12

‘Getting Deep into Things’: Deep Mapping in a ‘Vacant’ Landscape

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Openings

We begin this chapter with a map (Fig. 12.1). It is not a particularly unusual type of map, in fact it’s one that is quite commonly used to

This chapter is written from the first-person perspective of myself, the lead author. I conducted the fieldwork that is described here. The co-authors were instrumental in supporting development of this project and writing of this text with advice and guidance. I use the collective ‘we’ at various points to refer to the multitude of authors, inhabitants and readers that gather around this text.

The deep mapping work is available to view at http://www.govandeepmap.com.

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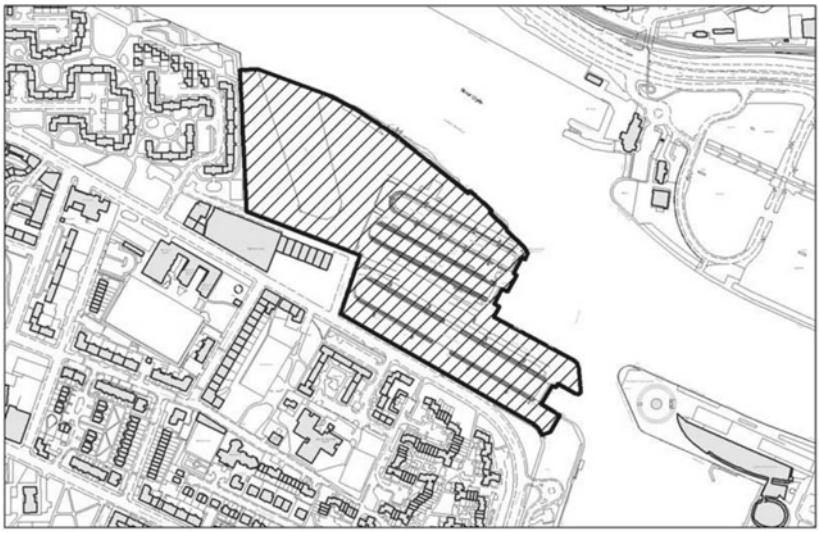

Fig. 12.1 Map of the Govan Graving Docks as used by Glasgow City Council. (Source Glasgow City Council. Published with permission from Glasgow City Council: © Crown Copyright and Database Right 2014. All rights are reserved. OS Licence number 100023379)

depict areas of wasteland, cartographically employing empty outlines or hatched boxes to show a plot available for development, as is the case here. Dotted traces might hint at the remnants of some former life but typically such maps resist telling us any further details of these wasteland places. Their emphasis, rather, is on the plots' status as awaiting development or the reinstatement of formal use.

When we take a walk through such a place however, we find far more that is actively present than passively 'waiting' (see Fig. 12.2). Stepping over that heavyweight boundary-line, we might immediately be confronted with an unabated ecology; grasses that rise to mid-thigh,

Fig. 12.2 (*Source* Author)

unfamiliar spider species disturbed underfoot, and buddleia exploiting the cracks in decommissioned concrete footings. We might also detect the traces of others who have come this way before us. Perhaps dog walkers, children in search of wilderness, or graffiti writers looking for the perfect wall. Striking up conversation with local residents we might well find that the site is alive with memory of former jobs worked in former shipyards, of the friendships formed on factory floors and the smell of the hot roll stand at the end of the street.

These things all elude the kind of instrumental and reductive cartography most commonly utilized in planning and policy-making. The fragmentary, heterogeneous nature defies neat outlines with singular meanings. Further, these things are never still, but a continually shifting tangle of narratives. Like eels, the more tightly we try to contain them, the more readily they slip from us. Despite the certainty with which maps like the one above are presented, they are hollowed out by the reductive instrumentality implicit in their making. It is only when we question what might be missing from such representations, what they avoid telling us, that their air of absolute and objective authority begins to crumble.

Pivotally, it is most commonly those more marginalized narratives that are filtered out from the sanitized map. Given the power that such representations can have, sitting on the desks of planners, speculative developers and policy-makers, omissions can serve to further exclude and invalidate. In this text, I argue that arts-based methods can play a potent role in this context (Kester, 2013) by offering avenues for spatial representation that allow for the multiplicitous, non-aligned and emergent nature of place (Massey, 2005). While the methods I explore are not restrained to any particular type of landscape, I maintain that some of the values that underpin them are particularly helpful and relevant to marginalized landscapes and 'wastelands' as the multiplicity of voices is often overlooked in these spaces.

Despite the existence of multiple, tangential narratives across landscapes such as wastelands, they are often overshadowed by and reframed within dominant meta-narratives. Hegemonic discourse centres around the future use of the land, overlooking uses and meanings in the present. In order to draw out marginalized narratives, there is a need to unsettle rhetorical notions about what the site means and who has

the authority to speak about it. It is here that arts approaches can serve as a helpful catalyst to conversation and investigation. Arts practices such as deep mapping seek to harness the capacity of the aesthetic experience to disrupt dominant narratives, creating spaces that allow individuals to speak outside of their commonly held positions (Kester, 2013). This notion of art as a context setting device may be linked to Viktor Shklovsky's (1917, as cited in Lemon and Reis, 1965) ideas around defamiliarization whereby art, as a device, is used to make the 'familiar strange' so that it may be freshly perceived. Through its ability to creatively remake and therefore reframe the present, art practice can situate common, everyday experiences in new contexts, prompting new discussions. Michelle Henning (2020) describes this as 're-presenting the present', in which the reflecting of the present back to the viewer in a way that is 'recognizable', 'negotiable' and 'accessible' creates the conditions for individuals to detect, reflect upon and mediate their being within it.

We consider the field of deep mapping, as an archaeological, geo-social and ethnographically informed art research practice which offers opportunities to generate representations that 'dive into' the heterogeneity and non-aligned multiplicity of place (Modeen & Biggs, 2020; Roberts, 2016; Smith, 2015; see also Reitz, this book). Deep maps embrace, as their starting point, the tensions that exist between incompatible narratives and between one slice of time and the next. They seek to draw out those discordant, micro-narratives that are commonly swallowed up within meta-narratives of a place. This approach also brings into question the role of the artist-researcher who is themself bound up within the present that they seek to *re-present*, calling for a move towards an ensemble of roles and an acknowledgement of their embodied being within the representational process (Bailey, 2018).

