

THE ROLE OF CHURCHES IN THE CONTINUITY OF URBAN SPACE AND MEMORY: THE CASE OF İSTANBUL - YEŞİLKÖY

Kentsel Mekân ve Belleğin Sürekliliğinde Kiliselerin Rolü, İstanbul, Yeşilköy

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Abstract

The memory of city dwellers is incorporated into the memory of places and is worth preserving, just like the cultural values of a place. Memory enables the individual to perceive and sustain their past and existence of the person perceiving and gains meaning when it is associated with space. Religious minorities' places of faith in Istanbul, Turkey, ensure the sustainability of memory and space. Churches and gathering spaces constitute places of memory and define cultural memory with memories as they transfer these memories from generation to generation. The churches in Yeşilköy, Istanbul are meeting places where minorities come together on important occasions. Newly constructed church has strengthened the debates on memory over the determining role of the spirit of a place. This study discusses and makes recommendations for ensuring the continuity of the components creating the spatial, collective, and cultural memory of the Yeşilköy neighborhood to maintain its originality. Examinations and observations within the scope of this study have revealed that the sense of belonging among the religious minorities living there comes to the fore, which requires the participation of minorities in the work to be carried out in the area. Preservation of the tangible and intangible cultural values in this area should be the primary objective since memory contributes to the preservation of place.

Keywords: Collective Memory, Cultural Memory, Cultural Continuity, Spatial Continuity, Yeşilköy

Özet

Kentte yaşayanların hafızası, mekânın hafızası ile bir bütündür ve bu hafıza, mekânın kültürel değerleri gibi korunmaya değerdir. Bellek, bireyin geçmişini ve varoluşunu algılamasını ve sürdürmesini sağlar. Mekânla ilişkilendirildiğinde ise anlam kazanır. Bu çalışmada kolektif ve kültürel belleğin nasıl işlediği ve tarihi kent mekânının sürekliliği ile bellek arasındaki ilişkinin varlığı Yeşilköy Köyü'nde bulunan kiliseler üzerinden tartışılmaktadır.

Azınlık grupların inanç mekânları, belleğin ve mekânın sürdürülebilirliğini sağlar. Kiliseler ve toplanma alanları, bellek mekânlarını oluşturur ve bu mekânlar kuşaktan kuşağa aktarım yapmaları ile anılarla kültürel belleği tanımlarlar. Yeşilköy'deki kiliseler, azınlıkların önemli günlerinde bir araya geldikleri bir buluşma mekânıdır. Rumlara, Ermenilere ve Levantenlere ait 3 kiliseye ek olarak Süryani Cemaati'nin burada yeni bir kilise inşa etmiş olması da mekânın ruhunun (*genius loci*) belirleyici rolü üzerinden bellek tartışmalarını güçlendirmiştir.

Özgün niteliklerini sürdüren Yeşilköy semtinin, mekânsal, kolektif ve kültürel belleğini oluşturan bileşenlerinin sürekliliğinin sağlanmasına yönelik yapılan incelemeler sonucunda, bölgede yaşayan dini azınlıklar arasında aidiyet duygusunun ön plana çıktığı saptanmış, yapılacak çalışmalara azınlıkların katılımının önemi ortaya koymuştur. Belleğin mekânın korunmasına katkı sağlaması nedeniyle bu alandaki somut ve somut olmayan kültürel değerlerin korunması öncelikli amaç olmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kolektif Bellek, Kültürel Bellek, Kültürel Süreklilik, Mekânsal Süreklilik, Yeşilköy

Historic urban space and the continuity of memory are directly and organically interconnected. The memory of the people who live in a space and those who utilize that space are also part of the memory of the place. This memory is of sensitive value and is worth preserving, like all cultural values of a space. When memory is interpreted in its simplest form, it enables individuals to perceive and maintain their past and existence as a whole. However, memory gains meaning when it is associated with space. Places of faith belonging to Christian minority groups (churches) also ensure the sustainability of memory and, in this context, of space. This study's main aim is to analyze the impact of the connection between the cultural qualities of space and the memories of inhabitants on the continuity of cultural heritage.

