



Chapter

Working with uncertainties

Living with masterplanning at Elephant and Castle

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ABSTRACT

Uncertainty is a condition inherent to all landscapes. Despite the availability of large sets of data, the capacity of digital processing, and expanded representational techniques, relations between people and land can remain ambiguous. Practices of mapping and masterplanning mediate specific landscape relations through traditions of surveying land, claiming ownership, and controlling change—practices that include claims to comprehensive knowledge in tension with partialities, omissions, and uncertainties. They are both ways of reconstructing relationships that people have with places, devices that can transform how people see and live their worlds. In this chapter I focus on uncertainties in mapping and masterplanning, exploring the opportunities and difficulties caused by partial decisions and selective omissions in the construction of maps and masterplans. Despite claims to complete knowledge (mapping) or comprehensive redevelopment (masterplanning) both practices frame specific arguments and selectively exclude information, impacting the lives of individuals, communities, and organisations. The focus of this research is the Elephant and Castle area of South London. I reveal how politicians, planners, and developers benefited from uncertainty caused during prolonged masterplanning processes while the daily lives of residents and workers were severely undermined. I also identify how long-established forms of belonging were broken by large-scale and drawn out planning processes. In contrast, I find that practices of collective mapping offer potential to generate shared knowledge of neighbourhoods and strengthen senses of belonging. However, while such inclusive practices can highlight the injustices of urban development the imbalances of power that are bound up with such large scales of masterplanned urban change result in overwhelming and unrelenting disruption to homes and lives. Many residents and traders were denied the right to belong to Elephant and Castle while simultaneously their ownerships, leaseholds, tenancies, and licenses to live and work were taken away.