

BUILDING MEMORY

On the symbolic function of contemporary memorial architecture

Ioana-Georgiana Șerbănoiu¹
Angelique Trachana²

¹ PhD student, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain

² Profesor, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain

Abstract

In late modernity, the symbolic function of architecture, that the architectural avant-gardes of the twentieth century have tried to abolish, emerges in the memorial buildings dedicated to the commemoration of the tragedies of the last century. In this article, it is treated from the architectural analysis, to reveal the significance of these traumatic events for contemporary societies. It argues some methodological procedures for articulating architectural language: how symbolic structures establish connections that affect both sensitivity and knowledge and how body, memory, space and time all together constitute an experiential nature unit.

Keywords: architecture, symbolic structure, collective memory.

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The Meaning of the New Monuments

In the age of electronic memories emerges the question of whether what is “written in stone” can still maintain a significant role reminding the community and the individuals of certain traumatic events. The question lies in the symbolic function of architecture. Certainly, huge amounts of information are stored on digital networks today and there is practically no need to remember because all information is accessed immediately. It can be said that this situation leads us to a generalized amnesia or void of memories and an immersion in the new, the present and the virtual. Victor Hugo had predicted, in *Notre Dame de Paris*, that “this will destroy that”. Referring to the printing press, “the book would kill the building”. Up until Gutenberg, architecture had been the great stone book. At a time when there was no freedom of expression, Victor Hugo equated the architect with the poet who expressed his most intimate thoughts in the buildings. Architecture as a total art was the medium, the communication device of the Middle Age, transmitting the same message, at the same time, to many people, during this extensive and heterogeneous period of Western history -and also during the Renaissance-. The manuscript codex for the transmission of written information was unavailable due to its artisanal reproduction procedure.

An analogy is established today with this first phase of the printing press and its mass dissemination. The original function of the image, transiently eclipsed by the word, has been returned by photography, cinema, television and finally the computer science. It can be said that the web page relieves architecture and almost assumes the function of the facade. Will "this kill that" again? Both processes constitute hypotheses of social change determined by the appearance of new technologies (Bertozzi 2004: 4).

The symbolic¹ and representative² function of an institution that was once held by architecture is, nowadays, substituted by a website. If the printing press has broken the symbolic monopoly of the buildings, according to Luis Fernández-Galiano (2017) in the age of mass media, architecture has experienced an even greater decline in its function as a vehicle of significance and it has been frequently reduced to mere remote consumable images, which make its presence unnecessary or disappointing.

Adolf Loos (1993: 160) had pointed out the only two cases in which architecture plays a symbolic and representative role: the funerary monument and the memorial monument, since these are the only types of architecture that belong to Art³. The rest would remain within their utilitarian and functional purposes like house as example. "The house satisfies the need (...). The work of art takes people out of their comfort (...) teaches new paths to humanity".

Indeed, the once powerful commemorative function of architecture has been blurring during the modern age and Alois Riegl (1903) detected, in his *The Modern Cult of Monuments*, a change within the semantics⁴ of monuments. Impregnated with the modern –critical of the cult of the past – spirit, he recognized a "historical objective value" and a "modern objective value" intrinsic of the monuments.

"During the International Style, the monumental style, as a bearer of memory and meaning, moved away from the architectural discipline and became a thing of anachronism, conservatism and fascism" (Prieto, 2017: 18). However, it resulted unassuming for the Modern Movement to give up symbolizing, therefore it tended towards a new type of monumentality as a language⁵ that would express the modern values. Giedeion alluded to the "spirit of the time", *Zeitgeist*, "the same one that, at that time, was blowing in order to enliven the flame of the war and which, in the opinion of

1. For Ernst Cassirer (1971), the symbol is the language. In the neo-Kantian conception of the symbol that Cassirer elaborates, the knowledge of the symbolic forms is preceded and predisposed by the judgement, the verbal discourse and the formal representation. A work of art, being a highly articulated whole, is a symbol and, as any other symbolic form, it is not a mere reproduction of a past reality, but it belongs to the field of "possibilities and not to the field of realities". Language manages to reproduce the true structure of what exists.

2. Cassirer bases that the re-presentation is an exhibition of a certain meaning through a sensitive sign.

3. According to Benedetto Croce (1967: 40), Art stands out through its unwavering relationship between form and meaning. "Content and form must be perfectly distinguishable in art, but they cannot be described separately as artistic, precisely because they are artistic only through their relationship: that is, their unity, understood not as an abstract and dead unity, but a concrete and alive one, from an *a priori* synthesis".

