

Migrating Landscapes: from local vernacular to new typologies



Competition Brief:

<http://migratinglandscapes.ca/competition/requirements>

Design Brief:

When people migrate, they bring with them cultural memories of a place, and unique cultural heritages, which affect one's identity and inform one's values. These migrated memories, either from another place or another time, transform as they settle into new contexts. New memories are forged, through processes of layering, erasure and juxtaposition, as the migrated memories negotiate with the unfamiliar in the context of new landscapes and architectural environments. In this sense, one never really settles or unsettles, and the resulting built form is neither of the former nor of the present. Instead, unique forms of un/settlement result that resonate with both local conditions and one's own migrated cultural memories.

The Migrating Landscapes Competition invites young Canadian architects and designers to reflect on their cultural migration experiences and un/settling encounters and to design dwellings – in a sense, first acts of settlement - onto the new landscape designed by MLO. This new landscape is an abstract assembly made of wooden modules and contestants are invited to act as its first immigrants. The act of constructing the first dwellings will be enactments of first immigration onto this abstract landscape. The dwellings and the landscape will together form both the regional exhibitions and the exhibition in Venice, providing a unique view into Canada's past, present and future.

Video: Narrative

A monologue video in which the entrant talks about:

- Intentions and ideas of the construct; specific resonances to the migration story.
- The video must frame the upper body (chest and up) portion of the narrator against a white background.
- Entrant's face must be screened or covered with a medium/method of choice during the narration.
- After the narration is finished, the entrant MUST pause five seconds and then remove the screen/cover, revealing his/her face for the final 10 seconds of the video.
- Video may be a maximum of three minutes in length, including the final face reveal.

Model: Construct

A physical dwelling model that:

- Reflects, represents, questions, or settles the unsettling experiences and conditions narrated in the video.
- Tectonic and programmatic interpretation of and response to un/settling conditions.
- Model can be constructed at any scale (e.g. 1:1, 1:10, 1:100, 1:1000).
- Model MUST be portable and meet the luggage requirements of regular national and international commercial air travel. (i.e.: <http://www.aircanada.com/en/travelinfo/airport/baggage/>)
- All materials allowed, keeping in mind that durability through trans-Atlantic travel will be necessary.

The competition video can be viewed at: <http://vimeo.com/29838638>

The five selected model photos are included in the following pages.

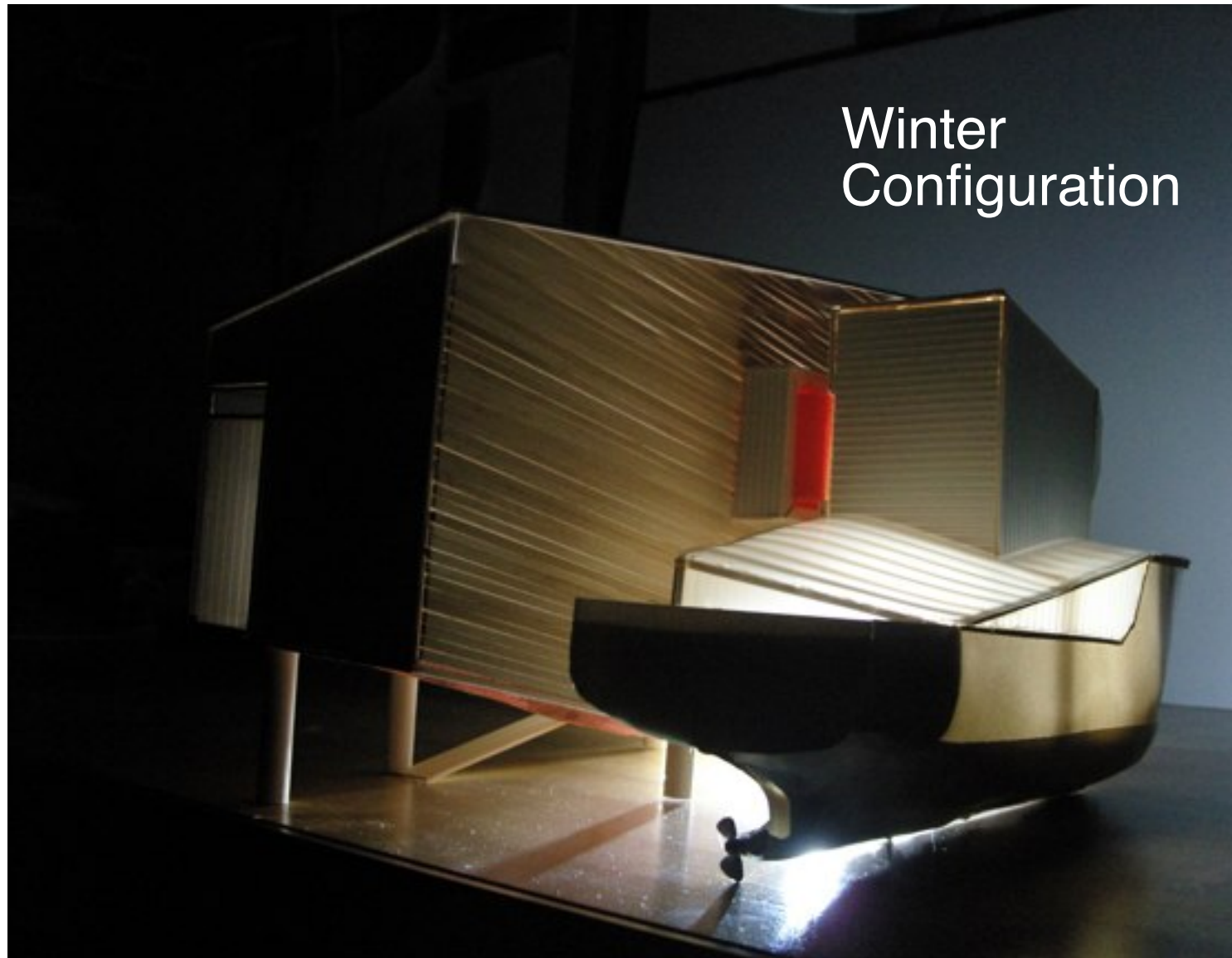
Program and Building Operation:

