CLORINDA SISSI GALASSO

MNEMOTOPES

DESIGNING THE
MEMORY OF PLACES

ESSAYS BY
GIOVANNI BAULE
GERMANA AGNETTI

FrancoAngeli

DESIGN DELLA COMUNICAZIONE | SAGGI OPEN ACCESS | 06

Design della comunicazione

La collana Design della comunicazione nasce per far emergere la densità del tessuto disciplinare che caratterizza questa area del progetto e per dare visibilità alle riflessioni che la alimentano e che ne definiscono i settori, le specificità, le connessioni. Nel grande sviluppo della cultura mediatica la presenza del Design della comunicazione è sempre più trasversale e in continua espansione. La comunicazione richiede un sapere progettuale là dove la cultura si fa editoria, dove i sistemi di trasporto si informatizzano, dove il prodotto industriale e i servizi entrano in relazione con l'utente. Il Design della comunicazione è in azione nella grande distribuzione dove il consumatore incontra la merce, nella musica, nello sport, nello spettacolo, nell'immagine delle grandi manifestazioni come nella loro diffusione massmediale. La collana è un punto di convergenza in cui registrare riflessioni, studi, temi emergenti; è espressione delle diverse anime che compongono il mondo della comunicazione progettata e delle differenti componenti disciplinari a esso riconducibili. Oggetto di studio è la dimensione artefattuale, in tutti i versanti del progetto di comunicazione: grafica editoriale, editoria televisiva, audiovisiva e multimediale, immagine coordinata d'impresa, packaging e comunicazione del prodotto, progettazione dei caratteri tipografici, web design, information design, progettazione dell'audiovisivo e dei prodotti interattivi, dei servizi e dei sistemi di comunicazione complessa, quali social network e piattaforme collaborative.

Accanto alla dimensione applicativa, l'attenzione editoriale è rivolta anche alla riflessione teorico-critica, con particolare riguardo alle discipline semiotiche, sociologiche e massmediologiche che costituiscono un nucleo portante delle competenze del designer della comunicazione.

La collana si articola in due sezioni. I SAGGI accolgono contributi teorici dai diversi campi disciplinari intorno all'area di progetto, come un'esplorazione sui fondamenti della disciplina. Gli SNODI ospitano interventi di raccordo disciplinare con il Design della comunicazione.

FrancoAngeli

Clorinda Sissi Galasso

Mnemotopes
Designing the memory of places

FrancoAngeli

To Lucio, my mnemotope

Contents

Mnemotopes

Giovanni Baule
Design Department, Politecnico di Milano

The landscape of mnemotopes

This book is the result of research. Or, one could say, the first result of research, because, like any research worthy of the name, it opens up a horizon by methodically arriving at an original result and represents the beginning of research. Due to its founding character, it therefore represents an important starting point. Moreover, as is so often the case, Clorinda Galasso's research gives a name to something we know or thought we knew, discovering an unprecedented heuristic dimension that is destined to grow over time.

Mnemotopes presents itself as a meeting point, a point of convergence between memory studies and communication design in its particular declination of 'communication design for the territory'; in this sense, it positions itself as the barycenter of a field of investigation that, made fertile by this overlap, encompasses a very broad disciplinary constellation that includes literature, urban planning, anthropology, social sciences, human geography, media studies and theories of perception and representation, without neglecting the world of the arts, which has made this theme a specific field of intervention. It is a disciplinary map, already traced here, which also consists of relations and participations, destined to become a matrix of broader maps; evidence of a widening disciplinary focus and of the undeniable originality of this research.

Among the elements that structure the mnemotopes, it is the thread of memory that reconfigures the places and the points of view on the places; and the places in turn evoke memories, within a sort of circuit that is thus fulfilled. «Although they are so subtle as to become intangible, the threads of thought remain attached to two real extremities: states of consciousness or neuro-perceptual processes on the one hand, the object on the other», Stefano Catucci reminds us (Catucci, 2024, p. 27). In the case of mnemotopes, it is a matter of highlighting not so much the existence as such of places that, more or less known, are already part of a geophysical reality, but precisely the thread of memory that connects them to past experiences, envelops them, and reconfigures them as concrete

places of thought: «[...] working in this way on an intuition that still dominates our view of thought, we would no longer have only the phantom line connecting consciousness with things, but material threads that keep us in the physical environment in which we are and operate» (*ivi*, p. 29). It is an experiential thought that arises as an individual or collective and which the devices of communication clearly extend into their collective dimension, into the possibilities of a larger exchange. It is the thread of memory that binds us to places, catalysts of memories to the point of weaving a common texture, drawing horizons, mutable landscapes of an actual plural memory.

How to make those threads visible, what devices can be brought into play, not only by recirculating what is already known, but by adding a different perspective that filters, augment and nourishes the system of memories?

Communicating places of memory through coherent devices dictated by the culture of design: this is the particular responsibility of communication designers who take on the vast themes that cross this field, interweaving theoretical insights and techniques of representation. This, then, is the peculiar knowledge behind the mnemotopes; they are also an antidote to the risks – of which designers are well aware – of the extreme mediatization of places: when communicative spectacularization becomes predominant and, in contrast to forgetting, mainstream representations of places sprout up, often associated with overtourism, the extreme consumption of the communicated landscape.

As has already been pointed out, facing the paradox of memory technologies – which present themselves as accumulative rather than selective – the 'here and now' prevails, the annulment of the past and the future, hence of memory itself. If the divestment of memory in favour of the absolute present, promoted by the media system and the proliferation of artificial memories, is the widespread condition of our times, on the other hand, memory anchored in places and objectified by places preserves them and, hopefully, memory itself, while the atrophy of memory is the cause-effect of the decay of places.

Communication is inserted in the space of integration between the different planes of memory and the direct perception of places, it is a stimulus for preservation, an invitation to access, and an incentive to experience places of memory. The idea of mnemotopes, as described and documented here, brings us back to a principle of 'narrative configuration' of places, following Paul Ricoeur's definition in *Time and Narrative* (198): a time, or in our case a place, that has been taken out of the flow of everyday life and communicatively reshaped.

Mnemotopes enhance memory as a narrative practice that connects events in ever-changing ways and builds a network of relationships, as opposed to a de-narrativized memory in which piles of data or information are without history (Byung-chul, 2024).

The choice of *phototext* as a paradigmatic device for the communication of mnemotopes is therefore emblematic: it goes beyond the naturalistic vision of photography and enables us to see/read the constitutive processes of a place of memory thanks to the syntagmatic dimension of the photo-text montage. The photo-textual device, where the layout-montage operates as a 'paper film' (Moholy-Nagy, 1969), allows the individual mnestic archive to become a common experience. Here the mnemotopes function directly as an actualisation of the memory of places, where the flow of individual memory is fixed and access to habitable memories takes shape. In summary, they confirm to us with extreme evidence that «there is a landscape when the perceptible proves to be affective» (Jullien, 2017, p. 59).

References

Byung-chul, Han
2024   *The Crisis of Narration*, Cambridge, Polity.

Catucci, Stefano
2024   *Sul filo. Esercizi di pensiero materiale*, Macerata, Quodlibet.

Jullien, François
2017   *Vivere di paesaggio. O l'impensato della ragione*, Milano, Mimesis.

Moholy-Nagy, Lázló
1969   *Painting, Photography, Film*, London, Lund Humphries.

Ricoeur, Paul
1984   *Time and Narrative*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Germana Agnetti
Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti, Milano

Searching for the hidden memory

Searching for the hidden memory could be the subtitle of this book by Clorinda Galasso on the memory of places. Unveiling the content of memory is like opening a treasure chest. In a way, memory is a stranger. We know, for example, that memory is an intrinsic element of the entire universe: the celestial bodies carry the mnestic traces of their evolution, the earth would not be what we know today without the memory of what it was, of what happened, and of what was imprinted in and on it. However, we also know that uncovering these traces requires rigorous research that delves into what we might call the "darkness of memory". We know that, not only for us but for the entire animal and plant world, memory is the great director of what we are and become over time. It records and imprints on our consciousness all the events we have experienced and participated in, including our behavior and thoughts. Nevertheless, as Jorge Luis Borges notes in his short story *Funes el memorioso*, "Funes the Memorious" (1964), there is no memory without forgetting. Paradoxically, memory is *l'arte del dimenticare*, "the art of forgetting" (Agnetti, 1969). But where does everything we forget go?

It stratifies within us, in the places we inhabit, both physical and mental. Although we do not always realize it, it «set our arms and legs in motion» (*ibid.*). Perhaps only writers and artists can help us understand the complexity of what we know but is still unknown, through a story or an image.

Based on this assumption, Clorinda Galasso poses the question: How do I represent the memory of places? How do I make visible something that is hidden in individual memory? How do I connect places, people, communities in a single network of memory? These questions are even more urgent today, as the cloud stores and archives the countless images, words and voices that we produce every day, inevitably intertwining them. Galasso develops one research able to show connections between various levels – the individual and the community or even the past and the present – and holds together studies, readings, connections between different concepts, all the many different aspects of the interdis-

---

ciplinary landscape on memory. As so often, it is then intuition that makes the acrobatic leap to reach the goal, which in this case was the immersion of the gaze in an artistic dimension, through storytelling and photography.

This is how *Mnemophoto* was born. *Mnemophotos* are phototextual works that are structured and take shape through three successive moments: the testimony, the territorial photographic reportage, the portrait. A conceptual process that, from an anthropological perspective, feeds on memories, sharing, emotions.

The interpretation of memory is linked to the return of emotions that facilitate remembering, and when it is communicated, it becomes another memory, a shared experience. This first exchange marks the beginning of the memory designer Clorinda Galasso's research, who, equipped with maps and descriptive clues, goes to the place of memory to question and photograph it. At this point, the final phase begins: the synthesis is a portrait. The persons are in their homes, surrounded by their usual objects, but now they have their mnemotopes with them. The portrait is the photograph of this instant, accompanied by the story. The place, and the memory of the place, are the protagonists who speak to us. These portraits form a gallery, each of them suggesting a world, and together they give us the image of a community: an anthropological portrait made up of voices and images that remain to testify to a time and place of our culture.

References

Agnetti, Vincenzo

1978   "Libro dimenticato a memoria (1969)" in *Libro (particolare)*, Milano, Artra Studio.

Borges, Jorge Luis

1964   "Funes the Memorious", in *Labyrinths: selected stories and other writings*, New York, New Directions.
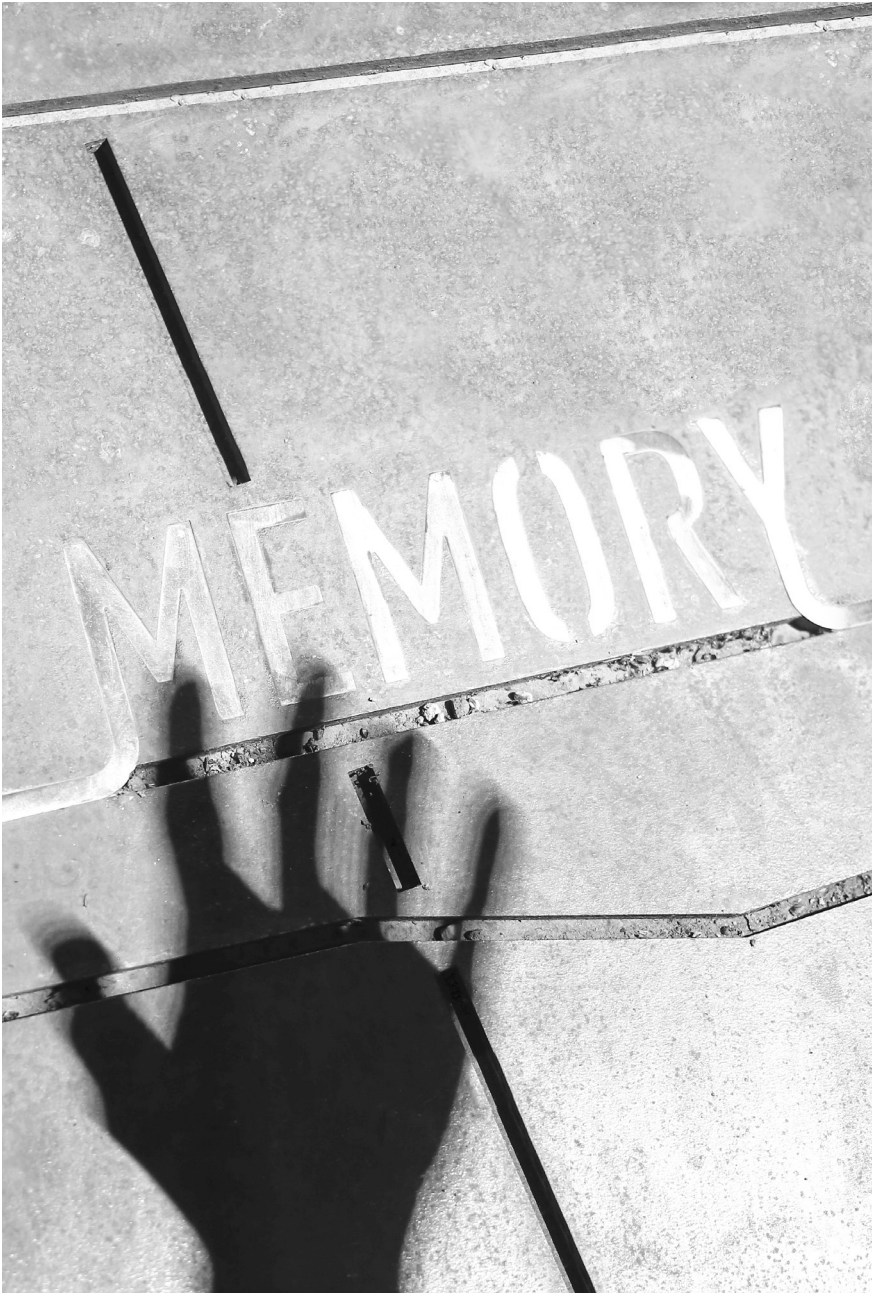
Figure 1. Detail of the *Albero della Memoria*, Giardino dei Giusti, Milan, Italy. Clorinda Galasso and Stefano Scagliarini, 2022.

Introduction

In the broad and interdisciplinary mnestic landscape, talking of the "memory of places" proves to be more complex than talking of "places of memory".

For the latter, there is an extensive literature that has developed over time and continues to grow: there have been many attempts to define these entities (Nora, 1984), many possible translations (Winter, 2010) and terminological variations (Erll & Nünning, 2010). Since their beginnings as a defining statute, they have been conceptually associated with practices of commemoration: they are points of condensation and orientation in collective memory (Isnenghi, 1996) and are physically connoted by forms of externalizing memory such as monuments and memorials. Even today, places of memory traditionally form a niche – a fundamental one – within the macro world of remembrance, able to perpetuate certain historical events, ensuring they are not forgotten by future generations.

On the other hand, the focus on preserving the *memory of places* extends to a broader scenario, encompassing commemorative sites and "places of trauma" (Assmann A., 2011), along with various other realities where memory plays a crucial role. These contexts involve a multitude of variables pertaining to the types of memories preserved. They hold together the "material location", the physical space, with the "geography of the imaginary", the immaterial and symbolic dimension (Sullam, 2018): spatial memories in the plural, variously combined, running parallel, meeting, overlapping, colliding, blurring and fading (Isnenghi, 1996). Considering the memory of places thus offers alternative approaches to preservation, translation and storytelling, but also to the field of design.

Rather than focusing on the conservation of the physical, material structures, this approach draws attention to the protection of the intangible aspects that make up the identity of a place including documents, images, oral testimonies, unofficial content that dialogues by inhabiting the territory, waiting to be communicated. Furthermore, looking at the memory of places provides a holistic framework that transcends disciplinary boundaries and encourages collabora-

tion and creative innovation between different fields of knowledge. It is precisely in this perspective, that we find the *mnemotope*, one of the least explored variables of the memory-place relationship, a poorly documented object of territorial interpretation whose composite and plural nature allows an openness to the world of design. Its history begins as a terminological variant of its more famous companion, the place of memory, and then unfolds into an increasingly independent *portmanteau*. Being a single word, without the use of prepositions, the mnemotope succeeds in condensing the link between memory and territory while at the same time opening it up to further meanings. A complex reality that does not respect sequence and temporal rhythm, but rather experiences the *time of memory*, made up of extensions and compressions, overlaps and short-circuits, thus producing multifaceted narratives.

The mnemotope will be the protagonist of this volume, which is divided into three main sections: *Memory and places*; *Mnemotopes*; *Designing mnemotopes*.

The first part opens with a reflection on the link between memory and place, considering its profound articulation. The book then introduces the theories of Maurice Halbwachs, the French sociologist and father of the idea of collective memory (1950), and the so-called *social frameworks* in which space plays a special role in fostering connections between individuals and communities and in producing social stability through the sedimentation of shared memories. It then describes Pierre Nora's monumental work, *Le Lieux de Mémoire* (1984-1992), in which for the first time we see a structured definition of the place of memory. An interpretation that encompasses not only the physical aspects of the territory, but also the immaterial elements, and whose main criterion for selection is the symbolic meaning of the place and the memory intention entrusted to it.

The impact of Nora's work is so strong that triggers a long wave of interest in memory across all fields of knowledge, a phenomenon known as the *memory boom*. Today, it has shifted into a state of *mnestic hypertrophy*, where memory serves as an overarching concept, blurring distinctions between its various nuances and facets. Nevertheless, the expansion of the topic of memory, and in particular the memory of places, has also led to the development of new research frameworks such as *Memory Studies*, as well as innovative scientific experimentations linking the relationship between place and memory to physiological systems already inherent in our brains, such as *place cells*, neurons found in the hippocampus that facilitate spatial navigation and memory formation in relation to specific sites or environments.

The second part of the volume focuses on the concept of *mnemotope*, and explores its terminological and conceptual origins. It begins with the evolution of the idea of place of memory, both historically and linguistically, and shows its changes over time and the attempts at translation on an international level. It then explains the emergence of the mnemotope, first as a synonym and later as an autonomous concept, which is used to interpret the depth of meaning of the territory's past. As a complex concept, one of the most important mnemotopic distinctions is introduced: individual and collective mnemotopes. We can distinguish between realities associated with personal memories, which are more fragile and transient and those that comprise the collective memory of a group or a society, which are more stable and capable to stand the test of time and overcome generational changes. Memory Studies will then examined in further detail with reference to the more or less explicit relevance of the mnemotope. Since the beginnings of this field of research, the place/memory axis has been a central theme that has developed over time to what has been called the fourth wave of Memory Studies. A moment of reassessment with regard to the contemporary that considers the mnemotope as a living organism in which society, individuals, traditional memorial patterns and physical space are interwoven.

The third section addresses the relationship between design and mnemotopes. The conscious role of the designer in preserving, organizing and transmitting the past and its documentary legacy to future generations now seems evident: within this vast panorama of experimentation, communication design stands as a mediator of the territorial past, capable of interpreting the complexity of places and reactivating their memories. The compound nature of the mnemotope thus offers two interpretive approaches. From one perspective we have memory, *mnemo*, and the *topos*, understood as place, producing a term that synergistically interconnects the two concepts, but of which we do not yet have a structured definition. From another angle, we have memory, *mnemo*, and the *topos*, intended as a recurring motif: we can find mnemo-*topoi*, typologies that help us to recognize these realities. The chapters therefore do not offer an unambiguous dictionary definition of the mnemotope, but a plural one, composed of different, constantly evolving properties. The volume also proposes a taxonomy composed of various mnemotopic categories and supported by real examples derived from territorial exploration. The last part is dedicated to a design project, *Mnemophoto*, which focuses on communicating individual memories that attempts to convey their value through phototextual practices.

In conclusion, *Mnemotopic Communication Design* will be introduced, which meets specific characteristics, starting with the choice of the mnemotope as a reference term for the study, translation and representation of the memory of places; to the awareness that by adopting the *memotopic approach* we can promote alternative reflections in the academic teaching context encouraging the creation of artifacts that represent places beyond stereotypes; to the recognition of the mnemotope as a productive and performative principle that can be the driving force for the development of innovative design solutions and alternative territorial explorations. The aim of the research is to provide a comprehensive overview of the mnemotopic theme, tracing its origins to its entry into the world of design as an interpretative object of the past offering original keys to interpreting the territory. Design today is not in a position to exhaust the subject of mnemotopes, but certainly Communication Design for the Territory has access to tools and methods for the recognition of mnemotopes, for their translation, representation and visualization. The book should be seen as a first step, as a stimulus to further illuminate a field of research that is ready to evolve, in the conviction that the study of mnemotopes is a concrete response to the need for memory of communication design.

FIRST PART

The memory of places

1.
Memory and place

Memory is a place.
Since the calendar commands the rhythm of our actions, and dictates our muscular and cerebral energies (Mariani, 2017), memory might seem a phenomenon that mainly concerns the folds of time.

A closer look, however, reveals a constitutive and non-accidental relationship to place: memory is naturally place-oriented or at least place-supported (Casey, 1987, p. 187), and the earth itself «is a great memory, everything we do emanates from us and is recorded by the earth (meaning by recording everything: books, art, wars, plagues, etc.)» (Agnetti, 1972).

In memory, time becomes "place" (Portelli, 1997), that can be read as palimpsest of the past, as layers gathering stories, feelings, ideas, and practices. Localization is one of the essential conditions for our ability to remember, and it would be very difficult to describe an event if one could not imagine the place (Halbwachs, 1980). Places not only help us remember, but they are also mnestic anchor points. They can reactivate the past and transfer memories to the present.

The most characteristic effect of place is to maintain or preserve rather than to divide or disperse. This is what lies behind idioms such as "march in place", "have a place of one's own", "it's a nice place to be", "put oneself in place", etc. In each case the expression draws on the peculiar power of place to hold or keep in. (Casey, 1987, p. 186)

The relationship between place and memory is part of a deep cultural history.
No wonder that one of the first forms in which this connection has manifested itself is metaphor. In fact, place metaphors have accompanied the representation of memory since antiquity, giving it a sense of consistency and concreteness. The most commonly used are those of architectural nature, which do not explain how memory works, but suggest a notion of memory as deposit (Agazzi & Fortunati, 2007, p. 506); they are places where remembrances are accumulated

and stored, in an ideal of order and organization of knowledge (Galasso, 2018). What seems significant about the metaphorical connection with the mnestic world is that it proposes a conservative *platiality* (Buell, 2001), it offers realities that are concerned with the preservation, if only in an abstract and eidetic way, of memories and their value. Realities that not only safeguard, but also deal with the selection of materials to be snatched from oblivion. Memory is compared with institutional realities such as archives or libraries, but also with more intimate sites such as closets, boxes, album and suitcases; in the digitalization era, every memory produced and stored in the cloud has effectively become its space occupied on a server. What remains evident, despite the unstoppable obsolescence and the rapid technological changes, is that memory is tied to a place, a *locus*, to a *topical device*, and that a memory without its place is an evanescent, unstable, momentary entity (Anceschi, 1992). Giving place to a memory therefore means giving it existence and providing it with stability that transcends the passage of time.

Memory is placed.
«Even if places themselves have no innate faculty of memory» (Assmann A., 2011, p. 282), at the origin of remembrance lies the intricate phenomenon of spazialization, a deeply ingrained aspect of human cognition and cultural expression that transcends epochs and civilizations. This nuanced interplay finds its genesis in ancient practices, prominently visible in the *mnemotechnics* (Yates, 1966) employed by poets, orators, and politicians since the dawn of antiquity.
These figures, from the halls of ancient Greece to the corridors of medieval academies, understood the profound potential of organizing memory through the construction of mental landscapes based on real locations. Through meticulous arrangement and association, they wielded the power of spatial organization to encapsulate and retain vast reservoirs of knowledge, spanning from epic poetry to philosophical discourse: «the spatial structure of mnemotechnics functions like a plan or a map, released from its concrete place of origin. Through this abstract spatial power, mnemotechnics come close to writing, albeit a writing that is composed not of letters but images» (Assmann A., 2011, p. 296).
This enduring connection between memory and space underscores the primacy of visual perception, «what the ear hears and the mind comprehends is best retained when the eyes help to keep it in the mind» (Erll & Nünning, 2010), but, through the spatial references, integrates a tactile dimension, heightening the

mnemonic experience with sensory richness. Across millennia, this symbiotic relationship has served as a cornerstone of human cognition, shaping our perception of the world and providing a fertile ground for the exploration of memory's intricate mechanisms and profound implications for individual thought and collective expression. Through the centuries, another manifestation of the memory/place axis has surfaced.

The *memory of places*.

> The expression is both convenient ad evocative. It is convenient because it leaves open the question of whether is a *genetivus objectivus*, meaning that we remember places, or a *genetivus subjectivus*, meaning that places retain memories. It is evocative because it suggest the possibility that places themselves may become the agents and bearers of memory. (Assmann A., 2011, p. 281)

This interpretative framework may be helpful in unraveling the ambiguity of this term, and can be the starting point for our investigation, in which the «place is not simply the context on which memories hang, but the very texture of the specific content itself» (Trigg, 2013). We can thus divide the choice of dealing with 'memory of places' according the two main variables.

It is *convenient* because the use of this expression manifests the interpretative preference for place over space. Considering that space and place are about the "where" (Agnew, 2011), and that «space and place are basic components of the lived world» (Tuan, 1977, p. 3), places seem to be more anchored to the past as the result of a developmental process: «what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value, so space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning» (*ivi*, p. 6). Places «come to life through the body of the percipient, through its olfactory, visual, acoustic and haptic perceptions as individual acts of empathy with the past» (Hubner & Dirksmeier, 2023, p. 105). From this perspective, when discussing the topic of 'place', the focus shifts from the surface to the deeper layers of meaning that lie within it. It goes beyond the physical attributes of a space and explores the immaterial realm; it encourages looking at the content, what is inside, stratified, connecting to past events and experiences. Choosing to focus on the 'memory of places' rather than 'spaces of memory' enables us to explore the intricate meaning-making web of memories, emotions, and narratives that are

intertwined with specific physical locations. Unlike the term space, which may denote a more abstract or generic concept (Tuan, 1977), place evoke a sense of specificity holding a unique collection of memories, experiences, and cultural contexts that contribute to its identity and meaning[1], and acknowledging the role of territorial mnestic substance as the tangible and intangible elements that contribute to the formation and preservation of memory within a geographical area. The expression is *evocative* because it helps to expand the idea of places of memory or sites of memory. Traditionally, these entities are strictly connected to commemoration: places that facilitate remembrance, promote community engagement, and preserve the legacy of past events for future generations, places where the commemorative act «arising out of a conviction, shared by a broad community, that the moment recalled is both significant and informed by a moral message» (Winter, 2010). The privileging of the memory of places evokes a broader realm in which live not only the places "of trauma", but also all those realities where memory remains a constitutive act, manifested, however, not in practices of commemoration, but in other models of preservation, translation and storytelling. In particular, it opens the discourse to the theme of creative memory by unfolding the link between the act of creation and the place where it occurs, thus including a whole range of realities that are usually excluded from traditional ways of remembering. These decisions are an attempt to overcome the kind of *auratization* (Assmann A., 2011, p. 323) of the places of memory, which has turned them into aestheticizing artifacts distant from reality, and to return them to the status of *contact zones* (*ivi*, p. 322), or *memory zones* (Galasso, 2028), a mixed texture between remoteness and sensory presence.

---

1.   In this regard Aleida Assmann (2011) says that «the memory of places is firmly fixed to one particular location from which it cannot be separated» (p. 296).

2.
Maurice Halbwachs
and mnestic spatialization

Until the eighteenth century, the connection between places and memory was recognized in the classical *loci memoriae* (Yates, 1966). Since the Romantic period, however, it has acquired a deeper philosophical and conceptual meaning that has freed it from being a purely mnemonic ability.

Places moved away from being the frameworks into which the concepts to be remembered were inserted, but also distanced themselves from being the mere field of action of the present. Memory began to reveal itself exclusively in its transmission, as the representation of a past and its lost spontaneity.

The relationship between past and places became a social question, an issue linked to the constitution of communities and the recognition of their identity within the territory. In the literary world, Romantic poetry gave a strong impetus to this reflection. The rediscovered attachment to landscape and nature has favored the emergence of texts that analyze places in relationship to their ability to evoke memories. One example is the poem *The Excursion*, published in 1814 by William Wordsworth. The work «strives to be not a witness to change, nor an occasion for historical speculation, but a book-length elegy. An elegy for what? For memory itself» (Hirschfield, 1999). Through its four characters, the *Wanderer*, the *Poet*, the *Pastor*, and the *Solitary*, it appears as a creative demonstration of the problematic dialogue between individual and collective memory. The figure of the Pastor is particularly significant in this discourse, as producer and transmitter of community's memorial sites (*ibid.*). He leads the visitor through the local cemetery, but the gravestones are nameless. He begins to describe the anonymous lives of his parishioners, bringing them into the narrative, connecting personal memories to the land, linking nature with human, incorporating local stories into a process of collective recognition. The invisible epitaphs, through the biographical representations of the Pastor, make the site a place of memory filled with voices and open to the community. We can already perceive the medial consciousness of the mnemotope that finds emanation, recognition,

and stability in narrative, in this case oral history. The visualization of memory was also in a moment of profound change. Aby Warburg's research in the field of art history had shown that images are carriers of powerful meanings associated with the memory of a society. Iconography holds a whole series of *Pathosformeln*, "pathos formulas", fibers of collective memory, that are emotionally charged, repeated over time and that can be identified. For this reason, in 1927, he developed the idea of creating an atlas of images, *Mnemosyne Bilderatlas*, with tables of photographic reproductions of artworks linked by the same formulas that would create maps of figurative cultural memory. In the *Atlas* the image represents the locus in which impression and memory come together and condense (Galasso et al., 2020). The importance of Warburg's work lies in the evocative power of panels that are not stuck in linear systems but evolve in fluid and constantly updatable assemblages. The association of images that weave multiple themes around a central element creates energy fields and triggers an interpretive mnestic process in the viewer.

At the beginning of the XX century, this vast and interdisciplinary discussion includes the innovative works of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs.

Far from the Freudian psychoanalytic view that saw the subconscious as the main mnestic reference space, and distant from the theses of Charles Blondel, «according to which individual memory is held to be the necessary and sufficient condition for the recollection and recognition of memories» (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 121), in *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Halbwachs, 1925) he states that memory can exist only if contextualized by the social group to which the individual belongs, for example families, religious communities, and social classes.

His work clearly breaks away from the organic and physiological view of memory and is embedded in the radical assumption that no one can remember alone and that memory, since childhood, is situated in precise and recognizable *social frameworks*. The most basic framework is that of language: verbal conventions represent the easiest way to stabilize memories, and memory thus results in «a narrative action that creates a communicative bridge and establishes a link between the remembering subject and the group to which he belongs» (Di Pasquale, 2018, p. 65). His research is part of the aforementioned dialogue between individual and collective memory, a theme that also became the title of his most important book, *La mémoire collective* (Halbwachs, 1950). For the sociologist, memory is never a private matter, and communities need shared mnestic supports to recognise themselves as such and to survive events.

