1 **105 Rumford Street (1955-1965)**

Bernie lived here with her parents and three brothers and sister from birth until the age of 10 when in 1965 the family was cleared to 50 Ackers Street, just round the corner.

"The house was solid with large windows, and the attic was inhabitable. There were three stories and we took on lodgers, one was named "Mrs Jackson". Every room had sinks. It was built in the 19th century."

"The safest I ever felt was here because of the close proximity of all the neighbours, all the neighbours had children, apart from the elderly neighbours and we looked after them."

"We all had very little. The bombed areas, the areas which were being bulldozed, were our play-grounds. We didn't have a lot of toys or money for toys but it didn't matter because we were very adventur-ous and had great imagina-tions. We climbed over all those bombed out cars! The con-demned buildings, when they were half-bulldozed they were like a ruined castle..."

2 **50 Ackers Street (1965-1970)**

Bernie's family moved here from their Rumford Street home.

"It was a large victorian terrace house. There were attics and a cellar, a very solid house, we had our pick of bedrooms...we were able to move our piano straight in because the hall was so wide...We didn't use the top floor except to play in...it was a huge house, far too big for us really, but we thought it was great!"

In 1970 the family was informed by letter from the council that their house was to be demolished. The family had to choose their next home from a selection of three addresses supplied by the Council. In February 1970 the family were moved by council supplied van to the Wilbraham Road housing estate in Fallowfield; Bernie's mother still lives there.

Bernie had to leave her piano at Ackers Street; there was no room in the van or the new house for it. Bernie explains she missed the old house after moving, "I missed the space, I remember going back, I used to go back to the house...the windows were broken quite quickly after we left and I would look through the window downstairs and see the piano and it was heartbreaking because there were bricks and stones that had been thrown through the window on top of my piano which had been polished every week!"

3 **Auntie Nan**

Bernie's mother's familiy lived here: Auntie Nan, Granddad, Uncle Martin, Uncle Jim, Uncle Mick & cousins Martin and Mike. The family was relocated unhappily to Moss Side through the clear-ances; Bernie remembers they were moved before her family.

Auntie Nan's marriage broke down and the father of her two children, Martin and Mike, failed to support the family. Bernie remembers her mother scraping together a bit of money from the 'housekeeping' * every week to help Auntie Nan. Bernie and her cousin Martin were close playmates often playing 'Mass' (her choice) and 'Torture" (his choice) in the front room* and the attic at her 50 Ackers Street home.

4 **The Brett Family**

The Bretts lived here with their many children. Bernie remembers playing out with the children and because it would take too long to call all their names, their mother blew a whistle to call them in for tea.

5 **Mrs Marsden**

She was one of the elderly residents who the neighbours looked out for. Bernie explains, "If we hadn't seen her Mam would say, 'Go and see if Mrs Marsden is ok, I've not seen her for a couple days at the shops." We'd go and she'd say , 'I'm alright'. We'd do their shopping for them. We just knew everybody. Old people would live with their families, they would sit out...you'd see two of them sitting in their chairs on the front step, just passing the time of day*...and they could keep an eye on the kids, so they weren't lonely and the mothers could go off and the kids could stay with Granny for an hour."

6 **Uncle Jim**

He lived next door to Bernie: "He wasn't anybody's uncle but we called him 'Uncle', he would take us all to school".

7 **Marion O'Mahoney**

Schoolmate and neighbourhood friend. "Our friends in school were our friends in the street. So playtime carried on when we came home from school. We still had fights, petty daft things, but there was a closeness there."

8 **Nana McGahey**

'Nana', as she was called by the neighbourhood children, lived a few doors down from Bernie with her daughter and granddaughter. Her granddaughter was one of Bernie's friends. Nana's son Drew was a sailor who had a cinecamera and still camera. "He took a cinefilm of us and also had a little camera as well, he was the sort of street photographer."

9 **Mrs Riley**

Another elderly neighbour looked after by the neighbourhood.

10 **The Holy Name Church**

For Bernie this was the centre of her family, school and the community's life. "When you look back at Ackers Street, it's like a vista. You have the church which is almost next to my house so you can't help but to see the church at the same time, and the church has been part of my life since I was a dot". The community surrounding the church was largely Irish. "The community started in the late 40s, early 50s when the Irish population was there, and suddenly there were lots of children, which there would be."