In this chapter I reflect back on an ongoing deep mapping process that holds divergent multiplicity as its central motive in depicting a location normally understood as wasteland. My starting point is the tract of land depicted in the opening of this text—the Govan Graving Docks in Glasgow, Scotland. The site formerly lay at the heart of Glasgow's shipbuilding industry which, when it collapsed in the latter half of the twentieth century, brought significant consequences for the local working community (High, 2013; Tovar et al., 2011) from which it still

has not fully recovered (Butler et al., 2012). Having been decommissioned in 1987, this site stands as one of the few remaining markers of Govan's industrial past, given that all other shipyards have either been cleared completely or (as is the case with the one remaining yard) unrecognizably modernized and walled off geographically and socially from the Govan community. However, in the 34 years since its closure, the Govan Graving Docks has been almost continually appropriated by local citizens for a broad spectrum of informal purposes. The site is alive with shifting and heterogeneous narratives yet these are commonly precluded by traditional cartographic forms. Through reflections on the empirical and methodological challenges of applying a deep mapping approach to this setting, in this chapter we explore the broader questions around how such a research process can actively seek out and amplify heterogeneous and marginalized narratives in a deindustrialized urban landscape. This holds critical relevance for the recognition and reclaiming of citizen agency within those many European cities now experiencing an upswing in development following the industrial decline of the late twentieth century. While acknowledging implicit tensions around scientific rigour and identifying the alternative forms of exclusion that can serve to hinder the polyvocality of deep mapping, this chapter outlines the helpful contributions that this approach can offer place-based investigations in marginalized landscapes.

The Arts Research Approach of Deep Mapping

The term deep mapping is embraced by a broad variety of artists, creative practitioners and researchers that utilize arts- or performance-based approaches to stimulate conversations *about* and investigations *into* place (Biggs, 2010; Roberts, 2016). Broadly, this approach sets out to contend the totalizing and irreducible nature of traditional cartographic representations, aspiring instead towards the ideal of encompassing 'everything you might ever want to say about a place' (Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p. 65). Clearly practitioners do not regard such an endeavour as a realizable objective as Cliff McLucas (2014), a proponent of deep mapping, described:

> Whilst I can talk about deep maps, whilst I can imagine such things … whilst I can even dream about deep maps, unfortunately, I have to admit that I have never seen one.

This is not to say that McLucas made no attempt to create deep maps (he did in fact leave several precedents), rather, alongside many advocates in the field such as Least Heat-Moon (1999), he recognized that one could never complete the object of a deep map, only engage in *deep mapping*. Instead, we may read the wide-ranging manifestations of deep maps as *efforts to describe* place in its fullness and unending complexity. Implicit in this is an immersive, performative 'dance' between the mapper and the place, as Wood (2015) describes:

> [W]hat's essential is getting out in the field […] and looking hard at stuff. Walking through it and writing it down forces a valuable kind of attention, an irreplaceable kind of attention […] This kind of immersion makes you think about things, dream about them, and this prompts new questions, which send you back out into the field. It doesn't take long to get deep into things when you're paying attention, and mapping focuses attention.

Consequently, examples of deep mapping appear across a broad range of arts' and humanities' disciplines that gain strength in their avoidance of tight definition (Modeen & Biggs, 2020). These include auto-ethnographic texts (Least Heat-Moon, 1999), journeying (Bissell & Overend, 2015; Sinclair, 2017), participatory archaeological digs (Lewis, 2015) and photo collage (Reddleman, 2015) amongst others (see also Reitz, this book). Though diverse in form, they are loosely unified by their effort to lure the mapper into this dance, prizing open discursive interactions with place.

Considering my task of 're-presenting' the Govan Graving Docks, drawing out the many tangential and overlooked narratives that exist there, I identify several pertinent sentiments from discussion on deep mapping. Three themes emerge as offering particularly productive lines of inquiry to the context of the Govan Graving Docks:

Polyvocal

A central motive of deep mapping is to pursue investigations of place beyond that which is immediately evident. Implicit in this notion of 'digging' is the drawing out of multiple, discordant narratives and associated meanings and material manifestations. In a sense, deep mapping removes the confining boundaries of the instrumental, reductive map, creating the space needed for tensions and contradictions in narratives to exist simultaneously. Faced with a polyphony of narratives, I argue that the position of the deep mapper, from a constructivist perspective, is never neutral but rather consciously present and actively seeking to give platform to those voices commonly drowned out in reductive representations. As Cliff McLucas (n.d.) states:

> Deep maps will not seek the authority and objectivity of conventional cartography. They will be politicized, passionate, and partisan. They will involve negotiation and contestation over who and what is represented and how. They will give rise to debate about the documentation and portrayal of people and places.

Such a position offers margin for the individualized and intimately personal to be heard while also providing an arena for collective storytelling and knowledge construction. It carves out room to fully acknowledge lived experiences, not as events confined within the place itself, but rather as the collision between the physical landscape and the continuum of life trajectories that extend far beyond the bounds of the site (Ingold, 2017).

This contesting of 'what is represented and how' (McLucas, n.d.) also holds promise for vacant land in particular. In such locations where strong confluences of meanings are wrapped up in either the period of use prior to closure or the speculative, forthcoming use, deep mapping processes may helpfully redirect focus away from the past or future place and instead create opportunity for the present place to be acknowledged and validated. Giving precedence to this marginalized time frame, the creation of a deep map can incrementally shift speculation about a place away from 'what it should become' and towards 'what it *is*'.

Generative

Deep maps can be interpreted as both catalytic objects and actions taken into the field to stimulate investigation, unearth further questions and open up conversation. In iterative fashion, these 'traces' subsequently prompt reflection and generate the impetus for further, more divergent investigation. The artist-researcher is inextricably embedded in this process as the deep map comes into being through discursive interaction with place. It is through such imperfect and meandering *efforts* to create reflections of place, that deep mapping simultaneously invites debate about both the place and the process of representation. McLucas (n.d.) further points to the collaborative nature of deep maps in this regard: 'Deep maps will bring together the amateur and the professional, the artist and the scientist, the official and the unofficial, the national and the local'. By placing emphasis on the process, the *creating* of a deep map becomes a space of generative exchange, elevating inhabitant knowledge alongside that of the artist-researcher and resetting traditional hierarchies.

Open-Ended

Given the common preoccupation of deep maps with the 'fundamental *unmappability* of the world' (Roberts, 2016, p. 5), the creative outcomes of deep mapping might more effectively be read as 'forever incomplete' processes. Such objects are candid in acknowledging their own inadequacy to embrace the unending and entangled tapestry of narratives surrounding place. However, as Modeen and Biggs (2020) point out, these are the contexts where art comes into its own power: 'It is precisely this inadequacy that enables the arts to evoke our lived experience as always exceeding and falling short of the conceptual definitions central to analytical thinking' (p. 53). In its ability to situate itself within and gesture towards that which we do *not* know or *cannot* express, art can avoid the closing down and flattening out of the continual emergence of place. In this sense, the art research practice of deep mapping suggests

a representational approach that tentatively presents a subjective and discursive 'window' in the continual becoming of place.

For our location of interest and, indeed, our particular preoccupations with it, these three sentiments collectively offer fruitful underpinnings for the creation of a conversational, representational research method. As the Govan Graving Docks has majoratively been understood as 'vacant' or 'awaiting development', the many histories of lived experiences and citizens appropriations in the site since its closure have passed largely unrecorded. This lack of formally assigned use can be seen to have created an entirely different kind of space in the urban landscape, one in which many narratives are present, overlapping and confronting each other (Humphris & Rauws, 2020). However, the objective of our representational effort here is not to uncover and pin down meaning in a place where it appears to be missing; in a site that is so actively in a state of becoming, we feel that this would be entirely unconducive. Instead, by putting these sentiments of *polyvocal*, *generative* and *open-ended* into action, we intend to create a representational space that contends the very notion that the place is without meaning. It is an effort to create a representational space around this very different kind of territory that commonly falls out of the urban imagination (Shoard, 2000).