The competition brief states no specific program, except for the building becoming the first dwelling within this new landscape. In this sense, the building I have designed is made to develop flexible space that can provide the basic shelter and operation within the rural outport, but also that can have specific uses as the community grows and develops. It could be used as a prototype for the current state of the outport, and mark the re-settlement back into the outport. In this way, the design is a network, with many small building elements, and converted fishing trawlers. The concept is that the building provides permanent amenity or cultural program in a given community, and that each community could have a different program in the building based on their needs, funding, and existing local building stock. These programs could range from services such as recycling or health care, to small businesses, or collective spaces like libraries or theatres. The needs of the outport stretch beyond basic services currently provided, to cultural, intellectual and emotional sustenance, as well as a higher level of amenity in order for them to be attractive places to live. The proposal seeks to utilize the operation of the harbour and fishery to promote development, tourism, and local participation in rural Newfoundland.

The basic operation of the building relies on the traditional seasonal cycle of the outport. Using standard 65 foot fishing trawlers, the boats are converted into mobile units of the building amenity and also provide coastal transport of residents between communities, providing new public transportation, which is important, especially as the outport is aging and people need to rely on local public transportation. The operation of the project depends on participation with local Harbour Authorities, and the use of the local wharf and its equipment. There are varied capabilities along the coast, and the project would be adapted to suit each community's local practices. Equipment such as that pictured below can be utilized for transportation and maintenance of the boats in the winter season to allow the winter configuration, where the boat becomes part of the building and provides extra public space for communities which are isolating and empty in the long, cold winters.