Even the most intimate memories exist «in relationship with a whole ensemble of notions which many others possess: with persons, places, dates, words, forms of language, that is to say with the whole material and moral life of the societies of which we are part or of which we have been part» (Connerton, 1989, p. 36). However, he does not place individual and collective memories on the same level: «the collective memory [...] encompasses individual memories while remaining distinct from them. It evolves according to its own laws, and any individual remembrances that may penetrate are transformed within a totality having no personal consciousness» (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 5).

Among the pages of *La mémoire collective*, he recalls a walk-through London, stating that on such a walk, he was never alone, but always accompanied by architects, designers, novelists, painters, people who have contributed to the building of the city's identity: «They help me to recall them. I turn to these people, I momentarily adopt their point of view. [...] I can still feel the group's influence and recognize in myself many ideas and ways of thinking that could not have originated with me and that keeps me in contact with it» (*ivi*, p. 24). No wonder that Halbwachs so carefully spatializes this example. As one of the foundations of intersubjectivity, place is vital in creating connections between individuals and social groups (Donohoe, 2014, p. 34). Halbwachs supports the importance of localising memory and argues that the spatialization of memory through real places has an important role in social stability.

Thus, every collective memory unfolds within a spatial framework. Now space is a reality that endures: since our impressions rush by, one after another, and leave nothing behind in the mind, we can understand how we recapture the past only by understanding how it is, in effect, preserved by our physical surroundings. It is to space – the space we occupy, traverse, have continual access to, or can at any time reconstruct in thought and imagination - that we must turn our attention. (Halbwachs, 1980, pp. 139-140)

The spatial substance in which memory is rooted is not inactive, but is permeated by the thoughts and feelings of the people of the past (Truc, 2011) and the sociologist therefore distinguishes two different mnestic frames. On the one hand, we find the private and local past, «made up of objects, houses, and stones» (*ivi*, p. 149) and exposed to the passage of time. On the other hand, there is a more distant and less intimate memory that is more robust and can be shared. Truc (2011) define the first conceptual framework as 'memory of places', the second

as 'places of memory', less rich in details but certainly more stable because subject to processes of institutionalization and symbolization. A semantic shift between the two expressions is then attested, places of memory become the result of selections, strategies, precise decisions, catalysts of aspects of collectivity (Bassanelli, 2015, p. 35). Thanks to Halbwachs' interpretation, even the extreme familiarity of the questions: where were you when you hear...? where were you when you see...? (Donohoe, 2014, p. 32) linked to historical events, appears richer in meaning. Remembering "where we were" and not only "what we were doing" is a fundamental mnestic act that contributes to the recognition of the individual as part of a more or less extended group of individuals.

We retain our memories because of our connection to the material *milieu* of our reference group (Connerton, 1989, p. 37). The process of mnestic spatialization, which began with mnemotechnics, becomes in Halbwachs a manifestation of the capacity of places «to locate memories and give them direction» (Horn, 2020, p. 2). However, what Halbwachs does not explain, according to Paul Connerton (1989), is how memory is transmitted into the spatial framework, how internal transmission occurs within the group and its future generations, but also how the transition happens between groups that are different but share common viewpoints. Connerton addresses the acts of transfert that make these movements possible, and, in particular, the two main social practices that facilitate them: incorporating and inscribing (pp. 73-74). The former refers to activities in which the body is actively involved, such as gestures and manners, and to the performative side of memory. Inscribing practices refer to those actions that allow data to be stored and preserved through physical and usually artificial devices, such as photographs, encyclopedias, and dictionaries.

These first theoretical attempts to discover the deep connection between memory and places already show how much this relationship has developed over time with an oscillating tendency between blurring and rediscovery.

3.
Pierre Nora and the *lieux de mémoire*

One of the authors who, knowing Halbwachs' theories, contributed to what can be called the *hermeneutics of places of memory* is certainly Pierre Nora.

Between 1984 and 1992 he published in France a monumental work entitled *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, divided in seven volumes. Covering a long period of time, and starting from a compound and complex concept that seems controversial from the very beginning, it is not surprising that Nora's theory has evolved over the years to the point where it is almost contradictory. His reflections on the places of memory begin with the renowned essay entitled *Between Memory and History* (1989). A ground-breaking article that provoked and continues to trigger criticism and doubt on a topic that is only slowly losing interest, as it is of crucial importance for the historical and social changes of countries and communities. Nora attributes the focus of his argument to the rupture between the concept of memory and that of history. For the historian, they are not remotely synonymous, but are in complete opposition. Memory is a vital, dynamic entity, subject to constant changes of which it is not fully aware. A reality, therefore, fragile and «vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation» (Nora, 1989, p. 8), which can undergo moments of stasis and suspension and then can be subject to processes of renaissance. It is a phenomenon that is constantly dormant, anchored in the present and always potentially activated. History, on the other hand, is the problematic reconstruction of what has been, it is the representation of the past, the result of an intellectual production that requires continuous analytical and critical processes. Moreover, memory seems to be animated by the affective dimension of recollection, while history adheres to the parameters of evidence and proof. Memory is inherently multiple, as Halbwachs argued, belonging to individual social groups, and there are as many memories as there are communities. History tends toward universalism at the expense of an affective and sensitive side of the past. What is also relevant from the mnestic-spatial point of view, is that memory «takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and

objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities and progressions» (Nora, 1989, p. 9). Memory appears as a genuine phenomenon, constantly opposed to the critical discourse from which history is nourished. The immediate expression of the spontaneity of memory and its connection with tradition are the *milieux de mémoire*, sort of natural mnestic habitats (Dickinson et al. 2010), an authentic memory environment that is continuously experienced and does not create a break between the past and the present (Kalinowski, 2021, p. 11).

According to Nora, the sharp division between these two phenomena has led to the slow but inevitable disappearance of the *milieux de mémoire*, which have given way to another kind of reality, the *lieux de mémoire*. A concept that is not a mere neologism, but that Nora first offers to academia as a composite entity, sites where collective memory takes root; artificial remnants of memory that symbolize its resilience in the form of reconstituted objects of historical analysis, which the author attempts to systematize to prevent the total phagozization of memory by history. But it is mediation that allows memory to endure and show itself in the form of a place of memory.

In the *lieux de mémoire* there is nothing pure and authentic anymore, but only traces of a spontaneous memory that languishes in the contemporary world and has a constant need for representation and conservative stability. These are realities that live under the constant eye of the «commemorative vigilance» (Nora, 1989, p. 12) that protects their presence and keeps them from disappearing; places where history and memory overcome their distance and are interwoven.

The *lieux de mémoire* are remnants, shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded (Nora, 1989), collected by history and displaced into the present. Where memory is deposited and stratified in autonomy, history stabilizes and petrifies, offering society a new memory, a memory grasped by history (Ricoeur, 2004). In the opinion of the historian, the metamorphosis of memory caused by its encounter/contrast with history is characterized by three main variables: *Memory-Archive*, *Memory-Task*, and *Memory-Distance*. The first, as the name itself underlines, is the result of a civilization's obsession with archiving, with an increasingly oppressive tension towards despair. It is Nora himself who asserts that the imperative of the age «is not only to keep everything, to preserve every indicator of memory – even when we are not sure which memory is being indicated – but also to produce archives» (Nora, 1989, p. 14). An archival obsession that sometimes does not sustain memory, but disperses it in hundreds of linear kilometers of documents that are difficult to consult.

The second variable lies in the psychological memory turn, with a shift from the collective to the individual dimension that sees the singular person as ultimately responsible for mnestic survival. Since memory is no longer inherent in everyday life, it is the task of the individual to prevent it from disappearing altogether through his or her personal actions. Finally, *Memory-Distance*, which is configured in the perception of a constantly interrupted past that is no longer linear and is rooted in an ephemeral temporality.

It is precisely in this multi-layered context that the reflection on the places of memory takes place. Nora's immediately appears as a non-topographical management of the subject, containing symbolic and intangible elements. In fact, the author does not focus on the places of memory that we could define as concrete, experienced in their physical and territorial dimension, but he dwells on other external and mediated marks (Ricoeur, 2004) as objects and celebrations. What makes Nora's reflections a cornerstone of subsequent studies on the relationship between memory and places is the consideration of these places as mental or physical, abstract or concrete, territorial or objective realities, «where memory crystallizes and secretes itself» (Nora, 1989, p. 7). Crystallizing refers to the ability of places to layer themselves in time and become hard but fragile palimpsests of memories that retain their identity thanks to their location. The reference to the ability of secreting is the inherent quality of memory to reactivate and thus return cyclically to reveal itself to contemporaneity.

Nora also divides the places of memory into three categories: material, symbolic and functional, without setting clear boundaries, but supporting an osmotic movement. If we consider «the *lieu de mémoire*'s material aspects, they would readily display themselves in a vast gradation» (Nora, 1989, p. 22): places of memory that are natural and concretely experienced, which can be topographical, rooted in the ground and therefore potentially reachable, such as the *Bibliotheque Nationale* on the site of the Ancien Hôtel Mazarin in Paris, but also places of memory that can be transported, such as the *Tablets of the Law*. There are also monumental memory-sites which can arise even far from the place to which the memory they represent refers, without compromising their historical mnestic value. When Nora speaks of functional places of memory, he means realities preserving memories that would be lost with the disappearance of their bearers (e.g., ex-partisan associations), but also pedagogical and educational materials such as manuals and dictionaries. Places related to the mental geography of remembrance and intended to evoke episodes that are fundamental to the identity

of a country (Agazzi & Fortunati, 2007). The third typology combines different symbolic sides of memory. On the one hand, we have the celebrations, not places that you reach but that you participate in, extemporaneous sites, so to speak, that can offer repeatability in time like the anniversaries. On the other hand, there are the physical places of pilgrimage, such as sanctuaries, where the real experience is to be present on the spot, but also cemeteries that preserve the remains of famous people and can even become tourist destinations.

As has just been shown, *lieux de mémoire* are not only physical places, but they can also be persons (Joan of Arc) or objects (national flags) or even celebrations. The main criteria that lead to the selection and categorization of realities are the symbol and the intention to remember. Nora is convinced that even a material place, such as an archive, is not a place of memory to be experienced, traversed, perceived, if the imagination does not invest it with a symbolic aura (Agazzi & Fortunati, 2007). It is therefore no coincidence that Aleida Assmann (2003), has included the symbol among the devices that she defines stabilizers of memory, together with affect and emotion. But a *lieu de mémoire* would not be definable as such even if it were not characterized by a specific will to remember.

Without the intention to keep the past alive, a *lieu de mémoire* would be only a *lieu d'histoire*, an inert place against oblivion, standing still before the passage of time: «it was no longer enough simply to select objects; instead those objects would have to be constructed: in each case one would have to look beyond the historical reality to discover the symbolic reality and recover the memory that it sustained». (Nora, 1996, p. xvii). In the preface to English edition of his work, called *Realms of Memory* (1996), he finally gives a structured definition to the *lieux de mémoire*:

a *lieu de mémoire* is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community. (Nora, 1996, p. xvii)

It remains to be emphasized, that despite the controversies and conflicting opinions about Nora's definition, his terminological and conceptual contribution to memory context has been decisive. The historian has the merit of having united two phenomena into a *unicum*. A recognizable entity, whose characteristics could be endlessly redefined, but whose unity is finally recognizable and can transit not only in time, but also in space. From his reflections, only the places of memory

and not the places of history have existed. Despite translation difficulties, Nora's operation shows that a typological classification of places of memory is possible. It will never be perfect or exhaustive, but it can serve to find even imperceptible connections between places that make them part of the vast and existing world of *lieux de mémoire*: «there is a differentiated network to which all of these separate identities belong, an unconscious organization of collective memory that it is our responsibility to bring to consciousness» (Nora, 1989, p. 23).

Nora's work leads to categorizations, to typologies, to mnestic markers that evolve into conceptual distinctions of legitimacy. The historian's task, then, is to legitimize new realities from this perspective, and the designer's task, perhaps, is to recognize and make them communicatively emerge.

4.
Memory boom and memory hypertrophy

The so-called *memory boom* refers to a period in the late twentieth century that was characterized by an increased, almost excessive interest in the topic of memory. This turn involved the academia, but also many other cultural fields such as architecture, psychology, neuroscience, and literature. Even the main media, television, and cinema, talked about the mnestic aspects of society and dealt with the reproduction of the past. Many of what Astrid Erll (2011) calls *memory films* were produced. Movies like *Memento* (1992) that «address concepts of memory and problematize and imaginatively realize acts of individual and collective remembering» (Erll, 2011, p. 138); productions like *Apocalypse Now* (1978) and *Schindler's List* (1993) that do not focus on the inner workings of memory and its manifestations, but recall the past through real historical events to be remembered. In this overstimulated context, Nora's perspectives on places of memory are disregarded. Despite the great success, he himself states (1996): «the destiny of these *lieux de mémoire* has been a strange one. The work was intended, by virtue of its conception, method, and even title, to be a counter-commemorative type of history, but commemoration has overtaken it» (p. 609). Although the classification proposed in 1984 included pure sites, exhaustive of their commemorative function, and composite sites, where the commemorative element is only one of many symbolic meanings, only commemoration remained.

According to Nora, the *memory boom* (Winter, 2007), of which he was the main proponent, did not bear the hoped-for fruit, as it pushed the places of memory back into a commemorative context and went so far as to trigger what could be described as an obsession, no longer just archival, but of commemoration. «Nora stresses the multiplication of archives, commemorations, exhibitions that replace a true physical representation of memory, in order to palliate the fact that our society 'no longer inhabits its memory', that it no longer has any direct and immediate relationship with it» (Gangloff, 2020, p. 110). The desire to give voice to places where history and memory are integrated on an immaterial level,

places where symbolic value stands for the permanence of time, is leveled with the theme of commemoration, eliminating possible rich interpretive nuances.

Nevertheless, the twentieth century can be called the century of memory. Memory became a bridge between the different fields of science, a characteristic that it still maintains today. This complex phenomenon was studied from a physiological point of view, analyzing cerebral principles, but also from a political perspective. Memory entered into a profound social discourse and became both an expression of subjectivity and an engine of collective recognition. In Western thought, the epoch of mnestic development is characterized by a dichotomous approach: memory is opposed to forgetting, the individual is compared to the community, history becomes its main antagonist (Nora, 1984).

A classificatory system that initially enriched considerations with new aspects and expanded memory research, but in the long run became sterile and fossilising. Memory became a nebulous terrain of investigation: it is so rich in insights and new considerations that it is confusing, and disorienting.

«I alone have more memories than all mankind has probably had since the world has been the world. [...] My dreams are like you people's waking hours. [...] My memory, sir, is like a garbage heap» (Borges, 1964, p. 64). The slow, nasal voice of *Funes the Memorious* tells of his overly detailed, vast, and elusive memory that preserves every infinitesimal moment of his existence. A memory that remembers everything and can no longer abstract, filter, or select. A memory that stores everything but can no longer process or interpret. A paradox, of course, almost a provocation, but it seems clear that we are subject to unprecedented memory inflation, almost a "fury" (Fontcuberta, 2018) a phenomenon that can be called *memory hypertrophy* (Tarpino, 2022): there is so much memory that the term is losing its «precise meaning in proportion to its growing rhetorical power» (Gillis, 1994, p. 3). The word memory is increasingly evolving into an 'umbrella term', a catch-all concept (Jéquier, 2013) usable in any field of knowledge, and it is becoming indistinguishable from concepts such as identity and culture (Fabian, 1999, p. 51); for Winter (2000) the fate of memory is henceforth to be utilized «just as we use words like love and hate without ever knowing their full or shared significance» (p. 13). A mnestic saturation that leads to an overextension of the term to every area of knowledge without selective criteria, both in public and in scientific discourse with different points of view, which leads to many misunderstandings. The hypertrophy of memory is a phenomenon that extends to the present day, memory is still pervasive and has lost some of its deeper mean-

ings. However, this terminological opulence has given way to a series of new reflections, mainly concerned with the collective side of memory, marking a real turning point in memory research, regardless of its disciplinary context, which have led to the emergence in the scientific world of *Memory Studies*, grounded on an aggregative research perspective and based on connections rather than just opposites. The Memory Studies label is associated with the publication of the international peer-reviewed journal of the same name, the first volume of which was published in 2008 by a founding interdisciplinary group.

As stated in the statute, the journal is «examines the social, cultural, cognitive, political and technological shifts affecting how, what and why individuals, groups and societies remember, and forget. The journal responds to and seeks to shape public and academic discourses on the nature, manipulation, and contestation of memory in the contemporary era»[1]. The reputation of this publication has grown steadily over the years, and today it is considered a scholarly reference point for a disciplinary field whose contours are still not clearly defined. It remains evident that even though the contributions are pluralistic and reflect different cultural points of view, memory is considered as an integrated system that combines the physiological dimension with the socio-cultural one. The main objects investigated by Memory Studies are (Di Pasquale, 2018, p. 214): the transition from personal and private memories to the public and shared dimension; the value of participation in memory; commemoration and the traumatic side of memory; the interest in practices of memory valorization in the public space; the importance of witnesses and oral tradition; the conversation and protection of memory in historical archives; the material and immaterial devices that favor transmission, vividness and mnestic stability, with particular reference to the media arena, e.g., photography, cinema, storytelling. This radius of action may seem very vast and multifaceted, but a conscious research reality has emerged, with an integrative and hybrid vocation that has brought memory studies into constant content production. Interest in these issues also led to the establishment of the *Memory Studies Association*[2], launched symbolically at its inaugural conference in Amsterdam in 2016, with the aim to provide a gathering space for developing, discussing and exchanging ideas about the methodologies, theories, and results of memory studies; to become the central forum for scholars from around the world and across disciplines who are interested in memory

---

1. See https://journals.sagepub.com/description/mss
2. See https://www.memorystudiesassociation.org/

studies; and to further establish and extend the status of memory studies as a field. On the association's website you can also find a list of Centers, Institutes and Networks engaged in the study of memory. There are academic institutions, research centres associated with university faculties, but also independent institutions engaged in the valorization of local memories. One of the most important European centres was the *Konstanz Geschichte und Gedachtnis*, created in 2009 by Aleida Assmann at the University of Konstanz[3], Germany. It served the exchange and interdisciplinary research of the complex topic of memory in its psychological, historical, political and symbolic-cultural dimensions. In 2011, was founded by Astrid Erll, Professor of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at Goethe University Frankfurt, the *Frankfurt Memory Studies Platform* (FMSP)[4], a forum for interdisciplinary memory studies, linking researchers in Frankfurt and internationally, that revolves around three main Research Lines: *Transcultural Memory*, the *Mediality of Memory*, and *Memory and Narrative*.

In Italy, there is *TraMe – Centro di Studi Semiotici sulla Memoria* of *Alma Mater Studiorum*, Università di Bologna[5], Italy, established by Patrizia Violi in 2009, which combines a semiotic approach with a perspective of interdisciplinary dialogue that questions memory in all its dimensions and declinations.

The emergence of Memory Studies underlines how active and vital the topic of memory remains and how flourishing the attempts are to structure the research on this topic in such a way that it does not drift fruitlessly, but multiplies interdisciplinary connections. These are the basis for its growth and further development. Indeed, without contact between disciplines and different fields of knowledge, memory remains a *souvenir* from the past.

---

3. See https://cms.uni-konstanz.de/fileadmin/archive/geschichteundgedaechtnis/
4. See https://www.memorystudies-frankfurt.com/
5. See https://centri.unibo.it/trame/it

5.
Memory of places and brain studies

Memories constitute the core of our personal history, but they are also the result of specific biological processes. Over the last century, many of the research questions regarding mnestic processes have found answers in the interactions between brain chemicals and neuronal receptors. Essential concepts in memory experimentations include encoding, consolidation, retrieval, forgetting, context, and memory systems, among others (Schacter et al., 2012).

Despite many studies on this topic, few scientists have focused their experiments on the relationship between spatial memories and brain regions, and memory research in humans has traditionally centered on more abstract, language-based tasks (Herweg & Kahana, 2018). The question of how we brainly perceive our space and our place has occupied epistemologists for centuries (Moser et al., 2008). Kant championed the concept of space as an innate organizing principle of the mind through which the world is and must be perceived. He wrote «space is a necessary *a priori* representation that underlies all outer intuitions» (Kant, 1781). Only recently has the neurophysiology of spatial memory been explored, as the ability to remember places and events is supported by a complex neural network: «the ability to represent and navigate the surrounding physical space is supported by the activity of the hippocampal formation and of the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC)» (Viganò & Piazza, 2020). Experimental investigations of spatial representations in the brain began with the discovery of *place cells* by John O'Keefe and Dostrovsky (1971): place cells, located in the hippocampus, are actively involved in the creation of spatial maps in the brain that provide a kind of sense of place and navigational ability. Different place cells are triggered at different locations and their combination creates an internal neural map representing a particular environment. There are also place cells in the entorhinal cortex, which are called *grid cells*, showing a striking topographic organization (Hafting et al., 2005), and providing a grid-like framework for spatial representation, allowing for precise positioning and movement within our surroundings.

«Place cells coexist with grid, head direction, and border cells, all likely to interact with each other to yield a global representation of the animal's changing position, which may be used to guide the animal to particular locations in the environment. With a modular organization of grid cells, the network may be able to generate not only one map of the external environment, but thousands or millions» (Moser et al., 2015, p. 12).

They are involved in measuring movement distances and provide orientation metrics for the spatial maps created in the hippocampus. This cellular system of relationships forms a comprehensive positioning system, a sort of neural GPS in the brain. Like web mapping platform (e.g., Google Maps), the brain GPS is able to collect in neurons our movements and place positioning, and retrieve them when needed. The combinational network of place cells and grid cells has an essential memory function: they can storage hippocampal memories characterized by events that are tied together in sequences (Tulving & Markowitsch, 1998) just like positions are tied together in two dimensions as spatial maps (Moser et al., 2008). This creates a system of place maps in the brain that allows us to always have an idea of where we are and at what point in our lives.

In addition to the information about our location, distance, and direction that we receive from the medial entorhinal cortex, the hippocampus records what is in a particular place, not only in terms of physical appearances, but also in terms of events and related experiences that have happened, and even non-spatial stimuli such as texture or odors (*ibid.*). In 2020, a research published in the Journal of Neuroscience, entitled *Distance and Direction Codes Underlie Navigation of a Novel Semantic Space in the Human Brain* (Viganò & Piazza, 2020), pushed the issue even further. According to the two scientists, the brain regions and neural machinery used to encode spatial positions are reused in humans to represent conceptual spaces as a kind of compass for orientation in the place of ideas.

The spatial maps generated in the brain are then not only used for positioning in the environment, but also play an important role in thinking and reflective activities: «our species uses the same neuronal machinery to support internal representations ("cognitive maps") of nonspatial memories and experiences» (p. 2728). The brain uses and activates the same areas to navigate places and concepts, and the classical idea of *loci* returns. In the brain, «when humans mentally navigate bidimensional uniform conceptual spaces, they recruit the same grid-like and distance codes typically evoked when exploring the physical envi-

ronment» (Viganò et al., 2021, p. 1); in mnemotechnics, the mind through mnestic activities creates and uses maps and locations where to retain information, concepts and events. So, the hippocampal region seems form the basis for quantitative spatio-temporal representation of places, routes, and associated experiences in memory (Moser et al., 2008). But what evolutionary advantage could nature have gained by employing identical structures for both spatial cognition and memory, despite the apparent dissimilarity between these functions?

An intriguing possibility is that the cognitive map provides, in a manner of speaking, the stage upon which the drama of recollected life events is played out. By this account, it serves as the 'mind's eye' not only for remembering spaces, but also the events that happened there and even – according to recent human neuroimaging evidence – imagination. (Marozzi & Jeffery, 2012)

Indeed, the memory of places can be considered as the neurobiological fruit of our brain, emerging from the dynamic interplay of neuronal activity, synaptic connections, and sensory input. These memories are not merely passive reflections of our experiences but active constructs shaped by ongoing brain processes, continuously refined and updated through our interactions with the environment. In this light, the memory of places transcends mere abstraction, offering a profound insight into the physical substrate of human cognition and perception. It reminds us that our understanding of the world is deeply intertwined with the workings of our brains, and that the roots of memory of places lie not only in the external landscape but within the intricate architecture of our minds.

SECOND PART

Mnemotopes

6.
Toward a definition of mnemotope

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the *lieux de mémoire* highlighted and supported by Nora, were not immune to terminological criticism. The scope of the French historian's research radiated abroad and becomes a case on the international level. In the preface to the English edition (1996), Nora describes the difficulty of finding an English equivalent for *les lieux* and points out that he chose 'realms' to emphasize the symbolic apparatus of these realities.

However, the translation problems continue (Erll & Nünning, 2010), *lieux de mémoire* have been variously transformed into "places of memory" or even "backgrounds of memory", which links them to the original idea of *loci memoriae*, the founders of the spatialization of memory. In Germany the term *Erinnerungsorte* (François & Schulze, 2001) is the most used, the evolution of the word *erinneren* from meaning "to internalize" to encompassing "memory" with a didactical connotation, implying both learning and teaching (Erll & Nünning, 2010, p. 22), highlights a linguistic and conceptual shift. Despite Nora's extensive effort to translate his *lieux de mémoire* into English, and to establish a unique definition within the international sphere, it remains evident that this term does not function as a transnational word, neither linguistically nor conceptually.

His analysis seems too rooted in French territory and no wonder that after Nora's publications, many countries have operated to find their own idea of places of memory. In Italy, particularly relevant are Mario Isnenghi (1996) reflections. In his work, divided into three volumes and echoing Nora's title, *I luoghi della memoria*, the author focuses on the symbols, characters, and structures of Italy from 1861, the year of unification, to the second post-war period. Places where the memory of the local community recognizes a significant and consolidated element of its pastand identity; they represent the intersection of physical topography and the mental geography of memory.

The studies of the American scholar Jay Winter return to that idea of commemoration from which Nora had tried to keep his distance. In the essay *Sites*

of memory (2010) he defines the term more narrowly, excluding that symbolic amplitude so dear to the French historian, to mean physical sites where commemorative acts occur.

Topoi with a life history. They have an initial, creative phase, when they are constructed or adapted to particular commemorative purposes. Then follows a period of institutionalization and routinization of their use. [...] In most instances, the significance of sites of memory fades away with the passing of the social groups that initiated the practice. (Winter, 2010, p. 312)

These are places that respond to the imperative "never again" or "not to forget" and that are addressed not only to contemporaneity as traces of memory, but above all to future generations, for whom they represent a real *memento*.
According to the author, they are paradoxically ephemeral places that, despite the durability of the materials with which they are usually built and the celebratory austerity by which they are supported, remain stable and active only if there is a society that recognizes them, and are inevitably destined to disappear with time. Despite the attempt to move away from Nora, these reflections continue to manifest one of his most compelling methodologies, the investigation of memory sites as "plural texts" in the Barthesian sense of the term (Barthes, 1989): «the text is plural. This does not mean only that it has several meanings, but that it fulfills the very plurality of meaning: an irreducible (and not just acceptable) plurality. The text is coexistence of meaning, but passage, traversal» (p. 59). An intrinsic plurality that undoubtedly defines places of memory complexity. The same conceptual multiplicity has also been captured by Michael Rothberg (2010) through what he has called *noeuds de mémoire*, 'nodes of memory', located within multidirectional dynamic systems of memory. Attempts to expand the conceptual field produced by Nora continued over time, as did the search for synonyms or terminological alternative to expand the mnestic lexical field.

These networks of remembrance, in crossing physical, representational, and experiential domains, can also be productively conceived of as 'memoryscapes', layered accretions of material, imaginative, and embodied memory that are stretched across geographical scales. (De Nardi et al., 2020, p. 226)

In 1995, historian Simon Schama made a significant contribution to this discourse with the publication of *Landscape and Memory*, opting for the term 'landscape' over 'place' «in conjunction with memory to describe geographical imaginations of the pastness of our world» (Maus, 2015, p. 216). This choice broadened the discourse on the relationship between memory and place, fostering a holistic, multi-layered, and symbolic perspective that subsequently became a focal point in the study of geographies of memory (Azaryahu & Foote, 2008; Till, 2003), echoing earlier discussions by Tuan (1977). We can also find the term 'historical place' or 'historical site' «dedicated to the cultural production of their pasts» (Azaryahu & Foote, 2008), offering a profound connection to bygone eras through the physical remnants and narratives they evoke. Despite the various linguistic and conceptual declinations, what appears constant is again the theme of commemoration that also settles the term 'memorial site' or 'memorial landscape' as a crystallization of the past (Nora, 1989) «in which the content of memory and the shape of the memory landscape is based on the decision of those who have the power to determine meanings conveyed in and through the landscape» (Hubner & Dirksmeier, 2023, p. 105). These places seem to be solid witnesses of the past, dependent on the choices of a community as a social construction generating forms of public memory. In this theoretical horizon, constantly undergoing changes and new interpretations, in the early 1990s when Nora published his last reviewed volume, another term began to make its way.

A compound word, an almost-neologism, composed of two parts that refer to ancient Greek: *mneme*, memory and *topos*, place. The *mnemotope*.

Mnemotope is not an entirely new word, it has been sporadically used in various fields of knowledge (Galasso, 2021). The first scholar to decide to choose it as a stand-alone term and not as a synonym of *lieux de mémoire*, was Jan Assmann in the volume *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulture* (1992).

Entire landscapes may serve as a medium for cultural memory. [...] Rome created a sacred landscape during Antiquity, consisting of topographical texts of cultural memory, that is, 'mnemotopes'. (Assmann J., 2011, p. 44)

In Jan Assmann's vision, *mnemotopes*, originated from classical mnemotechnics, embody the place as fundamental part of cultural memory. They are physical realities gradually *semioticized* (*ibid.*) becoming complex mnestic texts convey-

ing meanings from ancient ages, «site-specific materializations of the past in the present» (Engel, 2022), privileged mediums and interpreters of *in loco* occurrences. What persists is an immanent glance at mythology and religion that does not attempt to broaden the horizon of places of memory, but seems once again to staticify it and confine it to a historical discourse.

