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Memory, Victims and place:

Memorialisation of sorrow caused by conflict, and violence, mass shooting, and war.

Five case studies: Colombia, Mexico, New Zealand, the USA, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University by Yeimy Walker

Lincoln University 2012
MEMORY, VICTIMS AND PLACE

MEMORIALISATION OF SORROW CAUSED BY CONFLICT, AND VIOLENCE, MASS SHOOTING, AND WAR.

FIVE CASE STUDIES: COLOMBIA, MEXICO, NEW ZEALAND, THE USA, AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE).

This research is a comparison of five case studies that uses analysis and criticism in a structured way to record and explore how languages of memorialisation and landscape interventions might respond to memories of trauma, place and victims.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University by Yeimy Walker

Lincoln University
2020
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LANGUAGES OF MEMORIALISATION
I express my sincere appreciation to those who have contributed to this thesis by providing advice, enduring countless meetings, donating their time, offering their encouragement, and assisting in innumerable other ways. I am profoundly grateful.

Special thanks to:

Dr. Jacky Bowring Thesis Supervisor
Dr. Shannon Davis Associate Supervisor
Ms. Shona Mardle Administrator, SOLA

And thanks to my wonderful family. I simply couldn’t have done this without your support and help on this journey:

Scott Walker
Camilo Walker
Amara Walker
MEMORY, VICTIMS AND PLACE
Abstract

How might the memorialisation of sorrow caused by violence and conflict, mass shooting, or war be expressed? Moreover, how can existing memorial languages be useful to memorialise the open wounds of the victims? Memorials inspire design narratives and develop unique memorial languages that keep remembrance alive. This research employs a case study approach to analyse five memorial landscape architecture projects that express the sorrow of violent conflict (Colombia and Mexico), mass shooting (the USA and New Zealand), and war and loss (the United Arab Emirates). These examples of responses to violence through landscape interventions across a wide range of settings are testimonies to the witnesses, survivors, victims, perpetrators, and places of tragedy.

Each narrative of tragedy leaves its own unique set of wounds and scars. This research examines how existing memorial languages might provide unique responses to deal with the sorrow experienced by conflict and violence, mass shooting and war victims. The study of the five responses allows for personal interpretation of tragedy, greater community engagement, and the development of individual and collective memorial responses. To this end I highlight how each of the five cases is particularly effective at identifying one specific theme of memorial language.

Keywords
memorial language; memories of trauma; place and victims; narratives; landscape interventions; architecture; places of tragedy; experience; violence; conflict; mass shooting; war.
LANGUAGES OF MEMORIALISATION
As a child, I grew up with a constant awareness of the pain of war. Conflict and violence were regular parts in my daily life. My experience with the conflict in Colombia provides an opportunity to interpret the processes that lead to acts of memorialisation. It is not easy to detach ourselves from the realities of conflict and violence, as they leave a powerful stigma that opens a narrative of wounds and scars. However, recognising the victims of tragedies in an endless conflict that has tainted our lands, our memories, and people’s lives is the first step to understanding the processes of memorialisation and developing responses that can engage victims, visitors and future generations.

We all belong to a world where danger, poverty, inequality, religious conflict, and senseless death are part of everyday life. Places of trauma and violence leave traces of brutality inscribed in people’s minds, bodies, and memories. Focusing on memory makes us reflect on the role that memorials and design can play in places marked by violence and trauma. Landscape interventions of memorialisation can provide some answers to the main questions of this research. Thus, this thesis is focused on answering the following questions: How might the memorialisation of sorrow caused by conflict, violence, mass shooting, or a war be expressed? Moreover, how can existing memorial languages be useful to memorialise the open wounds of the victims?
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Chapter 1
Introduction

“...I remember I met a very beautiful woman two years ago. A mother who had been waiting for ten years for her son to appear. In ten years, she has never come out of the house in fear that her son might call or come to knock at the door when she is not around. She is a person caught in her own jail. His dish is always on the table. There are hundreds of cases like hers. It is then that one realizes how these persons have been marked by violence....”

(Doris Salcedo in Marcus, 1997, p. 241)

Personal testimonies of human suffering and loss are narratives that root memories of grief both in time and space. Memorial languages embody many layers of individual and collective memories. According to Davis and Bowring (2011):

“[The] practice of memorialisation has become increasingly complex due to the influence of globalization. Memoryscapes—memorial landscapes—are today infused by the tension between local needs and global expectations, offering highly concentrated places in which to investigate the physical expression of memory.”

(Davis & Bowring, 2011, p. 15)

Thus, memorials can provide meaning for people in one place by connecting them with the experience of others. Memoryscapes—memorial landscapes—play important social, political and cultural roles. People experience a sense of place that allows them to interpret a unique design language that is not mutated or transferable, thus enriching individual and collective memory. If memory and memorials in a landscape are holders of individual and collective memories and experiences, then how might design combine with a place to create a framework for remembering? Moreover, how can memorial languages generate an awareness of the victims of the conflict? This research is interested in these questions. It focuses on the existing memorial languages expressed in a small number of case studies around the world as responses to and expressions of the experiences of victims of the conflict.
This thesis consists of eleven chapters that explore the above questions. Below is a brief overview of the roles and main points of each chapter to guide readers.

**Chapter One** is an introduction to the thesis; it establishes the main focus and aim of the research. This chapter includes the context of the thesis and the main research questions.

**Chapter Two** is a review of relevant academic literature. The two theories discussed in this research, *Place and Memory* and *Sense of Place*, are frameworks for understanding the context of memorials. I explore how the theories can suggest how to provide unique narratives that can shape individual and collective memory. The collections of these experiences and the responses of memorialisation can render a powerful sense of belonging and identity. The relationship between the two theoretical perspectives can reveal connections between place, memory and tragedy that suggest how we might generate memorial responses.

**Chapter Three** outlines the research methodology used in my fieldwork. I explain how information was gathered and organised, and discuss the steps I used to analyse each case. I then outline how the results of each case study will be presented and how they may show how landscape characteristics and design processes can contribute to the development of memorial language responses to victims and places of trauma. In addition, I discuss how my research findings might contribute to the existing literature on memorial languages, with a particular focus on the primary research question.

**Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight** are analyses of the five case studies. Each chapter provides a description and interpretation of the site, including the memorial context and the meaning of the place as a location where survivors and visitors can participate in the construction of memory. I explore the architectonic dialogue, design process, and design languages of each case. I then discuss the core concepts of the memorial by offering physical and sensory interpretations of the memorial languages. Finally, I examine how the narrative of each site is embedded in time, place, and memory, developing a unique story that can contribute to remembrance, healing, and meaning.

**Chapter Nine** is a compilation of the results of the analyses and interpretations of the five case studies from chapters 4 to 8. Through its central narratives, each case study allows for personal interpretations and experiences. I develop a set of diagrams that summarize the main characteristics of each site. I present the dominant narratives of each case study through a set of design attributes and phenomenological lenses. Each case study provides a unique set of lessons for how memorial languages can respond to human-induced tragedies such as violence and conflict, mass shooting and war.

**Chapter Ten** is a discussion of the relationship between the two theoretical frameworks developed in Chapter 2, *memory and place* and *sense of place*, and the results of the case studies presented in Chapter 9. I highlight how each of the five cases is particularly effective at identifying the role that one specific theme of memorial language.
Chapter Eleven concludes the research and evaluates the degree to which the research aim and objectives have been accomplished. The findings are the result of my own personal, subjective experiences from visiting the five memorial sites. Ultimately, visitors have the autonomy to determine what the site means to them and how they wish to interact with both the physical memorial as well as the memories attached to each site.

Over time, places define and structure our sense of self, such that being displaced can have a dramatic consequence on our experience of who we are, and in some cases even leave us with a feeling of being homeless in the world. Equally, the memories that we obtain from places we currently inhabit adopt a value that is both immeasurable and vital. Without the memory of places, memory itself would no longer have a role to play in our conscious lives.

(Trigg, 2012, p. 1)
Chapter 2
Theoretical Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is an introduction to the exploration of two theories relating to Place and Memory and Sense of Place in the context of memorials. In Section 2.2, I offer a brief overview of place and memory theory and how it can provide meaningful materiality and individual experiences that shape collective memory in social practices and responses to memorialisation. In Section 2.3, I give a brief overview of sense of place theory and how as humans, we relate to the landscape that surrounds us. Over time, the collections of these experiences become memories that provide a powerful sense of belonging and identity. In Section 2.4, I conclude with the relationship between the two theories Place and Memory and Sense of Place as essential aspects of place experiences and emotional bonds between individuals and memory places.

In this research, one of the main aims has been to identify the variety of ways in which places are experienced as a response to memorial languages and how these responses relate to victims and places of trauma. The theoretical approaches that I employ are structured into two theoretical perspectives that suggest how we might work with memories of trauma through memorials. Ken Taylor (2008), explores the meanings of landscape and memory and suggests that:

"One of our deepest needs is for a sense of identity and belonging and a common denominator in this is human attachment to landscape and how we find identity in landscape and place. Landscape therefore is not simply what we see, but a way of seeing: we see it with our eye but interpret it with our mind and ascribe values to landscape for intangible – spiritual – reasons. Landscape can therefore be seen as a cultural construct in which our sense of place and memories inhere."

(Taylor, 2008, p. 1)
2.2 Places of Memory

2.2.1 Place

What exactly is place? Is it purely a particular position in space, or is it a variety of levels of experiences that individuals build in time, or could be something more? Perhaps it is best to think of a place as a location or territory with a specific character and identity. People’s memories and experiences are shaped by interactions within the place that can develop a sense of rootedness, identity, and sense of belonging. Geographers deal directly with space and place, and contribute to the understandings of sense of place that is part of landscape architectural practice.

The role of place in everyday experience contributes to the development of human meaning. In his book *Place and Placelessness* (1976), Edward Relph analyses the concept of place, citing Lukermann (1964), who states: “[we] understand places as complex integrations of nature and culture that have developed and are developing in particular locations, and which are linked by flows of people and goods to other places ... a place is not just the ‘where’ of something: it is the location plus everything that occupies that location seen as an integrated and meaningful phenomenon” (p. 3). Lukermann also intimates that “the study of place is the subject matter of geography because consciousness of place is an immediately apparent part of reality, not a sophisticated thesis; knowledge of place is a simple fact of experience” (ibid, p. 4).

Place is therefore not a scientifically determined phenomenon. It better understood in a more subjective sense: Geographical reality actually begins with the places we know and experience. “Geography can be understood as a response to our existential involvement in the world, it is nevertheless far removed from the lived world in attempting to make man, space and nature objects of enquiry” (Relph, 1976, p. 6). Thus, place can best be understood as a profound, complex and meaningful aspect of our everyday encounters with the world that is best described using phenomenological methods that proceed from experiences rather than concepts. Relph suggests:

Places in existential space can therefore be understood as centres of meaning, or focuses of intention and purpose. The types of meanings and functions defining places need not be the same for all cultural groups, nor do the centres have to be clearly demarcated by physical features, but they must have an inside that can be experienced as something differing from an outside.

(Relph, 1976, p. 22)

Relph argues that places are, essentially, “significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world” (1976, p. 141). He believes that in order to understand the true role of place, it is important to understand the role that language plays in connecting place to meaning. Relph argues that the key link between the two can be understood through the concept of “insideness”, which is “the degree of attachment, involvement, and concern that a person or group has for a particular place” (Seamon & Sowers, 2008, p. 45).
2.2.2 Dialectics of Insideness and Outsideness

According to Smethurst (2000) “a traditional distinction between space and place has been formulated by the humanist geographer Yi Fu Tuan: Place is circumscribed from the undifferentiated spaces that surrounds it and threatens it with its instability; space becomes place as we inhabit, get to know it better and endow it with value” (p. 267). The identity of place relies on the experience of an ‘insideness’ that is distinctive from an ‘outsideness’. One of the major proponents of a ‘phenomenological’ approach in architecture, historian-theoretician Christian Norberg-Schulz, has written, “to be inside is the primary intention behind the place concept; that is to be somewhere, away from what is outside” (Norberg-Schulz 1971, p.25) cited in Relph (1976, p. 49). The manifestations of the difference between inside and outside are as much cultural, social and psychological as physical.

Relph (1976), points out that identity is fundamental in everyday life and is more than just an objective characteristic—it can both influence and be influenced by our experiences. He focuses on the concept of insideness, or “identity with places” (p. 46). While he never precisely defines this concept, he argues that: “The essence of a place lies [less in terms of geographies, landscapes, cities, and homes than] in the experience of an ‘inside’ that is distinct from an ‘outside’…to be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with the place” (p. 49). This concept of insideness is the single strongest defining feature of what sets a place apart in space. Insideness (as distinguished from outsideness) means that one is experiencing a place as opposed to observing it: “It is the difference between safety and danger, cosmos and chaos, enclosure and exposure, or simply here and there.” (ibid, p. 49).

There are degrees of insideness, and the more inside a place a person feels, the stronger his or her identity with that place will be.

For a person to be considered as an insider he or she has to have an involved relation to a place; alternatively, an outsider has a more detached relation to a place. This distinction is constructed as two poles of a continuum of place experiences using two criteria: being more or less involved in a place, and more or less conscious of it.

(Relph, 2000, p. 616)

In Place and Placelessness, Relph discusses numerous types of insideness and outsideness, each type relating to meaning one receives from a particular interaction with a place. Seamon and Sowers point out the most powerful type of insideness in this way:

The strongest sense of place experience is what Relph calls existential insideness—a situation of deep, unself-conscious immersion in place and the experience most people know when they are at home in their own community and region. The opposite of existential insideness is what he labels existential outsideness—a sense of strangeness and alienation, such as that often felt by newcomers to a place or by people who, having been away from their birthplace, return to feel strangers because the place is no longer what it was when they knew it earlier.

(Seamon & Sowers, 2008, p. 45)
Thus, understanding the insideness vs. outsideness relationship is one of the keys to how people experience place. They bond to a place when they have a high degree of experience with it that builds a meaningful relationship.

How do these theories of insideness and outsideness, sense of place and identity relate to sites of trauma? Does the involvement of individuals and collectives in tragedies connected to particular places change their senses of that place? How does the materiality of place become intensified through involvement in a profound experience and the memories it invokes?

2.2.3 Memory and Place

Memory is our ability to encode, store, retain and subsequently recall information and past experiences in the human brain (Holtzblatt & Beyer, 2010). The conception of memory has always been rooted in the context of time, involving senses, experiences, people, actions, and different scenarios. Moreover, memory consists of fragments of prior experience and ideas that people can recall at particular times. According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception*:

> To remember is not to bring into the focus of consciousness a self-subsistent picture of the past; it is to thrust deeply into the horizon of the past and take apart step by step the interlocked perspectives until the experiences which it epitomizes are as if relived in their temporal setting. (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 26)

Dylan Trigg (2012), in his book *The memory of place: a phenomenology of the uncanny* argues that:

Over time, places define and structure our sense of self, such that being displaced can have a dramatic consequence on our experience of who we are, and in some cases even leave us with a feeling of being homeless in the world. Equally, the memories that we obtain from places we currently inhabit adopt a value that is both immeasurable and vital. Without the memory of places, memory itself would no longer have a role to play in our conscious lives. (Trigg, 2012, p. 1)

Memory of places is particularly important for people who have endured extreme pain and anguish from war. How do these traumas affect our sense of identity and connection with landscape? How can we reconnect people with land, memory, and past? For example, Pierre Nora (1989) in *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire* suggests that history in the Latin American context is a continuously unfolding open wound that is visible now in “the irrevocable break marked by the disappearance of peasant culture... Among the new nations, independence has swept into history societies newly awakened from their ethnological slumbers by the colonial violation” (p. 7).
Moreover, Pierre Nora claims that there is “an increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good, a general perception that anything and everything may disappear - these indicate a rupture of equilibrium.” The experience of losing this equilibrium is “where memory crystallizes and secretes itself” (ibid, p. 7).

He also argues that:

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present... Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past.

(Nora, 1989, p. 8)

In the Latin American context, where two of the five case studies are located (see Chapters 4 and 5), conflict and violence are frequently reoccurring phenomena affecting everyday reality. Places of trauma provide an identity that defines the historical context of the place as one burdened with the stigma of repeated exploitation and brutality going back to the conquest: “This conquest and eradication of memory by history has had the effect of a revelation as if an ancient bond of identity had been broken and something had ended that we had experienced as self-evident” (ibid, p. 8). The narrative of memories of tragedy, trauma, sorrow, violence, and impunity is embedded in multiple generations.

The connections between memory and place, intensified through the experience of trauma, therefore lie at the heart of my research questions: - How might the memorialisation of sorrow caused by the conflict, violence, mass shooting, or a war can be expressed? Moreover, how can existing responses and memorial languages be useful to memorialise the open wounds of the conflict?

Collections of individual memories can create a unique understanding of the context of a tragedy, as they have the ability to record information about things or events with the ability to recall them later. The ways of celebrating the memory of a person or event can be represented in memorials in a number of language forms: Remembrance, Recognition, Healing, Peace, Spirituality, Comfort, Learning, Empathy, Nostalgia, Temporality, Melancholy, Emotions, Fragments, Refection, Tragedy, Connection, Silence and so on. (see Bowring (2016), Davis and Bowring (2011), Till (2014), Schramm (2011), Young (1993)).
Marita Sturken, an American scholar, author, professor, and critic in memory studies, suggests:

Memory forms the fabric of human life, affecting everything from the ability to perform simple, everyday tasks to the recognition of the self. Memory establishes life’s continuity; it gives meaning to the present, as each moment is constituted by the past. As the means by which we remember who we are, memory provides the very core of identity. (Sturken, 1997, p. 1)

According to Sturken, we should not view memory as a replica or mirror image of an experience. Instead, we should view it as a narrative that allows us to investigate “how cultural memories are constructed as they are recollected” (ibid, p. 7). Memory is not a replication, it is a form of interpretation.

If we view memory in this way, memorials can be powerful tools in the production of memory. People and communities do not merely experience the replication of an event; they are able to actively participate in memorials to give meaning to the past.

### 2.2.4 Places of Memory

Places of memory can provide social practices, meaningful materiality, individual experiences, and collective imaginations as a constituent of localised memory. According to Schatzki’s practice theory, landscapes of memory are described as a social phenomenon; practices of memory contextualise certain places as meaningful links to the past (in Maus, 2015, p. 217). Moreover, these places of trauma might also be linked to the past with marginalised experiences through injustices framed in individual memory and identity.

According to Till (2012b), ‘wounded cities’ are densely settled locales that have been harmed and structured by particular histories of physical destruction, displacement, and individual and social trauma resulting from state-perpetrated violence (p. 6). The power of memorialisation and commemorative practices is seen in sites of memory such as statuary, streetscapes, memorials, monuments, stamps, tourist attractions, urban renewal projects (ibid, 2012b, p. 7). Furthermore, public memorials and commemorative practices are designed to preserve memories for the future by transferring the memory from the past to the present in order to reinforce individual identity and generate empathy for the scars of war.

Existing memorial languages can contribute a unique dialogue that combines collective memory, place of memory and urban identity in a way that integrates daily life and urban context. Further, Till (2012a) argues that memory-work motivates the creation of social capital, provides a range of memorialisation activities, creates new forms of public memory, and is committed to intergenerational education and social outreach (p. 292). Moreover, sites of memory or memoryscapes where the power of individuals’ and social groups’ experiences can be seen in expressions of empathy and care.
In conclusion, creating memorial spaces can have a key role in altering our sense of place because it creates meaning “from the existential and perceptual places of immediate experience” (Relph, 1976, p. 7). In the five cases of this research, I explore how learned experience can preserve or transform or erase our sense of place. But the experience can also change our perception of that space, along with a range from banal to sacred.

2.3 Sense of Place

Why do we need a sense of place? As humans, we relate to the landscape that surrounds us. Over time, the collections of these experiences become memories that provide a sense of belonging and identity. “People demonstrate their sense of place when they apply their moral and esthetic discernment to sites and location” (Tuan, 1979, p. 410). Places, where we had experiences that are tied to our memories, become part of us, and we are part of them creating a mutual relationship – a sense of place (genius loci).

However, what happens when the sorrow of war shifts these relationships with our landscape and starts to bring place experiences as forced displacements, death threats, terrorism, and many other crimes? How does a victim associate these experiences with landscape and memory? How can landscape permeate many of these experiences and define who we are? Furthermore, how can we deal with memories of tragedy?

Memory and experiences of sadness develop a connection with the wounds of war, trauma, loss, pain and the fractured soul. Sometimes even the sense of belonging is gone. In Margaret Drabble’s *A Writer’s Britain: Landscape in Literature* (2009), the author offers a vivid reference to Virginia Woolf’s sense of loss of a loved place by expressing an emotional sense of landscape lost:

> The past lives on in art and memory, but it is not static: it shifts and changes as the present throws its shadow backwards. The landscape also changes, but far more slowly; it is a living link between what we were and what we have become. This is one of the reasons why we feel such a profound and apparently disproportionate anguish when a loved landscape is altered out of recognition; we lose not only a place, but ourselves, a continuity between the shifting phases of our life.
> (Drabble, 2009, p. 270)

From Drabble’s perspective, landscape needs to be understood as a dynamic, profound, complex and meaningful aspect of our everyday encounters with the world that is best described using phenomenological methods that begin from experiences rather than concrete concepts. Juhani Pallasmaa (2012) explores the phenomenological dimensions of human experience in architecture, arguing that “every touching experience of architecture is multi-sensory; qualities of space, matter and scale are measured equally by the eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle” (p. 41). Incorporating all of our senses will strengthen our existential and sensory experiences, which will enable meaningful engagement with memory and place.
According to Relph (1976), the key to humans understanding, or recovering, their sense of place is tied to phenomenology. In the case of my research, phenomenology can help to explore each case as a place of memories that build everyday experience. The various ways place is manifest in our experiences, the characteristics of places as they are expressed in landscapes, and about how these are being increasingly threatened by processes of placelessness that weaken diverse experiences and identities of places. “The most meagre meaning of ‘sense of place’ is the ability to recognise different places and different identities of a place… Sense of place may be authentic and genuine, or it can be inauthentic and contrived or artificial” (Relph, 1976, p. 63).

Relph argues that sense of the place has two varieties: authentic and inauthentic. Authentic places are those that acquire meaning because they follow from an authentic and deep sense of place (p. 68). That is, the experience of people with a place is open and honest. Such a relationship is usually generated in an unconscious way, as it is the result of a natural process that reflects local values and intentions. Unfortunately, Relph (1976) argues, in today’s world the identity of many places is increasingly being generated in inauthentic ways.

Inauthentic sense of place includes those landscapes which are “internationally similar.” The subjective experience people have with them is not genuine. In modern, industrial societies, superficial landscapes frequently replace local or authentic needs and intentions with ones of the “average” and “abstract” are instead what is valued. Identities are created based on some concept of rationality or efficiency.

Relph (1976) argues such inauthenticity is not always undesirable, but that such landscapes rely on the superficial or the “kitsch,” rather than the authentic. So what is the role of identity in creating a sense of place? The author argues that there are three components that combine to create the identity of places: 1) buildings, objects, and landscapes; 2) the activities that happen there (both commonplace and special); and 3) meaning (what we associate with the place, e.g., beauty or ugliness; joy or sadness). While these three concepts are distinct, they are interconnected and combine to create, according to Relph (1976), a sense of the place or genius loci. Once created, sense of the place can prove to be a powerful and enduring concept—and one that can persist in the face of a great deal of social change.

Importantly, Relph argues that place takes on added importance because we find that in today’s world it is under threat as it never has been before. In a world that is undergoing intense globalisation, humans find that their sense of place is “increasingly threatened by processes of placelessness that weaken diverse experiences and identities of places” (Relph, 1976, p. 6).

Kevin Lynch (1960) defines the identity of a place as the fact that it can be distinguished from other places, “which implies its distinction from other things, its recognition as a separable entity” (p. 8). Additionally, the identity of place allows people to understand and contextualise individual memories, thus adding meaning and value through our experiences. M. Jones (2014) suggests that:
Sites of trauma carry distinct identities that are rooted in history, culture, society, and individual memories. Memorial languages open up different types of recognition and interactions between the act of memorialisation and people’s experiences. The combination of memorial design and memorial languages might contribute to building an emotional, intangible and sensory interaction between place and people.

Jacky Bowring, a landscape architecture academic specialising in memories and memorials, argues, “An event which is truly tragic requires not resolution or closure, but an opening towards the emotional, a fully present engagement. Through confronting the void there is a challenge to connect with the subjective, and confront the depth of existence” (Bowring, 2016, p. 65). Bowring also considers places which have been affected by trauma to be containers of memory that carry emotions as well as personal and collective memories of sorrow and tragedy.

Bowring introduces melancholy as an awareness of ‘human conditions’ reaffirming that the appreciation of a place is subject to our experiences and connections with it:

The pain of loss, human rights violations and the suffering of countless people, reflect nostalgia, silence and open wounds in the memories of several victims - Instead of quickly papering over the cracks of landscapes of sadness and disaster, an enhanced appreciation of their place in the landscape deepens connections.
(Bowring, 2016, p. 171)

According to Trigg, 2012, being “touched by the past” brings us into a region of memory and temporality that elicits the moment personal identity is marked in either an affirmative or a disruptive manner by the experience of memory itself”. Trigg suggests that landscape is a potent setting for memory, shaped by personal emotion and collective connections that might define part of identity (Trigg, 2012, p. xvii).

However, Bowring cautions, “For a designer, emotional potential in the landscape is to be carefully navigated, and not overdetermined” (ibid, p. 170). The landscape designer usually works with these aspects of a place in order to reinterpret it. Simon Bell explains that:
Genius loci is an elusive quality which tends to be easier to conserve than to create. It is certainly vulnerable to damage or destruction if not recognized or valued and treated with sufficient sensitivity. People tend to be more attached to a landscape with a strong sense of place and so are more likely to be sensitive to and wary of landscape change. An essential part of the analysis of any landscape should be to try to identify the genius loci (1993: 122).

Place is associated with the most intimate and personal memories that were generated by particular arrangements of space, time, things, people and events. According to Taylor (2008), “Landscape and identity are inherent components of our culture, one informing the other … access to, and freedom to enjoy the landscape as well as respect for spiritual and symbolic meanings people ascribe to their landscape, are some of the components that will support dignity and wellbeing of communities” (Taylor, 2008, p. 5).

2.3 Conclusion

Building the relationship between memory and sense of place in the context of a memorial site can be achieved through developing narratives that use languages of memorialisation. This can create the potential for resistance to the dehumanising effects of mass tragedies. Taylor (2008) suggests that “a common theme underpinning the idea of the ideology of landscape itself as the setting for everything we do is that of the landscape as the repository of intangible values and human meanings that nurture our very existence. This is why landscape and memory are inseparable because landscape is the nerve centre of our personal and collective memories” (p. 4).

Establishing a meaningful role for memory and sense of the place means doing much more than merely tying tragic events to a particular place and time. It involves creating the potential for human interaction with a place that allows survivors and visitors to create their own meaningful experiences in a way that enables them to not only remember tragic events but to create enduring connections between memory and place. Casey (2000) suggests that:

In body memory, place memory, and social rituals these unresolved residuals of memory find refuge. People need to be recognized and recognize themselves in their social and physical environments to be able to give and accept care across generations. When individuals return to places that have witnessed pain and violence, but are now being cared for and may offer care, they can be again surrounded by living memory and emotional attachments, providing a safe space for personal self-reflection, discovery, and change.

(in, Till, 2012b, p. 12)
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3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methods that I use in my research. Methodologically, the research is situated generally within qualitative approaches as I am dealing with subjective responses to victims and places of trauma. The Chapter proceeds as follows: In Section 3.1, I introduce the main questions of this research. In Section 3.2, I outline the fundamental approaches used in my fieldwork research and the selection of the sites. It also explains how the information has been gathered, selected, and organised. In Section 3.3, I give a detailed account of the different methods used in the process of the collection of the information and the steps followed in order to develop an analysis and format of a comparative study of each case. In Section 3.4, I outline how the results of each case study will be presented, describing how symbols, landscape characteristics, and design processes are involved in developing the memorial languages of each site. In Section 3.5, I propose a framework for how the research implications will be discussed and how they might contribute to the existing literature on memorial languages, with particular focus on the primary research question. And in Section 3.6, I conclude with a brief summary of the main methodologic steps I take in this research.

Throughout time, people have witnessed deep memories of loss, violence, conflict, war, and tragedies which can be recognised as unaddressed wounds of the past that can unfold new narratives in the memorial languages. More importantly, the main questions of this research are - How might the memorialisation of sorrow caused by the conflict, violence, mass shooting, or a war be expressed? Moreover, how can existing responses and memorial languages be useful to memorialise the open wounds of the conflict?
3.2 Approaches Used in the Fieldwork

Case studies are the primary drivers for exploring, processing and approaching the main research strategies in this research thesis. A critical, interpretative and reflective view provides a theoretically informed way to tailor the data collection and to categorise the phenomenological experiences captured in the fieldwork described in Chapters 4 to 8. The research will allow for the development of a critical analysis based on site visits and established responses and theories.

The case study method has established its relevance as a research strategy of complex and practical information in multiple settings and disciplines. Wilbur Schramm argues that:

> The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result. A case study is, therefore, an effort to contribute to policy and decision making, rather than to science.  
> (Schramm, 1971, p. 6)

Schramm points out that the role of decisions is typically the major focus of case studies that require the researcher to consider a number of potential design choices. Many design decisions underpin the development of memorials, and this is the analytical focus of this research – everything from scale to context, to materials to form is all about design choices. The selection of case studies is important in shaping and locating sites that are meaningful to the research questions. The case studies that I selected for this reflect the relevant responses to violence and conflict, mass shootings and war, as well as the fact that I was able to travel to those sites in person.

