

Expo 67: *Man in the Community*

Constructing Pavilions, Building Friendships



Figure 1: *Man in the Community* Pavilion

ARCH 355 – Architectural History IV
Professor Annmarie Adams
TA: Olivier Vallerand
Nancy Serag-Eldin 260381490

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Introduction and Historical Context

The 1960's was a contentious time in history. The Vietnam War, the Civil Rights' Movement in the USA, the Separatist Movement in Québec, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Cold War with Russia, and the ongoing tensions in the Middle East between Israel and its neighbours all made it a wondrous feat to pull off a World Fair at all under these circumstances. Yet, in spite of all this, Expo 67 successfully persuaded all these opposing countries to come to Montréal, to participate and build, rather than fight and destroy.

How did Expo 67 create a genuinely civilized and harmonious discourse and behaviour in a time when the world seemed to be at odds with itself and everyone in it? Where did the hope for global friendship come from in a time when racism and prejudice were rampant and political correctness had not yet been born? In a world full of bitter disagreements over fundamental issues, the architecture of Expo gave people who had disparate backgrounds and opposing ideologies a common ground.

*"I came to the fair a nationalist, full of pride in Canada. I left it a humanist, full of hope for man."*¹

¹ "The Realm: Fulfillment at the Fair." *Time*. (May 1967), 19.

These are the sentiments of Columnist Peter Newman, a native Canadian, whose words summed up the mindset of the tens of millions of visitors to Expo 67 that summer.

This paper is an exploration of the positive impact of Expo 67 on the mental, emotional, and psychological attitudes of the multitudes that were lucky enough to experience one of the great architectural events of the century. Specifically, it focuses on the successful creation of trans-nationalistic feelings among all people, and the general air of a united team spirit. One pavilion in particular, *Man in the Community*, represents this theme extremely well.

The Optimism of *Man and His World*

Expo was a reflection of its own theme: *Man and His World*. It was the creation of a utopian world, the Expo city, complete with its own 'continents' (artificial islands Notre-Dame and St. Helene), 'bodies of water' (the St. Lawrence River), 'nations' (as represented by their pavilions), infrastructure, transportation, and zones of international common ground such as theme pavilions, stadiums, and amusements which all provided the physical setting for this discussion of a new social civility of behavior. In this man-made world, each building was a monologue; the fairgrounds and site plan precipitated the ensuing dialogue; and the architecture of Expo was the public conversation.

Hundreds of visitors can still recollect with accuracy details of that summer from over 40 years ago. Roy Rogers is just one of the many Montreal natives who attended Expo as a boy and continues to cherish the memory of it today. Not much remains of those awe-inspiring pavilions, but he still visits the few that remain at Parc Jean-Drapeau where the US Pavilion has now become an Ecological Museum that he visits with his own son, and continues to recount and share his stories with him.²

Expo was a glimpse of just how good life--and people--could be; a glimpse into a better world, full of technology, convenience, and comfort, but also full of people who were diverse, accepting and welcoming. Its architecture had the power to unite the world, allowing people to not only dream big, but believe those dreams were possible. As difficult and unlikely as it seemed that Expo would open on time and succeed at all, the prevailing optimism of the people made it a reality.

The Expo Logo: *Friendship Around the World*

Trans-nationalism, global camaraderie and international friendship were of the primary objectives of the committee members who designed, organized, and directed Expo. During this contentious decade, Expo 67 was a model of social success, world unity, harmony and general feelings of 'goodwill towards man'. There were 90 pavilions that represented nations, corporations, industries, religions and more. Although these

² Roy Rogers, Personal Interview. Montreal, February 14, 2011.

categories are essentially how mankind has divided and subdivided itself for centuries, creating competitions and rivalries for superiority and righteousness, still, feelings of nationalism gave way that summer to grander, more altruistic feelings of brotherhood. This was embodied in the simple, almost childlike innocence, of the Expo logo, Figure 2.



Figure 2: The Expo 67 Logo

The logo was a pictorial representation of the simplest and oldest depictions of *Man*: the stick figure, with arms outstretched. A collection of eight pairs of stick figures linked arm in arm in a circular pattern represented the human race, unified by friendship, encircling the world.