Some years later, the archaeologist Anthony Purdy (2002), confronted the mnemotopic idea with its closest and more famous predecessor the *chronotope* (Bakhtin, 1981), stating that mnemotope is «a chronotopic motif manifesting the presence of the past, the conscious or unconscious memory traces of a more or less distant period in the life of a culture or, metaphorically, an individual» (Purdy, 2002, p. 94). Bakhtin's concept, the «intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature» (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84), even if rooted in the literary criticism realm, can be considered one of the first attempt to include space, and not only time in a broader discourse of creative interpretation of reality. «Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to movements of time, plot and history» (*ivi*). Thus, the fusion of temporal and spatial dimensions is an essential part of the chronotope, and contributes to materialize and visualize themes that the intrinsic intangibility makes problematic. This does not apply in the same way to the mnemotopes, for which time plays a constitutive, but not always determinative role. Places of memory often refer to events that lie precisely in time, but this need not be the rule; frequently they refer to an indefinite, mythical or legendary past (Bednarek, 2012). For Bakhtin, the chronotope remains the space in which time finally becomes palpable, observable and experienceable. There is no reference to memory and its narrative dimension layered over places. Both acknowledge their ability to materialize unstable and intangible concepts that are so theoretical that they even struggle to find the right terminology to represent them. Both promote access to symbolic values and the experience of immaterial, but in Bakhtin's works we have a chronological discourse, while in mnemotopic theorizing the focus remains on topography. One aspect, however, remains crucial after the advent of chronotope: the space, and in the specific case of mnemotopes, the place, is not anymore the framework of time, but is an active factor which can itself turn into a compelling story (Moretti, 1997). Inside the term mnemotope, given its integrated nature, we can find that liminal value, expressed by Nora (1989), between material and symbol, that characterizes the topography of memory. The con-

ceptual *portmanteau*, in fact, seems to gradually loose its practical and stylistic use, to avoid repetitions in the text, moving toward a more conceptual assumption: making memory and place coexist in a single domain, making them speak together without the use of prepositions. It effectively renders the concepts of place and remembrance as interdependent, entangling their manifestations and significations in one epistemological whole (De Nardi et al., 2020, p. 117). If terminology is the poetic form of thought (Agamben, 2020, p. 1), some terminological questions are important at this point, also because, continuing to explain a reality by reference to another, as done previously, does not solve the issue and anchors the mnemotope to single and exclusive fields of knowledge that does not fully reflect its interdisciplinary meaning. In *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung. Ein interdisziplinäres Lexicon* (2002), the "Dictionary of Memory and Remembrance", the authors, echoing already mentioned Jan Assmann's reflections, emphasize even more the mnemotopic articulation.

Memory has a real (topographical) place in mnemotopes. They can mark very complex sense formations, but also keep alive a collective memory linked to a natural element, but always perceived thanks to a code. [...] Thanks to their ability to last in the spaces that define them, mnemotopes embrace very wide temporal horizons. (Pethes & Ruchatz, 2002, p. 353)

Starting from these considerations, mnemotopes are not only traces but can be considered apparatuses. They seem to respond to those characteristics highlighted by Foucault's thoughts (1980) e later recalled by Agamben (2020) for whom the *apparatus* is a network established between heterogeneous elements; a formation that, at a particular historical moment, had the essential function of responding to an urgent need; a formation characterized by an internal coherence between the parts; a formation that has concrete strategic functions; a formation that appears at the intersection of power and knowledge relations. In this respect, mnemotopes are mnestic cultural devices with a preferential relationship with the territories (Galasso & Baule, 2021).

The emergence of the territory at this point is not accidental. Territory is a living palimpsest, a social *milieu* intricately linked to historical events. Its essence comprises both an official facade and a deeper, more emotional dimension, defying simple surface-level interpretation. Evolving through daily interactions, it continually reconstructs itself, safeguarding vital evidence essential for piecing

together the past (Galasso, 2018). We can therefore say that mnemotopes reside in the territory and are an integral part of it. They represent a nexus between memory and the territorial domain, functioning as catalysts for renewed interpretation, igniting fresh perspectives and insights into the past. All these reflections, however, have not yet led us to a proper definition of the mnemotope, which seems to continually elude a clear theoretical framework, perhaps because of its plural essence. For this reason, recent studies have attempted to overcome the vagueness of the term, determining what a mnemotope is not in order to expand its cultural meaning. Jan Van Rookhuijzen (2020), is one of the few scholars to have specifically chosen the term mnemotope and attempted its definitory and interpretive process, emphasizing its importance in an academic discourse that continues to look at the relationship between place and memory. He states that mnemotopes are not objects, monuments, or landscapes, although these categories are closely associated with them (p. 19). Objects, like relics venerated by pilgrims, are transportable, not embedded in a surrounding landscape, and less persistent than a mnemotope. Monuments are «salient because of their physical permanence [...] their attraction lies in the assumption by visitors that one can re-experience historical (or mythical events), or follow in the footsteps of famous persons» (p. 8). Monuments are usually located in places convenient to the eye, typically elevated on pedestals. They are easily accessible and identifiable and may stand in places far from the event or figure they are intended to commemorate. The mnemotope is not the result of a predetermined social action and intended project and does not choose its location. It can be difficult to reach, and its direct experience can be really complex to the point of inaccessibility. This is not to say that the two realities cannot overlap: the mnemotope can often present a monument on its surface precisely because there is significant mnestic layering there or because it makes explicit an event to be remembered, and on the other hand, some monuments can become mnemotopes over time through the constant spatialization and stratification of narratives.

In Van Rookhuijzen's reflections, the previous mentioned physical connection of the mnemotope with the territory is striking. The author tightens Nora's taxonomy by excluding objects and personalities to focus on the place. Objects are indeed too transient and perishable, as are personalities, which are considered only in their contact with places. Additionally, the reasoning on the public and symbolic externalization of memory, which does not always coincide with the mnemotopic reality, seems significant. A monument, a plaque, a stele do not

always signal the presence of a mnemotope, but sometimes point to a relevant historical fact without a precise connection to that spatiality.

In his tentative to refine the mnemotopic contest, the author dwells on the idea of landscape: «mnemotopes are specificic landmarks; a landscape is much broader and vaguer category, which may encompass different kinds of places and nature» (p. 8). The idea of landscape is hazier, while mnemotopes tend to look for a recognizable localization. Referring to the considerations of Jan Assmann (1992), Van Rookhuijzen's introduces the concept of *memory landscape*, as an aggregate of mnemotopes. The theme is then linked to two fundamental concepts: collectivity and spatial densification. Indeed, mnemonotopes are activated mainly in the context of collective dynamics, favoring the recognition of social groups and the stability of important historical events over time. Collectivity, however, seems too broad a concept to be considered a mnemotopic discriminator.

Collectives are very large realities, but also very small and spatially circumscribed communities. In this sense, the mnemotope does not seem to make any difference. The collective scale does not appear to invalidate the mnemotope, which can be recognized by whole societies, but also by small local nuclei, without affecting its mnestic value. Instead, the idea of spatial densification seems much more significant. The aggregation of several stories identifies a mnemotope based on two parameters (Van Rookhuijzen, 2020, pp. 13-15): *clustering*, when in a given geographical area there is a concentration of different mnemotopic realities of proximity that can be experienced by following a sort of mnestic/spatial itinerary; *accumulation*, when in a single site, in a given mnemotope, different narratives accumulate over time, stratifying its presence on the territory and increasing its already complex reality at once part of a distant past and the present. Stefan Bednarek (2012) comes with a discourse similar to the one of Purdy (2022), this time juxtaposing the mnemotope to the internationally renowned *lieux de mémoire*. In this case, rather than a confrontation, Bednarek's argument seems to support a distancing. In the author's view, placing them side by side, risks a total assimilation of the mnemotope, causing it to lose its faint degree of autonomy and including it with no way out to the *commemorative bulimia* (Bassanelli, 2015, p. 10). Given its young age, the mnemotope does not need parallels, but rather to build its own identity made up of distinctive features that make it increasingly recognizable within the vast sphere of memory.

While such definitions serve to provide some degree of clarity within the intricate landscape of the subject matter, they do not offer a comprehensive solution

to the mnemotopic complexity. In this interdisciplinary excursus, aimed at justifying and explaining the choice of the term mnemotope as protagonist of this volume, we can also add other concepts and authors that, although not directly referring to the term itself, point to the memory of places and its intangible value with the same theoretical intentions, and indeed add relevant aspects to the mnemotopic contextualization.

The concept of mnemotope can echo the Roman *genius loci*. For the Latins, it was the indwelling spirit, the tutelary nume of place, that protects and preserves people and places, that accompanies them from birth to death and determines their character or essence (Norberg-Schulz, 1979) by placing them in a close identity relationship with the environment. The ancient man lived in an osmotic relationship with the place, considering it a living reality, a determining part of the existence. This concept finds a similar precedent in the Greek idea of the *Daimon* «a spirit to whom all human affairs, happy and sad, were attributed. It was believed that each person had his own good demon that directed him toward the fulfillment of his essence» (Bevilacqua, 2010, p. 25). A modern form of interest in *genius loci* is found in architecture, especially in *Genius Loci. Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* by Christian Norberg-Schulz (1979). For the author, architecture needs to protect and express the vocation of the place (p. 23) without altering it, but rather bring back the material and immaterial characters of the territory into the architectural artifact. The *genius loci* is reflected in the building's ability to materialize the essence of place by respecting it, dialoguing with it, and expressing itself in it. The spirit of the place, then, can also ascribe attractive or repulsive forces to certain places far beyond what their position in geographic space or historical time might indicate (Casey, 1987, p. 197).

The *genius loci* can activate directional intensities, arrows that jump back and forth between people and their environment, giving individuals a sense of being part of the environment, of a comprehensive totality (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, p. 23). In these aspects we find a correspondence with the concept of the mnemotope: the memories layered in a place are alive, changing, abandoned and rediscovered, able to be revived and reinterpreted, generating a series of internal forces that make the mnemotope a dynamic and constantly changing reality.

An entity that becomes an existential foothold, in a concrete, everyday sense (*ibid.*): not a mere intersection of phenomena, but a multiplicity of mnestic, living forces that link individual and collective memories, that cross symbol and physicality and that can be understood and translated in their meaning. Here

also lies the role of the designer who, like the architect, should cultivate the *genius loci*, auscultate the mnemotope, the voices that places tell, the history of nature and the stories of people, their memories, their labors, their presences and absences (Turri, 2004, p. 81). We can cite again the Azaryahu and Foote's (2008) insights that, while speaking of historical spaces, help to broaden the scope of mnemotopic inquiry. They introduce three categories in which spatial narratives can be developed and layered, thus constituting a mnemotope: single point or place, mnemotopes are localized and described from single, easily marked places; routes and paths, mnemotopic narratives develop along paths that follow a physical or temporal order, i.e., linked to the chronology of events; large areas or long periods, mnemotopic narratives cover very large areas and very long periods of time, so precise choices must be made to narrate them (e.g., thematic, geographic, hybrid). In this case, temporality is still very present, echoing the chronotope, but the key aspect is the analysis in terms of scale. It seems clear that the mnemotopes do not all have the same extent and mnestic presence in the territory. Some are very punctual and concentrated places that have a clear and strong cultural value despite their limited range. In other cases, very small places are meaningful only if they are part of geographic or thematic routes. In the case of very large areas, memory landscapes, with a relevant historical value, it is necessary to analyze precise strategies of connection and organic translation. In the recent volume *Places of Memory* (Horn et al., 2020), which brings together interdisciplinary essays on the topic of the spatialization of memory, no precise terminological choice is made; the idea of places of memory is generically associated with sites of memory, but the insights operate in a mnemotopic sense, introducing the importance of practices in mnestic terms. The authors focus not only on the intrinsic capacity of places to preserve memories, but also emphasize the fundamental role of memory practices (p. 3) in promoting the preservation of memories by evoking, modifying, and transforming them.

This leads to the view that it is not enough to find a definition of mnemotope, but what is needed are targeted mnemotopic practices that, through a conscious use of memory in its relation to territory, are able to bring the past to the surface and lead it into modes of content and artifact production.

7.
Individual and collective mnemotopes

Contemplating the expansive realm the memory of places, one can not overlook the dichotomy between realities intertwined with personal memories and those encapsulating the concept of collective memory as articulated by Halbwachs (1950). Hence, it is possible to distinguish between individual and collective mnemotopes. However, a cognitive premise must be set. As we have seen in the previous chapters, memory originates in our brain, and namely, the distinction between individual and collective starts in our own synapses.

In neuroscience, memory is more than a repository or a monolithic entity; it is a system: «an interaction among acquisition, retention, and retrieval mechanisms that is characterized by certain rules of operation» (Sherry & Schacter, 1987, p. 440). Within this system we can distinguish an implicit and explicit memory (Imbasciati, 2015). The first is an unconscious memory, composed of memories that have accompanied humans since the first hours of their life, through processes that can recall sensations and stimuli of which we do not perceive the actual memory. This type of memory involves habits, repetitive procedures, motor practices, all actions of which we do not perceive how they were learned when they are performed; they are unconscious, primitive, automatic memories.

Explicit memory, on the other hand, is the realm of mnestic consciousness that includes all the aware processes of remembrance. Its structure is the closest to the general idea of memory, that is a fixed and faithful image of reality, so that when you remember a fact, you feel that you are remembering something to which you can give a verbal form. The explicit system branches out further to include two other forms of memory, semantic and episodic. The first is conceptual knowledge, characterized by the presence of fixed figures, intellectual prototypes that can be expressed with verbal and graphic symbols. The episodic memory, on the other hand, is composed of elements that are not so rigidly classified but are related to the specifics of each individual's experience. These first distinctions, which refer primarily to mnestic processes related to the individual, may

be useful to identify a taxonomy even within the collective memory. Manier and Hirst (2010) divide collective memory into three categories that make explicit its conceptual elasticity (pp. 257-259): *Collective episodic memory*, shared memories of personal past events of members of a community; *Collective semantic memory*, shared memories of distant historical facts; *Collective procedural memory*, shared traditions and rituals whose knowledge and practice are embodied. Here we can venture a connection between these categories and the mnemotopic context, with special reference to the distinction between individual and collective mnemotopes. «Individual and collective experience imply each other. All experience is individual in that collectivities do not have minds, or memories either, though we often speak as if they did» (Kenny, 1999, p. 421). The social nature of memory is essential, but so is its individual essence. A collective and recognized memory is composed of many sedimented personal memories that constitute its voice. Even within the social framework, therefore, it is necessary to attach importance to those places of memory of the individual that jointly contribute to the constitution of the mnemotopic network. An individual mnemotope, is therefore a place linked to personal memory, a place connected to the private dimension of remembrance. Settled on these territorial realities we can find tender and blurred memories of childhood, existential turning points, territorial roots, family memories. Following the just exposed neuroscientific theories, we can speak of implicit individual mnemotopes, that is, all those places that constitute a dense but unconscious nucleus within the individual and that can reappear as *impromptu* mental representations in the context of everyday experiences or even in the form of *déjà vu*. Then there are explicit individual mnemonotopes that we recognize as part of our journey through territory/existence and that we allow to enter into a process of personal institutionalization.

Individual mnemotopes are the bridge between autobiography and topography (Galasso, 2023b) and allow us to recognize ourselves in the territory, they give us the feeling of being present, of existing. Whether explicit or implicit, they are very nuanced at the perceptual level, they are realities with a strong suggestive force, so they can evoke very intense emotions. This certainly includes nostalgia, «a highly complex emotional response that combines feelings of sadness and painful longing with joy and human warmth» (Arnold-de Simine, 2013, p. 54).

For this reason, they have become the protagonists of numerous cultural productions. One example is the film *Wild Strawberries* (1957), written and directed by Ingmar Bergman. The original Swedish title is *Smultronstället*, which literally

means "the wild strawberry patch" but idiomatically denotes a personal, subjective, meaningful place that says nothing to those who have not lived near it. It is a place that is charged with significance only if the individual who contemplates it had a connection to it (Mercatanti, 2016). The film begins with elderly professor Isak Borg, who is travelling by car to Lund in southern Sweden to collect an academic award. He is accompanied on the trip by his daughter-in-law Marianne. Due to a detour in the itinerary, the two happen to find themselves near the house where Isak spent two decades of his youth. The stop in those places, in the so-called "place of strawberries", and the image of the house deeply move the professor. The individual mnemotope is activated and triggers a series of memories that appear before his eyes, as if he were reliving those moments. Famous has become the quote of the protagonist:

Smultronstället! The place where wild strawberries grow! Perhaps I got a little sentimental. Perhaps I got a little tired and felt a bit sad. It's not impossible that I began to think of this and that, associated with places where I played as a child. I don't know how it happened, but the day's clear reality dissolved into the even clearer images of memory that appeared before my eyes with the strength of a true stream of events. (*Wild Strawberries*, 1957)

From this moment, Isak's journey becomes a true mnemotopic itinerary, in which the tension with the places of his past increases the path of life and identitarian re-evaluation. A very different atmosphere is the one narrated in *Azzorre* (2020) by Cecilia Giampaoli. On the border between *memoir* and travelogue, the book tells of the author's journey to the place where her father died after a tragic air accident. On February 8, 1989, a Boeing that headed to Santo Domingo crashed into the Pico Alto of Santa Maria, one of the most remote islands in the Azores. It is an immersion into the past, made up of testimonies and newspaper reports, but also of steps, landscapes, sky, and mountains. The re-elaboration of the trauma passes through the process of knowledge and exploration of the place that took away her father.

La strada prosegue ancora, umida, coperta ai lati da muschio verde acceso. Ci sono altri monumenti sulla sinistra del sentiero, sono bianchi: una targa per le vittime, un pilastro su cui sono appoggiati alcuni pezzi dell'aereo e una targa più bassa e piccola per i membri dell'equipaggio. [...] La terra è bagnata, devo camminare ai lati della strada, ma affondo comunque nel fango. [...] La vegetazione è folta. Le chiome degli alberi sono un soffitto

altissimo e la luce del sole filtra a fatica tra i rami. Cammino ancora, finché d'un tratto li vedo tra i sassi, e pietrifico anche io. Sparsi piegati, rotti, invecchiati. Insostenibili pezzi di aereo[1]. (Giampaoli, 2020, pp. 85-86)

A place she must know and understand as well as possible before nature takes over, before the islanders' memories associated with this event are completely erased, before it is too late: «Non sono venuta per riportare in vita mio padre, il passato è passato e non si può rifare, ma ho un conto aperto con questo posto. Nel male e nel bene, sarei diversa se non fosse successo. Non sarei io» (p. 22)[2]. This example introduces the study of personal mnemotopes within the field of *Trauma Studies*, since physical places can give «visibility to memories of extreme suffering, sometimes within the framework of national discourses of the past, and at other times within small communities» (Hubbel et al., 2020) and individuals, and they can have the healing power «to contain, reconcile, and repair indelible wounds» (*ibid.*). Memories tied to specific places are thus a support in understanding events, becoming part of individual acts of remembrance. They assume a fundamental role in human discourse, guiding personal narratives, and enhancing self-territorial awareness. There are also cases in which places condense personal memories over the course of time until they become shared, safe individual mnemotopes, unofficial pilgrimage sites. This is the case with the *Wind Phone*[3] in Otsuchi, Japan, installed by Itaru Sasaki: a white booth containing a disconnected rotary phone, which since the tragic tsunami of 2011 has been welcoming and sedimenting the memories of survivors who can freely enter and express their inner emotions, their most painful unspoken word, their most beautiful and heartbreaking messages. Also worth mentioning is the *Piccolo Museo del Diario*[4], "Little Diary Museum", in Pieve Santo Stefano (AR), Italy, a multi-sensory and interactive exhibition that narrates the history of the *Archivio*

---

1.   "The road continues, damp, overgrown on the sides with bright green moss. To the left of the road are other monuments, they are white: a memorial plaque for the victims, a pillar on which lean some parts of the plane and a lower and smaller plaque for the crew members. [...] The ground is wet, I have to walk on the sides of the road, but I still sink in the mud. [...] The vegetation is dense. The treetops are a very high ceiling and the sunlight barely penetrates through the branches. I keep walking until suddenly I see them among the stones, and I petrify myself. Scattered, bent, broken, aged. Unsustainable pieces of airplanes", translation by the author.

2.   "I have not come to bring my father back to life, the past is the past and cannot be restored, but I have an unfinished business with this place. For better or worse, I would be someone else if this had not happened. I would not be myself", translation by the author.

3.   See https://bell-gardia.jp/en/guide/the-phone-of-the-wind/

4.   See https://www.piccolomuseodeldiario.it/

Diaristico Nazionale, the "National Diary Archive," showcasing precious autobiographical testimonies. It serves as a presidium to safeguard personal memories, transforming them into universal stories.

Individual mnemotopes, so rich in mnestic texture, so sensorially and emotionally jagged, are exposed to the physiological erosion of memories. Their survival is related to the social transmission of memories, which occurs in processes of recognition, consolidation, symbolization, and institutionalization. To remain stable over time, the individual mnemotope has to be communicated, its mnestic value must be recognized as meaningful and shared, it must take on a symbolic value that transcends personal boundaries, and in rare cases it may be politically recognized as a place of memory. In these phases, mnemotopes are collectivized as a dynamic set of representations of a past that is experienced as still active, present, and as part of the reality of the group (Jedlowski, 1989). The systemic categories of memory presented at the beginning of this chapter may also be useful in identifying different types of collective mnemotopes:

– **Collective episodic mnemotopes**: shared mnemopes between small communities, usually connected with local, oral, unhistorical, unofficial memories. This group includes *generational places* (Assmann A., 2011, p. 284). Realities with a particular mnestic intensity that connect the members of a family to a particular site for uninterrupted generations.
– **Collective semantic mnemotopes**: shared mnemotopes, between large communities (countries, regions, states,) as a source of civic pride and status (Van Rookhuijzen, 2020). Connected to historical events, are usually institutionalized and become identity symbols.
– **Collective momentous mnemotopes**: shared mnemotopes related to specific epoch-making historical events with strong symbolic meaning that transcend the locality. They become realities universally recognized as places of memory (e.g., *Ground zero* in New York).

Aware of these distinctions, what remains important is the intrinsic value of the mnemotopic entity, whether individual or collective. The mnemotopes produce movements on the territories in search of our roots, those of our ancestors, or going even deeper into the memories that an entire planisphere shares. Whatever the objective is, what remains is that particular pleasure of the imagination warmed on the mnemotope (Van Rookhuijzen, 2020, p. 11), which will be a fundamental characteristic for its entrance into the field of communication.

8.
Mnemotopes and the fourth wave of Memory Studies

As we have already observed in the previous chapters, *Memory Studies* is a relatively young but already active academic area, and the related Association organizes an annual conference that has become an important interdisciplinary moment in the study of memory issues. During the days of the meeting, scholars in the field of remembrance, artists and memorial practitioners from around the world have the opportunity to discuss pressing issues of theoretical innovation, implications for practice and future possibilities that are pushing forward the boundaries of this emerging field of knowledge. In just a few years, thanks to the dynamism and continuous publication, dissemination and exchange activities, this discipline has undergone considerable development, including public, institutional recognition. But what place do mnemotopes have in this evolution? In the article *Travelling Memory*, Astrid Erll (2011) delves into the status of Memory Studies and the changes that have occurred over the years. She identifies *three waves*, in which the relationship between memory and place may not be explicitly stated but can certainly be identified with a critical eye.

The first phase is that of the early twentieth century, which coincides with the studies of the aforementioned Aby Warburg (1929) and Maurice Halbwachs (1950). The latter is considered the father of Memory Studies, who transferred memory to the collective environment, describing it as social phenomenon developing in space. In his research on the spatial framework, the importance of the physical environment becomes clear, playing a «vital role in the formation an perpetuation of collective memories and identities» (Hagen, 2006), and even when these spaces are not fixed, they can create a strong sense of stability, permanence and continuity (*ibid.*). Thus, as Halbwach himself states «that's how memory is defined. Space alone is stable enough to endure without growing old or losing any of its parts» (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 156). We are not explicitly discussing sites of memory, but what appears evident is that the memory associated of places serves as a potent foundation for shaping both individual and soci-

etal structures, facilitating their persistence and stability over time. The second phase, 1980s and 1990s, is the one that marks the entry of Nora's *lieux di mémoire*, a conceptual and terminological shift in which it now becomes clear how much talking about and studying memory, especially after the Second World War, cannot refrain from considering places of memory and their role in society. These are also the years of the *memory boom* and of Jan Asmmann's research on cultural memory. The distinction between communicative memory and cultural memory is fundamental: the former is «non-institutional; it is not supported by any institutions of learning, transmission and interpretation» (Assmann J., 2010) and it seems very much linked to the idea of individual mnemotopes, as it is ephemeral and limited to everyday occurrences. The latter is institutionalized, «exteriorized, objectified and stored in symbolic forms» (*ibid.*), with place playing a crucial role. Places not only fix and certify memory by anchoring and it in a territorial location, but also embody a temporal continuity that goes beyond the short-term memory of individuals and produces cultural spaces (Assmann A., 2011). The third wave in the new millennium «is characterized by a focus on "postnational"," "transcultural"," "cosmopolitan"," "postcolonial" and "multidirectional" approaches» (Olick et al., 2023) that have moved Memory Studies away from the purely eurocentric dimension of their beginnings. Thus, memory is looked at as a topic that has no institutional boundaries, but moves in the geographic horizon along with communities, always generating new localizations. These themes persist in what has just begun as the fourth wave (Craps et al., 2018). A phase attentive to the issue of sustainability and ecology from a postanthropocentric perspective. Recently, the concept of *slow memory* (Wüstenberg, 2023) has emerged, based on the recognition that while we are good at commemorating sudden or extreme events such as wars, atrocities or disasters, we struggle to address gradual changes that can be just as consequential, such as climate change, de-industrialization or the gradual assertion of social and political rights. In this context, mnemotopes certainly are still an open discourse, and definitions continue to be updated. A mnestic term has lately appeared, *placemory* (Hubner & Dirksmeier, 2023), considered a living organism in which the society, the individual observer, memorial patterns handed down from the past, and material space are relationally interwoven (p. 107).

In all phases therefore, including the one we are going through, the attention to mnemotopes, more or less stated, has remained alive and active and has also produced a good number of publications.

A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies (2010), edited by Astrid Erll with Ansgar Nünning, dedicates a long reflection to the relationship between memory and place in the chapter "*Lieux de mémoire* - Sites of memory". It includes an analysis of the genesis of the concept of place of memory starting from the classical idea of *loci memoriae*, a contribution on the translation epic of *lieux de mémoire*, and finally an excursus on sites of commemoration. The volume has the merit of bringing together in a single publication different disciplinary approaches to the now transnational topic of places of memory.

The Routledge Handbook Of Memory And Place (2020) is a compendium that explores more recent interdisciplinary research on the interrelationship between memory studies, place, and identity. The volume is divided in seven sections: *Mobility*; *Difficult memories*; *Memoryscapes*; *Industry*; *The body*; *Shared traditions*; *Ritual*. Their sequence again emphasizes the interdisciplinarity of the topic and connects to the stages of evolution of Memory Studies that we have covered here in this chapter. In 2023 has been published the book *Critical Memory Studies. New Approaches*, edited by Brett Ashley Kaplan, in which an entire part is dedicated to "Monuments, Memorials, Museums, Memoirs" as forms of externalization of memory. The final chapters then open up to the world of digital communication by presenting examples of virtual memorial practices.

In the same year, the *Memory Studies journal*, published a special issue "Taking Stock of Memory Studies", where the editors proposed three different points of view on the fourth wave: «those that seek to open new *geographical* and cultural horizons in memory studies, those that seek to open, expand, combine, or, occasionally, critique, existent *disciplinary* perspectives, and those that seek to develop a new sensitivity to *ecological transformations* and have engendered new perspectives on temporality» (Olick et al., 2023). In this way, the article aims to emphasize the increasingly clear opening of this field of research in many directions and dimensions, which is moving more and more towards a pluriverse perspective (*ibid.*). Also significant is the work of the aforementioned Astrid Erll (2009). In *Sites of Memory, Premediation, and Remediation* introduces a fundamental concept related to mnemotopes and their communication which will be explored in detail in the third part of this volume: remediation.

I use the term 'remediation' to indicate that those events in particular which are transformed into *lieux de mémoire* are usually represented again and again, over decades and centuries, in different media. What is known about an event that has turned into a site

of memory, therefore, seems to refer not so much to what one might cautiously call the 'actual event', but instead to a canon of existent medial constructions, to the narratives, images, and myths circulating in a memory culture. (Erll, 2009, p. 120)

The re-medial construction, described by Erll, introduces the privileged field of action of mnemotopes in the context of design, which will be the focus of the next section. Despite their physical existence, mnemotopes are often dependent on communicative processes in order to be recognized within territories and to maintain their vitality. Communicative tools and artifacts such as storytelling, digital interfaces, and visual narratives serve as essential mediums through which memory layered in places establishes connections to individuals and communities. They can capture and transmit the mnestic identity of a place, convey its atmosphere, stories and landscapes, and create emotional connections with residents and visitors that foster a sense of attachment and belonging. The symbiotic relationship between physical realities and communicative processes underlines the dynamic nature of mnemotopes. Through communication design, they can go beyond mere geographical locations and become active entities that engage with their surroundings enriching the human experience.

Designing mnemotopes

9.
Mnemotopes and Communication Design for the Territory

Today, the intricate relationship between mnemotopes and design remains poorly documented and explored. The scarcity of references within this discipline should not be misunderstood as a lack of relevance, on the contrary, the fusion of memory and space has profound implications for both design theory and practice. Places that are imbued with personal or collective memories evoke emotions, nostalgia and serve as vessels for cultural heritage. Understanding these connections is crucial for designers seeking to create meaningful projects, content and artifacts. In an exploratory research perspective, we can state that space has played a crucial role around design since the 1990s, from the studies of Edward W. Soja (1996). Defining the *Spatial Turn,* the author underlines the renewed centrality of space not only in its physical and material nature, but giving importance to the imaginary and imaginative side. Physical space (*First Space*) and mental space (*Second Space*) appear as necessarily complementary categories. Space must be understood as a symbiotic connection between the real and the imaginary (*Third Space*). This turn consistently affected geographical disciplines, but also extended to design practices: it adds a new dimension to communication design, in continual search for new coordinates within which to organize its artifacts, introducing a focus on territory as a provider of information and a more generalized sensitivity to place as a reservoir and potential generator of communicative resources (Baule & Quaggiotto, 2015).

Communication Design for the Territory[1], starting from this paradigm and in a constant and performative cooperation with various disciplines (e.g., cultural anthropology, sociology, georgaphy, etc.), recognizes the territory as a multifaceted entity encompassing not only physical landscapes but also cultural, social, and atmospheric dimensions, positioning itself as a transformative activity that aims to reformulate content to facilitate comprehension, make it more acces-

---

1.   See http://www.comunicazionedelterritorio.it/

sible, and find the most appropriate form of expressions (Baule & Caratti, 2017) for the territories. Fundamental in this field of knowledge is the principle of geo-localization involved in the study and creation of territorial interfaces: any type of device that, through different systems of representation and mapping and experimenting with coherent communication formats, provides tools that can act as links to access the territory and its contents (Baule & Quaggiotto, 2015).