Beyond such attitudes to investigation, the tools and practices used in the actual creation of deep maps are dependent upon the demands of the place and the skills and resources available to the map initiator. This active steering away from any notions of a formalized approach stands central to their offer. As Biggs (2010) proposes, the value of deep mapping partially pertains to its ability to resist 'becoming complicit in its "disciplining"' (p. 21) (see also Modeen & Biggs, 2020; Roberts, 2016). What follows is the development of and reflection upon a deep mapping method that is highly specific to our research interests in the site, and the artistic practice and even personal traits of the lead author who undertook this fieldwork.

Methodology

This first phase of deep mapping the Govan Graving Docks was conducted over a period of two months during which I spent extensive time on the site and in conversation with local individuals. The site is located on the edge of Govan, a formerly prolific boat building community that has seen a high level of vacancy and deprivation since the closure of the majority of the shipyards in the late twentieth century. While the site is privately owned, the owner has failed on several occasions to secure planning permission for a largely private housing development. The site closed in 1987 and in the early 2000s most of the remaining buildings were demolished. The only remaining architectural features are the listed pump house, one tidal dock and three impressive dry docks with stone walls that remain largely intact. Despite this, the site feels relatively 'wild' given the significant amount of flora and fauna that have established there. The gated entrance to the site is almost always left open and there is a general acceptance, including from the police, that individuals may access the land; there are few days that pass where it sees no visitors. Individuals are frequently seen walking, adventuring, graffiti writing, drinking alcohol and nature watching. Over the 2-month period, I spent 19 days on the site, visiting for between 1 and 4 hours. I also hired a studio space in the centre of the community where the map was gradually created and I spent much time walking back and forth between the two locations, observing the surrounding neighbourhood along the way.

I made the recordings for the map using two parallel practices. The first was an iterative interview process of discussion and illustration with individuals closely connected to the site. The second involved regular onsite observational drawing and recording the presence of site users and informal conversations with them.

Interviews

I made contact with the local inhabitants that were interviewed through both snowballing local connections and from chance encounters while

onsite. Given that the site is predominantly used by a collection of disparate individuals between whom very little network exists, my sustained presence onsite was a critical factor for making connections with inhabitants. The process involved two interviews; the first taking place on site and the second in my local studio space for a more reflexive conversation that explored emergent themes in greater depth. The primary interview was intended to gather a general overview of the inhabitant's connection to the site. I placed emphasis on how it related to them personally and how their relationship to the place had changed with time. My lines of questioning framed the site as particular and different from other places in the neighbourhood, such as a park and, through this, sought to unearth what the particular qualities were that resonated with them and repeatedly drew them back to the site. As we talked together, we walked around the site itself allowing the conversation about the place to become embodied and thus further illuminated; speaking theoretically about its meanings while physically negotiating its terrain.

From these recordings, I made partial transcriptions, pulling out key quotes and drawing these together into 4–6 emergent themes through a process of inductive coding, categorizing and labelling. The thematic labels were either words taken directly out of the transcript or created by myself in instances where the topic was discussed more abstractly. For each I sought a landscape metaphor to reflect the theme in the particular way that the individual had expressed it. For instance, one inhabitant made several references to change in the community with the inevitable coming and going of development; for this I depicted fishing boats in a harbour, sitting on the mud, waiting for high tide to return and transform the landscape once again. The quotes themselves were then woven around the illustrations to create a landscape of sentiment.

In the second interview, I presented the collection of illustrated themes back to the inhabitant. I gave them time to read through and review their quotes, correct anything that they felt was inaccurate, discuss their thoughts further around the themes and metaphors I had chosen and add any additional themes they felt were missing. Following this, I asked them to consider how the themes might relate to one another by laying the illustrations out spatially to form their own narrative map. Those

themes that felt closely related or causational could be placed close together while others could be set down in a more distant location. Pinning these down and drawing strings between them, we discussed the nature of these connections and what the 'spaces in between' might mean. I also asked the inhabitants to consider what the connections might be between themes that they had initially thought were unrelated. Finally, together we laid their map down on top of those maps that had been created by other inhabitants and explored the differences, connections and tensions that lie between them. The intention of this was to empower the inhabitants in the process of compiling the full representation, by electing where to position themselves within it, and to further identify the nuance of their own narratives in the presence of others'.

Observational Drawings

In parallel to these interviews, we routinely spent time on the site making observational drawings and talking with other site users. By making drawings of objects that had been left behind by visitors, I was able to get to know the life of the place more intimately. The practice was often quite sedentary, sitting in one location for 30 minutes to 2 hours at a time in which individuals often felt confident to approach me with passing hellos or asking questions, and, on quiet days, sufficient stillness for resident wildlife to emerge. In line with Causey's (2017) exploration of drawing and ethnography, this practice additionally disciplined me to 'see' the site, to focus my gaze and speculate about objects and markings that I would otherwise overlook. As explained in the findings section, these sketchbook pages of drawings and notations moved from a tool for initial observation to becoming an important component of the overall map themselves as a gathering of traces reflecting my own experiences and encounters on site.

These recordings, notations and illustrations form a growing body of content that constitutes the open-ended deep map (see Table 12.1 that documents the quantity of content so far). Such divergent forms of gathering require different modes of practice. Within these, the role of the researcher becomes dynamic, continually shifting positions throughout

Table 12.1 Content of map collected and created so far (over two month fieldwork November–December 2020)

Interviews	5
Interview drawings	20
Onsite spontaneous discussions	14
Onsite observational drawings	12
Noted site visitors	73
Total days on site	19

Source Author

the research field rather than occupying one static point of observation. At one moment the researcher plays the role of the engaged listener while at other times the passive observer. Sometimes the central focus lies on context setting. At other times the primary role is that of the reflexive academic (Wittmayer & Schäpke, 2014). In this sense, the role of the researcher becomes adaptive, moving between positions in response to the ever shifting circumstances on the ground (see also Franklin, this book). Throughout the project, this 'ensemble-self' approach to the researcher role has afforded the vital flexibility needed to contend with the multiplicitous nature of place.

Uncoverings: Reflections on a Deep Mapping Method in Practice

In my time spent actively deep mapping in the field, I have avoided treating the method set out above as an instructional guidebook, but rather adopted it as a performative tool for investigating and probing within this highly specific context. Thus the method is mediated by the ensemble-researcher; it is alive in response to the landscape in which it is played out. Here I offer reflections that have emerged from this reflexive negotiation between the performative-artist-researcher and the method; drawing out and amplifying those dimensions that proved to be generative and stepping into alternative positions and modes of practice when the method appeared to be reaching its limit.