4. Semantic theory studies architecture as a historical object. The object-phenomenon is studied through an abstract code of signs that can be handled independently of the same object, as long as its operational laws are defined. These laws constitute a pre-structure that explains it as an object. Since architecture does not abide by the laws of a closed structure, Cassirer's (1944) phenomenology allows circumscribing this pre-structure into the symbolic system in which it assumes the role that its historical evolution gives it. The symbol is, therefore, one of the ways that leads to an objective view of the things.

5. Cassirer bases his statement in the fact that language is the starting point of knowledge – and, as such, it is a representation of a meaning through sensitive signs and not a determinate order of interpreted signs – on a simple code. The analogy between language and architecture lies in the overlap of their semantic structure of emotional and propositional aspects (symbolic process). Language manages to reproduce the true structure of what exists and can become a guide in the cognitive process.

the Swiss historian, had materialized in Picasso's *Guernica*. The *terribilità* of this work was conceived as a new monumental language, however, as the old one, with the purpose of arousing the fear" (Prieto, 2017: 19). *Guernica*'s symbolic concept precedes and predisposes a trial, a speech and a formal representation.

Over time, modern monuments have functioned as the tragic symbols of their age, recovering the ancient (semantic), perhaps even primary function of architecture: the memory of the dead. This return to the origins implied a transformation in both the ideology that justifies the monuments and in the ways of conceiving and building them. From wars, genocides, the Holocaust to terrorist attacks, all of them have made the object of representation through monuments that, in turn, have undergone the formal changes and strategies of contemporary art. As of 1920, many memorials and funerary monuments were raised to commemorate the fallen, the unknown soldiers, the victims, as a way of remembering the terrible sacrifice of life. The cult of memory has promoted a great number of memorials and events that have occupied cultural life and social rituals.

Politics and Places of Memory

On memory, as a psychological and sociological factor, some light is shed by the studies of Durkheim (1982), Halbwachs (2004) and Bergson (1999), although some unknowns still underlie these topics. The analysis of Durkheim's "collective memory", associated with traditions in different cultures that establish unity and cohesion among its members is of primary interest. Architecture constitutes a "totem", an iconic symbol. There seems to be a certain consensus among scholars and society itself in admitting that mnemonic systems are fixed through architecture that builds places. A *locus* is the place where memory can be easily captured, while images –as simulacra of what a person intends to remember– must be placed in their characteristic *locus* (Yates, 2005). Therefore, institutions and individuals build, in these places, their national memory (Bastéa, 2004).

The fundamental question of "how to remember" raises a series of other questions: whether it is possible to overcome a collective trauma and, if so, how? Should past events be forgotten so that society can look towards the future or, on the contrary, is it necessary to remember them in order to avoid their repetition? According to David Rieff (2016), in his controversial essay *In Praise of Forgetting*, the famous quote of George Santayana (1905), "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" is one of the most repeated conventional ideas. There seems to be an explicit and almost absolute consensus on historical memory that the morally correct thing to do is to remember. But Rieff wonders why there is so much passion for the past. Analysing several of the most decisive conflicts in recent history –the conflict in Northern Ireland, the Spanish Civil War, the Balkan War, the Holocaust and the 9/11– he concludes that historical memory is not so much a moral imperative but an option; it can be toxic and, thus sometimes, the right thing to do is to forget.

Over the centuries, humanity has been unable to resolve the conflicts that generate the abusers and the abused, the criminals and the victims, regardless of the technological evolution and the advances that have been made both in the field of science and in that of humanities. There seems to be a concern in modern societies about how to overcome the psychological effects of violence. In some cases, there have been powerful reasons behind erasing or changing this past of violence and horror. From the "denazification" of Germany and Austria –that meant the destruction and erasure of the

symbols of the Nazi propaganda (swastikas, books, art, etc.)— or the demolition of the statues of Lenin after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there have been various policies in order to erase the memory.

In his 1984 dystopia, George Orwell describes the darkest side of the politics of memory and the social amnesia present in the totalitarian regimes. Erasing the memory was one of the most visible policies when some collective memories were deemed as dangerous for the perpetuation of the ideology of said regimes, whilst other memories (whether true or false) were purposefully exacerbated. The multiple ways of trying to erase the historical memory of a country could go from the physical destruction of its buildings and up to the destruction of its individuals. This destruction did not always mean (just) death.