In the light of a metaphorical coring, the territory appears as a multi-layered reality in which physical aspects, histories, stories, events, data and perceptions coexist in a synergic combination of tangible and intangible, material and immaterial. A palimpsest where *the scriptio inferior*, remains in «an obstinate will of survival to the point that, through some technical devices, it can be totally (or partially) recovered to the reading» (Maldonado, 2006, p. 111).

Therefore, the recognition of stratification appears essential and multiple levels of vertical exploration can be identified (Galasso, 2023a):

- **Physical**: the level of materiality, surface, and itineraries;
- **Narrative**: the level of storytelling and fictional descriptions;
- **Representative**: the level of information, data, and orientation;
- **Perceptual**: the level of sensory experiences, and atmospheres;
- **Mnestic:** the level of mnemotopes, traces of the past, and archives.

The changes in the territory that are constantly taking place expand the extra-physical dimension and emphasize the hybrid realm in which the different levels coexist and confront each other. This leads to a different positioning of territorial communication, which is no longer only about the valorization of physical emergencies, but about the polyphonic existence of the levels.

As can be seen from the list just presented, the *mnestic level* is crucial as places retain the past in a way that can be reanimated (Casey, 1987). However, when we look at an area from a physical point of view, we do not have immediate access to the experiences and histories that have settled there, that the places have absorbed, especially when there are no forms of mnestic externalization on the surface, such as monuments, plaques, and memorials. For this reason, Communication Design for the Territory collects contents (archival documents, testimonies, historical photographs, etc.), and reconnects them to the places with specific tools and devices in an *active conservation* perspective, this means communicating the past without exhausting its depth, revealing its richness and expressive potential, while maintaining a respectful attitude towards the sources

and documents (Galasso, 2018). This discipline aims to constructs mnemotopic remediations and to translate them. In this way, the physical surface of the territory opens up, revealing its inner complexity and the evocative power of the places. Design not only participates in the representation and communication of mnemonotopes, but plays a fundamental role in their recognition and stabilization. The fact that this discipline identifies the mnemonotopes in a communicative spatial-mnestic project and analyzes them as an essential part of the territorial mosaic implies that communication design becomes a real support for the mnemotope, for the verification of its presence in space and the demonstration of its intrinsic cultural value.

The *cartographic paradigm* (Quaggiotto, 2012, p. 25) is another reference when discussing mnestic spatial representation. For centuries, maps have served as interfaces enabling us to comprehend and navigate the intricate complexities of the territory, contributing to reconstruct the past and to geolocate historical events. As an interpretation of reality, they are not only conventional visualization of a geographical area, but they are able to convey the complexity of the elements that compose them. They are the final communicative artifact of a translation process in which different actors are involved: data, information, images, and texts are anchored to the territory revealing their communicative nature. Maps become visual mediums of remembrance, which cannot be thought of as «the passive reproduction of reality but a production of meaning and spaces» (*ivi*, p. 118). Maps can also be collected in atlases, icon-textual constellations capable of questioning the present with ever-new questions; a cultural artifact that opens original accesses to knowledge by placing images, texts, and scientific data in a close and kaleidoscopic relationship. It is therefore evident that maps are no longer only *of* the territory, but *for* the territory, entering a polysemic relationship with places and their memories, creating new research topics.

In particular, the rapid technological development associated with the diffusion of GPS has led to the proliferation of interactive maps, tools for territorial and cultural knowledge that start from a digital substrate of geolocalized intangible data. Based on these considerations, we can conclude that the profound and constantly moving flow of data emanating from the content/location axis generates an unexpected route of personal memories selectively linked to territory (Galasso & Baule, 2021). An underlying archive that is not directly perceptible, with passages about places and spatial frequencies that can be interpreted as a generalized tracing of individual memories that enter into a collective narrative.

A concrete example is *Google Maps*, the main outsourced digital orientation tool that allows you to save and then view all the places you have passed since 2009. This process, mostly passive and unnoticed, creates what we could provocatively call «the map of our lives» (Lana, 2019), where you can see all the small movements, but also the long journeys, archived with precision day after day. In this context, Generation Alpha, i.e. those born after 2012, will be the first to have a more or less conscious digital archive of their movements and the associated geographical memories.

Spatial turn, active conservation, geolocalization, cartographic paradigms, and a content-based approach, have made the study of territorial stratifications a living knowledge that finds in Communication Design for the Territory a mature and prepared field of study. The mnemotope, its definition, categorization and research inherently demand from this discipline specific communication solutions, artifacts and apparatuses suitable for the translation of their complexity.

10.
For a plural definition of mnemotope

One of the most significant aspects of the mnemotope is its compound nature: it is a *conglomerate of meaning*. As we have already said, on the one hand there is 'memory', understood as the ability to retain and recall traces of information about experienced events, images, sensations, ideas, etc.; the contents of the experience itself when they are recalled; the set of psychological and neurophysiological mechanisms by which information is recorded and later retrieved[1].

In the second segment of the word we have '*topos*', that can be intended as a place, a site in its physical presence or a recognizable narrative pattern, a stable motif in a work, a theme of an author or an era. Extending this idea, we can look for specific mnemo-*topoi*, recurring patterns, building blocks, basic unifying criteria that can make mnemotopes more comprehensible and recognizable.

The context of communication design, with its exploratory character, thus proves to be a privileged and fruitful context to describe the essence of the mnemotope in its multiple nuances. The following are some of the key characteristics of mnemotopes, which include aspects such as scale, geography, experience, emotion, sensoriality, expressive and communicative potential. The proposed plural definition is not absolute, but constantly updatable and integrable, and in its partiality attempts to establish some mnemotopic guidelines that may be useful for research in the field, and to establish contacts with other disciplines.

Place
When dealing with mnemotopes, the signifier – the place – is given a special value, is itself an object of attention due to its status, recognizable and set apart from an undifferentiated location, since «space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning» (Tuan, 177, p. 136). Mnemotopes are not transportable markers, but mnestic territorial repositories.

---

1. See https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/memoria/

Physical Permanence

The physical presence of the place stabilizes memory (Assmann A., 2011), situating mnemotopes in a perspective of permanence able to alleviate disorientation and separation caused by the passage of time (Casey, 1987, p. 195), and to overcome the individual short-term memory. While proposing mnestic uniqueness, they can create links between places and people, offering a sense of communal identification (Dickinson et al., 2010).

Location and Scale

Mnemotopes are located (Galasso, 2021). They have topographies (e.g., hills, trees, rivers), geographies (e.g., cities, towns, capitals), and different scales (Dickinson et al., 2010). They can be *articulated mnemotopes,* punctual realities on the territory, deeply stratified; *extensive mnemotopes,* sites that cover very large areas and zones; *mnemotopic landscape,* the sum of many small mnestic entities. Location and scale tend to value some views and voices while ignoring or diminishing others.

Living Organism

Mnemotopes are evolving entities that require careful nurturing «to retrace 'what is actually being lived, and not only what it is thought is being lived' as a form of embracing the living present of memory making» (Hubner & Dirksmeier, 2023, p. 111). We can recognize mnemotopes if we understand them as living entities that bring the past to the surface and into contact with contemporaneity.

Complexity

Mnemotopes are compound mnestic accumulations. They are palimpsests that hold the marks of the current text and show traces or remnants of earlier writing underneath. Layers are evolving, facing present, and mnemotopes are always accreting their own past (Dickinson & al., 2010, p. 30).

Access Difficulty

Reaching and accessing a mnemotope can be challenging both physically and psychologically. These are often unfamiliar places about which little information is available and which have hardly any infrastructure. Sometimes they are remote and inaccessible sites. Navigating the mnemotopic layers requires a delicate balance of sensitivity and understanding. These places are not merely physical loca-

tions but repositories of collective narratives and lived experiences, which can present barriers to entry for those seeking to engage with their essence.

Narratives
Mnemotopes contain stories. Whether visible or latent, the narratives are a fundamental part of the mnemotope and its subsequent dissemination. Mnemotopes have their own communicative value that may be hidden but remains intrinsic as they go from individual to collective.

Authenticity
When we are approaching a mnemotope we often expect to have unique access to the past, building a relationship of trust. Feeling the mnemotope as real, as genuine direct memory bearer, is one of the access keys to its identity. Perception of a mnemotope's authenticity helps us recognize its value not only as a stabilizer of the past but also as its mediator.

Experience
Mnemotopes can be lived. The place is one of the main experiences you can have of memory, and sensoriality is a foundational part of mnemotopic involvement. There is a kind of embodied memory in encountering a mnemotope. Casey (1987) suggests that we can talk about an *aura*, an enveloping atmosphere, that exists in the place and can surround us. Paradoxically, we can perceive the atmosphere even of inaccessible mnemotopes (Galasso, 2021). The suggestion that a mnemotope can produce should not be underestimated, even to the point of real enchantment, as places endowed with such a particular force and energy that we are compelled to stop and observe them better (De Botton, 2002).

Movements Activator
Mnemotopes can activate movements on the territory. They can attract our steps and thoughts (Lee, 1907). If we recognize a place as a mnemotope, we may feel the desire to reach it, to see the memory it preserves, and to feel its *genius*. Mnemotopes can generate new paths of memory tourism (Bartoletti, 2010), focusing on «sites on the margins of the mainstream touristic circuit» (Ahmad & Hertzog, 2016). These processes can lead to the configuration of mnemotopic itineraries able to revive inaccessible, disappeared places, and at the same time to make people see original aspects of places they already know (Galasso, 2023c).

Curiosity Activator

Mnemotopes can activate intellectual curiosity. One can feel the desire to learn everything about the place, before reaching it; this curiosity can continue even after returning home, fueled by the vivid memories encountered during the visit, driven by the search for a deeper and richer understanding. The mnemotopes also allow us a glimpse of the way places are created through the mobilisation of cultural memory (Brunow, 2019, p. 20).

Interdisciplinarity Activator

Mnemotopes can activate internal interdisciplinary discourses within the field of design, and can also trigger dialogues between very distant disciplines. The term fosters cooperation between various fields of knowledge, and this allows mnemotopic theories and practices to be investigated on multiple interpretive levels.

Visual Interpretation

Visual apparatuses appear fundamental not only to represent the mnemotope itself, but also to translate the memories it preserves. Relying on eidetic and photographic memory, *Bildgeddchtnis*, 'iconic memory' for Aby Warburg (1929), mnemotopes enable also a visual interpretation of the past which supports its active reconstruction.

Remediation

Mnemotopes contribute to render the memory of places accessible and perceptible. Mnemotopes, just as memory, are dynamic and continuously reworked according to the discursive frameworks guiding processes of remediation (Erll, 2009; Brunow, 2019, p. 20). A remediated mnemotope can offer original meanings, and new interpretations of the topographic past; it can also contribute to the establishment of a mnemotopic network that grows by implosion rather than explosion, complementing the fabric that already exists and dependent on a flux of feelings, emotions, experiences and meanings (Hubner & Dirksmeier, 2023).

11.
Mnemotopic categorization

Within the world of communication design, recognizing the mnemotope means understanding its variety. In the previous chapter, we tried to set out the main features that identify a place as a mnemotope, but is there one mnemotope or many mnemotopes? The answer is evident, but not so obvious.

There are several different mnemotopes and they can take any form, they can be man-made structures and natural landmarks, and even, empty, remote spaces (Van Rookhuijzen, 2020). We can find inaccessible, unreachable places, and sites where there is apparently nothing to see or experience, *naked places* where the absence of obvious traces meet and clash with the narratives that seem to persist, while the place seems to disappear (Pirazzoli, 2011).

We are quite used to mnemotopes related to commemoration. Institutionalized realities, providing a place of public recognition in an effort to preserve, and reconcile, but also what Aleida Assmann (2011) defines *places of trauma*, where «something is not expressed but has been warded off as unspeakable» (p. 312).

Their surface is characterized by the common presence of forms of externalization of memory, material objects and structures that support collective memory. Mnemotopic physical space makes visible the memory of suffering, sometimes in the framework of national discourses on the past, sometimes in small local communities (Hubbel et al., 2020).

Among these mnemotopes we can list:

– **Monuments**: forms of externalization of memory to remember events, deeds, or characters. Mostly figurative, following a vertical progression and standing on a pedestal.
– **Memorials**: places of remembrance based on the idea of participation, spatial development and the mnestic involvement of visitors.
– **Memorial museums**: museums that focus on the role of testimony and are dedicated to the commemoration of specific historical events.

- **Counter-monuments**: experimental and critical forms of memorialization whose project is based on the concepts of impermanence, emotional involvement, active participation, absence, and provocation.
- **War mnemotopes**: places that conserve the memory of events related to periods and episods of conflict.
- **Artificated mnemotopes**: mnemotopes that through the work of artists, creative people, designers and architects increase their symbolic meaning and acquire an artistic value added to the commemorative apparatus.

We have also mnemotopes that offer a completely different perspective. Creative territorial entities, multifaceted macro and microcosms, cultural intersections where territory, past, and curiosity coexist, often united by a solid commitment to preservation. In these mnemotopes, the *memento* is less present, as is the commemorative purpose. They are usually unofficial locations, more difficult to identify and map, requiring an intense phase of territorial interpretation. They experience a kind of communicative insufficiency that can turn into a real communicative urgency. There are many such places and they are not mutually exclusive, but enrich the territory with further stratifications which, when codified, allow the development of new models of territorial reading.

We can identify *cultural mnemotopes*, places of geo-attraction, and subsequent geo-aggregation of varied cultural phenomena, usually concentrated in a given area and period (Galasso & Baule, 2021). In this regard we can mention *La Ruche* born from the generosity of the sculptor Alfred Boucher (1850-1934). When the Universal Exhibition was over, he acquired the *Gironde Wine Pavilion*, and he rebuilt the metal structure with bricks creating *La rotonde*, an octagonal structure that would have housed 140 workshops, like the cells of a beehive, and allowed disadvantaged young artists to work and express their creativity. The structure hosted for example Chaim Soutine, Marc Chagall, Fernand Léger, Robert Delaunay, and today the *La Ruche-Seydoux Foundation*[1] takes care of its management and maintenance, and still houses sixty artists' studios. We can also talk about project mnemotopes, historical places (e.g., archives, house-musems, museum-studios) protagonists of industrial design' past, such as the *Studio Museo Achille Castiglioni*[2] and the *Fondazione Vico Magistretti*[3] in Milan.

---

1. See https://fondation-larucheseydoux.com/
2. See https://www.fondazioneachillecastiglioni.it/
3. See https://www.vicomagistretti.it/it

In this context, the theme of creativity appears significant, not as simple inventiveness, but as the faculty of the human being to adapt to the different circumstances of existence by reprogramming its own norms and knowledge, in order to create the new (Garroni, 2010). We can therefore speak of *creative mnemotopes* as places where the creation process becomes an integral part of the development and the reputation of the site. We can mention the small Sardinian town of Ulassai in Ogliastra, surrounded by rocks, birthplace of Maria Lai, an artist who made thread and sewing her tools to connect places and intentions. In response to the request for a monument to the victims of the war (Gaglianò, 2016), on September 8, 1981, she realized *Legarsi alla montagna*, tying together the houses of the village with the mountain above them to stimulate a reflection on the interdependence of community bonds, in a work that became the first "relational art" installation. A blue ribbon ran through all the streets, intertwining doors and balconies, until it was hung at the top of Mount Tisiddu (Fig. 2). After this collective operation, Ulassai became an open-air museum, a place that is still visited today for its creative memory, in search of the ribbon that links art to the territory. The creative act thus seems to be an effective distinguishing factor, a useful investigation path in identifying mnemotopes on the territory: there is a tension between two different processes that fall fully under the individual/collective question discussed in the previous chapter.

From one point of view, we are faced with a place that, with its geographical, atmospheric, sensory and historical peculiarities, is not only reflected in the creative process, but also induces it; a place that osmotically stimulates the creativity of the individual by entering into the production process. Let us remember what the sunny *Provence* meant to Vincent Van Gogh or *Mount Sainte-Victoire* (Fig. 3) to Paul Cezanne; let us consider Luciano Bianciardi's attachment to Milan as a promoter of the deep involvement of the urban places in his novels; among his pages, as in those of Carlo Emilio Gadda[4] and Giovanni Testori[5], there are already real itineraries within the city that can still be followed today. From another perspective, we witness how these places gradually enter a mnemotopic collectivization. Starting from the author's beginnings, the place, generator, condenser, and medium of the creative act, begins to fix itself as a mnemo-*topos* on the territory, and to generate physical movements aimed at exploring the site and the inspiration that shaped it. In recent years there has been an exponential

---

4.   In this perspective see Bianciardi, 1962.
5.   In this perspective see Testori, 1958.

Figure 2. *Mount Tisiddu*, Ulassai (OG), Italy. Clorinda Galasso and Stefano Scagliarini, 2022.

Figure 3. *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, Aix-en-Provence, France. Clorinda Galasso and Stefano Scagliarini, 2021.

increase in the number of literary guides, editorial publications, digital artifacts that take the fictional value of places as their focus of investigation. By becoming a place known by creativity, the mnemotope binds to the works produced on its soil, generating a network of ideally geolocalized works and sites. The bipartite relationship between creativity and mnemotope seems to be demonstrated in phenomenological terms, but it lacks a structured theorization of the process that, starting from the link between individual, place and creativity, produces creative mnemotopes and fixes them on the territory, stabilizing them. Nevertheless, we can support this assumption listing:

– **Literary mnemotopes**: physical places inhabited by the protagonists of fictional stories; places quoted in novels; places part of the plot; places related to writers' biographies.
– **Cinematographic mnemotopes**: physical places used as set in screen productions that are re-mediated by movies.
– **Houses**: residences where artists, creatives, and prominent cultural and historical figures were born, lived or worked (studios and atelier).
– **Industrial mnemotopes**: places related to workers' village experiences and industrial archaeology.
– **Mnemotopic museums and collections**: museum realities that collect and display a lot of information, data, and memorabilia related to a particular mnemotope, in the specific place they remember.
– **Mnemotopic itineraries**: routes that geolocate punctual mnemotopes and emphasize their territorial relationship.

Through the mnemotopes typologies we can identify some liminal realities like: ruins, what remains, not erasable, of historical and cultural value, can be defined as the second stage of the destroyed (Bassanelli, 2015), as the first is the rubble, remains of what has collapsed or demolished that are usually removed to make room for new construction; mnemotopes marked only by commemorative plaques; naked places; cemeteries as places of collective burial but also of the search for ancestors, and illustrious graves.

The following pages will embark on an explorative journey through the various mnemotopic categories, inviting reflection on the diverse manifestations of the relationship between memory and place in the contemporary world.

The next chapters can also serve as a guide for connecting with lesser-known mnemotopes, fostering sustainable territorial exploration.

11.1 On mnemotopes' surface: monuments and memorials

Places undergo processes of institutionalization in which preserved memories come to the surface in the form of historical markers, permanent supports for mnestic fragility. A relationship, a tension (Young, 1993), emerges between the sites of memory and the markers, which resolves itself in a balanced coexistence in which the indicator appears as a natural extension of the place, but which can also be exacerbated when the marker does not match the spatial memories and a perceptual incongruity arises. In any case, commemorative formats are linked to geographical locations, the environment and the community of reference and become part of «a socializing system whereby fellow citizens gain common history through the vicarious memory of their forbears' experiences» (*ivi*, p. 6). The main forms of memorialization present on the territory are monuments, memorials, and memorial museums. They are the result of an evolutionary process of externalization of the past, which began after World War II and which even today cannot be considered complete. In general, we can speak of monuments as celebratory material references to glorious deeds and heroic characters, as opposed to memorials, spatial realities for mourning and remembering tragic past events (*ivi*). In the dynamic context of memory, however, there is room for a more precise and detailed distinction.

The term *monument*, derived from the Latin root *monere* (to remind, to inform, to persuade), refers to a series of works (e.g., sculptural groups, stelae, obelisks, gravestones) united in their purpose: being a signifier, pointing to a historical event, and sometimes a call to remember (Booth, 2018). The monument is a human, intentional manifestation of the past which occupies a semantic field that brings together the concepts of memory and power (Gaglianò, 2016); it is placed, and has a precise symbolic function that makes it one of the most rooted and traditional expressions of remembrance. It is usually a massive, aphasic, static structure, made of valuable and durable materials. It is mostly figurative, following a vertical progression and standing on a pedestal, a symbolic link between earth and sky (Bassanelli, 2015). The trajectory of the gaze is also peculiar: given the elevated position, the viewer must lift the gaze to look at it, with a movement from bottom to top, usually associated with the divine. The monument is erected to commemorate a particular person of the past, a group of people or historical events. Its main function is not only to transmit memory but to keep it stable for future generations. We build monuments to produce something that outlives us, something that contributes to a cultural world that will continue

(Donohoe, 2014, p. 91). At the end of second world conflict, the term monument was gradually replaced, or at least complemented, by the word *memorial*, from the Latin *memor* meaning "mindful", referring to more complex and practicable spatialities (Bassanelli, 2015). Monuments began to seem oppressive, in terms of size, materials, positioning, and symbology: in a disrupted world that called for rapid change, monuments appeared static witnesses to a problematic past, immobile icons of an anachronistic way of remembering. People started to look for more intimate evocative places of remembrance that allow the real experience of memory, less mediated by marble and solemnity. The physical place reacquire mnestic value, becoming itself the bearer of a message, through its very existence, allowing the visitor to autonomously re-actualize the events (*ivi*, p. 58). In memorials, then, the contemplative act typical of monumental presence gives way to participation. The visitor can pass through these realities and experience a mnestic involvement. They are places with amplified meaning and suggestive power that help communities to experience memories and preserve their past.

In this perspective we can mention *Hiroshima Heiwa Kinen Kōen*, "Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park" (Fig. 5), built on the open field created by the explosion of the nuclear bomb dropped on the city on August 6, 1945. The purpose of this mnemotope is to commemorate the victims of the bombing, but also to perpetuate the memory of nuclear horrors and advocate world peace, fostering peace tourism practices (e.g., guided tours around the *Hibaku* buildings that have resisted the deflagration; talks with the *Hibakusha*[6], the bombing survivors). Not fare from the park stands the *A-Bomb Dome* the skeletal ruins of the former Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall, now become a landmark for the memory of the city and the whole of Japan. «To stare at the Dome, to look into its cracks, to follow the meanders of its twisted iron, is to contemplate survival: what continues to exist, but mutilated, fragmented, parched» (Mariani, 2017).

We can also cite the *Berlin Wall Memorial*[7] (Fig. 4) located at the historic site of *Bernauer Straße*, running along both sides of the street for more than a kilometer. In this area the barricade of the border between the sectors since August 13, 1961 had particularly violent effects on the daily lives of the inhabitants since they could no longer travel their usual routes. The site includes the *Chapel of Reconciliation* and the excavated foundations of a former apartment building. On the side of the street that belonged to West Berlin, rise the *Visitor Center* and the

---

6. For more information visit https://www.wfchiroshima.org/english/
7. See https://www.stiftung-berliner-mauer.de/en/berlin-wall-memorial

---

Figure 4. *Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer*, Berlin, Germany. Stefano Scagliarini, 2021.

Figure 5. *Hiroshima Memorial Park*, Hiroshima, Japan. Clorinda Galasso and Stefano Scagliarini, 2023.

Documentation Center, which includes the observation tower and a permanent exhibition on the history of Berlin's division. In the south area of the memorial there is the *Fenster des Gedenkens,* "Window of Remembrance", to pay tribute to the victims of the Berlin Wall killed while trying to escape.

Along the banks of the Danube, in Budapest, we can encounter the memorial, *Shoes on the Danube Bank* (Fig. 6). Created by film director Can Togay and the sculptor Gyula Pauer, the memorial takes the form of 60 pairs of 1940s-style shoes, true to life in size and detail, cast in iron and anchored to the ground on the east bank of the Danube River. In October 1944, Ferenc Szalasi founded the *Arrow Cross Party*, a fascist, anti-Semitic organization that exercised a reign of terror in the city. Nearly 80,000 Jews were expelled from Hungary in a death march to the Austrian border and approximately 20,000 Jews were killed along the river. They were ordered to take off their shoes (valuable items to be resold by the militia after the massacre) and were shot at the edge of the water so that their bodies fell into the river and were carried away. At three points along the memorial are cast iron signs with the following text in Hungarian, English, and Hebrew: "To the memory of the victims shot into the Danube by Arrow Cross militiamen in 1944-45. Erected 16 April 2005".

The evolution of forms of commemoration goes hand in hand with the proliferation of memorial museums, environmental tools where memory becomes a matter of preservation through the visitor's emotional involvement in an articulated experience. The memory they convey has at its core two spheres of meaning: the *memento*, or preserved fragment, and the *monito*, the warning, the "never again" (Bassanelli 2015, p. 66). They form a recent focus of inquiry in museography, described in Paul Williams' *Memorial Museum* (2007). The author defines them as «a specific kind of museums dedicated to a historic event commemorating mass suffering of a kind» (p. 6), where individual objects, photographs, and witnesses are organized within experiential spaces and communicative apparatuses that trace the course of events, assuming a didactic and narrative role. In this case, the role of place is particularly clear: most memorial museums are built in the very place whose memories they convey, and this connection is fundamental to the museum experience itself. To be in a place whose memory is stratified and to be able to experience it through objects, artifacts and testimonies generates an important mnemotopic tension whose design takes part in the phases preceding the creation of the museum itself. One example could be the *Museo Audiovisivo della Resistenza*, "Audiovisual Museum of the Resistance" in Fosdinovo

(MS), Italy, a place for the preservation of the memory of the Resistance as told by partisans, deportees, peasants who directly witnessed the events. The exhibition space, designed by *Studio Azzurro*, does not follow the traditional canon, but evolves around an audiovisual installation that includes a large interactive table, *Tavolo della Memoria*, "The Table of Memory". On the surface are projected archival images as a virtual book, while video interviews of witnesses scroll across multiple screens, adding the audio component to the experience and thereby increasing visitor engagement.

Relevant is also the *Museo Monumento al Deportato politico e razziale nei campi di sterminio nazisti*, "Museum Monument to Political and Racial Deportees in Nazi Death Camps" in Carpi (MO), Italy, conceived by Milanese studio BBPR with the collaboration of Renato Guttuso, who actively participated in the iconographic design, and Lica and Albe Steiner, who took care of the exhibition space. Inspired by an anti-rhetorical conception, the Museum shows in thirteen rooms the drama of deportation, considering it in its universal dimension of man's violence on man. Despite their differences, the three forms of memorialization, monument, memorial and memorial museum, are not mutually exclusive, but coexist in the mnemotopic surface and network.

Figure 6. Detail of the memorial *Shoes on the Danube Bank* by Can Togay and Gyula Pauer, Budapest, Hungary. Clorinda Galasso and Stefano Scagliarini, 2021.

11.2 When conflict permeates the place: war mnemotopes

When we talk about places associated with conflict, there is no single and institutionalized definition: design and function depend on different countries and nations. However, it seems clear that the element of commemoration is crucial for the stability of these places and their preservation over time.

In particular, during the inter-war decades, the architecture of war memorials was a significant part of the collective forms of memory externalization.

In France, after 1918, began to rise *monuments aux mort*, to mark the death of the ordinary citizens and the loss suffered by their widows, their orphans, and their parents, this as opposed to remembering and honouring armies, military leaders or great men of state. The epitaphs inscribed were often the same: *À nos morts*, *Gloire à nos héros*. These kind of monuments were erected mainly by local communities, as a shared expression of mourning, to honor the memory of fellow citizens who died *pour la France*. They show a precise symbolic language, like obelisks and war crosses decorated with laurel wreaths, but also palm leaves, which echo the martyrdom. On their surface there is usually the list of the dead follows for the most part alphabetically or chronologically. In some cases, they present figurative motifs like soldiers in glorious attitudes or weeping widows on graves. Strong is the presence of cenotaphs, empty tombs that stand in for the absence of the fallen, for example the *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* which symbolically honors all fallen soldiers whose remains have not been found or identified.

In the United Kingdom the term *war memorial* was coined and is still commonly used in English-speaking countries to refer to any tangible object erected or dedicated to commemorate war, conflict, victory, or peace; casualties who served in, were affected by, or were killed as a result of war, conflict, or peacekeeping; to those who died as a result of accident or disease whilst engaged in military service. Memorials are expanded to include forms of mnestic externalization that «combine tribute with utility by establishing or expanding a civic facility (hospital, hall, library), or, as a compromise, provide the community with a memorial that is both monumental and useful (clock tower, fountain, carillon)» (Inglis, 1992, p. 10). War memorials most often arise in cities to commemorate the fallen, and therefore do not connect to the physical sites of the battles, but instead relocate the memory of it within the confines of the community.

For these reasons, in this volume we do not speak of war memorials, but of *war mnemotopes* appearing as preserved places of remembrance of the conflict. This category includes traditional monuments and memorials, but also military for-

tresses, battlefields, trenches that are now open to the public and have been converted into museums, as well as courts that have left their mark on history. This is the case of the *Justizpalast*, "Nuremberg Palace of Justice", scene of the trials of the main Nazi war criminals between November 20, 1945 and October 1, 1946. Despite the remodelling that has taken place over the years, the original seating of the defendants has been preserved, and can bee visited as part of the information and documentation center, the *Memorium Nürnberger Prozesse*, "Nuremberg Trials Memorial". Another example is the *Ninth Fort Museum*[8] in Kaunas, Lithuania, serves as a significant war mmnemotope. Inaugurated in 1959, it commemorates the victims of Soviet and Nazi crimes that took place within the original military fort, in an exhibition that unfolds through its galleries. Additionally, military prisons can also be considered as war mnemotopes, for example the *Côn Đao Prison* in Vietnam. Constructed in 1861 by the French colonial government to detain political prisoners, the structure was transferred to the South Vietnamese government in 1954 for similar purposes. For approximately 113 years, Côn Đao Island was notoriously known as "hell on earth" due to the severe conditions endured by its inmates. Thousands of prisoners were locked in its cells: political dissidents, communists and Viet Cong, writers, protesting students, Buddhists, people who refused to salute the flag. After the country's reunification in 1975, the prison was turned into a museum reporting the hard labor and torture methods and it is recognized as a Vietnamese national historic site. We can enlarge the scale and consider as war mnemotope an entire neighborhood: the *Quadraro* in Rome, Italy. In the Second World War, its inhabitants enacted one of the city's most heroic resistances. The *Quadraro* was nicknamed, by SS Commander Kappler, the "wasps' nest", as during the nine months of the occupation of Rome (1943-1944), the population was the only one to repel the Nazi-Fascist troops. On April 17, 2004, the *Quadraro* was awarded the gold medal of civil merit. Various guided tours through the streets of the district are organized today to recall its history and memory but also to encounter the artistic vitality which takes shape and color through street art works on the small walls of the houses that together constitute the *M.U.Ro*, il Museo Urbano di Roma[9], "Urban Museum of Rome". These are all examples of places that from serious conflict situations have managed to trigger regeneration processes based on commemorative practices and the active museification of remembrance.