Divergence

One of the central aspirations of the Govan Graving Docks deep map is to pluralize narrative representations of the site. As explained in the methodology, interviews began with individual discussions that were subsequently woven into an agglomerated, layered form of representation (see Fig. 12.3 depicting many agglomerated narrative representations).

I found that postponing the moment of assembly to the end of the discussion process created a suspended space in which inhabitants were able to delve into, grapple with and eventually articulate their

Fig. 12.3 (*Source* Author)

own nuanced relationships to the site before being confronted with the narrative 'worlds' of others.[1] Together we were able to use this space to follow traces of meaning away from the site itself, out into their broader continuum of life experiences, detecting enduring themes of importance before bringing them back to the context of the Govan Graving Docks. In this way we incrementally 'felt out' their own narrative world.

While this suspended space allowed for greater divergence of narratives, explicitly common themes between the narratives did arise, such as heritage, or the need for sanctuary. However, in employing metaphor and illustration to reflect the sentiments expressed, it was possible to intentionally seek and draw out minutiae differences between the positions held. As such, one theme could appear in several different narrative worlds but with different expressions. Heritage, for instance, was at once depicted as a cliff face, progressively eroded by a hostile sea, while elsewhere it was characterized by a makeshift house continually built upon and adapted through time (see Figs. 12.4 and 12.5). In discussion these variated illustrations appeared to assist individuals in qualifying their own perceptions as being different from others, or even different but partially aligned in some aspects.

Through the process of defining their own narrative 'worlds', several inhabitants made connections between their preoccupation with the site and their own personal traits and preferences, with a sense of being different from the common majority with regard to their needs in the built environment and expectations of urban living. These expressions included the need for quiet and distance within the city, the ability to be alone and unregulated (see Figs. 12.6, 12.7, 12.8 and 12.9).

In my pursuit of multiplicity in the deep mapping process, I detected other knowledges present in the field but requiring other modes of recording and representation. While the interview approach was certainly

[1] It is important to note that, despite the fact that this particular deep mapping aims to draw out excluded voices, we cannot assume that this very different kind of investigative process was entirely inclusive. It is also reasonable to assume that the uncommon aspects of this investigation method create exclusions in their own right due to the elitism that is often associated with the arts and the discomfort it causes to many who do not consider themselves to be a part of this world. However, in the creation of the illustrations, I made a concerted effort to avoid overly abstract interpretations and instead generate images that made small, tangible steps over into the metaphorical.

Fig. 12.4 (*Source* Author)

proving successful in deeply investigating personal connections and drawing out diversity in perspectives, it was clear that, culturally and practically, it was not an accessible approach for all, particularly in a community facing multiple disadvantages such as Govan.

The following intersecting cultural factors played a role in the process of deep mapping:

- language barriers: adult illiteracy is a recognized issue in Govan and, with a large migrant population, some experience challenges with English as a second language. We recognized this in some individuals we met on site and found that, while many would pass with a smile and acknowledgement, they often avoided stopping to talk;
- cultural context: after some failed attempts, we also came to understand that for some the interview format (whereby one member in a conversation holds a designated 'power' to ask questions and set the

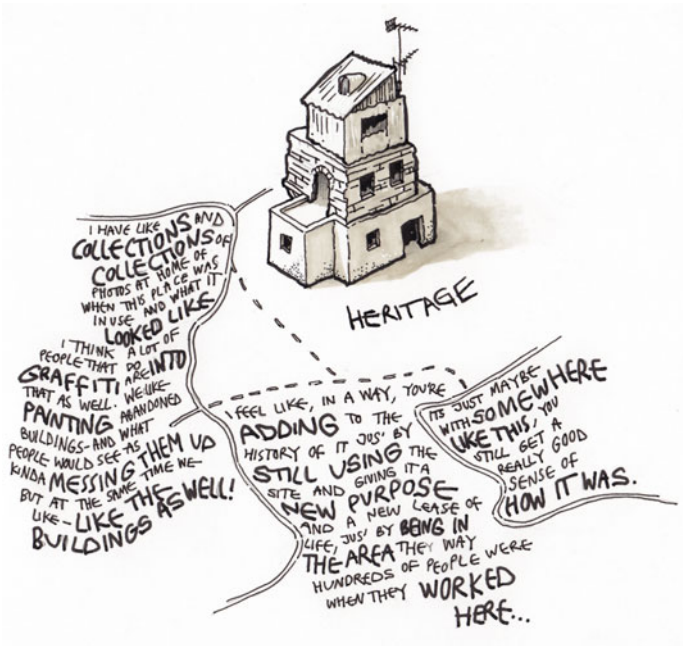

Fig. 12.5 (*Source* Author)

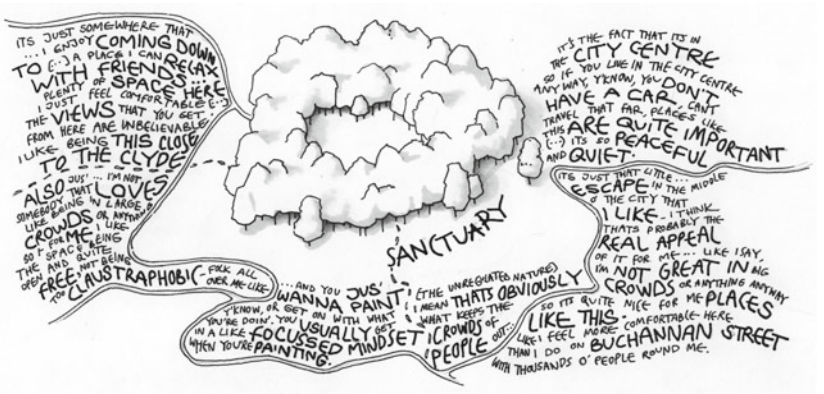

Fig. 12.6 (*Source* Author)

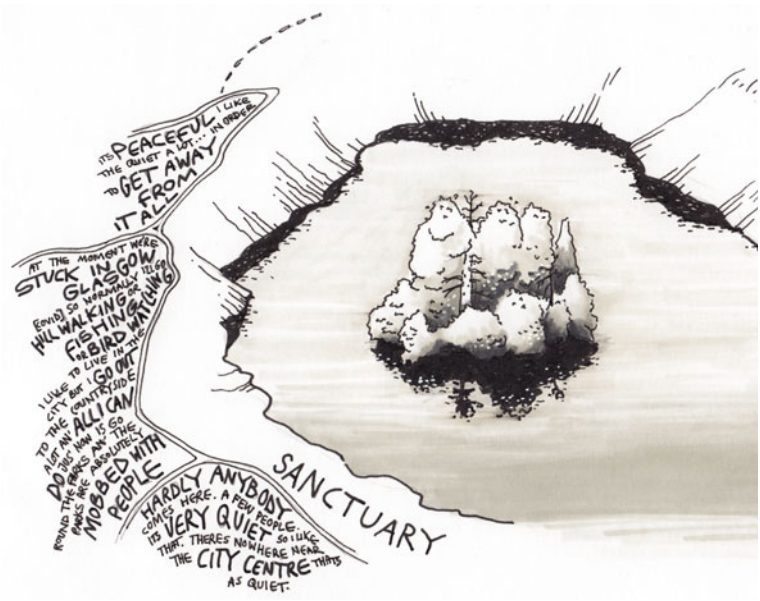

Fig. 12.7 (*Source* Author)

agenda or strategically guide the conversation) was culturally unfamiliar or could even be instrumental in further perpetuating historic power imbalances. We also found different cultural attitudes towards making arrangements, agreements and plans;