The Expo logo was a symbol of the overall theme of this World Fair: *Man and His World*, as taken from a book by the same title by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, a

philosopher, author, and aviator. Thus, every structure, movie, and event at Expo touched upon the idea of how *Man* relates to his surroundings and environment. The Expo logo in Figure 3 below was built in three-dimensional form and was aptly located at the base of the entrance to the *Man in the Community* Pavilion.



Figure 3: The Expo Logo built in 3D at the base of the entrance to the *Man in the Community* Pavilion

The *Man in the Community* Pavilion has an additional layer of complexity to its theme of *Man and His World*. *Man* (mankind) does not exist in a vacuum; meaning, people collectively affect change all around the world every day. Simultaneously, they are also impacted by those changes (sometimes in unforeseeable ways) and forever changed by them as well. The decisions *Man* makes and the actions he takes have far reaching consequences that reverberate throughout the world and are reflected and refracted back onto him, because *people are all connected* through each other, as part of one human race, as expressed by the logo. It is a fascinating concept, the idea that *Man* is both the initiator and a member of his own domino chain reaction. The architectural expression of this notion is beautifully summed up by Winston Churchill's famous declaration,

*"We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us."*³

Can architecture indeed influence mankind's behaviour, etiquette, and sociability? How can we design buildings and public spaces that improve our mood, humanitarianism, and philanthropic attitudes? Can our surroundings affect our actions, morality, or beliefs? According to studies done by Oscar Newman, an architect and the director of the Institute of Planning and Housing at New York University in the 1970's, the results are absolutely conclusive that people's behavior differs in different settings. Although it

³ C. M. Deasy, *Design For Human Affairs*, (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1974), 5.

is people that enact certain behaviors, and not the buildings, the building plans, layout, and arrangement relative to each other will either aid or discourage certain behaviors.⁴

The *Man in the Community* Pavilion

Meredith Dixon's slide of *Man in the Community* Theme Pavilion of Figure 1 featured on the cover of this report was located on Cité du Havre, the land harbor peninsula of Montréal, west of the islands of Notre-Dame and St. Hélène on the St. Lawrence River, as shown in the Expo Site Map of Figure 4.

