

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PLACE AND “REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING” AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF ANTAGONISTIC MEMORY IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL MEMORY

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## Abstract

It is clear that throughout the history of mankind, power struggles have been waged and consolidated over the domination of land and/or space. However, in the context of technological determinism, it can be said that the power struggle for the seizure of space has evolved in parallel with the transformation of processes and determinants. This is because, again, actual domination over (and/or occupation of) a physical space has given way to symbolic occupations of spaces and to the tradition of waging battles for might and power in a more abstract fashion. The principal element of abstract occupation and domination struggles is memory. “Memory,” which is defined as the ability to consciously keep in mind the subjects experienced or learned and their historical context, is indisputably the power that determines what we do and say and that determines and dominates the processes of remembering and forgetting, as long as no opposition exists or is created that could cause hesitation in strict acceptance. There is bound to be a relationship between space and memory for the reason mentioned above. This study aimed to examine the antagonistic construction of social memory in light of basic theories. To this end, focus was placed first on memory and social memory, and the related concepts were defined. Then, the nature of memory specific to the practices of remembering and forgetting was examined under the guidance of approaches to protagonist and antagonist memory, and an attempt was made to present the subject’s relationship with space from different perspectives. As a result, this study revealed that memory can never be considered as an individual forgetting/preservation device, and that its antagonistic dimension stems from the “uncompromising conflict of remembering and forgetting that it contains.”

**Keywords:** Memory, Space, Social Memory, Antagonist Memory, Remembering-Forgetting.

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## TOPLUMSAL BELLEK BAĞLAMINDA “HATIRLAMA VE UNUTMA”NIN MEKÂNLA İLİŞKİSİ VE ANTAGONİST BELLEK İNŞASI

### Öz

İnsanlık tarihi boyunca, iktidar mücadelelerinin fiili olarak toprak ve/veya mekân hakimiyeti üzerinden verildiği ve pekiştirildiği açıktır. Bununla birlikte, teknolojik determinizm bağlamında, mekânların ele geçirilmesine dönük iktidar mücadelesinin, süreç ve belirleyicilerin dönüşümüne paralel olarak evrildiğini de söylemek mümkündür. Zira, yine mekân temelindeki fiili hakimiyet (ve/veya işgal) yerini, mekâna ilişkin sembolik işgallere; güç ve iktidar savaşlarının daha soyut biçimde sürdürülmesi geleneğine bırakmıştır. Soyut işgal ve hâkimiyet mücadelelerinin başat nesnesi ise bellektir. Yaşanan veya öğrenilen konular ile bunların tarihsel bağlamını bilinçli olarak zihinde saklama yetisi olarak tanımlanan “bellek”; hatırlama ve unutma süreçlerini belirleyen ve domine eden; kat-i kabulde tereddüt yaratacak karşıtı olmadığı/ üretilmediği sürece, tartışmasız eylem ve söylemlerimizi belirleyen güçtür. Mekân ve bellek arasındaki ilişki ise yukarıda zikrettiğimiz nedenden dolayı kaçınılmazdır. Bu çalışmada toplumsal belleğin antagonist inşasını temel kuramlar ışığında irdelemek amaçlanmaktadır. Bu amaçla, öncelikle bellek ve toplumsal bellek üzerinde durulmuş ve ilgili kavramlar tanımlanmıştır. Ardından belleğin hatırlama ve unutma pratiklerine özgü doğası protagonist ve antagonist belleğe ilişkin yaklaşımlar rehberliğinde irdelenmiş, konunun mekanla ilişkisi farklı bakış açıları altında sunulmaya çalışılmıştır. Sonuç olarak bu çalışmada belleğin asla tek başına bireysel bir unutma/saklama aygıtı olarak kabul edilemeyeceği, antagonistik boyutunun da “içerdiği uzlaşmaz hatırlama ve unutma çelişkisinden” kaynaklandığı ortaya konmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bellek, Mekân, Toplumsal Bellek, Antagonist Bellek, Hatırlama-Unutma.

### Introduction

The past and memory are not only dependent on the physiological existence of the body and the brain but continue to exist in the “collective memory,” which includes the practices of remembering and forgetting, far beyond individual memory. In other words, remembrance is formed together with all the material and immaterial relations of the society of which one is a part. This means it is possible to talk about different collective processes for different communities. These differences are cultural, not natural; they are the basic building blocks of

making sense and defining the present we live in.

In this respect, each individual is shaped inside a certain geography, within certain groups, within the framework of the collective codes, symbols, belief system, language, and signs that these groups transfer to the individual, and by a common past transferred to him. The past is reestablished and reconstructed within today's perception of thought every time we remember it.

