

FORMS OF REMEMBERING: Spaces of memory & memory of spaces

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Research Article

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Abstract

Memory, a fundamental aspect of human experience, plays a vital role in shaping identities, understanding the past, and constructing narratives of the present. Space, as a narrative linking past, present, and future, functions as a means of remembering and forgetting, confronting the past as part of the place of social experience, and contributes to identity formation through its symbolism. In this context, the study aims to examine how individuals and communities relate to and construct meaning with memory spaces, and how these spaces shape collective memory through various elements. The study seeks to analyze memory as a dynamic concept from individual, social, and cultural perspectives through architectural works, spatial approaches, and Pierre Nora's concept of memory spaces (lieux de mémoire) using exemplary structures. Within this framework, it questions how the memory functions of specific buildings and spaces are designed and experienced in the architectural context. The study uses qualitative methods such as architectural analysis, visual and textual exploration, and literature examination. Pierre Nora's theory of memory spaces is supported by analyses of selected structures. The case analysis covers architectural features, spatial usage, and visitor experiences of chosen structures within specific dynamics, producing concrete data on architecture's capacity to convey memory. It examines architectural elements that enable the "crystallization" of collective memory in physical space by classifying them within the conceptual framework of fundamental design approaches. By categorizing design dynamics and presenting an analytical methodology for memory spaces, the study aims to contribute to the literature with its original value.

Keywords: Collective memory, memory and space, memory of place, spatial representation, identity

HATIRLAMA BİÇİMLERİ: Hafıza mekanları & mekanların hafızası

Özet

İnsan deneyiminin temel bir yönü olan hafıza, kimliklerimizi şekillendirmede, geçmişi anlamada ve bugünün anlatılarını inşa etmede hayati bir rol oynar. Geçmiş, şimdiyi ve geleceği birbirine bağlayan bir anlatı olan mekan ise, toplumsal deneyimin yeri ile bir parçası olarak hatırlama ve unutma arasında, geçmişle yüzleşme aracıdır ve içerdiği sembolizmle kimlik inşa sürecine katkı sağlar. Bu bağlamda, çalışmanın amacı, bireylerin ve toplulukların hafıza mekanlarıyla nasıl ilişki kurduklarını ve anlam inşa ettiklerini, bu mekanların da kolektif belleği hangi öğeler üzerinden nasıl şekillendirdiğini incelemektir. Çalışma, dinamik bir kavram olarak "hafızayı" bireysel, toplumsal ve kültürel açılarından mimari ürünler, mekansal yaklaşımlar ve Pierre Nora'nın "hafıza mekanları" (lieux de mémoire) konsepti üzerinden örnek yapılarla incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çerçevede, mimarlık bağlamında bu kavramsal yapıyı kullanarak, belirli yapılar ve mekanların hafıza işlevlerinin nasıl tasarlandığını ve deneyimlendiğini sorgulamaktadır. Çalışma, mimari analiz, görsel ve metinsel inceleme ve literatür incelemesi gibi nitel yöntemleri kullanmıştır. Pierre Nora'nın hafıza mekanları kuramı, seçilen yapılar üzerinde yapılan analizlerle desteklenmektedir. Örnek analiziyle, belirli dinamikler dahilinde seçilen yapıların mimari özellikleri, mekansal kullanımı ve ziyaretçi deneyimleri analiz edilmiş, bu sayede, mimarinin hafızayı aktarma kapasitesine dair somut veriler elde edilmiştir. Çalışma, kolektif hafızanın fiziksel mekanda "kristalleşmesini" sağlayan mimari öğeleri temel tasarım yaklaşımları kavramsal çerçevesi bağlamında sınıflandırarak ele almaktadır. Tasarım dinamiklerini kategorize edip hafıza mekanlarına yönelik bir analiz yöntemi ortaya koyarak, çalışma, özgün değeri çerçevesinde literatüre katkı sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplumsal hafıza, hafıza ve mekan, mekanın hafızası, mekansal temsil, kimlik

1. INTRODUCTION

Memory is a cognitive ability that enables living beings to store and retrieve information resulting from their interactions with the environment over both short and long-term periods. It represents the living essence of societies, reflected in their cultural, historical, and social spheres. At its core, memory refers to the cognitive process by which information is encoded, stored, and later retrieved in the human brain. This process encompasses the acquisition, retention, and recall of past experiences, knowledge, and skills, making memory an element of human cognition. Memory allows individuals to navigate present realities, plan for future contingencies, and construct personal and communal identities. As Nora (2006) notes, “memory” is not just a passive repository of past events but is the very life of collective groups, constantly produced and reproduced through social interactions. Memory exists in a dialectic relationship between remembering and forgetting, taking fluid forms shaped by various uses and interpretations, shaped by various uses and interpretations, and accommodating both long periods of latency and sudden revivals. It is a dynamic, ever-evolving phenomenon that is deeply sensitive to its sociocultural context (Nora, 2006). Additionally, Halbwachs (1992) emphasizes a key distinction between memory and dreams, asserting that memories are anchored to places. While history is linked to events, memory is inextricably connected to specific locations (Nora, 2006); suggesting there can be no memory without a place, just as there can be no place without memory.

Against this backdrop, the concepts of memory spaces and spaces of memory emerge as pivotal frameworks for understanding how collective memories are territorially embedded and materially maintained. Memory spaces are not merely physical or virtual sites. Rather, they are culturally and historically meaningful loci that serve as repositories of collective memory. These spaces carry multiple layers of narratives, symbolic values, and cultural significance, functioning as active arenas where individuals and communities engage in the construction, reinforcement, and negotiation of their memories and identities. Such spaces encompass a broad spectrum of locations, ranging from monuments, memorials, museums, cemeteries, and ancestral homes to contemporary digital platforms. The conceptual underpinnings of memory spaces and spaces of memory draw interdisciplinary inspiration from memory studies, sociology, anthropology, cultural geography, and heritage studies—each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the spatial mediation of memory.