Nowadays, “memory policies” include the political measures taken in order to remember or to forget an event and are always based on a selective criterion. From these memory policies surge the laws of memory that promote the official versions of the critical events in the history of a country. The collective memory of any group is a construction manipulated by the power in order to control the memories. National stories are built to serve the interests of the present (Lowenthal, 1999). Public memory is not a faithful representation of the past, but it is rooted in the needs of the present and the future. Memory is a contestable social construction that protects the *status quo* (Bodnar, 1993).

Certainly, the postmodern desacralization of traditions has created a social void that has been filled with commemorative activity (Foucault, 1977) and the building of places as a political instrument by those who are in power.

The Italian architect Aldo Rossi (2015) quotes Halbwachs' *La Mémoire collective* to underline that the city itself is the collective memory of the people and –as memory is linked to facts and places– the city is the *locus* of the collective memory which, in order to shape reality, must always materialize in it. This conformation remains in its monuments as unique facts and the ideas that we have regarding them. Since the publication, in 1966, of *The Architecture of the City*, the recovery of the value of collective memory in architecture has remained present in the architectural theoretical debate.

The Representation of Absence

Architecture works with images and, more specifically with *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (Panofsky, 2003). Memory is also based on and is working with images. However, although the images that constitute the human memory can be distorted, the architectural image remains in its initial form (De Freitas, 2012). That is why John Ruskin (2000: 207) said that “there are but two strong conquerors of the forgetfulness of human, Poetry and Architecture”, underlining the importance of architecture as a barrier against the loss of memory and its function as a link between the past, the present and the future.

Architecture like poetry “in times of lacking” (in Hölderlin's verse) comes to fill this void. Modern memorials dedicated to the violent events of the recent past evoke the emptiness, the absence, the nothingness after the tragedies. As Kamin (2015: 5) said about the Twin Towers in New York, “the absence of the towers speaks louder than their presence ever did”. As expressed in the existentialist⁶

6. In the works of Søren Kierkegaard (1976 and 1984).

and in the post-structuralist⁷ philosophy, “the absence” is what drives the aesthete and what awakens the desire, an immediate emotion for what is absent and which is connected to suffering, according to Schopenhauer (2013).

“Something is absent because it is not present, but the significant detail is that the absent something is figured as potentially present, that is, held-in-readiness” (Fuery 1995: 2). The Peace Memorial in Hiroshima that commemorates the deaths of 140.000 people on August 6th, 1945 is, perhaps, the best-known example of a type of monument based on the partial or total conservation of the tragedy scene. In this case the Gendaku dome, located in the epicentre of the explosion, is preserved and its remains awaken a sublime feeling that no longer occurs when contemplating the destructive power of time –as it once happened while observing ancient ruins – but when perceiving the unlimited power of technological warfare. The Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp is preserved as an empty, silent stage, where photographs and some personal items of the people that have been exterminated are exposed. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, designed by Peter Eisenman, between 2003 and 2004 in an abstract and minimalist language, confined within a mesh that changes its height, presenting a wave-shaped warping, with its intellectualism and cold materiality, doesn’t cease to evoke the loneliness in a Jewish cemetery (Fig. 1). It resembles the Jewish Museum in the same city, the work of Daniel Libeskind, built between 1989 and 1999, another abstract configuration that is enhanced by a dramatic light. Both these works recreate the locus eremus, the absence and the emptiness of a deep emotional impact. (Fig. 2).



Fig.1. *The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, Berlin. Peter Eisenman.
[Source: <https://pxhere.com/en/photo/1088969>]

7. The concept of “absence” appears in the Derridian criticism of the “ethics of presence”. For Derrida (1972: 281-285), there is an “absence” in the sense that the meaning of a sign is absent because it is given by differentiation with other signs. The initial idea belonged to Ferdinand Saussure.



Fig 2. *The Jewish Museum*, Berlin. Daniel Libeskind. Art installation “*Fallen leaves*” by Menashe Kadishman.
 [Source: Doris Hausen, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/herbstkind/4757990843/>]

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC, by Maya Lin, in 1982, is another minimalist and silent device whose symbolic efficacy gravitates on a crack in the ground as a land art work that guides the black granite memorial wall – as a type of gravestone – where the names of the fallen and missing in this war are engraved (Fig. 3). Michael Arad’s work for the 9/11 Memorial in New York also responds using a minimalist language. Opened in 2011, it highlights the absence of the twin towers and the void that they left by preserving their footprints. The place is considered a theatre of memory in the place of the tragedy. It seems that the emptier and quieter the shapes are, the more they potentiate the sounds and the voices of the memories (Fig. 4). According to the minimalist principle, with less means more expression, that Mies Van der Rohe formulated by *less is more*.