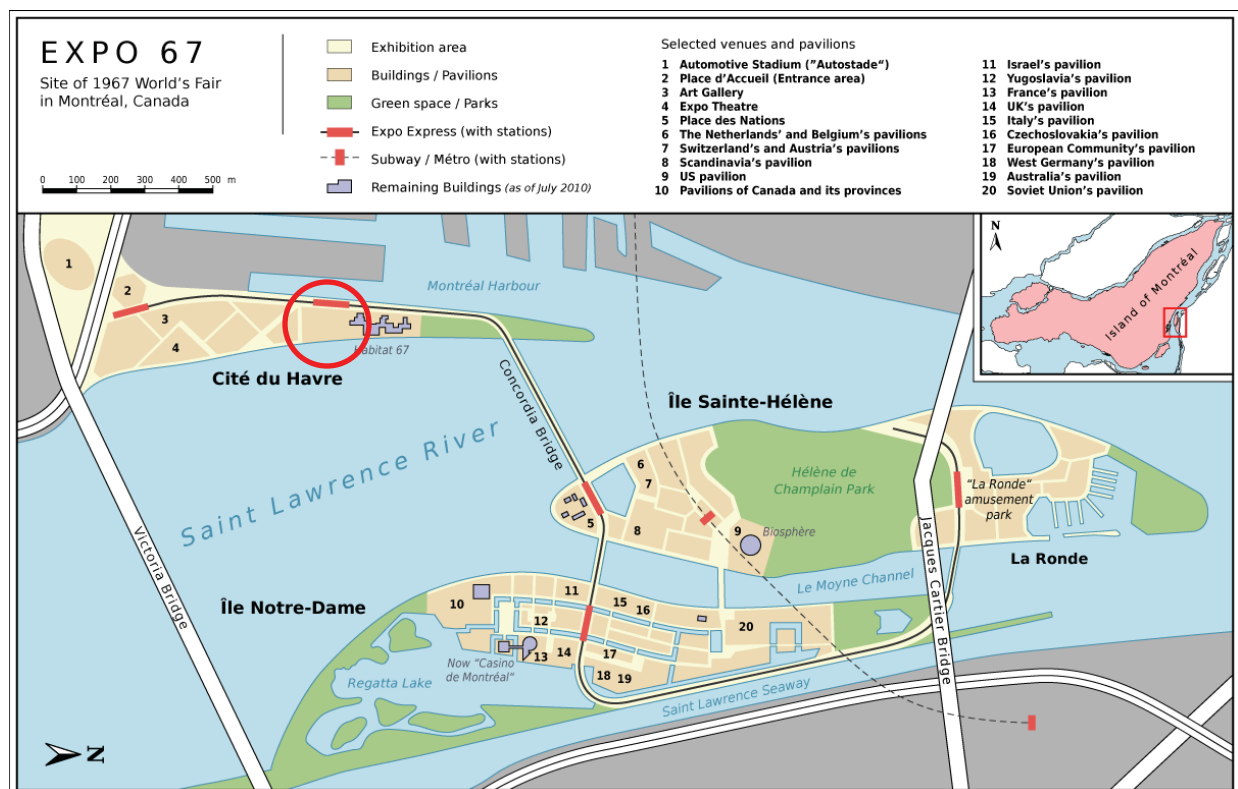


Figure 4: The Expo Site Map

⁴ Deasy, 4.

This pavilion was situated next to the *Man and His Health* Pavilion that co-shared the same lot on the fair grounds, connected by landscaped terraces. These pavilions have a similar style and pack a one-two punch architecturally with their hexagonal forms and wooden construction. These are both sandwiched between the *Labyrinth* Pavilion to the south and Moshe Safdie's *Habitat 67* to the north, as shown in the close-up below.

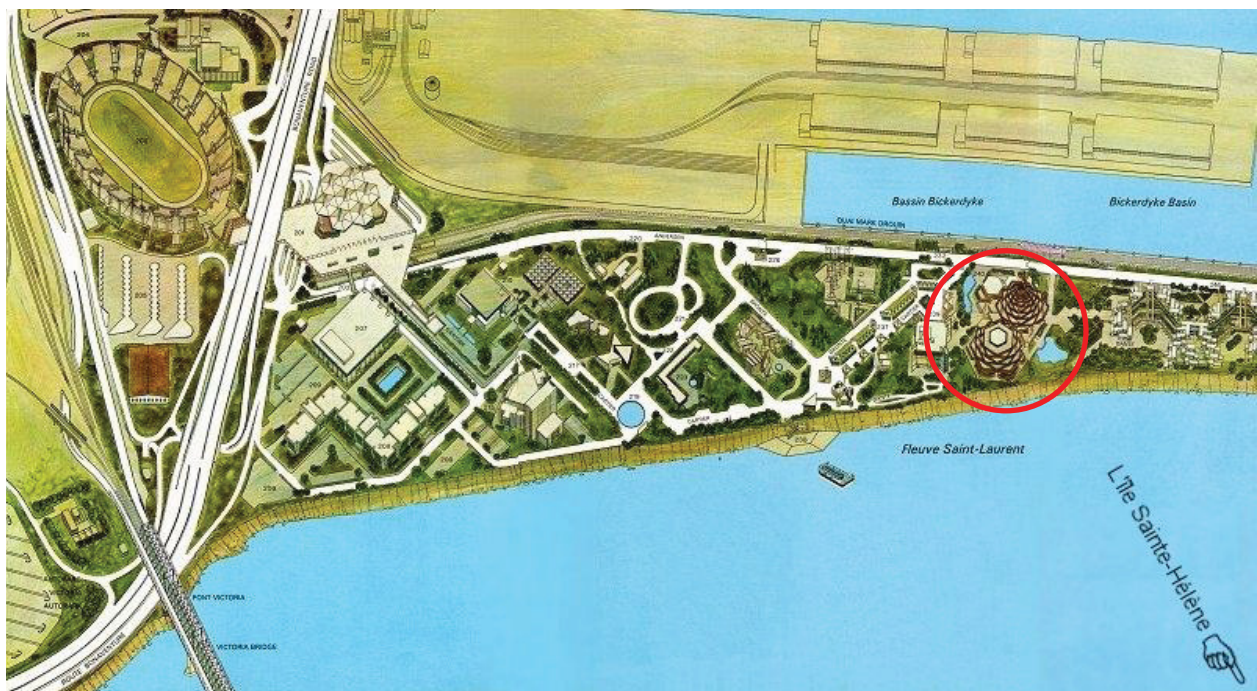


Figure 5: A close-up view of Cité du Havre showing the location of the hexagonal structures of *Man in the Community* and *Man and his Health* Pavilions