- personality: as the site is used by many who feel the need to be by themselves or away from other people, it was not uncommon for individuals to avoid interaction.
- drink: alcohol addiction is not uncommon around the site with a handful of individuals drinking from early morning. While some were very open to discussion, interactions were based upon regular, informal, unstructured chats;

While these may be acute and limited issues, this list encompasses a broad range of individuals whose diverse perspectives could be easily overlooked were the deep mapping relying solely on formally conducted interviews. It seemed my method was beginning to confine rather than

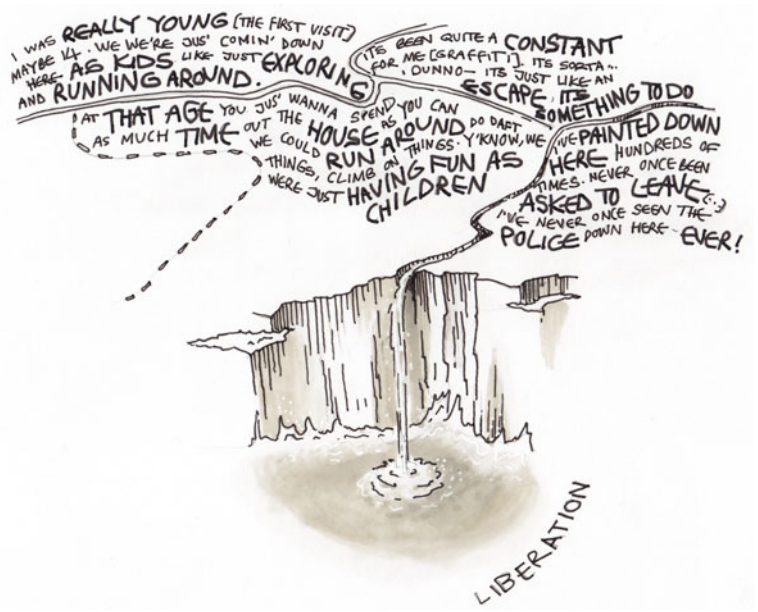

Fig. 12.8 (*Source* Author)

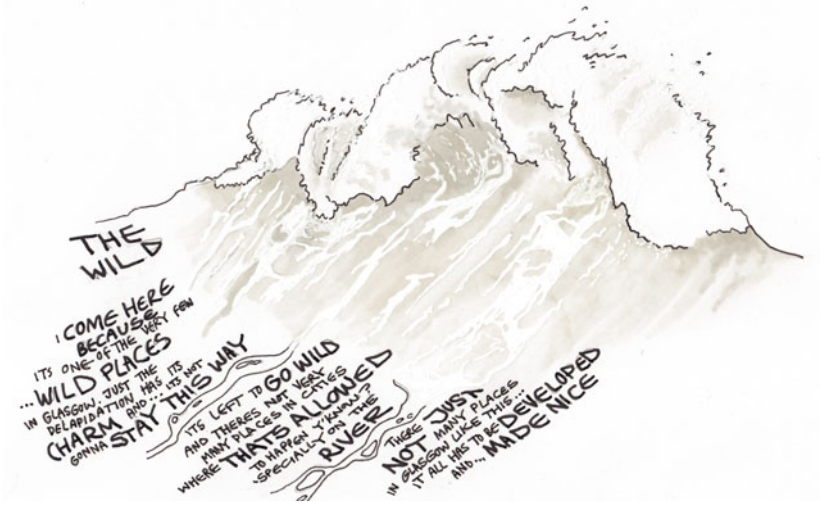

Fig. 12.9 (*Source* Author)

kindle the momentum of the investigation. However, as I spent periods of time on site conducting the observational drawing part of the mapping practice, I found myself increasingly engaging in spontaneous interactions with these inhabitants. Our presence on site and the stillness of the drawing practice lent me a familiarity and approachability, creating space for longer, less pressured conversations. I had originally intended to utilize the drawing practice to make purely visual observations of the site and chiefly as a segue into interviewing inhabitants. However, I came to acknowledge these serendipitous interactions as a crucial touch point between these inhabitants and the mapping process, and thus the sketchbook evolved into a valuable and direct input tool for the map. The recordings I made became richer in content and the pages filled out with details of interactions and stories told alongside the observational drawings (see Figs. 12.10, 12.11 and 12.12). As it grew, I was able to share and reflect on progress together with those who stopped to chat. One regular local even affectionately named this practice as 'going for a doodle'. As such our ethnographic drawing practice became one that not only prompted us to 'see' the site more deeply (Causey, 2017) but also to 'hear' it.

Over time it became clear that these sketchbook pages, as both recordings and mediators of conversation, would exist in the deep map with equal prominence to the content generated through interview. As McLucas (n.d.) eludes to in his statement 'Deep maps […] will involve negotiation and contestation over who and what is represented and how', deep mapping allows for a 'playing' of value attribution that actively attempts to create representational space for voices that might otherwise be overlooked by those research methods that require more formalized processes of data collection driven by hegemonic calls for scientific rigour and replicability.

Disruption

Given my aspiration to detect and represent diversified spatial narratives around the Govan Graving Docks, I was acutely aware that a necessary objective would be to disrupt commonly held notions about what the