"When we left Ackers Street I went back, I didn't want to go to mass in the new parish Church, because it wasn't a proper church for me...I went from this beautiful gothic church which held hundreds of people to a 1950s building with a table for an altar...what broke my heart really was it was still there and I couldn't have it, it was taken from me...that really hurt. I didn't realise how much because of the excitement of the new house [Wilbraham Road] and the intactness of this new place where we were happy enough, but the church just summed up for me what it all meant."

11 **The Holy Name School**

"The church and the school were joined together with my life on Ackers Street and Rumford Street. I had a great time at the Holy Name School...the teaching of RE in school was the most important lesson, and our teachers were like priests and nuns in that respect. Our religion was central to school as well as church and home life. It wasn't just a subject it was our lives. I thank that's why I wanted to play mass, that would be important."

12 **Sweet Shop**

After Mass on a Sunday Bernie and her siblings would spend their "Sunday Spends" * here.

13 **Crofts 1965-70**

"All the old people had gone by the time we went to Ackers Street, there was hardly anybody left. On Ackers Street we were out on a limb. We were just sort of hanging in there...we just didn't feel as permanent as Rumford Street...by the time I was ten the clearances had started."

"I was at college when we were told we had to move. I kept it to myself, most of my school pals were from posh areas...they didn't know anything about slum clearances. I didn't want anyone to know where I lived, because it was just crofts* and bulldozers and bombed out cars. I didn't want my school friends to come simply because to walk down Ackers Street it's half a street. You've got beautiful Victorian houses at one side and a wasteland on the other. I didn't want to bring anyone down there. It was a shame."

14 **Walter's Cornershop**

The family had a little red 'tick'* book at this shop. During the week Bernie's mum would purchase goods here 'on tick'* and pay off the debt on Friday, pay day. When Bernie's mum was ill in hospital Walter helped her purchase exactly what her mum would have bought -- he remembered her weekly shopping habits.

15 **Grafton Street**

"This was a 'no-go area' for us. Grafton Street had hostels for single men and a few pubs and we were more likely to be attacked by kids we didn't know who lived in worse condi-tions than we did. We weren't allowed on that street, if we had to go to the hospital on Nelson Street we had to walk down Oxford Road from Ackers Street, it was the boundary of our neighbourhood."

16 **The Grafton Pub**

Bernie could see this building from the Rumford Street house, it was a landmark.

17 **Phil's Newsagent**

Bernie bought cakes for her miner dad's lunch early one morning here while her mum was in hospital.

18 **Manchester Royal Infirmary (MRI)**

Bernie and family were often here with inevitable cuts and bruises associated with playing out. The Matron, on seeing them again, asked, "Where are your parents? You are here often!" to which Bernie replied, "They sent us here!".

Map Symbols

- Bernie's home
- Historic place of interest
- Important neighbour
- Crofts* created 1955-65
- Crofts* created 1965-70
- No-go Area

* For explanations of expressions and terms please see the glossary on the inside front cover of this map.

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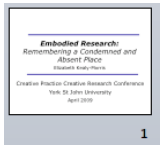
Memories, Narratives & Histories: a Postgraduate Research Conference
Wednesday 3 June, 2009
InQbate, University of Sussex

Commemorative Practices for a Destroyed Place: Memory and Absence in Chorlton-on-Medlock

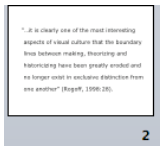
This paper will consider the ways destroyed places might be remembered and explore how the memories of absent places might reside as much in the body through tacit, unarticulated knowledge as through explicit knowledge which can be expressed linguistically.

This paper is based on a collaborative oral history project carried out with former residents of a central-Manchester UK working-class district destroyed by the post-war municipal and national practice of 'slum clearance'. This paper will consider the commemorative practices former residents carryout in the present to remember their destroyed neighbourhoods, the knowledge about the district such practices evidence and the possible reasons for such remembrance.