In this context, how the past is remembered and made sense of as well as its reconstruction and transfer is actually an effort to tie the present to itself through rituals, museums, and monuments by attributing the "past" to spaces. The place and importance of the space in both individual and collective memory determines how it is going to be remembered. In all stages, from the construction of spaces to coding them with cultural, social, and even political meanings and presenting them to the society with these codes, the decisiveness of political actors is much stronger than all other constructors. Political actors put their symbolic signature on people's experiences, perceptions, sensations, and memories with many elements, especially "Memory Spaces", to ensure a lasting mark and continuity. In this context, memory spaces exhibit an important power in changing and transforming the remembering and forgetting process.

Based on the aforementioned problematic assumptions, this study reveals the construction of antagonistic memory and its spatial relationality through theoretical and practical readings. The aim of the article is to discuss the antagonistic construction of memory and social memory on a theoretical basis. Therefore, considering the fact that Turkish political history, when evaluated in the context of the founding myth of the Republic of Turkey, has created and perpetuated countless social memory manifestations documenting the space-power relationality, the scope of the literature review has been kept wide and an attempt has been made to introduce interpretations to create a new perspective. This study discusses the relationship between antagonist memory and space in light of the literature.

## **On The Subject and Object Of Memory**

The conceptual plane on which the debates on social memory continue indicates that there is no universally accepted definition of social memory, and that it is possible to talk about as many definitions as the number of parties discussing this issue. This is because the common feature of all definitions of

social memory, which are presented with different definitions by historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists, is that this term is a memory form that transcends individuals and is shared by the group (Roediger III et. al., 2015, p. 176). The shaping of this form is basically a process related to how it is affected by the social structure of which itself is a part. The process in question offers the opportunity to review and re-evaluate the relations established between the past-present-future according to the common framework that is accepted depending on the events experienced by each society.

This is because “what an individual remembers and forgets can be understood in the social context and gains a meaning in this context” (Çağla, 2007, p. 217). This meaning is the product of the knowledge and experiences acquired by the individual during the socialization process. Individuals become a party to a shared state of sympathy in the face of events that they have not experienced or are unable to experience, but which are recounted or told to them, or of which they are a part of its actual representation (Yelsalı Parmaksız, 2012, p. 285-286). In a way, the relationship between remembering and forgetting is what lies at the root of this understanding of empathy.

It is known that memory is based on the relationship between “remembering” and “forgetting.” There is a deep and large gap between “remembering” and “forgetting,” and this gap is filled by the special conditions and position of the social frameworks accessed today. This is because it is these frameworks that make the existence of the individual possible by keeping individuals together.

As Nora says (2006, p. 10), “memory is not so much content as context; it is always a trump card, a set of strategies, a phenomenon that is more valuable in the way it is used than in its existence.” In this way, it should be emphasized that the past requires “remembering together, not living together.” This is because the function of social memory is to remember (remind) what happened in the past in order to establish and maintain society’s identity (Tunçel, 2017, p. 22).

Therefore, the importance of memory increases depending on different conditions with respect to not only the individual and the identity definer but also our group identity, and our relations with others. In summary, our memory is generative in a social, cultural, geographical, and political context. While the questions of how social memory is “produced” and to what extent this production reflects or chooses reality take us to the social dimensions of memory, this argument also leads us to the following important explanation and assumption: “To forget is usually a health problem for individual memory,

whereas for social memory, forgetting is an often used strategy” (Deniz, 2014, p. 17). This strategy shows itself as much in spaces as it does in memories. This is because space constitutes one of the most important grounds of the ideological struggle over meaning.

Although the physical existence of the space has always remained the same, the meaning attributed to it (whom it is meant to satisfy politically, ideologically, and socially) has changed. What matters is not simply the physical existence of a space, but whom it is intended to satisfy and what underpins it. This is because every political power builds spaces according to the social and cultural codes of the people it is dealing with and constructs its strategies accordingly. In other words, the political power bases its continuity on the antagonism of remembering and forgetting. Acting on this, the assumption that memory can coexist with both remembering and forgetting beyond the individual-social distinction will be shared. An antagonistic boundary is drawn by the political power in the process of being together and those who are inside and outside the antagonistic boundary differ from each other. Once the antagonistic boundary is built, a space is created that facilitates the continuity of social memory.

### **Antagonisms as a Parameter Strengthening Social Memory**

In numerous studies in the field of social science, antagonism is the complement of a person as a material and spiritual whole that he carries as a force in his existence that both improves and destroys him. The word “antagonist” is a word that we use simply as “enemy,” “opponent,” and “antihero” in Turkish today. It is derived from the Greek word *antagonistês*. “This concept, called ‘antagonisma’ in Greek, is explained with the word ‘struggle’” (Çankı, 1954, p. 161). Antagonisms have been extensively studied in the literature of history and sociology. Many explanations have been made for how and why antagonisms arise in society, from Marxism to various forms of “conflict theory.” One of the most general definitions in the field of social sciences is explained as “conflict or hostility between individuals or groups that are in opposite positions in terms of social interest or ideological leanings” (Demir and Acar, 1996, p. 103). This is probably the most effective definition for a study conducted in the context of the relationship between memory and space.