The *Man in the Community* Pavilion was designed by Arthur Erickson of Erickson & Massey Architects. The form of the pavilion is a stylistic pyramid-ziggurat hybrid. The hexagonal layers diminished in size from base to peak creating a spire-like roof. The base diameter was 285 feet, and enclosed an area of approximately 50,000 square feet. The stacked hexagons reached a peak height of 140 feet. Built of Douglas and B.C. fir,

this wooden temple utilized large plywood box beams, some members as large as five feet square, and 80 feet long, weighing nearly 12 tons.⁵



Figure 6: An aerial view of the hexagonal structures of *Man in the Community* and *Man and his Health* Pavilions

⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Forestry Department, Corporate Document Repository. "Wood at Expo 67." < <http://www.fao.org/docrep/59708e/59708e05.htm> > [March 28, 2011]

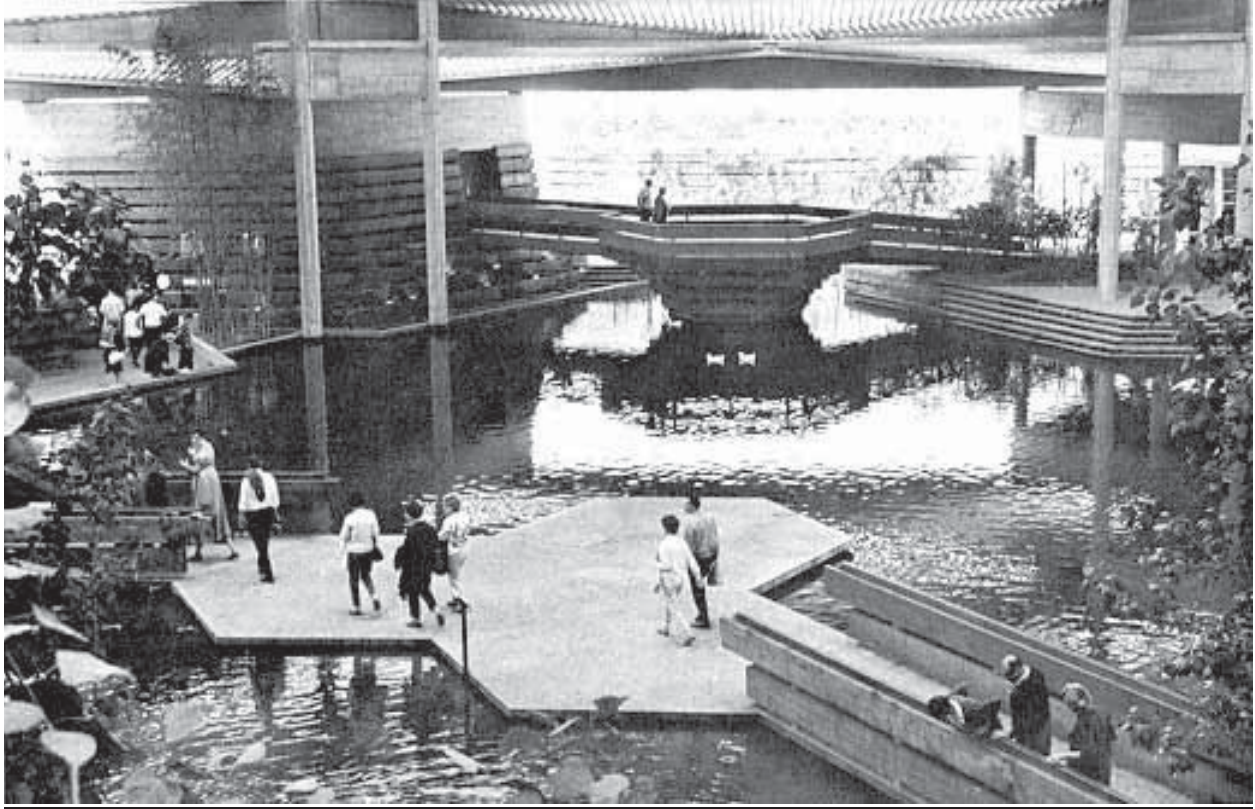


Figure 7: The interior of the *Man in the Community*: the indoor pond and garden

The inside featured an unusual surprise to visitors. The roof structure was open at the top to allow natural sunlight and rain water in. So, when it rained, the drops fell through the open roof into a lush courtyard garden in the center of the pavilion surrounded by a pond, creating a serene and tranquil environment. The garden then wound through the pavilion and around walkways that connected to the enclosed exhibition theatres and displays.