Please see the project's website for more information:
http://www.mappingmemory.info

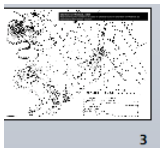


Introduction



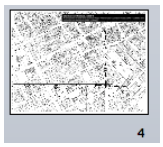
During my Masters stage study on the Visual Culture route with MIRIAD at Manchester Metropolitan University, completed in October 2008, my practice focused on exploring and testing methods of inquiry that would support my interdisciplinary interests in memory, place and visuality. My concern with the visual relates to both how people come to make meaning *from* and *through* the creation of visual representations, what I call 'working out visual culture', after Irit Rogoff's analysis of visual culture as a "transdisciplinary and cross-methodological field of inquiry" which has eroded the boundaries between "making, theorizing and historicising" (1998:28).

This paper is concerned with memory, destroyed place and the search for ways to develop visual culture that responds to and articulates the remembering of an absent place. Developed from my visual and written work at Masters stage, the overall aim of this paper is to explore the ways a destroyed place is remembered and, specifically, to ask whether memories of this destroyed place reside as much in the body through tacit, unarticulated knowledge as through knowledge which is explicit and able to be expressed linguistically.



The place which is the subject of my investigation is Chorlton-on-Medlock or "C-on-M" as residents called it, a former working-class district directly south of Manchester, England's city centre, which was demolished during the post-war official practice of 'slum clearance'. C-on-M was described by Fredrick Engels in 1845 as one of several "unmixed working-people's quarters, stretched like a girdle, averaging a mile and a half in breadth, around the commercial district" (1980:77). This district was well known for its boarding houses, dance halls and

rows of terraces. Many of these boarding houses and grander terraces had been some of the first middle-class housing in Britain, abandoned when the trains reached into the fields of Cheshire by the early part of the 20th century (Makepeace, 2007).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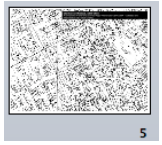
Clearances were carried out both nationally and locally from 1957 to 1975, a practice that demolished 90,000 homes in Manchester alone. My interest has been the memories former residents might have of C-on-M before being cleared from the area.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Over the course of two years I worked with ten former residents of C-on-M. I initially met some of these through placing an appeal in the *Manchester Evening News,* the local paper. I asked former-residents who were cleared from C-on-M to contact me to share their memories of pre-clearance life and the experience of being cleared. The participants lived in the various neighbourhoods that made up the district of C-on-M and were cleared during different stages in the demolition.


6

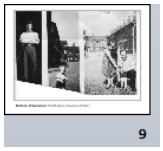
My aim with this project has been to privilege the memories and experiences of those displaced by the clearances to tell the story from the destroyed streets themselves, using the methods of participatory action research, oral history and visual practice to foreground what Michel Foucault (1975:25) termed 'popular memory' recorded as 'popular history'.


7

Contextual Framework


8

Because my research has been concerned with the on-going production of cultural memory relating to a particular place I have engaged with theories of memory as well as cultural geography. My aim has been to understand how and why we come to know where we are; and similarly, how we remember the places where we have been. Following Michel de Certeau (1984:117) I take 'space' to be a location in constant flux, changing according to the needs in the present. A 'place', on the other hand, is understood as a personalised and inhabited site, and "implies an indication of stability" (de Certeau, 1984:117). Spaces and places differ, then, in how they function, specifically in the meaning they hold for the person who is experiencing them.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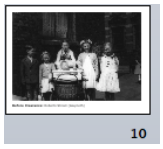
According to Pierre Bourdieu we behave differently when we feel part of a community, taking up our place in a 'lived environment' which he defines as 'habitus'; the term habitus denotes "…an embodied, as well as cognitive, sense of place" (Hillier & Rooksby, 2002:5).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An important aspect in exploring how Chorlton-on-Medlock might be remembered today is the recognition that the district no longer stands as a site to revisit. Employing Karen E Till's (2005) notion of 'place making practices' this paper explores the ways in which people might remember C-on-M, even in its absence§. Till (2005) suggests that through a practice she terms 'place making' people try to contain and make sense of the past:


11

> Through place making, people mark social spaces as haunted sites where they return, make contact with their loss, contain unwanted presences, or confront past injustices. (Till, 2005:9)

What happens when that place no longer has a visible or material trace and when there is no memorial to a community now dispersed? Can the remembrance of

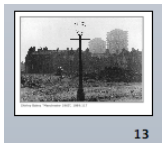

12

the absent district still be understood as 'place-making practice' despite the fact that there are no longer tangible sites to encourage remembering?

