Unforgetting Hillsborough: researching memorialisation

Conference or Workshop Item

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The LL of Hillsborough is a nexus of trajectories shaped by the ongoing interventions of inter alia individuals, institutions, activist groups, artists, passers-by, etc., producing their accounts, artefacts, transgressive emplacements and acts of unforgetting across different places, media, and timescales. In my research, I am drawing on survivor memoirs, interviews, official reports, media reports, cultural artefacts (including books, banners, songs, monuments, art works), and observing public acts of remembering...

**ABSTRACT:** The Hillsborough Disaster took place on April 15, 1989. 96 football fans lost their lives as a result of events on the day. Several survivors have committed suicide and many more lives have been blighted. Initially, fans were blamed for the deaths and it was not until 2017 that fresh inquests ruled they had died as a result of ‘unlawful killing’, for which the police were mainly responsible. The fans were completely exonerated. I’m exploring the way different forms of memorialisation constitute LLs, how to try to capture ‘an’ LL across spaces and time, and how to find my own place in it as a researcher.

The Taylor Report, 1989

... the officers in command assumed that there was an attempted pitch invasion. ... A request was made for dog handlers. $78

In virtually every case the cause of death was crush asphyxia due to compression of the chest wall against other bodies or fixed structures ...

$109

... statements made by SYP [South Yorkshire Police] officers were initially handwritten as ‘recollections’, then subjected to ‘review and alteration’ [by] SYP solicitors and a team of SYP officers. ... police officers were asked to reconsider and amend their initial statements before they were forwarded to the Taylor Inquiry. ‘key’ words and descriptions such as ‘chaotic’ were counselled against and, if included, were deleted.

**DATA:**

The LL of Hillsborough is a nexus of trajectories shaped by the ongoing interventions of *inter alia* individuals, institutions, activist groups, artists, passers-by, etc., producing their accounts, artefacts, transgressive emplacements and acts of unforgetting across different places, media, and timescales. In my research, I am drawing on survivor memoirs, interviews, official reports, media reports, cultural artefacts (including books, banners, songs, monuments, art works), and observing public acts of remembering...

**APPROACH:**

Lou (2016: 131)

I reconceptualize LL as a cultural text that sediments in multiple historical and social processes on various timescales

Seals (2017: 273)

... the researcher must be vigilant in reflexively accounting for the researcher’s own positionality during the experience:

- What do I notice?
- Why do I notice these elements of the LL?
- What are my feelings about these elements of the LL?
- What aspects of these elements interact with what aspects of my own positioning to make me feel this way?
- What about the LL is allowing this dialogism between self and others to occur?