

## URBAN MEMORY IN HALABJE AND THE REFLECTION OF URBAN MEMORY IN THE CITY

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### ABSTRACT

The city is a place of memory. Buildings, monuments, roads, squares, green areas are important elements for the city. However, we cannot talk about soul of the city without urban memory. Urban memory is as a kind of collective memory that is constituted by individuals' experiences within the place itself and through its history and social environment. Every society has a social memory. This social memory all events of human history they have lived hold in memory, record and transmit to future generation. The place of memory in social life and political culture has called attention to the various struggles over remembering and forgetting the past.

The events the impact on people coming to city and by past events make empathy, allows to living in the moment. Wars create a big crack on people's and their life as well as the city. This research is about collective urban memory and the politics of urban space in case of Halabja. The meaning of Halabja totally dealing with urban memory and urban space in the past and even today. It's very important to issue this criteria and preserving memory that by developing of public memory on urban place, to know the city of Halabja, the effects of urban memory left in this city examine in detail and the people living there city with social relation was investigated. The chemical attacks and its effect on urban life, urban memory has been cleared out.

**Keywords:** Monument, Urban memory, Social memory, Halabja chemical attack, Urban identity

### 1. INTRODUCTION

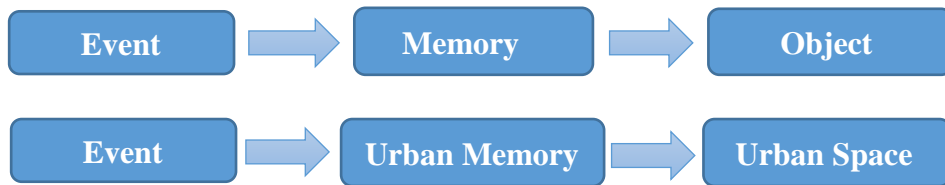
This study is about the role of symbols in the context of urban memory will be interpreted in terms of community structure, urban identity, lifestyle, the encountered historical process and spatial transformation in case of Halabja city. It investigates how the dynamics of power relations work differently at each level and looks at the structure of the city that connects the memory and belongings of the non-Arab (Kurdish) societies with the Saddam regime in a different way.

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Memory locates us, as part of a city history, as part of a tribe or community, as a part of a city building and nation-making. A community if loss of memory is, actually, loss of the social and cultural identity (Sandercock 1998: 207–208). Meaning of memory “the past events and traces of a person’s in the mind, all the moments that the person has lived in the past (Dehkhoda, 196, 64). At the same time memory accumulation of information in human mind the power and the ability to remember (Oxford, 1994, 530). Sometimes there are only names or places of events remain in memory. So, the memory and object of the mind come to life with the spaces. As William Siew-Wai Lim (270) “history, memories and local identity are a more accurate measure of how much an urban environment is enjoyed by the people.” Each city have different feelings in its habitants and visitor (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The event of memory process equivalence (Tabei and Alkan Bala 2015)

Memory is about related to individual or social events. But social events leave wider traces in memory. Cultural and historical heritage are all steps in the history of city gathering and collective memory that presents today. As is known, the place has deeper meanings beyond the meaning of location (Relph, 2007, 120). The conceptual and descriptive criteria of place should be cleared out to understand the relation of events in social memory to place. Thus the social memory transferred to next generation. Therefore history of city strengthening the social memory factors. Urban memory is a collective memory historical and social all information about the city until today. Collective memory and collective identity are viewed as dynamically constructed in a discursive interaction (Wodak and Fairclough 1997, Johnstone 2002). Collective identity is usually based on symbolic myths and sites of commemoration, which have a very specific and basic function in a construction of a culture, society and nation (Ohana and Wistrich 1996).

As the central structure of a developing and consisting democracy, through transparency, comprehensiveness, public participation, accuracy, sensibility and other criteria in memorialization, public memorials may become democratic dialog areas (Erbaş and Ozer 2012). Moreover, memorialization plays a central role in shaping and managing civilian and urban life and policies, and becomes a reason to explain peoples’ opinions on political issues and ideologies (Brett et al., 2007). The city is a living organism, in this context the living it forms the city’s memory. Establishing appropriate physical and social order for events, documenting memories, and establishing appropriate conditions for transfer to future generation. Social, cultural, ethnic diversity, historical background ceremonies and celebrations are the city’s social and political potentials. In Halabja city’s social, cultural, and political analysis study depends on the political structure of the city and on its social components, events and chemical attack. Politics is a descriptive, creator of the memory spaces of the city in a sense and supervisor. In the process of formation of the city, the guide power is political. Thus the urban and urban spaces are influenced by social events. War, riot, migration governance of the country effects the arrangement of the cities. Changes in social and political situations

result in attributing new meaning in the urban memory. This new meaning leads to the deletion of the past and the link between the past and the future is breaking.