In summary, the antagonist is the opposing force that the protagonist, that is, the hero of the story, is struggling with in the current story (be it fictional or real life). It certainly doesn't have to be bad and/or thoroughly evil. This is because what is trying to be achieved with dualistic pairs (i.e., good-bad/black-

white/hard-soft... etc.) is to keep alive the element of conflict, which is the basic element that increases the reading potential of the stories, and the effort to fight for a just cause.

Antagonism is an us/them relationship in which the two parties are enemies who do not share any common ground (Mouffe, 2015, p. 28). Antagonisms bring about a positive construction process with a negative definition. At this point, it would be useful to explain why antagonist is used instead of one of the concepts such as enemy, rival, antihero, or ambivalence. In the literature, “disharmony” or “irreconcilable opposition” can be used as a substitute for the concept of antagonist, but concepts such as enemy and rival are not enough to convey the meaning attributed to antagonist in the context of this study.

In this study, a new usage was not preferred, since the concept of antagonist has been used in the literature for many years, even by our authors. Moreover, as Lenin said, “antagonism and contradiction are not the same thing, antagonism (i.e., irreconcilable opposition) is a special case of contradiction. In a socialist society, antagonism disappears while contradictions persist.”

At this point, continuing the narrative by pulling the concept of antagonist from the etymological dimension to the philosophical dimension will strengthen this explanation. In Marxist philosophy, antagonistic opposition has been used in a sociological context in terms of class groups (those who try to preserve and maintain the continuity of the class system in question and its gravediggers). At the heart of this approach, which is based on the aphorism of Marxism that “Capitalism will create its own gravediggers,” lies this: “Disagreements tend to turn into conflicts as they become deeper and more intense. These conflicts can only be resolved through revolutionary struggle, social revolutions, i.e., by changing the existing social order” (Buhr et. al., 1976, p. 300). This is because “Marx’s theory of accumulation is a theory of how capitalist society is reproduced on an enlarged scale. Capitalist society is understood as a class society or society based on opposing relations between the capitalist class and the working class. Accumulation theory is a theory of attempts by the capitalist class to expand its domination over the working class and thus society. Accumulation, in other words, is basically the accumulation of classes in their antagonistic relations” (Bell and Cleaver, 2002, p. 20).

To put it another way, antagonistic relations (irreconcilable contradictions) between social classes are catalysts for transformation. The antagonistic relationship between the classes that make up the society is always inclined

to worsen and these inclinations are bound to end in revolution. In Marxist and Leninist philosophy, this understanding, which connects revolutionary development to the irreconcilable contradiction and/or struggle of opposites, has produced accumulations that prioritize and maintain this understanding on a path from Ancient Greece to Contemporary philosophy and science.

Of course, according to some, the source of this production is the conditions of existing, existence, and presence (availability); while for others, it is socio-political motives. It could be argued that these are the two areas of narrative most favored when trying to explain antagonism. The tendency to describe antagonism by basing it on economic-political motives can be traced back to Marxist literature, as mentioned above. To understand the thinkers who treat antagonism in the context of human nature, being, existence, presence, etc., it would be appropriate to cite the Logos-centered and dualist epistemological stops of the Western Metaphysical Thought Tradition and even the source of the opinions held by Ancient Greek thinkers on which those stops are based. If one tries to reach the whole from the part, logos centrism is “a tradition that traces the roots of truth to the logos as the creator of an internally coherent and authentic truth—whether it be the verbal and self-existent (i.e., uncreated, unrelated) word, the voice of rationality, or God... In other words, the absolute truth itself is a philosophical category from which everything derives and which derives everything” (Mutlu, 1998, p. 242).

Dualism, on the other hand, basically comes from Descartes’s acceptance that man consists of two separate vessels that are different from each other. Descartes’ approach, which adopts a dualist attitude with this distinction of the “soul” as a thinking vessel and the “body” as a spatial vessel, is used to express two opposing principles that cannot be reduced to each other (Kaya Erdem, 2019, p. 32). This phrase can be summarized as follows in the context of the narrative on the Western Metaphysical Thought Tradition that exists/stands on the feet on logos centralism and dualism in the words of Küçükalp (2008, p. 33-34), who characterized metaphysics as “a search for an unchanging vessel behind change”:

The most basic characteristic of the Western metaphysical tradition is that it seeks a stable, permanent source through polar oppositions while seeking a point of presence, and it sees the truth as something extra-historical, something that can be obtained through the use of existing and necessary epistemological tools. All dichotomous distinctions that can be listed on a historical path such as episteme-doxa, world of ideas-shadows, form-matter, spirit-body, subject-object, noumenon-phenomenon, fact-value etc. have been developed by the Western metaphysical tradition with the

aim of reaching the truth. All existence and truth claims put forward throughout the tradition of metaphysical thought basically have a logocentric approach and dualist character.