In this context, the study aims to explore the relationship between memory and place by focusing on the dual notions of memory places and places of memory. The study seeks to unravel how these spatial phenomena function as critical vessels and transmitters of both individual and collective memory. Employing an interdisciplinary perspective that synthesizes approaches from memory studies, cultural geography, and heritage studies, this research analyzes the meanings, constructions, and sociocultural significance assigned to these spaces. The study intends to illuminate how these memory places are socially constructed through the interaction of historical events and cultural practices, shaping their formation, designation, and ongoing relevance. Additionally, the research highlights the dynamic nature of memory places, examining their evolution over time, and evaluates the complex interactions that occur between individual recollections and communal memory within these spatial contexts.

The study encompasses a broad inquiry into how memory places function as critical nodes in the preservation and transmission of collective memory. It investigates the factors that shape the design, composition, and symbolism of these places, including political, social, and cultural influences. By examining both tangible and intangible dimensions of memory places, the study delves into how these spaces influence personal experiences as well as collective mnemonic practices. It also considers the ongoing transformation of such places in response to changing social dynamics, cultural negotiations, and historical reinterpretations. Moreover, the study addresses the role of memory places how people remember and interact with these places to sustain and reshape collective memory.

To achieve the purpose, the study is guided by several key research questions: How do memory places contribute to the formation and preservation of collective memory? What factors influence the design and composition of memory places? In what ways do memory places shape individual and communal experiences of memory? How do memory places interact with the mnemonic practices and behaviors? How do memory places evolve over time, and what implications does this evolution have for collective memory? These questions explore the contribution of memory places to the formation and preservation of collective memory, the influencing factors on their design and composition, their impact on individual and communal memory experiences, their interaction with mnemonic practices, and their temporal evolution alongside the implications for collective memory itself.

The research employs a multidisciplinary approach, integrating theoretical frameworks and methodological insights from sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and geography to provide a rich, perspective on memory places. It applies a qualitative research design that facilitates an in-depth exploration of the complex social and

cultural processes involved. Data collection techniques include spatial analysis, visual and textual analysis, and literature review, allowing for a comprehensive examination of both physical and symbolic elements of memory places. This combination of methods enables the uncovering of detailed narratives, meanings, and contextual factors that shape individual and community engagement with memory spaces.

By fostering an understanding of the relationship between memory and place, the study holds significant implications for various practical fields such as cultural heritage preservation, urban and regional planning, and the construction of collective narratives. It provides valuable insights that can inform policy-making, enhance community engagement strategies, and improve the preservation, interpretation, and management of sites imbued with mnemonic significance. Ultimately, the findings are expected to contribute to academic discourse by clarifying how physical and virtual environments serve as vital mediums through which memories are maintained, contested, and transformed, thereby shaping social identities and historical consciousness in contemporary societies.

2. MEMORY, SPACE, PLACES OF MEMORY

Halbwachs (1992) defines “memory” as “the reconstruction of the past using input from the present”. In other words, the act of memory and remembering involves recalling the symbolic representation of an event, situation or place that the person has previously perceived and comprehended through the circumstances, emotions and factors, rather than experiencing the past one-on-one.

Unlike Bergson's (2007) definition of “memory” at the individual level and through images realized in the mind, Halbwachs (1992) brought a new perspective to the concept by describing “memory” as a “collective structure” formed under the influence of social structure and norms. In this context, Halbwachs is the first thinker to deal with the concept of “collective memory” in a sociological context in depth and in detail and to develop a theory. According to him, having a collective memory means that individuals who make up a group or human community have a common image about their past and become conscious of their unity and uniqueness through which they develop. In this case, what pushes individuals who belong to a group to act jointly is based on the common image of their past, in other words, “collective memory” (Halbwachs, 1992).

Memory, at both the individual and collective levels, has a profound impact on individuals by shaping personal and collective identities, evokes emotions, provides a sense of continuity, and enables learning and adaptation. Collective memory, in particular, plays a crucial role in shaping the values, social cohesion, and historical consciousness of communities. The following effects can be observed:

- *Identity Formation:* Personal memories provide a narrative thread that connects past experiences with present self-perception. Collective memory helps individuals situate themselves within a broader context, fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity.
- *Emotional Experience:* Memories evoke emotions and affective responses in individuals. Positive memories can bring joy or pride, while negative memories may lead to sadness or trauma.
- *Sense of Continuity:* Memories grant individuals with a sense of continuity and coherence in their lives. They provide a link between past, present, and future, allowing individuals to draw upon past experiences to navigate current challenges and anticipate future events.

Collective memory is constructed and shaped through various processes, including social interaction, cultural practices, and historical events. It is not a merely an accumulation of individual memories but emerges through a collective negotiation and selection of what is considered significant and worthy of preservation. Collective memory is transmitted through different instruments as memory spaces are important instruments in the transmission of collective memory by providing tangible and symbolic spaces for engagement, reflection, and commemoration and play a crucial role in the formation and preservation of collective memory by providing physical or virtual loci where memories are curated, performed, and transmitted.

The concept of “lieux de mémoire” introduced by French historian Pierre Nora emphasizes the significance of physical spaces in the construction of collective memory. According to Nora, lieux de mémoire are sites where memory crystallizes and becomes visible, representing the values, history, and identity of a society. These sites may be intentionally created, such as museums or memorials, or arise organically, such as battlefields or ancestral homes. Lieux de mémoire embody the interplay between memory and place, serving as anchors for collective memory. *Memory places are not solely physical locations but are intertwined with social constructs and meanings, reflecting the experiences, values, and identities of individuals and communities.*

3. MEMORY OF SPACES: CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND DESIGN APPROACHES

Space represents an architectural and urban manifestation of historical knowledge and memory in point of the “method of loci” which it presents through the structural and fictional qualities. It is a process of building identity in the social and cultural context in which it takes place with the symbolism it presents (Qureshi et al., 2014). Space, as a carrier of historical and social knowledge, is an integral part of the collective human experience. It bears witness to both traumatic events-such as war, genocide, and destruction-and proud moments, including victory and revolution. Unlike a Platonist perspective, this concept of space possesses a dynamic and eternally variable essence that holds memory. It embodies an encompassing and inclusive spiritual self, telling much to its users by playing a key role in the history of the individual or society.

