MINECRAFT
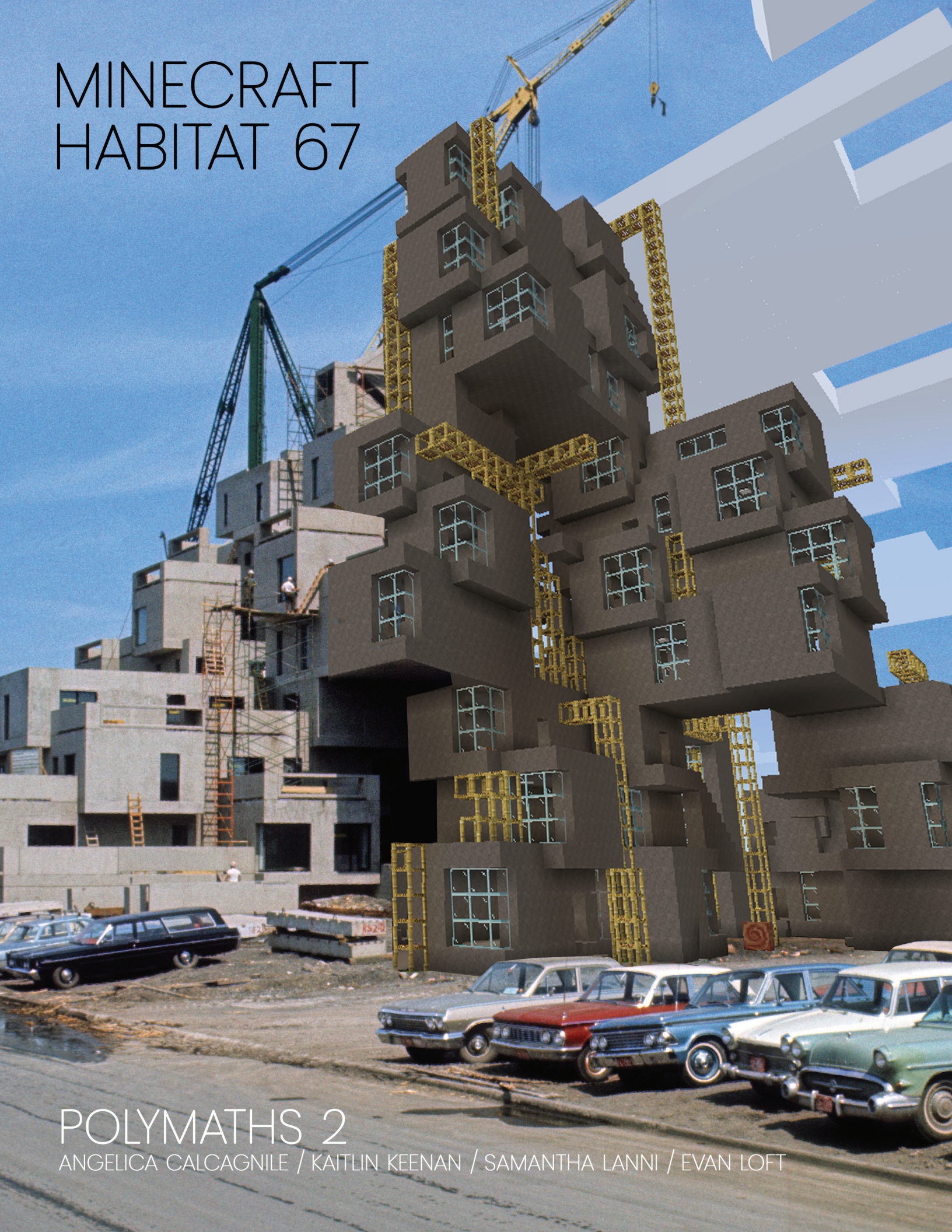# HABITAT 67

POLYMATHS 2
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Concrete Utopia: (Re)Designing Habitat
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Polymaths 2
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In tackling the design aspect of our team's Minecraft interpretation of Habitat '67, what surfaces time and again is the disconnect between what is, and what could have been, both in our digital Habitat, and the very real building in our very real city. Both our Habitats are hauntological artifacts, structures that examine and uphold Modern and Modernist ideals that never quite came to fruition.