This is because the Ancient Greek philosophers basically sought two things, a fixed permanent/eternal-everlasting first cause and/or first knowledge on the axis of knowledge and reason; essence and/or vessel. What philosophers do not agree on is the nature and number of what they seek. What is finally found, whether it is single or infinite, a principle, or a vessel, is the cause, the nucleus (essence or vessel) that is the carrier of all qualities from which everything stems (Kaya Erdem, 2019, p. 17-18).

Beyond its theoretical definitions, the Western tradition of metaphysical thought and the legs of logocentrism and dualism on which it stands can be regarded as the source of all antagonistic discourses and practices. This is because the emerging antagonism has the power to mark everything that it defines as irrational as hostile and/or irrational by referring to the priority it assigns to one of the terms determined as subordinate and superior each time, through polar oppositions. Since ancient Greece, the tradition of inquiry inherent in the tradition of Western metaphysical thought, seeking those who need nothing else but oneself to exist, and the effort to reach the truth or existence through polar oppositions (dualism) take us to the antagonistic ground on which Western metaphysics is built. The antagonistic ground (rising on the feet of logocentrism and dualism) will continue in all centuries and in all areas where we can and/or will be able to trace the Western metaphysical thought tradition.

The antagonism of this study is based on the ideas of Laclau and Mouffe in their work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1992) and Schmitt's ideas in his book *The Concept of the Political* (2012) and Mouffe's ideas in her book *On the Political*. Thinkers, by drawing the boundaries of the structure idealized by antagonism, accept the concept as an example of “othering.”

According to Kundakçı (2014, p. 228), antagonism refers to the existence of an opposing political identity, namely “the other,” not as a simple dialectical opposite of the “us” identity but as a symbol or limit that makes “us” impossible. Once it is understood that every identity is relational and that the affirmation of a difference is a prerequisite for the existence of any identity, that is, a perception of the “other” that establishes the “outside” of identity, it will be possible to comprehend Schmitt's emphasis on the ever-present possibility of antagonism more easily and better see that social relations are a field that



allow antagonism to thrive.

Antagonisms, which provide the formation of the identities of us and the other, and which are also called the founding elements of politics in this respect, are in any event based on a kind of exclusion principle. Antagonism can also be expressed as a kind of struggle between enemies, by creating a constitutive outside. In this struggle, as much as the “them” dimension is the constructive aspect of antagonism, the “us” dimension emerges as the constructive aspect of the “friendship” relationship (Kundakçı, 2014, p. 218). Antagonisms that are produced on the basis of power relations and to provide a certain ideological manipulation play a role that both constitutes and destroys identity. As soon as it is believed that one of the parties is approaching victory, another relationship of exclusion will act as the constitutive element of politics and democratic struggles will destroy the completeness of social cohesion anew. (Kundakçı, 2014: 221). If by doing so, existing society is established within the framework of antagonistic borders, this means that an alternative form of society is possible in which these insurmountables can be constructed in a different way. This claim is precisely the basis of the friend-foe distinction and the potentiality of the political (Dündar, 2016, p. 117).

According to Mouffe (2015, p. 23), the creation of an “us” that can always exist by determining the boundaries of “them” in the field of collective identities does not mean that such a relationship is necessarily a friend/foe relationship, i.e., an antagonistic one. However, under certain conditions, it is necessary to accept that there is a possibility that this us/them relationship can always be an antagonistic relationship, meaning, it can turn into a friend/foe relationship.

In this respect, the antagonistic struggle should not be read as a struggle of given identities, but rather as a friend/foe struggle between the identities that establish themselves in the struggle. Although the categories of friend and foe, us and the other, and finally people and power are always present, the subject positions that occupy these categories are inclined to change constantly. In other words, there is no privileged basis or justification for a particularity inside the “friend” category today being called “foe” tomorrow. Similarly, when the perpetrators who are “power” today become victims whose demands are not met tomorrow, they can establish an equivalent relationship with other victim particularities and fight the “new” power (Kundakçı, 2014, p. 218-219).

In other words, antagonism assumes the function of the other that contributes to the construction of the hegemonic masses’ own political identities, and to

the concretization of the other opposing power against which these political identities struggle and turns into a kind of performance indicator of the construction, power, and role of social memory, in other words, an indicator of its success. Thus, the binary oppositions that ensure the continuous reproduction of power, the construction inherent in the constitutive antagonistic borders, are candidates in the long run for serving to reproduce again and again the power’s legitimacy, which it built atop hegemonic values. This is because, in social memory records, there is a differentiation on the grounds of being on the side of or in opposition to the political. In other words, it may be said that processes triggered by similar events turn into opposing working memories over time.