“Space” is a phenomenon through which the collective memory “incarnates” as the whole of abstract or concrete objects, meaning, values and experiences it contains together with its physical qualities. In the historical process, space has played a mediating role in the preservation, storage and “remembering” or “forgetting” (!) of all human activities, individual and social experience, through different forms of transmission and representation and the contextual dynamics it is involved in. Buildings and cities enable us to regulate, understand, remember, and ultimately recognize and remember ourselves (Pallasmaa, 2011). In this context, spatial practice, beyond fixing or romanticizing events on the time-space plane, bears the traces of common life and experience as a “storyteller” witnessing history in the context of cultural continuity and a reality beyond time. The architectural object is a physical representation of lived events. It embodies the ideological and intellectual attitudes of its time, reflecting historical and cultural consistency within the broader context of architectural production and all cultural products.

The memory of the space, beyond its organizational or formal approach, is related to the feeling and the “moment” that results from individual perception and experience. The harmonious coexistence of all components-such as spatial composition, geometry, form, scale, material, light, and color-is an instrument of expression. This collective harmony aids in the discovery of the spatio-temporal “reality” behind the “memory” contained within the space. Simultaneously, each individual component acts as its own instrument of expression. It becomes part of individual history and therefore social accumulation and cultural identity at the point of the permanent and cyclical interaction of the new “interpretation” and “understanding” acquired in every sensory experience. Societies and places accumulate the mental traces of what happened in them (Tanyeli, 2011). Casey (2000) states that the concept of space refers to the physical location where memories can be stored and preserved, while Lyndon (2009) states that we can remember, imagine, keep in mind and think. In this sense, space with memory *contains the dynamism arising from the variability of life; is modest but very striking because it is real; is not constant, it changes, but bears the traces of historical events; doesn't decide what needs to be remembered (except for the remake), it's left to the person who experiences; allows the dialectic of forgetting and remembering* (Nora, 2006).

According to Pallasmaa (2011) space, beyond merely creating visions and images, is “memory incarnated” in which bodily experience, actions, emotions, culture and ultimately social identity embody through tectonic language and formal grammar. The formation of spatial memory takes place through the interaction of the concepts and symbols of the space and bodily experience in the context of the “process of recalling” the past, thoughts and events in the mind, the selection of spatial elements with design approaches and the way they are brought together. The order of the space preserves the order of things to be remembered (Connerton, 2018). History consists of stopping and starting, presence and absences. Beings are when history is vital, running, feeding itself, and where its energy derives from its own momentum. Absences are gaps between one run of history and another-where the propelling organism dies-which are subsequently filled with memory. Memory begins where history ends (Eisenman, 1994). In this framework, “memory spaces” carry a message beyond time by “stopping time” in the continuity of social history, aiming at remembering national traumas and reinterpreting the past. Spaces of memory, within the urban identity and urban landscape, integrated into the city and daily life, connecting the past to the present and at the same time “preserving” for the future, to be reconstructed in the mind and coded into memory by concretizing historical facts and events through space and architectural objects. are places that have the quality of “physical stimulus”.

In this context, based on Pallasmaa's (2011) “memory embodiment” approach, space will be evaluated as not only creating visual images but also as a “place of memory” where bodily experience, action, emotion, culture, and social identity are shaped. The formation of spatial memory occurs through the interaction of the conceptual and symbolic elements of space with bodily experience, and the selection and assembly of design elements within the context of the “remembrance process” of the past in the mind. The analysis below will examine the role of the spatial order and formal language in preserving historical events and social identity that must be remembered; the function of memory spaces to commemorate national traumas and reinterpret the past by “stopping” time within continuity;

the integration of these spaces with the city's identity and urban landscape, bridging the gap between the past and the present; and the materialization of historical facts through architectural and spatial objects and the evaluation of their associated physical stimulating properties. In line with these criteria, both the symbolic and experiential dimensions of space will be examined in the analysis and how spatial memory is constructed as a living and social phenomenon will be revealed. The following specific criteria were considered in selecting the examples below:

- *Direct Spatial Traces of Historical Trauma:* As the original physical locations where tragedy occurred, sites enable the materialization of memory in space.
- *The Power and Innovation of Architectural Narrative:* The sites with experimental and symbolic use of architecture for memory production, evoke emotions through the spatial experience.
- *Representation of Different Spatial Typologies:* Original concentration camps, memorials and public spaces offer a multidimensional understanding of memory.
- *Regional and Cultural Diversity:* The selections come from diverse geographies allowing for the exploration of the relationship between the universality and locality of memory.
- *Role in Social and Political Identity Construction:* These places not only reflect the past but also function in the construction of national, ethnic, or social identities.

The following examples have been analyzed through specified criteria (Table 1), such as *Historical Function and Context*; *Originality of the Space / Structural Condition*; *Architectural-Symbolic Expression*; *Visitor Experience and Interaction*; *Function of Collective and Cultural Memory*. This multidimensional evaluation aims to uncover the relationships between the spatial qualities and their historical, cultural, and social significances.

Table 1. Analysis Criteria (Prepared by the authors.)

Criteria / Space	Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum	Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp	Nuremberg Documentation Center	Bandırma Ferry	Berlin Jewish Museum	Anıtkabir	Washington Monument	September 11th Memorial Square
Historical Function and Context	Genocide and torture site	Concentration camp, site of genocide	Documentary center on the Nazi trials	A place of social memory symbolizing Atatürk and establishment of Republic of Türkiye	Jewish history and Holocaust memory	The mausoleum of Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye	Symbol of America's founding values	A sacred space created in memory of the 9/11 attacks
Originality of the Space / Structural Condition	Original prison and torture site	The original concentration camp and gas chambers	Modern building, document and exhibition area	Original ferry and port area	Museum of modern experimental architecture	Monumental structural monument	Monumental obelisk	Open-air monuments and pools
Architectural-Symbolic Expression	Physical scars of violence and tragedy	Symbols of fear, death and genocide	Spatial expression of justice and accountability	Symbols that remind us of Atatürk and his comrades-in-arms	The experience of the theme of tragedy and memory in architectural language	Emphasis on national leadership and independence	Symbol of unity and freedom	Symbolic design with the theme of loss and remembrance
Visitor Experience and Interaction	Intense emotional response, concrete historical experience	Stroll through the historical site and a strong emotional impact	Document and history-oriented, cognitive interaction	Individual and collective memory experience	Spatial experience and different layers of perception	Planning appropriate for official ceremonies and visitor flow	Visitor guidance as a national symbol	Emotional memorial space and reminder function
Function of Collective and Cultural Memory	Preserving the memory of the Holocaust and sharing the tragedy	The universal symbol of social trauma	Legal and historical memory and reckoning area	Social identity and cultural formation	Post-genocide reconstruction and memory	Spatial expression of national identity and history	Spatial representation of national history and independence story	International terrorism and solidarity memory

3.1. Conceptualization and Analytical Results of Memory Sites

The main reason for the existence of a “memory space” includes stopping time, preventing forgetting, determining the state of objects, immortalizing death, and embodying the intangible in a way that includes the most of the meaning within the fewest signs (Nora, 2006). Within this framework, **non-intervention, reinforcing with annexes, re-editing, designing the context, praise-glorify and making the void feel** are among the main design dynamics applied in the formation of memory spaces.