Translating Habitat '67 into our Minecraft world ironically undermines almost every notable element of the real life building, beyond its iconic appearance. At the core of Habitat's modern allure is the way in which it was constructed, with modular elements assembled in a factory, then stacked one on top of the other with the help of a crane. This standardization and quick assembly were cornerstones of the building's modernism, which is completely undermined by our Minecraft homage. Forty blocks in the air, teetering on the edge of some hastily erected scaffolding, counting each L shape's outline out block by block, I wished that I had the ability to preassemble our units on the ground, and pop them into place. My teammates, blocks in hand, filled in the units, again, block by block, and then it was once again time for me to count out the outline for the next floor. This act, of placing each block by hand, felt like traditional craftsmanship, and hardly the modernist exercise this building is meant to embody. In this way, our Minecraft build is a tribute to a modern approach to home construction that it can, in many ways, never be.

Of course, the actual Habitat building is itself emblematic of this concept, particularly with regards to the more philosophical elements of its modernism. Constructed to showcase a new approach to urban high density housing, while offering the comforts of suburban life, all in a streamlined and cost-effective way, Habitat was populist at its core. Though never designed to be social housing, it was constructed to be "not a building, but a system, and one that wasn't

tied to a particular site but could be applied anywhere." (Safdie, 116) Nonetheless, in the words of Hatherley, Habitat '67, like so many projects of its kind, is "[c]aught in the grim paradox of nostalgia for a time yet to come, the utopian imaginary that lies behind" it now "atrophied". (8) Its units, like Modernism, "proclaimed, again, to be too good for the worker (or the 'underclass'), and is left for the affluent to play with." (12) In a highly critical piece published around the building's unveiling, architecture critic A. E. J. Morris wrote, "it is patently absurd to see in anything like this Habitat 'an answer to the Indian housing problem'. This is indeed the cake proposed for those who cannot afford bread." While it is contextually unclear whether Morris is referring to a Canadian housing crisis affecting Indigenous people, or lack of housing for India's large population, he was prescient in identifying that Habitat '67 would not become a template for revolutionizing the housing industry. Given his other critiques, however, he might be surprised to see that units in Habitat, though rarely on the market, generally trade for over one million dollars.

In identifying in projects like Habitat '67 a nostalgia for a now atrophied utopianism, Hatherley recognizes a "failure of the future" (Fisher, 16) that is central to the idea of hauntology. Boym argues that nostalgia can be prospective (8), and that "nostalgia itself has a utopian dimension—only it is no longer directed toward the future", an idea echoed by Galloway in "*Warcraft* and Utopia". It's in this metaphorical place that Habitat '67, both the real building, and the Minecraft interpretation, can be found. Habitat's architect, Moshe Safdie, connected his ideas about architecture and urban planning to his childhood experiences of "the socialist nirvana of the collective movement and the kibbutz", in his words "one of the most utopian constructs ever developed". (122) Habitat '67, while unlike any of the housing projects that predated it, was nonetheless rooted in Safdie's nostalgia for a collective living experience. Of course, our project is, at its core, also nostalgic. The mere act of attempting to reproduce a building that is synonymous with our city within Minecraft is an homage that is by nature backward-looking. Unlike Safdie, who looked to the past to inspire a new approach to housing,

we simply looked to the past to see how faithfully it could be reproduced in a radically different context. Given that, as Galloway argues "virtual worlds are always in some basic way the expression of utopian desire", our Habitat, the result of our play, is by nature utopic, a model designed to amuse, but also hopefully shelter our classmates.

It's in that goal that our project found the most complication. While our team settled on "Constructing Expertise" as the guideline for our project, ultimately, our build diverged from our inspiration video by Youtube user Keralis, which showcases the work of PaulvMontfort on the World of Keralis creative building Minecraft server. In examining what our Minecraft version of Habitat '67 was to be used for, it was clear that the extreme scale of this build would not function as our own little utopian housing project, even if abbreviated to a single phase or lobe of the structure. We determined that we didn't want our Habitat to become an extension of the nearby game-generated village, but live just south of it, above the river, like its real-life counterpart, and become a community for our classmates. In this way, our build seeks to append some additional Minecraft-enabled utopianism back onto Habitat '67, given that, as Galloway suggests, "all video games are, at a certain level, utopian projects", and, free of real-life budgetary concerns, we are able to happily assign units to whoever might want one. Unfortunately, in preserving an accessible scale for players, the Minecraft design loses some of the details that could better mirror the real life construction, and the limitations of specific blocks force different calculations for how to allow players to move through the complex and make use of the units. This ultimately results in our construction failing one of the critical goals of the real life building, namely the individual green space assigned to each unit. Of course, this isn't anything a Minecraft mod or two couldn't fix, but given the constraints of this project, we have to satisfy ourselves with what exists, and what will continue to evolve over the next little while, and with the fact that the build will remain haunted by past decisions that made future realities impossible.