The source of the interest in antagonisms should be sought right here, in the accumulation of social memory. If this accumulation cannot be poured into regular and communicative forms of remembrance, it will not be possible to make “us” possible, and this impossibility also reduces the likelihood of being able to perpetuate the construction of the power’s changing strategies in the social memory by passing it down from one generation to the next.

### **The Construction of Antagonist Memory**

At this point, it may be very meaningful to start with a question to reveal the relationship between memory and antagonist memory: “Where are memories kept? Answering this simple question brings with it a series of metaphorical and analytical explanations about memory” (Yelsalıparmaksız, 2019, p. 9).

As stated in the previous section, memory in its simplest form can be defined as the storage, retention, and recall of information, behaviors, experiences, and memories learned throughout life. At the beginning of the last century, Freud argued that the memory never loses or erases any memory, and that every moment/memory can come to the surface under the appropriate conditions. In other words, “the past is in a constant state of restructuring in line with the interests of the present.” He says that the memories we cannot remember are actually fragments of life that we prefer to hide and suppress. (Göle, 2007, p. 28-29).

Based on all these, memory/remembering when read in the context of an antagonist-protagonist relationship is the paradox of forgetting/suppressing. Therefore, there is an antagonistic process in the construction of social memory in the context of remembering and forgetting. This is because throughout

history, many forms of power have tended to highlight the antagonistic boundaries through which they can convey the dominant goals and values and thus preserve the building blocks of the dominant ideologies in the process of social remembering and forgetting. This method has helped to keep potential resistance under control in every period and to place them in the collective memory as a counter-memory.

Antagonist memory gains meaning and/or is expected to gain meaning in relation to both the space experienced and the place lived. Based on this, various thinkers claim that the traces left in memory by place and space continue through the communication and interaction of certain signs, symbols, and social groups. Therefore, memory functions at the individual, spatial, and locational levels. Since memory is related to both remembering and forgetting on a spatial and locational plane, it can never be considered as an individual forgetting/storing device. Memory is simultaneously a device for remembering and forgetting/suppressing and it should not be forgotten that the antagonistic dimension stems from the “irreconcilable conflict of remembering and forgetting.”

Basically, looking at the concepts of remembering and forgetting in the literature, we can say that three types of memory are mentioned in connection with the aspects of space and place. These are “Individual memory,” “collective memory,” and “cultural memory.” The first two types of memory unfortunately have a problem related with the mortality of the individual in the context of “remembering” and “forgetting.” The only way to overcome this is to immortalize the memory provided by “cultural memory.” In this context, it became necessary in the 20th century to develop a concept of “memory” based on a new understanding of “remembering” in the face of the danger of the tradition being forgotten. The key concept here is “tradition.” The double-sided working power of memory becomes evident in the axis of preserving memory contents and creating the potential to pass them down to future generations. This means that unless it is touched, memory is only that which records. When it is contacted, it can transfer its knowledge potential to the means of transmission. In fact, the boundaries between cultural memory and tradition are erased at the “touch” line. The continuity carried by tradition means that people touch it and develop a spontaneous relationship. In short, tradition is that which makes “remembering” immortal with the continuity it carries.

This is because “tradition” suddenly becomes a problem when the past is condemned to death at the point where “human”-centered understandings

of memory, which are so incapable of transforming the past into tradition, cannot exceed man’s mortal side. For this reason, a new understanding of “remembering” was needed to keep the past alive as a “time” (İlhan, 2015, p. 1403).

At this point, “Memory and the subject of remembering are always individuals, but they are dependent on the “framework” that constructs their memories. The good thing about this theory is that it can explain forgetting along with remembering. Assmann, who says that if a person -- and a society -- can reconstruct the past only within the framework of the relation with which he is connected, he will forget everything outside the framework of this relation” (Assmann, 2015, p. 45), should be re-read with references to the den of space and place.

As Halbwachs points out, by its very nature, remembering possesses a social quality. Memories form a group’s communicative and emotional cement. Halbwachs argues that people can never form an individual memory in the strict and narrow sense of the word; on the contrary, they are always included in memory communities (Önder, 2017, p. 166). As Assmann (2015) states: “The past does not occur spontaneously, it is the result of cultural structure and representation; it is always supported by specific motives, expectations, hopes, and goals and shaped by the framework of the present. This is because cultural memory is not biologically transferable, it must be kept culturally alive for generations.”