Based on this aim, this study discusses how collective and cultural memory functions through the churches in Yeşilköy Köyiçi, a neighborhood in the Bakırköy District of İstanbul, Turkey, and the presence of a relationship between the continuity of historical urban space and the continuation of memory. An important aspect here is memory and its continuity, as the minorities who currently live in the Yeşilköy Köyiçi neighborhood or who have settled in different districts of İstanbul all come together in the churches on important occasions (holidays, weddings, and funerals). Religious spaces play an important role in preserving and maintaining the memory of these people. The Assyrian community, currently constituting the majority in the neighborhood, has recently built a new church here, which has strengthened the debates on memory that are the subject of this study.

The study aims to reveal the guiding principles of planning approaches around places of faith, one of the key components of cities, in the context of urban conservation with the concepts of collective and cultural memory, specifically within the concept of memory, which has been discussed from different perspectives throughout various disciplines. The starting point of the study was to investigate the churches that are of important value for Christian minority groups in trying to sustain their memory, the places around these churches, and their intended use. In line with this objective, three churches in Yeşilköy Köyiçi in İstanbul, and the community that uses these churches were selected as the study area. The Assyrian Church, which was under construction at the beginning of the study, was opened for worship in 2023, and this process enriched the discussion of the study.

Claim that (Halbwachs, 2018) individuals acquire their memories through their membership in a social group, especially through their religious and class

connections, place them somewhere in their memory and thus remember them” is similar to that of social anthropologist Paul Connerton, which is “in many cases a person remembers with the provocation of those around him”. (Connerton, 2014). The Egyptologist and theologian Assman emphasized rituals such as ceremonies, festivals, celebrations, et cetera in his research on memory and revealed that religion is effective in cultural memory, which supports the hypothesis of the present study. (Assmann, 2015). Sociologist Henri Lefebvre and historian Pierre Nora have written that memory and history are not synonymous; they contain opposites; memory is always a current event, and history is the imagination of the past. (Lefebvre, 2019) (Nora, 1994).

One of the theorists included in the theoretical background of this study, sociologist Halbwachs asserts that people form their memories as a result of their affiliation with a social group. (Halbwachs, 2018) On the other hand, Connerton claims that a person remembers things due to the provocation of those around them. (Connerton, 2014) Assman emphasizes rituals such as ceremonies and festivals in his studies on memory. (Assmann, 2015).

The reason Yeşilköy was chosen as the setting of the study is that the neighborhood, which was a historical settlement, is a residential area that has hosted many diverse ethnic groups. Founded as a Greek fishing village, the neighborhood has been home to Greeks, Armenians, Levantines, Muslims, and Assyrians throughout history. There are three old and one newly built church in the neighborhood.

The concepts of memory and space were initially defined, followed by the establishment of the relationship between these concepts, while providing context for the study. After revealing the spatial history of Yeşilköy, the hypothesis that the presence of churches in the area creates continuity in space was supported by the researchers’ observations.

The quantitative data of this study were obtained from the evaluation of the current situation in the area and the records of local administrations. This study examined previous research from those who have worked in the field, looking at the impacts of memory on spatial continuity and the traces of social memory, conducted archival research at the Assyrian Kadim Foundation and Yeşilköy neighborhood associations, and examined the effects of memory on the continuity of space and social memory.

TRACES OF COLLECTIVE AND CULTURAL MEMORY IN SPACE

“Each social group can only remember with space”
(Lefebvre, 2019)

If memory is considered as a storehouse that preserves every moment a person experiences, space is like the walls of this storehouse. Space plays a triggering role in the process of recalling an individual’s memories. Individuals often want to return to specific places in their memories. When a person sees a building, a park, or a monument from their past, it often triggers memories from their childhood. This is an example revealing the relationship between the concepts of memory and space. Space ensures the continuity of memory by keeping memories alive.

A person has experiences that correspond to certain periods of time throughout their life, and after a certain period, they recall some of these experiences, thanks to memory. However, there is also the physical environment in which daily life takes place, which constitutes personal and collective memory. Thus, space acts as a 'place' in the construction of personal and collective memory. In the meantime, the memory of space is also formed, enabling the definition of the reality of the present (Erman & Özalöğlu, 2017).