The Tribute in Light installation that is turned on every year, on September 11 in Battery Park, evokes the silhouette of the towers, thus enhancing their absence. As “every image is, first of all, a sign of absence, which it replaces in the symbolic plane” (Gubern, 2017: 67)



Fig.3. *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, Washington D.C. Maya Lin.
 [Source: Henk Sijgers, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/henk-sijgers/14571454955/>]



Fig.4. *9/11 Memorial*, New York. Michael Arad.
 [Source: Rex Hammock, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/rexblog/14739694346/>]

Memory as Embodied Experience

The main characteristic of architecture is its complexity, as an art that works with matter, space and emotions, consciously restoring the union of the senses, the needs, the impulses and the actions characteristic of the human existence and contemporary design on the plane of significance. Within the memorials and the museums there is also the added need to make understand certain historical events⁸.

Unfortunately, as it is well-known, architecture, as a language, presents, beyond a certain threshold, some clear inabilities in transmitting information. Faced with the theory of communication that is governed by rigid structure mechanisms, the symbolic structures of architecture allow a certain degree of freedom of interpretation. The metaphor is sometimes used almost as an equivalent to the symbol, as is the case with Charles Jencks (1975), while other theorists, such as De Fusco (1970) and Eco (1992 and 1986) have renounced the analogy between language and architecture and have assumed architecture as an equivalent to a semiologic structure.

The notion of time is closely linked to that of the space and its evocation possibilities. The space evokes the time. Since life is ‘sacred’, one can say that, in a metaphysical sense, the tragedy of death permeates a space and a time with the sacredness of the loss of life. The memorial-museums thus become sacred spaces, “capturing” the sacred time and becoming a gateway to it. By representing these two categories, space and time, perfectly superimposed, the physical construction becomes a receptacle for the two to manifest. The designer of such a receptacle is faced with a complex test of mastery, since it consists in filtering, through his subjectivity, a way of representing the tragedy that would make the world understand what happened⁹. According to Liiceanu (2002: 255), “it is amazing the speed with which a time moves away from us when a discontinuity in history occurs (...) and simply becomes an abstraction”. The resulting object thus becomes a witness to the facts while also being the product of its author’s ideas and sensibility and, at the same time, a product of an ideology and a culture specific to a certain era.

The memorial-museums organize, in a way, the search for an experience, so that the visitors can empathize with the fallen, the victims, the absent. Empathy, *Einfühlung* (Vischer, 1873) or “sentimental projection”, according to Worringer (1908) is a projection of the self in objects.

Nowadays, in the process of innovating the museum program, these spaces go beyond being simple exhibition spaces to becoming a lived reality. Visitors are invited to not only look, but to experience the space with all the senses. It is not just about visualizing objects and places anymore, but it has become more about experiencing a certain atmosphere. The impact of a pile of objects, belonging to the victims, in a dark room, can be even greater than the impact of the ruins of a concentration camp and can make the visitors resonate emotionally with someone’s experiences, without necessarily remaking the space in which said experiences happened.

If absence can be eloquent (Fricke, 2015), the Jewish Museum in Berlin and the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem –a work by Moshe Safdie (2005)– are two eloquent examples of experiencing sensations

8. With the crisis of the Modern Movement, the two fields –that of the senses and that of the ideas– seem to have merged, thus driving architecture to enter into a philosophy of an extrovert nature, that eliminates the watertight compartments and proceeds more openly, to look for structures where knowledge and enjoyment converge.

9. The symbolic theory is eclectic in its methodology, but it is precisely that eclecticism that makes the various options of likelihood of the symbol possible. As Hegel (1971: 104) said, that eclecticism is less “real” than simple theories, but, as a counterpart, it is more coherent with the symbolic possibilities, since its theoretical “presence” is not offered as something that fits into the linear schemes created by the human mind in accordance to the law of minimum effort.

of constriction and oppression through architecture. Both have a deep emotional impact and, although different in their ways of proceeding, both coincide in raising the sensation of terror, loss and impotence. The visitor is not only exposed to the photographs and the objects of the victims, but to the same process of becoming a victim. Such is the Holocaust Tower of the museum conceived by Libeskind, where the sensation of the visitor is that he is inside a chimney pipe; this sensation is augmented by the zenith ray of light that constitutes the only source of illumination in the chamber. When touring both museums, the final sensation shifts from desperation to hope; in the case of Libeskind's museum, this is represented by a garden from which one can gaze at the sky, while in the case of Safdie's building, by an open terrace in the end of the tour offering an ample panorama (Fig. 5).