Having the ability to find technologies that invoke and trigger remembering, mankind avoided making forgetting a disease, meaning, it avoided memory loss. The available data show that various memory technologies have been used throughout human history. It can be said that one of the most effective applications for the purpose of remembering is the discovery of the space-knowledge relationship (Demir, 2012, p. 185-186).

This is because, based on Assmann’s views, for memory that is alive and maintains its existence in constant communication, if the exchange of locational and spatial elements that strip the said exchange away from the mortality of the individual pauses or if the locational frame in which the exchange is made changes or disappears, this is when forgetting occurs. Memory is lost and identity is lost at the individual, collective, or cultural level.

It is at this point that the relation between antagonism and memory can be touched upon. Above all, although it is known that the subject of memory

and recollection is always individuals, antagonist memory emerges as a form of struggle when those who are aware that those who construct individuals' memories are at the same time dependent on a "framework" want to use this. This is because if a person -- and/or a society -- can only reconstruct the past in a place and space within the framework of the relation with which he is connected, he will forget everything outside the framework of this relation. In the process of building an identity construct at any level, be it individual, collection or cultural, in other words, in the process of constructing the "I," if there is a protagonistic identity available, an antagonistic construction is also inevitable.

For example, if we go back to the beginning and start from the class-based Marxist philosophical expression of antagonism, the political economy conditions that you were born into and that will potentially shape your whole life will make it possible for you to live in a certain region and under certain conditions in Istanbul. These conditions force the construction of an identity that is supported by special motives, expectations, hopes, and goals and shaped by the framework of the present, in similar conditions, in time and place, not one that you build from scratch. This very identity construction is the structure that makes your distance from the protagonist element and your antagonist memory possible.

Philosophically speaking, whether the tendency to describe antagonism on the basis of economic-political motives is adopted or attempts are made to interpret it with the legs of logocentrism and dualism in the context of the Western Metaphysical Thought Tradition, the result does not change.

This is because "antagonist contradictions are valid in all conflicts in an exploitative (subordinate) society" (Rosenthal and Yudin, 1972, p. 481) and above all, antagonistic contradictions are inevitable in any situation where the construction of identity at the individual, collective or cultural level is expected. The important thing here is the effort to master the memory. This effort is what defines the existence of the Antagonist against the Protagonist. For protagonists, too, often owe their existence to controlling the present, the past, and the future.

This being the case, it could be said that antagonistic memory has a positive effect on the process of remembering or forgetting because the periodic instruments that trigger memory "are intrinsically opposed," meaning antagonistic. This in turn shows that the instruments that trigger memory are based on opposing

interests. Ultimately, the memory’s theoretical framework reflects the history of the group and its antagonistic dependences.

This is because, as a reminder, when the antagonist-protagonist relationship is actually read in the context of memory, there is always a conflict/struggle between remembering and forgetting and this is because, to recall once again the words of Assmann (2015, p. 45): “If the exchange of memory, which continues its existence in constant communication, stops or the frame of the reality in which the exchange is made changes or disappears, forgetting occurs. Forgetting means the complete or partial disappearance of this framework.” As can be expected, one of the basic components of the communicative exchange process mentioned here is place. The change is a change concerning these parameters. The transformation of memory begins with changing the said environment and space and forgetting the memories based on them. However, as also exemplified in Assmann’s (2015) narratives: “Memories are forgotten not only naturally due to changes in external conditions but also as a result of destructive influence from outside.” This effect and its source are extremely important in the relationship between antagonism-protagonism and memory. At this point, it would be useful to mention the relationship between memory and space to reveal the relationship between antagonism and memory more clearly.

### **Space as a Result of Antagonist Memory**

It would be appropriate to continue with the construction of the antagonistic memory by including space. This is because what is put forward in this study is that, starting from the question of whether the space builds the memory of the person, or the person builds the memory of the space, the protagonist and antagonist paradigms and similar conceptualizations are actually very complex and require in-depth reading because some countries define this dualism according to economic and political interests and it is this that shapes social memory by being accepted as a reality over time.

All events recorded in the social memory of people turn into events that are remembered/reminded and forgotten/erased with certain reminders. Placing these events in spaces, in other words, fixing the memories in the space both ensures the continuity of the spaces where the past and the common memory are symbolized, and acts as a trigger for the memory.

In this context, space is the strongest catalyst that triggers memory. To

remember is to activate specific paths of memory that are appropriate at that moment. Space has become as important and decisive as words, rituals, myths, legends, belief systems, and behavior patterns in the activation and transmission of memory.

Etymologically, the Turkish word for a space “is derived from the Arabic word ‘kawn’ (نوك) meaning “The existence of any being somewhere in one form or another.” Similarly, the verses about the creation of the universe in the Koran are called the “Kawni verses.” As Schick points out (2000), the word “yer” (“place” or “ground” in Turkish) has nothing to do with people’s life experience, but the word “mekan,” derived from the Arabic root “to be,” basically means “that which has come into existence,” that is, an object of existence.