Spaces enable the continuity of our memory along with two different concepts: collective memory and cultural memory. While collective memory refers to the memory of a community, cultural memory refers to the environment where the community lives and the set of values in that environment.

Changes in the squares, streets, and buildings of a city destroy the traces and memories in social memory. The individual who keeps their memory alive while these changes occur returns to the past with the help of their environment when the traces of the past are lost completely. However, remembering a place's past is out of the question for individuals who are unfamiliar with the previous state of the place that has undergone change. Their memory begins at the point where the change ends. As Halbwachs (2018) emphasizes, collective memory is “selective, socially constructed, spatially inclusive. The memory of a society is a reconstruction of the past.”

A building or a monument can ensure the continuity of memory. This is also true for places of worship. Preserving the memory of these places or revealing it to people who visit guarantees their preservation and, thus, the continuity of the space (Kurtarır, 2012). Churches are also holy places. The memories of a religious group are revived when the members of the group see the location and arrangement of objects in a church. When Christians go to a church or a cemetery, they know they will find there a mood they have experienced before and that they will meet people who have the same mood as them. However, it is not enough for them to pass the threshold of the church; there must also be people there who have the same understanding as them (Halbwachs, 2018).

Halbwachs said, “When memory forgets, this means that the groups that have memories of them are disappearing.” In other words, the memory of a society continues to transform as individuals, especially for the elderly. They pass away or become isolated, and the group itself is constantly changing. It is difficult to say when a collective memory has disappeared or when it has left the group's consciousness, as it is enough that it lives in the memory of a limited group to find it again (Halbwachs, 2018 p.102). What is meant here, as Halbwachs emphasizes, is that memory is alive and continues to exist in constant communication. If this exchange pauses, or if the framework of the reality exchanged changes or disappears, the act of forgetting emerges. In other words, people only remember what they have exchanged and what they can place in collective memory. Therefore, the memory of the group to which the individual belongs is more influential than individual psychology (Connerton, 2014).

According to Halbwachs, collective memory is a collaboration of memories, but history is unique. This is another characteristic distinguishing collective memory from history. History is the universal memory of the human species; however,

there is no definition of universal memory. Each collective memory is supported by a limited group in time and space. History is concerned with differences, not similarities. Memory does not exist without similarities, as people with the same consciousness remember common events. Collective memory is the recording of similarities; however, history begins at the point where collective memory is no longer preserved. When the number of people who remember a period or a person begins to diminish, the only way to save it is to solidify it through writing, to write down past events according to certain rules (Halbwachs, 2018).

Nora agrees with Halbwachs, stating that memory and history are not the same, but rather, the former includes contradictions. According to Nora, memory is continuously produced by living groups; it is alive and in constant development. History is the reconstruction of things that no longer exist; however, this is problematic and incomplete. Memory is always a current event, whereas history is a vision of the past (Nora, 2006).

“The root of the sense of continuity is in space; there are memory spaces because there are no memory environments anymore.” Here, Nora has brought up several symbols, representations, and indicators that form and strengthen the relationship between collective memory and space. These concrete traces that Nora has underlined combine the social, cultural, and historical values in the memory of individuals to form the *lieu of mémoire* (place of memory). Spatial memory, which is formed individually, joins together with the social, political, and cultural events of the period, traditions, neighborhood relations, and remembered playgrounds. Individuals' emotional and semantic experiences of those places are also impactful in the formation of spatial memory.

Memory's source stems from the group. Common memories, beliefs, and values shared by group members play an active role in the formation of collective memory. The existence of a “place” that shelters the common values of these group members and ensures their historical continuity also sustains collective memory. It is very important for individuals to perceive the story or the past of a place correctly for collective memory to progress and carry it into the future.

Lefebvre, who says that “each social group can only remember with space”, draws attention to another point. Lefebvre points out a difference between the physical and social definitions of space and that such a difference also exists between the physical and social definitions of time. (Lefebvre, 2019) What is meant here is that every social time is unique, yet one and the same. In other words, there can be many, even simultaneous, but different social and collective memories of the same period of time.