Winter Configuration



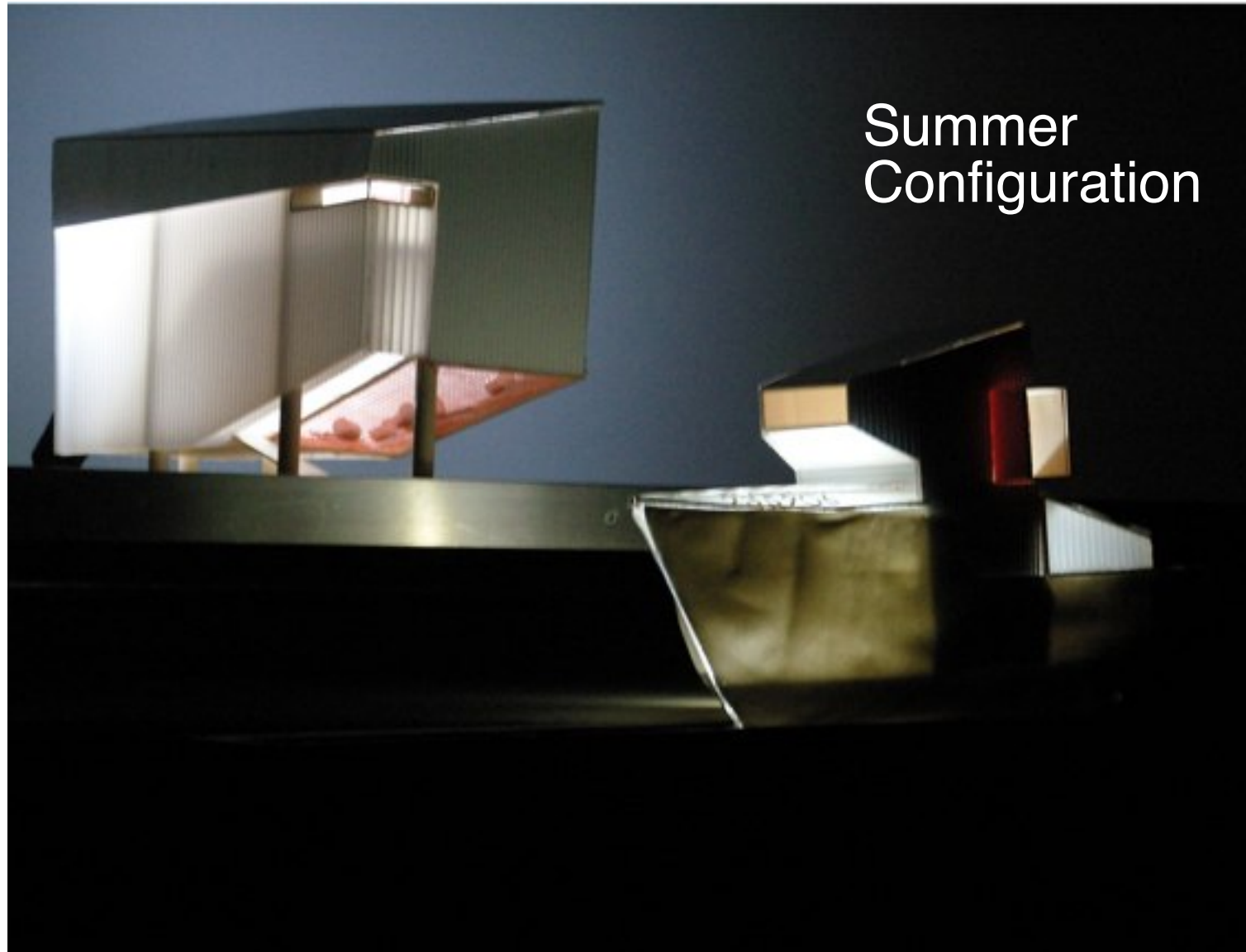


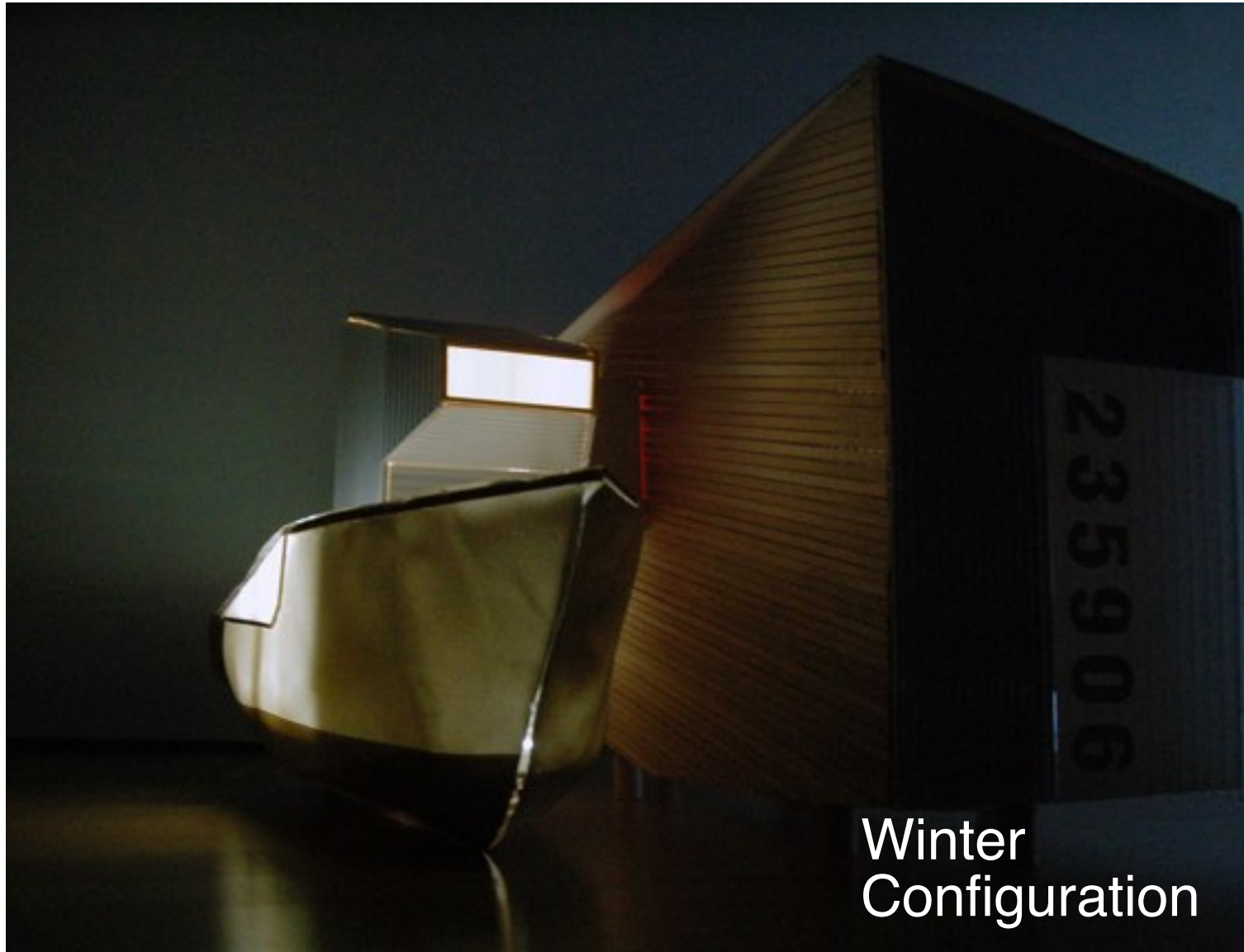
Summer
Configuration



Summer
Configuration

Summer Configuration





Winter
Configuration

Introduction

Although preliminary, this design represents different ways of incorporating sustainability into the outport community, by fitting into local culture, utilizing local resources, and creating a modern vision for dwindling rural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador. This essay will demonstrate the requirements for working within the outport to create positive local reactions, and create sustainable solutions in order to implement new coastal transport services, infrastructure and amenity. This model is developed based on the historical 'Splinter Fleet' which serviced Newfoundland's outports until the 1980's. The past is important in developing a realistic and rooted vision of the future Newfoundland outport. The past is used as precedent in multiple ways in the design of the lightship network; heritage architecture influences the building design, traditional skill sets inform the program development, and local culture and media are used to build the project into a functional social network.

The competition brief asks us to talk about our personal migration story of entering a foreign cultural or physical landscape. What was I expecting, what did I observe, and how did this shape my approach? I think the greatest feeling was one of sadness at the loss of such a beautiful culture of adventure, wilderness, hard work and kind people. The method of dealing with this was linked to a sense of Narrative in Newfoundland. This is my attempt at building the capacity of the region to narrate its own past, present and future through re-identification and restructuring of local traditions and infrastructure. This proposal utilizes the informal networks between outports, strengthens them and deploys shared amenities and locally based governance to re-empower the outports of Newfoundland and Labrador. As a designer, the heritage of the outport helps in developing a narrative of a modern vision of the outport and a future vision of what it could be. *"Rural development is not just about 'new things' being added to established situations. It is about newly emerging and historically rooted realities that are currently reappearing as rural development experiences avant la lettre. Rural development policies should focus on strengthening proven constellations and supporting emergence of new ones. A particularly decisive element will be the combination of the old with the new"*¹ This idea of developing the rural outport within a greater context, or across many scales, is the strategy that I have developed for the project.

¹ Rural Development, Van der Ploeg, 141

Developing a personal Narrative:

"I never understood the meaning of a storm door before I went to Newfoundland. I also didn't really comprehend just why its nicknamed the rock- or how thick the fog can get- so thick that even as a pedestrian it can be scary. I had never really spent time on the ocean before, never really experienced the vastness of standing on the edge of a grey ocean on a grey day.