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ENGL 398

18 March 2021

<div align="center">The Most Brutal Form of Modernity in Minecraft</div>

Brutalism is a term often associated with Montreal's famous Habitat 67, an architectural staple of Moshe Safdie which was created in 1967 with the intent of providing residents with a vision into the future. Polymaths 2 embarked on recreating the historical building through a process of modernization and industrialization to both our own technologies and the area surrounding the build. In this way, Polymaths 2 was quickly forced into a new era of technology, jumping from an antiquity-esque state to a fully technologically refined community of industrial builders. To achieve the reality of a fully realized concrete build in the middle of—what we thought was uncolonized territory—we needed to shift our previously held understanding of collaboration in favour for a more efficient and inherently modern way of construction. Through an analysis of Ben Singer's "Meanings of Modernity" in relation to the build and the effect of our rapid modernization on the environment surrounding the area, this essay will argue that Minecraft forces players into modernization, regardless of their playstyles.

While reading Ben Singer's article about the varying methods of pinpointing the exact definition of modernity, many of his assertions rang true in the strategies we employed throughout the building process in our rendition of Habitat 67. Before beginning the construction of the iconic landmark, we collectively realized that we were unable to create the materials needed to craft such a daunting structure. In many ways, Polymaths 2 was still existing in a time of antiquity—using unrefined materials like cobblestone and wood for the majority of buildings

we constructed and had no real understanding of automated crafting. We also had decided on a location that was a considerable distance away from our monument. These two factors encouraged a rapid modernization of our technology and transportation systems. Ben Singer states that the beginning of modernity ushered in "a series of sweeping changes in technology and culture" which "created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space" (Singer 19). Once armed with an assembler and a railway that would transport the materials being automatically generated by the machinery and the players from one area to another more efficiently, we were ready to begin the construction. By constructing a massive concrete building with a complex entanglement of intersecting L shapes, we inadvertently brought a rapidly growing version of modernity to that part of the map which we believed to be uninhabited at the time. As Singer writes we created a modern society not unlike a "merry-go-round in which, men, objects, and values incessantly move with a mad rapidity…without a moment of rest and stability" (29). Polymaths 2 exemplified this behaviour as we took up hundreds of squares worth of wilderness and claimed it as our as we created a monument that can be seen from miles away.

As we had just commenced our building project, we discovered a small village which neighboured our construction. This village was densely populated by primarily farmer villagers and their livestock where they lived in small huts constructed with wood and cobblestone. Directly adjacent to our modern monolithic build was a physical representation of a playstyle that was our reality for the majority of the class until this point. We had intruded on a small society of farmers without even being aware of their existence, often accidentally killing their livestock that had wandered over to our build without even knowing it could possibly belong to someone else. Their feudal lifestyles were unknowingly feeding industrialized workers who were

moving towards a modern space in the wilderness. Their existence near the build did not make a large impact until one day, they were all gone from the village. There was not a single villager left to trade with and their chests had been emptied. No one really had any ideas as to where they were or why they left, but as I was thinking of this essay, I realized that they too were a biproduct of rapid modernization. Modernization essentially "destroyed the equilibrium of thousands of brains which lacked staying power," (19) just as Max Nordau is quoted saying in Ben Singer's article. Those who did not revolutionize would cease to have the same staying power as those who moved to a more modern way of living.

