# London bombing memories explored

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Six years on from the devastating 7/7 London bombings and in the wake of the inquest into the attacks, a special issue of the journal *Memory Studies,* published by SAGE, explores new research into our collective memories of this tragic event.

"The London attacks make for a particularly compelling case study of contemporary remembrance and commemoration," say authors of the lead editorial, Matthew Allen and Annie Bryan. "Significantly, it would seem that a wider social project of remembering the bombings is at odds with the inquest's aim of providing an official, finalized historical account of 7/7."

The three-year UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded research project set out to pioneer the study of mass-mediated commemoration. Researchers analyzed both media coverage of the bombings, and personal memories of the events as part of the project, entitled Conflicts of Memory: Mediating and Commemorating the 2005 London Bombings.

Where commemoration results from social engagement, memorialization involves using the media as a memory aid. In-depth analysis of television coverage both immediately following the event and the coverage of commemorative events a year later revealed interesting shifts.

In the paper Dynamics of memory: Commemorating the 2005 London bombings in British television news, Nuria Lorenzo-Dus and Annie Bryan explore how images of the bombings as they unfolded shot on

mobile phones spread rapidly around the globe, first via social media and then through more traditional media channels such as newspapers and television coverage. However the authors show that, despite this apparent breakthrough for citizen journalism, the mainstream media re-asserted generic conventions for coverage a year later. The camera-phone images were then displaced from commemorative programming by the theme of commemoration itself, as media channels gave a high news value to personal accounts of the events and to the theme of trauma a year on.

Anna Reading discusses in the paper The London Bombings: Mobile Witnessing, Mortal Bodies and Globital time how mobile phones represent not just the ultimate in convergence of digital media technologies in the early part of the 21st century but also a personal and globally networked prosthetic to human memory. She compares media accounts of the 2005 bombing with a bombing of the London Underground in 1897 to explore the different time frames through which media technologies communicate, witness and commemorate public memory.

She argues that mobile and networked media appear to compress the time between the instant, the moment of the event and the instances, the repeatable moments in which that instant can be communicated. With mobile technologies images can be captured by witnesses and rapidly and widely circulated and reassembled across different connected media, dynamically traversing the private and public memory in new ways. But time, she argues, is not only compressed, since the process of commemoration of the terrorist atrocity also has its own time (s) tied to dates such as anniversaries and to events such as the Coroner's inquest with the London bombings. While the rapidity of mobile witnessing was important at the time, it is the slower mediated narratives of survivors, witnesses and rescuers from the coroner's inquest that help us understand the scars that remain to the mortal body over time.

These two papers form part of a series of articles in this special issue of Memory Studies resulting from the research project which explores some of the debates generated by the London bombings, illustrating the range of disciplines that can be brought to bear on the many issues and perspectives surrounding this event.

**More information:** Further details of the project can be found at: www.newmediaecology.net/mediam … /bombings/index.html

The London bombings: Mobile witnessing, mortal bodies and globital time by Anna Reading, London South Bank University, UK and University of Western Sydney, Australia and Dynamics of memory: Commemorating the 2005 London bombings in British television news by Nuria Lorenzo-Dus and Annie Bryan, Swansea University, UK, are published today, 7th July 2011, in Memory Studies.

The two papers discussed in this press release will be free to access for a limited time here: mss.sagepub.com/

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