There are three different kinds of social frames: family, religious groups, and social events, all of which are the carriers of traditional forms of behavior. These frames not only help to form individual and collective memory but also enable individuals to remember and make it easier to identify and locate things (Halbwachs, 2019). Social frames are the environments where groups preserve and maintain their culture, with each group contributing to the cultural formation of the next, for each group needs specific spaces and buildings that reflect and support its way of life to become institutionalized (Erman, & Özalöglu, 2017). For Lefebvre, social frames include the memory of events; however, collective memory contains cultural memory (Lefebvre, 2019).

Urban spaces have been transformed throughout history. Apart from destructive effects such as wars and disasters, urban projects have also erased the traces of the past. Through such projects, buildings have been demolished, boulevards and squares built, and urban parks opened for construction in most cities.



Figure 1. Taksim Square and Monument (1977)

Source: SALT Archive,
Tabanlıoğlu Family Archive,
[https://
archives.saltresearch.org/
handle/123456789/214714](https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/214714)

The historical center of İstanbul has also undergone similar projects throughout history. The works carried out in Taksim Square are one such example and have created a different meaning for those who know the previous state of the square from those who are only familiar with the square in its current form. There is no trace of the past, as a concrete concept of space and time, which is the fulcrum of social memory, has disappeared as a result of these interventions. In short, every intervention in Taksim Square damages social memory. When the continuity of memory is interrupted, all the meanings and social relations formed in the space in the historical process are injured. As a result of these spatial and functional changes, the memories of those who use the space are also affected, and there is a loss of memory surrounding the space. When all these factors come together, there is a risk of weakening emotional ties (Erbey, 2017). Numerous studies have been conducted on urban spaces such as Taksim Square that have undergone change and transformation as a result of spatial interventions. However, in this context, places of worship, especially churches and the urban spaces used by their communities, have not been discussed much in the literature. In this respect, the unique aspect of this research, which is a reading made through churches in İstanbul, is thought to be a contribution to the literature.

Memories are preserved when places are preserved, and the transfer to future generations of the past and experiences is vital for the sustainability of a place's identity. Places of memory, which are embedded in the memory of the place, bear more meaning for some segments of society or specific individuals. The old and new inhabitants and users of Yeşilköy Köyiçi have defined this meaning in terms of their own experiences. These experiences consist of the memories that the inhabitants recall with the place, as Lefebvre says, and their collective memory defines their culture. (Lefebvre, 2019) The churches and the gathering spaces around them constitute places of memory of Yeşilköy that are passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, they define their belonging to these places together.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACES OF MEMORY IN PRESERVING THE MEMORY OF PLACE

The collective memory of a society can be found in various places. In particular, the places where group members carry out their daily practices or visit at certain times are spaces where unique social dynamics survive. The continuity of communication between group members is ensured, a sense of belonging develops, and identity is acquired thanks to these visits. For this reason, sacred places are often at the center of the spatial organization of communities. Sacred spaces, or churches in the specific case of the study, are a space of existence for different ethnic groups separated from the general society. Gathering through a common religion, these groups create a collective memory.

As Nora emphasizes, places of memory and holy spaces (places of belief), which have emerged with the realization that there is no spontaneous memory, have found a place for themselves in every era of history. (Nora, 1994).

Religion is an important element of social memory according to some sociologists who perceive the concept of religion as a sacred chain of memory, and who regard the abandonment of religion as a loss of memory. Therefore, it is quite normal that the memories of a religious group are revived when the group members see certain spaces, specific locations, or the arrangement of objects (Halbwachs, 2018). This has led places of worship to be central locations in the organization of urban space. Public spaces, especially mosques, are the central units of urban organization in traditional Islamic societies. So too is the case for Christian societies. These places of worship have been spaces that define religious and social life, where socio-economic processes take place, and reflect the political situations and changes of cities and states.

Assman argues that places of belief are inclusive in many ways when compared with other places of memory, as cultural life is under the influence of religion more than we can imagine in a world where there is often no distinction between religion and culture. Therefore, societies can come together and form a religious group regardless of gender, age, ethnic group, education, et cetera, but only with their similar lives on the axis of commonality of belief (Assman, 2018). Religion is the main phenomenon that brings people together most inclusively, acting as an ‘umbrella’. A society may adopt different habits, cultures, and traditions, but ‘religion’ creates a strong environment of common thought and action that brings people together beyond all these differences. Thus, the fact that religious places acquire spaces and continuity in cities can be considered a reflection of societies and cultures and creates a basic basis for discussing the continuity of the concepts of identity and memory of Yeşilköy.