Non-intervention the space involves a change in function, such as keeping the space as it exists without erasing the traces of experience or making it available for use as a museum, and in this context, “reflecting, introjecting, revealing its essence, opening to interpretation and witnessing” is an approach applied through design dynamics. **Non-intervention** involves preserving sites in their original or devastated conditions, allowing the physical traces of trauma or history to speak for themselves without alteration. Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp exemplify this approach; its preserved areas stand as stark, unmediated testimonies to genocide, fostering an atmosphere where the absence and destruction themselves convey profound remembrance.

- *Reflection: It reflects the events to the visitor.*
- *Introducing: It absorbs all emotions, some experiences are engraved in the ears of walls and furniture, silent cries are heard softly.*
- *Self-opening: Space does not show itself different from what it is, it opens its essence.*
- *Opening to interpretation: It tells, leaves the comment to the visitor. Whether you see it or not, the truth is there in its entirety.*
- *Witnessing: The visitor is now a witness. Time, space and emotion...*

The most notorious of the interrogation centers in Cambodia was S-21, housed in a former school and now called **Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum** (Figure 1 & Figure 2). Between 14,000 and 17,000 prisoners were detained in primitive brick cells built in the classrooms (URL-1). S-21, was created as an interrogation, torture and execution center against people considered enemies of the State. The museum houses an archive that preserves the documents and instruments that were used for tortures, as well as photographs and works of art (URL-2).



Figure 1a. Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, Exterior View (URL-2)



Figure 1b. Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, A View from Corridor to Courtyard (URL-3)

Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum preserves original cells, classrooms, and torture rooms exactly as they were found, maintaining the authentic and haunting atmosphere of the site. Physical elements such as iron bedframes, leg irons, and torture instruments remain untouched, allowing visitors to fully immerse themselves in the grim reality of the atrocities carried out there. Photographs lining the walls serve as stark reminders, and the spatial arrangement of the building encourages visitors to reflect deeply and bear witness to the horrors committed. The architecture of the museum functions as a powerful memory site by conserving the space in its genuine condition, transforming its role while safeguarding the traces of traumatic history. This preservation invites visitors into a process of reflection, emotional engagement, personal revelation, and interpretation, all while bearing witness to the genocide’s devastating

impact. In essence, the site itself does not need to actively convey anything, because the memories are inherently embedded in the place, waiting for each visitor to perceive and interpret these memories on their own.

- *Reflection:* The space reflects the events to the visitor, presenting the horrific history transparently and directly.
- *Introjecting:* The space absorbs all emotions; some experiences are engraved in the walls and furniture, where silent cries are softly heard, allowing visitors to emotionally connect with the past.
- *Self-opening:* The space does not present itself differently from what it is; it reveals its essence without alteration or secretion.
- *Openness to interpretation:* The space tells the story and leaves room for visitors to interpret. Whether one sees it or not, the complete truth remains present in its entirety.
- *Witnessing:* The visitor becomes a witness through the intertwining of time, space, and emotion-experiencing the historical trauma firsthand.



Figure 2a. Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, Prisons (United Nations, n.d.)



Figure 2b. Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, Memorial Hall (URL-4)

From 1940 to 1945 in **Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp** (Figure 3 & Figure 4), it is estimated that the SS and police deported at least 1.3 million people to the Auschwitz camp complex between 1940 and 1945. Of these deportees, approximately 1.1 million people were murdered (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2015). The camp, which was converted into a museum in 1947, is today an important archive and research center on the Nazi regime, and the history of the places is explained to the visitors, supported by photographs, belongings, written documents and videos.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, demonstrates a sensitive transformation of function that preserves the original physical traces and trauma. The approach carefully maintains the site as it existed during the atrocities, using design dynamics that reflect, introject, reveal essence, allow for interpretation, and enable witnessing. The site's authenticity is preserved through stabilization rather than restoration, reflecting the decayed state as a witness to history. Functional elements like railway ramps and administrative buildings connect visitors to the operational aspect of oppression while the landscape and spatial arrangement preserve the ghostly presence of those who suffered. The architecture's brutal simplicity, the use of lasting materials like brick, and ephemeral wooden huts for Birkenau underscore the layered narrative of violence and neglect. Auschwitz-Birkenau's memory space embraces the design principle of *non-intervention*, maintaining original traces and transforming the function into a place of reflection, emotional introjection, self-revelation, interpretive openness, and witnessing. This integrity allows the site itself to serve as an unmediated, haunting, and educational memorial to the Holocaust.

- *Introjecting:* The space deeply absorbs emotions-the worn walls, rusted barbed wire, and decayed wooden huts metaphorically hold the silent cries, suffering, and memories of the victims, reaching visitors both emotionally and spiritually.
- *Self-opening:* The site does not mask or alter its nature but reveals its core essence in an unfiltered way; the original camp layout, damaged buildings, and remnants are exhibited as they were left, emphasizing historical truth.

- *Openness to interpretation:* The space narrates the genocide openly yet leaves room for personal reflection and interpretation by visitors. The truth is fully present regardless of individual perception, inviting ongoing contemplation.
- *Witnessing:* Visitors become witnesses by physically moving through time-marked spaces that evoke the trauma and loss in an immersive way, where time, space, and emotion converge to create a testimony.