Additionally, I was very familiar with some of the places (New Zealand, Colombia, Mexico, Abu Dhabi) that allowed me to have a better understanding of the context and place. The benefit of knowing my mother tongue (Spanish) brought relevant benefits when I visited the Colombian and Mexican case studies. At the beginning of the process of creating the research proposal, I planned to examine responses and memorial languages only for the case of Colombia. This was because of all of the countries in the world, Colombia has experienced one of the highest levels of violence and armed conflict.

However, my experience in New Zealand during the mass shooting tragedy during Friday prayers on 15 March 2019, made me more interested in exploring a wide range of commemorative responses. The New Zealand tragedy created an opportunity to study its connection with one of the most significant mass shooting tragedies in a history of the nation of the United States of America: the Columbine shooting. In addition, the narrative of violence, conflict and drug-related crime of Colombia has rooted similar contexts and languages of memorialisation that were developed in Mexico City at the Memorial of the Violence and Victims.
A second extended armed conflict (Mexico), a second mass shooting (Columbine) and a memorial to war dead (UAE War Memorial) were added because they refer to tragedies that involved multiple layers of violence and responses. I believe that adding these three cases in different settings and contexts will help me to build a better comparative analysis of how memorial languages can respond to tragedy, adding the possibility for new narratives of mourning and tragedy to the research.

The selection of sites allows for a useful comparison of responses to tragedy across a broad range of scales, settings, and memorial languages on each case, as shown in Figures 3, 3.4 and 3.5. According to Francis (2001), critical dimensions can bring unique information to the project and the context: “In a case study, these dimensions are scale, time, community and cultural impacts of the project; environmental sensitivity and impacts” (p. 20). Francis argues that while there are many benefits to a case study approach, there are some important limitations as well: “One typical problem is the inability to compare across cases, especially when different types of data have been collected” (p. 17). The author recommends that it is essential to be “systematic, consistent and rigorous” in using three methodological approaches applicable to each of the case studies.

The first approach I incorporate into this research involves using the site visits, site analysis, historical analysis, design process analysis, and photographs of the project as a method of developing a case study analysis. The interpretations and descriptions of the five sites are based on detailed observations of the sites. I had the chance to visit each of the five memorials, in some cases on two occasions on different days and at different hours. Observing at different times can create a different experience, leading to new interpretations of the memorial languages that each memorial evokes. Our human nature leads us to ask ‘how’ and ‘why’ things are the way they are, opening a range of questions. We are constantly sorting the world into categories based on our experiences and interpretations of how places work.

The second approach involves access to archival material searches, newspaper articles, public records and internet searches. The additional source material was used such as journal articles; books and a list of academic material encountered in scholarly databases such as Scopus, and Google Scholar; blogs and databases. These were powerful search tools to add to the narrative and information delivered in this research. One of the considerations during this stage of the research was to include several interviews and discussions with people about their experiences and their opinions of each memorial.

The advantage of incorporating interviews and discussions is that they can reveal detailed information about personal feelings, experiences, perceptions and opinions, and behaviour. In setting up interviews, I consulted the ethical approval form of the Human Ethics Committee at Lincoln University.
In light of the human ethics challenges, and processing the relevant information in different settings, contexts, languages, cultures, beliefs, and the challenge of performing interviews with different visitors, the analysis would significantly decrease the likelihood of completing the analysis in a reasonable amount of time. Travelling to three different continents and five different countries in less than three months involves a lot of physical and emotional pressure. Therefore, I decided to collect the data through other methods in order to succeed and finish my research on time.

When I visited the first memorial of my study, the All Souls Anglican Church, in Christchurch, New Zealand, I had the opportunity to speak with the Deacon of the community. This spontaneous meeting allowed me to add valuable information that was not provided anywhere because the tragedy in Christchurch just recently occurred. According to the policies and procedures of the Human Ethics Committee, Section 6.2.4 (Exemptions):

> The observation of, or request for statements from, public officials or other prominent persons on matters of public interest or within the scope of their public duties, or requests for information from individuals or communities while acting in a client capacity (for example, a community group involved in a landscape planning or design exercise).
> (Lincoln University, 2018, p. 3, CC-BY 3.0 NZ)

The last statement suggests the conditions under which research activities are exempted from the requirement for being reviewed by the Human Ethics Committee. This allowed me to speak with people carrying out their public duties at each of the sites, including the Deacon at the All Souls Anglican Church, in Christchurch, New Zealand; the tourist guide at the Wahat Al Karama in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates; the guard at Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Bogotá, Colombia; and the guard at the Memorial to Victims of Violence, in Mexico City, Mexico. In my research, I spoke with public figures at each of the five sites.

The third methodological approach is to develop a straightforward narrative of each case study that reveals the following information: ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘when’, location, who is involved, status, narrative, funding, design process, and lessons learned. Figure 3.2 below is a diagram depicting the research structure where the core scope of this study, victims, and place of trauma, leads to a narrative of analysis of five case studies. The final results are intended to lead to further discussions for future researches.

![Figure 3.2](image)

Methodological components and structure of the research. Adapted from source "It should be noted that this is a generalization of the process, which in practice also contains continuous refinement of research questions and scope as the project progresses and finds its form" (Kjerrgren, 2015, pp. 18-19).
Cross-disciplinary / Literature study: comparative study languages of memorialisation

**Five Case Studies:**
Violent conflict (Colombia and Mexico)
Mass shooting (The USA and New Zealand)
War and loss (The United Arab Emirates)

**Fieldwork:**
Case study analysis, interpretations, and description of the site and the memorial languages

1. Relevant scope - Victims and place
2. Synthesis of different methods of research strategy as a comparative study
3. Developing a case study description, analysis, interpretations, and critique perspective of each case study
4. Reflections on the Five Case studies through each method (A NARRATIVE that creates memories and displays meaning to embed experiences)
5. Analysis of methods and comparison to one another and comparative of languages of memorialisation
6. Fieldwork (Colombia, Mexico, USA, New Zealand, and the United Arab Emirates)
7. Findings and results that enables finals interpretations of each case study
8. Discussion, theoretical context: sense of place, place of memory. The three ideologies embedded in the five case studies
9. Definition of opportunities for further research

**FIVE CASE STUDIES**
- Colombia
- Mexico
- New Zealand
- The United States (USA)
- The United Arab Emirates (UAE)
3.2.1 The Case Study

In the practice and study of landscape architecture, “the case study method is becoming an increasingly common body of knowledge that contained effective forms of analysis, criticism, and dissemination for landscape architecture research and practice” (Francis, 2001, p. 15). Mark Francis is a landscape architect and urban design academic who explores the design and meaning of built and natural places. Francis argues, “A case study is a well-documented and systematic examination of the process, decision-making, and outcomes of a project, which is undertaken for the purpose of informing future practice, policy, theory, and/or education” (p. 16). He suggests that from a landscape architecture perspective, “case studies are a way to build a body of criticism and critical theory” and “communicate a broad description and evaluation of a project” (p. 16).

Robert Yin (2003) suggests that case studies are one of several possible approaches to research. Each strategy has its advantages and disadvantages, depending on the specific research questions. But in general, he argues that the nature of case studies makes them “the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed; when the investigator has little control over events; and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p. 1).

The case study method is used as a tool for exploratory research that will help to illustrate theories and how different aspects of the memorial language responses are related to victims, place of trauma, and human-induced violence such as (violence and conflict, mass shooting tragedies, a war memorial). The results and findings from the fieldwork, selection of data and analysis of the work might develop more questions and opportunities for future research. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2016), “We attempt to understand ‘what?’ ‘when?’ ‘where?’ and ‘who?’ as an extension of our inquiry into the phenomena we are studying” (p. 3). Thus, the case study method will serve as a research tool for the critique and contextual analysis of five case studies presented in this thesis.
3.3 Research Approach

3.3.1 Comparative Study as a Research Structure

This research is a comparative study that uses analysis and criticism in a structured way to record and explore how languages of memorialisation and landscape interventions might respond to memories of victims, and place of trauma. The case studies provide an opportunity to make a comparison across five memorial landscape architecture projects which express the sorrow of violent conflict, mass shooting, war, and loss. The approach and role of the fieldwork will provide a set of structures in which interactions, interpretations and processing and recognition of the narrative of each memorial place drive the research structure of this thesis.

Each of the five case studies addressed in this research is a contemporary phenomenon in real-life contexts that includes a comprehensive overview of how each memorial responds to victims and places of trauma. The case study fieldwork will entail a careful analysis of landscape languages to develop some principles of how to respond to tragedy, victims, and place, around the fundamental questions of this research, that is: How might the memorialisation of sorrow caused by the conflict, violence, mass shooting, or a war be expressed? Moreover, how can existing responses and memorial languages be useful to memorialise the open wounds of the conflict?

The following research structure reveals how the five landscape interventions are interpreted through memorial context, design context, expression of memory and stories of the site. The analysis across the case studies will provide the languages of memorial development in each memorial as a response to human-induced tragedies (violence and conflict, mass shootings and war, categories develop for this research) (Figure 3. 3).
A NARRATIVE that creates memories and displays meaning to embed experiences.

Memorial Context
Meaning of The Place
Disaster Tragedy Event
Locational Information - large and small scale
The Setting for The Memorial
Place, Space and Character Site Analysis

Design Context
Exploration of The Identity of The Memorial
Architectonic Dialogue
Timeline to Construction
Design Process
Design Language

INTERPRETATIONS

Expression of Memory
Interpretations
Core Concepts
Memorial Languages
Symbolic, Elements – Symbolic Interpretations

Stories of the Site
Narrative
Main Features of Memorial Languages
Spatial, Perception, and Experience Studies

INTERACTIONS

FIVE CASE STUDIES

Colombia
Mexico
New Zealand
The United States (USA)
The United Arab Emirates (UAE)
3.3.2 Memorial Context

The use of memorials, or memorialisation, is a way to remind people of events that can trigger individual or collective experiences where it can unfold through interactions with the place. Places of tragedy provide a close relationship between collective memories and materiality of places that allow a reconstruction of the past using facts, experiences, or impressions taken from the present. Memorial context contains narratives that open dialogues between interpretations, experiences, memory, connecting victims and place in one response. The memorial context of each of the five memorials is investigated to establish the nature of the responses to violence and conflict, mass shootings and war, also the location, scale, cultural attributes and settings of each place.

This research uses critique within a case study format to investigate memorialisation through five memorials and analyses them within three categories. The first category is a response to violence and conflict. The Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Bogotá, Colombia and the Memorial to Victims of Violence, in Mexico City both, fit into this category. The second category is a response to mass shootings. The Memorial Park in Columbine, in Colorado, USA, and the White Shoe Memorial in Christchurch, New Zealand. Finally, the third category, a war memorial response, is represented by the case of the Oasis of Dignity ‘Wahat al Karama’ in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

To outline the memorial context, I use a comparative discussion of similarities and differences among the five case studies that attribute identity influencing personal and collective experiences.
The first category is a response to violence and conflict. In the marginalised context of Colombia and Mexico, violence has normalised violence context to the point that it is part of daily life. Assassinations, kidnappings, war actions, forced disappearances, and displacements are part of the narrative and context of the place. The forces that drive the responses of Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Colombia, and the Memorial to Victims of violence in Mexico, memorialise thousands of victims in recognition of a violent social fabric with the goal of preserving their memory.

Places, sites, and the art of memory of Latin American culture relate to deep memories of violence drawing from the Spanish conquest, American imperialism, civil war, domination and racism, gender, race, authoritarian governments, and neoliberalism. But they are also connected to and influenced by non-Latin American events such as the Holocaust and the American civil rights struggle. There is something universal about them. As Hite and Buenos argue, “Memories are the underlying grammar of identity, and violent memories do not go away, no matter how silent or buried they can be, both figuratively and literally” (Hite, 2017, p. 191).

The second category is a response to mass shootings. The context in which violence occurs determines one’s proximity and frequency to exposure, both of which affect the response. For instance, the two cases of the category of mass shootings provide different contexts. On the one hand, in the USA, the tragedy of gun violence has become a frequent and contextual factor of society. On the other hand, New Zealand has often been considered a safe country with a relatively low level of homicide that is now a setting where tragedy and violence are possible.

The responses to mass shooting tragedies, expressed in the Memorial Park in Columbine and the White Shoe Memorial, evoke empathy and a powerful sense of absence. The relationship between the two memorials is based on a variety of personal reminders tied to human presence (such as the quotes from the families in the case of the Columbine Memorial and the shoes present at the White Shoe Memorial), and a focus placed on the precise number of the victims.

The third category, a war memorial response is a common one in a number of large and small communities around the world. The Oasis of Dignity is a place to celebrate the soldiers who made sacrifices while serving a nation. The Oasis of Dignity conveys a strong cultural meaning in a space that pays tribute and shapes, reflects and reaffirms the Muslim culture into the cultural and social context that either become a part of everyday life or a celebration of the past.
3.3.3 Design Context and Language

Design context and language are subjective elements that are part of the landscape and highly influenced by the social, spatial, historical background of an individual or group and where the memorial is located. These elements can be represented by a combination of characters, signs, and forms, that provide multiple structures and patterns that help to recognise them. Design context and languages can be perceived by feelings and senses (touch, sight, smell, sound, and taste) that allow us to communicate in various forms using finite elements.

Combining design context and languages will strengthen ways of developing perceptions, dialects, and vocabulary to express ideas that establish interactions between people, place, and memory. Kramsch states: “common attitudes, beliefs, and values are reflected in the way the members of a group use language” (Sirkeci et al., 2015, p. 381). According to Héctor Oddone (in Márquez, López, & Vivas, 2011), language as architecture is presented as a system of communication:

The architect thinks, but will not produce a work made of words, but an object made of shapes and materials. This object transmits its own and particular message that largely cannot be translated into words. The existence of the architectural object as a product belonging to the field of figuration, depends essentially on the management of elements and exclusive relationships of that field, as far as language is a way of knowledge and expression of qualities - not expressible in other disciplines or languages - of needs and desires of the human being.  
(Márquez et al., 2011)

Language involves different ways of communication in a specific context. Moreover, design is not only the physical space form, or drawing produced such as planimetry, sketches, or construction but also is a graphic representation of personal emotions and interpretations. According to Owen (2007), “the ability to use language as a tool is usually thought of as a means for communication. Visual language is used diagrammatically to abstract concepts, reveal and explain patterns, and simplify complex phenomena to their fundamental essences” (p. 25).

Moreover, incorporating design context as a part of the analysis, description and critical dimension of the memorial sites will help to explore the identity of each memorial. According to Francis (2001), a critical scope will bring a piece of unique information to the research and the context: “Critical dimensions included in a case study are scale; time; unique constraints; community and cultural impacts of the project; environmental sensitivity and impacts” (p. 20). Furthermore, Francis recommends a format of collecting information on different levels that will provide an in-depth analysis of the case studies. Figure 3.4 shows the template I developed in line with Mark Francis’s recommendations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHOTO(S)</th>
<th>PROJECT BACKGROUND</th>
<th>PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT</th>
<th>LESSONS LEARNED</th>
<th>CONTACTS</th>
<th>KEYWORDS</th>
</tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>PROJECT NAME</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>DATE DESIGNED/PLANNED</th>
<th>SIZE</th>
<th>ARCHITECT(S)/ARTIST</th>
<th>CONTEXT</th>
<th>SITE ANALYSIS</th>
<th>PROCESSES</th>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>CRITICISM</th>
<th>SIGNIFICANCE AND UNIQUENESS OF THE PROJECT</th>
<th>LIMITATIONS / OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>COST</th>
<th>GENERAL FEATURES AND LESSONS</th>
<th>WEB SITES/LINKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Figure 3.4**
Format to use for each of the five Case Studies.
Adapted from source, (Francis, 2001, p. 21).
3.3.4 Expression of Memory

Memory is our ability to encode, store, retain and subsequently recall information and past experiences rooted in the context of time. It involves senses, experiences, people, actions, and different scenarios. Moreover, memory consists of fragments of prior experience and ideas that people can recall at particular times; thus, it can play an essential role in perception.

The collection of experiences through the senses will draw a narrative in our memory. Also, phenomenological interpretations are tools to process and reveal the meaning of the place allowing visitors to develop a unique individual narrative. In this research, the information will consist of the content, the involvement of the victims in each of the case studies, regional context, site context, scale, design forms, and the narratives developed in the landscape.

Phenomenological interpretations bring a language that manifests itself in different ways through touch, sight, smell, sound, and, taste. These human senses will help to define how each memorial site is marked as a place of memory, and how it can enable communication between people, place, and surroundings. The above process resembles language and speech, in which individuals communicate and express themselves through signs.

Karsten Jørgensen (1998) suggests that “the ‘signs’ that constitute the design language are categorised using the analytical vocabulary of landscape design, for example, elements, materials, effects and shapes” (p. 39). Since signs are part of the design languages, the concepts of existing memorial languages in this study can be seen as ‘signs’ to interpret how these different responses to victims and place, tragedy and sorrow might lead to memorialisation of landscapes.

The analysis of the landscape will be based on the interpretation of different physical, emotional, phenomenological and personal experiences. Jørgensen’s concepts of the different cognitive levels of looking at the landscape suggest that we are continually seeking the information congruent with our own ‘inner landscapes’- information that affirms us, and tells us we are real. As he explains:

    Language is a system of signs, and with the aid of a design language one could carry out syntactic, semantic and pragmatic analyses of landscape architecture. The syntactic aspects would relate largely to what may be called readability; semantic studies would deal with the meaning or interpretation of statements in a particular area; and pragmatic analyses would explain how the design language of landscape architecture is applied.

    (Jørgensen, 1998, p. 44)

The following format of diagrams and axes suggests a systematic mapping of the interpretations and phenomenological perception structures in each memorial site of the fieldwork. Figure 3. 5 shows a set of interpretations through the following categories which will help to analyse the memorial languages in each case study:
Figure 3. 5
Layout arrangement and phenomenological interpretations.
Source: Own elaboration.

- **Impression (symbolic + abstract).** The use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities, and the abstract form and individual experiences such as seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling help to identify in each case study the universal languages of memorialisation.

- **The involvement of the victims (detached + incorporated).** The role of victims and their engagement in the process of memorialisation where victims, survivors, families are either included in the detached from the process or excluded from it in each memorial case study.

- **Surrounding context (enclosed + open).** Surrounding context as a measurement of the enclosed or open spaces that dictated the building forms, materials, natural or humanmade boundaries.

- **Surrounding site memorial (included + excluded).** The interpretation of the surrounding site shows the involvement and engagement that each memorial offers, and people feel included or excluded.

- **Time (permanent + temporary).** Time as a relevant trend of how a memorial is a permanent or temporary response.

- **Scale (large + small).** The scale is part of the aspects of landscape character to describe memorial units to their shape and allow for a comparison between and size (large or small) of the five case studies.

- **Representation (absent + present).** Memorials can evoke either the absence or presence of the victims through objects, forms and elements in the landscape responses widely recognised as languages of memorialisation.

- **Phenomenological lenses such as (touch, sight, smell, sound, and taste).** Through the phenomenological approach, I will analyse and experience the responses in each case study. Interpreting the place within senses will help to understand, experiment and be aware of the main characteristics represented to make each memorial distinctive.

Figure 3. 6 displays a grouping of contents and interpretations through two axes in each cartesian graph. The two axes will compare attributes such as temporary vs permanent content and symbolic vs abstract interpretations, large scale vs small scale content and dynamic vs static interpretations. The third axes will illustrate the conclusions from the analysis in each memorial and through the dynamic vs static content and the temporary vs permanent it will generate the final conclusion which might open an opportunity for further research.
3.3.5 Memorial Languages

Memorial languages open up different types of interactions between the act of recognition and the act of memorialisation which influences people’s experiences. Sue-Anne Ware is a landscape architect and academic who writes about memorial design and how it has “emerged over time from traditional statuary and iconographic architecture to ephemeral celebrations and landscape gestures” (1999, p. 43).

Ahenk Yilmaz (2010), author of The Art of Memory: A Method to Analyse Memorials’ claims that,

A memorial [is defined] as the representational image of a specific event in a well-defined place built to remind the observers of that event, and then one can see the act of architectural memorialization as the materialisation of the basic principles of the art of memory. From this conceptual framework, mental representation becomes the physical form of the memorial and locus becomes the place where that form exists.
Yilmaz (2010, pp. 267, 268)

In other words, the author implies that memorials are “conventional commemorative structures, which are erected to preserve the memory of the past, but also existing buildings or natural formations, which are dedicated to reminding the observer of a specific event or person” (p. 268). Memory endures the process of remembering about a determined subject, place, person or victim. This research will implement case study methods that will help to analyse memorials in terms of specific memorial language responses.

One of the classic examples that changed the perspective of the memorialisation and processes of mourning, loss, and grief within introducing new languages was Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Lin’s entry to the 1981 competition challenged conventional memorial design and introduced a new language that created a place for healing, reflection, testaments to lives lost and recognising the victim as an individual.

Inscribed with the name of every fallen soldier, it became a sacred place for veterans and their families. It’s also influenced later designs like the World Trade Center Memorial, which also features the names of the dead etched into black stone.
(Public Radio International PRI, 2013)

Maya Lin introduced a new memorial language that was both familiar to the family of the victims that empowers and allows for individual experience in a public space. The abstract piece of art goes into the land and raises a minimalistic granite wall that permits mourning and opens the interpretation of our human condition. “The important thing to know about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is that it made memorials matter again,” says historian Haas cited by Public Radio International (2013).
The forms of traditional war memorials and remembrance contain narratives either of victory or of the bitter price of the victory or the dominant memorial languages of the “never again” text of the World War I memorials. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial refuses to adopt the narrative implied by the traditional monuments to glorify war.

Examples such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and other prominent designs from around the world will be introduced in the analysis of each case study. The purpose of making comparisons to other designs is to add a point of reference to the critical analysis. This allows the research to identify parallels in the approaches to memorial design, responses to place, and victims, and the narrative of the memorial languages. Further, the responses to tragedy, place and victims in each case study offer new narratives that contribute to memorial languages and highlight important questions that I will consider in the findings, discussion, and conclusion sections of this thesis.

3.3.6 Landscape Languages

Anne Whiston Spirn’s book *The language of landscape* suggests that landscape is a verbal language, self-expression of experiences, and reflection of individual relationships embedded in context. Spirn states:

The language of landscape is our native language. Landscape was the original dwelling; humans evolved among plants and animals, under the sky, upon the earth, near water. Everyone carries that legacy in body and mind.

(Spirn, 1998, p. 15)

Physical connections with landscape elements such as plants, sunshine, and nature are often used as examples for showing dialogues in the landscape. Spirn explains that the language of the landscape can be spoken, written, read, and imagined through perception and interaction to develop a vocabulary and grammar to read landscapes.

The landscape has an expressive meaning that can be read and analysed through different layers. Moreover, Karsten Jørgensen suggests, in the analysis of meaning in landscape design it is useful to consider the role of ‘context’, e.g., the ‘overall composition’ of the design, ‘the situation’, and the ‘interpreter’s cultural background, their experiences’ and so on. In other words, the context of a specific case can speak about the meaning in landscape (de)signs and allow the landscape to engage with the viewer to:

Meaning in landscape design from a semiotic point of view [is] based on a hermeneutic approach to the understanding of landscape. It promotes the view that the meaning of landscape does not reside in the landscape itself, nor in the observer, but arises through mediation between the observer and the landscape.

(Jørgensen, 1998, p. 39)
3.4 Research Approach

Honouring and remembering the victims involves developing a narrative of the site that requires constant interactions between place and context. Responses to violence through landscape interventions can be found in a wide range of settings and categories (I focus on the three categories of violence and conflict, mass shootings and war memorials). A set of diagrams and matrices are developed to describe and explore the critical elements of the final results of the case study method.

Francis (2001), suggests that “In the design professions, such as landscape architecture, case studies are typically used to describe and/or evaluate a project or process” (p. 16). Case studies typically employ a variety of research methods, [including] experimental (Ulrich 1984), quasi-experimental (Zube 1984), historical (Walker and Simo 1994), storytelling/anecdotal documentation (McHarg 1996) and multimethod approaches as cited in Francis’s book A case study method for landscape architecture (p. 16). Yin (2003) suggests that the value of case studies lies in their potential to “retain holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life situations” (p. 2).

The following figures 3. 7, 3. 8, 3. 9, and, 3. 10 (see images below) will show a clear discussion of the analysis, process and relevant results from each of the five case studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOLS AND LAYERS OF MEMORIAL LANGUAGES</th>
<th>MATERIAL</th>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>LOCAL NARRATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CENTER FOR MEMORY, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MEMORIAL OF THE VICTIMS OF THE VIOLENCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLUMBINE MEMORIAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>WHITE SHOES MEMORIAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>THE OASIS OF DIGNITY MEMORIAL</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

▲ Figure 3.7
Analysis of the five case studies in terms of their memorial languages.
Source: Author’s analysis.
The five case studies and the analysis of the landscape characteristics through location, place and scale. Source: Author’s analysis.

### Figure 3. 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Character</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Memorial of the Victims of the Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbine Memorial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>White Shoes Memorial</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Oasis of Dignity Memorial</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 3. 9

Process of development of the five case studies representing by design, engagement and the main responses in each one. Source: Author’s analysis.
3.5 How Findings Will be Analysed

I propose a framework for how the research implications will be discussed and how they might contribute to the existing memorial language responses to memory, victims, and places of trauma. First, the data gathering and the information processing will be presented in a format of case studies for each of the five case study sites. Then, I will analyse the phenomenological interpretations for each case. Finally, the results and findings will be presented in Chapter 9.

The collection, processing, and analysis of data will generate more questions that will support the theoretical approaches adopted in this research project. These are structured into three theoretical perspectives that suggest how we might work with memories of trauma through memorials. In Chapter 10, I will present a review of the context of the theoretical context of the three theories (sense of place/genius loci, place of memory, and memory), with the goal of developing some principles that will lead to suggestions of how we might create experiences that lead to meaningful interactions and participation between victims and places of trauma.
A review of the findings and results will help to develop some principles that will affect interactions and participation through the research moving from a passive relationship to create experiences that lead to meaningful results.

The narrative of memories of tragedy, trauma, sorrow, violence, and impunity is deeply embedded in the social contexts of the five memorial sites. The importance of the connection between memory and place allows understanding how and when collective memories connect themselves to a place. Moreover, places of memory draw memories of places that evoke more specific questions, including:

- How might the memorialisation of sorrow caused by the conflict, violence, mass shooting, or a war can be expressed?
- How can existing responses and memorial languages be useful to present the open wounds of the conflict?
- What is the role of design in the process of answering the questions on this research?
- How can memorial languages create an awareness of the victims and the conflict?
- What is the role of memorials?
- What is the relationship between time to place, and place to memory, memory and time?
- How does this memory of the past shape our understanding of the present moment?
- Is the narrative of each case study clear for the memorial to be outstanding?
- Does each memorial content more than one narrative?
- Does a work of art in a public space heal the victims?

According to Gurler and Ozer (2013), “Memory places or site designs, which include commemoration, symbolism and different usages, get the opportunity to become living spaces outside commemoration days or rituals, as well as set better relations with the visitor. In this way, they can escape from losing their meaning and becoming invisible” (p. 863). The authors suggest that designing memory sites has a significant impact on societies by integrating them into urban spaces on the human scale that is created. The relationship between victims, place, and memory offers possible frameworks for defining and developing possible future sites or interventions as a way to draw on the existing memorial languages.
3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the methodology of case study research, discussing how the material was collected and analysed in each of the five places that I visited. Through the diagrams developed in sections 3.3, and 3.4, I discussed how I will report the findings and results that are reflected in the phenomenological experiences and interpretations of each site of the case studies.

My intention is to bring unique perspectives to the narratives in each of the responses categories in this research as three main themes (violence and conflict, mass shootings, and war) and how these case studies can reveal aspects of a place of memory and memory of space. In addition, the methodology will help to explain how sites of memory across five different case studies are evoking recognition and direction to further responses to victims and places of tragedies.

In order to explore the responses and representations through the narratives of the memorial languages in each case study, I will continue presenting the five memorial cases in the following chapters within the same order of the categories and templates of the diagrams presented in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 4, I will analyse the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Bogotá, Colombia, and Chapter 5, I will examine the Memorial to Victims of Violence, in Mexico City as responses to violence and conflict.

Then, in Chapter 6, I will interpret the Memorial Park in Columbine, in Colorado, USA, and Chapter 7, I will render the spontaneous responses of the White Shoe Memorial in Christchurch, New Zealand as responses to mass shootings.

Finally, in Chapter 8, I will describe the Oasis of Dignity ‘Wahat al Karama’ in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates as responses to war.
Page left blank intentionally
"When a person disappears, everything becomes impregnated with that person’s presence. Every single object as well as every space becomes a reminder of absence, as if absence were more important than presence."

(Doris Salcedo, 1992)
THE MATERIALITY OF MOURNING
Chapter 4

Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four, I introduce the first case study, the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Bogotá, Colombia, which is a case study of a memorial in the category of response to violence and conflict. The Chapter proceeds as follows: In Section 4.2, I describe the memorial context and meaning of the place as an inclusive and participatory space where survivors of violence can participate in the construction of public historical memories. In Section 4.3, I explore the design context, in which the soil offers a physical presence of the victims, and what has been hidden or silenced because memory resists death. In Section 4.4, I introduce the core concepts of the memorial and the use of vernacular architectural techniques to build emotionally significant relationships with the victims of violence. In Section 4.5, I demonstrate how the memorial represents a place for people to remember, heal and build meaning from the memory of the victims of the armed conflict. Finally, in Section 4.6, I summarise the general features and lessons learned.

“Memory is not an instrument for surveying the past but its theater. It is the medium of past experience, just as the earth is the medium in which dead cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging.”