With its sacred spaces, diverse ethnic groups, and the formation of identity that has transpired from the past to the present, Yeşilköy has built an abstract bridge between the memory of the place and the collective memory. The relationship between memory and space and the role of religious and cultural habits of societies in the continuity of space are solidified in churches, in other words, in places that can be characterized as ‘places of memory’.

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS PLACES IN THE CONTINUITY OF SPACE AND MEMORY IN YEŞİLKÖY

The Yeşilköy neighborhood, located within the borders of the Bakırköy district of İstanbul, has always been a place of residence for diverse ethnic groups. Founded as a Greek fishing village, the neighborhood has been home to Greeks, Armenians, Levantines, Muslims, and Assyrians, communities that continue to this day. Before the rapid urbanization of 1950s, the neighborhood had a Greek population of up to 80%, mostly in the Köyiçi neighborhood, and was impacted by political developments throughout history, losing its population density mostly due to forced migration. Thanks to written and oral history, along with memories surviving to this day, we know that during the period when there was a dense Greek population, there was also a very lively and entertaining lifestyle as an extension of this culture, with closer neighborly relations that overflowed onto the streets. Taverns and restaurants in the neighborhood, which are trying to maintain their existence by keeping up with modernity, are the remains of this social structure produced by the Greek culture. When looked at from a cultural point of view, the first church (Agios Stefanos) and primary school established in the neighborhood and belonging to the Greeks have survived.

Besides the Greeks, Armenians, Levantines, and Assyrians were other minority groups that contributed to the population of the area. Armenians gifted the neighborhood with an art-oriented lifestyle, as they were mostly engaged in woodworking and handicrafts when they first arrived. The Armenian church, Surp Stepannos Apostolic, and the primary school located within the church grounds have survived and continue to function to this day. This community is the most important bridge between the old fabric and the new social structure.

Assyrians resided in Yeşilköy after 1950s. Assyrians, generally active in the jewelry industry, had used the Latin Catholic Church of San Stefano as a place of worship and meeting for around 50 years. The community's request for a church of their own was accepted by the current government and in August 2019, the construction of the church began on land deemed suitable in the cemetery area belonging to Latin Catholics. The construction of the church, Mor Efreim Assyrian Ancient Church, took four years and it was opened for worship on October 8, 2023. The first service in the church was held on Sunday, October 15, 2023.

To this day, the neighborhood maintains this cosmopolitan structure. The presence of churches of minority groups ensures the continuity of space and memory in the neighborhood. The neighborhood has always been prosperous, and this economic welfare is reflected in the housing and urban spaces. Yeşilköy Köyiçi's urban fabric, an urban conservation area, has 48 registered buildings that have preserved their original character to date. Of these buildings, 44 are examples of civil architecture, and four are monumental buildings.

Agios Stefanos was Yeşilköy's first recorded name in 16th century. It was an important residential district of the Makriköy (Bakırköy) district on the Marmara coast, about 17 kilometers west of İstanbul. The name of the neighborhood was changed to “Yeşilköy” after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic and became an affiliated borough of the Bakırköy district in 1924 (Tuğlacı, 1993).

Dating back to the late Roman and Byzantine periods, Agios Stefanos is known as a settlement of summer villas and mansions along the Marmara Sea coast. There are records of summer villas here, even during the Roman period. The Latins landed in the area on June 23, 1203, and anchored their fleet off Agios Stefanos during the 4th Crusade. (Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi, 1994)

Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, Agios Stefanos was a small ship harbor. The district's zoning began in the 1840s, and it was then that the mansions were built. Regular ferry boat services were established from the bridge to Agios Stefanos in early 1852, and in 1870 a train and station became operational.