---

8. See https://www.9fortomuziejus.lt/?lang=en
9. See https://muromuseum.blogspot.com/p/m-u-r-o-f-e-s-t-i-v-l.html

---

11.3 Mnemotopic artification

Parallel to traditional forms of memorialization, the languages of the arts, in the broadest sense of the word, have initiated processes of mnemotopic abstraction aimed at the vivid actualization of the past to increase the visitor's participation and mimetic fusion with the testimony, and to establish an empathic link between viewer and memory (Young, 1993).

A direct relationship with the places is sought, which contributes to the re-elaboration of the trauma and not only to its passive observation. In some cases, the mnemotopes undergo processes of *artification*, referring to the process by which something is transformed or elevated into the realm of art, through deliberate aesthetic or creative interventions. In this way, the places of memory increase their symbolic meaning and acquire an artistic value. More and more frequently, internationally renowned artists are being asked to confront with the project of memory and to make their a vision available to the "never again".

We cannot offer here a univocal version of the process of artification, because it is found «on many interrelated levels and is simultaneously symbolic, material and contextual» (Shapiro, 2009), but there are significant elements, that we can consider constants in this kind of process:

– **Abstraction**: instead of figurative, sculptural groups in which the human presence is dominant, artists increasingly propose conceptual, abstract interpretations of memory (geometric shapes, pure lines, synthetic forms, etc.), as in the case of the *The Grande Cretto*, "Great Cretto" by Alberto Burri. A memorial that physically and metaphorically preserves the past of the community of Gibellina, Italy, devastated by the earthquake in the Belice Valley on January 14, 1968. The work extends on a monumental scale along the hill, on the ruins of the city. From above, appears as a series of concrete fractures in the ground, whose artistic value lies in freezing the historical memory. It is composed of twenty-two white cement cubes that recollect the structure of the houses. A labyrinth that can be walked through the spaces between the blocks, recalling the old streets of the city.
– **Objects**: objectual entities have become the protagonists of artists' mnestic works. They place us in an intimate relationship with their owners and make us feel a close resemblance to the victims. This link with the human and the private life makes objects delicate materials. Such is the case of the

Museo per la Memoria di Ustica[10], "Ustica Memorial Museum", designed by Christian Boltanski in Bologna that revolves all around the carcass of the tragically downed plane DC-9 Itavia in 1980. It is encircled by a walkway that allows exploration from all sides. Nine large black boxes are placed at the feet of the aircraft, containing the personal belongings of the victims. Along the aisle, black mirrors with speakers are hung on the walls, playing back in whispers phrases that might have belonged to the 81 victims. This is reminded by the light bulbs suspended from the ceiling that turn on and off in the rhythm of a breath.

– **Emotional involvement**: no longer aphasic monuments, immobile on their pedestal, but participatory, involving memorials that work on the perceptive side of remembrance, seeking the reconstruction of past feelings.

– **Overcoming inaccessibility**: mnemotopic spatial resilience sometimes collides with unexpected events. These accidents erase the place and make it unvisitable, but artification processes can help to overcome the inaccessibility, at least conceptually. Consider the case of the ferry Moby Prince, which dramatically collided and burst into flames on April 10, 1991, causing the death of 140 people. To mark the thirtieth anniversary of the tragedy, the *Associazione Effetto Collaterale*[11] organized a series of commemorative events in Livorno. These included the installation *Oggetti di una strage*, "Objects of a massacre" by photographer Attilio Zavatta, which was dedicated to visually reproducing the personal and now collective stories of the objects found on the ferry after the fire, which are the only things that remain.

– **Place of Art**: artificated mnemotopic representations manage to find their way into art venues and gain recognition in this context. Works can become museums and their designs can be part of archives and galleries.

It should also be emphasized that the process of artification can come up against «a wall not only of public bewilderment but also of survivor outrage» (Young, 1993, p. 9). Traumatic memory, represents such a delicate issue, and artistic remediation is not always seen as an added value. The intangible and abstract dimension of art can generate skepticism and disappointment, it can appear indelicate and superficial towards real suffering, which witnesses physically keep.

---

10. See https://www.museomemoriaustica.it/
11. See https://effettocollaterale2012.wordpress.com/2021/04/08/documenta-30-tra-aprile-e-maggio-arte-pubblica-mostre-e-installazioni-per-il-trentesimo-anniversario-del-moby-prince/

11.4 Subverting memorial narratives: counter-monuments

In the last decades, starting from Germany, contemporary artists, architects and designers, moved from the traditional idea of monuments and memorials no longer recognizing their imposing nature and the almost total lack of interaction with the people. They renegotiate the tenets of the common memory-works, creating *counter-monuments* «brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being» (Young 1993, p. 27); new experimental ways of transferring memories, especially traumatic ones.

The goal is not to console but to provoke; not to remain forever but to be exposed to the natural passage of time; not to be aphasic but to shout; not to stand-alone but to stimulate interaction with passers-by (*ivi*, p. 30).

The main attributes of these forms of memorialization are:

– **Impermanence**: counter-monuments often give way on the level of eternity or long duration to affect the present. Artists focus on transience, linking memory to the concept of time in a relationship of interdependence. They no longer rely on long-lasting materials, as the concept of the indestructibility of monuments is called into question, as is their fragile eternity.
– **Abstraction**: it is expressed in various ways. In the form of pure, essential, geometric structures, such as stone cubes placed on the surface of the site, to stand in contrast withe the figurative past of the monument as an anachronistic representation of the present, but also in more extreme and articulated forms of representation (e.g., wires, thin cables, sand).
– **Absence**: the disappearance of counter-monuments can be designed and planned. The structures decay and only their memory remains. Sometimes they are not present on the surface, but penetrate the ground and can only be imagined. This is the case with Horst Hoheisel's *negative monument*. He worked on the *Aschrottbrunnen*, a neo-Gothic, pyramid-shaped fountain that was financed by the Jewish businessman Sigmund Aschrott in 1908 and demolished during the Nazi regime. Hoheisel's project is neither about preserving the remains nor reconstructing them. The artist first rebuilt the empty concrete monument along the original lines, then turned it upside down and buried it in the ground of the square activating the flow of water.
– **Metamorphosis**: counter-monuments celebrates the evolution and the fluidity of the place of memory. Mnemotopes live in historical and social transformation and not in the rigidity of stone. Metamorphosis can also oc-

cur through the performative activity of the author, who while working on the counter-monument changes its relationship to place. This is the case of *Anna - Monumento all'Attenzione*, dedicated to the memory of the victims of the massacre of Sant'Anna di Stazzema, conceived and realized by the artist Gianni Moretti. On August 12, 1944, Anna Pardini was one of the youngest victims, she was only 20 days old. For each day she was no longer alive, the artist conceived to plant a golden metal thistle in the ground (Fig. 8) of the track that leads from Sant'Anna down to Val di Castello, following a downward movement opposite to that of the German Nazi troops, dispelling the horror of violence. The installation of the first two elements was carried out on 25th April 2018 by Adele and Siria Pardini, Anna's sisters, and still continues today. As the author himself defines it, the monument becomes «a mobile form, changing in time and space. A living organism and, as such, subject to the passage of time, change and decay. [...] A monument intended as a form of repair and reconstruction of what was interrupted»[12].

– **Participation**: in the case of the counter-monuments, the involvement proceeds in two different ways. On one hand, the artist/architect/designer attempts to increase the direct involvement of the viewers by getting them actively participate in the mnestic reconstruction of the site and in its preservation. Relationality can become a call to action. For example, the *Stumbling Stones Project* (Fig. 7), small, polished brass tiles in the pavement in front of the last address of choice of the victims of National Socialism. The idea of placing the tile on the floor instead of on the façade, like traditional plaques, engages the body in new practices of commemoration (Pinotti, 2023): the stone can be stepped on, and to be read it induces the passerby to lower the gaze as if in a bow. On the other hand, the act of remembrance becomes more and more transnational and the mnemotopic works try to underline that the memory is never alone, but always in relation with the others.

– **Emotional involvement**: counter-monuments live, evolve and survive in relation to people. Inserted in public space, they constantly seek the reaction of those who encounter and observe them. They are not concerned with controversy, but feed on criticism, which in any case develops a mnestic commitment. The installation *Schlüssel gegen das Vergessen*, "Keys Against Oblivion", designed by Julia Schulz, is located at the intersection of Ser-

---

12. See https://www.anna-monumentoallattenzione.net/

Figure 7. *Stumbling Stones Project*, in memory of Cesare Finzi, via Sardegna, Milan, Italy. Stefano Scagliarini, 2022. Courtesy of De Marchi and Finzi Family.

Figure 8. *Anna - Monumento all'Attenzione* by Gianni Moretti. Project manager: Luigi Ficacci. Produced and realized by Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio for the provinces of Lucca and Massa Carrara, Italy, in the framework of the PAC Piano Arte Contemporanea 2016 of the MiC Ministero della Cultura (ex MiBACT). In collaboration with: Parco Nazionale della Pace di Sant'Anna di Stazzema, Museo Storico di Sant'Anna di Stazzema, Associazione Martiri di Sant'Anna, Comune di Stazzema (LU), Comune di Camaiore (LU), Comune di Pietrasanta (LU). Technical support of Giovanardi s.p.a. Clorinda Galasso, 2021. Courtesy of Gianni Moretti.

vitengasse and Grünentorgasse, in Wien, and is surrounded by a metal railing. It is embedded in the sidewalk, covered by a transparent glass panel, and contains 426 keys, each with a nameplate. They symbolize the Jewish residents who lived in the neighborhood and were victims of the Nazi regime. Seeing the keys, a symbol of home, dwelling, daily life, individual property, the visitor feels immersed in the sense of loss, of a neighborhood that has been mutilated of an entire part of its population.

At this point, we can notice an alignment between counter-monuments and artificated mnemotopes. The two typologies have some similarities (e.g., emotional involvement, abstraction), but they move in autonomous directions. Counter-monuments arise from the desire to challenge commemorative conventions something that is less evident in the context of the artificated sites. What they have in common is certainly the desire to create new forms of configuration of memory, open and free ways of re-elaborating trauma that seek contact with the community and the territory. In this context, the issue of *profanation* is also important. These new forms of memorialization, which are open to the public, encouraging passage and haptic involvement, risk distancing the visitor from the memories, creating a short-circuit in the mnemotope experience. This is what happens at the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, in Berlin. A horizontal architecture of squared volumes: three thousand concrete blocks, from a few centimeters to 4 meters high, forming a rhythmic and powerful texture. Designed by the architect Peter Eisenman, it is the largest work-tribute to the victims of the Holocaust. It has become the destination of rivers of tourists who play, walk, run, sunbathe, and take selfies among the stelae. According to Agamben (2005), these phenomena do not represent a problematic issue as the sacredness of the place is not affected by the new modalities of fruition, but becomes more present.
In recent years, we have also seen the expansion of another variable: *regeneration*. The focus is the renewing side of the memorial, as a site not only anchored to the past, but a place that lives in the present and is confronted every day with on-going life. This is the case of the *9/11 Memorial*[13] in New York with the work *Reflecting Abscence*, a place that remembers the irreparable loss through the void left by the towers, but that also celebrates life with the surroundings white oak trees and twin waterfall pools, representing the "absence made visible".

---

13. See https://911memorial.org/

11.5 *In memoriam*: cemeteries and graves

Cemeteries as memorial sites are among the most common and fundamental components of the Western tradition of mourning (Donohoe, 2014, p. 69).

The term refers to the spatially defined area used for the burial and commemoration of the deceased. Originally located in the middle of the city and near churches, cemeteries began to be established outside the urban habitat from the 18th century for socio-sanitary reasons. They become *heterotopias* (Foucault, 1986), "other spaces," that «recall the myths of paradise; they manifest an idealized plan; they mark a final rite of passage; they form a microcosm; they enclose a rupture; they contain multiple meanings; and they are both utterly mundane and extraordinary» (Johnson, 2013, p. 799). Over time, cemeteries become marginal entities at the territorial level that keep death out of the sight of the living.

In what sense, however, can we actually juxtapose cemeteries with mnemotopic realities? Starting in the 19th century, in France, large city cemeteries began to be built, «no longer places intended to separate the dead from the living: instead, they were increasingly conceived as places to be visited and incorporated into everyday practice» (Young & Light, 2016, p. 64), taking as a model the parks, green spots in the urban fabric. Additionally, towards the end of the nineteenth century, numerous national cemeteries were founded: places of high architectural and artistic value, in which valuable sculptures and monumental graves stand out, which made the cemeteries recognized as cultural heritage. Here are buried the most illustrious characters of the country, artists, writers, politicians, so that citizens can come to pay tribute to them. Cemeteries open up to new contemporary uses, often unrelated to the original function of burial site, becoming locations for daily recreational activities such as walking, lunch breaks and jogging; they are perceived as safe places, with a peaceful atmosphere. Cemeteries have become a destination for people seeking information about their origins, their family roots and most distant ancestors, and a touristic destinations.

We can speak of c*emetery tourism*, or *tombstone tourism*, as a «movement of people to visit cemeteries to see statuary and funeral ornaments in tombs of notable and famous people and other anonymous» (Fonseca et al., 2015). These practises can be included in a niche called *dark tourism* (Young & Light, 2016), and more specifically in the *dark resting places* (Stone, 2006). Visits to cemeteries are included in touristic itineraries with dedicated guides, in podcasts[14], and in

---

14. See Giulia Depentor *Camposanto* podcast which explores burial sites from which the author conducts historical and genealogical research, https://www.giuliadepentor.com/podcast/camposanto/.

cemetery atlases[15]; «tourism planners often use the cemetery as a mechanism to promote visitation to an area, conserve the structural integrity of landscape and architecture, and sustain the ecology of local environments» (*ivi*, p. 154).

In the mnemotopic context, we can involve cemetery tourism in the heterogeneous phenomenon of *memory tourism* (Bartoletti, 2010), defined by travelers who explore destinations closely associated with specific memories, historical or cultural significance, or individual remembrance (Galasso, 2023c). As memory is a crucial factor in choosing a destination, and it impacts on the tourist experience (Marschall, 2012), people are including cemeteries in their itineraries in search of direct contact with the past, of sacred, energetic, emotional spaces, simultaneously witnesses to local history in cities and towns (Millán et al., 2019). Think of the famous *Pére Lachaise* in Paris. Since 1811, when it was decided to bury the remains of Molière and Jean de La Fontaine within its walls, the most famous cultural and political figures have been laid to rest here, contributing to make the site what it is today: a must-visit destination every travel guide. What has developed over the years is a sort of enthusiastic pilgrimage of people desiring to pay homage to the personalities who were part of their lives in one way or another, or to seek inspiration in the places imbued with genius. The tomb of Jim Morrison was even cordoned off to avoid possible damages given the high flow of visitors. Paris is also home to the *Montparnasse cemetery* in the 14th arrondissement, considered an open-air museum as many graves are listed as historical monuments, such as those of Charles Baudelaire, Guy de Maupassant, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Chaïm Soutine. One of the most remote cemeteries in the world is that of Atuona, the capital of Hiva 'Oa, one of the Marquesas Islands belonging to French Polynesia. A winding path leads to the cliffs of the *Calvary Cemetery*, where the post-impressionist artist Paul Gauguin (Fig. 9) and the famous singer Jacques Brel rest. People from all over the world cross the Pacific Ocean to visit this mnemotope, a tranquil place that evokes a deep sense of peace and emotion, surrounded by the scent of frangipani flowers, and whose terraced grounds offer a mesmerizing view of the majestic bay.

Today, an increasing number of cemeteries provide interpretive facilities for visitors, and guided tours in search of the most famous graves (Young & Light,

---

15. See Depentor, G. (2023), *Immemòriam. I cimiteri e le storie che li abitano*, Milano, Feltrinelli; Nooteboom, C. (2015), *Tumbas. Tombe di poeti e pensatori*, Milano, Iperborea. Both volumes explore and narrate various graves and burial sites, collecting what, behind a marble headstone, a particular monument, a touching epigraph or the enchantment of an atmosphere, they still have to tell.

2016). The *Cemetery of San Michele* located on a Venetian island offers visitors the map and the alphabetical list of tombs of historical or artistic significance[16]. It is located on the homonymous island and is easily recognizable thanks to the perimeter wall of red bricks; inside, the area develops in the shape of a Greek cross inserted in a square, with an elliptical final part. Famous graves include those of the composer Igor' Fyodorovich Stravinsky (1882-1971) and the poet Joseph Brodsky, but also the artist Emilio Vedova and the ballet impresario Sergej Diaghilev. Recently, an association was formed, ASCE, *Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe*[17], with the aim of promoting European cemeteries as a fundamental part of the heritage of humanity. The site proposes an updated list of the main European cemeteries and presents a section dedicated to the European cemeteries' routes. The original traumatic nature of the cemetery mnemotope has therefore evolved through the centuries, and the visitors who walk the long avenues of *Pére Lachaise* or *Montparnasse* usually do not focus on the dark side of the memory, but look for the creative matrix of regeneration, and feels immersed in a place devoted to the custody of memories that have made humanity great.

Houses themselves can also become resting places, as in the case of Nikola Tesla's ashes, which today repose in a spherical urn on a stone pedestal and are displayed in the permanent exhibition of the house museum[18] dedicated to him in Belgrade, or in *Rungstedlund*[19] the house of Karen Blixen, in whose garden the remains of the famous Danish writer rest under a large beech tree.

We should include in this chapter also places in which there are no burial infrastructures or huge monuments, but where illustrious people have decided to rest. We can cite the *Mani*, the region that occupies the central peninsula of the southern Peloponnese in Greece. In 1989, Bruce Chatwin's wife, following her husband's last wish, brought his ashes to a small village on the peninsula, *Kardamyli*, to be buried in an unmarked grave in front of the 12th century Byzantine church dedicated to St. Nicholas. The author stayed in Kardamily for a long time, guest of Patrick Leigh-Fermor, his dear friend and expert of Greek culture. Still today, although they do not know the exact point, many visitors reach the Mani to pay their respects to Chatwin by having a sip of *ouzo* or *retsina* in the shade of the olive trees of Kardamyli (Fig. 10).

---

16. See https://www.comune.venezia.it/it/content/cimitero-smichele
17. See https://www.significantcemeteries.org/
18. See https://tesla-museum.org/en/legacy/collections/memorial-items/
19. See https://blixen.dk/en

Figure 9. *Calvary Cemetery, Paul Gauguin's grave,* Hiva 'Oa, Marquesas Islands, French Polynesia. Clorinda Galasso and Stefano Scagliarini, 2022.

Figure 10. *Kardamyli*, Greece, 2022. Courtesy of Luca Gennati and Ludovica Varotto.

11.6 Dwelling in memory: when home is a mnemotope

The world is full of places that invite passers-by to pause their errands for a moment, and to remember that, right where they are standing, once upon a time something very important happened (Van Rookhuijzen, 2020, p. 1).

Describing mnemotopes we can not exclude the houses, birthplaces, residencies or studios of cultural, creative, historical eminent figures, that survived until today, preserving the memory of their owners. But as Mauro Novelli (2019) wonders, what do we look for in these houses? What do we are expecting to find? It seems to be much more than a question of voyeurism.

The home is «first and foremost a reflection of our intimate life, not only because our personalities are projected onto it, but also because our way of inhabiting it is unique» (Bloch-Dano, 2019, p. 13). Perhaps in visiting the houses of the best-known others, we seek to inhabit for a moment the uniqueness of their way of understanding dwelling. We seek the intimacy with which they lived in their spaces, the warmth of a living room, the scents of a kitchen. Houses collect memories made of voices, silences, past materialized in the memorabilia meticulously preserved in showcases, in furnishings that, unchanged, seem to have been waiting for us for such a long time. We are called to contemplate places of vanished ceremonies (*ivi*, p. 11). What is missing is the dynamism that characterizes the everyday. In this context, remetiadion processes can serve as valuable allies. Especially in the case of museified homes, informative photographic panels can help make rooms fill with footsteps and colors again, a display case can let us explore daily routines, a projection can recall sounds and voices.

Sigmund Freud lived for 47 years in *Berggasse* 19 in Wien before he had to flee the Nazis in 1938. Today his apartment hosts a museum[20]: inside the few remaining pieces of furniture have been placed in their original location according to photographs of Edmund Engelman. The images immortalize the setting in which Freud lived and worked throughout almost his entire career (Werner, 2017). Without these documents, the house would be completely empty, but through their presence we are able to reconstruct the environment and Freud's habits.

Objects can also act as a mnestic, inspirational trigger. Maybe we hope that the contact with the genius, with the vestiges of the most vivid creativity, can stimulate our dormant verve, our sleepy inventiveness. The *Cezanne Atelier*[21] is situated in Aix-en-Provence, very close to the *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, on the second floor of

---

20. See https://www.freud-museum.at/it/

21. See https://www.cezanne-en-provence.com/en/the-cezanne-sites/atelier-de-cezanne/

---

a small country house. It consists of a spacious room lit by a large window. In contrast to Freud's house, everything here has been preserved, and the atelier contains the objects often depicted by the artist, such as bottles, vases, fabrics, as well as personal items such as a smock, a cane, a large ladder and hats.

Surely, houses possess an incomparable narrative capacity (Novelli, 2019, p. 13), and paradoxically, it is not necessary to cross the doorstep. Sometimes it is enough to look up, noticing shy commemorative plaques, words engraved on the stone, witnesses of illustrious presences.

Different types of residences understood as mnemotopes can be distinguished:

– **Birthplaces**: the starting point of the biography of illustrious figures without any further connection to their life, or the place where they were born and spend the rest of their days. They connect the characters to their territorial roots, such as the *Museo Deleddiano*[22] in Nuoro, Sardinia, the birthplace of the writer and Nobel Prize winner Grazia Deledda, which shows the troubled relationship with her land, the apartment[23] where Amedeo Modigliani was born on a marble table in the kitchen, located in Livorno, his hometown until the move to Paris, or the *Museo Casa Natale Arturo Toscanini*[24] in Parma.

– **Family houses**: very different in scale, from a tiny apartment to a villa. They offer a direct contact with the daily life of the character, for example the house[25] where the artist's and composer's MK Čiurlionis lived, situated in Druskininkai, Lituania, consisting of four buildings where visitors are introduced to his biography or the Franz Liszt apartment[26] in Budapest. They can also have a strong historical and political connotation like *Casa Antonio Gramsci*[27] in Ghilarza (OR), or *Casa Cervi*[28], located in Gattatico (RE), the house-museum (Fig. 11) born from the spaces and the objects collection kept by the family of the seven brothers murdered by the Nazi fascists in retaliation on December 28, 1943. We can mention also *Casa Colussi-Pasolini*[29], in Casarsa (PN), which housed the writer from 1942 until 1950, and which

---

22. See https://www.isresardegna.it/index.php?xsl=565&s=16&v=9&c=4094&nodesc=1
23. See https://casanatalemodigliani.it/
24. See https://www.museotoscanini.it/it-IT/Museo-Casa-Natale.aspx
25. See https://ciurlionis.lt/veiklos/padaliniai/m-k-ciurlionio-namai-muziejus/
26. See https://lisztmuseum.hu/en
27. See https://www.casamuseogramsci.it/it/casamuseo/la-casa/
28. See https://www.istitutocervi.it/museo-cervi/
29. See https://www.pasolinifriuli.it/luogo/casa-colussi

---

today hosts the *Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini*, offering visitors a permanent thematic exhibition distributed in the various rooms.

– **Studio and atelier:** places of creation *par excellence*, inserted or connected to living spaces. They open a door to the creative memory of the place, to the spatiality of the gesture. The writers' houses, such as that of Ivo Andrić in Belgrade, are so numerous that they form an autonomous core of investigation, as well as the painters' studios like the house/atelier of Giorgio de Chirico in Rome, now turned into a museum[30] or *Casa Morandi*[31] in Bologna.

Among these categories, we can distinguish: houses that have remained intact over time; reconstructed houses; empty houses of which only the memory remains; inaccessible houses; destroyed or ruined mansions; houses that have become official museums; houses that continue to exist as private homes and that only retain their status thanks to the plaques on the outside of the buildings; houses that become archives; houses that remain open thanks to private foundations and associations. We can cite the studio of Vincenzo Agnetti[32], in via Machiavelli 30 in Milan, now the venue for the historical archive, established in 2015 by the daughter Germana Agnetti and the grandson Guido Barbato with the aim of preserving, acquiring and cataloguing the documentation related to Agnetti's works and life. It promotes the collection, dissemination of the works[33], writings, testimonies, news, and any other material concerning one of the leading Italian exponents of conceptual art, and it offers cycles of exhibitions that relate his creations to contemporary artistic production (Fig. 12).

Typologies aside, what is fascinating about houses is the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experience that contributes to their inherent memorability (Casey, 1987). This specific mnemotopic category stresses that persons are felt and remembered primarily as persons-in-particular-places. We can remember persons better, if we can perceive the "action of place" where they lived. The house becomes a *periechon* (Donohoe, 2014, p. 22), a container of lives, creating a bond with those who still walk through its rooms.

---

30. See https://fondazionedechirico.org/casa-museo/

31. See http://www.mambo-bologna.org/museomorandi/Storiaeidentite/

32. See http://www.vincenzoagnetti.com/

33. See the *Archivio Series*, curated by Guido Barbato to document the artist's work by highlighting the most visionary aspects of his research, and the *Quaderni Series* dedicated to the exhibitions in dialogue between Agnetti and contemporary artists.

Figure 11. Detail of the bedroom of Alcide Cervi and Genoeffa Cocconi, *Museo Cervi*, Gattatico (RE), Italy. Clorinda Galasso and Stefano Scagliarini, 2022. Courtesy of Istituto Alcide Cervi.

Figure 12. Exhibition *Dialogo 03, Vincenzo Agnetti, Chiara Dynys e Stefano Arienti: Sante subito e fiori*, 10/10/2023 - 15/03/2024, Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti, Milan, Italy. Credits: Roberto Marossi.

11.7 Fictional realms as evocative mnemotopes

As «memory and sense of place have to do with more than 'physical' monuments and structures» (De Nardi et al., 2020), within the macro-category of cultural mnemotopes we can find *literary mnemotopes*, places where inspirations and intellectual efforts have been concentrated to generate remarkable works.

They are the spaces, generated and inhabited by the protagonists of literature history that, if mapped, can highlight original itineraries of intersections between places and ideas which «could only be conceived where they were materially born» (Pagani, 2019, p.11). A literary mnemotope is not just a quoted place, but corresponds to the versatile sum of its representations (Westphal, 2009), which construct and reconstruct it over time, often layering and adding to other aesthetic domains, such as painting, photography, and film.

Iconic is the case of *Ponte della Ghisolfa* (Fig. 13), a Milanese suburban railway overpass that the novelist Giovanni Testori (1958) made the protagonist of one of his most famous stories. Testorian characters live this place, making it an agglomeration of memories in which urban and social, private and collective experiences merge. The *Ponte della Ghisolfa* has been further stratified over the years thanks to the cinematographic transpositions, including the neorealist movie *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960) by Luchino Visconti, emphasizing even more how the mnemotope can be linked to creative experiences.

This kind of mnestic-spatial entity invites us to ask ourselves how much a place and its physical conformation can actually influence the generation of artistic and design contents, moving away from being a stage, but working as an active part in generative processes. Umberto Eco, in *Sei passeggiate nei boschi narrativi* (1994) speaking of Paris, stated that when he was writing he liked to have the narrated spaces in front of him, giving a sort of confidence with the story and increasing the identification with the characters (Westphal, 2009, p. 208). The same happens in the literary production of Antonio Tabucchi, rich of mnemotopes linked to Portugal and to its capital Lisbon, where the author moved and lived for a long time. It is not surprising that his most famous book, *Sostiene Pereira* (Tabucchi, 1994), begins with: «Pereira maintains he met him one summer's day. A fine fresh sunny summer's day and Lisbon was sparkling». The city is discovered following the thread of the story, and the reader, becoming a *flaneur* (Westphal, 2009, p. 216) establishes a bond with places that begins to explore with the protagonist, following him through the streets of the city, taking *Avenida da Liberdade* until *Café Orquidea*, where he orders an iced sugary lemonade.

Places that are still identifiable today, through a *homotopic consensus* (*ivi*, p. 131), that has made possible to create real tourist guides dedicated to Tabucchi's Lisbon (Pini, 2018). Other times, what geocriticism calls *heterotopic interferences* can occur (Westphal, 2009, p. 147): moments in which the connection between reality and fiction becomes precarious and the affabulation is a preponderant element. These processes generate places that are less recognizable on maps, but perhaps those that most stimulate curiosity. This is the case of the detailed address given to the editorial office for which Pereira works, *22 Rua da Saudade*, or the one of his house, *66 Rua Rodrigo da Fonseca*. Both do not exist but are not unreal, they are plausible. Which then is the relationship between paper mnemotopes and real mnemotopes? Geocriticism helps to give an answer, exploring the permeable frontier between real and fiction, *limen* among space and literature, keeping in mind that liminality concerns the threshold and not the frontier (*limes*), which might turn out to be closed and insurmountable (*ivi*, p. 139). In the vast world of literary mnemotopes, it is also interesting to distinguish between those authors who have mentioned punctual addresses and those who, from the moment of writing, have already highlighted a route, which in many cases has been reconstructed *a posteriori*, thanks to the presence of evident traces within the narration. We could mention Dino Buzzati and his *I miracoli di Val Morel* (1971), in which the author, through a series of icon-texts, traces a path that can still be followed today, starting from the village of Giaon, touching the sanctuary of Madonna Parè, and finally reaching Valmorel. This type of operation allows us to think about the different degree of authorial intentionality of literary mnestic sites that modifies their further elaboration and interpretation.

Regarding mnemotopes related to films, it is necessary to start from the concept of *location*. The term has entered common language to mean a place away from a studio, where a film or part of a film is made and that is selected after a series of scouting activities. Spatiality is therefore a determining factor in the development of a movie, right from the first stages of research. Some locations, however, become so recognizable that they are no longer just settings, but places of cinematic memory. Such is the case with the *fontanili* near Crema, Italy, water intakes mostly for irrigation purposes, which after starring in one of the best-known scenes in the movie *Call me by your name* directed by Luca Guadagnino, are now the destination of a filmic pilgrimage from all over the world (Fig. 14). We can mention also the Italian comedy *Il sorpasso*, released in 1962, a road movie *ante litteram* directed by Dino Risi. Protagonist of the film is the Etruscan Coast, near

Figure 13. *Ponte della Ghisolfa*, Milan, Italy. Clorinda Galasso and Stefano Scagliarini, 2022.

Figure 14. *Fontanile Quarantina*, Capralba (CR), Italy. Clorinda Galasso and Stefano Scagliarini, 2022.

to Livorno in Tuscany, Italy, where the car races take place, the overtaking manoeuvres counterpointed by the unmistakable honking and the bad gestures addressed to all those overtaken. The film is still very famous today and the route that the two protagonists travel is still alive in the Italian imagination.