Once I started talking to people, what shocked me is how a landscape can influence a culture so directly- and at the edge of a landscape, how important the specific space of that threshold between land and sea becomes. The in- between of ocean and rock is the single most productive and active area within a community. Since the moratorium on cod- perhaps this is no longer the truth.

Outmigration has characterized the outpost. Newfoundland itself is a migratory landscape- since its inception; hundreds of communities have resettled elsewhere. But migration has a story of push and pull factors- things like better employment elsewhere, or lack of healthcare. The design represents a reiteration of Newfoundland's first settlement- by sea. It Follows the rules of the seascape and bridges the coastal zone.

The mountainous, dark topography of Newfoundland is nearly impenetrable- and the logic of these settlements seems unclear- until you see them by water. The logic of access to the ocean becomes the logic of siting. These access points- harbours wharves and slipways are essential to maintaining the character of these fishing towns- post fishing. . The various dories, fishing trawlers, and supply vessels operate seasonally. While the harbours are full of action in the summer, in the winter they sit empty. The concept of the building is to operate with this seasonal migration between land and water and the boat becomes integral to the building itself.

The building is to provide the amenities that are the push and pull factors of migration to declining fishing communities- by sea. The program could be anything from a library, research cluster, blood bank or small museum. The ability of the building to convert seasonally, so that the boat is always the heart of the program allows this wasted winter space to be re-used and gives the converted fishing trawler a new purpose.

There is a culture of dealing with harsh conditions creates incredible resourcefulness and unique local skill sets. Materials used have associated practices, for instance the use of nets for storage areas, or lounging areas can be knit and that skill can be preserved within the architecture of the building as a landmark of heritage. Near extinct practices will be reinvented to form new traditions and new patterns on the edge of the landscape. I can imagine a fleet. "

Context:

The context of my proposal for the competition is that of a reactionary vision. My experience of the landscape of Newfoundland was punctuated by decaying reminders of the outport as an endangered place. The story of outmigration from the outport is the current story- and my design questions what new narratives could look like? How can we maintain and develop influence from the past while dealing with the reality of the outport, instead of romantazing it, and planning for the future. The historical context of Newfoundland is defined by its fishery, and the typical outport community was developed around the harbour. Seafaring culture has influenced the social traditions, cultural stock, and vernacular architecture of the outport. Since the moratorium on cod fishing in 1992, the harbours of outports across the island have been losing traffic, and the intangible cultural heritage of the outport is beginning to be lost. Intangible Cultural heritage refers to the *“Stories we tell, the family events we celebrate, our community gatherings, the languages we speak, the songs we sing, knowledge of our natural spaces, our healing traditions, the foods we eat, our holidays, beliefs and cultural practices.”*² This type of living heritage requires a community, and with out-migration of rural inhabitants from the outport to the capital, or out of province, these practices are becoming threatened to be lost.



² Newfoundland Heritage Society website

Traditions:

Traditions are expressed in the physical and cultural heritage of the outpost. Traditions generate ways of building, communicating, celebrating, cooking, and even playing. One of the main goals of this project is to express, maintain, and develop the historical traditions of the outpost improve its resilience, despite long periods of economic and social decline. The ability of traditions to define the social and cultural patterns in day-to-day life makes them a viable media for creating sustainability within the outpost. *“Respect for the seasonality and the traditional rhythms of community life propagates recurring and interlocking patterns of events that make for cultural transactions and public sociability in the public realm.”*³ Traditions can create events and modes of communication which is important for mobilizing change in the outpost, *“The role of annual events in reinforcing community cohesion is especially important in areas where the rural population is dispersed... and where shows and festivals form an excuse for community gatherings.”*⁴ Some of the elements of the design build on existing local traditions, cultural memories, and events.

Migration:

Since the province was centralized in the 60's, the government of Newfoundland and Labrador has relocated entire communities that were not economically feasible. The outpost population has developed techniques for coping with the change. The technique of moving one's house from one place to the next developed too as residents would jack up their houses and float them to new communities assigned by the government. This idea of a mobile architecture, and the importance of mobility was really important in developing the concept for the competition. The ability of the building's program to migrate using vernacular boats tries to build on this tradition of relocating important places.



Re-use of resources:

The tradition of making use of what is available is important in the vernacular architecture and local skill set of the outpost. This skill has been practiced and finessed. In the picture to the right, the building has been designed and built using the denomination of the shipping crate- this saved the time and expense of cutting and milling lumber and made use of the dimensions available. The ability to make something out of waste is important for the future of the outpost; the landscapes is full of left-over parts, and the maintenance of local structures and community building can be achieved with little investment in these depressed economic areas.



³ Small town Sustainability, p. 81

⁴ Rural, Woods, 212

Regional Precedents:

The National Tourist Routes comprises 18 selected stretches from north to south in Norway. Mountains, fjords and coastline form the core of the travel experience. Bold architecture placed in magnificent natural scenery gives each attraction character, and many destinations along the route. Selected landmarks were chosen, and different local, young architecture firms designed each piece. The program of the projects varies to meet local needs, and the buildings function as lookouts, ferry terminals, washrooms and brings. Perhaps one of the best things about the tourist routes is the ease of navigation for locals and foreigners alike. A really modern, cool and clear website makes it enticing to go see what is happening, and increases the amount of tourism in the area.

What I have used from this precedent is the importance of developing varied program for each community's needs, and the importance of getting many ideas and stakeholders together. Developing a clear system of approach and rules to the development allows even distribution of resources along the coastline, accentuate local heritage, and brand the region.



Case Study: see organization in Lusatia

Regional projects require governance- in order to assemble stakeholders, mobilize local participants, and achieve funding, regional projects are often developed through governments or non-governmental organizations. To understand the feasibility of a regional coastal network in Newfoundland, it is important to look at precedent regions that have been able to achieve success in regional projects. In many ways, the governance structure of the project is embedded within the design concept and its programming to achieve reasonable scale within the locales in the lightship region.