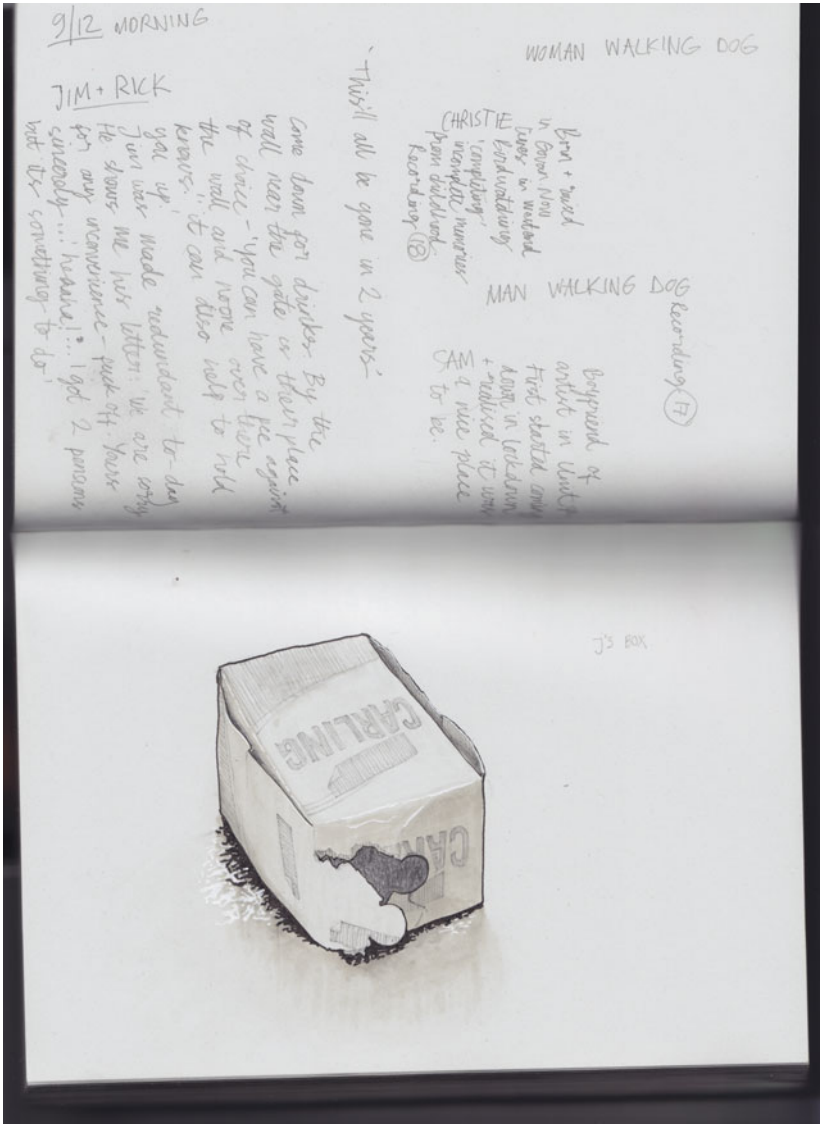

Fig. 12.10 (*Source* Author)

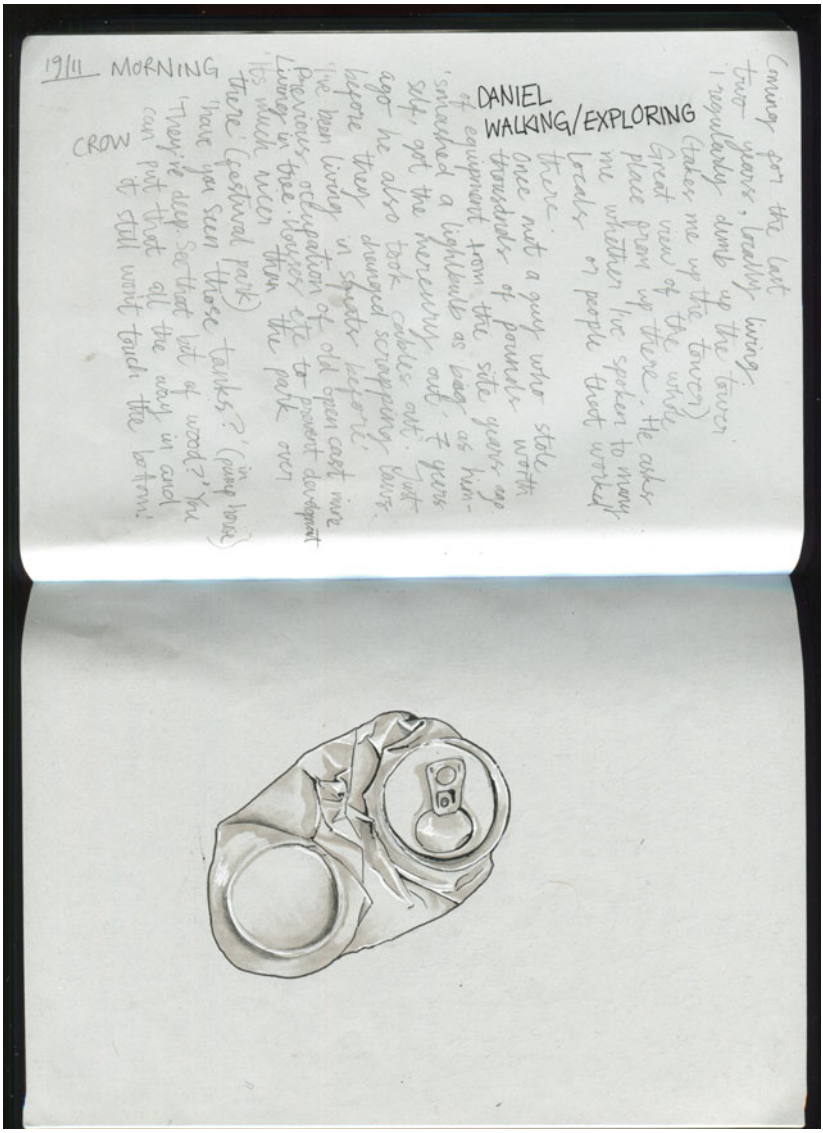

Fig. 12.11 (*Source* Author)

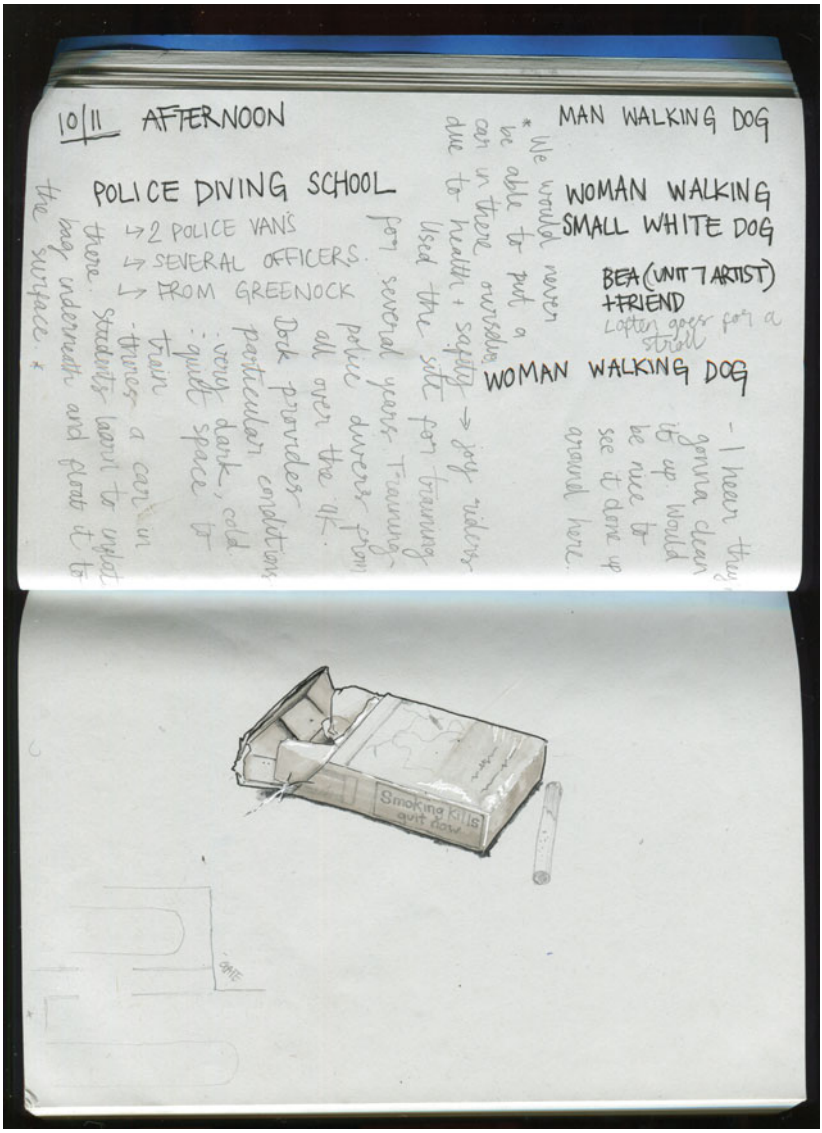

Fig. 12.12 (*Source* Author)