Therefore, in this volume we speak of cinematographic mnemotopes rather than film locations: to keep the light of landscapes and characters (Iarussi, 2017) in view, to actively maintain the physical presence of the places associated with movies. It is now common practice to retrace and explore these sites through practices of *movie tourism* (Riley et al., 1998), *film-induced tourism* (Beeton, 2005) or *set-jetting* (Grihault, 2007). There are also digital spaces to communicate cinematographic mnemotopes like *Davinotti*[34], the largest online archive of Italian movie locations photographed and shared by the users, or *Movie-Locations*[35], with the same purpose but with international coverage.

In this theoretical framework, we cannot avoid mentioning the *theatrical mnemotopes*. Although less recognizable, they tell the story of the relationship between fiction and reality in a similar way. As an example, we can cite the work *Ritratto dell'artista da morto* (*Germania '41 - Argentina '78*) by Davide Carnevali (2022), performed in 2023 by Davide Riondino. A play that oscillates between autobiography and narrative invention: a trip to Buenos Aires to follow the court case of an apartment that was bought in 1978 by an alleged relative, but was expropriated from a political dissident who disappeared during the military dictatorship. Visiting the crime scene, the plaintiff discovers that the *desaparecido* was an Argentinian composer who, at the time of the disappearance, was working on the scores of a Jewish pianist whose traces had been lost during the Second World War. After the conclusion of the performed trial, the apartment is transformed into a house-museum, and the stage becomes a kind of collective mnemotope that the theater audience is invited to actively visit. Throughout the performance, the audience keeps vacillating between a sense of truth of the events unfolding on stage and their complete fiction. Only at the end, walking through the apartment, people realize that what they have seen is a story, only the reflection of reality. The confrontation between fiction and authenticity does not seem to affect the communicative power of the mnemotopes, which acquire greater evocative power through the work of the authors and directors and increase the involvement of the audience/viewer.

---

34. See https://www.davinotti.com/
35. See https://movie-locations.com/

11.8 Industrial mnemotopes

In the vast horizon of mnemotopes, we can also refer to *industrial mnemotopes*, places associated with the development of work in a specific territory, and the economic environment of a country. They are usually associated with the field of industrial archaeology. The idea of preserving industrial monuments is historically linked to Great Britain and the Industrial Revolution. One of the first scholars to develop this idea was Michael Rix, who wrote in an article entitled "Industrial Archaeology" in *The Amateur Historian* (1955):

Great Britain as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution is full of monuments left by this remarkable series of events. Any other country would have set up machinery for the scheduling and preservation of these memorials that symbolise the movement which is changing the face of the globe, but we are so oblivious of our national heritage that apart from a few museum pieces, the majority of these landmarks are neglected or unwittingly destroyed (Rix, 1955, p. 225).

Michael Rix was the first not only to recognize the historical importance of industrial sites as symbol of progress but also to emphasize the value of physical remains of industrialization (Palmer & Neaverson, 1998). Industrial archaeology became an accepted area of study in the sixties and under this definition today we can list: any building or structure that, alone or with machinery or equipment, significantly represents nowadays or is closely associated with the evolution of industrial and technical processes; productive places that avoid demolition due to their important historical value and relevant aesthetic significance; constructions whose protection stems from a nostalgic attachment to industrial spaces, formerly imposing and inaccessible, now empty and silent, but not irrelevant within the landscape (Ribera & Cucco, 2019).

Industrial heritage turns out to be significant in areas as diverse as society, territory, technology, and history. When analyzed, it reveals essential data for knowledge of the past and the present, but it also raises several issues related mainly to recollection and reuse of the spaces. Opening the gates of a site of this type means to confront with stopped and emptied environments that manifest their memories and need to be recognized, recovered, transformed. They serve as layered records of socio-economic transformations, retaining the progression of events since the initial establishment of an industry on a particular territory (Palmer & Neaverson, 1998). Among industrial archaeology buildings, and re-

lated topographical contexts, we can cite metalliferous mines, textile industry complexes, kilns and furnaces, power plants like the *Ricevitrice Sud* in Milan (Fig. 15). Built between 1933 and 1934 to distribute the hydroelectric energy generated in Alta Valtellina by AEM, the *Azienda Elettrica Municipale* of Milan, the structure symmetrically separates the two wings of the complex, where the utility rooms and the control panels are located. The vertical orientation is highlighted by the narrow windows that, framed by pilasters, characterize the sides of the building, which is entirely clad in travertine. In front of the entrance there is a granite fountain with two concentric overlapping basins, emphasizing that water is the economic and productive source of the company.

Today, *Ricevitrice Sud* is known as one of the nodes for electricity distribution in the southern part of the city and continues to be an active element of the urban production network, but is also sporadically opened to the population for energy culture events. In September 2021, the AEM Foundation[36] in *Ricevitrice*'s court promoted an evening dedicated to the history of the plant and the film heritage preserved in the Foundation's Archives, with the public screening of original historical films by AEM and the movie *Metropolis* (1927) by Fritz Lang.

Another mnemotope we can include in this discussion is the *Antonino Ancione* asphalt factory in Ragusa, Italy, which permanently ceased its activities in 2013. Between 2015 and 2019, the city hosted the *FestiWall* public art festival, curated by Vincenzo Cascone, during which representative exponents of contemporary muralism created permanent works for the community, activating a process of urban regeneration. Over the course of five years, the initiative touched various parts of the city, from the newest neighborhoods to the historic center, but not the walls of the Ancione factory. Behind the closed doors, however, the same artists who had worked for the festival were involved in another project, *Bitume*[37]: spin-off of FestiWall, a site-specific operation, in which more than 25 artistic personalities from all over the world had the opportunity to inhabit the industrial mnemotope, symbol of the local working-class, to study its complex ecosystem, giving their own interpretation (Fig. 16). A collective operation to approach the past not as 'become' but as 'becoming' (Bertella Farnetti et al., 2017) in order to nurture the seeds of creativity present in this memory zone (Galasso, 2018). The artistic action carried out behind closed doors found its way into the present when the Ancione factory reopened its doors after the final closure of the festi-

---

36. See: https://fondazioneaem.it/
37. See https://www.bitumeplatform.it/

Figure 15. *Ricevitrice Sud during the event AEM Metropolis*, AEM (Azienda Elettrica Municipale), Milan, Italy. Stefano Scagliarini, 2021.

Figure 16. *Meno Leffa* by Guido van Helten, *Bitume*, Fabbrica Antonino Ancione, Ragusa, Italy. Stefano Scagliarini, 2021. Courtesy of Vincenzo Cascone.

val, offering the inhabitants the creative interpretation of the Contrada Tabuna's industrial past. Guided tours were organized to admire the works, and in 2023 the volume *Bitume* (Cascone, 2023) was published to give voice to all the stories living on the revitalized site from a scientific and literary point of view.

Another example of industrial place regenerated through art, is the *Centrale Montemartini*[38] in Rome. Inaugurated in 1912, was the first public electricity production plant in Rome. Decommissioned in 1963, today the vast spaces host an unusual display characterized by the intertwining of elements of classical archaeology (sculptural groups, mosaics, etc.), from the Capitoline Museums' collections, with elements of industrial archaeology (turbines, machinery, etc.), an exhibition choice that succeeds in harmoniously contrasting the smooth whiteness of the marble with the dynamic blackness of industrial plants.

An industrial mnemotope can be also related to workers' village experiences: housing architectural complexes created around the factory to host the employees and their families. The *Villaggio Crespi d'Adda*[39], for example, is an entire town, built by the owner of the Crespi textile factory for his workers. They were provided with homes, gardens, school, bakery, hospital, church and all necessary local services. The UNESCO Committee for the World Heritage entered Crespi d'Adda in the World Heritage List in 1995, as one of the workers' villages best preserved. Today is still inhabited in large part by the descendents of the original employees. There are no formal entrances or opening hours, and everyone can walk around the complex, where time has stopped, feeling many signs of its past. As this last case suggests, it is important to underline that under industrial mnemotopes are not limited to closed and abandoned productive places or ruins.

In these consistent group are included also active places becoming cultural heritage or passed through museification and artification processes, like *Galleria Campari*[40] in Sesto San Giovanni (MI) housed in the first factory erected in 1904 that shows the history of the brand and its close connection with the world of art and communication, but also industries and buildings still in production, which daily strive to keep their strong memories alive, such as *Fratelli Branca Distillerie* in Milan, which combines in the same place the company's business activities with outreach initiative through the *Museo Branca*[41] and the guided tours.

---

38. See http://www.centralemontemartini.org/
39. See https://www.crespidadda.it/
40. See https://www.campari.com/it-it/galleria-campari/
41. See https://www.museobranca.it/

11.9 Mnemotopic museums and collections

Are museums mnemotopes? This is a very delicate question. Museums can collect and exhibit information, data and memorabilia related to a particular mnemotope, but this does not mean that they have to originate in that place.

It happens that these two aspects coincide to create a *mnemotopic museum*.

This kind of reality has certain characteristics that make it an autonomous entity in the large museum context:

–   **Place**: the mnemotopic museum arises in the very place it commemorates and has a close connection to it. If the physical conformation makes it possible, it is the place itself that becomes the frame of the exhibition space.
–   **Memorabilia and relics**: they are a foundational part of museum exhibits, but in the case of mnemotopic museums they are not essential. Display cases are therefore not indispensable, they can add touchability to the experience, but what matters most is being able to have access to the place.
–   **Exhibition space**: since the museum can be even a "naked place" (Pirazzoli, 2010), the informative apparatus plays a key role to access the past. Integrative panels and interactive devices play an important role in communicating the history of the place and its importance in a geographical area.
–   **Atmosphere**: perceptual aspects are essential in the design of a mnemotopic museum. The final museum exhibit encourage visitors to reflect and understand, but also to experience the mnestic specificity of the site.
–   **Memory Tourism**: mnemotopic museums are often included in memory tourism itineraries (Bartoletti, 2010). They can generate movements in the territory to access the experience of memory in the place that generated it.

One of the museums that meets all these requirements is the *Eldheimar Museum*[42] in Iceland. The exhibition focuses on the volcanic eruption of 1973 on the island of Heimaey off the south coast of the country. Visitors are given an insight into people's lives before the eruption: the inhabitants of Heimaey had to leave their homes in the middle of the night and evacuate the island, many of them never seeing their homes or possessions again. The eruption began in the early hours of January 23, 1973 and lasted for 5 months destroying almost 400 houses and businesses. The museum was built around one of the few survived houses, the one in Gerðisbraut 1, now left as a museum of remembrance. A house com-

---

42. See https://www.eldheimar.is/?lang=en

pletely covered in ash, where visitors can use a digital device to recognize the objects that remained intact despite the extreme heat. The exhibition covers the catastrophic event with the help of projections of original footage from the time, audio reports, photo reports, interactive installations, and information panels.

As we have observed in this last mnemotopic example, material objects are an integral part of our psychological and emotional life, they help us form our personality (Starace, 2013), ensure the continuity of our self and our relational field, and help define the memory of our past. They are witnesses of our passage through the territory and are able to materialize our memories.

Each object, whether ancient or contemporary, has its own unique and unrepeatable biography. This does not end with the age or civilization from which it originated, but continues to silently record fragments of new memories, as the object passes through time and changes of history. By recounting how they have been used, altered, abandoned, forgotten, rediscovered, and then handed down perhaps rescuing them from new oblivion, objects resist time and bear witness to our life and those of the people who live before us. Whether they are artistic creations or everyday things […] objects act as a bridge connecting those who produce them with those who observed them and question them today[43].

They can also evoke the sense of time, place and society beyond individual memory and can play a powerful role in defining a community's memories, being capable of make re-experience the collective past (Black, 2011). Within the broad horizon of mnemotopic museums, we can thus identify and distinguish the *mnemotopic object collections*. The main features of this specific mnemotopic typology will be listed here:

– **Object**: in this type of mnemotope, objects are collected and displayed. The actual value of the object is not particularly important, but the meaning the collector associates with it. These can be historical objects, but also everyday objects characterized by intimate symbolic investments that constantly change over time. They can foster personal mnestic associations in visitors.
– **Sum**: they usually present large quantities of objects. Accumulation is a frequent feature of this type of collection, and sometimes we see the gathering of the same object in countless variations and expositions.

---

43. From the exhibition *Archeologia invisibile*. Museo Egizio di Torino, Turin, May 2019, January 2022, curated by Enrico Ferraris.

– **Collection**: over time collection makes an almost anonymous site a place of memory. It is the accumulation of objects on a given place, their layering, that produces memories and makes that place a mnemotope.
– **Exhibition**: the initially scattered objects are usually organized according to precise criteria (e.g., thematic, geometric) and displayed in the different environments that make up the place according to defined paths (e.g., chronological, narrative).

To illustrate this category, we can mention the *Fondazione Museo Ettore Guatelli* in Ozzano Taro (PR), Italy. The museum consists of the collection of everyday objects recovered by Ettore Guatelli during his life (Fig. 17). The exhibition is not based on the reconstruction of domestic environments, as is the case in traditional ethnographic museums, but the halls display more than 60,000 objects, including hammers, shovels, scissors, barrels, jars that fill furniture and shelves or cover the walls in geometric patterns (circles, arcs, ellipses, diagonals, etc.), creating a scenic effect that evokes life in the countryside and becomes a "graphic monument"[44] to the memory of the humble social classes.

The tour concludes inside Guatelli's home, a place where the objects disposition follow more internal logics, linked to intimate memories. The museum can be visited through guided tours led by the *Associazione degli Amici di Ettore e del Museo*[45] which is convinced of the need to preserve and pass on the work and vision of Guatelli, thanks to whose presence the objects of the museum are still able to tell their infinite daily stories.

We can then return to Iceland, home of another mnemotopic collection: *Petra's Stone Mineral Collection*[46], a local museum with minerals and crystals gathered by Ljósberg Petra María Sveinsdóttir in Stoeðvarfjoerður. From the age of 9 she dedicated herself to the search for stones of special color and shape, walking to remote and almost inaccessible places, but the real collection began when she bought a house and had space to store them. In 1974 Petra decided that her home should be open to anyone who wanted to enjoy the view of her stones and today her house and garden, completely filled with stones, have been transformed into a museum run by her granddaughter Petronilla.

---

44. See https://www.museoguatelli.it/museo-del-quotidiano/lesposizione/
45. See https://www.amiciguatelli.it/site/
46. See https://www.steinapetra.is/

We can also mention the *Museum of Broken Relationships* in Zagreb, Croatia, an expanding assortment of items, each serving as a memento from a past relationship, accompanied by a deeply personal yet anonymous story from its contributor, which has become a literary mnemotope as the protagonist of the novel *Museo di un amore infranto* (Bonetto, 2023). In the *Les Archives du Cœur*, designed by the artist Christian Boltanski, on the other hand, no concrete objects are stored, but heartbeats, physiological unique memories that visitors can record themselves and leave in the small wooden building on Teshima island in Japan. From that moment on, the heartbeats officially become a part with a serial number of the mnemotopic database, which is freely accessible and audible for anyone entering the space, while sitting with headphones, watching the sea.

«Objects survive, but only those that are marked by an idiosyncrasy, a bizarre detail, a deviation. The anonymous objects [...], on the other hand, merge into a magma of matter» (Mariani, 2017). In the case of mnemotopic collections, it is precisely the fusion, the sum of carefully preserved objects that determines the mnestic identity of the place. It is the new relationships that emerge between the various objects, the environments in which they are conserved, the collector and the potential visitors that generate mnestic engagement.

Figure 17. Detail of the Salon, *Museo Ettore Guatelli*, Ozzano Taro (PR), Italy. Clorinda Galasso and Stefano Scagliarini, 2021. Courtesy of Fondazione Museo Ettore Guatelli.

11.10 Mnemotopic itineraries

In recent years, there has been a proliferation of paths remembering the presence of notable figures in particular cities, sites of significant historical and cultural significance within defined geographical boundaries, and commemorative sites in specific regions and territories (Galasso, 2023c). The relationship between these entities generates the *mnemotopic itineraries*. Thanks to geolocalization, these routes make the mnemotopes walkable and physically experienceable. If the location becomes inaccessible or fades away with time, the designed itinerary can provide compensation through tailored content, enabling visitors to still experience its presence and they are also able to rigenerate "sites on the margins of the mainstream touristic circuit" (Ahmad & Hertzog, 2016).

Under communicative perspective, mnemotopic itineraries include various types of artifacts, tools and apparatuses (Agamben, 2020) both at the level of final user enjoyment, *in situ* or remotely, and at the level of extemporaneous route discovery in the environment.

These include:

- **Plaques**: they are the most traditional mnemotopic signal artifact. Hung on the walls of the place, they are an analog and functional system of indication to which the visitor is already accustomed. In contrast, they have the need to be concise and thus present little information.
- **Territorial tiles**: brass plaques placed directly on the road, engraved or affixed with a graphic element commemorating a personalities or events. Usually not located at the exact mnemotopic point, but between different stops to orient the user within the route. They can also have the function of a catchy object to arouse the curiosity of passers-by.
- **Informative supports and panels**: totems or panels usually placed on site. They describe the mnemotope and sometimes include a map that allows users to orient themselves within the route. For example in Arles, there is a walking tour with panels located in the places where Van Gogh is believed to have set up his easel, marked by brass tiles along the road depicting the silhouette of the painter. The same happens on the Island of *la Grande Jatte*, a strip of land two kilometers long and two hundred meters wide lying on the Seine River at the gates of Paris. In the nineteenth century, the island was frequented by Parisians who loved to relax on its shores, as a bucolic retreat far from the city center. It was also a favorite destination of Impres-

sionist painters, who depicted it in numerous paintings, like *Un dimanche après-midi à l'Île de la Grande Jatte* by Georges Seurat. On the island are located reproductions of ten emblematic paintings printed on panels, right where the artists set up their easels, which can be followed by visitors as an mnemotopic itinerary[47].

– **QR codes**: they can take the place of traditional plaques and signs as smaller and more affordable. They can be linked to websites and provide space for large amounts of content. However, they require an Internet connection.

– **Audioguides**: mnemotopic routes can be supplemented with audio content accessible throughout the route using dedicated apps, via QR codes placed directly at the sites or with directional speakers. The narratives usually go beyond the purely informative and can be even more captivating with musical and authorial content. Today they are often evolving into podcasts.

– **Map-based site**: websites are an important source for enjoying itineraries remotely or for making travel arrangements. In the virtual environment, maps promote spatial awareness and enable the precise location of stops along the route. In addition, different digital content can be associated with each mnemotope (e.g., photos, audiovisual material, archival documents) depending on communication needs.

– **Mobile App**: applications make it possible to access digital content directly on site. The presence of geolocated maps allows users to orient within the route and calculate accurate distances. The mnemotopes are supplemented by various documents, and augmented reality experiences are also possible.

– **Hybrid artifacts**: routes can be experienced through communication artifacts that strategically mix existing types in terms of formats, structures, languages, tools, and media, to achieve an innovative goal (Quaggiotto & Galasso, 2023). This is the case of the project *Giovanni Testori e i Segreti di Milano*[48], a digital mnemotopic itinerary to retrace the author's places. In an original narrative perspective, the project describes a complex environment in which maps, quotations and archival photos intersect, creating a communicative system that draws the boundaries of a Testori District and becomes and an instrument of mnestic valorization of the city of Milan.

---

47. See https://www.visitparisregion.com/en/walk-around-the-ile-de-la-jatte
48. The project was developed between 2017 and 2022 by research group DCxT of the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano, see https://www.milanotestori.it/t/

11.11 Ruins, abandoned places and plaques

Transversal to this taxonomy, we find a whole range of mnemotopic realities, suspended mnemotopes that usually do not fit in the commemorative context, but implicitly conserve a troubled past or which abandonment and deterioration transform into traumatized entities. We can consider for example the *ruins* that can be defined as the second stage of the destroyed (Bassanelli, 2015). The first one is the rubble, remnants of what has collapsed or been shot down that are usually removed to make space for new constructions. The ruins remain, elaborated, as residues, not erasable, of historical value.

We can also talk about *traumatized architecture*. Innovative buildings in their historical era complex, designed with specific goals and functions which time has altered, making it perceived as an awkward and unwanted mnemotope, that often cannot be demolished due to their cultural importance, for example the *Istituto Marchiondi Spagliardi* in Milan, famous example of brutalism now completely ruined. Abandoned places, that decay in their physical dimension, but that «solidify in the dimension of the memory of those who lived there, to the point of constituting an irreducible element of identity[...] they live with a physicality of their own, with their own corporeal and material consistency» (Teti, 2014). Entities that are only apparently immobile, but constantly changing. They mutate both in the long run, slowly, yielding to the force of the weather and nature that wants to take back its spaces, but also with the seasons, finding count-less chromatic variations. This also happened to the *Buzludzha*[49] (Monument House of the Bulgarian Communist Party) built in central Bulgaria by the Communist Government to serve as part of a network of educational heritage sites, and as a venue for institutional events by the Party. Today, much of the structure has been destroyed due to neglect and vandalism, but despite its ruined state, it started to draw new visitors. The isolated location, the atmosphere of decay, and the monument's political significance still capture the attention of the global media. In their evolution, abandoned mnemotopes can undergo museification processes that, however, leave the place untouched and merely adding communication tools to facilitate the visit and explain the history of the place.

This is the case of the village of *Oradour-sur-Glane*, 22 kilometers from Limoges, France, which on June 10, 1944 witnessed the massacre of its inhabitants and its total destruction by a unit of Nazi SS. Today, the ruins are a memorial[50], *Centre de*

---

49. See https://buzludzha-monument.com/history/
50. See https://www.oradour.org/lieu-de-memoire

la mémoire d'Oradour, and bear deep scars: walking through its streets stopped in time, accompanied by memorial plaques, visitors can recall the circumstances of that tragic day in contemplative silence.

In some places the dynamic movement comes to a sudden halt and the territorial memory remains suspended. The gates close, the stratification inexorably slows down giving way to a process of crystallization. At this point, it is useful to ask whether there are differences between abandoned and *crystallized mnemotopes* (Galasso, 2023d). The boundary between the two realities seems to be very fluid. What both types have in common is the atmosphere of limbo due to the cessation of activities at the site, and with that comes the idea of decay, of ruin, making them perceived as forgotten places, inevitably doomed. What distinguishes them is the timing. Abandonment leads to rapid decay of place, time seems to rage overwhelmingly in disused spaces, and neglect leads to empty, unused, even hostile environments. A crystallized place of memory, on the other hand, shuts down, stands still, but is constantly waiting to be reopened. Dust seems more forgiving, as if guarding, not erasing. One can also think about the idea of stability of these places. The abandoned tends to merge with the new reality until it disappears. The territorial presence of the crystallized places is more noticeable: the place is recognized as part of the landscape and the community, thanks to the past and the memories that it preserves despite its inertia.

Finally, there is another liminal category to highlight, those of commemorative plates or memorial plaques, objects that, affixed to a specific but not always original location, can make it recognized as an active mnemotope on the territory. They are generally made of marble or bronze, but can also be glazed ceramic.

In most cases they present a precise and concise rhetoric: name, date of the event or person being commemorated. In other cases, sculptural elements such as bas-reliefs, or excerpts from the production of the person being remembered are added. Most of the memorial plaques honor a distinguished person that was born, live, work or died in a determined building and at the same time commemorates the connection of this building with the biography (Azaryahu, 2021). It is a kind of biunivocal relationship between the place and the person, that through the plaque contributes to the identification of the mnemotope. The act of mounting a plaque on a place, can be seen as part of the process of public mnemotopic recognition, which also produces a historical geography of great names and events that is woven into the urban fabric (*ibid.*) and that can be used for alternative itineraries of territorial exploration.

12.
A mnemotopic project

As we observed in the previous chapters, mnemotopic research is embedded in Communication Design for the Territory that has embraced the territorial project as its distinctive dimension, in conjunction with *Memory Studies*, the academic field devoted to memory as an integrated interdisciplinary system.

As there is still no organic definition of the mnemotope, the investigation has moved towards the development of a plural definition from heterogeneous, interdependent parameters (Chapter 10) and the delineation of a mnemotopic taxonomy (Chapter 11). The lexical transfer of the concept of *mnemotope*, which transposes a term typically used in other fields of knowledge (e.g., cultural anthropology, history, sociology) into design, not only recognizes it on a theoretical level, but demonstrates its development into a *productive principle* integrated into the design projects and actively involved in the creation of effective and functional communication systems. The translation of the mnemotope as a project paradigm allows designers to scratch the surface of territories by highlighting the traces of the past beyond mere recollection (Galasso, 2023a, p. 1631). Through what we can call a *mnemotopic approach* (*ibid.*), communication design reveals the intrinsic meanings of the memory of place in different situations.

It has been used, for example, in teaching design activities[1] where students had the possibility to re-imagine mnemotopes, reintroducing them into the contemporary cultural ecosystem, and to translate mnestic sites into hybrid and innovative forms of communication. This didactic process involves the collection and selection of extensive documentation related to the territorial identity, not only in the form of information and data, but also as narratives, images and multimedia content, the valorization of its fragmented and diverse nature, and its organization in new configurations of meaning and prototypes.

---

1. DCxT research group of the Design Department at Politecnico di Milano, specifically in the Final Synthesis Design Studio of the Master's program in Communication Design, see https://www.comunicazionedelterritorio.it/

This kind of view, can also go outside the classroom to be used in very different research projects. We can name *Giovanni Testori e i Segreti di Milano* again, but also *Education and memory*[2], a participatory project intended for high school students to rediscover, through a series of activities and workshop (e.g., shared word clouds, interactive photo panels, postcard design, on-site exploration and photo reportage) the mnestic value of the *Institute Marchiondi Spagliardi*, built in 1958 by Vittoriano Viganò, now considered an inhabitant ruin of Milan. But also *Mnemosphere*[3], born within the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano, based on a synergistic collaboration between different fields of knowledge and scholars, proposing a dialogue between communication design and exhibition design, with special attention to emotions, colour perception and temporary spaces and services. By considering the memory of place as an active concept, it intended to expand the mnestic atmospheric horizon from a design perspective, and manifesting the narrative capacity of the mnemotopic images (Cecchi & Galasso, 2024). We can also claim that the new theoretical dimension of the mnemotope reveals its *performative dimension* (Mitchell, 2005). Returning to the idea of the *genius loci*, mnemotopes, recognized and re-mediated by design, appear as animated subjects that need to be given voice again, and that wish to control the viewer's gaze, instead of passively offering them as objects to be contemplated. Subjects with their own individuality that must be heard and described (Pinotti & Somaini, 2009). Mnemotopes have a descriptive, informative component, but also an active status that stimulates new projects and suggests novel lines of design intervention in the academic context but also beyond.

This is the case with the *Mnemophoto* a project *pro-memoria* (Montorio, 2021), that aims to enhance and revitalize the individual mnemotopes and the plural narratives they preserve. We move through a dense network of personal memories every day, even if we are usually not aware of it: *Mnemophoto* is an apparatus to expand the knowledge of the background of places, even the most intimate, thus enhancing the territory, its history, its experience. It is a mnestic engine for the involvement and confrontation of the inhabitants, a focus on a past that is alive but difficult to express, represent, and communicate. The following chapters describe the ongoing project, beginning with the historical and cultural perspective, the phototextual context, the description of the design features, the structure of the artifact and finally the presentation of the results.

---

2.   See https://www.agathon.it/agathon/article/view/284/304
3.   See https://www.mnemosphere.polimi.it/it/

12.1 The phototextual approach

Photography became associated with memory the moment it was assumed that a fragment of reality could be captured on a physical and transportable support. It is the very idea of freezing an instant that sets the resulting image in the past, and the dimension of memory is immanent to the act of photographing itself. The moment, once immortalized, will never happen again, and it will recur forever. This is precisely the mnestic power of the photographic act: to bring the past back again and again before our eyes. On a lexical and metaphorical level, the expression *photographic memory* is very common as the ability to recall information visually and in great details. However, this formula implicitly encapsulates the relationship between photographs and memory. To have a photographic memory means to take and keep photographs in order to remain, to stay. It means creating a temporal arrest: we stop time, freeze an instant and look or try to understand what is happening inside us (Bailly, 2012). What we see is no longer reality, but an infinitesimally framed piece of time that continues and always refers back to it. This is also true for the image of places.

It is no coincidence that the first photograph ever taken refers to a place. It was captured in 1827 by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce using a technique known as *heliography* or "sun writing", and called *La cour du dolmaine du Gras*, "View from the Window at Le Gras". In the photograph we can clearly distinguish an open window on the left, a dovecote on the side and behind a tree. There is a roof in the center and a chimney to the right. Apart from the technical issue, since the very long exposure times made it almost impossible to reproduce movements, what emerges is the need to represent the world, its physicality, to duplicate its material consistency, to imprint it on a support and allow its permanent realization and dissemination. Since the beginning of the history of photography, reproducibility has been linked to places, to their collective memory, which inevitably has parallels with personal memory (Desideri, 2020, p. 58).

This process has given rise to a social kind of photography that could be called a *photography of places* (Valtorta, 2013), capable of contemplating the great changes that occur in the reality in which we live (Valtorta, 1997) and of realizing images that, through spatial representation, seek to capture the meaning of the territories they depict (Valtorta, 2013). Beyond the countless variants and aesthetical interpretations, the photographs of places are to be considered real, tangible, and sharable memories. Their mnestic power is so strong that we often remember not the real details but the photograph of the place. The captured image

contributes to the reconstruction of the past, but the real memory is overlaid by that of the photograph, which is so strong that it takes its place.

Based on the photograph and its fusion with the past event, a new mental image is created. According to Susan Sontag, this is the main risk of the connection between photography and memory in postmodernity, it «lies not in the fact that we remember through photographs, but that we remember only those» (Sontag, 2003, p. 77). A photo of a place, however, is not only a reproduction of physicality, but an *hypertextual document* able to preserve the reality that surrounds us and that lies layered beneath us. A visual support that promotes the mnemotope, and stabilizes it through representation.

In the vast photographic panorama, the relationship between photos and places has evolved over the centuries, generating different communicative apparatuses. Among these is the *phototext*, which focuses on the fusion of the narrative and visual planes into a *unicum* and that, given its hybrid nature, seems to be suitable for communicating the complexity of the mnemotope.

But what is a phototext? Is it possible to identify its peculiar properties?