Fig.5. *Yad Vashem*, Jerusalem. Moshe Safdie.

[Source: Kyle Simourd, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/89241789@N00/3862998181>]

The effect of these overwhelming environments, that modify the visitor's bodily experience in its journey, is reinforced through the manipulation of the light, sounds, projections and various other technological implementations. Combining the exterior and the interior, landscape and museology, through screens, computers, audio-visuals and other interaction elements, these devices become true machines of perception and learning.

Undoubtedly, it is the architecture that plays the leading role, speaking for itself in order to convey ideas and emotions. One of its primary communicative functions is that of alluding beliefs, values, customs, states of the spirit, but also evoking pleasure and joy as well as pain, anguish and sorrow. However, when art is subordinated to a political or patriotic message, it becomes ideological art and propaganda that seeks a certain effect, not the spontaneous perception of this art.

Throughout broad sectors of the public, in the press and the media, there has been some reluctance about the abstract art and the conceptual architecture that are associated with the latest memorial-museums (Brody, 2012). Faced with these positions, the defense of the didactics and the intermediation that Gombrich (1975:29) made for the art museums can be extrapolated to the memorial-museums of the tragedies of the last century, since they convey the knowledge and understanding of the contexts, contemplated from a historical and ideological point of view. Human culture is certainly not universal. The way in which an art form can be interpreted is dependent and responds to a cultural and educational issue. The symbolic in art and architecture, as Croce (1967) states, does not correspond to the apprehension of a motionless concept, but to a perpetual formation of a judgement. The methodologies of possible interpretations (formalist, iconological, semiological, structuralist, materialist, sociological, technical, etc.) are included within the entire study of the symbolic structure. Art, therefore, will not be a simple representation, but a representation of a judgement.

When architecture materializes, it transforms the symbol into a producer of History and this History becomes an annihilator of any alternatives. Historicity implies a communication code between the creator and others. Much of these conventions, like many of our actions and behaviours, are cultural and depend on a certain type of learning. In the memorial-museums, elements that assemble complex systems, ranging from space-time to language, are transferred from the plastic and scenic arts. Symbolic structures are superimposed on formal systems, especially those transferred in this field from sacred and funerary art, since they are inscribed within a greater symbolic tradition and familiarization. The language of these works must be, in a certain way, of common understanding. Given their didactic nature, they represent the means that reinforce the values and/or beliefs and customs of the people.

However, the ability of the architecture to convey emotions is directly proportional to its degree of freedom with respect to conventions and codifications; the more degrees of freedom possible, the higher its symbolic power. An “open work” reaches a high level of possible suggestions. Indeed, the modern language of abstract architecture has an enormous potential for significance and interpretation. It generates open and neutral works, with the capacity of induction into the atmospheres, so that everyone can experience their own feelings and relive their own memories. Although this does not mean that the architectural object is lacking any ideological content and that it isn’t the subject of norms, canons and fashions that the power imposes upon them, there will always be that “artistic will” *Kunstwollen*¹⁰, that gives art the force of the free human spirit, while conditioning it by means of a worldview, a *Weltanschauung* or a cultural awareness of the moment. The “artistic will” confers a certain autonomy to art but, unconsciously, this autonomy is contaminated by symbolic structures that are used within a certain community or inside a certain

10. *Kunstwollen* is a concept created by the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl, who understands it as a force of the human spirit that gives rise to formal affinities within the same era, in all its cultural manifestations. He develops it further in his work *Late Roman art industry* (1985).

knowledge linked to the aesthetic function. Abstraction and empathy represent the dichotomy whose treatment, during the elaboration of the project, implies sensitivity, moderation, respect and distance. They are the fundamental keys in effectively achieving the intellectual and emotional shock that is intended.