## 2. THE INSPIRATION OF URBAN MEMORY EXAMPLES OF EMBARRASSMENT

Authority, power and politics have been the major influences in the design of urban memory. The historical testimony of the Jewish Museum with its symbolic and monumental, not only in the memory of the city but in the collective of mankind leaving a mark in memory is a striking example. The Jewish Museum is almost a reincarnation of the memories which are denied and was aimed to live down. In other words, it reveals the production of a figurative location and keeps the collective memory alive through this place. The symbolic warning of deriving lessons from the destructions of the injustices throughout the history of human beings and avoiding similar mistakes should also be considered. The Berlin Jewish Museum which was designed by a world-famous architect, Daniel Libeskind who was originally Jewish, was completed in 1999 and opened in 2001 focused on localizing the terms of memory, emptiness and underground in terms of continuity, poverty and genocide as well as the terms of poverty and born-out. The Jewish Museum turned pain, tears, murder, cruelty, discrimination, grabbing, rapes, and all sorts of attitudes which may be considered crimes against humanity into the walls, ceilings, stairs and garden in a building through their symbolic references. The building which breaks a line of ancestry and narrates it through fractures in its mind is the story of disappearing (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Jewish Museum (Second author personal archive 2014)

Another example, a memorial place in Berlin to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, designed by architect Peter Eisenman and engineer Buro Happold. It was designed by American Peter Eisenman. Building began on April 1, 2003, and was finished on December 15, 2004. He has stated that this work is designed to confuse and disturb people's minds. The reason for this is to emphasize that this monument is a "grave" of the grave and to give people a more striking feeling. The monumental grave consists of small, large concrete blocks and the lengths of blocks vary between 0.2 and 4.8 meters. Dimensions are not systematically placed in an irregular manner like a labyrinth. It can be understood that the fact that the number of long concrete blocks is more than that, puts pressure and influence on people (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Holocaust Memorial

Another example is Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome), which resembles our Halabje case study. On 6 August 1945 at 08:15 o'clock in Hiroshima caused by atomic bombing of the US Air Force killing at least 70.000 people. After the atom bomb a flame ball started to expand in all direction at a speed of 440 meters with a diameter of 230 meters and a temperature of 4000°C. The Genbaku Dome as a result of the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima, it is the main places where people who lost their lives are remembered. Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome) is the only structure standing on the field where the first atom bomb explodes and included in the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1996. The Genbaku Dome is actually the most striking and shocking monument to the damages that could be given to a person with human hands. The building built in 1915 by Czech architect Jan Letzel at the edge of the Motoyasu River, building was used as Hiroshima Product Exhibition Hall. But the dome of the building was not destroyed by the bomb and succeeded to stand. Now the building shows its presence as a museum monument. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial not only is it a stark and powerful symbol of the most destructive force ever created by humankind; it also expresses the hope for world peace and the ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/775>) (Figure 4).

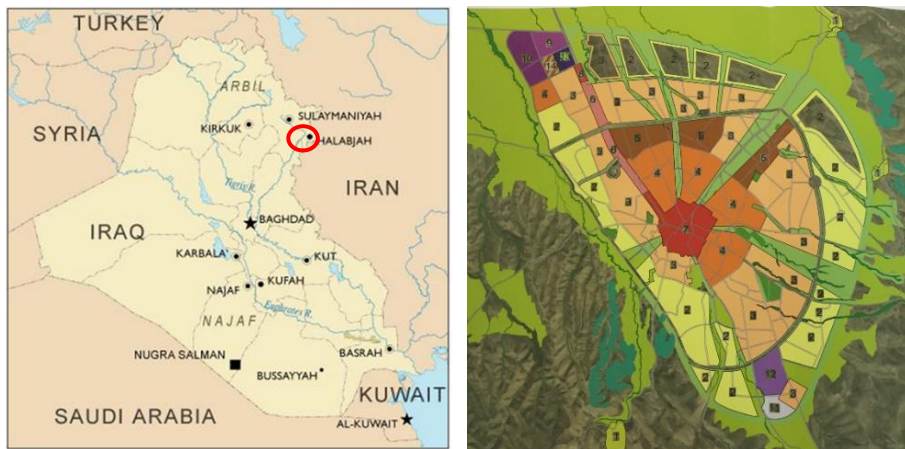


**Figure 4.** Hiroshima Peace Memorial

It is possible to increase the number of examples on the world. This study is examine the art state of Halabja city and evaluate the importance of chemical attack in the urban memory. So, the social relations before and after the chemical attack on the Kurdish people, the different ethnic groups living in Iraq, focuses on issues that affect the urban society and memory, such as the changing lifestyle.

