lemon 1985, p. 186). During this time, the planning process made more room for public participation and environmental concerns were increasingly incorporated into plans (Filion 1999, p. 432, 2000, p. 174). While increased public participation curtailed the redevelopment of inner-city neighbourhoods, such as Alexandra Park, construction in the downtown core continued to boom despite planning attempts to calm the growth (Filion 2000, p. 173). This resulted in the destruction of many nineteenth-century brick buildings (such as small theatres, arcades, and bank branches) and their replacement with office towers servicing international finance and trade.

The rubble of the 1980 zone at the Leslie Street Spit represents a shift in the city's planning practice where capitalism and entrepreneurship played more prominent roles. The organisation of the material types and the shaping of the landscape in the 1980 zone of the Leslie Street Spit show that there was considerable planning for the afterlife of the rubble. In this way, the rubble of the 1980 zone reflects the heightened citizen participation and environmental concerns that emerged during this period of urban planning in Toronto (Filion 1999, p. 432). Yet, the materials here also coincide with a shift from small-scale, locally oriented structures towards buildings that positioned Toronto in the global business world.

Creative destruction of Toronto's built environment

Harvey (2006) explains that for a city to become modern it must symbolically create a break with the past in order to discard its old reputation and adopt new ideals. Creating a clear break with the past in order to overcome the failures of the old regime is a tactic that has been used throughout the history of cities (Zukin 2006, p. 113). Often, this break is symbolically represented through architecture, as noted by Kapelos, who writes that "To break with the past and be truly modern demanded a new aesthetic, a new architecture that would ultimately create a humane environment" (2002, p. 42). What is often forgotten in the public imagination is the communities that were displaced during this process. In Toronto, the construction of New City Hall marks an event of creative destruction where new architecture and building techniques were used to introduce modern attitudes in the planning and governance of the city, where the reputation of "Old Toronto" was swept aside in order to allow the city to become modern. Prior to the construction of the New City Hall, the area bounded by Bay Street on the west, Queen Street on the south, University Avenue on the east, and Dundas Street to the north was composed of residential and commercial buildings that dated to the nineteenth century (Goads 1880) (Figure 17). The nineteenth-century brick and wood structures in this area were demolished in advance of the construction of the New City Hall. This reinvented the area and gave a sense of renewal to the entire city. This was effective since old Toronto had the reputation of being cold, quiet, conservative, insular, and "a good place to mind your own business" (Fulford 1995, p. 1).

Many attribute Toronto's shift to a "city that works" to a single event on Monday, 13 September 1965: opening day at the New City Hall and Nathan Philips Square, both designed by the Finnish architect Viljo Revell (Relph 1990, p. 31, Sewell 1993, p. 119, Gandy 2002, Hume 2007, p. 70). As noted by the Bureau of Architecture and Urbanism, "The building of the City Hall transformed the image of the city, and with it, the public perception of Modern architecture" (2002, p. 78). Sewell echoes this sentiment. He writes, "The New City Hall was controversial, but almost immediately it was publicly lauded as the city's successful leap into the future" (1993, p. 119). The building of the New City Hall was a highly symbolic step in the modernisation of Toronto and it marks a departure

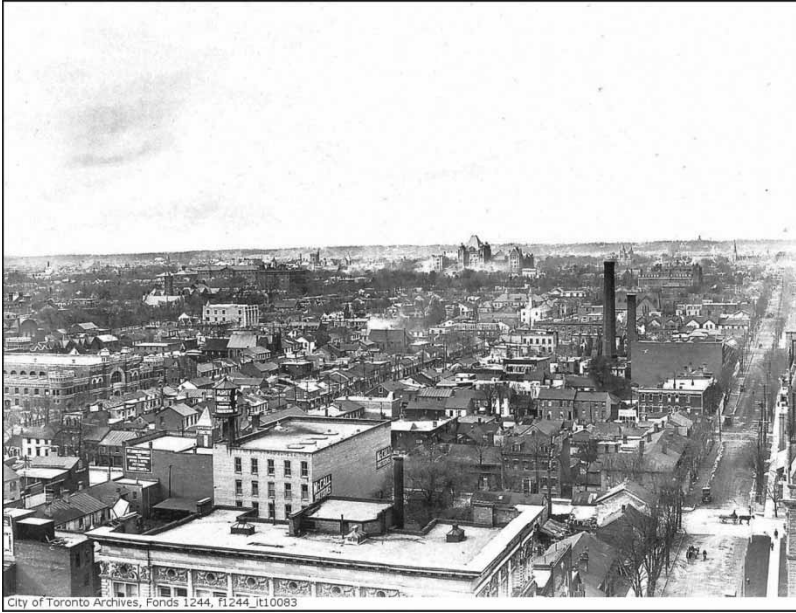


Figure 17. Looking north from the intersection of Queen Street and Bay Street in 1910.
Source: William James Family Fonds, 1910 (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 10083).

from traditional building techniques and materials (Figure 18). Even Revell's choice of concrete as a construction material for City Hall stands in sharp contrast with Toronto's three older City Halls, which were made of brick and locally sourced clay (City of Toronto 2010). The construction of the New City Hall symbolised Toronto's leap into the modern world and willingness to discard undesirable elements of its past in favour of structures that suggest readiness for growth.