Michele Cometa (2016), states that despite the many variations on the theme, what remains evident is that phototextual practices mainly move around three interpretative criteria: gaze [1], layout [2], and *parerga* [3]. To these we found pertinent to add: hybridization [4], authorship [5], coding disorder [6], and remediation [7]. Phototextual practices challenge the traditional status of literature in iconic terms, and defy its canon with photography, born as a purely visual mode of communication. In hybridization [4], the phototext finds its own *raison d'être*: photography and texts cannot be separated if we do not want to incur in the collapse of the new formation generated by the synergistic encounter of media. We could not define the phototext without emphasizing the importance of the gaze [1], of its manipulation, of the design of its direction. Phototexts work on sight, on eyes movements on the pages, generating effects that can be disorienting, alienating, but also stimulating. Layout issues [2] are an integral part of phototextual practices. The design of the relationship between textual and visual units on the page, and beyond, is critical to the final effect. The different views are the result of the relationships established between photos and text. We can act on the rotation of the images in the space of the page, inevitably flipping the book to achieve its fruition; we can reverse the traditional reading order; one can operate on the cut of the photographs giving them unusual and symbolic forms. At a composition level, there are more than just reframing operations: text can be-

come an integral part of photography. Speaking of phototexts, we cannot exclude paratextual elements [3], which we can classically define *parerga*: captions, titles, comments, appendices, notes etc. In this particular genre, they are all elements designed in detail that can deeply modify the fusion between narrative and visual planes. Regarding authorship [5], we find several photo-textual combinations. The author can be both a photographer and a writer; a writer and a photographer can collaborate in the creation, as in the case of *Un Paese* (1955), born from the collaboration of Paul Strand with Cesare Zavattini, or *Viaggio in un paese terrestre* by Vittore Fossati and Giorgio Messori (1997), a microcosm of stories resulting from a five-year journey «to find places frequented and described by poets and painters who had put the landscape, and the art of representing it, at a vital point in their work and thoughts» (p. 9); texts and images can be selected, organized and given meaning by the author, but not directly produced.

The idea of coding disorder [6] (Chiocchetti, 2018, p. 739) is another variable of phototexts. We are dealing with captions that do not explain the photo but question it, that amplify its suggestive side without describing it, or even depict aspects that do not appear in the images, creating asynchronies and bewilderment. We are in front of «a subtle – at times subversive – cooperation between images and words» (*ibid.*). A crucial criterion in the analysis of phototexts is remediation [7]. The third perspective, the *third object*[4] (Chiocchetti, 2019), is configured as the final product, the act of remediation, the representation of two different mediums, photo and text, in something that was not there before their fusion, a new medium that exists only in the encounter with the mind of the reader/viewer.

An interesting case is part of one of Orhan Pamuk's most renowned works. His novel *The Museum of Innocence* (2008), which describes Kemal's unrequited love for Füsun, is complemented by the real *Museum of Innocence* in Istanbul, where the author exhibits physical objects from the imaginary story. The narrative is further communicated through the phototext *The Innocence of Objects* (2012), where each chapter is conceptualized as a museum space (Carrara, 2020). A choral plot which produces the saga of a city made up of many individualities.

Moreover, at the level of phototextual formulas and languages, taking up again Cometa (2016), we can distinguish a three-part structure that develops around *inscriptio*, title, *subscriptio*, comment and *pictura*, photograph (p. 96). A seemingly balanced system, that will be the interpretative key of *Mnemophoto* project.

---

4.   The author refers to the "third mneaning", concept coming from the theories of Ejzenštejn related to the montage of attractions in the Soviet Cinema vanguard of the twentieth century.

12.2 *Mnemophoto*

As anticipated, *Mnemophoto* is a phototextual project that departs from conventional ways of remembering to capture and interpret the aura that connect places, memories and people, making the mnemotopic network more visible.

The starting point are the *individual mnemotopes*, an intense cosmos that wants to be experienced, heard and translated into new collective, shared memories.

The project, started in 2021, is structured into three consequential phases:

1. **Mnemotopic Recollection** – *Testimonies*: in the first phase, the memories are collected. Participants, through a digital form[5] (Fig. 17), tell the story of a mnemotope related to their lifes, without limitation in terms of scale or location, but only in terms of actual accessibility. They provide a textual description of the physical characteristics of the place, capturing its geographical features, architectural elements, and atmospheric qualities, involving the memories it preserves and evokes, and giving the exact geographical location (coordinates or map link). Each mnemotopic story is then archived being an integral part of the project.

2. **Mnemotopic Research** – *Territorial photographic reportage*: after the recollection, the designer compiles a digital map[6] (Fig. 18) with all the coordinates and defines a route based on the directions of the participants. Each location is then photographed according to the descriptions provided in the form. Some places will have changed, others will have been preserved, some will have disappeared. The aim of this phase is to represent the mnemotopes in a way that respects and preserves the narratives of the participants, but also shows the designer's interpretation, to bring together within the photographic framework the two points of view, that of those who know and remember the place well and that of those who encounter it for the first time.

---

5. *Mnemophoto* in an ongoing, open project based on mnemotopic research, to participate and share an individual mnemotope see https://forms.gle/xXk5oz0y99Lx2VC97

6. Walter Benjamin (1932a) writes: «For some time, years in fact, I have been toying with the idea of articulating the space of life – *bios* – in a map. [...] I have conceived a system of signs, and the gray base of these maps would be colored by clearly and distinctly indicating the homes of my friends, the meeting places of the various collectives, [...] the hotels and rooms of the prostitutes I met for a night, the crucial benches of the *Tiergarten*, the school path and the graves I saw closing up, the spots where cafés with names now forgotten but familiar to us then appeared, the tennis courts in whose place empty apartment buildings now stand, the halls decorated with gold and stucco that the horror of dance lessons almost turned into gymnasiums».

---

3. **Mnemotopic Restitution** - *Portraits*: the third phase starts with the photographic prints (30 x 45 cm) on a rigid support of the rediscovered places. The participants are then portrayed with the printed version of the mnemotopes, in their houses[7]. In this way, the places of individual memory return to the hands of the owners, who offers them to the community.

The photos of the mnemotopes were taken with little human presence, keeping the atmosphere and colors suggested by participants. If a soft and warm natural light was preferred for the places, controlled lighting was used for the portraits to emphasize the subject and the object – the printed photograph –, and the background, which becomes an integral part of the individual mnemotopic story. By carefully designing each phase, and bringing the places out in a participatory act, the project aims to show the variety of individual memories embedded the territory, their interconnection and their importance in the social and cultural landscape. Although individual memories can seem irrelevant compared to the collective and institutionalized ones as they are too numerous, too fragile, too general, too ordinary, or too specific (Turri, 1998, p. 141), it is their being *common* that makes them shareable. They are the stories of the singular person, but if connected and mapped, they allow us to look at the territory as a portal to the infinite whole of the past. A transnational and transgenerational series of places that foster a «continuous connection with the present, a re-centering that sets creative functions in motion and summons the responsible action of the individual in the society» (Gaglianò, 2016); identity places that ground us in our multiple roots while propelling us forward into the future, where new memories will inevitably be woven into the places.

Mnemophoto investigate also the relationship between designer and participants. Starting from the project engagement and the drafting of the form, which is not without indecision, reconsiderations, and struggles in choosing the mnemotope (some participants do not consider it right to choose only one place, others show real emotional difficulties in the selection), to people's reactions when they look

---

7. House represents meaningful mnemotopes, guardian of personal memories. Being invited and entering private, unknown homes, is a complex part of the project as there may be unpredictable moments that could affect the photos. It also constitutes the most sensitive part of the research allowing the designer to share memories with the participants in the unique moment of the shot, immersed in a safe environment. The images realized inside the houses, become meta-portrait in the encounter between the internal individual mnemotope, the place of residence, and the external individual mnemotope, the place of memory externalized and spatialized.

Figure 18. Digital form provided to participants. *Mnemophoto Project*, Clorinda Galasso, 2021.
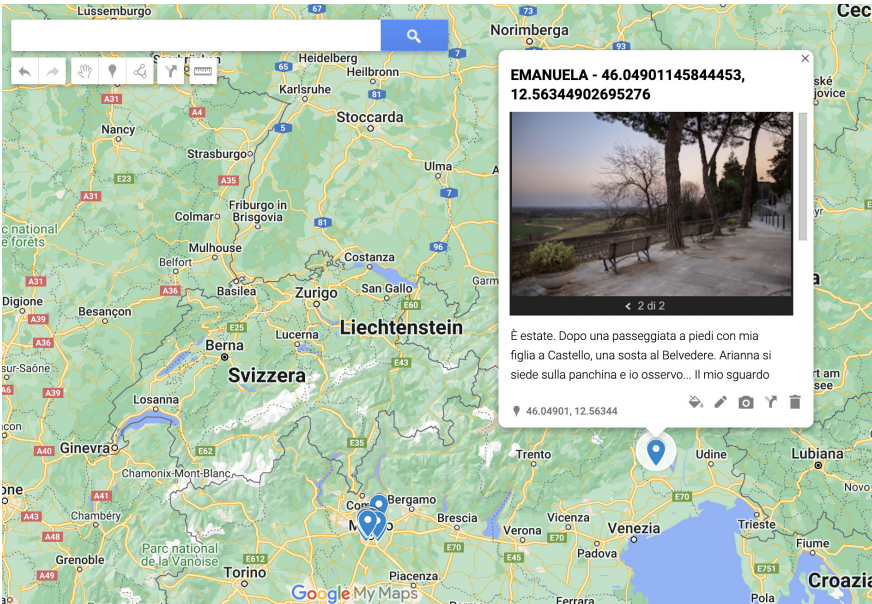

Figure 19. Digital map geolocating individual mnemotopes, including stories and photographs. *Mnemophoto Project*. Clorinda Galasso, 2021.

at their own site, photographed by external eyes, ranging from smiles of reunion to surprise, pride, nostalgia, and commotion.

In addition, it intends to study whether there are recurring aspects that can unify and characterize the representation of individual mnemotopes, adding new typologies and patterns (e.g., square, bench, door, street, bar, etc.) to those already highlighted in the mnemotopic categorization. The project has a serial form, as a topographical mosaic of individualities, where the reading of the images depends on that of the textual apparatus and vice versa.

The result is a series of phototext, composed as a triptych (Galasso, 2023b):

–   **Header** – *Inscriptio*: informative apparatus that reports data on: Name; Age; Title of the mnemotope; Location; Coordinates; State of preservation.
–   **Textual apparatus** – *Subscriptio*: narrative level consisting in the autobiographic mnemotopic storytelling, *auto-photobiotext* (Ferraro & Sperti, 2021). The text contains the physical description of the place but more importantly the description of the memory it contains, explaining why is significant to the participant's life and what its representation should communicate.
–   **Photographic apparatus** – *Pictura*: visual level of the phototext consisting of two original pictures, the meta-portrait made in the house or in a place that the participant considers familiar; the image of the place indicated by the participant and photographed according to the description and the designer's interpretation.

The individual mnemotopes communicated through the three-part report, enter a new path of fruition and public recognition. *Mnemophoto* was therefore adapted in 2023 into a site-specific exhibition[8] in Montepulciano, Italy, where residents were able to share their mnemotopes with the community in a public event.

The following is a curatorial selection of portraits taken between 2021 and 2023[9]. Due to the phototextual nature of the project, it is recommended to view the project in a double-page spread format. By seeing the photograph alongside the corresponding text, and vice versa, the interplay between visual and written elements can be fully experienced, enhancing the narrative and emotional impact.

---

8.   The artistic residence *Locus Personae* has been funded and organized by the associations *Canvas Hub* and A.P.E. (*Associazione Poliziana Eventi*) of Montepulciano (SI) with *51Lire* of Venice (https://www.51lire.com/) in May 2023.

9.   The portraits have been realized by Clorinda Galasso with the photographer Stefano Scagliarini. Texts are original in Italian with English translation by the author.

Angelina, 107

Piazzale Armando Diaz, Castello d'Aviano (PN), Italy

La Madonnina

Mi ricordo la madonnina. Che bella che è! È proprio bella, chissà chi l'ha fatta.
La vedevo da piccola, è ancora lì. Non hanno messo il nome sulla statua.
Non hanno messo neanche AVE MARIA.
Dietro ci sono le montagne. È vicino alla farmacia, ricordo la farmacista, aveva la barba, lui era un "bel om". Andavamo solo a prendere l'olio di ricino e lei ti guardava da molto vicino perché ci vedeva poco. Ogni mese ci davano l'olio, anche se non ne avevamo bisogno. Era un'abitudine. Un bicchiere così! Ti faceva venire il mal di pancia. Nella piazza c'era anche Borta che vendeva il sale. Ci toccava andare, perché lo vendevano solo là. Gli altri negozi non davano il sale, chissà perché. Da Nano compravamo lo zucchero e lui ci dava anche un fico secco e noi eravamo contenti.
È bello Castello[1].

---

1. "I remember the little Madonnina. How beautiful she is! She is so beautiful that I wonder who made her. I saw her as a little girl, she's still there. They didn't write the name on the statue. They didn't even write AVE MARIA on it. Behind it are the mountains. It's near the pharmacy, I remember the pharmacist, she had a beard, he was a nice man. We just went there to get castor oil and she looked at us very closely because she could see very little. Every month we got the oil, even if we didn't need it. It was a habit. A jar like that gives you a stomach ache. There was also Borta in the square that sold salt. We had to go there because they only sold it there. There was no salt in the other stores, who knows why. We bought sugar from Nano and he also gave us a dried fig and we were happy. It's beautiful, Castello".

Simone, 34

Via delle Forze Armate 163, Milan, Italy

Dente giallo

La villetta è attorniata da condomini riempiti da un'umanità nervosa. Nonno raccontava che lì c'erano le case minime, quel nome mi faceva ridere, sembrava la rappresentazione stessa del concetto di casa. Bagni? Uno per 4 famiglie. Il letto? Affianco la cucina. Quel minimo era di un' umanità sorprendente, meno di così non si può.

Le case minime le hanno tirate giù dopo la guerra, raccontava nonno, e ora quei blocchi grigi svolgono la stessa funzione raccogliendo storie di emigrazione e cambiamento. Oggi l'umanità del luogo si ritrova in questo bar, che nei decenni non ha perso la sua funzione di sfogo e aggregazione, in sottofondo chiocciano alcune galline mantenute nell'aia vicino alla pergola. L'edificio provoca un moto di soggezione quando lo si guarda, con il muro così scrostato ed ingiallito, sembra un vecchio tabagista che sbuffi: Cazzo guardi?. In alcune nottate invernali, attraversato l'incrocio della caserma e lasciate alle spalle le rotaie del deposito dei tram può apparire una "scighera" (nebbia) che riesce a crearsi nell'ambiente umido dell'ex piazza d'armi, un grande quadrato verde popolato da piante autoctone tra le quali alcuni uccelli paludosi trovano riposo.

In mezzo alla nebbia la villetta è come un dente giallo nella bocca del nostro tabagista. Fumo e umanità, un quadrato verde che resiste selvaggio e recintato, fino a quando i già manifesti appetiti speculativi non diverranno realtà ma quando la villetta affronterà la sua fine fronteggerà il bulldozer sbuffando: Cazzo guardi?[1]

---

1.   "The little house is surrounded by dwellings filled with nervous humanity. Grandpa used to say that were minimal houses there, that name made me laugh, it seemed to be exactly what one imagines a home to be. Bathrooms? One for four families. The bed? Next to the kitchen. That minimal was of an amazing humanity, you can't get anything less. The minimal houses were torn down after the war, grandfather told me, and today these gray blocks fulfill the same function by collecting stories of migration and change. Today, the humanity of the place is reflected in this bar, which has not lost its function as an outlet and meeting place over the decades, with a few chickens clucking in the background, kept in the coop near the pergola. The building triggers a movement of awe when you look at it, because the walls are so peeling and yellowed that it looks like an old heavy smoker puffing away: What the fuck are you looking at?. On some winter nights, when you cross the intersection of the barracks and leave the tracks of the tram depot behind you, a "scighera" (fog) can appear, which forms in the damp surroundings of the former parade ground, a large green space populated by native plants, among which some marsh birds find peace. In the midst of the fog, the hut is like a yellow tooth in the mouth of our smoker. Smoke and humanity, a green place that holds out, wild and fenced in, until the speculative desires already manifested become reality, but when the house Will face its end, it will cope with the bulldozer puffing: What the fuck are you looking at?".

Marina, 31
Via Marostica 29, Milan, Italy

Il bancone del lattaio

Non saprei dire l'età, quello che percepisco nel ricordo è che ero piccola, timida e total-mente dipendente dalla mamma. Ecco perché cadevo in confusione quando il lattaio rivolgeva direttamente a me la domanda "cosa vuoi per merenda?" a cui seguiva la mia classica risposta "non lo so". Il lattaio, o meglio, la signora Anna la ricordo grossa, imponente, la luce dei faretti le cade dritta in testa creando delle ombre ostili sul viso e tornando poi ad illuminarle il petto coperto dal grembiule.

Da dietro il bancone incrocia le braccia e si sporge in avanti verso di me dicendo diver-tita: "Il non lo so l'ho finito". Terribilmente intimorita toglievo lo sguardo e lo rivolgevo alla mamma che finiva per mettermi davanti due opzioni massimo e allora riuscivo a fare la mia scelta. La latteria o più nello specifico il bancone è il luogo fisico in cui ho visto concretizzarsi un qualcosa di astratto ovvero una caratteristica della mia persona (che non è il caso di indagare qui)[1].

---

1. "I can not tell you my age, but I remember being small, shy and completely dependent on my mother. So I was confused when the milkman directly asked the question, "What would you like to eat?", to which my classic answer followed, "I don't know". I remember the milkman, or rather Mrs. Anna, as tall and imposing. The light from the spotlights falls directly on her head, casting hostile shadows on her face, only to return and illuminate her apron-covered chest. She crosses her arms behind the counter, leans forward towards me and says with amusement: "What I don't know is finished". Startled, I avert my gaze from her and turn it to Mom, who finally presents me with two maximum options and I can make my choice. The dairy, or more precisely the counter, is the physi-cal place where I saw something abstract, i.e. a characteristic of my person (which I will not go into here), materialize".

Davide, 33

Monte Stella, Milan, Italy

La cima del Monte Stella
È dove ho portato per otto lunghi anni il mio migliore amico a quattro zampe, Ares. Per noi quello era un piccolo angolo di tranquillità. Eravamo solo io e lui. Non c'era nessun altro. C'erano giornate storte? Caricavo il cane in macchina e ci facevamo delle luuuunghe passeggiate. Ci facevamo sempre delle corse per raggiungere la cima. Arrivati lì, ci sono dei muretti dove ti puoi sedere, e stavamo seduti a guardare Milano dall'alto, in pieno relax. Non dimenticherò mai quel senso di tranquillità avendo lui al mio fianco[1].

---

1. "This is where I took my best pet friend, Ares, for eight years. It was a little corner of peace for us. It was just him and me. There was no one else around. Were there any bad days? I'd load the dog into the car and we'd go for long walks. We always ran to get to the top. When we got to the summit, there were little walls we could sit on and look Milan from above and relax. I will never forget that feeling of peace when I had him by my side".

Luigina, 40

Piazza Sant'Alessandro, Milan, Italy

Gli inizi

Cresciuta nell'hinterland milanese, Piazza Sant'Alessandro è stato uno dei primi luoghi che ho scoperto di Milano grazie all'inizio del mio percorso universitario. La scalinata della chiesa è stata teatro della prima chiacchierata, senza veli e divertente, con una persona che, nel tempo, è entrata a far parte della mia famiglia di affetti. Dal tavolino di un bar della piazza è iniziato un viaggio a tre nella città di Milano per narrare l'inusitato legame tra fotografia e cecità, all'interno di un progetto di tesi di laurea[1].

---

1.   "Having grown up in the Milan hinterland, Piazza Sant'Alessandro was one of the first places I discovered thanks to the start of my university career in the city centre. It was on the steps of the church that the first candid and amusing conversation took place with a person who, over time, became part of my family of affection. From the small table of a bar in the square, a journey through the urban landscape began to tell the unusual connection between photography and blindness as part of a dissertation project".

Rossella, 67 and Dario, 72

Viale Monte Grappa 14, Milan, Italy

Lo Shocking era casa

Ci andavamo almeno tre volte a settimana, sicuramente il martedì e il venerdì. Io facevo i turni in ospedale, ma quando smontavo andavo direttamente a ballare. Si arrivava intorno alle 22.30 e si usciva per l'una. Per arrivare alla pista bisogna scendere due rampe di scale. Nel mezzo c'era il guardaroba. Ricordo che a volte, il venerdì sera lasciavo la colazione alla guardarobiera che me la conservava per riconsegnarmela poi al momento della chiusura. C'era un grande bancone, non ricordo se bisognava pagare un biglietto per entrare o se bastasse fare una consumazione. Lo Shocking era casa.

Ci si conosceva tutti, eravamo una grande famiglia. Ricordo anche i proprietari, padre con la giacca beige e i risvolti marroni, mamma che poteva essere la mia e figlio che li aiutava nella gestione del locale. Di giorno gestivano un bar vicino a Piazzale Loreto, la sera si occupavano della discoteca. Dario arrivava sempre più tardi di me, intorno alle 23.30. Ricordo che anche mentre ballavo, continuavo a fissare le scale nella speranza di vederlo scendere. Il nostro primo incontro è stato semplice, ci siamo seduti e abbiamo incominciato a parlare, indossava un maglione giallo. Non mi è piaciuto subito, era uno molto sicuro di sé, ma il resto è storia. Lo Shocking è il luogo dove ci siamo conosciuti, quello da cui è partita la nostra famiglia[1].

---

1. "We went at least three times a week, definitely on Tuesdays and Fridays. I worked shifts at the hospital, but when I got off work, I went straight to the dance. You arrived around 10:30 pm and left at 1:00 am. To get to the dance floor, you had to go down two floors. In between was the checkroom. I remember sometimes on Friday nights I would leave my breakfast with the cloakroom attendant, who would keep it for me and then give it back to me after closing time. There was a big counter, I can't remember if you had to pay for a ticket or if you just needed a drink. Home was shocking. Everyone knew everyone, we were one big family. I also remember the owners, the father with the beige jacket and brown lapel, the mother who could have been mine, and the son who helped them run the place. During the day they ran a bar near Piazzale Loreto, at night they ran the disco. Dario always came in later than me, around 11.30 pm. I remember that even when I was dancing, I kept staring at the stairs, hoping to see him come down. Our first date was easy, we sat down and started talking, he was wearing a yellow sweater. I didn't like him straight away, he was a very confident guy, but the rest is history. Shocking is the place where we met, the place where our family was born".

Rocco, 31

Via Amendola, Favignana (TP), Italy

Scalo Galasso

Ri-trovarsi non è mai facile. Che accada in un luogo specifico ancora meno.

Viverlo tutti i giorni, un'ossessione controllata. Provi a farlo tuo, non ci riuscirai fino in fondo. Provi a tenerlo segreto, non ci riuscirai fino in fondo. E quando verrà invaso, quando non ci sarai più a osservarlo da lontano, lascerai tutto alla memoria, sperando resti nitida, sperando non ti tradisca mai.

Io lì ero vivo[1].

---

1. "Finding yourself anew is never easy. That it happens in a certain place, even less so. Living it every day is a controlled obsession. Try to make it your own, you won't quite succeed. Try to keep it a secret, you won't quite make it. And when it is invaded, when you're no longer there to observe it from afar, you leave it all to memory, hoping it will stay sharp, hoping it will never betray you.
In that place, I felt alive".

Andrea, 41

Via Milano, Peschiera Borromeo (MI), Italy

Arrivi e partenze

Sono appassionato di aerei e del volo in generale da che ho memoria.

Gli arrivi e le partenze portano sempre con sé quell'aura di avventura e di riflesso stesso della vita, nei suoi alti e bassi. Da bambino, i miei genitori mi portavano all'aeroporto di Linate a vedere gli aerei decollare, ma è solo una volta cresciuto che ho trovato un posto mio, una stradina sterrata che costeggia la pista, sconosciuta ai più, in primissima fila per lo spettacolo. Ci andavo (e ci vado) spesso da solo, ma ci ho anche portato qualcuno a cui sono legato. Un attimo prima è la calma più totale, il momento dopo, il rombo dei motori di un gigante di metallo sbuca da dietro gli alberi, a pochissimi metri dal tuo naso, che sta già guardando all'insù[1].

---

1. "For as long as I can remember, I have been fascinated by airplanes and flying in general. Arrivals and departures always have something adventurous about them and reflect life with its ups and downs. As a child, my parents took me to Linate Airport to watch the planes take off, but it was not until I was an adult that I found my own place, a dirt path along the runway that most people did not know about, in the front row for the show. I used to (and still do) often go there alone, but I have also taken someone close to me. One moment it's completely quiet, the next the roar of a metal giant's engines peeks out from behind the trees, just a few metres in front of your nose, which is already looking up".

Anna, 32
Via Stendhal 45, Milan, Italy

A farci i fatti nostri

Se chiudo gli occhi ricordo la luce di quei pomeriggi. Nel secondo cortile di Via Stendhal 45, fino a 20 anni fa, c'era la ditta della famiglia di mio padre. Si chiamava "CONTRO snc" e vendeva materiale per l'idraulica da almeno un paio di generazioni.

Nei primi anni delle scuole elementari, quando alle 16.30 mamma veniva a prenderci a scuola, la tappa successiva era da papà, "in ditta". Nel cortile, accanto a un Volkswagen azzurro, io e i miei fratelli giocavamo sull'asfalto. In fondo, l'ingresso della piccola azienda in ferro, carta da zucchero e vetro. Lì dentro c'era sempre fresco e un odore pungente di metallo. Ogni pomeriggio, la sorella di mio nonno, la zia Jole, una donnina minuta, elegante e discreta, interrompeva il suo lavoro contabile per prendermi allegra sottobraccio e portarmi con sé a fare qualche commissione: "ciao mamma, io e zia Jole andiamo a farci i fatti nostri!". Da quel cortile assolato imboccavamo una breve galleria che ci avrebbe condotto prima a un altro cortile, più ombroso e angusto, e poi all'uscita su strada. Quella prima galleria, cinta tra luce gialla e azzurrina, con alle spalle la ditta e lo sguardo dritto all'uscio, fuori dalla vista dei miei genitori, fu uno dei miei primi spazi di indipendenza: svoltato l'angolo sapevo che saremmo state solo noi, a farci i fatti nostri.[1]

---

1.   "When I close my eyes, I remember the light of those afternoons. Until 20 years ago, my father's family business was located in the second courtyard of via Stendhal 45. It was called "CONTRO snc" and had been selling plumbing supplies for at least two generations. In the early years of primary school, when my mum picked us up from school at 4.30 pm, the next stop was at Dad's, "in the factory". In the yard, next to a blue Volkswagen, my brothers and I played on the asphalt. At the end of the court, there was the entrance to the small iron, sugar paper and glass factory. It was always cool there and smelled pungently of metal. Every afternoon, my grandfather's sister, Aunt Jole, a petite, elegant and discreet little woman, would interrupt her bookkeeping work to take me cheerfully under her arm and take me on some errand: "Bye, mom! Aunt Jole and I are going about our business!" From this sunny courtyard, we walked through a short tunnel that led first to another, shadier and narrower, and then to the street exit. That first tunnel, between yellow and blue lights, with the factory at our backs and facing the door, out of sight of my parents, was one of my first spaces of independence: as I turned the corner, I knew we would be alone, minding our own business".

Luca, 33
Via Milano 30, Valbrona (CO), Italy

Boccata di fumo

Questa piazzola panoramica è stata per anni la sosta del mio solito giro in moto che da Como mi portava alla Colma del Sormano, poi giù da Valbrona a Onno, poi Bellagio e ritorno a Como. Mio padre mi mostrò e mi insegnò quel giro.

La prima volta è stato uno di quei giorni di piena condivisione di vita con lui. Col tempo sono diventati sempre più rari, forse andare in giro in moto ci aiutava a essere più in sincronia, non saprei. Quel giorno ci fu una sorpresa assolutamente inaspettata: girammo con una moto chiesta in prova a un concessionario e seppi che sarebbe diventata mia solo una volta ritornati al concessionario stesso. Una sorpresa ben riuscita, niente da dire! Da tempo non faccio un giro con la Gigia, la mia Husqvarna SM 125, ne avrei davvero voglia. Nella piazzetta ci fumammo anche la nostra prima sigaretta insieme, fu lui a propormela. Mantengo la tradizione di fumarne una ogni volta che mi fermo lì.[1]

---

1. "For years, this panoramic rest area was the stop on my usual motorcycle tour from Como to Colma del Sormano, then down from Valbrona to Onno, then Bellagio and back to Como. My father showed and taught me this route. The first time was one of those days when I fully shared life with him. Over time they became less and less frequent, maybe riding a motorcycle helped us understand each other better, I don't know. That day there was a completely unexpected surprise: we were riding around on a motorcycle that had been requested from a dealer for a test ride, and I knew it wouldn't be mine until we came back. A successful surprise, nothing to say! It's been a long time since I took a ride on the Gigia, my Husqvarna SM 125, I really wanted to. We also smoked our first cigarette together in that little square, he was the one who suggested it to me. I keep up the tradition of smoking one every time I stop there".

Erica, 28
Bosco della Ragnaia, San Giovanni d'Asso (SI)

Al sicuro[1]

Un bosco di cui una parte è stata trasformata in giardino, cosparso di statue e monumenti il cui obiettivo è far riflettere. Sono molto affezionata a questo luogo.

Ci sono cresciuta e ai miei occhi è sempre stato magico: quando mi sento stressata e sopraffatta riesce a darmi la calma e a farmi ricalibrare. I due monumenti ai quali sono più legata sono la stele dove c'è scritto "Everywhere you can see a part of it, nowhere you can see all of it". Un concetto bellissimo nella sua semplicità, parla del bosco, del mondo, di tutto ciò che viviamo in generale nella vita. Il secondo al quale sono molto affezionata, sono le quattro colonne gialle dove si trova scritto "solo qui, solo ora, solo questo, solo così"[2]. Cerco di tenerlo a mente come mantra nella vita.

Mi sento molto connessa con questo luogo che è per me casa, anche se cambia sempre. In estate è chiuso e sono riuscita a farlo vedere a poche persone, ma per me rimane speciale e lo collego a tanti bei momenti[3].

---

1. This phototext is part of the site-specific results of the artist residency *Locus Personae* organized and financed by the associations *Canvas Hub* and A.P.E. (*Associazione Poliziana Eventi*) from Montepulciano (SI) with *51Lire* from Venice (https://www.51lire.com/) in May 2023.

2. *Bosco della Ragnaia* (Ragnaia Wood) is a garden designed by the American landscape artist Sheppard Craige, in San Giovanni d'Asso, near Siena. The work in the photograph is the *Center of the Universe*. Courtesy of Bosco della Ragnaia. For more details see http://www.laragnaia.com/EN/

3. "A wood, part of which has been turned into a garden, dotted with statues and monuments designed to inspire reflection. I really like this place. I grew up there and it has always been magical in my eyes: when I feel stressed and overwhelmed, it manages to calm me down and bring me back into balance. The two monuments that are closest to my heart are the stele that says: "*everywhere you can see a part of it, nowhere you can see all of it.*" A beautiful concept in its simplicity that speaks of the wood, the world and everything we experience in life. The second image that I really like is the four yellow pillars that say: "*only here, only now, only this, only like this*". I try to keep this in mind as a mantra in my life. I feel very connected to this place, which is home to me, even though it is constantly changing. In summer it is closed and I could only show it to a few people, but it remains special to me and I associate it with so many beautiful moments".