(Benjamin, 2005)
4.2 Memorial context

4.2.1 Meaning of the Place

Conflict and violence are recurring Colombian realities that reflect underlying political and socio-economic factors. Conflict is the dominant narrative for the country’s historical context. The traces of the conflict are rooted in the period known as “La Violencia”, which was triggered by the assassination of populist political leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948. The nation was engaged in a destructive and deeply entrenched civil war for a period of more than sixty years. The conflict between the Colombian state and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) officially ended in December of 2016, when the Havana Peace Accords—negotiated over four years between the FARC and the Colombian government—were finally ratified by the Colombian Congress (Quigley & Hawdon, 2018). As Jimena Perry explains:

September 23, 2015, marked a historic day in Colombian history. President Juan Manuel Santos and Timoléon Jiménez, leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC-EP), agreed to sign a peace treaty. Concluding negotiations that started in 2012, the two leaders will sign the treaty on March 23, 2016, ending sixty years of armed conflict. (Perry, 2015)

The signing of the peace agreement provides optimism for many Colombian communities. The conflict that dominated the country for a large part of the twentieth century may finally be resolved. Recognising the victims of the conflict might help to aid peace-building efforts as a process of healing, with the aim of transforming violent acts into social learning to help Colombians to remember, thus preventing the denial of historical facts and events.

According to Perry (2015), since the early 2000s, different communities across the nation, in both urban and rural environments, have begun to create spaces where they could grieve and mourn the loss of their loved ones. These memory sites allow different communities a space to represent their specific experiences of the violence and make sense of their collective trauma (Figure 4. 2).
The Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation, founded in 2012 in Bogotá, is one example of how the healing process can take place:

[The Memorial] was created as a result of discussions of Human Rights NGOs and peace organizations that started in 2008…the [Colombian Memorial] is an inclusive and participatory space, where survivors of violence can participate in constructing their public historical memories…the architects promoted a participatory process where the survivors of atrocities could bring, as a symbolic gesture, a handful of soil dedicated to the victims…they wanted people to feel part of the initiative for peace that the Center promotes. Therefore, the wall represents the dead, memory, and the future.

(Perry, 2015)
4.2.2 Case Study Details

The format for the case studies displays a summary of key details of the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation Memorial in Bogotá. Figure 4.3 provides the details recommended by Mark Francis (2001, p. 20) for critiquing case studies such as context, scale, process, goals, scale, and location (see Figures 4.5 to 4.7). Francis also suggests that the “most successful case studies incorporate a variety of methods such as site visits; historical analysis (Figure 4.4); site analysis and behavioral analysis” (Figure 4.8) (ibid, p. 21).

### FORMAT FOR CASE STUDIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHOTO(S)</th>
<th>Figure 4.4 (See timeline of the tragedy or event).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT BACKGROUND</td>
<td>The Memorial is an inclusive and participatory space where survivors of violence can participate in constructing their public historical memories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT</td>
<td>Physical presence from the victims of the conflict. Their voices make visible what has been hidden or silenced because memory resists to death. By nurturing reciprocity between the body and the landscape, this serene and elegant scheme pays homage to the victims of the Colombian conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LESSONS LEARNED</td>
<td>Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTACTS</td>
<td>Tel 3813030 ext 4602/4605. <a href="http://centromemoria.gov.co/">http://centromemoria.gov.co/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEYWORDS</td>
<td>Promote values of peace, justice and reconciliation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT NAME</td>
<td>Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION</td>
<td>Cra.19b #24 - 82, Bogotá, Cundinamarca, Colombia. Figures 4.5 to 4.7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE DESIGNED/PLANNED</td>
<td>The project was in planning for over nine years. Commissioned in 2008, developed between 2009-2011 and opened on December 6, 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIZE</td>
<td>4000 square meter site. The work and exhume became one of the most significant modern funerary contexts in Latin America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHITECT(S)/ARTIST</td>
<td>Juan Pablo Ortiz Arquitectos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTEXT</td>
<td>The project is part of Bogotá’s Central Cemetery traditional complex. The specific lot was a funerary area featuring two centuries of remembrance in which more than 3,600 individuals were buried. See Figure 4.8 (See site analysis).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SITE ANALYSIS</td>
<td>The project carried out between 2009 -2012. Also, the beginning the campaign known as “Sown Soil of Memory.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROCESSES</td>
<td>Documentation center, auditorium, victim assistance center, classrooms, offices, museum and forest of peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEMENTS</td>
<td>Figure 4.16 (Design languages).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITICISM</td>
<td>The vernacular techniques of construction conducted over enclosed land and grounds. The construction seeks to build emotionally significant relationships with victims of violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGNIFICANCE AND UNIQUENESS OF THE PROJECT</td>
<td>Limitations: implanted under the soil in order to generate the least environmental impact possible. Opportunities: located in the grounds of a cemetery, surrounded by historic heritage buildings and green areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMITATIONS / OPPORTUNITIES</td>
<td>The total project cost of the Memorial was US$13 m. - 43,880,343,607 COP. A place for people to remember, heal and build from the memory of the victims of the armed conflict. “The land sown by memory, which emerges to remind millions of people of the systematic violence that Colombia has suffered in the last seven decades.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COST</td>
<td>Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENERAL FEATURES AND LESSONS</td>
<td>See more at: <a href="http://centromemoria.gov.co/">http://centromemoria.gov.co/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEB SITES/LINKS</td>
<td>▲ Figure 4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Format to use for the Case Studies.
Adapted from source (Francis, 2001, p. 21).
4.2.3 Timeline of the Tragedy

Figure 4.4
Timeline that marks the tragedy and responses. Author’s photos and layout.

EVENT
The Colombian conflict
Assasination Gaitan 1948

RESPONSE
December 6, 2012
On the ground where Globe B of the Central Cemetery of Bogotá was left and after exhuming more than 3,000 bodies. The Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation was inaugurated: a place that was intended to be remembered and built from the memory of the victims of the armed conflict in Colombia.

DOCUMENTATION CENTER

GLASS TUBES OF HEALING

PHOTO BY WALKER

PHOTO BY WALKER

PHOTO BY WALKER

PHOTO BY WALKER

PHOTO BY WALKER

PHOTO BY WALKER

PHOTO BY WALKER
4.2.4 Locational Information

▲ Figure 4.5
Map of Bogotá, Colombia, South America. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-b).

▲ Figure 4.6
Map of Bogotá and the Center of Memory Peace, and Reconciliation in the Mártires area of Bogotá. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-a).

▲ Figure 4.7
Map of the Center of Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation at the Central Cemetery of Bogotá. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-c).
4.2.5 Place, Space and Character Site Analysis

Figure 4.8
Layout of the master site plan of the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation. Adapted from source: (Goličnik & Thompson, 2010; Google Maps, n.d.-c).
Figure 4.8 is a site analysis of the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation that uses the post occupancy evaluation (POE) phase of evaluation, which “reveals common patterns of behaviour that appear to be correlated with particular layouts” (Goličnik & Thompson, 2010, p. 30). I systematically observed and recorded the actual use of the Memorial from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 23rd, 2019.

### 4.3 Design Context

#### 4.3.1 Exploration of the Identity of the Memorial

The undeclared civil war of the 1940s and 1950s, known as “La Violencia,” was one of the most devastating conflicts in the history of Colombia. However, it has left very few traces in citizens’ historical memory. According to Castro and García (2015), “Antonio Caballero once wrote that Bogotá was a city without memory.” Over the last fifty years, changes have occurred in the city, and the acceleration of urban projects has magnified the loss of memory. This is a manifestation of the insensitivity and indifference that elites have shown in planning and the spatial reorganisation of the city.

The Central Cemetery of Bogotá opened in 1836 and was declared a National Monument in 1984. The Cemetery suffered its first fragmentation between the fifties and sixties as a consequence of the city’s growth and the operation of the trolleybuses. During that time, it was divided into three parts to make space for the roads known as la Carrera 20 and la Carrera 22. Castro and García (2015) describe the remodelling works of the illustrious Cemetery that have been carried out since the 1980s:

> [A] series of conservation works were launched with the purpose of giving the place the appearance of a museum, but at the same time, these policies sought the extirpation of many popular cults. Thus, the patrimonial memory revealed the two sides of the coin: the urban-scale conservation of a certain past implies the abolition of others. As if the official memory was built around the heritage, operated identically to the individual memory, which to treasure a few memories, enforces through the work of oblivion, a destructive function of much of what has been. (Castro & García, 2015)

The Central Cemetery of Bogotá was the final destination of thousands of poor people whose remains were displaced and put into common graves. According to the report Bogotá, Ciudad Memoria (2012), the construction of the galleries (or columbariums) began in 1947. At the end of the twentieth century, the Capital District decided to suspend funeral activities in Lots B and C, which had served as sites for the remains of the poor for more than one hundred and seventy years (Figure 4.9). After 2008, these sites began to be used as dumps for the District Company of Services and the remains were moved elsewhere (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2012, p. 168).
The Central Cemetery is a space that embodies many architectural and historical elements common in Bogotá since the nineteenth century, while the forgotten graves add to the context of the memorial language of the Memorial. According to its architect, Juan Pablo Ortiz (2008), The Center of Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation is:

Unique in the world because unlike other similar projects which have been built after the occurrence of a conflict, this center is currently being developed in the midst of internal conflict. It has the purpose of rescuing the MEMORY of victims of violence in Colombia from oblivion and seeks to promote a culture of PEACE and respect for human rights by means of actions of cohabitation and social pedagogy. (Ortiz, 2008)
4.3.2 Architectonic Dialogue

According to *Bogotá, Ciudad Memoria* (Bogotá, Memory City) (2012), the architect of the Colombian Memorial said that:

The building is a monument to life, victims and hope of a future in peace. The most visible structure is the “Monolith” input that symbolizes the “Sown Soil of Memory”, and that emerges to remind us to millions of people banished by systematic violence that Colombia has suffered in recent even decades; hundreds of thousands of them have arrived in Bogotá.

(Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2012, p. 164)

In 2009, the Colombian Society of Architects was invited by the Secretariat of Government of Bogotá to organise a contest to select the architectural design of the Center of Memory. It formed a jury that chose from forty-one entries. The winning design was one from architect Juan Pablo Ortiz.

Darío Colmenares, advisor of the contest, summed up the sense of the architectural design of the winning project as follows: “It is a work that emerges from the earth and water to summon the memory of the pain that should not have happened and that should not be repeated; and also, to evoke the memory of causes and searches that cannot be avoided.” The architectural design for the project was presented on February 26, 2009, at an event held in the auditorium of the Bogotá Archive (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2012).

4.3.3 Timeline to Construction

At the Central Cemetery, in February of 2009 (sixty years after the Colombian civil conflict began), Bogotá decided to build “a monument to life, a seed for the consolidation of a non-violent society: a centre for memory, reconciliation, and peace” (Naranjo, 2015). The Memorial project was conceived as a permanent response alongside the columbariums (located in the Central Cemetery, columbariums were places that had formerly been used as graves, providing a site for collective grieving). More than 3600 people had been buried there between 1827 and 2002. On December 6, 2012, after the exhumation of thousands of bodies, on the ground where Lot B of the Central Cemetery of Bogotá had been, the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation was inaugurated to preserve the memory of the victims of the armed conflict in Colombia (Figure 4.10).

4.3.4 Design Process

Turning to the design process, the Center of Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation contains dialogues of the experiences and testimonies from victims of civil conflict. The plaques shown in Figure 4.10 are displayed on the walls of the Center of Memory. They explain facts about the origins and construction of the memorial as well as a description of the design process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>The city’s first proposal to build a memorial for life, led by INPAZ and the Health and Development Corporation. At the ceremony “Life is Sacred” with the Government of the Mayor's Office of Bogota, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The council of Bogota approves the Globo B site at the Central cemetery for the construction of the Metropolitan Park named “The Reconciliation”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2012</td>
<td>The participatory construction campaign known as “Land sowed with Memory” is carried out. It involves the delivery from the victims’ families of more than 40,000 records and testimonies relating to the political violence in order to help in the search for peace. The records are accompanied by handfuls of Earth to build the ‘Memorial for Life.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>The Bogota Human Development Plan, through the High Council for the Rights of the Victims, Peace and Reconciliation, guarantees the memories and programs for the proposed proposal of the Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation in its new location. The building is officially opened to the public on December 6, 2012.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Peace, Reconciliation and Memorial Center is a space for the citizens and social initiative meetings that seek to resurrect the past to build a new future.
The participatory construction campaign “Land sowed with Memory” is carried out, which consisted in the delivery by the citizenship of more than 40,000 records of fatal victims, testimonies and documents on political violence and the search for peace, accompanied by handfuls of Tierra to build the ‘Memorial for Life’.

From April 9, 2013, with the first celebration of the World Day of Solidarity with the Victims of the Peace and Reconciliation Memory Center, it becomes a national and international reference in the construction of peace and historical memory for the non-repetition of violence. Colombian politics.

The integration of the elrenacimento parks and the reconciliation in the peace park are projected. a place with cultural vocation and open-air gallery, for activities around the memory of the country and human rights. Memory with a sense of the future.

Thousands of anonymous victims and hundreds of others who continue to be victims of the conflict in Colombia up to the present day are the basis for the Memorial of Life that emerges from the earth in the Memory, Peace and Reconciliation Center building. Ortiz’s emphatic architectural design focused on a “building mostly underground and invisible on the ground with a quiet and humble, surface not to draw attention” (de Jong, 2018, p. 13). The box-shaped building volume projects vertically upwards, containing memories within its walls that are intended to end centuries of silence and failure to recognise victims of the conflict. One hundred small, rectangular gaps enable the structure to shed light on the sorrowful history of the country (Figure 4.11).

The Colombian Association of Family Members of Public Force Members Retained and Released by Guerrilla Groups (Asfamipaz) states:

Memory is accurate, narration and acceptance of the events that have happened since the victims and their families. It is to remember each loss, claim their name and dignity, and explain the reasons why it was run over. It is to clarify the role it plays in institutions in the face of victims and perpetrators. To recover the memory of the conflict is not to blame or point to the other; it is to establish what happened between all because only this way, the facts are understood.

(Centro de Memoria & Reconciliación, 2015, p. 79)
The design process of the memorial provided an inclusive and participatory space that involved the contribution of soil by victims and survivors. This spirit of social inclusion was articulated by Ortiz at the presentation of the design at the contest at the Colombian Society of Architects and the Secretariat of Government of Bogotá:

> At the main entrance of the memorial is a stand emblazoned with the words “sown soil of memory” (see Figures 4. 12 and 4. 13). The stand marks the beginning of the journey and welcomes visitors to the Memory Center in Bogotá. According to the mayor’s office, the purpose of the memorial is to promote memory about violence and armed conflicts, to recognise the rights of victims, to alert society to the truth, and ultimately lead to peace and reconciliation (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2012, p. 173).
Plaque describing the memorial, which reads:

“Sown Soil of Memory

In this place, over three years the ceremonies of land contributions were made for the participatory construction of the center of memory, peace, and reconciliation. People from all parts of Colombia, exiles and from various memory sites around the world, contributed with the handful of soil. With each handful, they gave us a story, a testimony, an experience.

Each handful of the Sown Soil of Memory symbolises the collective construction of historical memory, human rights, and peace.

The earth thus becomes a metaphor for memory: “that fertile territory where we sow our stories and our dreams of the future, where diversity is celebrated and respected”.

Figure 4. 12
Memorial “sown of with memory” display of a resulted campaign, organised by the Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation Center: it consisted of putting a handful of Earth in glass tubes with written testimony and that have been placed on the walls of the monolith and exhibited in here. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.

Figure 4. 13
Display of handfuls of earth in glass tubes commemorating the victims. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
4.3.5 Design Language

Experiencing a sense of place allows people to interpret design languages that can enrich individual and collective memories of a place. In Colombia, land is one of the leading causes of armed conflict. For this reason, thousands of people contributed handfuls of soil containing countless stories of suffering. The architect proposed that small tubes of soil be inserted into the walls of the memorial as a symbol of recognition of the victims. The building serves as a symbolic door that marks the entrance to the cemetery, but it is also a milestone that marks the beginning of the country’s transition from war to peace (refer to site master plan in Figures 4. 14 to 4. 16).

In order to ensure a sense of belonging and collective reference to the building’s design, Naranjo (2015) suggests that the community was invited to contribute written memories and wishes for peace, adding a greater level of articulation and eloquence than could have been achieved by a material memorial alone. These contributions were encapsulated and deposited into holes in the metre-thick walls. Naranjo adds:

The library, auditorium, reading, and exhibition areas were below ground. The roofs extend the topography of the cemetery-park reinforcing the presence of the monolith in the land, while respecting the existing structures and buildings. The first step on the access platform lifts the body above ground just enough to see from a higher point than that of the land. Naranjo (2015).

Naranjo suggests that Ortiz’s aim is to repair the links between the human body and the landscape:

[It is a] strategy to heal the earth and to contribute to the constitution of collective material memory. To heal the earth is to provide the support and the ground for the body, to cultivate it, and so to provide orientation for actions and thoughts. To heal the earth is to reconstitute this fundamental and deeper level of corporeality that enables proper interaction between human beings. It is to set a precedent and a premise that starts from and works upon the constitutive reciprocity between the body and the landscape. Naranjo (2015).
Layout of the master site plan, basement first floor and basement second floor, and sections A-A and B-B of the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation. Note: Adapted from Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation Center / Juan Pablo Ortiz Arquitectos (ArchDaily, 2015a, 2015b).
Figure 4.15
Layout of the master site plan, basement first floor and basement second floor, and sections A-A and B-B of the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation. Note. Adapted from source: Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation Center / Juan Pablo Ortiz Arquitectos (ArchDaily, 2015c).
Site Visit: July, 23 2019  
Time: 3:30 p.m.

Pedestrian Connection  
“Engagement with the loss of memories”

Water Fountain  
“Absence”

Monolithic volume  
“Dialogue between morning and loss ”

Water Fountain  
“Movement and rhythm”

Columbariums  
“Contemplation”

Limestone carving  
“Promote historical memory ”

Figure 4.16  
Interpretation of the site that shows the arrangements and overarching scheme of the architectural setting at the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation. Note. Adapted from source,(Google Maps, n.d.-c).
4.4 Expression of Memory

4.4.1 Interpretations

The Center of Memory Peace and Reconciliation has become part of the urban landscape, as it is attached to the surrounding historical part of Bogotá. The Memorial constitutes an undeniable physical representation of the Colombian peace process that encourages peace and respect for human rights in the city and the country. Areas of the Center of Memory have been converted into a center for cultural and academic events that reflect on the tragic events in recent Colombian history. In addition, youth participation has become part of the cultural and educational fabric; in fact, the temporary sculpture located at the Exhibition Hall (Figure 4.17) contains messages of peace from children who hope to for a better future.

Figure 4.17
Messages with peace dreams, exhibition room at the Remembrance Center. Source: Author's photo, 2019.
As a memory site, the Colombian Memorial not only focuses on remembrance in a museum-like way but strives to invite people affected by violence to contribute to the museum itself. Perhaps the most profound way this is done is through workshops, where victims of the conflict meet weekly to talk, listen and create new meanings out of their experiences. Moreover, different protagonists of the conflict interact at the memorial, contributing to the strengthening of memory processes that can reduce the likelihood of future violence. These strategies are pursued using workshops, exhibitions, and various artistic displays.

An exhibition display at the memorial that is entitled “Hands for Peace” recognises nineteen Nobel Peace Prize laureates whose plaster handprints remind visitors of the possibilities for transformation (Figure 4. 18). The display belongs to the city of Bogotá, and it suggests that our daily behavior should be focused on the building of a better future and urging Colombians to find new ways to consolidate peace and promote reconciliation.
4.4.2 Physical and Sensory Interpretations

- Symbolic
- Detached
- Enclosed
- Included
- Permanent
- Large
- Absent
- Tangible
- Comtemplative
- Unique
- Sonorous
- Apathetic
- Impression
- Involvement of the Victims
- Surrounding Context
- Surrounding Site Memorial
- Time
- Scale
- Representation
- Phenomenological
- Touch
- Sight
- Smell
- Sound
- Taste
- Abstract
- Incorporated
- Open
- Excluded
- Temporary
- Small
- Present
- Intangible
- Invisible
- Blandness
- Inaudible
- Emotional
Figure 4. 19 sets out the physical and sensory interpretations through the following categories, which form the basis of understanding the memorial languages: impression, the involvement of the victims, surrounding context, surrounding site memorial, time, scale, representation, and perception through phenomenological lenses.

**Impression (symbolic + abstract).** The Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation contains multiple symbolic meanings; one of the most significant ones is that soil from conflict sites around the country was embedded into the walls of the Memorial. The abstract components used in the memorial act as peacebuilders on the ongoing conflict. The windows on the façade are an abstraction of tears of thousands of victims of the conflict. The twenty layers that form the walls of the memorial building represent twenty decades of Colombia as a sovereign, independent nation.

**The involvement of the victims (detached + incorporated).** In the case of this memorial, people affected by violence were invited to contribute a handful of soil that is subsequently embedded in the walls of the building. This is a very strong statement of the desire to incorporate the victims and survivors into the process.

**Surrounding context (enclosed + open).** The memorial is located in an enclosed site in the middle of the Capital of Colombia Bogotá.

**Surrounding site memorial (included + excluded).** The Memorial is located inside of a cemetery which opens a narrative of loss and mourning. The atmosphere is thus an inclusive one of contemplation and reflection.

**Time (permanent + temporary).** The memorial is planned to be a permanent response to the conflict in which victims and survivors are participants of the building process in Colombia.

**Scale (large + small).** The memorial is located next to the Central Cemetery. The site of the building is set in 4,000 m².

**Representation (absent + present).** Memorialisation and recognition of those who suffered in Colombia’s armed conflict are carried out in the Memorial through workshops and exhibitions.

**Phenomenological lenses.**
- **Touch.** The tangible interaction for the visitors is offered in the workshops and the exhibition hall.
- **Sight.** The connection of nature with sites of memorialisation provides places of peace, retreat, solitude, and reflection as a result of a set of elements of the landscape that evoke contemplative meaning.
- **Smell.** The landscape of the site offers a strong sense of unique smell and fragrances from native plants and flowers located between the Memorial and the cemetery which are interacting as meditators of the two spaces.
- **Sound.** The below the ground setting of the Memorial insulates it from the noisy, dynamic city.
- **Taste.** The sense of taste was not aligned with the Colombian Memorial.
Conceptual tensions within content and interpretation factors will develop a position in the matrix that corresponds to the awareness components corresponds to the spatial, perception and experiences of the Colombian Memorial. Source: Own elaboration.
Figure 4. 20 displays three different graphs that map the relationship between different contents and personal interpretations of the memorial. In Chapter 9, I combine the results of these graphs with those from the other four case studies.

### 4.4.3 Core Concepts

The core concepts of the memorial are based on the soil: “the earth thus becomes a metaphor for memory: that fertile territory where we sow our stories and our dreams of the future, where diversity is celebrated and respected” (Naranjo, 2015). Land ownership is one of the driving factors behind conflict in Colombia. The 12-meter high walls of the Memorial have two main interpretations: first, its locally sourced material and vernacular architecture; second, the Bicentennial (anniversary of Colombia’s independence in 1810) is represented in the monolithic structure through a stratigraphy of twenty layers of the material (Figure 4. 21), each layer corresponding to a decade of Colombia’s Republican history (ArchDaily, 2015c).

According to the architect Ortiz (2008) the Center of Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation:

> It is the materialization of an Independence Bicentennial memorial where values leading to the construction of sustainable social development are honored based on the respect of life, no violence, truth, justice, and reconciliation. It is about building a place that enables people to remember events that have occurred recently so that they do not occur anymore. Ortiz (2008)

![Figure 4. 21](image)

“Twelve meter façade” of the Center of Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation. Source: Author's photo, 2019.
Piercing the facades of the Memorial building are hundreds of small, long windows that symbolise tears as a tribute to the victims from the conflict. (Figure 4. 22). Moreover, Ortiz developed an empathic relationship between the building and the victims of violence in Colombia by including the families and survivors during the construction process:

In order to have an emotional and meaningful relationship with the community during the construction phase, victims associations in the country were called and 15 symbolic ceremonies were held along with them, where 2,000 persons went to the construction area and made personal contributions with soil brought from their places of origin along with memorabilia and peace-related written statements; these contributions were inserted in glass tubes that were subject to custody at a special structure designed for this purpose next to the construction area over the course of 15 months. Once the construction ended, these 2,012 tubes with the corresponding contributions were taken to the building hall and were deposited in the holes that the formwork had left with which one-meter wide walls were erected. (ArchDaily, 2015c).
The combination of forms, textures, and natural and contemporary materials speaks emphatically about the close ties between the victims and their regional cultural and historical identity. Spanish architect Rafael Moneo (1988) suggests how the idea of working with certain materials can involve an assigned “value” or meaning fixed for each component in the composition:

When you are working with different materials, the texture itself- the construction of the texture - becomes a crucial issue. That was, in this case, the solution for giving interest to a wall that wanted not to be just a mute wall, but something able to live together with its surroundings. This attempt did not involve the indiscriminate use of a variety of materials, but an investigation of elements and combinations to achieve the condition of a wall that wanted to be continuous unto itself. (Moneo, 1988, p. 153)

Ortiz’s memorial was inspired by the masterful work of Le Corbusier (Unité d’Habitation, Marseille, France see Figures 4.23). The Colombian memorial embodies the modular architecture proportions and natural materiality of the textures that Le Corbusier established during his project. Moreover, for the Memorial, Ortiz adopted elements that are open to interpretation based on one’s perception in a similar manner to Le Corbusier’s multi-functional residential housing project in Marseille. Focused on communal spaces, the Colombian memorial is developed as a vertical structure that parallels Le Corbusier’s work.

![Figure 4.23](Image)

Shows the internal and exterior view of the Le Corbusier communal living, Unité d’Habitation, Marseille, France. The horizontal and vertical sliding windows allow the indirect connection with the outside. The building stands on pillars, leaving an open space underneath and expose the natural material. Source: Author’s photo, 2017.
4.4.4 Memorial Languages

The combination of memorial design and memorial languages might contribute to building an emotional, intangible and sensory interaction between place and people. Places with memories of trauma carry a distinct identity that is rooted in history, culture, society, and individual memories. Bowring (2016) claims that “Designing spaces which invoke melancholy and sadness allows for an emotional equilibrium in the landscape, as opposed to one which overloads the compulsion for happiness” (pp. 30-31).

The Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation was the result of the need for a place where remembering is no longer a choice but is a duty. Places of trauma and violence leave traces of conscious brutality from conflict not only in people’s minds and bodies but also in place and memory. The Colombian Memorial invites:

The descent into the memorial from the four directional points, creating a feeling of immersion into the building. He claims that when descending, the visitor prepares to enter a unique place endowed with a solemn atmosphere of meditation and silence. (Ortiz, 2008).

Naranjo suggests that there are two primary design strategies of the Colombia Memorial: “the first design strategy was an excavation analogous to that performed by the archaeologists (see Figure 4. 24). The second operation consists of a large earthen monolith that emerges from the ground at the crossing point of the axes, making reference to traditional rammed-earth construction (see Figure 4. 25).” (Naranjo, 2015).

▲ Figure 4. 24
“This vertical descent recognises the gravitational pull of the site and through a symbolic operation marks the apex of the abyss, the implied depth of the lacerated earth, its wound” (Naranjo, 2015). Image adapted from source: Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation Center / Juan Pablo Ortiz Arquitectos, (Ortiz, 2008)
4.4.5 Symbolic Elements

The Center of Memory is dedicated to preserving collective memories of the conflict, ensuring that diverse experiences can coexist, thus contributing to the healing of victims, and strengthening societal forces of that work towards peace. Places and landscapes allow memory to be witnessed and can elicit alternative experiences and responses to violence, trauma, and sorrow, transforming them into memorial languages that are attached to a memory.

The different responses, memorial languages, and symbolic elements are part of the orthogonal architectural forms that provide a dialogue between mourning and loss. Solid walls and one’s water mirrors represent the center’s attempts to offer a space of recognition and dignification to the victims of the conflict. In addition, the Memorial is a place for meditation, dialogue and honouring the memory of the victims, thus raising citizens’ awareness of the impact of the conflict through art, culture, and pedagogy.

The underground circulation leads into a courtyard. The horizon is encapsulated on the roof cover of the underground level. When one descends into this space, it becomes a sacred site of memories as the sounds of the city are left behind. (Figure 4. 26). The atmosphere of the underground space recognised the silence left by the absence of the victims (Figure 4. 27).

“Two cross-shaped slits were incised in the earth to receive the different volumes that made up the building. Center of Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation of Bogotá” (Naranjo, 2015). Note. Image adapted from source: Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation Center / Juan Pablo Ortiz Arquitectos. (Ortiz, 2008).
Figure 4.26
One of the main access to the building, Center of Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.

Figure 4.27
View of the underground volumes, and the courtyard at the Center of Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
As a part of the symbolic participation of victims in the construction of the Memorial, twenty female victims attended the first planting ceremony, a tribute to all of the women affected by violence in the country. (Figure 4. 29). On September 12, 2015, fifty-five native trees from the Botanical Gardens of Bogotá were adopted and planted (Toro, 2015).

For decades, limestone carving work has been a unique feature of the historic area surrounding the Memorial known as the *martires* (Martyrs). At the southern end of the Memorial site, eight large stone carvings have displayed to honour the memory and represent the past, present, and future of the Martyrs. They are figures that symbolically defend against oblivion (Figures 4. 29) The variety of art pieces in the memorial from different time periods is an attempt by the artists to develop a cross-temporary narrative of the city’s history using their craft. The commemorative pieces are part of the open landscape witnessing a memory of language whose intention is to honour the memory of the deceased.
This series of sculptures are located outside of the Memorial was built in tribute to what happened on April 9, 1948. The responses of the murder of the political leader Gaitan allow the artists through carving to represent what became known as the “Bogotazo”. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.