Figure 3a. Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp (URL-5)



Figure 3b. Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, Interior View (URL-5)



Figure 4a. Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, Main Gate (URL-5)



Figure 4b. Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, View to the Chambers (URL-5)

Reinforcing with annexes is a design approach to strengthen the memory by designing an additional space to the structure. “Exaggeration, opposition - reinforcement, directing and disturbing” can be counted among the basic design dynamics of the approach. *Reinforcing with annexes* refers to enriching historical sites with supportive structures or contemporary facilities that enhance educational or commemorative functions without altering the original. The Nuremberg Documentation Center exemplifies this by juxtaposing the preserved Nazi Party Rally Grounds with a modern museum annex which provides contextual information, interactive exhibits, and critical reflection, reinforcing collective memory while adapting to present needs.

- *Exaggeration:* It exaggerates the emotion of the space with a new and often dominant design.
- *Opposition-reinforcement:* It opposes or reinforces the concept in the content of the space.
- *Directing:* It gives the visitors clues on how to remember the event.
- *Disturbing:* It makes the visitors feel uncomfortable through designed awkwardness and even ugliness.

An example of this design approach is the **Nuremberg Documentation Center** (Figure 5 & Figure 6). Günther Domenig won the first prize in the 1998 architectural competition. Domenig felt the “Documentation Center exhibition at the Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg is a warning memorial to a dark period of modern history.” His design impresses the viewers with its decisive opposition to the Congress Hall's monumental architecture and the National Socialist philosophy that stands behind it. Domenig uses diagonal lines to disrupt the building's “axiality”, which otherwise imposes itself from every angle. His formal vocabulary which evokes lightness, and his

use of the materials such as glass, aluminum, concrete, opposes the building's granite façade and brick structure (URL-6). Günther Domenig designed the Nuremberg Documentation Center as both a *monument and a warning*. Its design, breaks up the historical axial layout of the building and proposes a new way of reinterpreting history. Apart from the movie theater hanging in the lobby and the working forum on the roof, the most prominent component of the Documentation Center is certainly the glass structure driven throughout the massive structure, permanently disrupting the dominant and symmetrical geometry of the Nazi building. The 130-metre-long passageway enters diagonally across the entire front of the building, whose colossal, majestic halls remain unfinished and open.

Nuremberg Documentation Center's architectural design exemplifies the “reinforcing with annexes” approach by combining the preserved Nazi Party Rally Grounds with a distinct, modern annex that challenges and contextualizes the historical site. Architect Günther Domenig’s design literally thrusts a sleek steel-and-glass “stake” diagonally through the massive, orthodox Nazi Congress Hall block, symbolically disrupting its original oppressive geometry and confronting the Nazi past. The annex enriches the historic site without altering the original fabric beyond necessary incisions, thereby reinforcing collective memory and providing spaces for education and critical reflection. This architectural intervention ensures the Nazi Rally Grounds remain a place of memory that confronts the past honestly while adapting to contemporary needs for commemoration and learning.

- *Exaggeration* is evident in the dominant and intrusive “stake” cutting through the building, heightening the emotional impact and drawing attention to the break from the past.
- *Opposition-reinforcement* appears in the contrast between the harsh Nazi architecture and the contemporary, transparent, and visually disruptive annex, representing a clear stance against the ideology embedded in the original structure.
- *Directing* occurs through the architectural form itself: the diagonal passage guides visitors physically and narratively, leading them through exhibits that detail the history and consequences of National Socialism while forcing new perspectives on the old building.
- *Disturbing* elements manifest in the physical dissonance and clash between the new and old parts of the building. The deliberate “cutting” through the solid Nazi structure creates discomfort and a sense of rupture, urging visitors to reflect critically.



Figure 5a. Nuremberg Documentation Center (Mimdap, 2015)



Figure 5b. Nuremberg Documentation Center, Courtyard (Mimdap, 2015)

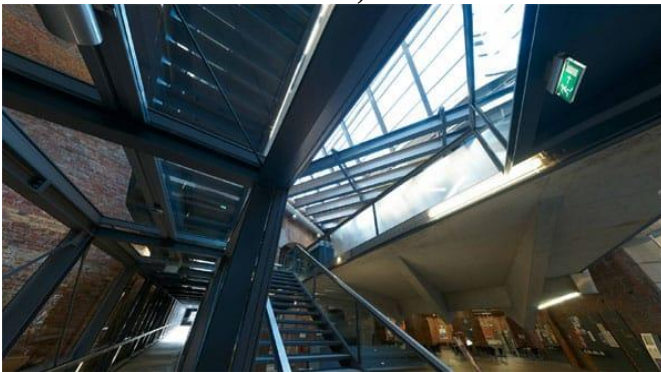


Figure 6a. Nuremberg Documentation Center, Interior View (Mimdap, 2015)



Figure 6b. Nuremberg Documentation Center, Annex (Mimdap, 2015)

Re-editing is to completely change the existing space and design a reproduction of the original space in the same place. “Imitation, animation, manipulation and illusion creation” are key design dynamics of this approach. *Re-editing* involves adapting, reinterpreting, or expanding sites to accommodate evolving narratives or societal values. In the Bandırma Ferry, visitors experience a spatial memory similar to the original. Historical experiences are revived through elements such as wax statues of Atatürk and his friends, but this memory is manipulated to affect visitors with a new narrative, rather than to represent reality. Ultimately, the memory of the place is created as an illusion, presenting the historical atmosphere of the original ship to visitors again.

- *Imitation: The place lost as a result of demolition is rebuilt by adhering to the old one. The memory of the place is not real, but it is tried to be felt by the visitors.*
- *Animation: Experiences are recreated in various ways.*
- *Manipulation Since the memory is not real, it manipulates the visitor with the new fiction.*
- *Creating illusions: The memory of space is actually an illusion.*

Bandırma Ferry (Figure 7), which played an important role in the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye, was built in Glasgow in 1878 under the name Trocadero and carried cargo for many years under the name Kymi. The ship, which was transferred to the İdare-i Mahsusa, which means the Maritime Routes Administration at that time, started to carry cargo and passengers in the Ottoman seas under the name “Panderma” from this date on. On October 28, 1910, when the name of the İdare-i Mahsusa became the Ottoman Maritime Enterprise, the name of the ship was changed to “Bandırma” and turned into a mail ferry. After bringing Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his comrades to Samsun on 19 May 1919, he continued his postal services and was taken out of service in 1924 (Anıtkabir, n.d.). The ship, which was sold to İlhami Söke in 1925, was dismantled by the same person in the Golden Horn within four months. It was rebuilt with reference to the original drawings of the ship, and it was converted into a museum by the Samsun Metropolitan Municipality, which took over the right of use and operation of the Bandırma Ferry on February 7, 2005, and opened to visitors on May 19, 2006 (URL-13).