Figure 2. A postcard from the 1900s Yeşilköy train station (Tuna, 2006)



Figure 3. Mor Efrem Assyrian Ancient Church (<https://efe-mimarlik.com/yesilkoyde-yapilan-suryani-kilisesinde-son-durum/>)



Figure 4. Location of churches in Yeşilköy



The three older churches in Yeşilköy are within an urban conservation area. They are all located within this 6-hectare area on neighboring streets. Different religious communities have preferred their church buildings to be close together. This unity in space integrates social memory and makes Yeşilköy unique.



Figure 5. Agios Stefanos Greek Orthodox Church in Yeşilköy (Turgay Tuna Archive)

Although most minorities living in Yeşilköy have left the district for personal or political reasons (either abroad or to other districts in İstanbul where minorities are concentrated), the number of people visiting the churches increases, especially on religious holidays and special occasions, such as weddings, baptisms, and funerals. These churches have a special significance for each religious group, as they are places of memory for their communities.

From this point of view, places emerge as an instrument for the preservation and revelation of societies' collective memory. Conversely, space can be the creator and protector of the collective memory of a society. The construction of the new Assyrian church indicates tangible evidence for this claim.



Figure 6. Surp Stefanos Armenian Church (Source: Turgay Tuna Archive)

The Armenians came from Central Anatolia in the 1820s to work in the gunpowder factories in Makriköy (Bakırköy), settling in Agia Stefanos (Yeşilköy) and Makriköy. The Gunpowder Master, Simon Amira Dadyan, had the Surp Stepannos Church built in 1826 (Tuna, 2006). The church was rebuilt as a masonry building by Boğos Dadyan 17 years later, in 1843 (Dabağyan, 2006). This church, which is one of the first Armenian churches constructed outside the city walls of İstanbul, was opened for worship on June 13, 1844. A private school was built next to the church in 1843 for the education of Armenian children. The school, which was later affiliated with the Ministry of National Education, continues to provide education.

Catholic Italians received the right to build a church in Yeşilköy in January 1865. The construction process, which began after Simon Dadyan donated the land, lasted one year, and the church opened for worship on April 19, 1866. However, this church was destroyed in the great earthquake of 1894. Therefore, a new church was built on the same land, which opened its doors to the community in 1896 (Dabağyan, 2006). This church is currently used by Catholics, whose population has dwindled considerably, as well as Assyrians who live in the area.



Figure 7. San Stefano Latin
Catholic Church

Greeks are the oldest population in Yeşilköy. The Patriarchate records report that 1,659 people lived in Agia Stefanos in 1657, with Greeks constituting the majority of the population. Around 300 Greeks lived here in 1873-1874. However, researcher-writer Dimitri Kalemis stated that the number of Greek families here during this period was only 80 (Tuna, 2006). Agios Stefanos Greek Church, built in the first half of the 4th century, is the oldest place of worship in Yeşilköy. This first church, which was dilapidated over time, was rebuilt as a masonry, owing to the financial support of Boğos Dadyan, the head of the Armenian community, as a gesture to the Greeks, and was opened for worship on September 2, 1845 (Tuğlacı, 1993).

PLACE OF THE CULTURE AND CULTURE OF THE PLACE

Abstract spaces are encountered in today's contemporary conditions due to the transformation of the perception of time, the dominance of speed, and the spatialization of time. Accordingly, places of memory can be considered symbolically and do not have to occupy a physical space. Street names that are songs or poems can also be considered places of memory (Biçel, 2012, as cited in Durna, 2015). Therefore, the emergence of places of memory can be associated with intangible cultural values as well as tangible space. Traditional expressions, oral traditions, narratives, social practices, and traditional handicrafts that have a place in the memory of societies express these values. However, these values, which do not necessarily occupy a physical space, have a stronger cultural continuity when they are associated with a tangible place to be passed on to future generations and maintain their continuity. While these traditions create a cultural dynamic in the background of the place, they create a certain context for them to be kept alive for future generations when traditions are associated with a certain place. Therefore, there is a space-memory dynamic that mutually feeds each other and continues from the past to the present in the relationship between the church space and the religious and cultural ways of life of the societies encountered in Yeşilköy.