Figure 4. 30 summarises the symbolic interpretations of the key characteristics of the Center of Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation. Symbolic cultural elements are dominant and are expressed in the layout of the design. The Spanish grid, (which was used to create new cities during the Spanish colonisation of the Americas), is reflected in the memorial setting. The entrances and pedestrian circulation patterns are on an axis, opening into a quiet interior space that allows sunlight and ventilation to its perimeter building.
4.5 Stories of the Site

4.5.1 Narrative

The columbariums are part of the memorial site. They are fragments of a story that communicates the past in order to preserve the history of Bogotá so that it better informs the present (see Figure 4.31). Colombian artist Beatriz González pays tribute to them with her work *Auras Anónimas* (Anonymous Auras), which honors them as spaces of memory and mourning for the nameless victims of war:

The scenes I used are of soldiers or peasants carrying bodies, and I am sure that this work has no expiration because it has a memory utility. I want to captivate the auras of the thousands of deaths that may be floating here and offer a space for those who want to mourn.

(Andes, 2018)
The Colombian memorial is a participatory space of empathic architecture that has actively involved victims of the conflict in Colombia throughout the building construction cycle (Figure 4. 32). The Memorial spaces continued to offer support and engagement to the victims through a vertical set of reflections that opens a dialogue between the building and the visitors (Figure 4. 33).
Plaque describing the memorial, which reads:

“This Memorial for Life

is inhabited by handfuls of soil that citizens brought in over three years. They are kept in 2012 glass tubes embedded in the walls of the building. They symbolize more than 40,000 records of victims of murders and disappearances and thousands of stories of violence. We recover voices, we make visible what has been hidden or silenced because memory resists death. We create the past so dreams can return.”

Figure 4. 32
Memory resists death states a plaque on an inside wall, “we build the past so that dreams return.” Source: Author’s photo, 2019.

Figure 4. 33
Words of encouragement embedded in the hall floor of the buildings in front of the documentation center. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
4.5.2 Main Features of Memorial Languages

The Memorial is a physical response that recognises the sorrow of collective memories and voices of the many victims who lived in silence with the scars from the Colombian conflict. It generates a clearer reflection of the reality of a country that has suffered for many years. Colombia’s armed conflict has left an estimated 8,650,169 victims in a country of approximately 50 million people (Alsema, 2018). Commemorating the victims of the conflict is the main purpose of the memorial language. The Center of Memory is a linear, open structure, both vertically and horizontally, whose reflections on the surface walls create a warm and dense atmosphere that is conducive to contemplation of the conflict’s tragic events.

The Colombian conflict has affected the way that people create, understand, and inhabit spaces and places. The degree to which conflicts affect responses, spaces and society depends on the capacity of communities to use mechanisms of negotiation, participation, and so on. Architecture can help to spread peace by inviting the participation of a large number of people in the project, beginning with their involvement with the building process itself and continuing with the continuous human interaction with space itself. A memorial that produces meaning does not happen spontaneously. Instead, it develops over time as people participate in the production of spaces that contribute to the unfolding memorial languages and peace in the country.

4.6 Conclusion

Notions of presence and absence of the ongoing Colombian conflict can help to protect our memories against amnesia. Symbolic operations before, during and after the construction of the Memorial brought hope by building confidence among the victims and survivors. This diffusion of the peace process involves a series of stages of consolidation intended to lead to the emergence of true peace. Testimonies and stories of the victims of the conflict suggest that:

In relation to the scope of the memory experience, we have opted for an approach that makes visible the damage to democracy, more than the traumatic nature of memory; that instead of sending a message horror with impact on feelings, worry about generating a reflection on the conditions and historical events that led to barbarism.
(Corporación Reiniciar, in Centro de Memoria & Reconciliación, 2015, p. 44)

The scars of violent conflict are embedded in the walls of the Memorial. Its materiality offers a strong sense of solitude that reflects the tragic nature of the long, low-intensity war between the government, rebel groups, and militias. According to Pallasmaa (2012):

Natural materials express their age and history, as well as the story of their origins and their history of human use. All matter exists in the continuum of time; the patina of wear adds the enriching experience of time to the materials of construction” (p. 31).
The importance of incorporated natural materials (soil) at the Colombian Memorial is a way to remind people of the personal experiences that are unfolding by the connection and relationship between victims and places. Places of tragedy and sorrow can offer a language that links victims and landscapes of memory. Powerful emotions and personal and collective memories of pain are threads that are difficult to cut. Downing’s discussion of the role of designers and their responses to those places that she suggests:

Although each individual image of place is unique, patterns of recurring domains emerged from this process; the secret place, the Arcadian place, the ancestral place, the shared place, the alone place, the intimate place, the gregarious place, places that stretch to meet the horizon line, and places that enclose and protect. Domains are symbolic of a quality of life; contact, retreat, participation, identity, love, grace, sensuousness, intelligence, fear, intimacy, growth, expansiveness, reflection, communing, and loss. (Downing, 2003, p. 216)
Through stories about places, they become inhabitable. Living is narrativizing.

(De Certeau, Giard, Mayol, & Giard, 1980, p. 141)
A TANGIBLE WAY OF REMEMBERING
Chapter 5

Memorial to Victims of Violence

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Five, I introduce the second case study, the Memorial to the Victims of Violence in Mexico City, which is a case study of memorial response in the violence and conflict category. The Chapter proceeds as follows: In Section 5.2, I explain the memorial context and meaning in light of the political and social effects of the ongoing violence in the county. The Mexican Memorial pays tribute to the many lives lost in the country’s drug wars, which is complicated by the uncertainty of how many and which victims would be honoured. In Section 5.3, I explore the design context, which features a series of steel plates and natural components that serve as allegorical elements of absence in materiality and presence of memory. In Section 5.4, I discuss how the Mexican Memorial embraces memory and remembrance of the victims by allowing visitors to write on the walls to acknowledge individual pain. In Section 5.5, I discuss how the Mexican case combines architecture and place with regard to symbols, materials and human interactions in order to create participation and solidarity. Finally, in Section 5.6, I summarise the general features and lessons learned.

Some of the most melancholy memorials are those which do not say much at all, leaving the viewer to make an effort, to become part of it, and to consequently form an affective bond. These memorials are not simply objects, but experiences. They invite participation rather than mere observance. The point is not seeking to find a ‘cure’ for grief, but accepting that sorrow is a necessary component of our human condition. Sometimes the experience may hang over the visitor like a question mark, something unsolvable, beyond comprehension, a wound kept open through the work of the memorial.

(Bowring, 2008, pp. 190-191)
5.2 Memorial Context

5.2.1 Meaning of the Place

A dramatic increase in criminal violence in Mexico since 2007 has resulted in an estimated 60,000–70,000 “additional” homicides, often of an especially brutal form, related to drug trafficking and other organized-crime activities. This violence has been accompanied by a steep increase in rates of kidnapping and extortion and has targeted participants in the narcotics trade as well as government officials, journalists, and civil society activists. (Shirk & Wallman, 2015, p. 1348)

Since 1980 Mexican crime groups and drug traffickers have become highly organised and developed specific regional areas of power for each group. The organised crime started with established networks and trafficking routes which increased the production and distribution of the drugs. By expanding the business, the groups began fighting for territorial control and access to markets, leading to drug-related violence and armed conflict across Mexico often using extreme forms of violence.

Mexican drug trafficking organisations have existed for several decades. However, since Colombian Cali and Medellín cartels were forcibly broken up in the 1990’s Mexican organised crime and drug rose to dominate the U.S. drug markets. This shift raised the stakes, which encouraged the use of violence in Mexico to protect and promote market share. Thus, the Mexican drug war is a conflict between the Mexican government and various drug trafficking syndicates. Drug trafficking involves extensive human and gun trafficking, money laundering, corruption, high rates of homicide, kidnapping, forced disappearances and other issues (Beittel, 2015, p. 11).

The Memorial to the Victims of Violence holds a specific narrative that invites a permanent dialogue between visitors and victims within metallic walls (Figure 5. 2). The metal plates or walls bear meaningful quotes from well-known writers and allow people to write their thoughts on them. Jennifer Jones suggests that,

The Memorial to the Victims of Violence was created in recognition of the political and social turmoil resulting from the ongoing context of violence in Mexico. It is composed of a series of steel plates, some weathered and some reflective, placed on a water mirror. Light helps articulate these architectural elements as an allegory of that which is now absent in materiality, but forever present in our individual and collective memory. (Jones, 2014)
Figure 5.2
The main elements that open the narrative on the Memorial to the Victims of Violence site visit, Mexico City. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
5.2.2 Case Study Details

The format for the case studies displays a summary of key details of the Memorial to the Victims of Violence in Mexico. Figure 5. 3 provides the details recommended by Mark Francis (2001, p. 20) for critiquing case studies such as context, scale, process, goals, scale, and location (see Figures 5. 5 to 5. 7). Francis also suggests that the “most successful case studies incorporate a variety of methods such as site visits; historical analysis (Figure 5. 4); site analysis and behavioral analysis” (Figure 5. 8) (ibid, p. 21).

### FORMAT FOR CASE STUDIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHOTO(S)</th>
<th>See Figure 5. 4 (see timeline of the tragedy or event).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT BACKGROUND</td>
<td>The Memorial to the Victims of Violence was created in recognition of the political and social turmoil resulting from the ongoing violence in Mexico.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT</td>
<td>A series of steel plates, water, trees and nature convene as allegory elements of absent in materiality and presence on memories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LESSONS LEARNED</td>
<td>A place to embrace memory and remembrance of the victims by allowing expression on the walls to acknowledge personal pain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTACTS</td>
<td>Memorial to the Victims of Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEYWORDS</td>
<td>Nature, water, steel walls, shadows, intimate space for mourning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECTNAME</td>
<td>Memorial to Victims of Violence in Mexico.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION</td>
<td>Av. Reforma, Bosque de Chapultepec, México City. Figures 5. 5 to 5. 7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE DESIGNED/PLANNED</td>
<td>Commissioned in August 1, 2012, the construction began on September 7th and ended on December 1st of the same year. Opened on April 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIZE</td>
<td>The 15,000 m² site promote memory of the culture and history; and recuperation of the public space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHITECT(S)/ARTIST</td>
<td>Designed by Mexican architecture firm, Gaeta-Springall Architects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTEXT</td>
<td>The site is part of Chapultepec, the most important park in Mexico City.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SITE ANALYSIS</td>
<td>This part of the forest belongs to the Federal Government and was under the custody of the Ministry of Defense of Mexico for many decades. See Figure 5. 8 (see site analysis).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROCESSES</td>
<td>Designed by a commission process by Federal Government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEMENTS</td>
<td>Steel walls, water, trees and nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITICISM</td>
<td>Figure 5. 14 (Design languages). The architecture and site combine symbolism, materials, and human interactions in order to create experiences of participation and solidarity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGNIFICANCE AND UNIQUENESS OF THE PROJECT</td>
<td>Limitations: We do not know who is a victim and how many victims there are. Opportunities: individuals can express their own feelings and establish a personal connection to the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMITATIONS / OPPORTUNITIES</td>
<td>The total project cost of the Memorial was US$3 m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COST</td>
<td>The Memorial to the Victims of Violence encourages people to interact and express their own experiences by writing or drawing on the walls, adding names and revealing their profound feelings of absence and loss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENERAL FEATURES AND LESSONS</td>
<td>Memorial to Victims of Violence in Mexico.<a href="https://arqa.com/arquitectura/memorial-de-las-victimas-de-la-violencia-en-mexico.html">https://arqa.com/arquitectura/memorial-de-las-victimas-de-la-violencia-en-mexico.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEB SITES/LINKS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.3 Timeline of the Tragedy

**EVENT**
Commemorate the lives lost in the armed conflict and drug-related crime. Avenida Reforma, Bosque de Chapultepec, Mexico City (Mexico)

**PART OF THE JOURNEY**
April, 2013
The 15,000 square metre site was completed

**RESPONSE**

**WALLS AMONG THE TREES**

**NATURE**

**INSIDE THE MEMORIAL**

**STEEL WALLS**

**WATER FOUNTAIN**

**SURROUNDINGS**

Figure 5.4
Timeline that marks the tragedy and responses. Author’s photos and layout.
5.2.4 Locational Information

![Map of México City, México, Central América. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-l).](image)

**Figure 5.5**
Map of México City, México, Central América. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-l).

![Map of the Memorial to the Victims of Violence, Mexico City. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-m).](image)

**Figure 5.6**
Map of the Memorial to the Victims of Violence, Mexico City. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-m).

![Map location Memorial to the Victims of Violence, Chapultepec Forest, Mexico City. Adapted from source: (ArchDaily, 2013; Google Maps, n.d.-i).](image)

**Figure 5.7**
Map location Memorial to the Victims of Violence, Chapultepec Forest, Mexico City. Adapted from source: (ArchDaily, 2013; Google Maps, n.d.-i).
5.2.5 Place, Space and Character Site Analysis

Figure 5.8
Layout of the master site plan of the Memorial to the Victims of Violence. Adapted from sources: (Google Maps, n.d.-i; Landezine, 2015).
Figure 5.8 is a site analysis of the Memorial to the Victims of Violence that uses the post occupancy evaluation (POE) phase of evaluation, which “reveals common patterns of behaviour that appear to be correlated with particular layouts” (Goličnik & Thompson, 2010, p. 30). I systematically observed and recorded the actual use of the Memorial from 11:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 24th, 2019.

5.3 Design context

5.3.1 Exploration of the Identity of the Memorial

Death and cruel atrocities have affected many generations and embedded memories of sorrow and loss in Mexico. The Memorial is dedicated to the drug war victims between 2006 and 2012, which resulted in more than 60,000 deaths: “The existing conflicts concerning issues of violence are merged through the reflection. The entire design becomes a canvas where visitors expose, write, and draw their conflictual feelings. That means that there is not only one conflict, but multiple conflicts and unique personal struggles” (Land8: Landscape Architects Network, 2015).

Social interactions, memory, and place make us reflect on the role of memorials and the role of design in places marked with violence and trauma. Stevens and Franck suggest that the architects of the Mexican Memorial have taken the idea of inviting tributes one step further by,

Relevant quotations are stencilled onto some of the 70 towering rusted Cor-Ten steel slabs [Figure 5.9]. But on the many remaining blank surfaces visitors can write or draw. Instructions say: ‘Paint what you feel … Express what you think.’ And so, people do— in chalk, or scratching with keys.
(Cave 2013, in Stevens & Franck 2016, p. 32)

Moreover, Stevens and Franck propose that active participation is a prominent aspect of visiting contemporary memorials, as terms such as “viewer” and “spectator” that imply passivity no longer capture people’s experiences:

[ leasing tributes at a memorial, individuals can express their own feelings and establish and mark a personal connection to the site and to the individuals they are remembering. Tributes left also enrich the experience of other visitors, because they can see the active role the site continues to play in commemoration. In leaving tributes, messages or drawings and studying those left by others, people engage with a memorial in a personal, intimate way.
(Stevens & Franck, 2016, p. 32)
5.3.2 Architectonic Dialogue

Violence is one of the most serious issues facing Latin America. Felipe Calderón, Mexican politician and president from 2006 to 2012, designated a corner of the Paseo de la Reforma (Boulevard of Reform) in Mexico City as a place to honour the victims of drug-related violence (Figure 5.11). Puig (2013) suggests that “under heavy pressure from human rights organisations, [the government accepted a proposal from] the country’s most prominent architects’ association organized [in] a contest and convened a panel of judges that included family members of victims. The money earmarked for the memorial’s construction, $3 million, came from assets seized from organized crime” (Puig, 2013).
Steel wall located at the memorial, which reads:

Aquí inicia el homenaje que los mexicanos hacemos a nuestros seres queridos que han sido víctimas de la delincuencia. Los recordamos con cariño y vivirán para siempre en nuestra memoria y en nuestro corazón. Agradecemos que el recorrido por este Memorial lo hagas con respeto, reflexionando sobre lo mucho que la sociedad y los gobiernos tenemos que hacer para detener la violencia criminal y construir un México de paz, libertad y justicia. Que el recuerdo eterno de nuestras víctimas sea la esperanza que nos impulse a luchar por un México mejor.

2012

Figure 5.10
Steel wall the main entrance of the Mexican Memorial with a quote described the narrative of the journey at the site.
Source: Author’s photo, 2019.

Here begins the tribute that as Mexicans, we do to our loved ones who have been victims of crime. We remember them with love, and they will live forever in our memory and our hearts. We appreciate that you visit this Memorial with respect, reflecting on how much society and governments have to do to stop criminal violence and build a Mexico of peace, freedom, and justice. May the eternal memory of our victims be the hope that drives us to fight for a better Mexico.

2012
Gaeta-Springall Architects (Julio Gaeta and Luby Springall) were chosen to embrace memory and remembrance of the victims of the conflict in a single location. The architects themselves suggest: “Our project plays the double condition of public space and memorial’ addresses one of the most important issues of contemporary Mexican society — violence — through a story. The resolution is that everyone has access to this ‘landscape design story’ by the use of different elements and interactions” (Land8: Landscape Architects Network, 2015).

The landscape design story developed by the architects of the Mexican Memorial commemorates the lives lost in the country’s drug wars. Debate and controversy swirled around how many victims the memorial would be honouring and whether it was appropriate to have the setting of the Memorial next to a military base. The local firm, Gaeta-Springall Architects, responded to these issues by saying that the Memorial development is “not a monument, but a living experience,” according to partner Luby Springall (J. Jones, 2014). This suggests that the Memorial’s location is less offensive to victims than if it were a more sacred site.

However, Javier Sicilia, a poet whose son was kidnapped and killed by criminals protected by the local police, has said the [Memorial to the Victims of Violence] is “a monument, not a memorial.” For him, a memorial must be part of a broader process of reconciliation, and that process has not yet begun. “We do not know the exact number of dead, what happened to them or their names” (Puig, 2013).

The architectonic dialogue involved a discussion among activists and social justice groups over how to honour survivors and family members whose wounds were still open from the violence. Some activists’ interpretations suggest that the Mexican Memorial contained limited public input into the design process. For them, a memorial should be a place where people can express their pain, pray and raise awareness. However, to these critics, the idea of having a space to remember and commemorate the victims of war, violence, and human rights violations in Mexico become “a set of huge steel towers, abstract and empty trapped” (Puig, 2013; Rodriguez, 2015).

### 5.3.3 Timeline to Construction

In 2012, Gaeta-Springall Architects participated in the National Contest for the Mexican Memorial and won first place. According to the architecture website ArchDaily, the Memorial is located in the forest and belongs to the Federal Government. It was under the custody of the Ministry of Defence of Mexico for many decades. Thus, the project meant the recuperation of 15,000 m² in terms of public space. The text description provided by Gaeta-Springall Architects suggests that:

[The] memorial is [an] architectural piece in which we can find the remembrance and the memory of the culture and history; in the particular case of the Memorial of the Victims of the Violence in Mexico, we materialize, in terms of architecture, one of the most important and current issues of Mexican society: violence. This is the big and open wound; in response to this, we propose an open project in the site, open to the city and open to the appropriation by the citizens; a project with a strong relationship with the city and her actors. The recuperation of the public space, as well as the remembrance of the victims of violence, are the essence of the project.

(ArchDaily, 2013)
5.3.4 Design Process

The central premise of Gaeta-Springall Architects was to recognise the value of the site and the place’s character as a tangible green space. The architects and the team wanted to develop and generate interaction between visitors, the forest, and the powerful forces of nature. Taking the opportunity offered by the green areas, they proposed a unique narrative where the trees and the steel walls would generate a dialogue between visitors and place.

The Mexican Memorial uses geometrical shapes in an open landscape. It includes concrete walking paths to allow intimate interaction between architectural forms and natural elements such as light, trees, and water (Figure 5.11). Moreover, the architects make the following claim:

We understand the power of memorials in public spaces as an emotional, cathartic confluence of civil art, architecture, and landscape. In the turbulent political climate of many Latin America countries, addressing violence and loss publicly and symbolically is an important intervention into collective conscience. This project which has multiple national and international awards inspires us with strength, beauty and simplicity. (Kohen & Tilson, 2015, p. 55)

▲ Figure 5.11
Concrete paths at the Memorial. Gaeta- Springall Arquitectos, 2013.
Source: Author's photo, 2019.
5.3.5 Design Language

The design language of the Memorial to the Victims of Violence invites a dialogue between the visitor, the rusty walls and the surrounding trees. The solemn, silent and empty spaces that echo between the walls and trees allow the concept of void, and thus absences become more vivid.

In the competition, a judge praised the Memorial, saying the project was a “poetic integration of light sculpture and passion.” Jones suggests that:

The metal plates are outlined with the light projectors creating subtle silhouettes. This ambiguity between solid plates, voids, and the water reflection is used as a mechanism to bring materiality to absence. The loss of lives, casualties of this ongoing conflict, is remembered by casting light to emphasize this absence.
(Jones, 2014)

The design language is created through concrete paths and vertical metal walls that encapsulate a mystical interior space of water and trees, providing a soft green landscape that breaks the continuity of the massive body of asphalt and concrete. The trees and green landscape gently embrace the steep landform of the site. The Memorial evokes a sense of peace, comfort, reflection, and generates dialogues between nature, life, and mourning in an open space (Figure 5. 12).

▲ Figure 5. 12
Design languages that evoke a dialogue between the visitor, the rusty walls and the surrounding trees Gaeta- Springall Arquitectos, 2013. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
Gaeta-Springall Architects claim that the memorial has dual purposes; it is both a public space and a memorial. They added local elements and materials to the site in order to preserve the *genius loci*. They also try to reduce the impact of development on the site:

The list of materials is reduced: steel and concrete, added to the natural elements of the forest. We are using the corten steel in three ways: natural, rusty or stainless mirroring, each of them with different meanings. The rusty steel means the marks and scars that time makes in our lifetime. The stainless mirroring steel is used to reflect and multiply the living: persons, trees, and the water of the central space; and the natural steel is used as an unperturbed element that remind us the main and essential values that societies must keep to live in peace. Concrete is used for the lanes and the benches; for walking and reflection.

(ArchDaily, 2013)
Interpretation of the site that shows the arrangements and overarching scheme of the architectural setting at Memorial to the Victims of Violence. Mexico City Mexico

Adapted from source, (Landezine, 2015).

Figure 5.14

Site Visit: July, 24 2019
Time: 12:30 p.m.
5.4 Expression of Memory

5.4.1 Interpretations

The Memorial embraces factors such as shape, colour, volume, space, light, and shadows connecting memory, place, and architecture in a dialogue between human beings and nature. According to the architects, the reflection of the steel plates on the water and the LED lighting is an allusion to the absent victims. The interaction between the natural characteristics of the site and the reflecting wall plates creates an ethereal effect, representing a more peaceful future. Architizer (2013) suggests that “the rust on the weathered plates speaks about the passage of time and the scars that we bear from our past.” The weathered plates reveal the passage of time and the scars that the victims bear from their past. A sense of grieving, absence, and empathy inspires silence, bringing a pacifying solace to the site.

The poetic narrative embedded in the cold, firm texture of the steel plates reproduces the void of the Memorial to the Victims of Violence. The Memorial provides the visitor space for contemplation and remembrance in a landscape full of sounds and textures (Figure 5.15).

![Figure 5.15](image)

Steel wall, with a quote that is related to memory, remembering, absence, and pain at the Memorial to Victims of Violence, Mexico City. Source: Author's photo, 2019.

Steel wall located at the memorial, which reads:

“Remembering is easy for anyone who has memory, forgetting is difficult for those who have a heart.”

*Gabriel Garcia Marquez.*

![Figure 5.16](image)

Layout arrangement and phenomenological interpretations of the Memorial to the Victims of Violence Case Study. Source: Own elaboration.
5.4.2 Physical and Sensory Interpretations

- Symbolic
- Detached
- Enclosed
- Included
- Permanent
- Large
- Absent
- Tangible
- Comemplative
- Unique
- Sonorous
- Apathetic

- Impression
- Involvement of the Victims
- Surrounding Context
- Surrounding Site Memorial
- Time
- Scale
- Representation
- Touch
- Sight
- Smell
- Sound
- Taste

- Abstract
- Incorporated
- Open
- Excluded
- Temporary
- Small
- Present
- Intangible
- Invisible
- Blandness
- Inaudible
- Emotional
Figure 5. 16 sets out the physical and sensory interpretations through the next categories which form the basis of understanding the memorial languages: impression, the involvement of the victims, surrounding context, surrounding site memorial, time, scale, representation, and perceptive with phenomenological lenses.

**Impression (symbolic + abstract).** The steel plates are abstract elements whose permanence is intended to preserve memory through the landscape site. The fact that they are blank invites the public to offer their own expressions. The water invites the visitor to view the presence of the victims in the reflection of the pools. One can walk across the water over a transparent aluminum grille, implying a physical connection with the water.

**The involvement of the victims (detached + incorporated).** In the case of this memorial, the designers were not aware of the identities of the victims. Neither were survivors included in the design process (Minutillo, 2014). The project is a tribute to faceless victims.

**Surrounding context (enclosed + open).** The memorial is located in an open site in the middle of Mexico City.

**Surrounding site memorial (included + excluded).** The site is in an inviting location. Mexico City has few green areas, so people are naturally drawn to the site.

**Time (permanent + temporary).** The memorial is intended to be a permanent response to the tragic events that have occurred in the country. The fact that people are allowed to write on the walls of the site means, however, that it is not considered to be a completely finished product.

**Scale (large + small).** The memorial is located on a site of 15,000 m².

**Representation (absent + present).** The victims are not named in the memorial, suggesting a focus on their absence. The Land8 website argues that “The suggestion of violence can be seen in the void created between the steel walls and trees that evokes the absence of the victims” (Land8: Landscape Architects Network, 2015). However, people are invited to write names, so the opportunity is there to mark the presence of victims.

**Phenomenological lenses.**

**Touch.** The tangible interaction between the visitors and the memorial occurs when people write or draw on the walls, adding names and revealing their more profound feelings. Also, the memorial offers the opportunity for blind people to read the quotes through the braille as a communication system.

**Sight.** The connection of nature with the Memorial site allows reflection and contemplation.

**Smell.** The Memorial offers strong possibilities for the visitor to sense a unique smell and fragrances from the trees.

**Sound.** The wind blowing through the trees and the birds offer natural elements that combine with the rich range of sounds produced from the city.

**Taste.** The sense of taste was not aligned with the Mexican Memorial.
Figure 5.17
Conceptual tensions within content and interpretation factors will develop a position in the matrix that corresponds to the awareness components corresponds to spatial, perception and experiences of the Memorial to Victims of Violence, in Mexico City. Source: Own elaboration.
Figure 5. 17 displays three different graphs that map the relationship between different contents and personal interpretations of the memorial. In Chapter 9, I combine the results of these graphs with those from the other four case studies.

### 5.4.3 Core Concepts

The core concepts of the Memorial are the tall trees at Chapultepec park and the powerful vertical rusty walls in the center. The natural elements and the materiality of the composition are offered in a single shared space in which soft shadows, light, and water become part of the essence of the place (Figure 5. 18). The mimicking of the natural forest by the steel walls creates a sublime effect. The atmosphere of the place suggests a dialogue between trees and walls, aesthetics and symbolism, and architecture and nature, which reinforce many of the Memorial’s underlying narratives. The combination of natural beauty and forms of materiality activate a keen sense of openness, which may assist with the process of acceptance and reflection on the loss; as Bowring points out, “The paradox of a beauty founded in sorrow, a love of loss, of longing, is melancholy’s gift to aesthetics” (Bowring, 2016, p. 18).
Gaeta-Springall Architects developed a space for empathy and recognition of the victims of violence, as well as for visitors. The memorial is an opportunity for people to process their memories or to share feelings with others. It encourages people to interact and express their own experiences by writing or drawing on the walls or adding names, thus revealing their more profound feelings of absence and loss.

The wall’s materiality and surfaces represent the effects of violence: the void of empty spaces is a reminder of the non–presences of the victims. The absence of names on the surfaces of the steel walls and the rusty texture intensifies the mourning and pain of the loss.

Framing a specific narrative for the victims’ families has been part of the dilemma surrounding the Mexican Memorial. Mexican society has not yet reached a consensus on what constitutes victimisation because of the ambiguity surrounding who the victims of Mexico’s violent drug war are.

Erecting a monument to casualties of crime is never straight forward and can be controversial. Mexico City’s Memorial to Victims of Violence in Mexico, a tribute to the many lives lost in the country’s drug wars, incited its share of debate concerning its location next to a military base and ambiguity over exactly who and how many it would be honouring. (Minutillo, 2014)

The architects state that the memorial does not include names because “we didn’t know who the victims were.” Instead, approximately 40 different quotes related to violence, memory, love, absence, and pain (Minutillo, 2014).

5.4.4 Memorial Languages

Memorial languages trace symbols as mechanisms of a community’s collective memory that represent individuals who are absent. Danijela Dimković (2016) suggests in Memorial Architecture as the Symbol of Remembrance and Memories that,

The act of remembrance shows that reconstruction of the past directly depends on the interest and interpreted present framework where politics, power, and memory are closely related. The process of remembrance no longer means giving importance only to heroic deeds, but individual pain and suffering, as well as the revival of the crimes that were previously concealed and repressed. (Dimković, 2016, p. 2)

Moreover, Bowring explains that our memory of traumatic experiences is an open wound that gives us space for contemplation: “Sadness and pain in the landscape can be most palpable in the face of disaster and trauma. Places which have experienced violence, death and damage are redolent in melancholy” (2016, p. 171). The author suggests that a greater awareness of ‘human conditions’ can enhance one’s experiences of a place and his or her connections with it:
The power of absences, presences, and losses is intensified and reflected in the narrative of the Memorial to the Victims of Violence. This wide-open space in the middle of one of the most populated cities in the world evokes emptiness allowing expression, reflection, and contemplation. The victims interweave a dialogue between the place and the scars of the conflict.

Dimković (2016) suggests that the “creation of architecture of remembrance provides access to communities that can provide social support, unite people with similar experiences, [and] help us understand the past” (Dimković, 2016, p. 6). Memory and remembrance represent concepts that establish the construction of place, architecture, and memorialisation of individuals, their stories, events or tragedies.