Figure 7a. Bandırma Ferry, Exterior View (Türkiye Kültür Portalı, n.d.)



Figure 7b. Bandırma Ferry, Interior View (Türkiye Kültür Portalı, n.d.)

The ship, which was sold to İlhami Söke in 1925, was dismantled by the same person in the Golden Horn within four months. It was rebuilt with reference to the original drawings of the ship, and it was converted into a museum by the Samsun Metropolitan Municipality, which took over the right of use and operation of the Bandırma Ferry on February 7, 2005, and opened to visitors on May 19, 2006 (URL-13). There are wax statues of Atatürk and his four comrades in the cabin inside the ship. The wall clock, telephone, map measurement materials, fire extinguisher, tables and chairs, manufactured in 1878, are the other works exhibited here. It serves as a symbolic and physical reminder of Atatürk’s pivotal journey in 1919 that marked the birth of the Turkish national movement. The Bandırma Ferry is an example of completely transforming an existing space by designing a reproduction of the original in the same location. Today, the Bandırma Ferry is reborn as a museum in Samsun, recreated faithfully to the original ship’s design. It includes wax figures, original furnishings, and exhibits that revive the historical journey and atmosphere. However, this memory is carefully manipulated to create a new narrative that affects visitors emotionally while remaining an illusion rather than an authentic original space. Visitors experience a spatial memory similar to the original ferry, but it is a curated and theatrical experience intended to engage with the historical significance in a contemporary way.

- The Bandırma Ferry creates a case of *imitation*. The lost original place has been rebuilt to evoke the memory of the past, though that memory is not the real but a simulation meant to be felt by visitors.
- The experience is *animated* through wax statues and historical artifacts aboard, recreating the atmosphere and key moments of that historical event.
- *Manipulation* occurs as visitors are guided through a constructed narrative in the museum, where the memory presented is a curated and fictionalized version rather than the authentic past. This curated experience crafts specific meanings and emotions linked to national identity and history.
- The Bandırma Ferry museum *creates illusions* of the original space and events. The memory of the ferry and its historic journey is an illusion crafted with meticulous detail, allowing visitors to engage with a fabricated yet meaningful representation of history.

Designing the context can be defined as determining the context associated with the event to be reminded and, within this context, designing a new and impressive structure through dynamics such as “agitation, triggering anger and vocalizing”. In this framework, a “museum” design that reveals the “reminder” – shame, praise, pain or rebellion – through form, facade, light, material, senses and movement is a cultural representation tool through both its architectural qualities and the objects it contains. *Designing the context* emphasizes the integration of memory places within their broader urban or natural environment to create meaningful connections across time and space.

The **Berlin Jewish Museum** embodies this by blending historical architecture with Daniel Libeskind’s symbolic design, recontextualizing Jewish history in Germany through fragmented spaces and voids that invite visitors to experience dislocation, loss, and cultural survival. It is an active reinterpretation connecting past and present identities. Three main concerns shaped the design of the Berlin Jewish Museum (Figure 8 & Figure 9). These concerns are: the impossibility of visitors to understand the history of Berlin without understanding the intellectual, economic and cultural contribution of the Jewish residents of Berlin to the city, the necessity of committing the Holocaust to the memory of the city spiritually and morally, and finally the acknowledgment of efforts to disrupt and ignore Jewish life in the city (Arkitektuel, n.d.). In this context, the building has been constructed with the emotions and expression that the visitors will experience the impact of the Holocaust both in the city of Berlin and in Jewish culture.



Figure 8. Berlin Jewish Museum (Arkitektuel, n.d.)

The building’s external shape is an abstract reference to Jewish religious iconography, giving a symbolic identity that connects deeply with the culture it represents. The facade features sharp, irregular cuts and voids reminiscent of wounds, symbolizing the trauma inflicted upon Jewish communities. Inside, visitors encounter dead-end corridors and narrow, oppressive spaces that evoke the sense of being trapped or suffocated, simulating the feelings of invisibility and erasure caused by the Holocaust. The architectural features of a well and a labyrinth garden physically represent confinement and confusion or entrapment, linking the spatial experience to the historical narratives of persecution and survival. In the open-air areas, harsh angles and crooked trees symbolize exile and disorientation, reinforcing the experience of displacement. A specific interior corridor is designed to be long, narrow, empty, and prolonged, symbolizing annihilation and a rupture in history and memory. The contrast between light and shadow, transparency and solidity, along with the choice of materials, express the tension between past and present, continuity and rupture.



Figure 9. Berlin Jewish Museum, Facades (Arkitektuel, n.d.)

Praise-glorify characterizes memorials that celebrate and honor figures, events, or ideals, lending grandeur and permanence to collective memory. Anıtkabir, the mausoleum of Atatürk, stands as a monumental centerpiece within Ankara's urban fabric, designed to reflect national identity, political ideals, and collective memory through its spatial context, ceremonial avenues, and symbolic landscaping. Also, the Washington Monument serves as a towering symbol of national unity and leadership, specifically glorifying George Washington as a foundational figure. This approach often combines monumental scale and classical design elements to evoke reverence and pride.

“Grand monuments” designed to praise-glorify, honor a person or event (victory or death), to remind future generations of a great and important event or person for the society, and a large and magnificent “monumentary” built on behalf of an important person for the society graves can be evaluated within this approach. In addition, Connerton's (2018) argument regarding monuments should not be overlooked. According to him, there is a reciprocal relationship between monuments and forgetfulness. The danger of forgetting leads to the building of monuments, and monuments to forgetfulness. If it is to put the thing that is wanted to be remembered in the form of a monument, to get rid of the obligation to remember; This is because monuments allow only certain things to be remembered, while causing others to be forgotten by a kind of discrimination. Monuments preserve the past as much as it allows us to remember it (Connerton, 2018).