Therefore, space means a function that renders the presence visible by making existence volumetrically apparent in space. In other words, existence is possible only by appearing in a space. In this respect, the space itself is a contradiction between potential volume and kinetic volume in space. This is because since existence is possible only by manifesting oneself in a space, every being calls on space to make room so as to open up a volume for itself. Thus, “formation,” which is the crux of the contradiction between existence and non-existence, necessitates violence in the manifestation of existence via space. Everything that exists requires a violence over space, and existence itself is an act of violence that creates space. The violent manifestation of existence in a space establishes the relationship of the space with consciousness through meaning. Since “existence” as opposed to not being harbors an actuality all by itself, it is clear that those who exist in a space through constitutive violence will henceforth meet their claims of existence in the same space with the meaning in origin. As a matter of fact, all wars throughout world history have been fought for the resolution of symbolic conflicts oriented toward the political meaning of being in a space.

In this regard, the Taksim Artillery Barracks construction project, which has been an important social and political issue in Turkey’s recent history, can be cited as an example. The barracks, planned to be built in Gezi Park, caused the political meaning of the park, which is based on the antagonistic opposition of the existence-non-existence dichotomy, to manifest violently. So much so that the park suddenly became the focal point of the existence-extinction struggles of various segments of society who claim to be oppressed. In other words, the park as a space witnessed the transformation of the protagonist-antagonist confrontation in society into a kinetic struggle. A single space became a field of

struggle where two stressed forms of existence in society meet. Thus, the Gezi Park events emerged as a result of the collision of two candidates for “being” trying to sit on the throne of existence.

There are official memories supported by institutions and even states, and then there are underground, secret, or forbidden memories. The “visibility” and acceptance of a memory also depends on the strength of its bearers. Armenian memory has always been forbidden and suppressed in Turkey. In Latin America, indigenous memory expressed itself as an antagonistic memory, diametrically opposed to the official memory of states born of colonialism and genocide, during the ceremonies celebrating the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the continent. Power and acceptance are not frozen and inactive data; they evolve, strengthen, or weaken and they contribute to the constant redefinition of the status of memory (Traverso, 2009, p. 44).

For this reason, countless thinkers from many fields of science, from Nathan Wachtel, who claims that the preservation of social memory can only be possible by fixing it to the space, to Pierre Nora, who leans on the argument that memory is established based on space, have focused on the relationship between memory-space and power.

In this relationship, space is one of the elements that arouse common feelings for the group that lives in it, prompt individuals and groups to remember and ensure continuity, contact with the past through the present, and the continuation of the collective memory. The locations that are selected as spaces are each a symbol that makes it easier to remember. This is why individuals start trusting the images depicted by the space and not their own memories. As soon as the space acquires historic significance, the memory immediately transforms into a command to recall with an image that has been learned by rote rather than what was experienced at that moment. To quote Nora, the memory environment of a genuine memory becomes a site of memory.

Nora (2006, p. 9) describes these spaces, which have been created as a means to remember the past, as “*lieux de mémoire*” (sites of memory) and highlights the functional role of these “sites of memory” in keeping memory alive through their own existence and reality effects. Nora (2006, p. 171) says: “The main *raison d’être* for the site of memory is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, and to materialize the immaterial.”

In this regard, the place and importance of the site in collective memory as much as in individual memory are determined by how the site is made manifest. In all stages, from building the sites to imbuing them with cultural, social, and even political significance, political figures are stronger determinants than



any other constructivist. To make a lasting mark and ensure its continuity, political figures will make their mark symbolically on people's experiences, perceptions, senses, and memories using many elements, but "Memory Spaces" in particular. Consequently, memory spaces have considerable power to alter and transform the process of remembering and forgetting (Zamur Tuncer, 2021, p. 3) because memory spaces point to the weakness in individual memory, and although individual memory has become weak, its inclination to define everything through social memory makes it obligatory to examine both the scope and importance of memory spaces with deeper readings. This is because memory spaces are far more than just physical spaces; they make references to practices that are more material, symbolic, and functional than the physical space. Playing a determinant role in the building and transferring of national identity and collective memory, these spaces are a construct built with a purpose on the road to creating the illusion favoring one side in shaping and transforming the practices of remembering and forgetting. Reading the past in these spaces, which have been constructed specifically to recall the past, reveals how memory has materialized at different times. In this respect, what matters is who constructed the memory spaces, where, when, and for what purpose. More than showing the importance and value of the past, memory spaces are parts of a construct deliberately created by the present and that reflects the effects of the political and social makeup of the group within them (Zamur Tuncer, 2021, p. 43).