Tragedies and open wounds embed memories in those who experience the pain of conflict. For instance, the Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, USA, and the Australian War Memorial in Wellington, New Zealand offer very different narratives of tragic events than does the Mexican Memorial. However, each of these uses of water and earthy colours to create a natural atmosphere suitable for contemplation. And each uses linear, vertical structures as a symbolic representation of the victims.

The Memorial to the Victims of Violence shares similarities with the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, in Montgomery Alabama. According to the museum’s website, it is America’s first memorial dedicated to “the legacy of enslaved black people, people terrorized by lynching, African Americans humiliated by racial segregation and Jim Crow [discriminatory laws], and people of colour burdened with contemporary presumptions of guilt and police violence” (Justice, 2018).

Both memorials contain materials such as rusted steel columns, rusty orange, and red colours, horizontal and vertical structural form, and natural elements such as water. Both feature narratives of pain, loss, and absence, and both have open green spaces that allow for reflection and solitude. Like the Memorial to the Victims of Violence, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice uses explanatory texts and quotations that empower the act of remembrance. Art historian Renée Ater, who focuses on the intersection of race, monument building, and national identity, describes how the water at the Alabama Memorial flows down the final long wall of the memorial (Figure 5.19):

Metal lettering asserts that all victims of lynching now will be remembered. “Thousands of African Americans are unknown victims of racial terror lynching’s whose deaths cannot be documented, many whose names will never be known. They are all honoured here.” The slow sound of water cascading down the wall allows space for contemplation, as you are able to sit along rough-hewn seating across from the water feature. (Ater, 2018)
Inspired by the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin and the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, Mr. [Bryan] Stevenson [founder and executive director of Equal Justice Initiative, the organization that developed the memorial] decided that a single memorial was the most powerful way to give a sense of the scale of the bloodshed. But also, at the site are duplicates of each steel column, lined up in rows like coffins, intended to be disseminated around the country to the counties where lynchings were carried out. (Robertson, 2018)

Campbell Robertson (2018) explains that the National Memorial for Peace and Justice uses sculpture, art, and design to contextualise racial terror. Moreover, the centre of the memorial is a grim cloister, a walkway with 800 weathered steel columns that hang from a roof (Figure 5. 20):

**Figure 5. 19**
Memorial languages inhabit different narratives that express collective or individual voices that take form and reflect on the memory of victims, places, past, history, and society. The Australian War Memorial in Wellington, New Zealand is a representation of remembrance for fallen soldiers (Figure 5.21). According to the website of the architectural firm Tonkin Zulaikha Greer, “the Memorial comprises 15 columns, each 6m tall and arranged in an open array on a surface of red sandstone and dark grey basalt.” The War Memorial embodies warmth, as the red sandstone colour reflects the Australian landscape character in addition to the inner-city and heritage qualities of the site. (TZG, 2015).

The memorial languages that the Australian War Memorial employs are similar to those of the Memorial to the Victims of Violence, as each initiates an open dialogue between materiality to absence as well as a reflection to void. Both memorials have adapted imposing vertical forms that express their natural material essence (one with steel metal in Figure 5.21 and the other with a red stone in Figure 5.22). Both Memorial structures represent emptiness while the open spaces serve as places of remembrance and absence: “The realization of voids, empty spaces that invite a man to fill the void, to imagine it, to resolve it” (Dimković, 2016, p. 3).
Figure 5.21
Series of steel plates, surrounding by nature and trees at the Memorial to the Victims of Violence Mexico City. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.

Figure 5.22
The composition of 15 columns honours the victims of the Australian war memorial in Wellington, New Zealand (TZG, 2015).
5.4.5 Symbolic Elements

In the central space, the main space of the memorial, there is a 1,200 m² reflective pool with an undetermined form and open geometry that reminds the visitor that the violence is ongoing (ArchDaily, 2013). The reflection of the walls and trees in the water invites the visitor to contemplate the absence of the victims (Figure 5.23). In the core of the Memorial, the steel walls rise high as muscular and prominent robust elements, providing a powerful sense of materiality.

The main feature of the Mexican Memorial is “70 towering monochromatic steel walls measuring 8 feet by 39 feet, positioned both vertically and horizontally amid a sometimes-dense area of trees.” The walls allow visitors to write, draw and offer the power to express their feelings (Minutillo, 2014). The possibility for visitors to provide spontaneous responses is countered by the permanence and rigidity of the metal walls (Figure 5.24).
The three main elements – steel, water, and trees—allow visitors to walk, stand, or sit in a spacious setting. The Memorial has enough space for everyone, even visually impaired visitors (Figure 5.25). It offers the possibility for different, individually determined forms of reflection that can help to build a meaningful relationship between the memorial and its users.
Water is a symbol of life and symbolic design element in the Memorial to the Victims of Violence. It is considered to be more than a mere aesthetic element. Water is a cultural symbol of purity, birth, and healing, and its presence at the Memorial suggests reflection, restoration, and peace (Figure 5. 26).

The Mexican Memorial is surrounded by nature, offering a pleasant green landscape and a unique atmosphere for interaction with a memorial in the most populated city in Latin America. The potent combination of the trees, light, shadows, bird sounds and the smell of nature create an emotional, mystical ambience in the place. The combination of earthy and forest smells is conducive to the development of calm, harmonious awareness of one’s own senses and human conditions (Figure 5. 27).
Figure 5. 28 summaries the symbolic interpretations of the key characteristics of the Memorial to the Victims of Violence. Symbolic cultural elements are dominant and are expressed in the layout of the design. The entrances and pedestrian circulation patterns are opening into a wide space that is partly or completely covered with grass, trees and shrubs.

Figure 5. 27
Concrete benches emerge from the ground and create a horizontal contrasting element to the verticality of the steel walls at the Memorial to the Victims of Violence. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
5.5 Stories of the Site

5.5.1 Narrative

The narrative is a description that reveals stories or historical events in an urban context and urban experiences, that had happened to individuals or a community construct collective memory. The construction of the narrative is a critical component of understanding the background of the Memorial to the Victims of Violence and how through the narrative develop their own memorial language.

Rodríguez (2015), states: “Premature, ambiguous and located in a few steps of a military camp, the Memorial to Victims of Violence is less an evocation of the victims than another dark legacy of Calderonism” [The author is referring to the aggressive anti-drug policies of Felipe Calderón, Mexico’s president from 2006-2012].

Figure 5.28

Symbolic Interpretation of the fieldwork information and personal experience level in order to understand the dynamic of the place Memorial site. Source: Own elaboration.
In identity construction, memory - this past that is maintained in the present and against which continuities or ruptures are established - functions as a fundamental reference. In its public dimension and because of its political potential, memory becomes the subject of multiple disputes that are always related to the distribution of power between those who claim the memory and those who grant it.

In terms of the memory it proposes, this steel park seeks to remind “victims of crime” and promote reflection on “how much society and governments have to do to stop criminal violence and build a peace Mexico, justice and freedom.
(Rodríguez, 2015)

According to Villagran (2012), part of the issue surrounding a memorial to victims is that Mexican society has yet to reach a consensus about what constitutes victimhood. One must consider the civilians who have been killed in crossfire and the activists who have been gunned down for speaking up. Dozens of journalists have been killed for their work. Many of the dead were likely killed in retribution for their work for one cartel or another (Villagran, 2012).

The controversial response to victims of Mexico’s drug war may prompt deeper debate. Villagran (2012) suggests that “the rusted steel slabs of a new memorial to victims of Mexico’s drug war bear no mark, not a single engraved name and more than 96 percent of crimes go unsolved and unpunished in Mexico. For the author the Memorial to the Victims of Violence is a reflection of uncertainty because the slabs serve as a blank slate: Names scrawled on can also later be erased” (Villagran, 2012).

However, Stevens and Franck (2016), authors of Memorials As Spaces of Engagement: Design, Use and Meaning suggest that people engage with a memorial in a personal, intimate way by leaving tributes, messages or drawings:

At the Memorial to Victims of Violence in Chapultepec Park in Mexico City, the architects Gaeta-Springall have taken the idea of inviting tributes one step further. Relevant quotations from famous people are stenciled onto some of the 70 towering rusted Cor-Ten steel slabs. But on the many remaining blank surfaces visitors can write or draw. Instructions say: “Paint what you feel … Express what you think.” And so people do—in chalk, or scratching with keys (Cave 2013). Now that active visiting contemporary memorials, terms such as “viewer” and “spectator” that imply passivity no longer capture people’s experiences.
(Stevens & Franck, 2016, p. 32)

Stevens and Franck suggest that “memorials are more diverse in design and subject matter than ever before. The exploration of how changes in memorial design and use have helped forge closer, more vibrant relationships between commemorative sites and their visitors (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p. i). The authors add that “the active role the site continues to play” in the commemoration process contributes to the positive experience that visitors have at the site (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p. 32).
5.5.2 Main Features of Memorial Languages

The architects and the essence of the place combine to drive the narrative at the Mexican Memorial. The symbolism of the structures, material, colours and the interactions of the individuals allow the visitors to have a close relationship with the memorial, creating experiences of participation and solidarity. The Memorial generates many possible experiences and multiple messages, encouraging visitors to bring their own expectations to the work, reinforcing individual perspectives.

Violence, sorrow and human tragedy are represented on the sense of abstraction of the forms that are rendering at the Memorial. Massive, lineal, vertical and horizontal structures combine the language of memory where the absence and emptiness of the victims of violence lie on the green landscape. Gaeta-Springall suggests the following regarding the experiential engagement and relationship between the visitor and the memorial:

A memorial is the architectural piece in which we can find the remembrance and the memory of the culture and history; in the particular case of the Memorial of the Victims of the Violence in Mexico, we materialize, in terms of architecture, one of the most important and current issues of Mexican society: violence.

(Arquitectos, 2013)

Violence in Mexico has become diversified over the past decade. The trends and characteristics of Mexican violence and the effects of government responses to this issue develop a complex disagreement in society. “The [Memorial to the Victims of Violence] dispute arises from the fact that the Mexican government has yet to fully document cases of drug war dead and missing, despite constant pleas from rights groups, the public and orders from Mexico’s own transparency agency” (press, 2013).

According to Ricardo Lopez Martin, one of the architects who designed the memorial said most panels are blank so people can write in the names of their relatives. Also, Lopez Martin said that,

It is not possible to make Mexico’s monument like the Vietnam or Holocaust memorials, because some relatives are still scared or feel they could be stigmatized by having their family members identified among the dead. It is sensitive and there is no database. We have talked with many victims’ relatives and many of them say ‘I don’t want my son’s name to appear next to a drug trafficker or a criminal.

(press, 2013)

Memorial languages offer opportunities to preserve memory and develop places that commit to commemorate and transfer the recognition of victims of the tragedy.

Places and their memory sustain us in our everyday lives, subject as these lives are to fragmentation and rupture of so many sorts. Even persons (i.e., the very beings who are the sources of separation anxiety) are experienced and remembered primarily as persons-in-particular-places.

(Casey, 2009, p. 195)
For instance, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, also known as the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin designed by architect Peter Eisenman “is the apotheosis of this soul-searching” according to Press (2005). “A vast grid of 2,711 concrete pillars whose jostling forms seem to be sinking into the earth, it is able to convey the scope of the Holocaust’s horrors without stooping to sentimentality”.

Place of memory sustain durable forms in which the relationship between emotion and expression reinforces the experience developing in the place. For instance, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, also known as the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, designed by architect Peter Eisenman “is the apotheosis of this soul-searching” according to Press (2005). “A vast grid of 2,711 concrete pillars whose jostling forms seem to be sinking into the earth, it is able to convey the scope of the Holocaust’s horrors without stooping to sentimentality.” The abstract installation leaves room for an open interpretation - “showing how abstraction can be the most powerful tool for conveying the complexities of human emotion” Press (2005).

5.6 Conclusion

Often memorials commemorate an individual or significant events in order to preserve them in memory. The tangible ways of remembering present opportunities to celebrate collective experiences which over time create the identity of a place through the interaction of memorial languages. The Memorial to the Victims of Violence is a response to the open wounds of thousands of victims. The walls allow visitors to add content so that they may express mourning in their own unique way. Through engaging in the interactive process of writing, they can express their most profound feelings, perhaps transforming the faceless walls into memories of absence. Memorial language has social implications:

It is not possible to make Mexico’s monument like the Vietnam or Holocaust memorials, because some relatives are still scared or feel they could be stigmatized by having their family members identified among the dead. It is sensitive and there is no database. We have talked with many victims’ relatives and many of them say ‘I don’t want my son’s name to appear next to a drug trafficker or a criminal.

(press, 2013)
Page left blank intentionally
What we hold in our heads – our memory, our feelings, our ourthoughts, sense of our own history – is the sum of our humanity.

(Eyre, 2011)
EXPERIENCE THE PRESENCE OF ABSENCE
Chapter 6

The White Shoe Memorial

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter Six, I introduce the third case study, the White Shoe Memorial in Christchurch, New Zealand, which is an analysis of a memorial response in the mass shooting category. The Chapter proceeds as follows: In Section 6.2, I introduce the memorial context and meaning of the temporary responses as an expression of solidarity with the Muslim community. In Section 6.3, I explore the design context, which was an empathetic message of solidarity from one Anglican community in the city to the families of the fifty-one victims. In Section 6.4, I introduce the main characteristics of this spontaneous response whose purpose was to make visitors aware of the empty space left by those who never wear those shoes again. In Section 6.5, I offer an interpretation of the memorial response as a tangible experience that developed a unique narrative in which pairs of shoes became symbols of absence, emptiness, and reflection of loss. Finally, in Section 6.6, I summarise the general features of the case study and lessons learned.

“Inquiry is also an instant of intentionality, whereby empty intentions—points of absence—become embodied as the object becomes perceived. With this intentional relation, there is a teleology to what is being sought, marked, above all, by the transition from empty to filled intentions. To speak here of emptiness does not mean lack or simple absence. Instead, an empty intention is already anticipated as a filled and present intention.”

(Trigg, 2012, p. 41)
6.2 Memorial Context

6.2.1 Meaning of the Place

On March 16, 2019, the Anglican Parish of Merivale St Albans ‘All Souls in Christchurch,’ New Zealand developed a temporary memorial outside the church. According to the Rev. Megan Herles-Mooar:

In the process of sharing our sadness and our grief, a desire to have an outward expression of solidarity for our Muslim brothers and sisters came into being. It is customary in the Islamic faith to remove your shoes before entering the Mosque. In remembrance of the dead, we put out for 49 (sadly later 51) pairs of shoes which were painted white and left outside our church.
(Herles-Mooar, 2019)

The shoes were donated from the local community and were lined up along the front of the church for a few weeks. The ephemeral response of the fifty-one white shoes can be seen “as an outward and visible sign of [the community’s] inward invisible grief.”
(Herles-Mooar, 2019, p. 1) (see Figure 6. 2).

The White Shoe Memorial was a response to the tragedy that allows for reflection on the tragic events that changed a nation forever. It paid respect to the fifty-one people who lost their lives during the shooting attacks on the two mosques. It is a reflective temporary space that symbolises the emptiness left by the absence of those who will never wear their shoes again (Figure 6. 1).
Hello, Several weeks ago I prepared my opening piece for the Messenger. The events of March 15 however changed all that. What follows is a series of reflections that occurred over the 48 hours after the shootings that changed us all.

Since then the week has been one filled with sadness and prayer, one filled with questions and sacred conversations. I would like to thank everyone who has reached out so beautifully in caring for one another and the wider community. As one of the first churches to reach out and respond to the tragedy as it unfolded, we redefined what it means to be a place of Welcome as someone said earlier today “Oh yes. All Souls – All Welcome.” What a profound and moving way to be thought of in our community and that happens because of your care and commitment to one another.

Yesterday (Saturday 16 March), we opened the Church for people in need of prayer and comfort. Throughout the day, members of our community known and unknown came in to sit and to pray, to wonder and to mourn. Just to be with others. As people shared their pain and frustration, several beautiful things occurred.

In the process of sharing our sadness and our grief, a desire to have an outward expression of solidarity for our Muslim brothers and sisters came into being. It is customary in the Islamic faith to remove your shoes before entering the Mosque. So, in remembrance of the dead, we put out a call for 49 (saddly later 50) pairs of shoes which were painted white and left outside our church. The shoes came from you, our parishioners, but also from our neighbours and the community around these streets. They were lined up along the front of our church and stand as an outward and visible sign of our inward invisible grief.

The other thing that happened was the creation of a service of Lamentation which was attended by around 70 - 80 people of varying ages and from many different backgrounds Saturday evening. Over half of those attending were from the wider community. Some were tourists who had landed amidst the chaos of a city in lock down, grieving and feeling a long way from home. I wish to thank you all for making them welcome, for offering your warmth in hugs and kind words and for caring above and beyond yourselves.

There are two enduring themes I wish you to take up this day. The first is the need to offer the peace of God in word and deed to all those we meet at this time. To really think about what we say when we use the words ‘Peace be with you’ and to offer that peace generously.

The second is that we are called in this shadowed time to be bearers of hope. The symbol of our faith is one which speaks of the work that was done by Christ on the cross for all creation but also acts as an invitation for us to lay before the cross that which destroys and pick up that which brings life to us and just as importantly to others.

The events of the last 48 hours have spoken of this in so many ways and now stands as an outward and visible sign of the inward and invisible call - a call for us to be carriers of hope in these days.

Hope for healing, hope for reconciliation, hope for a new day for our city, to carry this hope and light for those unable to carry it themselves in these dark times.

Hope and Peace. The gifts from God for the people of God offered this day.

Peace Be With You

Megan

Megan writes...

The Rev. Megan Herles-Mooar

Figure 6.2
The Messenger, All Souls, The Anglican parish publication, Christchurch, New Zealand (Herles-Mooar, 2019).
6.2.2 Case Study Details

The format for the case studies displays a summary of key details of the White Shoe Memorial in Christchurch. Figure 6.3 provides the details recommended by Mark Francis (2001, p. 20) for critiquing case studies such as context, scale, process, goals, scale, and location (see Figures 6.5 to 6.7). Francis also suggests that the “most successful case studies incorporate a variety of methods such as site visits; historical analysis (Figure 6.4); site analysis and behavioral analysis” (Figure 6.8) (ibid, p. 21).

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▲ Figure 6.3
Format to use for the Case Studies.
Adapted from source (Francis, 2001, p. 21).
6.2.3 Timeline of the Tragedy

**EVENT**
March 15
Chistchurch, New Zealand 2019

**RESPONSE**
March 16
2019
51 pairs of shoes to remember victims

**TRANSITION MOVED**
March 31
2019
Inside - All Souls Anglican Parish of Merivale St Albans

▲ Figure 6.4
Timeline that marks the tragedy and responses. Author’s photos and layout.
6.2.4 Locational Information

Figure 6.5
Map of the location of the Papanui Suburb in the urban Christchurch area, the South Island’s east coast, Canterbury, New Zealand. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-n).

Figure 6.6
Map of the location of the White Shoe Memorial on the suburb of Merivale area, north of the Christchurch City centre. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-h).

Figure 6.7
Map of the location of the White Shoe Memorial on the suburb of Merivale area, north of the Christchurch City centre. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-k).
6.2.5 Place, Space and Character Site Analysis

![Site Analysis White Shoe Memorial Christchurch city, Anglican Church All Souls. Adapted from sources: (Google Maps, n.d.-b).]
6.3 Design context

6.3.1 Exploration of the Identity of the Memorial

Addressing a media conference in New Plymouth, New Zealand, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern described March 15, 2019, the day of the shootings, as “one of New Zealand’s darkest days” (A. White, 2019). It had a profound effect on the families and the community of those who lost their lives. A memorial to acknowledge the victims of tragedy was viewed as an essential first step of the process of healing and interfaith reconciliation. The Rev. Megan Herles-Mooar of the Anglican Parish of Merivale St Albans “All Souls” in Christchurch describes the temporary memorial as a way to reach out and respond to the tragedy as an “outward and visible sign of the inward and invisible call for us to be carriers of hope in these difficult days” (Herles-Mooar, 2019). According to Bowring (2016), “An event which is truly tragic requires no resolution or closure, but an opening towards the emotional, a fully present engagement. Through confronting the void there is a challenge to connect with the subjective and confront the depth of existence” (p. 65). The emptiness experienced at the White Shoe memorial allowed viewers to thoroughly engage with themselves as part of a solemn experience of contemplation, silence, peace, and empathy with the Christchurch Muslim community.

6.3.2 Developing the Memorial

The community around the Anglican parish of Merivale collaborated with the church by bringing shoes. Each pair of shoes were from their loved ones who had died a short or long time ago in their community before “New Zealand’s darkest day.” Each individual pair of shoes contained unique stories, and donating them to the church represented a new chapter of healing to the personal sorrow of people who were still missing their departed loved ones.

According to the Rev Megan Herles-Mooar, (personal communication, April 5, 2019), a very touching event occurred during the brief period of the construction of the memorial. When the Parish had begun to develop the memorial, one of the people who was helping to tint the shoes white for the memorial brought a pair of his work boots which to him represented care and commitment to others. He had suffered post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) because he had been involved with a crew that was responsible for cleaning up after Christchurch’s tragic earthquake of February 2011. During the clean-up, bodies were still on the ground, and his boots became covered with blood. To be able to put the boots that he had worn during the earthquake to good use enabled him to face the pain that he had felt for many years. Familiarity with feelings of grief and loss thus brought about the opportunity for the man to empathise with survivors and to help the community to begin the healing process.
6.3.2 Timeline to Develop

As news of the shooting spread, the Anglican Parish of Merivale St Albans All Souls in Christchurch immediately responded (Figure 6.2). The White Shoe Memorial was developed on Saturday, March 16, one day after the attack, in the Papanui Suburb in Christchurch. On Sunday, March 31, the fifty-one pairs of shoes were moved inside the chapel of the parish hall. And on Sunday, April 7, 2019, fifty-one families from the community of Merivale St Albans took a pair of shoes to their homes in order to pray and pay tribute to each of the victims of one of New Zealand’s darkest days.
6.3.4 Design Process

In a special Parish-wide service, the Rev. Megan Herles-Mooar (2019) suggested that “the recent terror attack has given rise to feelings and thoughts, both for us individually and for our community” (p. 1). Forty-nine of the pairs of shoes that were donated for use in the White Shoe Memorial had been worn by people who passed away in the community, and the last pair was donated by the aforementioned construction worker who had helped to paint the shoes.

For the community, the shoes represented an opportunity for reflection and contemplation by small groups and individuals. The temporary Memorial became the anchor point for remembering the impact of the tragedy, which generated awareness of how fragile and temporary we humans are. The white shoes are a powerful reflection of absence and emptiness and provide a strong empathetic statement that evokes a sense of absence of the victims. Dylan Trigg (2012) suggests that:

The lamentation of loss is displaced with a projected reclamation in the future. As such, we are concerned less with what is absent in the past and more with what is missing in the present, or, has since disappeared but may soon reappear again…This dynamic between absence and disappearance conveys a sense of nostalgia’s ambiguous structure. Entwined with the past, that same past is reexperienced in the present as one of presence and absence simultaneously. In both cases, therefore, the altered or distanced past renders what was previously continuous with the self, now discontinuous, leaving the existential unity of human identity uprooted. (Trigg, 2012, p. 175)

6.3.5 Design Language

Shoes can tell us where a person has been and where she wants to go. (Erin Mackie, in Gutiérrez & Almaguer, 2016, p. 64)

The image of the shoes opens up possibilities for generating individual meaning in the context of a memorial site. For instance, a pair of shoes protects people’s feet, represents a human individuality, reveals details of a person’s taste, identity, personality, and perhaps background. According to Silmarwen Linwelín (2017):

The shoe as a symbol has a contradictory significance. They represent authority and power, but they can also represent humility, servitude. It all depends on the context. In some religions, when you enter a temple you are required to take off your shoes, showing humbleness and respect to the divine. In this case, shoes are a symbol of obedience, of earthly contrast with the holy. (Linwelín, 2017)
On the other hand, shoes may have more than one connotation for Arab culture. According to Gammell (2008), showing the sole of your shoe has long been an insult in Arab culture because:

The shoe in the Arab culture is considered dirty because it is on the ground and associated with the foot, the lowest part of the body. The shoe is such an offensive symbol that it is seen as culturally rude to cross an ankle over a knee and display the sole of the shoe while talking to another person. The shoe is also considered unclean in the Muslim faith and believers must remove them before prayers. Wearing shoes in mosques is forbidden. (Gammell, 2008)

Empty shoes may also symbolise death. In Greek culture, empty shoes are the equivalent of the American funeral wreath. For example, empty shoes placed outside of a Greek home would tell others that the family’s son had died in battle (Reeve, 2004, p. 79). A pair of shoes is one of the most personal objects found with human remains. The spontaneous Memorial in Christchurch adopted shoes metaphorically as a witness to the tragedy and testimony to the presence of the victims. Another example of the use of shoes in memorialisation can be found in Mexico City, where a memorial was created to honour 49 children who died in a daycare fire in the state of Sonora. It used bronzed children’s shoes to mark the tragedy (see Figure 6.10).

![Figure 6.10](image)

6.4 Expression of Memory

6.4.1 Interpretations

During the brief period that the fifty-one pairs of white shoes were laid outside the Church, people had physical contact with them. Visitors began to straighten up the shoes, making sure that they were all right. When the shoes were laid on the grass outside the church, a real, tangible experience was made possible. When people touched the shoes, it was as if they were in close contact with the victims. The memorial thus evolved, perhaps in a partially unintended way, into an emotional experience of empathy, compassion and a sense of care.

Seeing the empty shoes around the stone Table of Humanity inside the Church created a sense of profound solemnity that allowed for reflection on the absence of the victims. Light streamed into the space through stained glass windows to highlight the sacredness of the space (see Figure 6.11).

The smell of incense from the candles allowed me to reach a level of mediation as I encountered the many layers of scents (Figure 6.12). The fragrance filled the entire space around me just in minutes with a subtle scent that brought back old feelings and even some memories from my childhood.
The combination of the aroma of the candles, the silence of the Chapel, and sitting alone in front of each white pair of shoes arranged in a circular shape connected me with one of the pairs of shoes for a moment as if I were wearing them (Figure 6.13).

Figure 6.13
Fifty-one white pairs of shoes arranged in a circular shape inside the Church, Christchurch, New Zealand. Source: Author's photo, 2019.
6.4.2 Physical and sensory interpretations

Symbolic
Detached
Enclosed
Included
Permanent
Large
Absent
Tangible
Comtemplative
Unique
Sonorous
Apathetic

Impression
Involvement of the Victims
Surrounding Context
Surrounding Site Memorial
Time
Scale
Representation
Touch
Sight
Smell
Sound
Taste

Abstract
Incorporated
Open
Excluded
Temporary
Small
Present
Intangible
Invisible
Blandness
Inaudible
Emotional
Figure 6. 14 sets out the physical and sensory interpretations through the next categories which form the basis of understanding the memorial languages: impression, the involvement of the victims, surrounding context, surrounding site memorial, time, scale, representation, and perceptive with phenomenological lenses.

**Impression (symbolic + abstract).** The fifty-one pairs of shoes represent the absence of each victim. The shoes become a powerful symbol of witnessing the tragedy. The representation of loss is inscribed into the memory of the city of Christchurch, a testimony to the human-induced violence where the presence of shoes can evoke abstract qualities of experiences and memory.

**The involvement of the victims (detached + incorporated).** The Muslim community was not included in the development process of the Memorial.

**Surrounding context (enclosed + open).** After the shoes were taken inside the chapel, the memorial went from being very open to being enclosed, although it was open to everyone in terms of access.

**Surrounding site memorial (included + excluded).** Both the first and second sites of the memorial were located in sacred places that were evocative settings for the generation of narratives of tragedy and sorrow.

**Time (permanent + temporary).** The White Shoe Memorial, which was begun within hours of the tragedy and only lasted a few weeks.

**Scale (large + small).** The first memorial was located in front of an Anglican Church, in a medium-sized section of 20 linear meters. The second memorial was set inside a small chapel.

**Representation (absent + present).** The White Shoe Memorial used the shoes as generic markers to represent deceased individuals. They did not represent specific persons. The shoes act symbolically, marking the absence of fifty-one individuals, and manifesting human loss.

**Phenomenological lenses.**

**Touch.** The White Shoe Memorial was highly accessible to the sense of touch. Visitors were allowed to physically interact with the shoes, particularly when they were outside.

**Sight.** The shoes at the memorial in Christchurch are in an inclusive space where they can help the observer to connect with the deceased at a deep contemplative level.

**Smell.** The smell of a busy road and the everyday urban setting was noticeable when the white shoes were lined up in front of the Church. But when they were moved to an indoor context inside the church, the candles and the innate fragrance of the church were conducive to a more sacred experience.

**Sound.** The indoor setting of the Memorial isolated the sounds produced from the dynamic residential landscape context.

**Taste.** The sense of taste was not aligned with the White Shoe Memorial.
Figure 6.15
Conceptual tensions within content and interpretation factors will develop a position in the matrix that corresponds to the awareness components corresponds to spatial, perception and experiences of the White Shoe Memorial, Christchurch. Source: Own elaboration.
Figure 6.15 displays three different graphs that map the relationship between different contents and personal interpretations of the memorial. In Chapter 9, I combine the results of these graphs with those from the other four case studies.

6.4.3 Core Concepts

Each pair of shoes exudes the essence of the person who used to wear the shoes, as defined by their style, shape, and texture (Figure 6.16). Although they are not the shoes of the actual victims, they are a powerful reminder that every person who died during the shootings was special and unique. The memorial “invoke[s] the void of absence” (Bowring, 2016, p. 59). The empty shoes embody a sense of emptiness in a deep reflection of temporality, embracing the fragility of human nature and reminding us of the vulnerability of the human body.