The **see** organization developed across Eastern Germany and Poland, as 17 mining sites were shut down in the early 90's. This left post-industrial towns, and communities that didn't know what to do with the vast, scarred landscapes of opencast coal mining. The organization developed to __. It has implemented or designed almost thirty projects, most of which utilize the abandoned sites while maintaining and repurposing some of the remnants of the mining industry. The organization has developed like a think-tank which connects local stakeholders, and helps local entrepreneurs, communities and governments to develop projects for the region. The Internationale Bauausstellung, who had developed Emscher Park, began the organization. *"IBA combines creative and technical innovation, confronts science and arts with this objective, draws international attention to the region - and thus creates regional circular flows in terms of economy as well as new jobs. This is realised via colleges and universities, through competitions, conferences, workshops, excursions and exchange of experience"*⁶. The IBA uses a transdisciplinary approach, and has been able to champion new methods of developing regional projects without the leadership of government. The seven key topics of the see organization's interest are: industrial heritage, waterscapes, energy landscapes, new territory (re-use of open cast mines), border landscapes, urban landscapes, and transitional landscapes⁷.

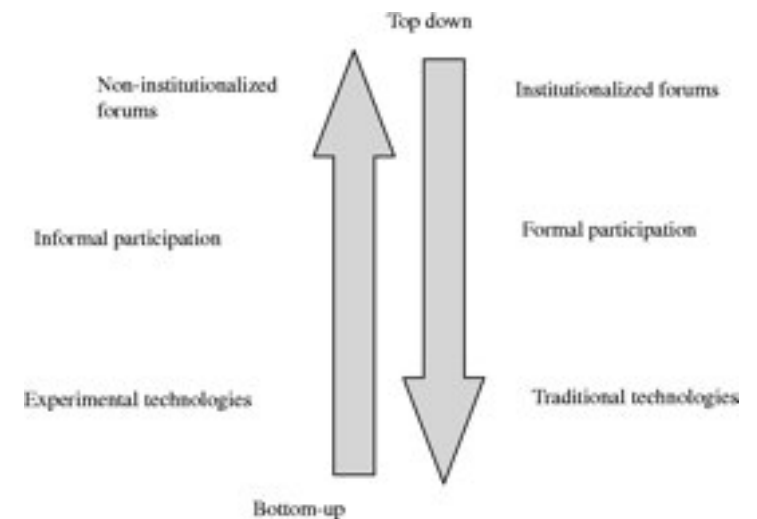
⁶ Ibid.

⁷ <http://www.iba-see2010.de/en/projekte/schwerpunkte.html>



Governance Structure:

There are two main ways of developing projects in rural areas; grassroots or bottom-up uses the decentralized nature of the rural condition and utilizes existing social ties and communication pathways to create change. *“The new decentralism questions the very organization and goals of the development process [top-down] as we know it, and the likelihood that it could ever possibly lead to sustainable development.”*⁸ However, in order to achieve a project which is bottom-up in nature, or achieved by many individual communities and stakeholders, there needs to be some top-down organization. The ability of top-down governance to ensure action and maintain formal communication is important, while the informal nature of bottom-up development allows for creativity and new modes of communication; one of the most important ingredients for developing new modes of sustainable development. This design is developed around the notion of developing internal governance first- to mobilize local participants, access government grant money, uphold and develop outport ethics with regard to development, as well as to earn enough profit to maintain the infrastructure itself. In its very nature, the coastal boat conversion project cannot be achieved by provincial or federal governance alone, and needs many different scales of governance, including federal, provincial, regional, municipal, and local. Imagining the project in reality requires imagining the team of individuals, which could easily bridge the gap between current initiatives, and processes- I imagine this project more as a question of restructuring than re-building. Communication with local stakeholders that can help create both top-down and bottom-up governance and help begin a local conversation.



⁸ Managing sustainable development, Carley, p. 131

Local Typologies:

Since Newfoundland is a unique place, with its own set of challenges and opportunities, it was important to establish the local typologies that were being touched on in the design of the competition. The local typologies that were important to this project are fishery buildings, coastal ferries, the 65' fishing trawler, and fishing rooms. By looking to these as examples, it is possible to determine the scale and capacity of the competition project. The development of this new typology for the competition is based on architecture, network, and social structure of the local typologies.

Fishery Buildings

The fishery requires a set of amenities, access points and building stock which are specialized to help bridge the coastal zone, and provide infrastructure for boats, equipment and the processing of fish products. These buildings have various typologies through the history of the outport. In the early years, the small-scale fishery required fishing sheds called 'rooms' or 'stages', while the larger scaled schooners required moorings. As the technology of the fishery has modernized, some of the organization of the historical fishery has remained through maintained infrastructure, such as slipways, and architecture. These buildings are clustered along the shores of the outport. Fish plants were located at the apex of the fjord, where small rivers provide a fresh water source for cleaning the fish. In many ways, the fishery organized the urban development of the outport, and provided public space, access, and services along the shore. The competition entry seeks to maintain the harbour as public space, and preserve the access and fishery culture of the outport.



Coastal ferry: The splinter fleet

Remote outport communities have historically been accessed by coastal boat services. They have operated across Newfoundland since 1884, and the majority of services were stopped by 1982, due to the resettlement of many communities and increasing road access. The remainder of these services are located on the South Coast of Newfoundland and East Coast of Labrador. The significance of these services to rural Newfoundland was great. The boats provided mail, medical services, public transportation and even education. The project region was serviced by the Splinter Fleet, composed of ten locally made wooden boats which ferried goods and passengers until the fleet was sold by the government for a fraction of their value in the 1960s.