Anıtkabir (Figure 10 & Figure 11) is the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the leader of the Turkish War of Independence and the first president of the Turkish Republic, located in Ankara Anıttepe (Anıtkabir, n.d.). Anıtkabir is loaded with many special meanings, from its sculptures to its decorations, from its towers to its reliefs. While the male group representing a soldier, a villager and a student symbolizes defense, production and education, two women hold a wheat wreath on both sides, symbolizing Türkiye's fertile lands, and the woman on the left holds the bowl in her right hand towards the sky and praying for God's mercy on Atatürk. The third woman standing in the middle covers her face with her hand and is crying, expressing the pain the nation felt over Atatürk's death (Günel, 2018).



Figure 10a. Anıtkabir (Günel, 2018)



Figure 10. Anıtkabir, Road of Lions (Günel, 2018)



Figure 11a. Anıtkabir, Statue (Günel, 2018)



Figure 11a. Anıtkabir, Mausolea (Günel, 2018)

The **Washington Monument** (Figure 12), is the obelisk in Washington, D.C., honouring George Washington, the first president of the United States. It was constructed of granite faced with Maryland marble, the structure is 16.8 metres square at the base and 554 feet 169 metres high and weighs an estimated 91,000 tons. The shaft's load-bearing masonry walls are 4.6 metres thick at its base, tapering to a thickness of only 46 cm at the top. At its completion in 1884 it was the world's tallest man-made structure, though it was supplanted by the Eiffel Tower just five years later. It remains the world's tallest masonry structure (Bigler, 2025). The monument's materials -marble, granite, and bluestone from various quarries- reflect a metaphor of layered history and overcoming adversity, as construction was interrupted for decades due to political and financial difficulties. This practical history is physically visible through the varying stone colors, which subtly narrate the challenges faced during the early years of the American republic. The Washington Monument both facilitates remembrance of George Washington's leadership and selectively frames national memory by emphasizing unity, leadership, and the founding of the nation.



Figure 12. Washington Monument (Bigler, 2025)

Designing and making the void feel is an approach to enliven the “traces” of a structure or a lived event with the principles of abstraction and symbolism, through the concepts of “provocation, movement, change and interaction” with an understanding reminding that “the importance of what is gone is understood only when it is gone”.

The September 11th Memorial Square (Figure 13 & Figure 14) is one of the most striking examples of this approach. There are two memorials for 9/11 at the site of the World Trade Center (“Ground Zero”). The first, the Memorial proper, is a park of around eight acres, consisting of paved space, rows of trees (swamp oaks) and grass, and concrete benches. Within this space are two large square pits (“pools,” “voids”), each of which has water cascading down its walls, disappearing into a smaller square hole in the center. Surrounding each pool is a low wall with the names of those who were killed on 9/11, and also of those who died in the car bombing of 1993, displayed along the top surface (URL-7). *Designing and making the void feel* reflects an architectural technique where absence, emptiness, or negative space becomes a powerful mnemonic device. The September 11th Memorial Square utilizes twin reflecting pools set in the footprints of the fallen towers, where voids symbolize loss and absence. This design evokes contemplation and collective mourning through spatial emptiness, turning void into a meaningful presence.



Figure 13. September 11th (9/11) Memorial Square (URL-8, URL-9)



Figure 14a. September 11th (9/11) Memorial Square, Top View (URL-10)



Figure 14b. September 11th (9/11) Memorial Square, Tribute in Light (URL-10)

3.2. Spaces of Memory That Resist Time

Through the conceptualization of spaces of memory that resist time, this study asserts that memory places cannot be understood solely as static relics but as dynamic, multilayered entities shaped by spatial design strategies that engage physical, symbolic, and experiential dimensions. Their role as carriers of identity and “time machines” is both reinforced and complicated by these design interventions, which mediate between permanence and change, visibility and absence, glorification and trauma. By mapping these conceptual frameworks onto diverse and globally significant memory sites, the research expands our understanding of how memory places evolve as living urban and cultural phenomena. They foster continuity and transformation within societal collective memory, enabling us to navigate the delicate balance between remembering and forgetting, presence and void, construction and deconstruction.

The study has explored the relationship between memory and place, enriched by a detailed conceptual and analytical examination of selected prominent memory sites worldwide. These sites exemplify diverse strategies in memorial architecture and design, illustrating how memory places negotiate preservation, embodiment, and interpretation through specific approaches. Based on the analyzed sample structures, there are various similarities and differences among design approaches. This indicates that the approaches share common features in their fundamental principles and application methods, while at the same time, each approach retains its own unique methodology, specific goals, and distinctive outcomes. In this respect, it can be stated that the design approaches analyzed in this study exhibit both complementary and distinguishing characteristics. Within this scope, the common and differing aspects of the design approaches addressed in the study have been systematically summarized and presented in Table 2 below.

These approaches range from preserving the original state of places without alteration, to enhancing functionality by adding new structures according to current needs; from reinterpreting and transforming spaces to deepening meaning by establishing context with their surroundings. These strategies holistically enable the preservation and reinterpretation of different layers of the past in both tangible and intangible forms. When these approaches are considered together, the preservation and transmission of historical memory enables a balanced and multidimensional evaluation of both material traces and abstract emotions and social meanings. Thus, the truth of the past ceases to be a mere memory but transforms into a meaningful and impactful life for current and future generations. This holistic perspective enables a continuous dialogue and process of reconstruction between history and the present.

Table 2. Distinctive Aspects of the Design Strategies (Prepared by the authors.)