Symbols, Archetypes and “Spatial Memory”

In relation to the information of the visual forms and to their own way of coding, the architecture of memorials arises, no doubt, from the religious architecture and from the ancestral funeral rites, but it distances itself from the first, in order to become part of the public space. Even so, the sacred essence of these monuments is latent, due to the extreme archetypal character of the human perception and society, according to Jung (1981). Given the human tendency to align with these archetypes, the expression of the sacred is rather intuited, both by the architect and by the recipients of his work.

As it is common in every work of art, architecture can be analysed by breaking it down into several different elements, but it is impossible to build it by means of an additive process of these elements. Simply said, although they can act as generators of connective ideas, the final work stems not from themselves, but from their interconnection within a structure.

The funeral stele resonates in the engraved name list that is one of the elements that can be repeatedly found in the modern memorials. The name is what offers individuality and makes a person recognizable. A gesture as simple as naming individuals can help extract the historical event out of the realm of pure imagination and bring it closer to reality, acting as a catalyst towards empathy and the humanization of the individuals, extracting them from the abstraction of a number. In Edwin Lutyens’ 1931 Franco-British memorial of Thiepval –scene of the Battle of the Somme in World War I– the inscription is the foundation of a classical monument. It is reinterpreted by placing the names of the fallen one after another on a gigantic marble tombstone that runs along the monument’s plinth (Fig. 6). Its immeasurable character suggests a “sublime uncomfortable feeling based on the enormity of the tragedy it commemorates” (Prieto, 2017:19).

The very name of the Yad Vashem memorial complex in Jerusalem, which commemorates the Shoah (the Holocaust) literally means "permanent name" and is taken from a verse in the Book of Isaiah: “To them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name (...) an everlasting name that will endure forever” (Isaiah 56:5). Finding the names and biographies of the victims was not an easy task since there sometimes were no survivors within a family, nor any documents that could identify them. The main hall, the Hall of Names, designed by the architect Moshe Safdie and the designer Dorit Harel, is a depository of testimony pages of more than 2 million victims of the Holocaust. The room comprises of two cones, each of them having a height or a depth of nine meters, specifically located above one another. While the superior one that goes upwards towards the sky, is filled with photographs of the known victims, the one below it, carved into the rock of Mount Hertzl and filled with water, reflects the images of the upper cone and is dedicated to the memory of the victims who have yet to be identified (Fig. 7). Apart from their physical representation, the names can be found in a computer centre, in an adjacent room, The Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names, which holds approximately 4.5 million names.



Fig.6. *The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme*, Thiepval. Sir Edwin Lutyens.
 [Source: Amanda Slater, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/pikerslanefarm/1788997964/>]

The wall of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington contains 58.318 names of soldiers killed or missing in combat. The only thing that differentiates them is the symbol of the cross engraved in order to indicate the missing or prisoners and a diamond for those killed in combat – neither rank, nor anything else besides the names is stated.

The desire to remember the name of each person in Michael Arad’s 9/11 Memorial in New York is materialized on the 76 bronze plates where the names are placed with the help of a complex algorithm, in order to form “meaningful adjacencies” (Matson, 2011). Although company names are not listed, the name of their employees are grouped together. In the words of the executive director of the Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund: “Your loved ones’ names are surrounded by the names of those they sat with, those they worked with, those they lived with and, very possibly, those they died with” (Dunlap, 2011).

The 9/11 Memorial in Arlington, Virginia, or the Pentagon Memorial, reflects the names of the 184 victims of the American Airlines Flight 77 and the Pentagon, each of them engraved in one of the 184 benches arranged on a surface of 7.800 sqm. According to the project, the benches are organized according to the age of the victims, starting with 3-years-old Dana Falkenber, up to 71-years-old John Yamnicky Sr. The benches are distributed in such a way that, while the visitor reads

the names of those who died inside of the Pentagon, he is facing the south façade of the building – that was impacted– while, when reading the names of the victims that were inside the plane, he will be facing skyward, contemplating the path of the plane.



Fig.7. *Hall of Names, Yad Vashem*, Jerusalem. Moshe Safdie.

[Source: Michael Panse, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/michael-panse-mdl/32520375370/in/photostream/>]

The name list, as a symbolic reminiscence of the gravestone, is common within memorials. As an exception, a touching monument deserves a special mention – the Children’s Memorial (Yad LaYeled), part of the Yad Vashem complex. Designed by Moshe Safdie, the memorial is dedicated to the 1.5 million Jewish, Roma, Polish or German children with physical or mental disabilities exterminated in the Holocaust. It stands out among other memorials because of the way in which it chose to commemorate the names – instead of engraving them, it opted for a continuous recitation of the names, ages and countries of origin of the victims, in English, Hebrew and Yiddish. The impact of listening to the names is even greater, leaving visitors with a feeling of loss and emptiness, unable to understand the cruelty of these acts.