Analysis: *Building Harmony and Brotherhood*

“God created one race: the human race. Man created racism.”⁶

In a world divided by ethnic, racial, and religious strife, Montreal's World Fair was successful because it was a class-act example of how multi-cultural groups of people can set aside their political bickering, linguistic differences, and senseless violence in favor of something constructive, productive, and unifying. Specifically, historian Pierre Berton spoke of how Expo bridged Canada's great divide among the Anglophones and Francophones during that summer through their cooperation to show the world that Canada was a contender on the world stage. He stated,

*“the secret of Expo's success — 'the Québécois flair, the English-Canadian pragmatism.’”*⁷

Expo was a testament to what *Man* can accomplish when he sets aside all other differences to create something lasting, meaningful and worthwhile. **There is nothing that unites *Man* more than sharing a common vision and goal.** Therein lies the secret to Expo's global success.

⁶ *The Oprah Winfrey Show* – “In Memory of Martin Luther King Jr.”, NBC: Harpo Studios Inc., January 17, 2011.

⁷ Pierre Berton, *1967: The Last Good Year*, (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1997), 269.

I believe that this theory was embodied in both the interior and exterior architecture and physical structure of *Man and His Community* Pavilion. The intention of the theme of this pavilion was to provoke thought and contemplation regarding the changing conditions of the urban environment that was confronting *Man*, with an emphasis on the human community. The interior displays celebrated *Man*'s perseverance and tenacity regarding the obstacles that he had overcome. However, the interiors will not be discussed here due to the limited scope of this paper. Below, I will discuss in detail the symbolism found in the exterior architecture of the structure.

The duo of structures that were the *Community* and the *Health* Pavilions created by superimposed hexagonal rings was particularly exemplary and symbolic of the Expo Logo. The rotational transformation of the hexagonal rings, as seen in plan-view, looked like pairs of interlinked arms. Every additional hexagonal layer superimposed on top had a smaller diameter and was further rotationally transformed, giving a feeling of circular motion and ascension. In my mind, it conjures up images of whirling dervishes, or children holding hands in a circle, skipping in circular rhythm. This imagery exemplifies the essence of friendship and playfulness, dancing to the same beat and song.

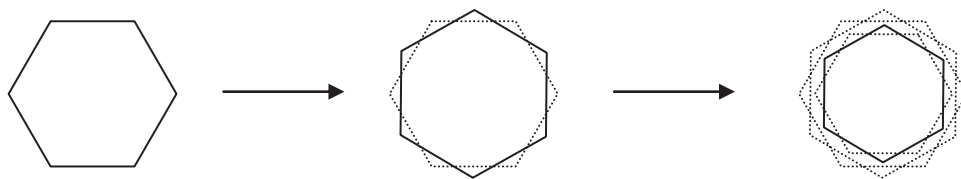


Figure 8: Plan view of the built-up hexagonal structure of *Man in the Community* Pavilion

The juxtaposition and contrast between the pair of hexagonal pavilions, *Community* and *Health*, was in their roof structures. Whereas *Man and His Health* Pavilion is truncated at the top, providing a flat roof, and was an inward-looking building, *Man and the Community* had a roof spire that elicited vertical ascension and skyward aspirations. This is important in interpreting the theme of the building and its architectural symbolism.

Starting from the bottom up, the pavilion was largest at its base, providing the widest possible entrances on all sides, as if to say: *all are welcome, come in and be a part of our community, our brotherhood*. Meredith Dixon's feature slide on the cover of the report illustrates the multitudes of international people honing in on this structure, as if it were a beacon guiding them home.