While Minecraft is generally open-ended, many would remark that the feeling of modernizing is rewarding in many playthroughs. When the player is first dropped into the world, they are placed in Antiquity, using cobblestone, wood and dirt to construct their tools and bases. But as the player becomes more experienced in their playstyle, there is an inevitable push towards modernizing one's base and surroundings in order to facilitate day-to-day life in the game. Though my group took a particularly large leap into the future, all players are seemingly pushed towards a modernizing mindset as they grow in game. In conclusion, Minecraft guides the player towards an industrialized, modernized worldview while also leaving those who cannot adapt behind to disappear without a trace.

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ENGL 398: Video Games and/as Theory

March 18th, 2021

An Industrial Revolution

When I decided to take this class I really did not expect it to be as involving, interesting, mentally taxing or fun as it is. What I find to be particularly fascinating about this course is that because this course is being studied for a theological study I feel that most of the decisions concerning class work as well as the group projects is up to the students themselves. Our homework for this class consists of not-so fairly heavy or long readings, though they are very interesting and intriguing, our other homework is spending time inside the game outside of class hours either completing our projects or individually working on things in the world that we would like to try. Overall I have absolutely enjoyed everything surrounding this class Anne would fully recommend to anybody to take it.

As a collective group we decided our project would be to build 1/3 of the habitat Montreal Olympic athlete condos, it was and still is somewhat overwhelming to see how much work we have done and how much is left to do. The main structure itself is 95% done, what is left to do is decorate the inside of each condo, windows, the area surrounding the building and the stairs and walkways leading up to each condo. Over the last month or so my teammates and I have divided up the responsibilities for completing the project in the following ways: Angelica focused on the design and the math behind the build, I focused on our immersive engineering side of the project to mass produce liquid and regular concrete, Kaitlin has played a large part in
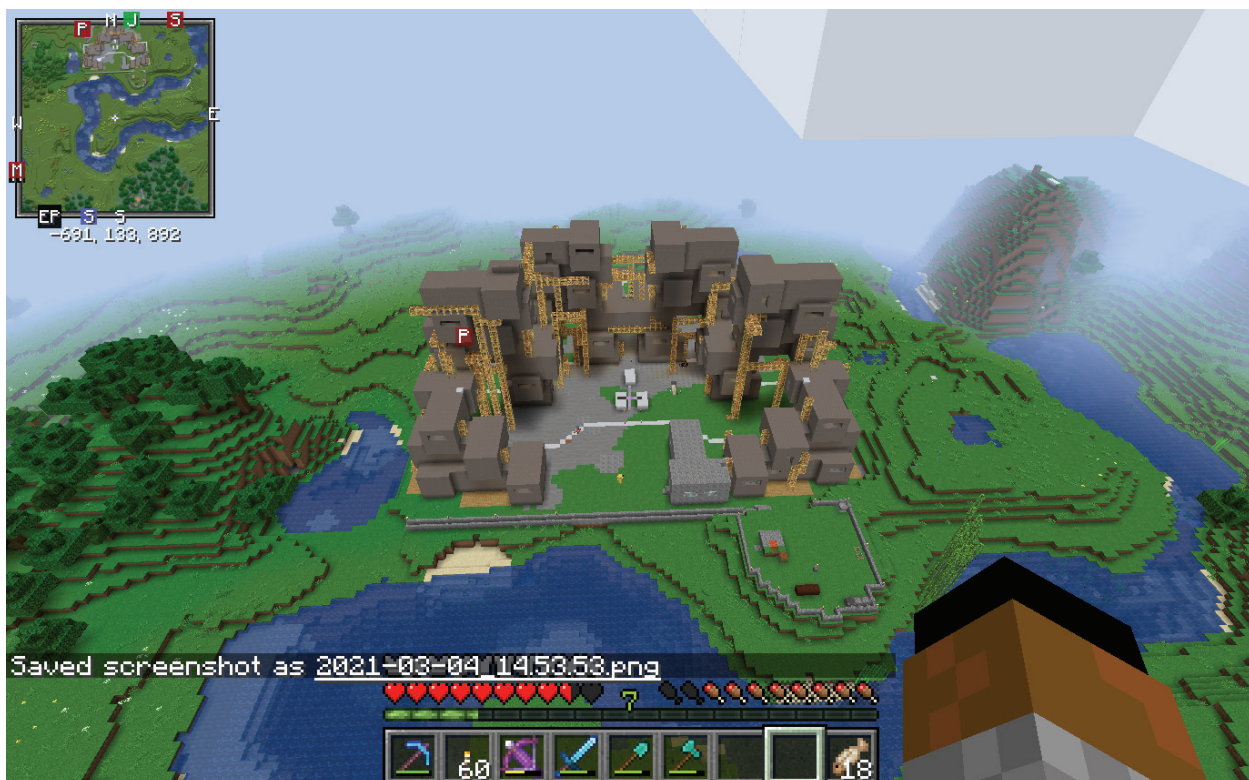
the construction of the actual buildings themselves, and our fearless member Evan died many, many times traveling to the end to get us end rods so that we could light our build. The most significant aspects of our project, in my opinion, is the design and math behind the built, as well as our engine room where we have the most of our immersive engineering multiblock machines and the railway system that helped us transport them; although, I will be focuses on the engineering aspect mostly.