Connerton and Assman emphasized rituals when examining memory. (Connerton, 2014) (Assmann, 2015). According to Connerton, an element of reminiscence lies at any beginning, and our mind turns to the framework of previous experiences before having a personal experience. The individual achieves this remembering through commemoration ceremonies and bodily practices, as ceremonies are repeated and performed in certain periods according to certain rules; this helps the group perceive that the past continues uninterrupted. The ceremonies held by countries for liberation days or important revolutions that are important to them have this kind of effect on the group. However, there is another type of ceremony that is retrospective and depends on the cycle of the year. Festivities in many cultures, commemorative days of an event in the mythological past, New Year's days or birthdays, and Christian feasts of saints are also among these types of ceremonies. Participation in these is voluntary. The groups are made to think that the relationship with the past continues and that such continuity is asserted with both types of ceremonies. Memorial ceremonies serve to keep the past in one's mind by drawing representative pictures. The imitation of a scene or situation wearing representative clothing is a re-enactment of the past. Here, too, the bodily practices that Connerton emphasizes in relation to memory come into play. The body used to revive the past in commemoration ceremonies can also preserve the past through certain abilities.

All four churches in Yeşilköy provide spatial unity for the groups to which they belong. Easter has a special significance among the festivals. The members of all communities attach importance to the service and continue to celebrate at their homes with a festive meal. Easter buns and eggs dyed red are the symbols of this holiday, a tradition passed down from the Greeks.

Examinations of these places revealed that the churches in Yeşilköy are places of remembrance that exemplify Pierre Nora's research. (Nora, 1994). Visitors to these places establish a connection with the past thanks to rituals. Churches, as physical spaces, revive memories and enable collective and cultural memory to come into play. However, it is not only physical spaces that keep the memory of group members alive. The setting in the churches, the rituals, the music playing in the background, and the smell of incense serve the continuity of collective and cultural memory.

The establishment of the first Assyrian church, which was constructed during the Turkish Republic, in addition to the three existing churches that are actively used by their congregations, shows the strong character and identity of the space. On the other hand, those who come to the area from outside Yeşilköy play an important role as those who live within the continuity of space and memory. Yeşilköy also differs from other places as it is a meeting place where many different communities come together on special occasions. There are many active churches in İstanbul; however, community members who have had past ties with Yeşilköy still prefer to come here and meet in these churches. The influential factor is not only the presence of churches but also their ties to the places that have endured from the past to the present.



Figure 8. Easter Mass at Surp Stefanos Armenian Church

A religious community can only be convinced that it remains unchanged if it sees those places or reconstructs a symbolic image of those places while everything around that community changes. Such places participate in the unchangeability of the physical and collective ideas find the opportunity to survive by settling in that space or staying within its boundaries (Halbwachs, 2018, p. 193). The churches in Yeşilköy are also meeting places for the Armenian, Greek, and Assyrian groups living here, helping to ensure the continuation of cultural memory.

There are also moments when the churches are completely empty or their doors are closed. Only motionless walls and objects lie inside. During these moments, the group has dispersed; however, the group continues to exist and maintains its old form. When the church is reshaped, or its doors are opened, it does not make the individual think that it has ceased to exist for a certain period of time. However, conditions must be met for this to happen. Believers must have passed by the church or seen it from a distance; they must have kept the sound of the bells, the images, and the ceremonial rituals they attended alive in their memory. The permanence of places is important in this respect (Halbwachs, 2018, p.189).

The churches in Yeşilköy are places of remembrance, exemplifying Pierre Nora's studies. Visitors to these places establish a connection with the past by means of rituals and conversations with other community members. As a physical space, churches revive memories and enable collective and cultural memory to come into play. However, it is not only physical spaces that keep the memory of group members alive. The preservation of these spaces is important for the continuity of the memory of group members, as when a social space is eliminated, group members face the risk of identity loss. The presence of these churches in Yeşilköy shows the importance of memory in urban conservation.

Yeşilköy contains elements that form collective memory and transfer it to future generations thanks to the historical processes it has undergone. Most of the villas in the residential spaces, which help form the impression of a "wealthy neighborhood", have been demolished and turned into apartment buildings; however, those remaining or the new ones built in their place continue to add to this perception. The churches, which date back to the late Roman and Byzantine periods, continue their existence unchanged, providing the most important spatial elements maintaining collective memory. The crowds seen in these

churches, especially on religious holidays and special occasions, reveal the contribution of these spaces to the sustainability of collective memory.