### 3. HALABJA AS A CASE OF URBAN MEMORY

Halabja is one of the cities of Iraq, its located on the North-East part of country. About 240 km from the capital Baghdad and the area about 1599 km<sup>2</sup>. International borders 14 km from the Iranian border. Population of the city is 70,000 (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Location and Master Plan of Halabje

Halabja city has a long history, and the city was built by the Ottoman Empire in the 1850. The founder of the city is the Jaff tribe. Famous leaders of the Jaff tribe include Adile Khanum. British soldiers stationed in Halabja during World War I, she is saved the lives several soldiers. The British honoring her with title Princess of the Brave. There are a few historic buildings in the city of Halabja. These the palace of Hamid Beg the last Baban prince, but destroyed the Palace during the 1958 revelation. Another historical building and city icon Lady Adila's palace was destroyed during the 1986-1987. (Karen Dabrowska & Geoff Hann- Iraq Then and Now). The city has been growing since the beginning of the 20th century.

However the chemical attack is in front of the city history and urban fabric. Iran- Iraq war period chemical attack was made to the city. On 16 March 1988 the Baathist regime of Iraqi director Saddam Hussein bombed the city and surrounding district were attacked with banned chemical weapons. The chemical attack of the Halabja can be described as the second Hiroshima. Approximately 5000 people killed and 7000 people were injured in this attack. The diseases and birth defects in the following years. While Saddam blamed Iran, foreign governments were not fooled. The attack was called a "Crime Against Humanity" by many countries, including Canada. The chemical attack didn't just kill people at the same time the city have become soulless and led to disappearance of identities. So changed the form of the ruined building, changed the social lifestyle in the city. In general urban fabric depended on the specific cultural, social, and political nature of the city of Halabja and that past suffering become dominate in the city (Figure 6).





**Figure 6.** Terrible persecution of innocent people after a chemical attack

After the attack Saddam regime was built a new town between Halabja and Sulaymaniyah, northwest 50 km far away from the old Halabja. So the city of Halabja divided into old and new. The new Halabja does not carry any of features of the city. As shown that the regime of the Saddam wants the identity of the city and social culture to disappear. The city didn't destroy cultural and social identity at the same time changed lifestyle of the people, urban fabric and rebuilt the new modern style building. Thus Saddam regime has demonstrated its dominance all over the city.

New Halabja city was a force collective town designed to uproot people out of their own living quarters. The name of the new neighborhoods Halabja, Sirwan, Biyara, Khormal, Tawila and Shameran.

In 1991 the city became the Kurdish people as a result of the uprising of local people. Reconstruction of the ruined city far away from the traces of war. The houses are bigger and the roads are new than the old town, but people wanted to return to their own lands, culture and life. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) changed the name new Halabja to Shazaur, the meaning of Shazaur fertile plain. 16 March 2016 officially make Halabja the fourth city in the Kurdistan, and the new Halabja (Shazaur) incorporated into the Halabja city. Memory of place reflect the fabric in the city. Urban memory of place is a highly subjective term and in a manner that is context and culturally specific transfer to next generation. The city of Halabja is an Islamic city features. So, the effected the specific form of urban fabric settlements. In the city social life is divided into two as public space and privacy space. As Barth (1953:109) indicates, 'is an integral aspect of the Kurdish ideal\_ inversely a person with a reputation for miserliness suffers corresponding loss of prestige.' As Alizadeh (2011:143) the strengthening of internal solidarity in order to ease the circumstances of isolation has thus ensured the development of a strong sense of community which has been materialized in the

discursive construction of the space in accordance with the cultural requirements of the inhabitants. In the city social life relation together to houses and public spaces, and main concept urban fabric society neighborhood traditional settlement. Anyhow, remembering this horrible incidence will always have a place in daily life of the citizens and a monumental places provides the physical appearance to the reminder.