The 65' trawler:

The government of Newfoundland and Labrador have developed classifications which influence the design, building, and operation of its fishing boats. These boats come in two main sizes, 35' and 65'. For the purpose of this project, I have selected to use the existing stock of 65' fiberglass over wood fishing boats, and convert them based on the needs of each outport. There is a large stock of these in the province, and many of the boats were built in the province. The boat pictured right is for sale for \$475,000. It measures 65 feet long and 22 feet wide. Although this is a fairly modern typology in Newfoundland, these boats require care and maintenance, and contribute to the intangible cultural heritage of the modern outport. The skills required to provide the maintenance are contained within the current generation of outport-dwellers, and with an aging population, are endangered.



Fishing Stage

Although I have briefly spoken about fishing stages previously, they deserve a little more discussion. The fishing stage, or fishing room, was essential to the development of the early fishery, as it provided access to the water, storage for equipment and a place for processing, cleaning and drying the cod, which was historically salted and placed on flakes to dry. “ When the market for salt fish virtually collapsed in the 1960’s, flakes were no longer needed and were the first artifacts to crumble.”⁹ While they serve no viable commercial function in modern times, they are still the heart of the social life of many small towns - with fisherman gathering to have a beer, playing music, or maintaining fishing nets and equipment. The architectural influence of these small-scale industrial spaces has translated into modern architecture in projects such as that on Fogo Island.



⁹ A Place to Belong, Pocius, p.167

Built precedents:

Because the context is very specific for the character and capacity of the community, precedents were selected from places with similar industries, social composition, and remoteness. Not all rural conditions are the same, and it was important to choose rural fishing villages in places like Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Ireland because of similar social, economic and environmental similarities. These places share similar climates, topographies, resources, and proximity to the coast. The following selection of projects addresses the difficulties of rural fishing communities, their isolated setting, infrastructure problems, and changing demographics. It is important to select appropriate precedents, which have been successful to ensure a sustainable approach that will stick. Rural fishing communities in Newfoundland especially, have a history of failed development initiatives.

Converting the Boat: (images p. 23-26)

The concept for Vulkana¹⁰ is the conversion of a wooden boat into a mobile hotel, restaurant and spa- seeking skiing adventure or scenery in isolated Norwegian fjords. The concept is to take an authentic fishing schooner from the 50s, bring talented young designers, builders, chefs, and adventure guides together and create an exciting experience for tourists and locals alike. I learned a lot from this concept- from the structural possibilities of a renovated boat hull to the ability of the project to function as a viable business, this project integrates into local cultural landscapes.

Converting Infrastructure: (images p. 27-30)

The other project that served as a good precedent was the conversion of railway infrastructure in Åndalsnes. Using the cultural memories of the once active port to bring in tourist dollars preserves some local infrastructure, and creates daily movement in the town, modernizing and creating new culture. The concept utilizes old railway tracks to move housing from inland to harbourside to function for the city and its tourists, who visit in the summertime, most often by cruise ship. This shift operates on a seasonal level, with the buildings moving from shelter inland in winter to the tourist hub of the harbour in summer. The project is sensitive to preserve as much of the local tradition as possible to create a sustainable and accepted addition to the town's industry.