REGIMES OF PLACE


12

Given that Chorlton-on-Medlock was demolished over the course of twenty years through local government policy of 'slum clearance', the destruction of this place, then, was a highly organised and political act. Till's concept of 'regimes of place' becomes important here to create an understanding of how and why C-on-M came to be destroyed. Till's meaning is that often an official set of culturally place-based practices comes to characterize how people think about a place's location, social function, sense of security and aesthetics – indeed, how a place 'works'. Following Till I sought to understand how the 'modernising' regime of place enacted by Manchester City Council when it deemed C-on-M 'a slum' and the clearances as an act of 'modernisation' in practice might have shaped and affected memories of the district.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CULTURAL MEMORY


14

Theories of 'cultural memory' have been central to developing an understanding of the kind of memories I encountered in the field. I employ the term and concept 'cultural memory' to indicate particular social processes groups engage in to define identity through remembering places and events which hold meaning for them.


15

Theorists use a variety of terms for this process including 'collective memory', 'national memory' and 'social memory'. I choose to employ 'cultural memory' as a clarification of the productive nature of such group memorial practices. After

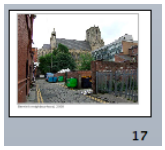
Raymond Williams (1981) I perceive culture to be a signifying system that at the heart of its practice is the production and circulation of meaning. As memory is a constructed representation of the past then, like language, it contains codes and conventions that produce meaning and make sense of the world through signifying practices (Hall, 1997:24). The past, then, can only have meaning if it is articulated and represented through the *act* or the *work* of remembering; memory is a 'meaning-producing practice' (Hall, 1997:28).


16

Nancy Wood (1999) reminds us that while it is true that only individuals can remember

> …the notion of 'collective memory' allows us to signal some tangible presence of the past that can be discerned beyond the level of the individual and in specific social milieux (1999:1).

Thus, according to the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, any personal memory of C-on-M evoked by a former resident will have been influenced and, indeed, 'appropriated' from a social group. Halbwachs proposed that cultural memory be considered as the 'social frameworks' within which personal memories are entwined. (Wood, 1999:1).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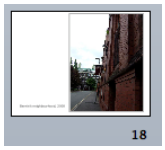
Nancy Wood suggests that cultural memory is fundamentally performative, and develops at a particular moment and place through specific types of memorial activity (1999:2). She developed the concept of the 'vector' "to designate the conduits of this performativity, whether these be commemorations, historical narratives, political debates, or other cultural forms" (1999:2). In terms of signifying practices, I consider Wood's vectors to be the 'work' of representing the past, the 'act' of remembering, the past being articulated to become memory, that moment of 're-memory'. Articulation cannot occur in isolation; we need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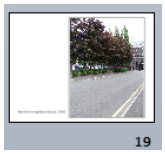
others to hear/read/see our act of representing the past for it to have meaning and become 'memory'. As Nancy Wood notes: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> If particular representations of the past have permeated the public domain, it is because they embody an intentionality – social, political, institutional and so on – that promotes or authorizes their entry (1999:2).

The Embodiment of Knowledge through Experience


20

While exploring why places might be remembered in particular ways for specific reasons I was mindful that the site of my inquiry has been destroyed. What are the tools or, to use Wood's term, 'vectors', which former residents use to remember C-on-M when few of Halbwachs' 'places in space' are still standing? Is memory of an absent place embodied within visual and spatial knowledges that are strong enough to withstand the fluctuation of a particular place's function, use and topography? How do former residents 'know' where C-on-M was? I sought to explore these questions through the discipline of visual anthropology, specifically the visual and written practice of Tim Ingold (2000, 2005).


21

Tim Ingold's anthropological work explores how human beings perceive their environments. In his essay *Up, Across and Along* (2005) Ingold differentiates the knowledge of the 'wayfayer' from that of the 'transported traveller'. For Ingold the wayfarer is constantly on the move and must engage with her environment for food and rest; she has no particular destination. The transported traveller, in contrast, is "destination-oriented"; every destination is the end of a journey rather than the wayfarer's moment of rest. Ingold suggests the traveller is carried *across* locations and that it is through wayfaring that we learn to inhabit our environment:

> The inhabitant is…one who participates from within in the very process of the world's continual coming into being and who, in laying a trail of life, contributes to its weave and texture (2005:4).