Another recurring archetype is the labyrinth that can be found in three of the monuments that commemorate the Holocaust: The Valley of the Communities of the Yad Vashem complex, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and The Garden of Exile of the Jewish Museum in Berlin (Fig. 8). In the architectural process, archetypes such as the labyrinth sometimes emerge unconsciously. According to Jung (1969: 187, 211-6), archetypes constitute a mental energy which

underlies as an unconscious inheritance. From mythology to religion, they connect generations, cultures and civilizations, forming a universal communication language.



Fig.8. *The Garden of Exile, Jewish Museum, Berlin.* Daniel Libeskind.
[Source: Pier Paolo Cedaro, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ked87/34558274012/>]

Designed by Lippa Yahalom and Dan Zur and situated in the western part of the Yad Vashem complex, The Valley of the Communities commemorates the Jewish communities of Europe and North Africa that were exterminated during the Holocaust. Excavated in the natural rock of the mountain, the names of more than 5.000 communities are engraved in its rocky walls. The visitor is walking across feeling loneliness and confusion, while meditating on life and death. The lack of vegetation inside it means destruction, while the plants that appear above the rocks evoke the hope of a new life (Neuman, 2014: 86).

The Garden of Exile of the Jewish Museum in Berlin also evokes a labyrinth. Designed by Daniel Libeskind, the structure comprises of 49 square-shaped concrete pillars. The vegetation that grows on them is a symbol for the creation of the state of Israel, in 1948. The architect has recognized that the sloping ground of the garden – that creates movement difficulties – was designed with the intention of offering the visitor the perspective of the Jewish people that were forced to abandon their homes and their previous lives.

Inside The Memorial of the Murdered Jews of Europe, Peter Eisenman creates a labyrinthine structure, consisting of 2.711 concrete steles. Although the architect affirms that the design of the memorial has no symbolic connotation, the labyrinth resonates in the abstract form of the memorial.

Water is an element in the design of memorials deeply rooted in the symbolic meanings that Chevalier (1986:259) describes. The water that cascades down the walls of the two pools that occupy the footprints of the Twin Towers in New York represents life, while its irremediable disappearance into the two holes that sit at the bottom of the pools generates the feeling of loss of life and the impotence when facing death. However, the continuous flow of the water gives the illusion that the deceased will not be forgotten, and that life will continue (Fig. 9).



Fig.9. *9/11 Memorial*, New York. Michael Arad.

[Source: Jack French, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jackfrench/7480093380/>]

At the 9/11 Memorial in Arlington, Virginia, each of the 184 benches that symbolizes each of the 184 victims has, underneath it, an illuminated pool in which the water flows continuously. However, every day, at 9:37 a.m. (the time of the attack) the system shuts down in order to offer a moment of silence. The designers' purpose was to create a place of consolation for the families (Miroff, 2008), since water, due to its healing and meditative properties, would help accepting and coping with the trauma.

Finally, the water present in the inferior cone inside of The Hall of Names of the Yad Vashem museum dampens the effect of the death of the persons whose individual names and stories may never be known.

Due to its reflective qualities, water may, sometimes, be closely related to another symbol: the mirror. The soul, considered as a mirror (Chevalier, 1986: 476-7) is evoked in both the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and in the Children's Memorial of Yad Vashem. The black granite that forms the walls of the first memorial was brought from Bangalore, India, and was chosen specifically for its extraordinary reflective qualities, transforming the whole work into a mirror in which the visitor sees himself alongside the names of the fallen (Figure 5), thus creating the inevitable bond of empathy that unconsciously stems from the realization that it could have been his name that was engraved in the granite.

Inside the Children's Memorial, a system of mirrors is used to multiply to infinity the image of one candle, remembering not only the 1.5 million children or 6 million victims, but also (and possibly even more tragically) all the lives that did not have the opportunity to be born symbolizing the whole, incalculable magnitude of the loss.