The Leslie Street Spit is the cumulative result of what was lost during the creative destruction of the city. It is the elements of the city that were discarded so that Toronto could become modern, current, and competitive. The social history embedded in this landscape is obscured by the mythology that the Spit is composed of "clean fill" and the impressive ecological profile of the landscape. The material culture of the 1964 zone is particularly haunting since it is composed of compacted garbage that includes household debris and personal items. The worn brick beach of the 1980 zone and the corroded, artifact laden aggregate from 1964 zone tell the story of Toronto's progress and evolution through modern planning practice and into a post-modern planning framework, including a largely forgotten community that resisted displacement in the wake of this transition.

The Leslie Street Spit: a landscape of memory

The Leslie Street Spit is the ruins of the City of Toronto since it is founded on the rubble that is a product of the ongoing process of creative destruction. Memory and nostalgia for what is lost is a common feature of ruins (Edensor 2005, Huyssen 2006) and the Spit often incites these emotions in its visitors. One way this is evident is through the construction of pathways, sculptures, and other structures out of the rubble by visitors of the Spit (Figure 19). Writing about affordances of industrial ruins, Edensor *et al.* (2012) note that ruins "invite expressive

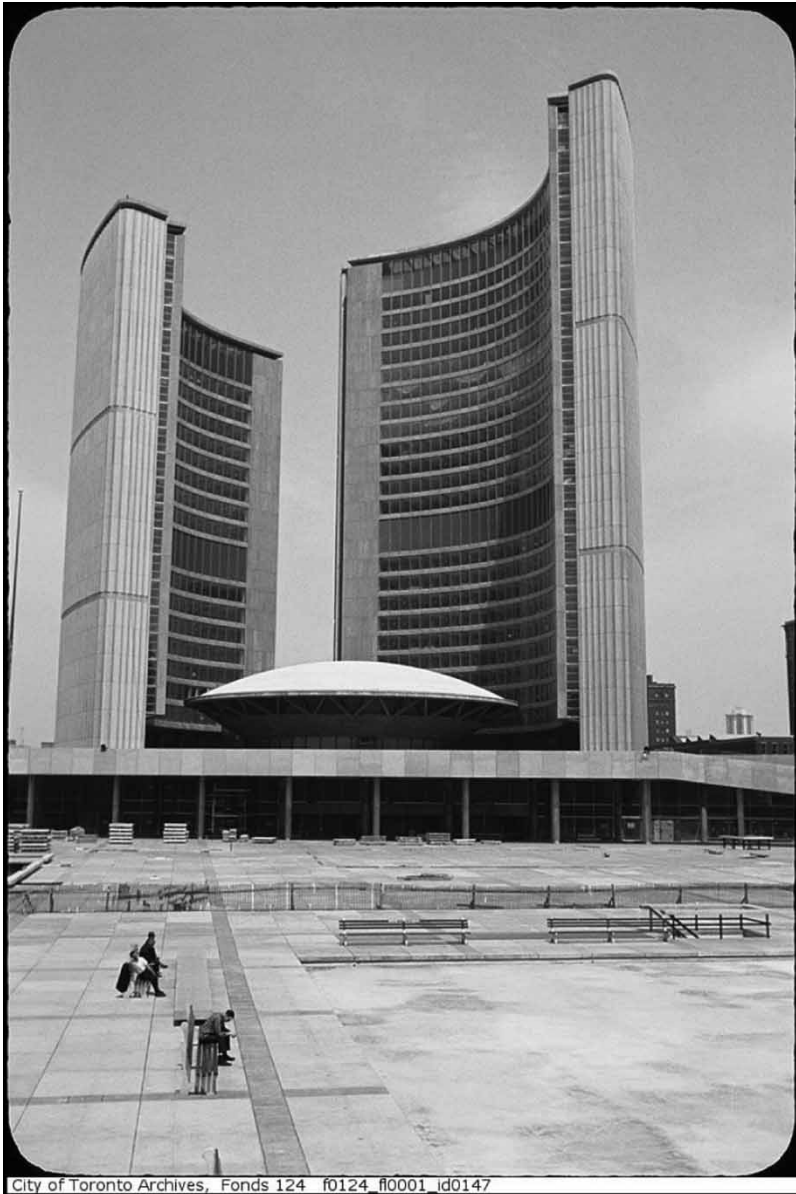


Figure 18. New City Hall prior to opening.
Source: Ellis Wiley Fonds, 1945–1966 (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 124, File 1, Item 147).