My interpretation of this building is that a *Community* is formed by drawing together *Man* from every direction and angle, from the far reaches of the earth, coming toward a commonality which unites them, that being society. In coming together, they form bonds, as depicted by the seemingly 'arm-linked' members of each additional layer of hexagonal rings that is rotated 30 degrees. More importantly, each hexagonal ring is placed on top of the layer below, symbolizing that as *Man* unites with other *Man*, they are collectively elevated, impressing upon society the lesson that in unity and cooperation there is a higher ethic and a nobler existence. Furthermore, each additional hexagon is smaller in diameter and area than the one previous, denoting that

as people unite, they are closer in spirit, tighter in bonds, and richer as a community. Together they will be able to achieve more, reach higher and go further than they could individually. This upward, dynamic, spiralling ascension reaches a pointed peak, the ultimate goal of a loving community, where *One* are *All*, and *All* are *One*. However, reaching this summit would not be possible without the dedicated support of each and every structural member from the bottom up, carrying, guiding and turning its structural brethren of beams up and around until the top.

One of the unique characteristics of the open roof structure caused by leaving the openings between the hexagonal corners uncovered was that it allowed the building to be at one with nature and harmonious with the weather, rain or shine. This was an important concept to the idea of *Man in the Community*: it was not only an aspiration of *Man* to be in harmony with his fellow man, but also to be in harmony simultaneously with nature as well, and to live sustainably and peacefully with species of his own kind as well as all living creatures that share the earth with him. Only in this way will *Man* truly attain superior status on the earth and reach the heavens.

Conclusion

*“The real and lasting victories are those of peace, and not of war.”*⁸

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

The many wars and other acts of aggression that took place throughout the 1960's that wrought ruin, devastation, and annihilation were the dipolar opposite of Expo and its vision, theme, and architecture. Architecture is one type of opposite of war. War is destruction. Architecture is *construction*.

*“Architecture—the art and science of making a building—is essentially an act of optimism.”*⁹

It was this optimism in *Man* and in humanity that made Expo 67 successful and memorable. Its architecture played a large role in human civility, and on a more global scale, friendship and understanding. The fair grounds' islands were a model of global unity, if only for one summer.

“I was there [at Expo] with my family at 11 years old. The Beatles ‘*Sergeant Pepper*’ record had just been released and, in general, it seemed like a happy, optimistic, forward-looking world. We, the

⁸ Esther Charlesworth, *Architects Without Frontiers: War, Reconstruction and Design Responsibility*, (Amsterdam: Elsevier Architectural Press, 2006), xiii.

⁹ Stephen Verderber, *Compassion in Architecture: Evidence-Based Design for Health in Louisiana*, (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 2005), 5.

young people, were going to overthrow the forces of old, and evil, and war alike.”¹⁰

-Mary Shelleysman

Rather than using nationality to divide people, architecture celebrated the diversity of cultures. It had the power to unite, heal, and bring understanding of “the other” by seeing the way they live, and the art of living through experiencing their buildings.

*“Healing wounds and building peace is not the exclusive responsibility of politicians. We, as architects and urban and regional planners, have a major role to play – and a matching responsibility.”*¹¹

Not only can architecture be used to illustrate how people live and work, but also how they can get along amicably, compassionately, on an individual and societal level.

Though the pavilions were never meant to last forever, the friendships and open-minded dialogues that they paved the way for will continue to last for lifetimes.

¹⁰ < <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mf4R5-LQPHI> >

¹¹ Sultan Barakat, “City War Zones.” *Urban Age*. (Spring 1998), 15.

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Meredith Dixon slide collection - <http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/expo-67/index.html>

Figure 1: < [http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/expo-67/slides/LARGE/\(3E\)_31_ThemePavilion_ManCommunity_ManHealth_BothPavilions.jpg](http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/expo-67/slides/LARGE/(3E)_31_ThemePavilion_ManCommunity_ManHealth_BothPavilions.jpg) > [March 20, 2011]

Figure 2: <http://expo67.ncf.ca/basic_unit_of_the_expo_67_symbol_p1.html> [March 22, 2011]

Figure 3: < http://expo67.ncf.ca/basic_unit_of_the_expo_67_symbol_p1.html > [March 22, 2011]

Figure 4:
<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/72/Montr%C3%A9al_Expo_67_Site_Map.png> [March 18, 2011]

Figure 5: <http://www.alamedainfo.com/Expo_67_Montreal_2.htm> [March 18, 2011]

Figure 6: <<http://www.westland.net/expo67/map-docs/mancommunity.htm>> [March 21, 2010]

Figure 7: <<http://www.westland.net/expo67/map-docs/mancommunity.htm>> [March 21, 2010]

Figure 8: drawn by the author. [March 28, 2011]

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