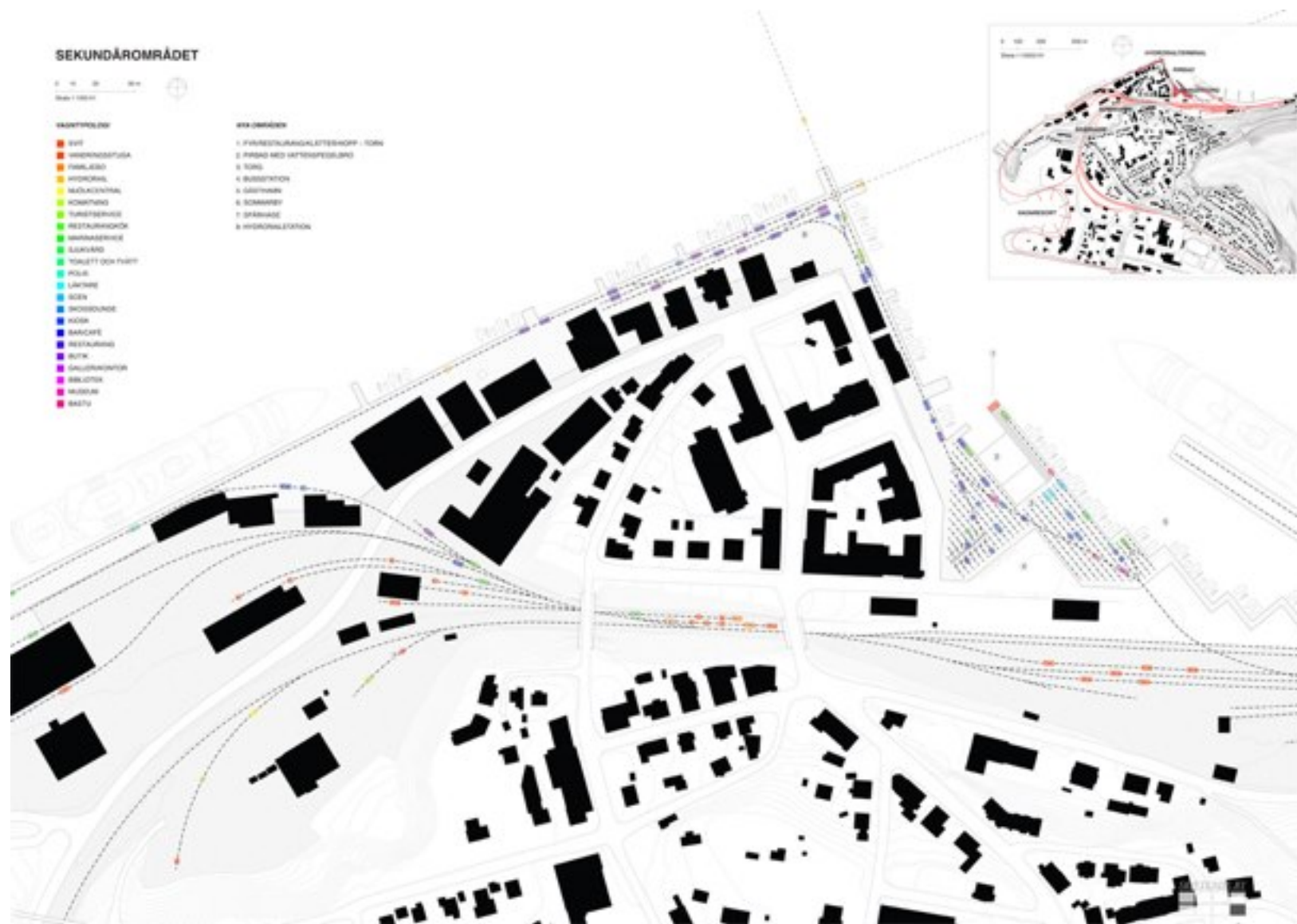
¹⁰ Vulkana website

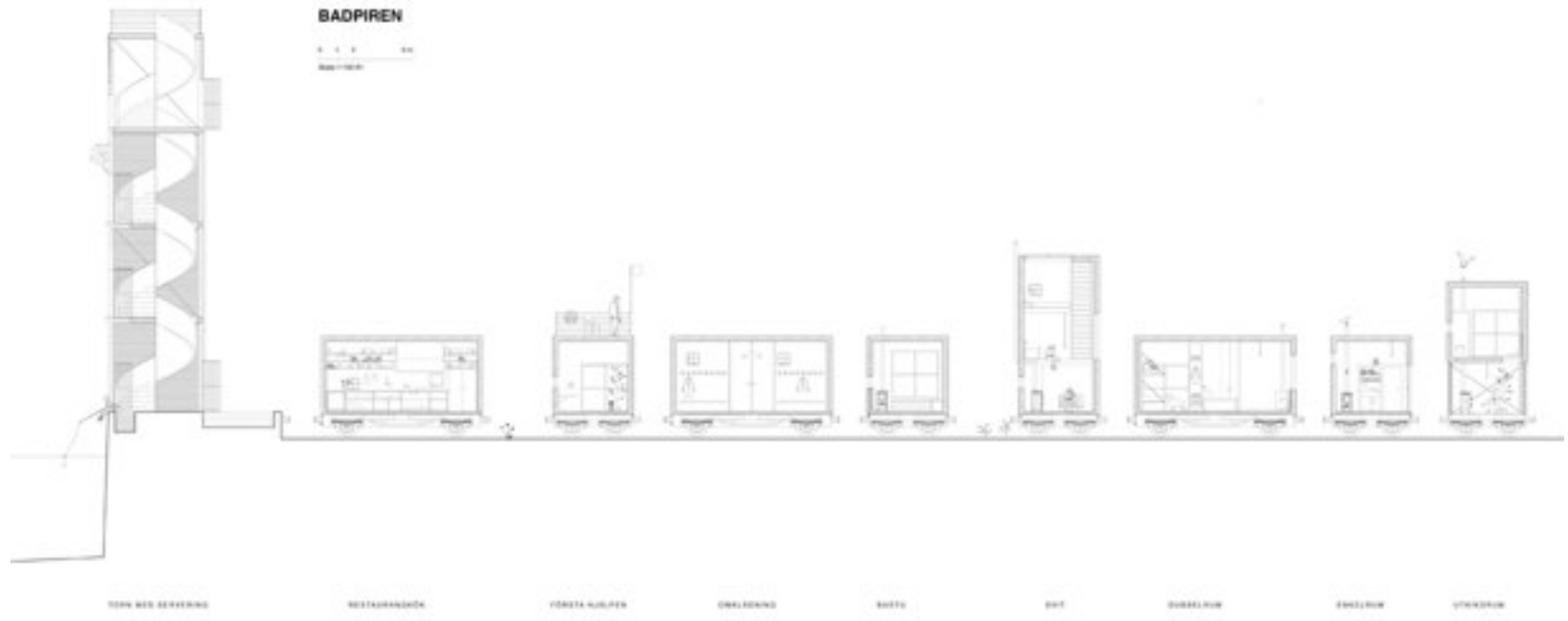
















Material Inspiration:



Materials and Construction Methods

As architects, we learn the importance of using local materials. They have less associated carbon from shipping and processing elsewhere and they promote the local economy. But the use of local materials in the outport has another potential impact. By using local materials, and local labour, intangible cultural heritage can be preserved and maintained within the envelope of the building. A landmark is built on local traditions- and using vernacular materials, embodies local culture. The abundance of generic, cheap architecture threatens the practice of utilizing specific, vernacular architecture in Newfoundland. For the purpose of this project, I will be focusing on local ways of building, adapted from the fishery heritage of the outport.

Local Skills

The adaptability of local skill sets to new practices can ensure continuity of work for outport residents. The adaptation of woodworking, craft and even motor mechanics into new practices has been demonstrated by the ability of outport residents to develop new businesses, despite the end of the fishery. An example of this is a casket factory in Calvert. The business started in 1992, during the moratorium, and utilizes local skill sets to manufacture quality caskets. Other such examples have been located along the study area. The competition entry uses this idea to develop a forward-thinking use of local skill sets. From boat maintenance and facility operation to the construction of the building, I have tried to adapt local skill bases, and work using local knowledge, while developing and progressing the skills forward to a more modern interpretation. The image that the outport can be current is important to its residents, and to the ability for the community to adapt to ensure the longevity of its future generations.