In this respect, the manufactured aspect of social memory is a part of the process of producing consent (Deniz, 2014, p. 11). This process points to a situation of perpetual construction revealing a mutually addictive social relationship that leads to the manipulation of not only memories but also those who remember depending on the preferences of the government (Thompson, cited by Yelsalı Parmaksız, 2012, p. 283). Within the context of selective fictionalization based on what will be remembered by whom and how, the construction of a representation of the past in line with the needs of the day reveals the government's approach to outlining its view of the past. According to Nora (2006, p. 21), "For the present to define itself from a national perspective, it must use the past to authenticate its own truth. To do this, a past is created that is conducive to justifying the realities and policies of today and, more importantly, rationalizing them."

Therefore, power has a great influence on the selectivity of social memory, and when the dominant power changes, as is frequently seen in history, the

first attack is made on statues, place names, and monuments to eliminate the existence of the previous one (Schudson, 2007, p. 182). According to Czepczyński (2009), the previous regime’s removal of the statues belonging to the symbolic cityscape and destruction of the buildings point to the effort of each sovereign power to open a power space for itself in the social memory, based on the understanding of “purging the cityscape.” Susam (2015, p. 78-89) expressed similar thoughts as follows: “As regimes and ideologies change, hegemony tends to destroy memory spaces with the desire to establish a new history and present.” “Changing epochs result in the overthrow of the statue. Such statues are signs of domination and decline. They are the ones who keep the public under control during their existence and prepare the ground for new sculptures in their descent. Every fallen statue is an invitation to a new one” (Kocabay Şener, p. 2019). Just as each era creates its antagonist (enemy). Such practices are usual for periods when power changes hands.

Turkish political history, when evaluated in the context of the founding myth of the Republic of Turkey, has created and perpetuated countless social memory manifestations that document the relation between space and power. In addition, the periods of political transformation in the history of the Republic of Turkey have witnessed the processes of producing permanent memories based on spaces by the political actors themselves in a way that will document and reinforce the said transformation. From the selection of the spaces used in political or social events to the decoration of the selected spaces, the “relationship between memory and place in favor of power,” something that has been seen in countless practices from power-place matching orientations to chosen and/or replaced place names, deserves the title of “antagonist” since a trend in favor of forgetting and/or making people forget is followed rather than remembering.

## **Conclusion**

The extant literature indicates that a space cannot remain indifferent to what occupies it, and that it is not possible for a process to occur independently of social memory. The most obvious and early signs of social change are seen in the changes to a space’s name and function; it is a fact that the space also transforms in accordance with the social structure during periods of breakdown.

In each historical breakdown period, spaces emerge and develop in different forms reflecting the common national sentiments, commitments, and belief points of that society. Transition and breakdown periods are particularly

intense space-building periods. This is because space is not simply a geometric spread, a physical object; rather, it is a construct, a social phenomenon in which social events take place. The traces left by the events on and in the space are political because they are designed to support a power network or to create a new power network according to the current situation.

In this context, the broad spectrum of examples ranging from how the names of spaces chosen in the founding years of the Turkish Republic and aimed at constructing the social memory and reinforcing the political system documented the transition from Islam to secularism, to how the names of spaces that symbolize secularism and the founding values of the Republic have been converted to have Islamic connotations in recent times, shows how effective and important spaces are in the construction of social memory in the context of political transformation.

Therefore, the antagonistic dimension of power reveals just how important for social memory everything is that is consciously excluded and pushed aside. Antagonist processes are one of the polar opposites that cause the illusion of priority in favor of one side and serve to deliberately hide some important elements for the perception of hegemonic values, while the historic developments relating to this dilemma can only have meaning when considered in terms of “serving interests” or “benefitting from differences.”

This point reveals the true importance of the power than antagonizes the memory and the factors (such as place) that affect this power. This is because, based on the judgment that there are points in social memory that are consciously hidden, unspoken, unnamed or excluded, the view and perception of space will gain an antagonistic essence in every period of power and will feed the antagonistic aspect of the protagonist power.

It is possible to ascribe meaning to this boundary with that expressed in the work called *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* by Laclau and Mouffe (1992, p. 158): “Antagonisms are not in society, *they are outside of it* or, more precisely, they form the boundaries of society and the impossibility of it forming itself fully.” In this environment, while the category of foreigner, minority and refugee positioned at the “other” end of the antagonistic boundary is constantly expanding, the discourse of protecting the interests of the people against these groups has created its own other over the friend/foe distinction for centuries and enabled the power to define itself through the absences in the other. Therefore, the construction of social memory and the drawing of antagonistic boundaries in

society are political acts in themselves. So, what is the antagonist/protagonist distinction constructed in social memory and where is it constructed? The answer to this must be sought in the role of power in the establishment and functioning of society because the social cannot exist without the power relations that shape it. Space is one of the forces that can keep alive the antagonism described by power because memory needs space.

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