On Saturday, March 16, 2019, the response of the Merivale community was immediate, and the White Shoe memorial became a symbol from a religious perspective that provided “hope for healing, hope for reconciliation, hope for a new day for our city, to carry this hope and light for those unable to carry it themselves in these dark times” (Herles-Mooar, 2019, p. 1).

The events that occurred on March 15, 2019, touched the entire nation of New Zealand and the world in a profound way regardless of one’s beliefs, cultural background or social status. The fifty-one pairs of white shoes were lined up along the front of the church to give us the opportunity to be shaped by the sorrow of the scars left by the tragic events, and to develop a unique way to respond to the pain of loss and absence (Figure 6.17).
On Sunday 31, of March 2019, the memorial was relocated, and the white shoes were lined along the perimeter of the Chapel. On 7 April 2019, the shoes were moved from the church to households in the local Anglican community where families could pray in their homes for each victim and their family. (Figure 6.18). However, the need remains for space where the Muslim community will memorialise the tragedy in its own way (Herles-Mooar, 2019).

![Figure 6.17](image1.png)

Setting of the White Shoe Memorial Outside of the Anglican Church
All Souls in Christchurch. Source: Author’s analysis.

![Figure 6.18](image2.png)

Setting of The White Shoe Memorial inside of the Anglican Church
All Souls in Christchurch. Source: Author’s analysis.
6.4.4 Memorial Languages

Memorial languages contain several narratives that come from the memories of witnesses, survivors, victims, and even the perpetrators in places of tragedy. Each of these narratives opens up a different form of remembrance. Thus, symbols or responses “form the basis for the design language of landscape architecture, being equivalent to words in a language, as well as corresponding to the sense experience of different landscapes” (Jørgensen, 1998, p. 44).

After the February 2011 earthquake, the city of Christchurch, New Zealand, suffered physical and invisible wounds that left scars of loss, emptiness, and grief. During the process of community recovery, public art and spontaneous art began to develop unique ‘memorial languages’ through community engagement. These responses of expressions had been adopted as a part of the identity of a resilient, rebuilding city.

One of the examples of a communal response is the ubiquitous road cones that have become part of the personality of the city of Christchurch. Locals place flowers in these road cones each year to memorialise the anniversary of the February 2011 earthquake (Figure 6.19). Another response of ‘memorial languages’ that implies temporality and reflection of loss is the work of Peter Majendie. To commemorate the 185 people who died after the 6.3 magnitude earthquake, he took many different types of chairs and tinted them white, a symbol of the loss of each victim (Figure 6.20). Majendie’s work, entitled ‘185 Empty White Chairs’, drew inspiration from two other chair-based memorials: The Field of Empty Chairs in Oklahoma City, built to remember the deadly 1995 bombing (Figure 6.21), and a memorial in Krakow for Jews forced into a city ghetto during World War II. These tangible forms of memorial language create an opportunity for remembrance of loved ones through the use of the whitewashed chairs.
A road cone decorated with a flower on top is an expression of memorialisation after the Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand (22 February 2011). Photo by Jacky Bowring, 2016.
Peter Majendie works to commemorate the 185 people who died after the 6.3 magnitude earthquake, he used chairs of all types, tinted white, symbolising each person lost. Photo by Jacky Bowring, 2016.
Butzer Design Partnership develop 168 empty chairs hand-crafted from glass, bronze, and stone that represent those who lost their lives, with a name etched in the glass base of each. Oklahoma City National, the USA 2001. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
Bowring suggests that Majendie’s temporary empty chair memorial represented loss, absence, and temporality. The poignancy of this temporality is expressed in the text displayed next to the site: “this installation is temporary, as is life.” Bowring adds:

The empty chairs and empty benches lay bare absence, with the landscape becoming an expression of the void. Memorial landscapes which enlist the melancholy of the void are arguably more ethical and empathetic in their approach to grief than those sites which might be considered a form of denial.
(Bowring, 2016, p. 64)

Empty chairs are a widely-recognised language of memory. An example is found in the work by Colombian artist Doris Salcedo, who:

Used hundreds of empty chairs to an equally haunting effect in a 2002 public work that unfolded over 53 hours on Nov. 6 and 7, the anniversary of the 1985 siege of the Palace of Justice in Bogotá, in which about 100 people died, including Supreme Court justices (Figure 6. 22). [Salcedo’s] work consisted of lowering wood chairs from the roof of the building at the particular time of day each victim was believed to have been killed… evoking a mass grave.
(Finkel, 2015)

In order to commemorate the 17th anniversary, Salcedo’s temporal art preform of chairs falling from the new building of the Palace of Justice serve as a symbolic powerful statement that honors the individual. The White Shoe Memorial and Salcedo’s work memorialise the individual as giving the value recognition by implying symbolic elements that represent each person’s life and not just a number.

▲ Figure 6. 22
Doris Salcedo artwork ‘November 6 y 7, 2002.’ In which she hangs from the ceiling wood chairs of different sizes and colors in front of the facade of the New Palace of Justice located in Bogotá, Colombia. Department of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2002).
6.4.5 Symbolic Elements

Fifty-one pairs of white shoes make a powerful statement marking absence and loss.

6.5 Stories of the Site

6.5.1 Narrative

Places of trauma, whether resulting from violence or unexpected natural disasters, inscribe traces of fear in people’s minds and memories. The city of Christchurch has found many innovative ways to use place as a way to respond to the tragedy. Eight years before the mass shootings of 2019, the All Souls Church community responded to a tragedy of its own:

When St Mary’s Church in Merivale and St Matthews Church in St Albans were damaged after the 2011 earthquake, their respective parishes decided to join together as one; building a new Church known as All Souls’ Church – signifying a new beginning. Fittingly, the chosen site is that of St Mary’s on Church Lane in Merivale. Cherished and holy grounds, it has been the site of a Church since 1866 when the first wooden structure was built. That Church was replaced with the magnificent stone Church and hall complex, consecrated in 1927, standing the test of time till sadly lost in 2011. (‘All Souls’ Church: A new beginning,” 2018)

The team of Higgs Construction began work on the new church in May 2017 with completion and it was completed in August 2018. (Figure 6. 23).

Figure 6. 23
Shape inside the Church, Christchurch, New Zealand. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
Recollecting memories of the dark day of the shooting in Christchurch, Rev. Megan Herles-Mooar (2019) offered the following narrative in her sermon on Sunday, the 17th of March:

I awoke in the night, listened to the rain and imagined the tears of God running through the streets of Christchurch. I reached out to the God of Ash and Wonder and said sleepily” why have you woken me when I need to rest?
I remember the last few hours of shut downs and desperate searches, of parents trying to get to children, of people trying out where loved ones are. And I feel the should has covered our city once more.

I listen to the rain and know you have woken me for a reason, God. I know you gave me just enough sleep for the next while and that whilst I slept, just blocks away, the battle for life continues in our city hospital as medical stuff, exhausted, called upon all that they had for another.

So, I get up, sit in my rocking chair, listen for you in the rain and pray for medical staff, for all emergency staff.

I pray that they may have endurance, that support may come to them, that their eyes may be keen and alert and that the horrors of the day, that started so well and ended so bleakly, may not be an unbearable burden for them.

And the questions arise. So many questions for this day. How could this happen here? What can we do? How can a person do such a thing? How can someone be so detached from humanity, that they would slaughter people without any sense of them being the same as us?

For that is what our Muslim brothers, and sisters are. The same as us. They awoke yesterday the same as us, prayed the same as us, rush around trying to get the kids dressed in time for school, just as we did. There were arguments and farewell kisses, like thousand other families. And rides into work that seemed just the same as the day before. Traffic’s backed up I see. And there was the call to worship - must be there in time – It’s been a stressful morning. It will be good to stop and be with God.

And then It’s not…

For in this moment, someone so damaged by the world – so detached from the wholeness of the human experience that they see not laughing, loving, breathing, men, woman, and children who have hopes and dreams, who came here to find peace. Peace in this country, peace in this city, peace in their sacred place, but instead a problem- something to be removed from the world.
(Herles-Mooar, 2019)
The term ‘empathy’ describes a wide range of experiences. Likewise, Bowring (2016) suggests that “empathy is the forming of emotional engagement with that which is encountered, the placement of the self into other” (p. 42). Also, the author points out that empathy, therefore, tends towards a fully phenomenological engagement. In the case of the White Shoe Memorial, each pair of shoes allows us to acknowledge our fears of loss and face the pain resulting from an acutely felt absence. The response of the memorial illustrated a strong example of how members of the local community could empathise with the tragedy-stricken Muslim community in a way that generated a palpable connection.

6.5.2 Main Features of Memorial Languages

The use of memorials, or memorialisation, is a way of reminding people of an event. This can often be a highly personal experience because it connects people with a particular place. Places of tragedy and sorrow provide a unique language expressed through landscapes of memory, enabling survivors and visitors to contemplate absence and temporality by encouraging them to experiment with a range of sensory experiences.

Shoes might symbolise status, protection, travel, identity, and so on. The fifty-one pairs of white shoes implied two significant elements: the shoes and the colour white. Shoes represent the temporary nature of the human condition. Moreover, perhaps more than any other form of clothing, shoes at the White Shoe Memorial are a reflection of human absence and how it shapes, traces, marks, and imprints our memory. The positioning of the shoes in a straight line is an ephemeral, tangible reflection of our transitory journey in life. The colour white can represent the absence of any colour. In a sense, it can mean everything or nothing. White is a symbol of peace (in Western culture), harmony, and purity, or death and rebirth, or a beginning and an end.

The congregation decided that using a pair of shoes to represent each person who died was a tangible way to contemplate the non-presence of loved ones and the profound sadness that resulted from their loss. Seeing and touching the shoes, smelling the unique fragrance of the candles, and experiencing the silence enhanced the visitor’s connection to the tragedy by creating the opportunity for deep contemplation.

6.6 Conclusion

Objects are a material form of dialogue. The different styles and sizes of shoes personalised the relationship between those who were remembering and those who experienced grief. The White Shoe Memorial was a symbol that unified a community through a spontaneous response that asserted the core values of humanity, acting as a centre for empathy, contemplation, and reflection. In A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community (1999), historian and Missouri Historical Society president Robert R. Archibald reflected on his hometown when he wrote:

Community symbols reflect our collective identity, incorporate our aspirations, and in their ambiguity can be focal points of discussion through which we confront each other, acknowledge difference, and define common ground upon which the civic enterprise must rest.

(Archibald, 1999, p. 47)
Columbine was a momentous event in the history of the country…
Even in the midst of tragedy we’ve seen the best, the best there is to see about our nation and about human nature.

*(President Bill Clinton in Senie, 2016, p. 106)*
THE SKIN OF ABSENCES
7.1 Introduction

In Chapter Seven, I introduce the fourth case study: The Columbine Memorial in Colorado, which is a case study of memorial response in the Mass Shooting category. The Chapter proceeds as follows: in Section 7.2, I describe the memorial context, and meaning of place as a space that provides comfort and healing to those that were touched by the tragedy on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School. In Section 7.3, I explore the design context and how the open spaces in the Memorial allowed survivors and families of victims to express their feelings through dialogues of hope, faith, and spiritual strength. In Section 7.4, I discuss how the Columbine Memorial was designed to be a place of peace, reflection and how the community was included in the process of its development. In Section 7.5, I explore the narratives that are engraved in stone, providing unique personal reflections from the victims’ families. Finally, in Section 7.6, I summarise the general features of the memorial and lessons learned.

"We wish to keep the dead truly alive in memory - alive as life is lived and felt, not just in action, but in human interaction. The difficulty is that memories fade with time. We seek to create objects of remembrance - a permanent public record in the form of monuments and memorials - that will serve as symbols of those who have gone before (or the events in which they participated) so that they may remain alive in the memory of the living."

Ochsner (1997, p. 23)
7.2 Memorial Context

7.2.1 Meaning of the Place

On a sunny spring day in April 1999, a suburban high school in Jefferson County, Colorado, found itself under attack by two of its own. In less than fifteen minutes of the first-lunch period on that Tuesday, two student gunmen killed 13 and wounded 24 before they turned the guns on themselves – the most devastating school shooting in U.S. history.

(Sheriff, 1999)

This was the first announcement of the opening report of the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Department regarding the thirteen murders and two suicides that occurred on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. It referred to an event that changed the history of a nation, with a profound effect on many families in the state of Colorado. The school shooting was a series of events and acts of sudden violence that brought sorrow to what began as an ordinary day and ended with an act that endures as one of “the most devastating school shooting in U.S. history.”

On April 20, 1999, two senior students, an eighteen-year-old and a seventeen-year-old, killed thirteen and wounded twenty-four before committing suicide during the middle of the school day at Columbine High School. Armed with guns and bombs, the two boys walked the hallways to commit the largest mass murder in U.S. history. According to H. Senie, “The date was [the] 110th birthday of Adolph Hitler, and it was followed by one day the [first] anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing” (Senie, 2016, p. 95).

On April 20, 2000, the first anniversary of the Columbine shooting, President Bill Clinton stated, “What happened in Littleton pierced the soul of America.” The event was a tragedy that marked the beginning of an era in the United States in which many lives were lost to gun violence in schools and public places, leaving survivors with devastating injuries, shattering families, and leaving many with psychological scars (Figure 7. 2).

Many spontaneous responses and memorials were created after the massacre. A permanent memorial began in June of 1999. The design process took three and a half years. It included feedback from victims’ families, survivors, the high school’s students, and staff, and the community. According to the Columbine Memorial Foundation (2009):

The Columbine Memorial is designed to be a place of peace, comfort and reflection remembering all those who were touched by the events of April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School, those who were injured and those whose lives were taken that day.

(Columbine Memorial Foundation, 2009).

The discreet, solemn and quiet memorial opened to the public on September 21, 2007. It was a place for all to visit and reflect on the impact and lessons learned from this tragedy (ibid, 2009).
"We remember every parent who battled depression and grief, anger and sorrow; who battled the relentless task of waking up knowing their child would not come home. We remember every parent, every friend who spent countless hours in dozens of hospital rooms and bedside vigils, in the slow and painful process of recovery. We remember our pain, we remember our sorrow; we remember our heroes. We remember those who in selfless acts of courage, who in sacrificial dedication risked all in time of crises and need.”

(Gino Geraci, at Memorial groundbreaking)
7.2.2 Case Study Details

The format for the case studies displays a summary of key details of the Columbine Memorial in Clement Park in Littleton, Colorado. Figure 7.3 provides the details recommended by Mark Francis (2001, p. 20) for critiquing case studies such as context, scale, process, goals, scale, and location (see Figures 7.5 to 7.7). Francis also suggests that the “most successful case studies incorporate a variety of methods such as site visits; historical analysis (Figure 7.4); site analysis and behavioural analysis” (Figure 7.8) (ibid, p. 21).

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| **GENERAL FEATURES AND LESSONS** | ▲ Figure 7.3  
Format to use for the Case Studies.  
Adapted from source (Francis, 2001, p. 21). |
7.2.3 Timeline of the Tragedy

**EVENT**  
April 20  
Littleton, Colorado, United States of America  
1999

**RESPONSE**  
September, 21  
2007  
The 25,080m² site was completed

**RING OF REMEMBRANCE**

**WALL OF HEALING**

**PART OF THE JOURNEY**

**INSIDE THE MEMORIAL**

**RING OF REMEMBRANCE**

**WATER FOUNTAIN**

**TRIBUTE PLAQUE**

**SURROUNDING**

Photos by Walker

Figure 7.4  
Timeline that marks the tragedy and responses.  
Author’s photos and layout.
7.2.4 Locational Information

Figure 7.5
Map location of the state of Colorado in the Western United States of America. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-e).

Figure 7.6
Map location of the Columbine area in the U.S. state of Colorado and the Columbine Memorial. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-g).

Figure 7.7
Map location of the Columbine Memorial Clement Park at 7306 W. Bowles Avenue (at Pierce St.) in Littleton, Colorado. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-f).
7.2.5 Place, Space and Character Site Analysis

Figure 7.8
Layout of the master site plan of the Columbine Memorial Clement Park. Adapted from sources: Columbine Memorial Foundation (2009); (Google Maps, n.d.-f).
Figure 7.8 is a site analysis of the Columbine Memorial that uses the post occupancy evaluation (POE) phase of evaluation, which “reveals common patterns of behaviour that appear to be correlated with particular layouts” (Goličnik & Thompson, 2010, p. 30). I systematically observed and recorded the actual use of the Memorial from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 30th, 2019.

7.3 Design context

7.3.1 Exploration of the Identity of the Memorial

The role of memorials as agents of memory is reflected through individual and collective experiences of landscapes that rely on the contexts of the visitor and the environment:

Permanent memorials are meant to last, to provide symbols and structures that may be reinterpreted by succeeding generations. They define a place for public mourning and for remembering. Formally and through usage over time, they may convey or distort actual events. By focusing on the absent bodies and invoking their presence, the memorials discussed here [evoke] history. They incorporate strategies of diversion that direct our attention away from actual events (a form of denial) and reframe tragedy as either secular or religious triumph or both. (Senie, 2016, p. 10)

For Senie, the memorial competitions and resulting works focus on loss and victimhood, all the while as they work to “reframe tragedy as a secular or religious triumph.” On the other hand, the Columbine Memorial represents a community’s response through a planning and decision-making process that offers insights into the community’s sorrow and memorialising the loss of fragile and innocent lives. According to Bingham:

The memorialising of victims of school tragedies is a sensitive subject moved from the spontaneous temporary memorial phase into a more intransient permitting individuals and groups to utilize faith-based strategies for coping with death and loss. Littleton, Colorado is a community with a strong religious component. Stemming from their religious beliefs, families and students desired to support others with faith-related expressions. In displaying temporary and more permanent school-based memorials, religion quickly became an issue. (Rebecka Dawn Bingham, 2008, p. 45)
7.3.2 Architectonic Dialogue

A twenty-eight-member memorial committee was formed in June 1999. It involved many community leaders who committed themselves to the planning and designing of the Memorial. According to Harriet Senie (2016), the Columbine Memorial Committee was:

Charged with selecting a design consultant, holding a series of public meetings, and compiling information gathered from over 3,500 survey responses. Chaired by Bob Easton, director of the Foothills Park and Recreation District in Lakewood, faculty, students, and administrative staff from Jefferson Country (in which Columbine High School is located), participated as well as a school district and community members. (Senie, 2016, p. 101)

According to the Columbine Memorial Foundation (2009), “The mission of the committee was to develop a consensus recommendation to create a physical, permanent memorial for our community and others to [honour] and respect those touched by the Columbine High School tragedy.”

Another critical factor that the committee leaders had to address during the planning of the permanent memorial was fundraising. Immediately after Columbine, donations flooded in from across Colorado, the nation, and the world. However, fundraising did not provide a consistent influx of money, making it difficult to finalise plans. The initially-approved plans for the Columbine Memorial were scaled back when it was clear that funding would fall short of the projected goal. In addition, the committee decided to set aside part of the budget for ongoing maintenance projects (Rebecka D Bingham et al., 2009, p. 23).

7.3.3 Timeline to Construction

After the tragic events, the voices of the victims’ families and the community played an essential role in the planning process and the permanent response of the Columbine Memorial. In the aftermath of the tragedy, spontaneous messages, flowers, ribbons, pictures, crosses, biblical messages and other objects recalling the absence of the victims became part of the common language of the community. According to Senie (2016), “The religious nature of the community was evident at the scene, including flowers that were constantly replaced and stuffed animals that were eventually donated to [the] local hospital” (p. 98).

The construction process of the Columbine Memorial was initiated on June 16, 2006, with construction beginning in August of 2006. Construction was completed thirteen months later, and the approximately 25,080 m² memorial was dedicated on September 21, 2007.
Over the eight-year period during which the Memorial was designed and constructed, the Columbine Memorial Committee regularly considered the opinions of families of the murdered victims, survivors and their families, and past and present high school students. This project represented years of gathering opinions, planning, fundraising, and construction. Because of the widespread effects of the calamity and the desire for catharsis, the Committee went to great lengths to include the community in the memorial planning process. Although planning for most memorial designs is a rather closed process, in the case of Columbine it was open to the community.

### 7.3.4 Design Process

Consisting of many community leaders and members, the Columbine Memorial Committee was formed in June 1999, committing itself to planning and designing the Memorial. According to Columbine Memorial Foundation (2009), three and a half years after the tragic Columbine High School shootings, and the Columbine Memorial Committee unveiled the conceptual design for a permanent community memorial. The design evolved from clearly outlined four priorities:

[First] decision-making and design centered first around those most affected by the tragedy — the families of those killed. The second established priority addressed injured individuals and their families. The third tier of design workshops and survey data collection was held with past and present high school students, staff and faculty. The fourth level of involvement brought community members into the process through surveys and an open house. The Columbine Memorial design process was developed utilizing feedback from those four distinct levels of participation. The emphasis was always on those that were most directly affected by the tragedy. The evolution of the design responded to the priorities established from the input and represents the Columbine area community in its forms, ideas and materials.

(Columbine Memorial Foundation, 2009)

The mission of the committee was to develop a consensus recommendation to create a permanent physical memorial for the community and others to honor and respect those touched by the Columbine High School tragedy. Through the planning and design process, the Columbine Memorial Committee, representing the Columbine community, envisioned the Columbine Memorial to be a place of Remembrance, Peace, and Spirituality. The Memorial would serve to provide comfort and hope for the community at large. The Memorial Committee adopted a fundamental philosophy that the victim’s families, injured students and faculty, survivors and the Columbine community would be given appropriate, equal consideration in the Memorial planning, design and fundraising process. To honor those who died, those who survived and those who loved them, the Memorial Committee involved and informed all concerned to the greatest degree possible (Columbine Memorial Foundation, 2009).

The Memorial Committee was responsible for fundraising, planning, and overseeing the construction of the memorial. According to Bingham et al.
The Columbine Memorial represents the culmination of a community’s eight-year journey, their struggle in finding an appropriate way to memorialize those killed and injured on April 20, 1999. Today, the memorial stands as a monument honoring the 24 wounded and the 12 students and one teacher who were murdered. The monument also represents this community’s effort to make sense of tragic events that abruptly altered their lives.

(Rebecka D Bingham et al., 2009)

The process of the Columbine Memorial was focusing solely on the victims and those that were directly affected by the tragedy. According to Senie (2016), “the victims were defined as paramount and the memorial as decidedly local. Nowhere is the nature of the tragedy defined, the crime mentioned or the killers named; nor were they in the built memorial” (p. 101).

### 7.3.5 Design Language

The design language of the Columbine Memorial is an attempt to create a space that embraces, comforts, and protects the victims, engendering a symbolic dialogue between the temporary nature of life and the finality of death (Figure 7.9). The design language is emphasised by the interior of the Memorial, where an oval-stone outer wall (the Ring of Healing) is softened by a grove of trees and native plants (Figure 7.10). A gentle, wiry outer retaining wall is embedded into the steep landforms of the hills.

The oval and circular composition is built with native Colorado stone and is engraved with the written feelings of the community. The sound of water coming from the nearby fountains and the words of remembrance add to the design language’s focus on healing, resilience, and aspirations for a better future (Figure 7.11). The memorial may not provide definitive explanations as to why such a tragedy occurred, but it stands as a reminder never to forget.

An intricate ribbon inscribed with the phrase “Never Forgotten” fills the center of the Ring of Remembrance, the inner part of the Memorial. The three structures of the Ring of Remembrance create a sense of equality among the 13 victims, ensuring that an equal amount of space is given to each person killed in the tragedy. The parents of the victims suggested that the Ring of Remembrance should be focused on paying tribute to their memories. The outer part of the memorial, the Ring of Healing, is a wall that speaks to the sorrow of the tragedy.
Figure 7.9
Layout of the master site plan of the Columbine Memorial and main entry sections. Adapted from source: Columbine Memorial Foundation (2009).
Figure 7.10
Layout of the elevations and sections of the Fountain, Rings of Remembrance and Healing Columbine Memorial. Adapted from source: Columbine Memorial Foundation (2009).
Today the Columbine Memorial stands as an open, public place for all to visit and reflect on the impact and lessons learned from this tragedy. According to the Columbine Memorial Foundation, formed by community leaders:

[The Columbine Memorial] provides a stunning and peaceful outdoor setting for visiting and personal / family reflection. Upon leaving this Memorial, a parent’s first reaction will hopefully be to hug their child and tell them they love them. (Columbine Memorial Foundation, 2009)

Today, over twenty years after the tragedy, the community, and families of the victims still focus on healing and coping with their sense of loss.
Interpretation of the site that shows the arrangements and overarching scheme of the architectural setting at the Columbine Memorial, USA. Adapted from source, Columbine Memorial Foundation (2009); (Google Maps, n.d.-f).


7.4 Expression of Memory

7.4.1 Interpretations

The Columbine Memorial is the result of thousands of people’s responses and nationwide support which allows the permanent memorial structures to become a symbolic site of healing. The Memorial rises into the landscape, highlighted by the external Ring of Remembrance and the internal Ring of Healing. The ground symbolises the guardian of the souls of the victims, offering a sense of contemplation, peace, and spirituality. The Rocky Mountains and the walls of the Memorial offer symbolic protection to visitors, while native plants, flowers, and pine trees offer a soothing, peaceful aroma.

Symbolisation is an essential component of memory, and it can play an important role in the healing processes. However, Bingham et al. (2009) argue, “Healing is not synonymous with forgetting. Healing places tragedy in its proper perspective and redefines the future with hope and optimism, critical components of the recovery process” (p. 4).

The open landscape of the Memorial allows people inside the Ring of Remembrance to personally reflect on the tragedy in an inclusive space. Touching and seeing the text that honour each one of the 13 victims of the Columbine tragedy may trigger emotions connected with the individual tragedy.

The design firm DHM Design, Colorado suggests the following regarding The Columbine Memorial: “In nature is healing and in the symbology of a circular form is the continuum of life itself. People who venture to experience this place are surrounded by poetry in its greatest sense, the poetry of a community unified towards the ultimate purpose: to remember and to heal” (American Society of Landscape Architects ASLA Colorado, 2009).
7.4.2 Physical and Sensory Interpretations

Symbolic” vs “Abstract
Detached” vs “Incorporated
Enclosed” vs “Open
Included” vs “Excluded
Permanent” vs “Temporary
Large” vs “Small
Absent” vs “Present
Tangible” vs “Intangible
Comtemplative” vs “Invisible
Unique” vs “Blandness
Sonorous” vs “Inaudible
Apathetic” vs “Emotional

Impression” vs “Surrounding Context” vs “Surrounding Site Memorial” vs “Representation” vs “Phenomenological”
Figure 7. 13 sets out the physical and sensory interpretations through the next categories which form the basis of understanding the memorial languages: impression, the involvement of the victims, surrounding context, surrounding site memorial, time, scale, representation, and perceptive with phenomenological lenses.

**Impression (symbolic + abstract).** The personal reflections at the Memorial are symbolic expressions. Reading and touching the names of each victim inscribed on the Columbine evoke a feeling of absences in a tangible way.

**The involvement of the victims (detached + incorporated).** The process of planning and building allowed for a high level of involvement of the victims and survivors, incorporating personal thoughts, quotes, and names of the victims, as well as the soil of their hometown. All of these contributed to the development of personalised narratives and the generation of authentic memorialisation responses.

**Surrounding context (enclosed + open).** The memorial is located in an open site of the Littleton park near to the high school where the shooting occurred.

**Surrounding site memorial (included + excluded).** The shape of the design rings of the Columbine Memorial is welcoming and inclusive.

**Time (permanent + temporary).** The memorial is intended to be a permanent response to the tragic events that occurred.

**Scale (large + small).** The memorial is located on a site of 25,080 m².

**Representation (absent + present).** The Columbine walls reflect the presence of the thirteen victims in the solemn language of memorialisation

**Phenomenological lenses.**

**Touch.** The tangible interaction between the visitors and the memorial occurs when visitors touch a flat, table-like stone that allows them to make physical contact with names, family thoughts, and other items lefts by visitors.

**Sight.** The high Rocky Mountains appear in the distance on the horizon, generating a connection between nature and the Memorial, which is conducive to healing and peaceful reflection.

**Smell.** The Memorial offers strong possibilities for the visitor to sense unique smells and fragrances from the native pine trees.

**Sound.** The wind blowing through the trees and the birds enhances the awareness of one’s natural surroundings.

**Taste.** The sense of taste was not aligned with the Columbine Memorial.
Figure 7.14
Conceptual tensions within content and interpretation factors will develop a position in the matrix that corresponds to the awareness components corresponds to the spatial, perception and experiences of the Columbine Memorial. Source: Own elaboration.
Figure 7. 14 displays three different graphs that map the relationship between different contents and personal interpretations of the memorial. In Chapter 9, I combine the results of these graphs with those from the other four case studies.

7.4.3 Core Concepts

Developing a permanent memorial space creates experiences in a specific time and place that can provide comfort and hope while reminding us of our experiences as human beings. Moreover, each memorial supports and displays a dialogue. Senie (2016), suggests that “the outer Ring of healing [of the Columbine Memorial that] is built into the side of a hill, somewhat reminiscent of the way of [the Vietnam Veterans Memorial] VVM is set into the ground. Like the Oklahoma City Memorial, it acknowledges the large circle of those affected” (p. 106). (see Figure 7. 15 and Figure 7. 16).

The Columbine Memorial borrows from the Oklahoma City Memorial in a number of ways. Both are located next to the site of the tragedy. The Columbine memorial was developed just behind the Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, while the Oklahoma City Memorial is situated next to the Alfred Murrah building that was the target of the bombing attack. Both involve the use of rings; the Oklahoma City memorial has a ring that contains some remnants of the building and an American Elm tree that survived the April 19, 1995 bombing. (Figure 7. 16). The Columbine Memorial also uses rings—an inner one to commemorate the victims and an outer one that reflects on the tragedy. In the case of both memorials, circles of stone create a welcoming gathering space to remember and honour the lives lost in the tragedy.
The symbolic shapes and elements of memorials may become significant design forms that enable active participation in memorialisation processes. For instance, Todd Haiman (2009) argues, the “council ring” was the signature piece in many gardens designed by Jens Jensen, who incorporated this concept into his designs in many public parks and private estates in America. Jensen typically located the ring in a woodland opening on the edge of a meadow or on a site with a view. This represented harmony with the surrounding landscape: “As evidenced by my own early experience...council rings serve as a meeting place for conversation, song, dance, storytelling, poetry, and campfires, linking humanity and nature” (Haiman, 2009).