Memory is articulated in concrete spaces through cemeteries, religious spaces, monuments, museums, historical fountains, schools, et cetera. In this way, memory continues to survive in those spaces. However, there are also intangible elements, such as religious ceremonies, festivals, and rituals, that ensure the continuity of memory.

CONCLUSION: PRESERVING THE MEMORY OF PLACE AND THE MEMORY OF SOCIETY

As a necessary goal for creating happier societies, improving the quality of life is among all urban planning strategies. For this purpose, current planning approaches prioritize the participation of communities in decision-making and implementation processes. However, it is necessary to protect and create spaces where communities feel they belong to ensure interaction. Public spaces enable people to come together to communicate and interact. Public buildings and spaces embedded in the collective memories of individuals and communities encourage gatherings as they are the most reliable spaces. Community events, holidays, and festivals that bring people together in these spaces are an important motivation for the continuity of values. Inclusive planning is an approach that involves all segments of society in decision-making processes to ensure that the needs and aspirations of residents are reflected in decisions. The development of conservation master plans is the current planning tool and approach for places like Yeşilköy. However, because these plans are limited tools for developing principles for the protection of intangible cultural values and memory, different planning and management tools are needed to genuinely protect areas such as Yeşilköy.

On the other hand, physical plans are not planning tools that prioritize participation. As they are prepared through participatory processes, address tangible and intangible values, and are flexible management plans, they have recently become widely preferred planning tools in protected heritage sites. Yeşilköy should be considered with a holistic “management plan” approach in the context of the preservation of places of memory, which bear great meaning for the users of the area as well as the inhabitants, the protection of unique qualities, and the continuity of the space.

Different from traditional approaches, a management plan places more duties and responsibilities on local and civil initiatives and deals not only with the current state of cultural heritage but also with its place in future projections. The common point, where all management plans agree, is that a management plan is a guide that establishes the site characteristics and management objectives and is not a plan that is prepared, completed, and implemented but is seen as a process that is constantly being revised. The management plan, defined as an ongoing process, is not static and adapts to changing conditions and objectives. Accordingly, the management plan for Yeşilköy should be based on the principle of ensuring coordination between all central or local persons and organizations working for the sustainability of cultural heritage assets and should include all relevant segments in the processes.

The four churches in Yeşilköy add vital meaning to the spatial character of the neighborhood with their monumental qualities. Moreover, they make the area a center of faith. When looked at from a sociological point of view, the presence of the churches makes the neighborhood a place where religious practices are carried out for the minority populations, as well as a place that mediates togetherness. Memories passed down from generation to generation enable communities and individuals to establish ties with Yeşilköy. Urban planning should also undertake the mission of protecting and strengthening these ties. Accordingly, the importance of a management plan approach for the sustainable and holistic conservation of Yeşilköy should be reemphasized. The basic principles for this proposed management plan approach in the context of preserving social and spatial memory can be summarized as follows:

1. Examinations and observations within the scope of this study have revealed that the sense of belonging among the religious minorities living there comes to the fore, which requires the participation of minorities in the work to be carried out in the area. Thus, a “neighborhood participation unit” where churches and their communities will take part should be established. This unit, which will provide continuous information and communication, is important in terms of guiding planning decisions. The churches’ communities should be included in the process of any planning, design, and renovation work to be carried out in the Yeşilköy Köyiçi neighborhood, even if the majority of them do not live there.
2. Preservation of the tangible and intangible cultural values in this area should be the primary objective since memory contributes to the preservation of place. For this purpose, continuously updated identification studies should be carried out and an archive should be created regarding the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the area. This archive will constitute important data for the preservation of the continuity of memory.
3. Exhibiting all books, articles, publications, photographs, maps, and engravings related to Yeşilköy on a website that can be accessed continuously and in an on-site location will also contribute to the continuity of memory.
4. In renovation works, the street texture and civil architecture should be preserved and unused buildings should be restored in a way that society can use.
5. The Primary School for Greeks, which belongs to the Greek community, and is currently closed, should be opened to provide education. This will increase the loyalty of the existing minority population to the place.

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