The Halabja monument and museum was made to commemorate the 5000 people died after the chemical attack of the Saddam regime. In 2003, the government opened up the most formal and in a sense the most significant of its memorials to the chemical attack at the Halabja city. Within the museum, there were the exhibits: powerful reconstructions of the events, with voices and script, photographs and film clips: the stories of the victims and the survivors rendering for the observer, for a brief time, an immediate experience.

Outside the museum there were gardens, a monument this monument representing memory when chemical attack an old man cradling a young child in his arms, both lying dead in a street. Representing memories in this way not only reminds people of their social history, without visiting a place specially, but also provides a correlation and helps to develop empathy with citizens as tourist (Ebru Erbas Gurler). The concept of Halabja museum 3 arms representing the 3rd month with 16 fingers representing the 16th day. And between the fingers are found in the sphere extends to the sky, representing the unity. Although from a distance it looks like some sort of concrete circus tent or even a water tower (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** The appearance of the museum from different view

In the inside have 3 circular-shaped room

1. First room, recalling that day and representing the animation with mannequins (Figure 8).



**Figure 8.** Living events are being revitalized

2. Second room, contains are photos taken by Iranian journalists, also contains prize possessions and Chemical Ali's pen, the Iranian journalist's camera, and some of Saddam's slippers (Figure 9).



**Figure 9.** Photographs of witnesses taking part in the massacre

3. Third room, the hall of names, writing the name of the all victims(5000 victims) arranged family group of Halabja chemical attack, on the carved the black marbles and covering all the wall in the room, with Kurdish flags all over the place (Figure 10).





**Figure 10.** The names of the people who died in the massacre

There are more than one mass graves in Halabja situated on a hillside east of the town. Further cemeteries are located in the south part of the city and writing the names on the gravestones of the victims as family group, but some of the wounded in the attack were taken to Tehran, where some died in here, there is another cemetery in Tehran and unfortunately, the most losses. In this grave 1500 people have been victims of holocaust. The percentage of green areas in the urban area of Halabja, including cemeteries approximately 28 ha (Halabja master plan inventory report). The female statue in the cemetery Halabja and behind the statue are hundreds of gravestones. This statue represented Fatima's hand of the statue's chest (Figure 11).



**Figure 11.** Memorial for the victims of the chemical attack of 16 March 1988

Another cemetery is located on the mountain, dedicated to the people who lived on the mountain side and died during the attacks. This place is have a beautiful view on city. It is suffering all over the city. The contrast with this beauty and the 16th of March 1988 couldn't be bigger. A lot of people died here or were injured during the attack, because they tried to flee to Iran. Even today, you can see the craters of the bombings marring the landscape. (Gerben Van Der Veen). Show dates are 16 March each year memorial ceremonies are held. Condemns the attack, remembering the dead and we do empathy.

And life does indeed go on. The town has seen significant growth, particularly in the last few years. After the Halabja chemical attack was in effect both city and the people's sociology, when visiting the city, museum, monument and cemetery making empathy happened there, and we ask ourselves the following question. What would we do if we were in such a situation? Also such events are happening that we will light our future. The past helps to increase the awareness in this respect and support the developments of social reflex. Urban memory is the

integrated between the city identity and lives people in there. The same time, preserving memory, and transfer future generation and culture etc. the Halabja museum, monuments and cemetery are helping to revive all social and political events in the urban memory.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Urban memorial is effect the city identity and civilization sociology. Urban memorial is one of the main elements that make up the structure of the city. The urban memory includes all the architectural works. Also the city with different memory until today are comes. It is an authoritarian control mechanism in design of urban memory and space relation. The two basic elements of memory remember and forget. Collective memory between these two latitudes develops. However, especially collective in the formation of the memory political powers, that will give meaning to collective identity the control the ways of remembering and forgetting. The memorial places that show a perfect moment of history. That we have forgetting we try to remember it again in our memory.

Halabja museum and cemetery of the glorious history of Kurdish people cultural and social accumulation, the Saddam regime crime the innocent people is a summary. Social experiences and memories with memorial places the city is carved into memory. The Halabja city is a perceptible example of the cruel massacre of the innocent people. In 1988, the Saddam regime killed 5000 innocent people with chemical attack. Halabja attack in shows that there is still an impact on citizens and in which foreign tourist can feel it immediately. Halabja massacre today still has influence in the city, and memories can be felt all over the city significantly. Halabja museum and monumental places are symbols of the city. This attack on the Halabja has taken place in urban memory and felt everywhere in the city. Daily life and memories is together in the Halabja city.

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