13.
For a Mnemotopic Communication Design

To conclude this volume, we can consider the territory as a vital, evolving archive consisting of multifaceted intersections of places and memories: the *mnemotopes*. This perspective encourages the exploration of the layers within sites, each telling its own story and enriching the collective narrative. By acknowledging the diverse nature of mnemotopic realities, we gain insight into the relationship between human experience and the geographical context in which it unfolds.

This holistic and interdisciplinary understanding encourages us to appreciate the richness and complexity of the memory of places, recognizing them as repositories of history, culture and territorial identity. Starting from these premises, we can ask ourselves what role Communication Design plays today in relation to the *territory-archive* (Galasso, 2022). First of all, we can recognize mnemotopes not only as topical figures (Anceschi, 1992), as conceptual frameworks that help us to categorize the different sites of memory, but as *topical apparatuses* that give substance and existence to the memory of places. They are performative entities that, when recognized, provide us with access to the past of the territory, opening doors on the surface to bring forth narratives, atmospheres, documents, records. The main criticality of mnemotopic discourse still seems to lie in the question: *but is everything a mnemotope?* The fact that the mnemotope is a very open concept makes it very susceptible to being understood as a catch-all concept (Jequier, 2013), that encompasses all possible physical realities that unite memory and place. To partially clarify this question, the volume offers a plural definition, the starting point for the mnemotopic research, and a categorization to expand the topic of commemoration in relation to places of memory. In the near future, a parametric and typological implementation will be necessary to foster a common and robust mnemotopic knowledge. Methodologically, *Mnemophoto* project has shown that phototextual practices are effective in implementing the mnemotopic approach, but other languages can be explored, leading to the creation of more sophisticated mnemotopic communication systems.

At this point we can introduce a *Mnemotopic Communication Design* that meets specific features:

– the choice of mnemotope as a term of reference to investigate, translate and represent the memory of places;
– the recognition of the mnemotope as a physical territorial specificity, of varying scale, typology and scope, in which content and narratives of various kinds associated with the past are layered and condensed;
– the recognition of specific different mnemotopic parameters, combined in a plural definition, in which communicative urgency is already present;
– the recognition of the mnemotope as productive and performative principle capable of being the driving force for generating innovative design solutions and further investigations;
– the awareness of the intrinsic interdisciplinarity of the mnemotope, already present in the composite nature of the term, that can enhance the dialogue between different research areas (e.g., Design and Memory Studies);
– the commitment to operate for the stability of mnemotopes in an active conservation perspective, respecting and enhancing their mnestic value;
– the objective of translating mnemotopes into complex communicative systems composed of different devices, using various communicative languages and involving different interpretive practices (e.g., phototextuality);
– the importance of geolocalization in the design of mnemotopic communicative systems as an effective way to anchor content to places;
– the awareness that adopting the *memotopic approach* can promote alternative reflections in the academic teaching context, encouraging students to create artifacts that represent territories beyond stereotypes, paying particular attention to the role of historical sources, documents and the visual remediation of specific territorial content (Galasso, 2023a);
– the awareness that mnemotopic recognition can contribute to the preservation and the valorization of territorial realities destined to be abandoned, demolished, or disappearing, in a perspective of cultural sustainability;
– the awareness of the vastness of the mnemotopic context and the infinite typological variables, not as an obstacle to design but as a stimulus to the realization of increasingly targeted and articulated devices;
– the recognition of a change in territorial exploration when it is done with *mnemotopic awareness*, capable of creating original itineraries in the context of memory tourism.

Given the emerging and evolving nature of the mnemotopic realm, the clear delineation of these variables is critical. An interdisciplinary and dynamic approach will not only facilitates the fine-tuning of their definition, but also will encourage their comprehensive exploration and expansion, allowing for a deeper understanding of their interplay and potential impact on different domains.

Despite their limited theoretical background, mnemotopes will persist as a stable and enduring presence within the field of communication design. If memory is not an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium (Benjamin, 1932b), the mnemotope, as one of its expression, will continue to be a vehicle of the past, inspiring territorial movements and curiosity, fostering dialogue and investigation within the research community.

Figure 20. *No mnemotope like home*, Milan, Italy. Clorinda Galasso and Stefano Scagliarini, 2024.

References

Agamben, Giorgio
2005   *Profanazioni*, Roma, Nottetempo.
2020   *"What Is an Apparatus?" and Other Essays*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Agazzi, Elena; Fortunati, Vita (eds.)
2007   *Memoria e saperi: percorsi transdisciplinari*, Roma, Meltemi.

Agnetti, Vincenzo
1972   "Non dipingo i miei quadri", in *Il mondo dell'arte*, Milano, Corriere della Sera.

Agnew, John
2011   "Space and Place", in Agnew, J.; Livingstone, D. (eds.), *Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, London, Sage.

Ahmad, Rafiq; Hertzog, Anne
2016   "Tourism, memory and place in a globalizing world", in *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 16(3), 201-205.

Anceschi, Giovanni
1992   *L'oggetto della raffigurazione*, Milano, Etaslibri.

Arnold-de Simine, Silke
2013   *Mediating Memory in the Museum: trauma, empathy, nostalgia*, Basingstoke, Palgrave.

Assmann, Aleida
2003   "Three Stabilizers of Memory: Affect – Symbol – Trauma", in Hebel, Udo J. (ed.), *Sites of Memory in American Literatures and Cultures*, Heidelberg, Winter.
2011   *Cultural memory and western civilization. Functions, Media, Archives*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Assmann, Jan
1992   *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulture*, Munich, Verlag C.H.Beck.
2010   "Communicative and Cultural Memory", in Erll, A.; Nünning, A. (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin, New York, De Gruyter, 109-118.

2011   *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization. Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Azaryahu, Maoz
2021   *An Everlasting Name: Cultural Remembrance and Traditions of Onymic Commemoration*, Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter Oldenbourg.

Azaryahu, Maoz; Foote, Kenneth
2008   "Historical space as narrative medium: on the configuration of spatial narrative of time at historical sites", in *Geo Journal,* 73, 179-194, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-008-9202-4.

Bailly, Jean-Christophe
2012   *Il tempo fermato: piccola conferenza sulle immagini*, Milano, Booktime.

Bakhtin, Mikhail
1937   *The dialogic imagination: four essays*, Austin, University of Texas Press.

Barbato, Guido (ed.)
2016-2019   *Archivio 01-05*, Milano, Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti.

Barthes, Roland
1989   *The Rustle of Language*, Berkley, Los Angeles, University of California Press.

Bartoletti, Roberta
2010   "Memory tourism and commodification of nostalgia", in Burns, P.; Palmer, C.; Lester, J. (eds.). *Tourism and Visual Culture,* Vol. 1: Theories and Concepts. Wallingford: CABI.

Bassanelli, Michela
2015   *Oltre il memoriale. Le tracce, lo spazio, il ricordo*, Milano, Mimesis.

Baule, Giovanni; Caratti, Elena (eds.)
2017   *Design is Translation*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.

Baule, Giovanni; Quaggiotto, Marco
2015   "Communication of the territory and cartographic interfaces. The spatial turn in communication design", in *The Virtuous Circle Design Culture and Experimentation*, Milano, Cumulus Conference Proceedings.

Bednarek, Stefan
2012   "Mnemotopika polska", in *Przeglad Kulturoznawczy,* N. 1 (11), 94-111.

Beeton, Sue
2005   *Film-induced Tourism*, Clevedon, Channel View.

Benjamin, Walter
1932 a   "Cronaca berlinese", in Tiedemann, Rolf; Schweppenhäuser, Hermann (eds.), 2003, *Walter Benjamin. Opere complete. Scritti 1932-1933*, Torino, Einaudi.

1932 b   "Excavation and Memory", in Bullock, Marcus; Jennings, Michael; Eiland, Howard; Smith, Gary (eds.), 2005, *Selected Writings,* Vol. 2, Part 2 (1931–1934), Cambridge, Belknap Press.

Bertella Farnetti, Paolo; Bertucelli, Lorenzo ; Botti, Alfonso (eds.)
2017   *Public history: discussioni e pratiche*, Milano, Mimesis.

Bevilacqua, Francesco
2010   *Genius loci: il dio dei luoghi perduti*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino.

Bianciardi, Luciano
1962   *La vita agra*, Milano, Rizzoli.

Black, Graham
2011   "Museums, Memory and History", in *Cultural and Social History*, 8 (3), 415-427.

Bloch-Dano, Évelyne
2019   *Le case dei miei scrittori*, Torino, Add.

Bonetto, Fabrizio
2023   *Museo di un amore infranto*, Milano, Accento.

Booth, William J.
2018   *Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

Borges, Jorge Luis
1964   "Funes the Memorious", in *Labyrinths: selected stories and other writings*, New York, New Directions.

Brunow, Dagmar
2019   "Manchester Post-punk heritage: Mobilising and Contesting Transcultural Memory in the Context of Urban Regeneration", in *Culture Unbound,* Vol. 11, Issue 1, 9-29.

Buell, Lawrence
2001   *Writing for an Endangered world: literature, culture and environment in the U.S. and beyond*, Cambridge, The Belknap Press.

Buzzati, Dino
1971   *I miracoli di Val Morel*, Milano, Garzanti.

Calabi, Daniela; Galasso, Clorinda; Borghi, Beatrice
2021   "Education and memory. Pedagogy of remembrance and communication design", in *AGATHÓN | International Journal of Architecture, Art and Design,* 10(online), 262-271, doi: 10.19229/2464-9309/10242021.

Carnevali, Davide
2022   *Ritratto dell'artista da morto* (*Germania '41 - Argentina '78*), Torino, Einaudi.

Carrara, Giuseppe
2020   *Storie a vista: retorica e poetiche del fototesto*, Milano, Mimesis.

Cascone, Vincenzo (**ed.**)
2023   *Bitume*, Palermo, Fondazione Federico II.

Casey, Edward S.
1987   *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

Cecchi, Marta Elisa.; Galasso Clorinda (**eds**).
2024   *Mnemosphere: Designing a Neologism between Memories, Emotions and Atmospheres*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.

Chiocchetti, Federica
2018   "Federica Chiocchetti in Conversation with Nina Strand", in Neumüller, M. (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Photography and Visual Culture*, New York, London, Routledge.
2019   "What is a Photo-Text Book?", in *The Photobook Review 016, Aperture Magazine*, https://aperture.org/editorial/pbr-photo-text-book/.

Cometa, Michele; Coglitore, Roberta
2016   *Fototesti: letteratura e cultura visuale*, Macerata, Quodlibet.

Connerton, Paul
1989   *How societies remember*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Craps, Stef; Crownshaw, Rick; Wenzel, Jennifer; Kennedy, Rosanne; Colebrook, Claire; Nardizzi, Vin
2018   "Memory studies and the Anthropocene: A roundtable", in *Memory Studies*, Vol. 11, Issue 4, https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980177310.

De Botton, Alain
2002   *L'arte di viaggiare*, Parma, Guanda.

De Nardi, Sarah; Orange, Hilary ; High, Steven; Koskinen-Koivisto, Eerika (**eds.**)
2020   *The Routledge handbook of memory and place*, Abingdon, New York, Routledge.

Depentor, Giulia
2023   *Immemòriam. I cimiteri e le storie che li abitano*, Milano, Feltrinelli.

Desideri, Antonio
2020   *Luigi Ghirri: l'omino sul ciglio del burrone*, Firenze, Edizioni Clichy.

Di Pasquale, Caterina
2018   *Antropologia della memoria: il ricordo come fatto culturale*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

Dickinson, Greg; Blair, Carole; Ott, Brian L (**eds.**)
2010   *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, Tuscaloosa, The University of Alabama Press.

Donohoe, Janet

2014   *Remembering Places. A Phenomenological Study of the Relationship between Memory and Place*, Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield.

Eco, Umberto

1994   *Sei passeggiate nei boschi narrativi*, Milano, Mondadori.

Engel, William E.

2022   *The Printer as Author in Early Modern English Book History: John Day and the Fabrication of a Protestant Memory of Art*, New York, Routledge.

Erll, Astrid

2011   *Memory in Culture*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Erll, Astrid; Rigney, Ann (eds.)

2009   *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, Berlin, New York, De Gruyter.

Erll, Astrid; Nünning, Ansgar (eds.)

2010   *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, Berlin, New York, De Gruyter.

Fabian, Johannes

1999   "Remembering the Other: Knowledge and Recognition in the Exploration of Central Africa", in *Critical Enquiry*, 26, 49-69.

Ferraro, Alessandra; Sperti Valeria

2021   "Autobiografie fototestuali al femminile nella letteratura francese contemporanea", in *Arabeschi*, 17, 125-142.

Fonseca, Ana Paula; Seabra, Claudia; Silva, Carla

2016   "Dark Tourism: Concepts, Typologies and Sites", in *Journal of Tourism Research & Hospitality*, S2-002, https//doi:10.4172/2324-8807.

Fontcuberta, Joan

2018   *La furia delle immagini. Note sulla postfotografia*, Torino, Einaudi.

Fossati, Vittore; Messori

2007   *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre*, Reggio Emilia, Diabasis.

Foucault, Michel

1980   *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*, New York, Pantheon Books.

1986   "Of Other Spaces", in *Diacritics*, 16(1), 22-27, https//doi.org/10.2307/464648.

François, Etienne; Schulze, Hagen

2001   *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte. 3 vols.*, Munich, Beck.

Gaglianò, Pietro

2016   *Memento: The Obsession with the Visible,* Munich, Milano, Postmedia Books.

Galasso, Clorinda

2018   *Zone di memoria. Il design per gli archivi del territorio*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.

2021   "Mnemotopic Perspectives: Communication Design as Stabilizer for the Memory of Places", in *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, Open Science Index,* 174, 15(6), 226-233.

2022   "I mnemotopi e il bisogno di memoria", in Bucchetti, Valeria; Zingale, Salvatore (eds.), *La trama sottile della grafica. Scritti sugli scritti di Giovanni Baule*, 172-177.

2023 a "Memory studies and design? The mnemotopic approach", in *Memory Studies*, 16(6), 1628-1641. https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980231202853.

2023 b "The Invented Mnemotopes Archive. Design Prectices for the Memory of Places, in *PAD - Pages on Arts and Design*, 23, 264-285.

2023 c "Mnemotopes and Memory Tourism", in *Dakam Fall 2023 Conferences Proceedings*, Instanbul, Dakam Books.

2023 d "L'esperienza Bitume. Forme creative di rigenerazione mnestica del territorio", in Cascone, V. (ed.), *Bitume*, Palermo, Fondazione Federico II.

Galasso, Clorinda; Baule, Giovanni

2021   "An answer to the complex representation of territory. The fertile ground of mnemotopes and design of communication, in *DESIGN CULTURE(S)*. *Cumulus Conference Proceedings Roma 2021*, Vol. 2, 2619-2629.

Galasso, Clorinda; Cecchi, Marta Elisa; Calvo Ivanovic, Ingrid; Mastrantoni, Claudia; Borin Ambra; Scagnoli Martina

2020   "Mnemosphere: An Interdisciplinary Research Between Memory of Places, Emotions and Atmosphere of Space", in *ECAH, The European Conference on Arts & Humanities 2021 - Official Conference Proceedings*, 59-69, IAFOR.

Gangloff, Anne

2020   "Art and Practices of Memory. Space and Landscapes in the Roman World", in Horn, Christian et al., *Places of Memory. Spatialised practices of remembrance from prehistory to today*, Oxford, Archeopress.

Garroni, Emilio

2010   *Creatività*, Macerata, Quodlibet.

Giampaoli, Cecilia

2020   *Azzorre*, L'Aquila, Neo edizioni.

Gillis, John R.

1994   "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationships", in Gillis, J. R. (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, 3-27, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Grihault, Nicki

2007   "Set-Jetting Tourism-international", in *Travel & Tourism Analyst*, (4), 1-50.

Hafting, Torkel; Fyhn, Marianne; Molden, Sturla; Moser, May-Britt; Moser, Edvard
2005   "Microstructure of a spatial map in the entorhinal cortex", in *Nature*, 436, 801-806, https://doi.org/10.1038/nature03721.

Halbwachs, Maurice
1925   *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, Paris, Librairie Félix Alcan.
1950   *La mémoire collective*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France.
1980   *The collective memory*, New York, Harper & Row.

Herweg, Nora, A.; Kahana Michael J.
2018   "Spatial Representations in the Human Brain ", in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 12, https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2018.00297.

Hirschfield, Lisa
1999   "Between Memory and History: Wordsworth's Excursion ", in *Romanticism on the Net*, (16), https://doi.org/10.7202/005880ar.

Horn, Christian; Wollentz, Gustav; Di Maida, Gianpiero; Haug, Annette (eds.)
2020   *Places of Memory. Spatialised practices of remembrance from prehistory to today*, Oxford, Archeopress.

Hubbel, Amy L.; Akagawa, Natsuko; Rojas-Lizana, Sol; Pohlman, Annie
2020   *Places of traumatic memory: a global contex*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Hubner, Elena; Dirksmeier, Peter
2023   "Geography of placemories: deciphering spatialised memories", in *Cultural Geographies*, 30(1), 103-121, https://doi.org/10.1177/14744740221123564.

Iarussi, Oscar
2017   *Andar per i luoghi del cinema*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

Imbasciati, Antonio
2015   *Nuove teorie sul funzionamento della mente. L'istituzione psicoanalitica e gli psicoanalisti*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.

Inglis, Ken
1992   "War Memorials: ten questions for historians", in *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, 167, 5-21, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25730853.

Isnenghi, Mario
1996   *I luoghi della memoria. Strutture ed eventi dell'Italia unita*, Roma, Laterza.

Jedlowski, Paolo
1989   *Memoria, esperienza e modernità*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.

Jéquier, François
2013   "Les Lieux de mémoire", in Gangloff, A. (ed.), *Lieux de mémoire en Orient grec à l'epoque impériale. Anabases*, 19 , 23-33.

Johnson, Peter

2013   "The geographies of heterotopia", in *Geography Compass*, 7(1), 790-803.

Kalinowski, Angela

2021   *Memory, Family, and Community in Roman Ephesos*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Kant, Immanuel

1781   *Critik der Reinen Vernunft, 1st Edn*, Riga, Johann Friedrich Hartknoch.

Kenny, Michael, G.

1999   "A Place for Memory: The Interface between Individual and Collective History", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41(3), 420-437, http://www.jstor.org/stable/179434.

Lee, Vernon

1907   *Genius Loci. Notes on Places*, London, John Lane.

Maldonado, Tomás

2006   *Memoria e conoscenza: sulle sorti del sapere nella prospettiva digitale*, Milano, Feltrinelli.

Manier, David; Hirst, William

2010   "A Cognitive Taxonomy of Collective Memories", in Erll, A.; Nünning, A. (eds.), *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, Berlin, New York, De Gruyter.

Marschall, Sabine

2012   "'Personal memory tourism' and a wider exploration of the tourism–memory nexus", in *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 10(4), 321-335, https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2012.742094.

Mariani, Maria Anna

2017   *Dalla Corea del Sud, tra neon e bandiere sciamaniche*, Roma, Exòrma.

Marozzi, Elizabeth; Jeffery, Kathryn J.

2012   "Place, space and memory cells", in *Current Biology,* Vol. 22, Issue 22, 939-942, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2012.10.022.

Maus, Gunnar

2015   "Landscapes of memory: a practice theory approach to geographies of memory", in *Geographica Helvetica*, 70(3), 215-223. https://doi.org/10.5194/gh-70-215-2015.

Mercatanti, Leonardo

2016   "Lo spazio bergmaniano ne *Il posto delle fragole*", in *Il capitale culturale, Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage,* Supplementi 04, 177-185.

Millán Dancausa, Maria Genoveva ; Pérez Naranjo, Leonor María; Hernández Rojas, Ricardo David; Millan Vazquez de la Torre, Maria Genoveva
2019   "Cemetery Tourism in Southern Spain: an analysis of demand", in *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, Vol. 25, N. 1, 37-52.

Montorio, Andrea
2021   *Promemoria: come creare l'archivio dei propri ricordi*, Torino, Add.

Moretti, Franco
1997   *Atlante del romanzo europeo: 1800-1900*, Torino, Einaudi.

Moser, Edvard; Kropff, Emilio; Moser, May-Britt
2008   "Place cells, grid cells, and the brain's spatial representation system", in *Annual Review of Neuroscience*, 31, 69-89, https://doi: 10.1146/annurev.neuro.31.061307.090723.

Moser, May-Britt; Rowland, David C. ; Moser, Edvard
2015   "Place Cells, Grid Cells, and Memory ", in *Cold Spring Harbor perspectives in biology*, 7(2), https://doi.org/10.1101/cshperspect.a021808.

Nooteboom, Cees
2015   *Tumbas. Tombe di poeti e pensatori*, Milano, Iperborea.

Nora, Pierre
1984-1992   *Le Lieux de Mémoire*, Paris, Gallimard.
1989   "Between memory and history: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*", in *Representations*, 26, 7-25.
1996   *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past,* Vol. 1 – Conflicts and Divisions, New York, Columbia University Press.

Norberg-Schulz, Christian
1979   *Genius loci: paesaggio, ambiente, architettura*, Milano, Mondadori Electa.

Novelli, Mauro
2019   *La finestra di Leopardi: viaggio nelle case dei grandi scrittori italiani*, Milano, Feltrinelli.

O'Keefe, John; Dostrovsky, Jonathan
1971   "The hippocampus as a spatial map. Preliminary evidence from unit activity in the freely-moving rat", *in Brain Res*, 34, 171-175.

Olick, Jeffrey K.; Sierp, Aline; Wüstenberg, Jenny
2023   "Introduction: Taking stock of memory studies", in *Memory Studies*, 16 (6), 1399-1406, https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980231207934.

Pagani, Paolo
2019   *I luoghi del pensiero. Dove sono nate le idee che hanno cambiato il mondo*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza.

Palmer, Marilyn; Neaverson Peter
1998   *Industrial Archaeology: Principles and Practice*, New York, Routledge.

Pamuk, Orhan
2008   *The museum of innocence*, London, Faber & Faber.
2012   *The innocence of objects*, New York, Abrams Books.

Pethes, Nicolas; Ruchatz, Jens
2002   *Dizionario della memoria e del ricordo*, Milano, Mondadori.

Pini, Lorenzo
2018   *A Lisbona con Antonio Tabucchi: una guida*, Roma, Guido Perrone Editore.

Pinotti, Andrea
2023   *Nonumento. Un paradosso della memoria*, Milano, Johan & Levi.

Pinotti, Andrea; Somaini, Antonio (eds.)
2009   *Teorie dell'immagine. Il dibattito contemporaneo*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina Editore.

Pirazzoli, Elena
2011   "Il luogo e il volto. Note a margine della crisi del monumento dopo il 1945", in *La Rivista di Engramma*, 95, 301-310.

Portelli, Alessandro
1997   *The battle of Valle Giulia: oral history and the art of dialogue*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press.

Purdy, Anthony
2002   "The Bog Body as Mnemotope: Nationalist Archaeologies", in *Style*, 36(1), 93-110.

Quaggiotto, Marco
2012   *Cartografie del sapere: interfacce per l'accesso agli spazi della conoscenza*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.

Quaggiotto, Marco; Galasso, Clorinda
2023   "Designing hybridization: alternative education strategies for fostering innovation in communication design for the territory", in *A Focus on Pedagogy: Teaching, Learning and Research in the Modern Acade*, 218-226, AMPS Proceedings Series.

Ribera, Federica; Cucco, Pasquale
2019   *La storia che r(esiste): approcci alla conservazione e valorizzazione dei ruderi*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.

Ricoeur, Paul
2004   *Memory, history, forgetting*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Riley Roger; Baker, Dwayne; Van Doren, Carlton S.
1998   "Movie induces tourism", in *Annal of Tourism Research,* 25, 919-935.

Rix, Michael
1955   "Industrial archaeology", in *The Amateur Historian, Vol.2, No.8.*

Rothberg, Michael
2010   "Introduction: Between memory and memory – from *Lieux de mémoire* to *Noeuds de mémoire*", in *Yale French Studies*, 118/119, 3-12, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41337077.

Schacter, Daniel L.; Addis, Donna Rose; Hassabis, Demis; Martin, Victoria C.; Spreng, R. Nathan; Szpunar, Karl K.
2012   "The future of memory: remembering, imagining, and the brain", in *Neuron*, 76(4), 677-694, https://doi: 10.1016/j.neuron.2012.11.001.

Schama, Simon
1995   *Landscape and memory*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf.

Shapiro, Roberta
2009   "Artification as Process", in *Cultural Sociology*, Vol. 13, Issue 3, 265-275, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1749975519854955.

Sherry, David F.; Schacter, Daniel L.
1987   "The evolution of multiple memory systems", in *Psychological Review*, 4, 439-454.

Soja, Edward W.
1996   *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing.

Sontag, Susan
2003   *Regarding the Pain of Others*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Starace, Giovanni
2013   *Gli oggetti e la vita: riflessioni di un rigattiere dell'anima sulle cose possedute, le emozioni, la memoria*, Roma, Donzelli.

Stone, Philip
2006   "A dark tourism spectrum towards a typology of death and macabre related tourist sites, attractions and exhibitions", in *Tourism, 54*, 2, 145-160.

Sullam, Simon Levis
2018   "Dai *lieux de mémoire* ai luoghi della memoria: prime note sulla genealogia di una categoria storiografica", in *Mestiere di storico: rivista della Società italiana per lo studio della storia contemporanea*, X, 1.

Tabucchi, Antonio
1994   *Sostiene Pereira*, Milano, Feltrinelli.

Tarpino, Antonella
2022   *Il libro della memoria: dimore, stanze, oggetti dove abitano i ricordi*, Milano, Il Saggiatore.

Testori, Giovanni
1958   *I segreti di Milano*, Milano, Feltrinelli.

Teti, Vito
2014   *Il senso dei luoghi: memoria e storia dei paesi abbandonati*, Roma, Donzelli.

Till, Karen
2003   "Places of Memory ", in Agnew, J.; Mitchell, K.; Toal, G. (eds.), *A Companion to Political Geography*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing.

Trigg, Dylan
2013   *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, Athens, Ohio University Press.

Truc, Gérôme
2011   "Memory of places and places of memory: for a Halbwachsian socio-ethnography of collective memory", in *International Social Science Journal*, 62, 147-159.

Tuan, Yi-Fu
1977   *Space and place: the perspective of experience*, London, Arnold.

Tulving, Endel; Markowitsch, Hans J.
1998   "Episodic and declarative memory: role of the hippocampus", in *Hippocampus*, 8, 198-204.

Turri, Eugenio
1998   *Il paesaggio come teatro. Dal territorio vissuto al territorio rappresentato*, Venezia, Marsilio.
2004   *Il paesaggio e il silenzio*, Venezia, Marsilio.

Valtorta, Roberta
1997   "La fotografia dei luoghi come fotografia", in Sacconi, A.; Valtorta, R. (eds.), *1987-1997 archivio dello spazio. Dieci anni di fotografia italiana sul territorio della provincia di Milano*, Udine, Art&.
2013   "In cerca dei luoghi (non si trattava solo di paesaggio)", in Valtorta, R. (ed.) *Luogo e identità nella fotografia italiana contemporanea*, Torino, Einaudi.

Van Rookhuijzen, Jan Z.
2020   *Herodotus and the topography of Xerxes' invasion*, Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter.

Viganò, Simone ; Piazza, Manuela
2020   "Distance and Direction Codes Underlie Navigation of a Novel Semantic Space in the Human Brain", in *Journal of Neuroscience,* 40 (13), 2727-2736, https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.1849-19.2020.

Viganò, Simone; Rubino, Valerio; Buiatti, Marco; Piazza, Manuela
2021   "The neural representation of absolute direction during mental navigation in conceptual spaces", in *Commun Biol,* 4, 1294.

Warburg, Aby

1929   *Mnemosyne - Bilderatlas: Zur Ausstellung im Kunsthaus Hamburg*, Hamburg, Dolling und Galitz Verlag.

Werner, Arnold

2017   "Edmund Engelman: Photographer of Sigmund Freud's home and offices", in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(2), 445-451, https://doi.org/10.1516/KBKW-07UU-WPEK-ANM8.

Westphal, Bertrand

2009   *Geocritica: reale finzione spazio*, Roma, Armando Editore.

Williams, Paul H.

2007   *Memorial museums: the global rush to commemorate atrocities*, Oxford, Berg.

Winter, Jay

2007   "The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom", in *Contemporary Historical Studies. Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol. 1, N. 0.

2010   "Sites of Memory", in Radstone, S.; Schwartz, B. (eds.), *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, New York, Fordham University Press.

Wordsword, William

1854   *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, Philadelphia, Troutman & Hayes.

Wüstenberg, Jenny

2023   "Toward Slow Memory Studies", in Kaplan, B. A. (ed.), *Critical Memory Studies. New Approache*s, London, Bloomsbury Publishing.

Yates, Frances

1966   *The Art of Memory*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Young, Craig; Light, Duncan

2016   "Interrogating spaces of and for the dead as 'alternative space': cemeteries, corpses and sites of Dark Tourism", in *International Review of Social Research*, 6(2), 61-72.

Young, James E.

1993   *The texture of memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning*, New Haven, Yale University Press.

Zavattini, Cesare; Strand, Paul

1955   *Un paese*, Torino, Einaudi.

COLLANA DESIGN DELLA COMUNICAZIONE

The theme of memory has long intersected with the field of design. There is growing evidence that designers play a central role in the preservation, representation and transmission of the past.

Within this broad panorama of experimentation, a lively discourse is developing on the relationship between place and memory. The volume proposes an exploration of this connection, favouring a transversal method of analysis that involves several disciplines and creates links between different lines of reflection. The focus is therefore on **COMMUNICATION DESIGN** as a mediator of the territorial past, capable of interpreting the complexity of places and reactivating their memory. One of the most significant aspects of the **TERRITORY** is its stratification, and this context requires a different positioning of communicative artifacts, which is no longer limited to the representation of physical appearances, but focuses on the polyphonic existence of plans, including immaterial and unofficial content.

In light of this scenario, the volume introduces the **MNEMOTOPE**, an interpretative object that offers an alternative way of looking at the **MEMORY OF PLACES**. By developing a plural definition of the composite term and categorising its manifestations, the study introduces the mnemotope as a performative principle in design that can be a concrete response to the need for memory in communication projects.

CLORINDA SISSI GALASSO
Postdoctoral research fellow at the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano. Her research focuses on memory representation systems and the valorization of documents preserved in historical archives. In particular, she is dedicated to the study of the connection between memory and places, with special emphasis on the concept of the mnemotope. In this series, she published *Zone di memoria. Il design per gli archivi del territorio* (2018).