physical investigation through the material forms that pre-exist ruination and those that belong to it” (p. 67). It is as if the individuals who created these pathways and structures at the Spit are trying to put the pieces back together to make sense of the rubble. Jones and Evans discuss the importance of materials in creating sites of memory. They write,

Destroying material traces of sites with deep place associations resets the clock on the embodied relationship between the individual and that environment. Those material sites can act as



Figure 19. Pathway constructed out of rubble at the Leslie Street Spit.

prompts to recover the memories which have helped to shape those affective connections. (Jones and Evans 2012, p. 2326)

In effect, the creative forms found at the Spit are a clear reminder of the origins of the rubble and suggest ways to imagine the discarded pieces of brick and concrete in their former place in the city. These sculptures help connect the Leslie Street Spit back to the built form of Toronto and serve to remind us of what has been lost.

The rubble of the Leslie Street Spit also illustrates the cycles of decay and renewal, which are strongly associated with ruins. This is noted by Huyssen who explains that, “decay, erosion, and a return to nature” are defining features of ruins (2006, p. 10). The cycle of decay and renewal is a major component of the Spit where the deposition of construction materials and natural regeneration of the landscape are considered a key feature of the “accidental success” of the landscape. The reclamation of disturbed landscapes by nature is one of the most powerful and evocative themes associated with the romanticisation of ruins and the power of nature’s ability to renew often stirs feelings of melancholy, hope, and wonder among visitors. The rich ecology at the Spit makes for classic ruins where nature has claimed a derelict landscape and transformed it into a novel ecosystem.

The Leslie Street Spit also functions as a site of conscience and memory. By considering the connections that the Spit has to episodes of destruction in the city we can better understand who and what has been displaced in the recent past. In the case of Alexandra Park, recognising the long-term social issues that resulted from the fast-paced redevelopment of the neighbourhood helps us to appreciate the importance of community consultation and engagement at the outset of future development proposals. This is especially important since the Alexandra Park is undergoing another round of redevelopment in an effort to address the social and structural issues in the community that resulted from the 1960s slum clearance initiatives. Furthermore, by identifying the buildings that were demolished in the downtown core during the 1980s we can evaluate the losses sustained to Toronto’s

built heritage. This is crucial given the high number of development projects currently ongoing in the downtown core. Many of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century structures that have been demolished are irreplaceable and represent a permanent loss to Toronto's overall cultural heritage. As noted by the International Coalition of Sites of Memory, "We have seen how – in every part of the world – the past has lessons for our future" (2012). In Toronto, the Leslie Street Spit teaches us that unrestrained development has lasting repercussions that cannot be easily mitigated.

Conclusions

Embedded in the landscape of the Leslie Street Spit is a history of urban socio-economic dispossession. Employing archaeological research methods reveals that the rubble of the Leslie Street Spit is historically associated with the modernist ideals of urban planning prevalent in the 1960s and the private sector driven planning practice of the 1980s. Linking sections of the Spit to contemporary development activities, such as the Alexandra Park scheme or the Scotia Plaza, gives a sense of what was destroyed and then buried at the Spit.

This research assigns a broad context to two sections of the Leslie Street Spit. While this approach yields information about the general social history of the rubble, it has not traced individual artifacts back to specific locations in the city. Future research could include the collection and analysis of artifacts found at the Spit to uncover more information about the neighbourhoods that have been displaced and demolished since 1959.

The Leslie Street Spit's vibrant and celebrated ecology play an important role in masking the underlying history of the landscape. Recognising the Leslie Street Spit as the ruins of Toronto in an unromanticised manner allows one to assign greater meaning to the landscape. Viewing the Spit in this light allows it to function as a site of memory in addition to being a site of urban wilderness. As noted by Herrington, "Since landscapes can contain tangible artifacts of the past, they have played a vital role in stimulating memories and associations" (2009, p. 72). At the Leslie Street Spit, memories and associations with the city are expressed as people create structures out of the rubble. This activity is most pronounced at the southern edge of the 1964 zone where a series of pathways and sculptures have been erected that uses the discarded brick, concrete, and rebar. These structures recall the former use of the rubble and make the social history of the landscape undeniably clear despite the urban development processes that make it easy to forget who and what existed in the recent past.

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