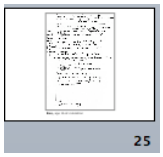
Ingold's work has enabled me to consider how memories of C-on-M might be embodied and therefore, to some extent, independent of C-on-M's erasure. Is it possible that the memories of C-on-M might be embodied ones that will not have been lost with the destruction of the streets? How could I visually represent this knowledge? To answer these questions I had to select my methodological approach carefully.

Methods


24

By its very nature memory is elusive, unreliable and often unarticulated and the 'place' of my investigation no longer stands; it has been erased as a district from the official maps of Manchester. There was little evidence on the surface that was accessible to me. Therefore I had to develop a range of research tools beyond the traditional methods of archival retrieval to generate materials I could analyse. I sought methods that would bring me close to former residents' memories, experiences and knowledge of the site through their words and the ways in which they continue to remember C-on-M. These methods included oral history through in-depth interviews, participatory action research, multi-sensory methods and visual practice.

Oral History with in-depth interviews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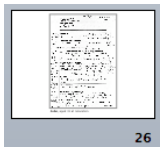
The in-depth interviews I carried out played a very important role in eliciting responses which were crucial to developing my conclusions. I sought to understand through the interviews how the respondents might remember C-on-M through daily and weekly habits, what their experiences of clearance had been.

Multi-sensory methods

Tacita Dean notes that "place is something known to us, somewhere that belongs to us in a spiritual, if not possessive, sense and to which we too belong" (Dean & Millar, 2005:14). As she suggests this 'sense of place' is intangible, how then does one attempt to represent its notions of identity, belonging, of 'being home'? I considered three multi-sensory approaches to support my research: sensory enquiry, photo-elicitation and memory map making.

Comment:

Sensory Enquiry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As I was interested in finding out whether memories of the absent C-on-M were embodied, my interview questions included asking respondents to name memories of their neighbourhood that were attached to their senses including:

- An event
- A view
- A smell
- A colour
- A taste

I encouraged them to answer quickly without censoring any immediate responses. Often a flood of memories would accompany each response. These memories were of the every day and weekly habits of participants' lives which evidence dwelling and engagement with the place they lived in.

Photo-elicitation


26

I organised a research event that I invited all of my contacts to attend as I wanted to organise an opportunity to work further with participants in a group setting to consider some of my research questions more fully.


28

I asked them to choose three family snapshots for us to discuss as a group. A method termed 'photo-elicitation', this is "based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview" (Harper as cited in Rose, 2007:240). The idea behind this is that a photograph offers researchers not just *more* but a *different* awareness of events that research methods relying on traditional methods of collecting data can't provide (Rose, 2007:240). Here I had two aims: firstly, to learn more of the cultural memory of C-on-M through strangers analysing and making meaning of others' personal photographs, and secondly, to


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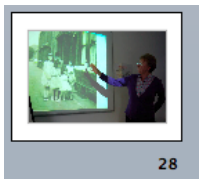
find out if in C-on-M we have one of Halbwachs' 'distinctive memory communities' evident in participants' ability to interpret each other's photographs.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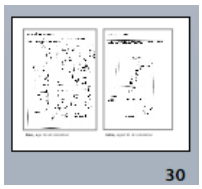
The discussion was a modified semiotic analysis of each photo. The photos showed an intact C-on-M, the one they want to remember. This exercise is proof of the performative nature of cultural memory, as Wood (1999) notes that it "only comes into existence at a given time and place through specific kinds of memorial activity" (1999:2). Here was strong intention to remember spurred on by collective remembering with the photographs as vectors, conduits of this performativity.