Vegetation is a "symbol of the fundamental unity of life (...), of the cyclical character of all existence, birth, maturation, death and transformation" (Chevalier, 1986:1049). It is also present in the design of the memorials. The Garden of the Righteous among the Nations in the Yad Vashem complex is an avenue created as a tribute to those who risked their lives during the Second World War to save persecuted Jews. Each one has his own tree and plate. Inside the Garden of Exile and the Valley of the Communities, the visitor is surrounded by walls but, when lifting his gaze upwards, towards the sky, he finds the hope of rebirth through the vegetation that appears on the backcloth of the sky (Fig. 10).

The Survivor Tree, the pear tree that survived the 9/11 attacks and the collapse of the Twin Towers, was found in October 2001, among the rubble, in a very poor condition, having its roots and branches broken and burned. After a nine-year-long recovery, the tree was transferred back to its place of origin, to be a part of the memorial, symbolizing a story of destruction, survival and rebirth (Nace, 2017). The adjacent square has also been filled with trees, creating a small forest, that also forms part of the memorial.

All these elements are identifiable and establish a corporeal identity; an identity as a sense of continuity in the experience of ourselves, a historical, ethnical, generational and national continuity, which includes values, beliefs and a sense of belonging to something that is above the individual, to something that is beyond ourselves, be it transcendent or banal, but, in any case, a complex experience that includes memory, self-image, the experience of time, emotions and values. Traceable over time, these communicative patterns allow architecture to transmit visual information, received in less complex modes. Through the archetypal images, they allow us to perceive, interpret, synthesize meanings, understand them, process them and assimilate them. These elements that transcend the time have such a great impact that they remain anchored in the collective and individual memory.

The relation between memory and architectural space is close to Durkheim and Halbwachs' concept of "collective memory" and goes against the "individual memory", or the pure memory, that is only related to time; while this type of "temporary memory" is constituted by images and only comprehensible through intuition, "spatial memory" is associated with places. In society, there is a "time" and a "space" that are imposed to guarantee the social life and there is, at the same time, a

certain causal relationship between social organization and the perceptions of space and time. Space and time are social constructions that, as Durkheim had presumed, unify and rhythmize the social life.



Fig.10. *The Valley of the Communities, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.* Lippa Yahalom and Dan Zur
[Source: Immanuel Giel, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Valley_of_the_Communities_05.jpg]

As a Conclusion

More than a conclusion, this article opens new questions and possible lines of research that relate architecture and memory to the philosophical, psychological and sociological concepts of space and time.

However, this paper, although lacking the argumentation needed to explain how collective representations are produced, argues some methodological procedures for articulating architectural language and how symbolic structure establish connections that affect both sensitivity and knowledge. Body, memory, space and time, all come together in space-time units of an experiential nature.

Halbwachs (2004) established a relationship between collective memory and group identity. However, nowadays, society is not homogenous, consisting of different groups, places, dates, words and socially different forms of language and spacetime. This aspect is particularly significant; since memory does not apply the same way “to all groups”, there is no certain way to represent spacetime. We certainly live in a diverse society, much more heterogeneous than Halbwachs could have ever known or imagined, even though, through some forms of media – mainly television – but also through the institutional conceptions of the public space, a new homogenization is intended.

As Manuel Delgado (2007) states, through these spaces, the institutions of the State are trying to deny the asymmetric nature of the social relations that they administer, offering impossible consensus scenarios, where they can carry out their integrating and mediating function. Perhaps the most relevant is the emergence of a Gender Sociology and, simultaneously, of a new collective memory, nourished by a history specific to women, which can break the masculine conception of the public space –and, therefore, of collective memory in general– opening new ways in the interpretation of society (Trachana, 2013).

The places of memory, seen here as public spaces, are substantiated in the practices and rituals of active individuals that – as indicated by Lefebvre (1978) –emotionally affected by architecture. In the informed societies, new collective spacetimes are inaugurated, since the individualities are organized not through an equal perception and ideas, but because they experience and transmit the same things (Negri, 2010). Through the shared information, one can notice a certain cohesion that takes advantage of the virtual mirror phenomenon, where the images are readily available.

The project of these types of places –dedicated to commemoration rituals– is not an easy task, as aforementioned. Furthermore, the task must be backed up by the design of an efficient communication strategy. It is the risky assignment of the political and creative leaders who, in turn, act by limiting these spaces on a formal and virtual level, connecting them to concepts – images that are elaborated within the framework of the contemporary visual culture – adapting them to current programs and uses. Thus, the representation of past events is correlated to the ideas and perceptions of the present spacetime, where the individual consciousness becomes the place of passage of these tendencies and the meeting point of the collective times.

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