Since the beginning of our warmup exercise, I have mainly been focusing on the immersive engineering aspect to our Minecraft class. Our team itself is fairly divided when it comes to skills that we've learned in the game, for example Angelica has focused a lot on the bees or planting and harvesting as I have focused on more on the machines and how to mass produce items/ liquid's. My experience with engineering and helping my team to produce large quantities of concrete, biodiesel, and liquid concrete helped me better to understand the reading by Suzie O'Brien and Imre Szeman, "Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution". One of their main points throughout their reading is that as we progress, we take up natural spaces that used to be for community and socializing and we use those for more technological and advanced things. This became absolutely apparent just within the first few days of planning where our project is going to be because I had moved at least a few 100 squares worth of stone and dirt to accommodate the size of our build (O'Brien and Szeman). Something else that became very apparent during the build which helped me to understand what O'Brien and Szeman were saying was that the production of our builds required mass amounts of "capital" to make: "industrial enterprises require major investments of capital to generate growth" (O'Brien and Szeman, 41). Now capital in this sense could mean two things, the first being actual land capital that will house the build, and Secondly capital as in money or resources. Though we have no actual form

of currency in the game our capital can be seen as our materials we collect throughout the world - we require more and more materials to mass produce any blocks we need for the actual build. We, on multiple occasions, depleted much of our stock to complete the task. In a sense it's a catch 22, to create the multiblock machines that help mass produce any material we required throughout the build also required materials to make and due to the fact that we were mass producing we then required more materials to mass produce more so that we weren't running out constantly. I now understood more than ever how much capital actually requires to fund and to create a massive build. All this organized machinery that we have created in our engine room, as we call it, an engine room that had a farm directly on top of it is a wonderful allegory of what O'Brien and Szeman used to explain what the industrial revolution is: "The term industrial revolution, generally used to refer to the period in British history from approximately the mid-18th to mid-19th century, describes the transition from an agricultural and small-scale commercial society to one based on the organize mechanical production" (O'Brien and Szeman, 41). This definition cannot only be used to help me understand exactly how far we've come from the beginning of this project to how far we've come at the end but also to our Minecraft world itself. When we were dropped into this world we entered something that was not ours, it had already been set up with villagers all over the world who are just minding their business and selling their items - an agricultural world for all you did was grow food and sell it. We have taken what we were thrown into which was "small-scale" compared to what we have made it to be by using our organized mechanical production and the multiblock machines that I've created in our engine room. I feel as though my view on production has definitely changed throughout this project, I always used to say that if I needed something I would just go out and find it and produce what I required but that's not the case with this build: "The Industrial Revolution thus marked a

significant change not only in the mode of production – the physical process used to generate the necessities of life – but also in the relations of production" (O'Brien and Szeman, 41). The four of us would have had to have worked day and night to produce the amount of concrete that we actually needed for the build if it were not for the machines that we have created. The reading helped me to understand how I had been feeling towards production since the start of the project, it was in a sense not only what I required anymore but it was what the team required thus my production had to up itself and it could not stay at the level that it was staying at.

Essentially, I believe that our world, our Minecraft world, is now in the process of an industrial revolution. It was only up until recently that some classmates have decided to create a trading post as well as I feel that more teams are trading within each other at now. Only last week that I actually have a trade between another teammate on another team because I helped them get materials that they required to feed Moloch and satisfy his requests. As I myself discovered the world I come across farms and buildings and villages that I didn't think were there that have been made by people in our class and with that I feel a change of winds rising within the world.