site means and who has the authority to talk about it. Indeed, many times on initial encounter with inhabitants, I was met with responses that reflected the prevalence and strength of such meta-narratives. 'Oh I don't have much to tell you'. 'I don't know much about the history'. 'You should go to the Fairfield Heritage Museum; you'll find what you need there'. Given such initial reactions, it became evident that one of the most foundational daily tasks of my deep mapping in the field would be the carving out of this disruptive space. The advantage that this leant the investigation was twofold. First, the creation of this space allowed for the reattribution of value away from commonly recognized sources of knowledge and towards the myriad inhabitant voices from those informally using the site day to day. It was a critically necessary component, supporting inhabitants to safely step beyond the structures of marginalization held within them in order to explore and voice their own narratives. Second, this disruptive space also allowed for the reattribution of value to the present, giving favour to the last 33 years of vacancy and life of the site in the here and now as opposed to the dominant conversations about either its historical use or its proposed future. Naturally, the present could not be extracted from the past or the future; however, the creation of the map provided the opportunity for them to be viewed *through the lens* of the present, appearing themselves as elements sitting within the narrative landscapes created (see Fig. 12.13).

Carving out such a space was an incremental process ushered in by moment to moment interactions. The type of questions I asked, or didn't ask, the things that inhabitants saw me note down, the points I lingered on in conversation, the objects I chose to spend hours drawing in the field, the people that I chose to speak to, and the persistence of my digging, questioning and recording over the two months, all served to generate and maintain this disruptive space. The overwhelmingly contingent and even subjectively personal nature of such concerns is reflective of the kind of arts-practice thinking that courses through deep mapping ventures and the consequentially broad and irreplicable outcomes they generate.

Combining verbalization (interviews) and visualization (drawings) evidently helped the process of disrupting hegemonic narratives. The

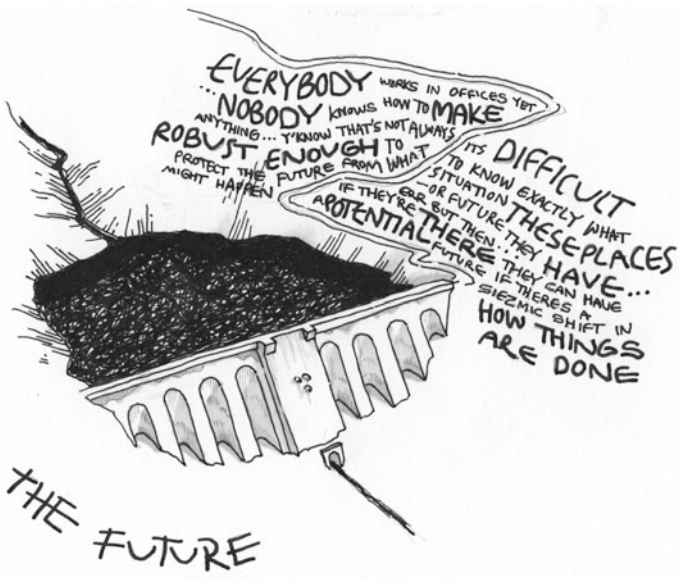

Fig. 12.13 (*Source* Author)

creation of hand-made drawings spun directly from inhabitants' descriptions and storytelling appeared to play a powerful role in expressly attributing value to their personal narratives. When inhabitants were presented with the drawings I had generated based upon their voices, the conversations expanded and almost all began to share their reflections and life experiences, to add them to the map. Indicated by the responses and enjoyment of the drawings as aesthetic objects, it appeared that this time-invested 'making' stage of the mapping process was interpreted by inhabitants as the artist-researcher literally *making time* for them. One inhabitant responded: 'It feels like you're really listening to me and that doesn't happen much in society these days' (J interview 2). While it is not unusual for individuals to respond positively when their viewpoints are given time and attention in interactions such as an interview, the creation of a physical artefact evidenced that this attention was additionally being given outside of the moment of our face-to-face conversation. Thus, we may read this art-production as a kind of 'gifting' in the discussion process. This did raise notable challenges to my aspirations of co-creation

as, engaged as they were by the illustrations, inhabitants were mostly hesitant to critique them and challenge them. As such, the majority of the investigative discussions around the illustrations were driven by additive comments.

These written landscape objects became catalytic agents in the reflexive, cyclical process of investigation between the place, the inhabitants and the artist-researcher. The creative outputs generated (be they objects, actions, writings, performances, etc.) acted as 'safe harbour' to the many tangential narratives that revolve around the Govan Graving Docks, creating a rich polyvocality in the process. They therefore serve to incrementally construct space around these wells of inhabitant knowledge like momentary voids that beckon further thought, further questioning and further exchange.

Absence

As the investigation progressed, another necessary dimension of the map emerged. The unfolding COVID-19 pandemic and the travel restrictions in place across Europe put significant limitations on the fieldwork. Although the initial stage of the fieldwork went ahead eventually, the outcomes of this period and the path of investigation it generated still warrant discussion. Unable to physically be present in the field, I made efforts to connect with individuals online; however, this proved challenging for several reasons, including many of those contextual factors that limited the interview process. Gateway community groups and community leaders were also not in a position to collaborate, being overwhelmed by the crisis themselves. I found myself compiling a list of groups and individuals whose inhabitant knowledge would enrich the mapping yet whom I was unable to talk with. This was not only a result of the pandemic but other systemic issues at play, such as a funding crisis for the arts and community organizations and, more broadly, local contextual factors or attitudes held by individuals. This period of limited access made it clear that not only was 'absence' prevalent, but it would also be necessary to represent 'absence' itself as a critical component in the mapping process.

This line of inquiry led me to create a further illustrated map component that would serve to both record and prompt investigation of absent voices and the causes that lie behind them. The illustration entitled *Loch Absence* (see Figs. 12.14 and 12.15) is a simple illustration of a loch with the names of identified absent voices concealed within it by printing black on black. It challenges the viewer to move around the work, in order to position themselves at an angle in which the names may be read. This additional open-ended illustration serves as a task-based device to prompt my own detection and mapping of absence that continues throughout the investigation. As the identities of those voices not present are rarely forthcoming, I adopted tactics for detecting absences such as making conscious records of those declining or unable to talk, opportunities missed, and my own limitations in the field, such as not visiting the site after dark and hesitations about approaching certain individuals. By introducing the open-ended *Loch Absence* illustration into conversations and interviews, and thus the idea of acknowledging voices absent from the discussion, it further became possible to invite inhabitants in as co-researchers in this process.