Approach	Core Features	Degree of Intervention	Purpose	Architectural / Design Dynamics	Examples	Visitor Impact and Reflection
Non intervention	Preserves the site as it exists, without any physical alteration. Natural state remains intact.	No intervention / preservation	Maintain pure memory, avoid sanitization	Emphasis on authenticity, rawness of memory	Auschwitz-Birkenau Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum	Unmediated witness, direct engagement with trauma
Reinforcing with annexes	Adds supportive structures or facilities without altering the original site.	Slight intervention	Support education and remembrance	Contrast, strengthening, guidance, disturbance without changing original	Nuremberg Documentation Center	Enriches understanding, supports contextual learning
Re-editing	Completely transforms the space; creates an illusion of the original environment.	Full intervention	Reinterpret or expand the narrative	Imitation, animation, manipulation, illusion creation	Bandırma Ferry	Evokes new emotional narratives, re-experiences history as illusion
Designing the context	Incorporates the site within its broader environment, designing new structures to evoke emotions	Moderate/high intervention	Connect past and present actively	Arousal, provoking anger, vocalization, symbolic design	Berlin Jewish Museum	Connects history with contemporary identity, emotional resonance
Praise-Glorify	Large, symbolic structures built to praise, glorify, and honor; emphasize collective memory.	Moderate intervention	Celebrate figures or events	Symbolism, grandeur, ostentation, durability, exaggeration	Anıtkabir, Washington Monument	Fosters national pride, collective identity, selective memory
Designing and making the void feel	Uses emptiness and voids as mnemonic devices, emphasizing absence and loss.	Moderate intervention	Evoke mourning, loss, and absence	Provocation, movement, interaction with negative space	September 11 Memorial Square	Represents collective mourning, loss, and reflection

4. CONCLUSION

The city, which is a stage of human intellectual and cultural images and social relations networks, can be seen as the basic element of all social processes. In the same parallel, it would not be wrong to define urban spaces as a set of instrument that is a requirement of the entire human condition, daily life experiences and mutual interactions in this process. In this sense, as a unique and indivisible part, the reflection of the public self and identity and the structure of the collective and existential body of a city, memory spaces and spaces of memory are rich and complex phenomena deeply rooted in the interplay between memory and place. In the study, drawing upon concepts such as collective memory and lieux de mémoire, the significance of these spaces in shaping individual and collective identities, preserving cultural heritage, and facilitating the transmission of memory across generations has been studied. By studying memory spaces, deeper understanding of how memory is constructed, negotiated, and shared can be understood, illuminating the intricate relationship between the physical and symbolic dimensions of remembrance. Memory contained in a physical space refers to the association of memories with specific physical environments, while a space with memory suggests intentional design or modifications to create environments that facilitate memory retrieval and cognitive process.

In the study, the relationship between memory and place has been examined, focusing on memory places and places of memory as significant sites where collective memories are constructed, preserved, and experienced. Through a multi-disciplinary approach and qualitative methods, valuable insights into the complex interplay between individuals, communities, and physical locations in the realm of memory have been gained. The study has illuminated the significance of memory places and places of memory in the construction and preservation of collective memory. Throughout the study, the factors that influence the designation of memory places have been investigated, highlighting the role of collective identity, historical events, and socio-cultural dynamics.

The Table 3 below presents a comparative analysis of the architectural and spatial approaches of selected memory sites, based on our core criteria. The table details each site's unique historical context, intervention and

preservation strategies, architectural narratives, and differences in visitor experience. Furthermore, concrete examples of the contributions of sites to memory production and their roles in spatial narrative are carefully categorized. This comparative model facilitates understanding how sites function, both in terms of spatial design and in the context of collective memory and social identity. Architectural intervention strategies as well as symbolic approaches illustrate the diversity and dynamism of spatial memory.

Table 3. Reflections of the Design Strategies on Sample Structures (Prepared by the authors.)

Architectural / Conceptual Criteria	Sample Structure
Non intervention	Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum The space, with its original prison cells and torture and execution areas, remains intact, allowing for the direct and unaltered reflection of tragic memory. Visitors physically experience the tangible traces of historical violence, and intervention in the space is limited.
	Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp The structures of the original concentration camp, including hundreds of cells, are open to the public and preserved almost as is; physical intervention has been kept to a minimum, and lived history is presented 'frozen' in place.
Reinforcing with Annexes	Nuremberg Documentation Center While the original structures and areas are preserved, the space has undergone functional changes (exhibition areas) for contemporary information presentation, but authenticity is a key preservation goal. Modern annexes are constructed next to the historical fabric, legal documents and information centers are established; historical memory is supported in the space with modern techniques, and memory production is enriched.
Re-editing	Bandırma Ferry The original Bandırma Ferry has been reinterpreted and re-functioned to commemorate Atatürk and establishment of Türkiye; the visitor experience and narrative have been diversified in the spatial setup.
Designing the Context	Berlin Jewish Museum In architect Daniel Libeskind's design, the space constructs a context of identity and memory by symbolizing historical trauma and loss with different architectural elements, sharp forms, light plays and voids.
Praise-Glorify	Anıtkabir and Washington Monument Anıtkabir and Washington Monument glorify national independence, leadership, and heroism; national identity and history are strengthened through monumental architecture.
Designing and Making the Void Feel	September 11th Memorial Square In the aftermath of the attack, themes of solidarity and national unity are evoked through the sacredness of the void and its understated simplicity; feelings of respect, gratitude and exaltation are often at the forefront. Voids memorial pools and reflective surfaces evoke a sense of both loss and hope in the visitor; the spatial experience is achieved by intensifying architectural voids in the emotional realm.

While the social experience, concepts and norms transferred from the past to the present were integrated with the architectural product and spatial “narrative”, they played a role both in the “protection” of the social memory and the “reproduction” with new accumulations. In this context, space, as a “living organism” and as a symbol of memories, accumulation and permanence, and “traces of our past”, is an important element for the preservation and “eternisation” of memory in the urban landscape. Due to the tendency of ideologies to construct societies on a “tabula rasa” by separating them from their past, traditions and experiences, “space” as a part of our identity and “identity carrier” within a communication system, is a bridge with a deep content in the formation of common consciousness. Society visualizes the past in various ways, depending on conditions and time, and changes its conventions accordingly. Because these conventions are generally adhered to, each member of society turns their memories in the direction in which the collective memory evolves. Since social memory, besides being “permanent” and “consistent”, also has a “fragile” structure, the process of “remembering” is also a “choice” in line with new experiences and actions and political and ideological stance. It moves between forgetting and eternity-nothingness.

Memory places serve as repositories of collective memory, shaped by historical events, cultural practices, and evolving societal dynamics. They provide spaces for individual and communal experiences of remembrance and commemoration. By recognizing the complexities and nuances of the design and physical essence of memory places, our understanding of how memory and place intertwine, shaping our individual and collective identities can be deepened. The historical accumulation and social memory, which are formed as a result of human reality, are part of the identity of societies as a “being” superior to individuals and a joint effort at the point of “the meaning of being human”. Therefore, **WE HOPE WE NEVER FORGET SOME THINGS...**

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