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Saved screenshot as 2021-03-04_14.53.53.png

The night has passed – What's your plan today?

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EGNL 398

18th March 2021

Minecraft and Mobility

When jumping into the game of Minecraft for the first time I was met with a bright and colorful world filled with possibilities. Overtime, I learned new technological advancements that were at first overwhelming(engineering), which then became easier to master, and improved my overall efficiency in game. One might say, or at least early historians would, I became "civilized" to the western world's modern ways. When I finally reached the early peak of my modernization state, my team and I were tasked with forging our own monument, but this one was of a more "recent" style (unlike Moloch). The monument we now began to forge was that of Habitat 67. With this in mind, my natural instinct as someone who plays plenty of adventure games went off. It my task to head out in search of the coveted "End Rods". These lighting fixtures allowed for modern lighting that would outshine the ancient looking flames we used previously. This task which started out as a simple "game quest" for my team, became something much more, which perfectly tied in with the allegory of railway space and railway time.

On my first trip to the end, there was one thing that became incredibly apparent to me, more so than anywhere else in-game. And that was the distance of which I had to walk, and the time it took to get to even one End City. Much like those in the past who spent many hours traveling by carriage, I too was taking a very slow and potentially treacherous trip. Of course, this was my "occupation" within the world of the game. While I also lay bricks later on, and

helped with some of the cement mixing; my main priority was seeking End Rods. These End Rods were an in-game commodity, which only the braver players sought out. I had to trek through miles upon miles of foreign and alien terrain, attempting not to upset the natives so I could attain some of their lighting rods. In real world time, it took roughly 2 hours to get there, and attain all the end rods and return back. This as many can imagine was a large amount of time to spend, and I had to do this several times to get the 200 or so rods I needed. Of course, this was until on my End Rod hunt, I found an unexpected piece of in game technology. That was none other than a new form of mobilization which I knew the instant I found meant something groundbreaking for the game world in which my avatar lived in. Similar to how Heinrich Heine thought the creation the railroad was a

 'providential event', comparable to the inventions of gunpowder and printing, 'which swings mankind in a new direction, and changes the color and shape of life' (Schivelbusch, 37)

 I could feel a change in how I would play the game. Elytra, the game's flight system when paired with fireworks, was essentially the railway of Minecraft for me. Where my peers would spend 15 to 20 to some times 30 minutes traveling from one place back to our base, I flew with ease. In turn that mobilization left me with a lot of time. This time became dedication to finding more important commodities for my team.

After a time, I went without visiting The End, as I had received my tech that changed my world. I did not want to lose all I had earned from this quest by falling into the abyss. However, after achieving mending and unbreakable, I devised a plan to return to the end.

This plan ended up getting me 2 new elytra, one of which I would gift to a teammate of mine. This immediately changed the value I held to elytra, as its natural aura has diminished due to the distance between getting it became far shorter. Much like Walter Benjamin explains, the

reproduction of something by means of distance shortening is linked directly to its aura. (39) By cutting the time it took for me to get to the Elytra in the hidden fortress in the sky to almost less than 15 minutes, elytra and the world of the end not only lost its isolated nature; but also, its value. (39)

Ultimately, Minecraft is an interesting game which challenges the player to explore and find new ways to efficiently forge the world around them. In my mission to bring modern lighting to my team, I was reminded of the importance of mobility, and the social power it holds when certain items are needed (end rods being one of these). While of course there we moments in my quest to attain end rods that still felt very much like it was just a game; such as fighting "shulkers" in the end city and all the platforming done...Additionally, I cannot say that my retrieval of fast travel in anyway alerted standard time...I can confidently say that throughout my experience I was reminded of the railway and all that it did to change the way we look at time, and the aura of locations and objects. Starting as a someone who seldom travelled far from my base to retrieve items, to someone who actively travelled from town to town greatly changed how I looked at goods in the game.

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why are we here just to suffer.mp4 (dropbox.com) (link to comical "shitpost" I edited quickly to showcase my initial barebones approach to traversing the end. The 00:07 minute mark is where you see how far on the map I was from where I died with all my end rods, next to a brand-new end city I had just found)