29

Mapping and Mapmaking

I asked participants during interviews to draw maps from memory of their neighbourhoods including their home and important local landmarks which might link to their daily/weekly habits. I was interested in how participants remembered the everyday, corner-by-corner spatial characteristics of the immediate neighbourhood surrounding their homes in pre-clearance C-on-M; I asked each participant to draw a map from memory of this area. These maps, which I term 'memory maps', were initially only background visual research but have become the primary evidence I've used to work through conclusions to my research questions.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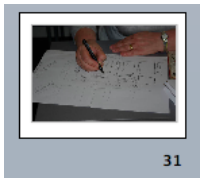
Here I am interested in the difference Denis Wood (1992:32) finds in the practice of 'mapping' as opposed to 'mapmaking'. Mapping is the practice of making sense and order to the world, how we use 'mental maps' to move through space, a skill he suggests is as old as our species. Ingold (2000) proposes "…mapping gives way to mapmaking at the point…where the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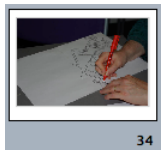
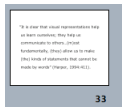
performative gesture becomes an inscriptive practice" (2000:231). Given that "…knowledge of the map is knowledge of the world from which it emerges"(Wood, 1992:18) it is subjugated knowledge of everyday living and dwelling, rather than knowledge which is official and surveyed, emerging from participants' memory maps. Participants' memory maps, I suggest, are examples of Till's (2005) place-making practices: these neighbourhoods were known and experienced; the maps are reproductions of how participants' neighbourhoods are remembered visually and spatially, how they functioned for each individual and in this way the maps contain narratives of popular memory.



Storylines

According to Ingold (2000) "…knowledge is regional: it is to be cultivated by moving along paths that lead around, towards or away from places, from or to place elsewhere" (2000:229). The maps are similar to Ingold's 'sketch map' (2005:6) which don't claim to be to scale, accurate or represent a large area. They represent individual memory of a social space evidenced in the landmarks, and places of interest they note such as the corner shop, the school, relative's home and the chippy. I suggest there are two kinds of knowledge represented in these memory maps: one is culturally place based – how the neighbourhood 'worked'. The other is the embodied knowledge of how the place felt to move through, how participants knew where they were in that place, and this links to Ingold's (2005) notion of wayfaring. He notes, "…in storytelling as in wayfaring, it is in the movement from place to place – or from topic to topic – that knowledge is integrated" (2005:8).

> It is clear that visual representations help us learn ourselves; they help us communicate to others…(m)ost fundamentally, (they) allow us

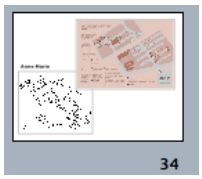


> to make (the) kinds of statements that cannot be made by words (Harper, 1994:411).

I suggest that as the viewer 'walks' the map, the story of inhabiting that environment is more understandable than to read a description of the area because we begin to perform the story through following the lines.

Memory Maps and Graphic Visual Language

I then re-interpreted the vernacular hand-drawn maps in professional graphic visual language to challenge the regimes of place set by the Council when it claimed the destruction of C-on-M was 'slum clearance'. That regime of place suggests that those living in C-on-M lived in slums, were slum dwellers and the insecurity and dereliction inherent in mass-clearance were small inconveniences to be endured for the greater good of modernisation. In this way I contribute to the cultural memory of C-on-M, creating visual culture 'with' and 'alongside' my contacts, helping to give form to their memories, knowledge and experience rather than making work and research 'about' them.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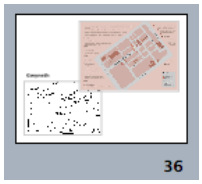
The maps aim to represent action, dynamism, engagement and knowledge of place from the very presence of the lines on the page. The folded and portable design of the maps signifies exploration, adventure and discovery so as to avoid them being considered precious samples of heritage. My aim is to employ the map as a storytelling device, a visual plan of knowledge which can be used in the field. Participants' memory maps invite us to visually and spatially explore their personal histories and knowledge of C-on-M, and they inform us that this was a lived and inhabited place which continues to be remembered, even in its absence, in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons.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Conclusion

To conclude, this paper proposes that through the post-war practice of 'slum' clearance of urban working class neighbourhoods throughout the UK, different interpretations of 'place' were at conflict with each other, competing to explain how those places functioned. I propose that participants do remember C-on-M in various ways for various reasons including low-level, unorganised counter memory, and through their photographs, reunions, memoirs, personal history and genealogy projects. Cultural memory of Chorlton-on-Medlock is being produced, then, and former residents are engaging in place-making practices that represent C-on-M as a place once inhabited and dwelled.