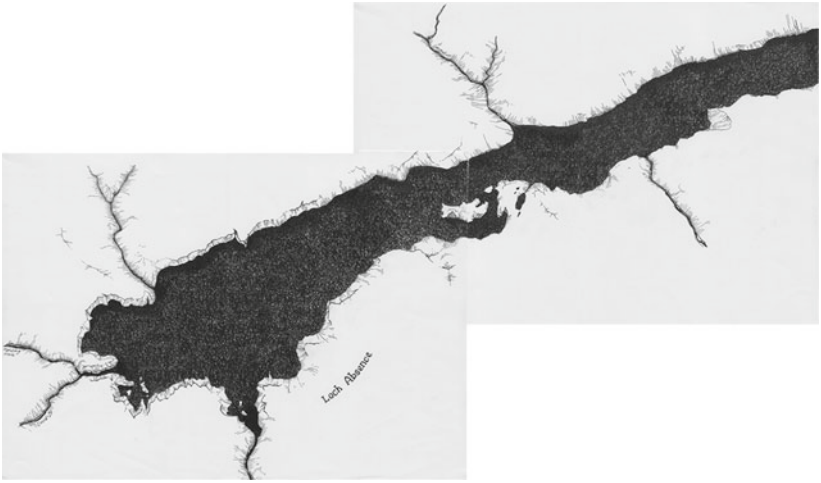

Fig. 12.14 (*Source* Author)

Fig. 12.15 (*Source* Author)

The Role of the Researcher: The Place, the Map and *Me*

The onsite drawing practice compelled me to spend up to 10 hours on site each week during the winter months. Some days I stayed on site until the cold or driving rain or darkness forced me home. Indeed, as Wood (2015) had forewarned, I did dream about it. Beyond observing, listening, recording, I was *living* the site for myself. Committing the whole of myself to the place in this way led me to reflect upon what had

brought me to do this particular work in this particular place. Memories surfaced of my own teenage ventures into wild and vacant spaces in my home landscape and the parts of my own identity that had called me there. Over the course of the two months in the field, I found these dimensions of myself increasingly seeping into the research investigation. While the roles I occupied as a researcher were multiplicitous, this effort to understand the place was also mirrored by a reciprocal process of self-understanding. This internal 'movement' alongside the movement of the research investigation drove me deeper into the field. In line with McLucas' assertion that deep maps should be 'politicized and partisan' (n.d.), I began to clarify my own political compulsions and allegiances.

Critically, however, this affected a notable change in the conversations I had with the many inhabitants I encountered. This embodiment, this inviting my own life-world into the mapping process, gave me the ability to meet with and sympathize with the life-worlds of others—to *hear* the experiences of those with whom I spoke. It generated the space within which individuals could express those life experiences that extended far beyond the bounds on the site. Only by relinquishing the position of researcher as neutral, immutable observer could these expressions of place emerge using the conversation space to understand our own experiences together.

My own art practice was central to this gradual embodiment. My employment of illustration was not as a convenient, aesthetically pleasing additive in the creation of a deep map, but rather part of the continuing evolution of my own artistic practice. The nights I spent scouring my thoughts for a suitable metaphor and a suitable image to portray it. The apprehension I felt in the moments before I tentatively offered those objects I had laboured over back to the inhabitants, just hoping I had pulled out the right words from what felt like a cacophony of meanings. The invitation of personal art practice into the making of a deep map is also (to varying degrees) the inviting of oneself into the process. The production of art is inherently rife with vulnerabilities and only in my vulnerability could I step down from the ivory tower and turn my questioning back upon myself.

Conclusions

Deep maps do not present a more accurate representation of place but rather an alternative 'truth' that can resist and confront hegemonic accounts. They do not seek to replace those conventional, instrumental depictions of place such as the map at the opening of this chapter. Instead a deep map may come into an active role when situated alongside existing representations. In such a way they bring into question assumptions that the social context of place is too layered, too contingent, too 'messy' to be included in the debate. The existence of a deep map serves to put a stake in the ground that is difficult to ignore. By *making effort* to represent what would otherwise be left in silence, it breaks through the cloak of omission curbing the momentum of those forces that serve to exclude and invalidate. In this way the deep maps hold the capacity to redefine the boundaries of debate over place, to voice both the 'cry and demand' over the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1991).

These advantages also draw attention to the potential complications and limitations of deep mapping as a highly context-specific approach to investigations of place. Disrupting or suspending commonly held perspectives in order to draw out more marginalized narratives clearly requires considerable time in the field. These are incremental processes contingent upon the building of trusting relationships with inhabitants, and they therefore do not lend themselves so well to research situations in which outcomes are predisposed and time pressured. Further, as is common to ethnographic approaches, it is necessary for the researcher to continually transition through different roles, engage closely with inhabitants and be reflexive about their own positionality in the process. This can be an intensive undertaking, particularly when working in places where socio-economic deprivation is prevalent. With regard to the creative output of the deep mapping process, its efficacy is also dependent upon where it resides. As a living object of representation and dialogue, a deep map would amount to nothing were it extracted entirely and solely enclosed within academic archives or frozen within publications. Resisting this requires partnership at the local level and a transferability of ownership so that it may be alive and in service of those inhabitants it endeavours to give platform to. And while multiplicity and inclusion

remain central to the values of deep mapping, the ways in which this less familiar, arts-based approach may create alternative exclusions, demand sensitivity and discussion. This points to the need for further research on deep maps in action within the fields of decision-making, investigating their capacity to be recognized alongside traditional cartographic representations and to advocate for those spaces and peoples they seek to represent.

In the context of place-based research methods, deep maps possess a special ability to foreground absence rather than side-stepping it. As a principal condition of arts approaches are their persistent confrontation with their own inadequacy to describe (Holub, 1990), they decisively leave loose ends untied, inviting the viewer to draw their own conclusions. This permits the researcher to bring all that is missing into focus as a component of the subject matter itself. In this way a deep map may situate conversations about a place within the 'presence of absence', positioning itself with honesty within the fullness of the social landscape. Such a research practice may have resonance in many fields (migration, homelessness or climate adaptation for instance) where singular spatial narratives are held by positions of power at the exclusion of others. They bring us back to and keep alive those vital and difficult questions about how our rural and urban landscapes are produced and for whom. And thus, while deep maps have by no means freed themselves from the dilemmas of representative inclusion, I propose that they offer a far greater contribution than creating an aesthetic, representational object of any sorts. In continually questioning assumptions about who holds the authority to speak about a place, deep mapping empowers marginalized individuals to recognize that they hold within them knowledge that is of value and significance, that without them there is no place.

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