The council ring was meant to inspire conversation, storytelling, drama, and even traditional singing around the campfire. In Jensen’s book, *Siftings*, he states:

> In this friendly circle around the fire, [individual] becomes himself. Here there is no social caste. All are on the same level, looking each other in the face. A ring speaks of friendship and strength and is one of the great symbols of mankind.  
> (Jensen, 1990, p. 66)
The Columbine Memorial takes the shape of a circle, offering an inclusive open space. The core design illustrates the legacy of Jensen’s council ring and garden design concepts (Figure 7.17). Sheltered from the wind that regularly blows down from the high Rocky Mountains on the horizon, the memorial is laid out on the winding park landscape in a broad oval shape that contains two circles.

The Memorial Garden Park in Odessa, Texas, has some features that are similar to those of the Columbine Memorial. In both cases, the core concept of the memorial is focused on remembrance in an open, public green park. Both involve inner and outer circular stone structures, and the conversation is focused prominently on the victims in a mourning space that is harmonious with nature (Figures 7.18 and 7.19).
Figure 7. 18
Inside of the Memorial Garden Park, Odessa, Texas. Note the open ring that is similar to that of the Columbine Memorial. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.

Figure 7. 19
Outside of the Memorial Garden Park, Odessa, Texas. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
7.4.4 Memorial Languages

Memorial languages can be both profound and open-ended. The vast array of individual or collective responses embodied in the structure, surface, material, colour and ephemeral components as space, scale, light, and movement can help to make a physical substance legible. Individual mourning responses depend on many factors, including the visitor’s social, economic, cultural, and religious background, as well as personal beliefs, that interact with and respond to the memorial.

The language of loss changes over time. Each generation brings a new interpretation of what it seems to be related to fear, pain, void, and absences. One of the best-known memorial languages is the use of flowers in grief and mourning. After a tragic event, spontaneous responses, tributes of flowers gifts, notes, pictures, candles, and balloons to the site of the tragedy developing temporary tributes. Immediately following the April 20, 1999 tragedy in the middle of the school day at Columbine High School the site became a place of such spontaneous tributes, creating a temporary memorial.

The immediate responses and tributes usually are linked with flowers and other items or objects such as a teddy bear, photographs, notes, and other items for the victims and their families. Once the sites of tragedies became physically marked, the expressions and responses are mixed by vigils and other ritual activities. Key commemorative activities common to memorials can often be divided into temporary and permanent responses. After the Columbine attack, according to Senie:

> Two hundred thousand items were left at the scene, including flowers that were constantly replaced, and stuffed animals that were eventually donated to local hospitals. Although many items (some 40-50%) were damage by rain and snow, approximately eight thousand objects had been catalogued by the following year and stored at the Littleton Historical Society” (Senie, 2016, p. 98).

This phenomenon of a site becoming the place for tributes, vigils, and rituals, was also apparent in Christchurch, New Zealand, following the 2019 mosque shootings. The mosques involved in the attacks, along with others around the country and the world, became the focus of vigils, messages and flowers as residents and visitors brought tributes, expressing responses to the event and related issues such as gun control (Figure 7. 20).
According to Stephens and Franck, “Leaving notes and particularly flowers is a traditional custom at formal memorials, particularly on national holidays at war memorials that recognise the sacrifices soldiers have made” (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p. 3). On April 19, 1995, the bombing killed 168 people. As a part of the permanent response, the Oklahoma City National Memorial provided the “memories” wall or the Memorial Fence (3.0 m) that was installed as a part of the permanent memorial (Figure 7. 21). According to a research history:

The Fence stood for more than four years, becoming notable as the place where visitors left stuffed animals, poems, keychains, and other items as tributes. During the construction of the Outdoor Memorial, 210 feet (64 m) of the Fence was moved to the west side of the Memorial, along the 9:03 side or the ‘healing’ side. The remainder of the Fence is in storage. Visitors may still leave small items along and in the Fence; the mementos are periodically collected, cataloged, and store. (Rivlin, 2011)
7.4.5 Symbolic Elements

The Columbine Memorial is a response from a community that experienced profound loss. Its symbolic elements evoke emotion, healing, and interaction with sorrow. Harriet Senie (2016) offers the following description of the Memorial:

A closed inner circle, focused solely on the victims, is surrounded by an outer wall with comments from some of those directly affected by the tragedy, signaling an overwhelmingly local perspective. The rampage that resulted in these deaths has been effectively erased here, replaced by themes of mourning and hope, evocative of the imaginative of the imagined “before” state of the community and spiritual afterlife of the victims. (Senie, 2016, p. 94)

The Columbine Memorial had two key elements: the outer “Ring of Healing” and the inner “Ring of Remembrance”. The first ring, The Ring of Healing is an exterior wall that provides a place to recognise those who were injured in the attack, representing an opportunity for the public to remember and reflect on their personal experience (Figure 7.22 and Figure 7.23): “Many of the injured victims or their families specifically requested their names not be listed in the Memorial and the Memorial Design Committee honoured that request” (Columbine Memorial Foundation, 2009). Moreover, Harris (2008) suggests that The Ring of Healing “is nestled along Rebel Hill, which offers a place of solemn reflection for the Littleton community [where] Native plants and grasses have been used to accentuate the site” (Figures 7.24).
Figure 7.22
*The Ring of Healing* at the Columbine Memorial. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.

“We dedicate this ground to the memory of the 13; We dedicate this ground to those who suffered physical harm; We dedicate this ground to the students and staff who were at Columbine High School; We dedicate this ground to all of their families; And we dedicate this ground to the community that is Columbine; We are ... Columbine.”

(Lee Andres, Columbine Teacher)

Figure 7.23
Reflection on their personal experience. *The Ring of Healing* at the Columbine Memorial. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
Inside the Ring of Healing is the second key element of the Memorial, The Ring of Remembrance, which is divided into three sections and a smaller inner circle. It is formed by an interior wall on which the victim’s families provide a text containing unique and personal reflection dedicated in memory to the victims and the immense impact that their deaths had on the community (Figure 7.25).
Thus, while the Ring of Remembrance focuses directly on the victims, the Ring of Healing reflects the voices of family members, students of the high school and the community who wish to express their grief as part of the path to healing. A ribbon in the core of the Memorial with the words “Never Forgotten” links the two rings together and serves as a symbolic connection between the community and their loss (Figure 7. 26). The ribbon was designed by Kyle Velasquez’s parents, Al and Phyllis, to designate the Columbine Memorial as a place for families to come to gather, to reflect and to heal.

The close relationship between visitors and the Memorial is enhanced by the surrounding scenery and the runnels of running water, which are conducive to contemplation and reflection (Figure 7. 27). According to Stevens and Franck (2016), “By drawing visitors close, the design features of many contemporary memorials stimulate the senses and invite exploration; they also encourage visitors to take a more active role in experiencing the memorial in a bodily manner and by leaving their own tributes” (p. 11).
Spontaneous acts of recognition are another form of commemoration. Temporary tributes as flowers, cards, rosaries and different types of objects personalise the experience in the Memorial (Figure 7. 28).
7.5 Stories of the Site

7.5.1 Narrative

Narrative responses to tragedy vary with time, location, culture, and religious beliefs. Some people memorialise the dead with rituals and ceremonies during the memorial process, including moments of silence, prayers, speeches, and funerals. The Columbine Memorial incorporates the thoughts, feelings, and voices of students, parents, faculty, volunteers, and community members, which help to remember, reflect, and commemorate the life of the victims. (Figure 7. 30). The specific way in which victims of the Columbine tragedy would be memorialised was a sensitive topic. According to Rebecka Dawn Bingham (2008), “as the Columbine community moved from the spontaneous temporary memorial phase into more intransient memorials, one of the more delicate issues to be addressed was how to incorporate religious beliefs into a public-school setting” (pp. 44-45).
Littleton families and students expressed a strong desire to support others with faith-related narrative languages of expression. Bingham (2008) suggests, “In displaying temporary and more permanent school-based memorials, religion quickly became an issue.” Soon after the Columbine tragedy, the school permitted students and families to memorialise the victims by decorating ceramic tiles. Once completed, these tiles were placed in the school’s hallway. The tiles were a helpful support in the school community’s grieving process. General guidelines were given to those preparing these tiles: “No specific references to the shooting, no student names, and no potentially offensive religious symbols or words” (Mears, 2003 cited by Bingham, 2008, p. 45).

Years of dialogue between the design team, the planning committee, and other community groups led to “a consensus recommendation to create a physical, permanent memorial for the community and others to honor and respect those touched by the Columbine High School tragedy.” Their goal was:

[T]o create a respectful place where family members, members of the community and visitors can come to gain an understanding of the innocent victims of Columbine; to create a memorial with content and purpose 100% derived from members of the Columbine community, and keeping with the scale, materials and natural forms found in the Columbine area; to recognize and honor the deceased, the injured, the survivors and the community members; to incorporate the Columbine “never forgotten” ribbon in the concept design for the memorial. In the years since the tragedy, the Columbine ribbon has become a symbol of community unification and strength. This specific ribbon designed in the Community will be re-created in the paving or landscape patterns of the memorial. (Columbine Memorial Foundation, 2009)
The families had the opportunity to express their feelings and write a tribute that would later be engraved on the Memorial’s inner wall (the Ring of Remembrance). However, according to Rebecka D. Bingham et al. (2009), the words of one victim’s father were considered divisive and controversial because some individuals believed he was attempting to use the memorial as a platform for his own political positions (Figure 7.31). The following words were written by Daniel Rohrbough’s mother and father:

DANIEL LEE ROHRBOUGH
March 2, 1984 - April 20, 1999

[NOTE: This initial part was written by Sue Petrone, Daniel’s mother.]

What will the world miss?
A precious gift from God with an engaging smile and beautiful blue eyes that would light up the room, sensitive and caring, always quick with a comforting hug. A funny kid with an infectious laugh and a quick comeback, so full of questions and wanting to know how things work. Family was important to you and always included in your life. Just beginning your journey with so much to learn, yet you taught us so much. We miss you.

[NOTE: Daniel’s father wrote the following statements.]

“Dad, I have a question.” Why? My son in a Nation that legalized the killing of innocent children in the womb; in a County where authorities would lie and cover up what they knew and what they did; in a Godless school system your life was taken? Dan I’m sorry. “I love you dad I’ll see you tomorrow.” 7:00 p.m., April 19, 1999. “There is no peace,” says the Lord, “for the wicked.” Isaiah 48:22.
Moreover, place of memory allows different kinds of opportunities for individuals such as participation, connection, and expression, and involve the concepts of time, mind, memory and place. Stevens and Franck (2016) suggest that “by leaving tributes at a memorial, individuals can express their own feelings and establish and mark a personal connection to the site and to the individuals they are remembering” (p. 32). Leaving tributes to enrich the experience visitors as an active role of engaging with the memorial in an intimate personal way:

Bringing tributes to a memorial is an expressive act, as are ritual visits and ceremonial events. Once at the memorial, visitors have opportunities to pursue other kinds of expression: to convey their response to tragic events through writing and drawing, to interact with other visitors, to share common experiences or concerns and to encounter others who may hold decidedly different opinions from their own. (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p. 98)

### 7.5.2 Main Features of Memorial Languages

When memory is an imprint of the presence of absence feelings, the memorial languages become a dialogue between the individual and place. For instance, the open abstract core of The Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) brings the past to the present in one place. The designer, Maya Lin explained her feelings about (VVM) design:

I thought about what death is, what loss is... a sharp pain that lessens with time but can never quite heal over. A scar. The idea occurred to me there on that site. Take a knife and cut open the earth and with time the grass would heal it. As if you cut open the rock and polished it. (Maya Lin in Griswold, 2007, p. 205)

The powerful message of abstraction inherent in the Maya Lin design inspired some elements of the Columbine Memorial. The Ring of Remembrance, into which names of the victims are inscribed, represents the reality of each victim’s existence. A unique and personal reflective text honouring each victim is engraved in stone, a permanent tribute to their existence (Figure 7.32). What is unique, according to Senie, is that “The overriding theme is religious; eight statements invoke God” (Senie, 2016, p. 105).
The Wall of Healing is a place to recognise the students, the community, parents, and others who were injured or suffering by the tragedy. It is an open public reflection of their own personal experiences engraved in stone with quotes and notable statements from the groundbreaking ceremony of the Columbine Memorial (Figure 7.33).

Figure 7.32
Tribute plaque to Daniel Lee Rohrbough at The Ring of Remembrance, Columbine Memorial. Source: Photo by Camilo Walker, 2019.

"Kyle Albert Velasquez

A young man, born on August 19th, in 1990, who lived a life of strength, courage, and kindness. His love for life was infectious, and he touched the lives of so many. He was a shining light in our community, and his legacy will live on forever. Kyle, you are a hero, and your spirit will be remembered.

Kyle was and is very much loved. He will always be missed and never forgotten.

Figure 7.33
Three of the thirteen tribute plaques inside of the Ring of Remembrance, temporary tributes Columbine Memorial, Clement Park, Littleton, Colorado. Source: Author's photo, 2019.

"I hope people come here to this place to think about how they themselves can be better people rather than come here to reflect on death."

"Columbine was a momentous event in the history of the country. Even in the midst of tragedy we see the best, the best is to see about our nation and about human nature."

This Wall of Healing is dedicated to those who were injured at Columbine High School and to all who were touched by the tragic events of April 20, 1999.

"This Wall of Healing is a place to recognise the students, the community, parents, and others who were injured or suffering by the tragedy. It is an open public reflection of their own personal experiences engraved in stone with quotes and notable statements from the groundbreaking ceremony of the Columbine Memorial (Figure 7.33)."
7.6 Conclusion

The Columbine Memorial was part of the eight-year process where a community struggled to find relevant responses to memorialise the thirteen individuals who lost their lives in the tragedy and to aid family members and the community in the healing process. The memorial is a permanent reminder of the victims and the tragedy that will endure in time and in our memories. However, it also serves a role as a monument to a community trying to make sense of these events that changed their lives forever. The memorial may not be able to provide all of the answers, but it stands as a reminder to continue to ask questions and to never forget.

The word “Columbine” evokes feelings of loss and senseless violence. In many ways, it reflects the zeitgeist of modern times. For religious individuals, the tragedy is the culmination of “the decline of morality following the liberal revolutions of 1968,” and is thus “a call for the return to prayer and the posting of the Ten Commandments in the schools” (Senie, 2017, p. 118). For others, the tragedy is one of the paramount examples of the failure of the American political system to effectively implement gun control legislation. However, while there is disagreement about whether the Columbine shootings are a result of a moral failure or a political one, the Memorial allows for the visitor to connect to a sense of loss and to empathise with the victims and their families. It is a testament to a community that moved past divisions in order to provide a response that can promote healing and unity.
Words are but the vague shadows of the volumes we mean. Little audible links, they are, chaining together great inaudible feelings and purposes.

*(Dreiser, 1998, p. 9)*
SILENT CONTEMPLATION
Chapter 8

Oasis of Dignity, War Memorial

8.1 Introduction

In Chapter 8 I introduce the fifth case study, the Oasis of Dignity war memorial in Abu Dhabi, UAE, which is an analysis of a memorial response in the war dead category. The Chapter proceeds as follows: In Section 8.2 I introduce the memorial context and meaning of the Oasis of Dignity as the first Memorial Park for the United Arab Emirates to honour the soldiers who made sacrifices while serving their nation. In Section 5.3, I explore the design context in which the symbolism of water creates possibilities for contemplation and reflection in this massive Memorial. In Section 5.4, I introduce the core concepts of the memorial and the use of armoured vehicles brought back from conflict and transformed as part of the memorial site. In Section 5.5, I offer an interpretation of the Abu Dhabi case where architecture and site combine to create a place of reflection, strength, pride, power, unity and eternity. Finally, in Section 5.6, I summarise the general features of the case study and lessons learned.

“The region is at times the entirety of the surroundings, the area or vicinity as a space in which one finds oneself or which one traverses, and at times a space defined by the traits and features of a certain unity or identity, at once geographic, economic, and administrative: the region results from the establishment of a perspective, a directing of the gaze, and a conception. By contrast, the country manifests itself as something based on a belonging, but a belonging that can only come from one who “belongs” insofar as, and because, he is related to what he calls his “country.”

(Nancy, 2005, p. 53)
8.2 Memorial Context

8.2.1 Meaning of the Place

Wahat Al Karama (Arabic: ظهار الاركان, meaning “Oasis of Dignity”) is located in Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), between the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque (which is the country’s principal mosque) and the General Headquarters of the UAE Armed Forces. According to the Department of Culture of Abu Dhabi, Wahat Al Karama is a permanent tribute to UAE’s brave soldiers and other Emiratis who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving the Nation:

[Oasis of Dignity] is a place where citizens, residents, and visitors to the UAE can pay homage to those who selflessly gave their life to a cause greater than themselves. They will continue to inspire us, and we will keep their memories alive through this memorial.
(Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, 2018)

The Oasis of Dignity is the first war memorial in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that commemorates those whom the government has named as its heroes. The 46,000 m² site is composed of three structures, or pavilions that offer the visitor a space for reflection, commemoration, and knowledge regarding each of the fallen Emiratis who “sacrifice[d] their lives in the line of duty, defending the sovereignty of the nation” (Ghazal, 2015). Each station of the Oasis of Dignity has a profound meaning for the Emirati culture. The falaj, a shallow, narrow water channel that runs through the structures, symbolises the traditional Arabian irrigation system and reflects the role of water in the Islamic religion, life, and culture (Figure 8.2).

During an inspection visit to the Oasis of Dignity, the Crown Prince of the UAE, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, suggested that the sacrifices of the soldiers provide important lessons of loyalty and sacrifice that can enhance the country’s stability, dignity and security. Shaikh Mohammed praises the Oasis of Dignity as a:

National landmark that commemorates the sacrifices of Emirati martyrs on the battlefield. It will embody the values of honour and solidarity towards achieving the end goal of preserving the country’s prestigious position and its pioneering in all areas.
(Khaleej Times, 2016)
Figure 8.2
Al Ain, Abu Dhabi, Oasis, ‘falaj’ the UAE’s traditional irrigation system.
Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
8.2.2 Case Study Details

The format for the case studies displays a summary of key details of the Oasis of Dignity Memorial in Abu Dhabi. Figure 8.3 provides the details recommended by Mark Francis (2001, p. 20) for critiquing case studies such as context, scale, process, goals, scale, and location (see Figures 8.5 to 8.7). Francis also suggests that the “most successful case studies incorporate a variety of methods such as site visits; historical analysis (Figure 8.4); site analysis and behavioral analysis” (Figure 8.8) (ibid, p. 21).

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▲Figure 8.3
Format to use for the Case Studies.
Adapted from source (Francis, 2001, p. 21).
8.2.3 Timeline of the Tragedy

**EVENT**
November 30
IRAN, Greater and Lesser Tunbs 1971

**Timeline that marks the tragedy and responses.**

Author’s photos and layout.

**Figure 8.4**
Timeline that marks the tragedy and responses. Author’s photos and layout.
8.2.4 Locational Information

▲ Figure 8.5
Map location of Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the UAE. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-o).

▲ Figure 8.6
Map of the Abu Dhabi region, city Center and the Oasis of Dignity Memorial. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-a).

▲ Figure 8.7
Map of the location of the Oasis of Dignity in Abu Dhabi. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-p).
8.2.5 Place, Space and Character Site Analysis

Figure 8.8
Layout of the master site plan Oasis of Dignity in Abu Dhabi. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-p).
Figure 8. 8 is a site analysis of the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation that uses the post occupancy evaluation (POE) phase of evaluation, which “reveals common patterns of behaviour that appear to be correlated with particular layouts” (Goličnik & Thompson, 2010, p. 30). I systematically observed and recorded the actual use of the Memorial from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 5th, 2019.

8.3 Design context

8.3.1 Exploration of the Identity of the Memorial

The Oasis of Dignity memorial is a permanent tribute to the soldiers from the UAE and other countries who gave their lives while serving the nation. According to UAE history books, the first Emirati “martyr” was Salem Suhail Khamis, who was killed on November 30, 1971, during the “Battle of the Greater Tunb” against Iranian forces shortly before the UAE’s formation (G. F. White, 2015). Soldiers have also given their lives in conflicts in places such as Yemen and Afghanistan.

Armed conflict between states has a debilitating effect on families and friends of those who lost their lives in battles. Thousands of lives and victims are recognised through the pavilions and structures of the memorial. According to the memorial’s designer, British-based artist Idris Khan, the government “wanted to create a park for reflection: of loss and remembrance,” and to “create a spiritual place in the city” (Aesthetica Magazine, 2017).

According to the Khaleej Times newspaper, “[acting UAE leader] Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan stated that Wahat Al Karama is a cultural landmark that reflects the UAE’s pride in the sacrifices made by its heroes.” Shaikh Mohammed also claims that the memorial is a timeless tribute to those who sacrificed their lives in the service of the country, serving as an essential part of the country’s effort to preserve the country’s culture and history for future generations (Khaleej Times, 2016). The Oasis of Dignity Memorial is a place designed for reflection and interaction in which the narratives of Arabic poems, water, and landscape forms that open possibility for contemplation. Bowring reminds us that:

Landscape architecture has the opportunity to contribute to the emotional wellbeing of the world through the shaping of places which foster contemplation. Designing spaces which invoke melancholy and sadness allows for an emotional equilibrium in the landscape, as opposed to one which overloads the compulsion for happiness.

(Bowring, 2016, pp. 30-31)

Khan’s Oasis of Dignity commemorates the lives of the UAE’s armed forces and serves as a place of congregation for all. Khan’s intent was to make it appear as if the memorial has always been part of the landscape, as if it emerged from the sand (Madden, 2017).
8.3.2 Architectonic Dialogue

After winning a competition established by the government of Abu Dhabi, Idris Khan was commissioned to design a permanent public monument for a memorial space. The memorial was built overseas. The aluminum was cast and painted in Brisbane, Australia, and Shanghai, China. The glass for the sculpture in the pavilion was made in Munich, Germany (Aesthetica Magazine, 2017). Proberts claims that:

Wahat Al Karama Memorial is not just a monument and pavilion of honour in Abu Dhabi, it’s a testament to the creative collaboration between artists and architects. The expressive union shared by Brisbane-based architecture firm bureau/proberts and design consultancy Urban Art Projects (UAP), has culminated in their project being shortlisted at this year’s World Architecture Festival in the ‘Civic and Community - Completed Building’ category.

(Proberts, 2016)

8.3.3 Timeline to Construction

“Following a competition held in early 2016, Idris Khan was selected as the chosen designer of both the Memorial and the Pavilion of Honor. It contains 20,000 cubic meters of concrete, over 5,000 tons of steel and over 120km of cables. Khan explains his thoughts for the commission and the larger conceptual intention for the country” (Magazine, 2017).

Khan claims that in January 2016, he stood on barren land and was told the only restriction was that the project should be ‘no higher than 30 meters’ and was given a month to produce a proposal. He won the competition in March 2017 and completed the project in November of that year. Khan “has designed and built the UAE’s first permanent monument of remembrance for the armed forces. During a ceremony that involved the seven Emirates and other dignitaries, the 23-meter-high public commission was unveiled by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi on 30 November 2016, National Commemoration Day” (Madden, 2017). The memorial was built in only seven months and inaugurated at the same date [November 30] that the UAE lost its first soldier in 1971, in the battle of Greater Tunb against the Iranians (Nowais, 2018).

8.3.4 Design Process

An article in Aesthetica magazine entitled “Idris Khan: Monument and Memory”, Khan says:

[He] was more concerned with conveying unity, support and to create a feeling of loss. This is a place where people can visit and perhaps remember anyone who has ever been close to them, not only the brave who chose to go to conflict, but to be a memorial for all. The structures allude to the momentum of falling, only to be caught mid fall. The tablets are supported which is what I think a family is all about. Someone always being there through the bad times in life.

(Khan in Aesthetica Magazine, 2017)
Moreover, Khan suggests that shadows play an essential role in his work because they empower the geometric form by adding a strong character that brings attention to the effects of light and shadow (Figure 8. 9). “It almost looks like a sundial, and for me, this dynamic moment reminds me of the short time we have on this planet”. It’s a very poignant and beautiful part of the piece” (Aesthetica Magazine, 2017).
Inside of the centre of the Pavilion surrounded by smooth movement of water, stand seven glass panels that include an intangible dialect of sounds and scents. Fourteen sides of the glass are marked with calligraphy from Arabic poems and quotes that hold the soul of the place (Figure 8.10). “The glass is embedded into the floor of the platform and rises up, almost leaning onto each other which has a direct relationship with the memorial. The glass is inscribed with the soldier’s oath both front and back” (Magazine, 2017). The collection of words in the middle of the glass panels inscribed at the eye level recognises an emotional and spiritual sentiment that embraces the structures of the space.
8.3.5 Design Language

Design language is an underlying scheme that guides the development of an architectural dialect that embraces context, place and peoples’ interactions. This language is dictated by shape, form, scale, and materials. The role of water shows the link to nature and tradition – the water is contained in narrow falaj-like channels similar to those used in ancient irrigation systems found throughout the Middle East – two important milestones of Islamic culture. The flexible and functional space of the Memorial operates on a larger-than-human scale which empowers the monumental forms. The dominant design vocabulary of the modernist movement prioritises a structural purity and simple forms that overlap and lean together (Figure 8.11).

▲ Figure 8.11
Main futures of the design language of the Memorial. Series of the Tablets and the Spine elements engage with the landscape and surroundings. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
Vertical geometric panels illustrate Khan’s interest in scale, rhythm, and composition (Figure 8. 12). The monochrome paint increases the sensory capabilities of the site because it contrasts with the light colour of the hardscape. “The Memorial itself comprises 31 massive aluminium-clad tablets, each leaning on the other, symbolising the unity, solidarity and mutual support that bind together leadership and citizens with the servicemen and women who protect them” (Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, 2018). A narrow panel that extends toward the Pavilion of Honour from behind the memorial tables, where it symbolically supports the final tablet.

The Memorial Plaza is a large, wide, shallow, circular pool of water that occupies the center of the plaza. The multifunctional space of more than 4,000 m$^2$ and 15mm deep provides a unique reflection of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and the Memorial’s panels, creating a sense of serenity and contemplation. “[The structure of the Plaza] is clad with travertine stone from Turkey and surrounded by a terraced amphitheater that comfortably accommodates 1,200 people” (Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, 2018).

The Visitors’ Centre is the primary entry and welcoming point for visitors to the Memorial. It is a modern open building that provides an interactive experience of the story of the Memorial and the UAE’s Heroes. The Visitor Center roof is accessible to the public and provides clear views of the site, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and the Sheikh Zayed Bridge beyond” (Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, 2018).

The Pavilion of Honour contains many elements of symbolic significance that layer together and enrich the theme of the Oasis of Dignity Memorial. The Pavilion is a solid structural anchor embedded at the end of the visitor’s journey: “The Pavilion’s circular internal wall is clad with over 2,800 aluminum plates, among which are inscribed the names of the UAE’s (as of now) 234 fallen heroes. Each of the illuminated plates is engraved with the soldier’s name, rank, service branch, location, and date of death” (Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, 2018). The enclosed geometric design of the pavilion is focused on the composition of seven large transparent glass panels and surrounded by water. The eight overlapping slabs that form the structure of the roof allows natural light to enter into the core of the space. The natural light and shade turn into a vocabulary that reveals Khan’s monolithic contemporary work as a mourning narrative inside the Pavilion of Honour (Figure 8. 13). Figure 8. 14 reveals the components of the War Memorial site and offers a description of the elements of its design language.
Figure 8.12

Layout of the master site plan and Section A-A the Oasis of Dignity Memorial. Adapted from source: Wahat al Karama / bureau^proberts + Urban Art Projects (ArchDaily, 2017f).
Figure 8.13
Layout of the roof plans and Sections, the Pavilion of Honour, The Oasis of Dignity Memorial. Adapted from source: Wahat al Karama / bureauaproberts + Urban Art Projects (ArchDaily, 2017e),(ArchDaily, 2017d).
Interpretation of the site that shows the arrangements and overarching scheme of the architectural setting at the Oasis of Dignity, UAE. Adapted from source: (Google Maps, n.d.-p).
8.4 Expression of Memory

8.4.1 Interpretations

The Oasis of Dignity is an evocative composition of memorial elements that reflects a strong cultural connection, providing a built landscape that enables reflection, emotion, contemplation, and interpretation:

Interpretations—like forms themselves—fulfil a cultural, historically conditioned role. We interpret buildings in certain ways because in so doing we can throw some light upon aspects of the world in which we live. (Juan Bonta in Davis & Bowring, 2011, p. 379)

The stations and pavilions that are part of the memorial are a mix of sculptural and architectonic elements that enrich the relationship between abstract symbolism from the Islamic culture and the materiality displayed by the massive structures.

The landscape of the United Arab Amirates is mostly desert, characterised by arid land, low precipitation, and high temperatures. The role of water in Islamic architecture is not solely a functional addition to architecture and design; it is an integral part of cultural, spiritual, and religious values. According to Burmil, Daniel, & Hetherington, at the most fundamental levels, water is essential for life:

In the arid landscape where heat, drought and dust prevail water provides a means to wash dust off, saturate thirst, cool off and refresh the body. Beyond these, water has come to symbolize purity, sanctity and rebirth. Purity is associated with the water current which carries refuse away, leaving the bather clean. The perception of cleanliness and refreshment associated with water leads to a sense of regained energy, youth, and health. (Burmil, Daniel, & Hetherington, 1999, p. 99)

The shallow, narrow water channel (the falaj) begins at the entry of the memorial site, runs through to the large dark grey leaning tables, with to the circular pool, and ends in a pool in the Pavilion of Honour. Unity, structure, and connection are all signified by water at the memorial. The falaj carries symbolic life into the structures and slowly blends into a 50-meter-wide, 15-millimeter-deep pool of reflection that frames the surrounding (the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque) providing a peaceful and contemplative space.