Local Materials

Using locally manufactured materials, or materials that utilize local skill sets. The building uses some heritage materials, such as traditional clapboard, hand-tied net and vernacular structural system using heavy logs. The local fishery building stock has informed the form and size of the building. The building has some higher-performance, and some mass-produced plastics to provide an affordable and functional project in the harsh weather. This design needed to be feasible to provide any contribution to rural Newfoundland, and using readily available materials will cut the cost of the project. The material palette of the exterior is white steel siding (used on local industrial buildings), polycarbonate panels (makes the project modern, but will not rust, or weather), clapboard, and netting for storage. Although heritage standards are strict in Newfoundland, it is important to note the effect of local forward-thinking landmarks for rural dwellers. For instance, Newfoundland's new Fogo Island Arts Centre has graced the cover of many architecture magazines and exemplified the unique heritage of Newfoundland, while using some local material and local skill.



Conclusions: Using Heritage as Precedent:

“The works of the past always influence us, whether or not we care to admit it, or to structure an understanding of how that influence occurs. The past is not just that which we know, it is that which we use, in a variety of ways, in the making of new work.... The typology argument today asserts that despite the diversity of our culture there are still roots of this kind that allow us to speak of the idea of a library, a museum, a city hall or a house. The continuity of these ideas of type, such as they are, and the esteemed examples which have established their identity and assured their continued cultural resonance, constitute an established line of inquiry in which new work may be effectively grounded.”

It is important when dealing with rural context to determine when the rural is- what time period that heritage is preserved or maintained to can affect its viability in the modern context¹¹. When we see heritage, it is easy to romanticize - wooden boats or dories, traditional architecture, self-sufficient lifestyles and quaint villages. These things have immediate cultural value and play into our perceptions of Newfoundland, but they do not represent the reality of the outport life. What value is there in the things we like to overlook- vinyl siding, fiberglass boats, abandoned fish processing plants, and other less impressive and romantic pieces of heritage. This is sometimes called intangible cultural heritage- it is the heritage we see living embodied in the daily routine of the outport. It has not become historical yet, and is perpetuated by often out-dated, poor, or neglected areas or outports. *“If heritage is regarded as a resource, sustainability in this context has three basic conditions. First, the rates of use of renewable heritage resources must not exceed their rates of generation: in one sense, all heritage resources are renewable because they can be continuously reinterpreted. Secondly, the rates of use of non-renewable physical heritage resources should not exceed the rate at which sustainable renewable substitutes are developed.”*¹² For tourism in the outport, heritage is a necessary ingredient in commercial viability and attraction of visitors. This is important for the project, as tourism could be a major driver in developing a coastal boat service along the Avalon Peninsula. For the purpose of the project, the use of local heritage and traditions as precedents is important. The past is no longer a story of how we got here, but the past becomes embedded in a vision of the future for the outport.

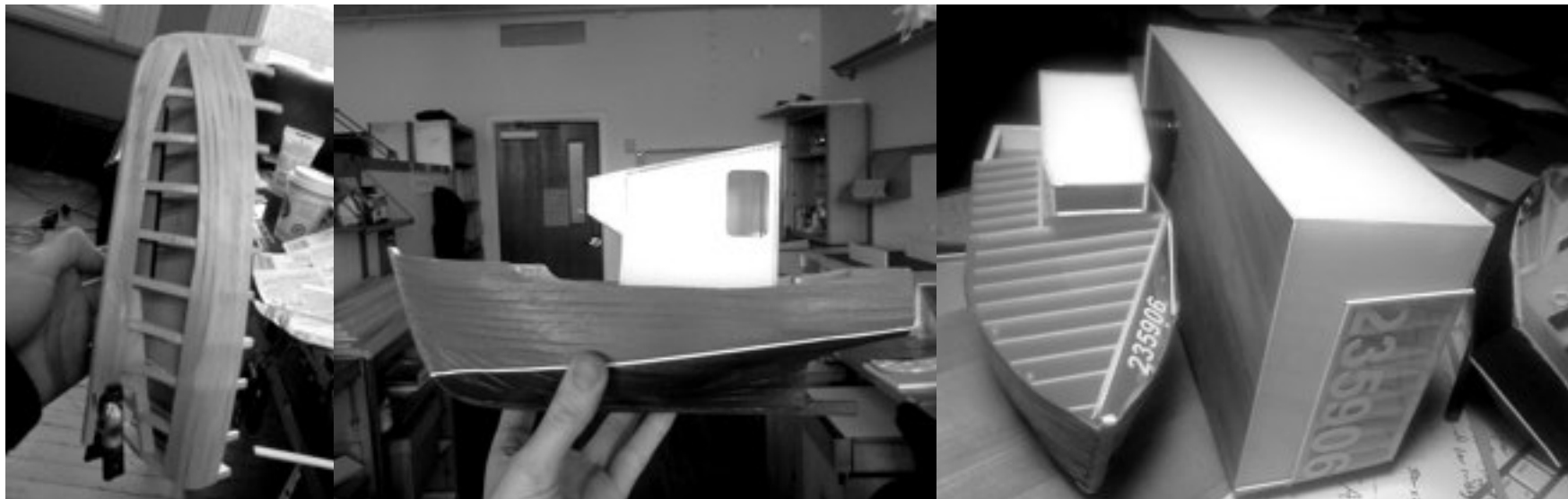
¹¹ Rural, Woods, 201

¹² Heritage as Knowledge: Capital or Culture?, Graham, 5

Regionals in Halifax:

Here are some photos from round two of the competition. This time I had much more time to spend on my model, and I was able to build the boats from scratch- using veneer and original plans from Newfoundland boat builders that were scanned into local archives. The ability to build the model using authentic model boat methods from the outport, mixed with digital fabrication using the laser cutter, made the final model more accurate of the intentions of the design. Here are the photos of model construction, and the final exhibition at Dalhousie's school of architecture. There are a few more photos, which can be found on my blog:

<http://kuehnle.tumblr.com/>





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