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Introduction...

This study explores the relational geographies of emotion, cultural memory and space in the former coalfield areas of Nottinghamshire and how these concepts have impacted senses of belonging, identity and place-attachment.

What I need to consider...

The Nottinghamshire coalfield has a complex history. Many settlements are relatively young, the area has experienced high levels of internal in-migration and social deprivation has been ongoing. Of specific importance is the underlying animosities and consternation which arose from the bitter Miners’ Strike 1984/5. These issues impacted Nottinghamshire heavily and forms the contextual backdrop to the pit closures that followed. Due to the use of psychotherapeutic techniques and participant observation, an ethical awareness of the historical contexts is critical. However, these ‘traumatic pasts’ need to be studied in order to overcome the problems facing the area.

What I want to achieve...

It is hoped that the study will contribute to the development of both academic interests in the area of Human Geography and working-class studies and, also, to policy debates surrounding effective regeneration strategies. To these aims I want to appreciate and interpret the complexity of the emotional geography within the study area. The study aims to interpret the strategies which the people of the Nottinghamshire coalfield employ to cope with traumatic and contested pasts. The study will analyse the roles in which remembering and forgetting of the shared histories are playing in the formation of locally conceived collective identities, belonging and sense of place. These will contribute towards holistic approaches to regeneration of the area.

Why the study is important...

Areas that have experienced deindustrialisation continue to have high levels of social disadvantage and socio-economic inequalities. These are particularly felt in the former coalfield areas. Academics working on deindustrialised societies stress the importance of history, cultural memory and space both within these communities and to our understanding of them. In addition, thinkers associated with the recent emergence of Emotional Geographies have argued that remembering is an emotional and spatial process. It is within these frameworks of emotion, memory and space that this project aims to develop regeneration strategies that engage with collective senses of identity, belonging and place in the Nottinghamshire coalfield.

How I aim to do this...

• **Psychotherapeutic Interviews** with key informants and residents to explore the emotional and spatial processes of remembering and ‘being’ in the subject area.
• **Participant Observation** of community events and everyday social interactions to interpret the ways in which interactions are embodied and performed.
• **Archival Research** of documents to analyse the changing emotional geography and social relations in the coalfield.
• **Autoethnographic methods** to explore my own personal, emotional relationship with the history and contemporary experience with the Nottinghamshire coalfield, as I grew up in the area and have deep connections to it.
• **Critical Analysis** of the artistic and visual representations of the coalfield’s heritage in order to assess how the historical discourse has been narrated by different groups and individuals.