The symbolic meaning of the pavilions creates a palpable physical response and a sense of loss through light, shadow, scale and the serenity of the sounds of the water. The aesthetics, function and symbolic elements of the Oasis of Dignity memorial unfold onto a wide-open landscape that is visually connected to the most significant mosque for gathering and prayer in the country, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. The view of the sublimely beautiful Mosque blends with the permanent geometric space offered by the Abu Dhabi Memorial as if both are part of a single contemplative space.

The tablets feature a series of Arabic poems and quotes from Sheikh Zayed, the nation’s founder, and the current Crown Prince, Sheikh Mohamed. The poems and verses encourage the viewer to discover and touch the engravings as they walk through the artwork, creating a personal relationship with the Memorial. The olive and palm trees that surround part of the memorial are symbols of heritage. The water rushing through the falaj system blends with the melodious sounds from the birds that are attracted to the bushes in the memorial.
8.4.2 Physical and Sensory Interpretations

- **Symbolic**
- **Detached**
- **Enclosed**
- **Included**
- **Detached**
- **Incorporated**
- **Open**
- **Incorporated**
- **Excluded**
- **Temporary**
- **Small**
- **Present**
- **Absent**
- **Present**
- **Tangible**
- **Intangible**
- **Invisible**
- **Inaudible**
- **Blandness**
- **Inaudible**
- **Emotion**

**Physical and Sensory Interpretations**

- **Impression**
- **Involvement of the Victims**
- **Surrounding Context**
- **Surrounding Site Memorial**
- **Time**
- **Scale**
- **Representation**
- **Phenomenological**
- **Touch**
- **Sight**
- **Smell**
- **Sound**
- **Taste**
Figure 8. 15 sets out the physical and sensory interpretations through the next categories which form the basis of understanding the memorial languages: impression, the involvement of the victims, surrounding context, surrounding site memorial, time, scale, representation, and perceptive with phenomenological lenses.

**Impression (symbolic + abstract).** Symbolic elements such as water are included in the landscape of the Memorial, allowing for a spatial engagement between visitors and place. The abstract forms slabs of aluminum tablets allow open interpretations reflecting void and absence in a tangible way.

**The involvement of the victims (detached + incorporated).** The Abu Dhabi Memorial incorporates the fallen soldiers into the design, as it includes their names. Rituals to honour their memory are frequently conducted.

**Surrounding context (enclosed + open).** The memorial surrounding context is accessible and open, which integrates the site with the surrounding landscape.

**Surrounding site memorial (included + excluded).** The site surrounding the Memorial is a wide-open landscape that invites visitors to honour the victims of the war.

**Time (permanent + temporary).** The memorial is intended to be a permanent response to the victims of the war.

**Scale (large + small).** The memorial is located in front of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. The site of the Memorial is 46,000m².

**Representation (absent + present).** The Abu Dhabi Memorial lists the names of the fallen soldiers on aluminium walls that are made from the melted-down vehicles from armed conflicts. The objects that were part of the war and caused so much sorrow are transformed into materials that are part of the memorial, providing a physical connection with the past.

**Phenomenological lenses.**

**Touch.** A tangible interaction between the visitors and the memorial occurs when people interact with the water. At the Pavilion of Honour, visitors can make direct contact with the tiles that contain the names of the soldiers.

**Sight.** The close visual connection with the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque with the Memorial site contributes to the atmosphere of reflection and contemplation.

**Smell.** The combination of the smell of sand, dry soil, and dust from the landscape is blown into the open landscape by the wind.

**Sound.** The ritual practices of the Muslim prayer performed five times each day add to the Abu Dhabi Memorial unique sonorous attributes.

**Taste.** The sense of taste was not aligned with the Oasis of Dignity Abu Dhabi Memorial.
Conceptual tensions within content and interpretation factors will develop a position in the matrix that corresponds to the awareness components corresponds to spatial, perception and experiences of the Oasis of Dignity Abu Dhabi. Source: Own elaboration.
Figure 8. 16 displays three different graphs that map the relationship between different contents and personal interpretations of the Memorial. In Chapter 9, I combine the results of these graphs with those from the other four case studies.

### 8.4.3 Core Concepts

The combination of architectural and landscape elements provides a composition in which scale, form, texture, and materials interact in the various open dynamic spaces of the Memorial, creating an atmosphere for mourning, contemplation, pride, and national unity. According to Madden, Khan’s monument was:

Inspired by American artist Chris Burden, especially his Beam Drop (1984), in which steel beams were released from 100 meters into slow setting concrete where they randomly stuck at eccentric angles, leaning against each other. Khan started by drawing straight lines at different angles that were connected, each supporting the next. The linear effect they never completely lost balance, yet were caught in between, creating an exciting rhythm.

(Madden, 2017)
The Oasis of Dignity Memorial offers pragmatic structures blended into the landscape, reflecting the influence of the Burden’s enduring works (Figure 8.17). His abstract sculptural compositions are an inspiration for Khan’s aluminum-clad tablets.

The journey begins with the falaj, a channel of water symbolising that life and knowledge originated from water in Islam. The falaj takes its inspiration from aflaj, a physical and technical characteristic of the irrigation system originating in the region (Figure 8.18). The gentle, peaceful sound of water as it moves along the starting point to the end of the Memorial adds dynamism, reflection, freshness, and tranquility to the site. The Memorial tablets and the Pavilion of Honour symbolise the support of a nation for soldiers and families. Khan made the following comment about the Memorial:

I wanted this monument to have positive and hopeful resonance while inspiring curiosity in sculpture and how contemporary art can influence emotions. It is a place for serenity within a city busy with construction and growth, a major part of a country’s history and landscape that will be absorbed by the cultural awareness of future generations.

(in Imanova (2017))
8.4.4 Memorial Languages

The outdoor structure of the Oasis of Dignity Memorial embraces specific artistic elements that are related to Khan’s background, and it is his intention that the visitor experiences these components via physical engagement with a series of stations. Many of his previous works are sculptures about loss and remembrance.

According to Madden (2017), Khan’s work has consistently addressed themes of memory and loss through the process of compressing time. Throughout his work, Khan has been inspired by pre-existing information and layers of meaning to create exciting rhythms, such as when he scanned photographs of water towers from the German photographers Hilla and Bernd Becher. Or when he layered every page of the Qu’ran to create a rendered image that was at once blurred and fragmented in a manner similar to our memories (Figures 8.19 to 8.22). These early works influenced his approach to the architecture of the Memorial. In an interview, Khan argues that:

Contemporary artists react to everything around them and somehow there is always an urge to create connections with the environment that they surround themselves in, whether they choose to or not. In this case, I feel I have created a place to reflect. It is a place for serenity within a very busy city of construction and growth. I believe this monument has a positive and hopeful resonance. (Madden, 2017)

Figure 8.17
Every...Bernd And Hilla Becher Gable Sided Houses by Idris Khan. Series appropriates the Bechers’ imagery and compiles their collections into single super-images. In this piece, multiple images of American-style gabled houses are digitally layered and super-imposed giving the effect of an impressionistic drawing or blurred film still (Khan, 2004a).
Every...Bernd And Hilla Becher Prison Type Gasholders by Idris Khan. The structures in the Bechers’ original photographs are almost identical, though in Khan’s hands the images’ contrast and opacity is adjusted to ensure each layer can be seen and has presence. Though Khan works in mechanised media and his images are of industrial subjects, their effect is of a soft ethereal energy. They exude a transfixing spiritual quality in their densely compacted details and ghostly outlines. ...Prison Type Gasholders conveys a sense of time depicted in motion, as if transporting the old building, in its obsolete black and white format, into the extreme future (Khan, 2004b).

Photographing or scanning from secondary source material—sheet music, pages from the Qur’an, reproductions of late Caravaggio paintings—he then builds up the layers of scans digitally, which allows him to meticulously control minute variances in contrast, brightness and opacity. Displacement (detail), 2015 large scale stamped piece in situ dimensions variable unique IK-66 (Khan, 2015).
The memorial language established by the Oasis of Dignity reflects the influence of various artists that have shaped Khan’s conceptualisation of memorials in a direction that evokes serenity and reflection. One of the most significant fragments of the narrative of the Memorial is seen when one encounters the names of the soldiers who lost their lives on duty for their country. Viewing the names of the soldiers who died in combat at eye level forces the observer to confront absence, loss, and death. Using the actual material used in conflict, moulded into 2,475 aluminium plates, evokes a sense of absence and loss (Figure 8. 22). The enclosures of the space and the roof structure almost mimic the tablet form of the monument, creates a protective cover of stillness, silence and respect to the room.

![Figure 8. 22](image)

Idris Khan, War Memorial, Oasis of Dignity, aluminium plate inside the Pavilion of Honour Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Source: Author's photo, 2019.

The aesthetic and material transformation statement embedded in Khan’s work is similar to the vision of the Colombian sculptor Doris Salcedo that marks the end of her country’s half-century guerrilla war. Both artists transform the materials that were involved in the conflict into elements that can contribute to a narrative that uses the language of memorialisation. Indeed, war, violence, and their effects have become a regular part of everyday life for many. Salcedo suggests that:
As a response to the signing of the peace agreement, Salcedo created a work in Bogotá, Colombia that transforms the scrap metal from leftover rebel machine guns, automatic rifles, and pistols into “tiles”, thus using physical material from the tragedy to evoke the presence of absent victims. These sidearms and other weapons were used to kill more than 220,000 people in a war that began in 1964 and ended through a peace treaty signed in 2016. According to John Otis, Salcedo believes “A conventional monument ... is usually a vertical piece placed on a pedestal that we should all look up [to]. So, I thought arms do not deserve to be there” (2018, November). Through her art, Salcedo transforms the symbol of violence, conflict, and sorrow into a new dialogue between the victims and the war.

Additionally, as a part of her work Salcedo recruited women who had been sexually assaulted by guerrillas, army soldiers or paramilitaries to participate in the process of this material transformation from symbols of violence to symbols of healing: “As we hammered along they started telling me what kind of experiences they were hammering away. So, it was a completely cathartic experience...It generated, I think, the energy of this floor has.”(Figure 8. 23). One of the women, Ángela Escobar, says that when she took off her earplugs the hammering resembled the sound of firefight. Another, Fulvia Chunganá, who was raped by a FARC guerrilla fighter in 1990, says that pounding the metal was so difficult, that tears came to her eyes. But now she says of the destroyed weapons: “To see them there, as part of the floor, is very gratifying” (Otis, 2018, November).

War is the main event of our time. War is what defines our lives . . . it creates its own laws. War forces us to generate ethical codes which exclude whole parts of the population; once this happens, we can attack and destroy them because they are no longer viewed as human, and we have used these false ethics as a tool to expel people from humankind. We see civil wars happening everywhere, every day. We read about these terrible events that shape the way we live. What I am trying to show in my work is that war is part of our everyday life. (Doris Salcedo in Salcedo et al., 2000, p. 18)
Salcedo and Khan’s works express a distinctive response to violence by transforming physical elements that were part of the conflict into a part of the physical memorial languages. While this type of consciousness narrative is a powerful shaper of identity, this type of narrative can help victims to take a step back and reflect on the historical events.

According to political theorist Fredric Jameson, “History is not something we can know directly; it is available to the scholar only as a combination of traces or wounds. It can be apprehended only through its effects” (Sefchovich, 2005, p. 102). A historical example, Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial in Washington, DC, brings the past and the present together. In his book, *Creating the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: The Inside Story*, Robert Doubek recalls that the instructions for the memorial’s design competition included the following statement:

“The purpose of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is to recognize and honor those who served and died. It will provide a symbol of acknowledgement of the courage and sacrifice, and devotion to duty of those who were among the nation’s finest youth.”

(Doubek, 2015, p. 91)
According to Bowring (2016), the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial “[is] eschewing pure representation and instead abstracting the task of memory into the simple form of black granite walls listing the names of the dead.” Bowring adds that “the memorial provides a resistance to the potential for the loss of empathy that can occur with the dehumanising effect of mass memorials. Rather than erasing the individual, the Memorial works to maintain their presence” (Bowring, 2016, p. 66). Placing the names on the shiny black surface of a stone reflects and inscribes a new insertion into the presence of absence. Commemorating the individual’s names recalls the past, but at the same time allows for the preservation of a personal and individual memorial.

Likewise, in the case of the Oasis of Dignity in Abu Dhabi, each of the names engraved on the Pavilion of Honour designates a fallen soldier as a hero for a nation but also recognises the deep void left in each soldier’s family. Presence and absence combine to develop a narrative that encodes our memory with the awareness of the void. Bowring suggests that:

> The encoding of narratives within memorials offers a different kind of security, bound up with aspects of evidence, identity and place. Gillis describes how in this context ‘anti-monuments’ – those memorial designs which rebel against conventional expectations – are criticised for ‘manufacturing oblivion’ and eroding the content of the event. (Bowring, 2016, p. 66)

### 8.4.5 Symbolic Elements

Khan's project is influenced both by his personal background and by Islamic cultural elements. It provides a place for reflection that is enhanced by the presence of water, as well as a series of Arabic poems and quotes from both the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan and Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Viewers are encouraged to read the quote from the Quran and touch the artwork, thus interacting with the Memorial on a more personal level (Figures 8.24 to 8.33).
- 210 metres total length of the *falaj*.
- 4 pools connected to the *falaj*.
- View of the falaj at day and at night the pool.

▲ Figure 8. 24
*The Falaj.* Source: Author’s photo, 2019.

▲ Figure 8. 25
*Main entrance. Visitor Center* is the main point of welcome for visitors to "Wahat Al Karama." Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
The Memorial Plaza. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.

- 31 aluminum-clad tablets.
- 1,000 cast aluminum panels.
- 111 tons of aluminum cladding.
- 300 tons of structural steel.
- 23m tall maximum height.

- 50 m diameter.
- 15mm depth.
- 1 m tall waterfall in front.
- 5 minutes to drain or refill.
- 4,000 square meter plaza.
- 1,200 people can sit in the amphitheater around the pool.

Memorial Tablets. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
Figure 8.28

Figure 8.29
Tablets are inscribed with a series of poems and quotes by the UEA leaders. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.

-27 metres long the spine is cast from over 90 square meters of Aluminum. The spine rises 3.3 from the ground to its highest pint.

The Spine. Source: Author’s photo, 2019
**Figure 8.32**
Ground floor of the Pavilion of Honour, the Oasis of Dignity Memorial.
Note. Adapted from source: Wahat al Karama / bureau^proberts + Urban Art Projects (ArchDaily, 2017a).

- 8 panels form the roof.
- 2,475 aluminum plates clad the circular internal wall.
- 7 transparent glass panels at the center.
- Each panel is 3.5 m tall and weighs 1.2 tons.
- 10 tons of aluminum recycled from armored vehicles.

**Figure 8.33**
The Pavilion of Honour. Source: Author’s photo, 2019.
8.5 Stories of the Site

8.5.1 Narrative

The UAE Memorial compiles many collective memories from the nation’s history in one location and devotes them to those who sacrificed their lives for the country. Khan’s narrative of the Memorial incorporates a new vocabulary of memorialisation that reflects his own background. Having always worked in monochrome, Khan softens the exterior of the Memorial with a painted gradient over the aluminum surface that softens the exterior to create a vertical series of paintings that are inspired by those of Agnes Martin, an important influence for Khan (Figure 8.35).
According to Thomas Marks (2014), “[Khan’s] photographs, these works, achieve a depth that belies their medium – and again, that feel for perspective is both visual and theoretical, as the paintings enter into dialogue with the great masters of abstraction and repetition.” Marks quotes Khan himself here: ‘It’s nice to push language,’ he says, ‘and see how far you can push a word to become a line’ (Marks, 2014).

The narrative of the War Memorial in UAE reflects the desire to honour those who died during the conflict. Its distinctive identity is rooted in the history, culture, society, and individual memories of the victims. Afra Al Romaithi, a guide from the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Cultural Authority, explains that:

Every day, whether rain or shine, a dozen servicemen in uniform visit Wahat Al Karama to salute the UAE’s heroes. In the Pavilion of Honour enlisted 234 names of martyrs the aluminum in the surface of the aluminum walls made from the melted down armed vehicles from the conflict. Every year at Commemoration Day include more martyrs who die in the recent war, 3 names shall be adding this year”

(Al Romaithi, 2019)

The President of the UAE, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, declared Commemoration Day in 2015 to honour those who gave their lives in service of the nation. It is marked each year on November 30th, the anniversary of the death of the Salem Suhail Khamis Al Dahmani in 1971. Commemoration Day begins when the UAE flag is lowered to half-mast at 8:00 a.m. A military parade features the nation’s armed forces members marching to national songs. A minute of silence is held at 11.30 am, followed by the raising of the UAE flag and the national anthem. Then the UAE’s leaders lay the wreaths at the Memorial and present medals to the Heroes’ family members in recognition and honor of the fallen soldiers’ sacrifices.

![Figure 8.35](image-url) 

Agnes Martin (1912–2004). Her paintings consist of a simple system of interlocking horizontal and vertical lines in an almost exclusively six-foot-square format. Her fragile lines that cross expanses of lightly applied, atmospheric color reveal a spiritual quest. Her arrangements shift in scale and rhythm from work to work. (Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2019).
8.5.2 Main Features of Memorial Languages

Monuments and memorials serve multiple functions in the communities in which they are established. Honouring the country’s war dead can symbolise a unified nation, make a statement about values, and create a contemplative and solemn space for individuals whom leaders think their society should remember.

The Memorial welcomes visitors with water rushing from the fountain, marking the beginning of a commemorative journey of a nation’s heroes. The strong connection between the Memorial spaces and water initiates a relationship of silent contemplation. Water becomes more important as the journey progresses. It is an active link that represents Islamic culture and embraces the Memorial purpose. The Memorial Plaza (or Infinity Pool), which swirls in an anti-clockwise direction, marks the existence of each soldier in space and time. The Pavilion of Honour is located at the end of the visitor’s journey. It is a place where memories of each soldier are engraved into the national memory. Every day a light is turned on next to every tile on which the name of a soldier is inscribed. The central concept of the Pavilion is continuous memorialisation. Every time that life is taken by war, a tile is taken off and then replaced with another one containing the name of the fallen hero, and a light is shone on that tile. The Oasis of Dignity provides spatial interaction between architecture and sculpture that brings identity, scale and movement, representing support and enabling acts of commemoration.

8.6 Conclusion

The Oasis of Dignity Memorial invites contemplation and reflection through the use of spatial forms that are the lexicon which expresses the loss and pride of a young nation. The Abu Dhabi War Memorial was developed to commemorate those involved and affected by conflict and to reflect the heritage of the UAE. Water, natural light and shadows balance the composition of geometric forms, adding ephemeral experiences and emotions to the visitor’s journey. A small stream of water travels through the different “stations” and “pavilions”, symbolising the UAE’s traditional irrigation system. This provides a sense of cultural identity and belonging to the site.

Every day at Oasis of Dignity Memorial, a dozen service members in uniform pay tribute to the UAE’s soldiers who have lost their lives in war. The rituals of mourning and the geometric structures bring together form, scale, textures, and colours, creating rhythm and a sense of unity. The design composition engages visitors by promoting a sense of togetherness through the pain of loss. The Abu Dhabi Memorial acknowledges that loss, honouring the names of each soldier without focusing on whether they died in victory or defeat. According to Maya Lin (2000) “The price of human life in war should always be clearly remembered.” Lin suggests that the power of including a name in a memorial site is that it is a response to tragedy on a personal level. She adds that:
The use of names was a way to bring back everything someone could remember about a person. The strength in a name is something that has always made me wonder at the "abstraction" of the design; the ability of a name to bring back every single memory you have of that person is far more realistic and specific and much more comprehensive than a still photograph, which captures a specific moment in time or a single event or a generalized image that may or may not be moving for all who have connections to that time.

(Lin, 2000, p. 35)
The USA
Colorado
Mexico
Mexico City
Colombia
Bogota

COLUMBINE MEMORIAL

MEMORIAL TO THE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

The UAE
Abu Dhabi

THE OASIS OF DIGNITY, MEMORIAL

New Zealand
Christchurch

THE WHITE SHOE MEMORIAL

The  Oasis  of
Dignity,
Memorial

Columbine
Memorial

The center for
Memory,
Peace and
Reconciliation

Languages

Violence, Landscape 
& Memorial 
Languages
Chapter 9

Findings and Results of the Case Studies

9.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the results of the analyses as well as the results of the interpretations of the five case studies from chapters 4 to 8. In this part of the research, I summarise the main narratives, providing interpretations of each of the five-case studies through a set of diagrams. In Section 9.1, I explain how symbols embody different layers into the narratives of the memorials by developing diagrams of the main characteristics of each case study through materials, form and local narrative. In Section 9.2, I highlight the events and the responses for each memorial. In Section 9.3, I assess the impact of the location, place, and scale as a part of the landscape character of each case study.

Further, in Section 9.4, I illustrate the design process, engagement, and responses to tragedy in the development of each memorial. In Section 9.5, I identify the key aspects of the landscape characteristics in the context as a part of the development of the case studies. In Section 9.6, I summarise the findings and present results of the dominant narratives of the five case studies through a set of themes and phenomenological lenses. Finally, in Section 9.7, I reflect on these findings and how memorial languages can respond to human-induced tragedies such as violence and conflict, mass shooting and war.

This research uses a case study approach to investigate memorialisation by analysing five memorials located in five different countries within three categories (Figure 9. 1). The first category is a response to violence and conflict. The Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Bogotá, Colombia and the Memorial to Victims of Violence, in Mexico City both, fit into this category (Figure 9. 2). The second category is a response to mass shootings. The Memorial Park in Columbine, in Colorado, USA, and the White Shoe Memorial in Christchurch, New Zealand (Figure 9. 3), fall into this category. Finally, the third category, a war memorial response, is represented by the case of the Oasis of Dignity ‘Wahat al Karama’ in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (Figure 9. 4).
THE CASE STUDY SITES

**VIOLENT CONFLICT**

**YEAR 2012**

**LOCATION COLOMBIA**

**AREA 4,000 mt²**

**CENTER FOR MEMORY, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION**

---

**VIOLENT CONFLICT**

**YEAR 2013**

**LOCATION MEXICO**

**AREA 15,000 mt²**

**MEMORIAL OF THE VICTIMS OF THE VIOLENCE**

---

The first category is responses to **violence and conflict**.

Source: Author’s photos and layout.
THE CASE STUDY SITES

MASS SHOOTING

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<th>YEAR</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>AREA</th>
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<td>UNITED STATES OF AMERICA</td>
<td>27,000sq or approx. 25,080mt²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COLUMBINE MEMORIAL</td>
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MASS SHOOTING

<table>
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<th>YEAR</th>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>NEW ZEALAND</td>
<td>20 LINEAR METERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WHITE SHOE MEMORIAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

▲ Figure 9.3

The second category is a response to a mass shooting.
Source: Author’s photos and layout.
The third category, a war, and loss memorial response.  
Source: Author’s photos and layout.

“Every memorial in its time has a different goal.”

Maya Lin
**Figure 9.5**
Timeline of the event and the memorial response for each case study.
Source: Own diagram.
9.2 Events and Responses of the Memorials

Responses to tragedy and the languages of memorialisation offer multiple layers of remembrance that have been linked with place and context, developing a dialogue in the landscape that brings together victims, memory and time. Figure 9.5 illustrates the timelines for each of the five tragedies and the memorial responses. In four cases a considerable amount of time passed between the event and memorial responses: The Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation, in Colombia, the Memorial to Victims of Violence, in Mexico City, the Oasis of Dignity in the United Arab Emirates, and the Memorial Park in Columbine. For the fifth case, the White Shoe Memorial was an immediate response.

Tragic events change the course of history and the perspective of society, embedding wounds in time. Latin American culture relates to deep memories of violence drawing from the pre-colonial period, the Spanish conquest, the colonial period, and the modern era. Forms of identity are stored in people’s memories as individuals. Additionally, the connection and influence by non-Latin American events, such as the Holocaust and the American civil rights struggle, develop a universal language of remembering violence and loss. The nation of Colombia was engaged in a destructive and deeply entrenched civil war for over half a century since the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, leader of a socialist movement in Colombia. This led to a violent period in Colombian history known as La Violencia.

The Colombian conflict is rooted in historical events going back to 1948 and was intensified by anti-communist repression in rural Colombia in the 1960s that led the liberal and communist militants to re-organize into the rebel organization known as the FARC. In addition, other guerrilla movements claimed to be fighting for the rights of the poor in Colombia to protect them from government violence and to provide social justice through communism. In 2012, sixty-four years later, the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Bogotá opened a place for the victims of the conflict, creating opportunities for social participation promoting a sense of community and peacebuilding.

In the 1980s, Mexican crime groups and drug traffickers organised and established networks and trafficking routes. As production and distribution increased, the groups began fighting for territorial control and access to markets, leading to an increase in violence across the country. The Memorial to Victims of Violence in Mexico City opened in 2013 as a government response to violence, recognising that society plays a role in both violence and peace.

Between 1971 and 1972 in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, seven emirates joined as a federation known as The United Arab Emirates (UAE). In 1971, during the “Battle of the Greater Tunb” against Iranian forces shortly before the formation of the UAE, the first Emirati “martyr” was Salem Suhail Khamis, who was killed by Iranian forces. In 2016, the Oasis of Dignity Memorial become the first permanent memorial in the UAE to pay tribute to the soldiers from their nation and other countries who gave their lives while serving the country.
Gun violence is a universal human rights issue that daily affects people’s lives. Twenty years after the Columbine massacre where two students killed 13 people and themselves on April 20, 1999, America has been tragically experiencing one mass shooting after another for decades. Focusing on memorials as responses to tragedy or as processes of commemoration can generate a variety of “permanent” or “temporal” memorial narratives. After eight years, the Columbine memorial responded by providing a permanent peaceful outdoor setting for individual and family reflection. And the day after the March 15, 2019 tragedy in Christchurch in which 51 died, the ‘All Souls in Christchurch’ church of the Anglican Parish of Merivale St Albans developed a temporary memorial outside of the church. The White Shoe Memorial is a response to a tragedy that allows for reflection on the event that changed a nation forever.

9.3 Analysis of the Results Through Symbols

The process of critique is used to explore the responses to tragedy and the languages of memorialisation through the process, development, and results expressed in narratives and symbols in each case study. Interpretations and experiences can lead to a strong language of memorialisation caused by conflict, violence, mass shooting, and war. How memorialisation is shaped often depends on who is directing the process, how memorial language is used, or the roles that space and place play in the memorial design.

Memorial practices and languages of memorialisation are part of the processes where place, victims, victims’ families, community, and visitors engage as mechanisms of humanising responses to trauma. The narratives and responses associated with death and grieving can take multiple forms depending on the nature, duration, and stage of the conflict. Memorials are social acts that can assist with peacebuilding, as they help to prevent tragedies from reoccurring. The peacebuilding roles that memorials can play include gaining recognition for victims, offering possibilities for reconciliation between perpetrators and the families of victims, and providing opportunities for healing through processes of remembering and commemoration.

Collections of individual memories can create a unique understanding of the context of the place and the narratives that surround it. Experiences and interpretations are ways in which information is gathered about people, objects or events in our memories. The ways we honour or celebrate the memory of an individual or event can be represented through several forms or symbols that build a language of memorialisation through our experience and interactions of the place.

This research is motivated by the fact that I grew up in Colombia, a country where the past and present are immersed in memories of tragedy, violence, conflict, drugs, abuses by public security forces and an endless list of open wounds. Every day people suffer in silence, fearful of an unpredictable future. One of my interests with these five case studies is to interpret cultural and social landscapes and how the past is remembered, what the role of memorials is in the prevention of future violence, and what forms of memorial languages are present.
Symbolic elements can communicate specific historical and ideological contexts through languages of commemoration that tell stories through the landscape. Each case study manifests its own narrative, and there is a range of narrative forms across the case studies representing a complex nexus between material and form, place and victims, trauma and individual or collective memory as part of the local narrative. In Figure 9.6, I identify the main symbols of the languages of memorialisation of the five case studies in this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOLS AND LAYERS OF MEMORIAL LANGUAGES</th>
<th>MATERIAL</th>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>LOCAL NARRATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| CENTER FOR MEMORY, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION | - Soil from victims’ homes  
- Static water  
- Native plants  
- Vernacular architecture | Colonial checkerboard layout  
- Catholic cultural values  
- Vernacular architecture  
- Soil used as a testimony from the victims’ home  
- Memories of the victims and the survivors | Organisational structure of the colonial systems |
| MEMORIAL OF THE VICTIMS OF THE VIOLENCE | - Panels of metal  
- Static water  
- Native trees | Colonial checkerboard layout  
- Catholic culture values  
- Special rituals on the Day of the Dead (December 2 in Mexico) | Organisational structure of the colonial systems |
| COLUMBINE MEMORIAL | - Native Colorado stone (forms the space)  
- Moving water  
- Native plants | Religious Christian values  
- Names of the 13 victims  
- Represent the words of the community | |
| WHITE SHOE MEMORIAL | - Shoes covered by white paint | Anglican cultural values  
- 51 shoes representing the number of victims (but no names)  
- Represent the mourning of the community | |
| THE OASIS OF DIGNITY MEMORIAL | - Slabs of aluminium  
- Light marble stone  
- Static water  
- Moving water (interpreted as an irrigation system)  
- Native plants  
- Glass | Islamic cultural values  
- Name of each of the 234 victims (up to now)  
- Commemoration Day or Martyrs’ Day is marked annually on December 1 in the United Arab Emirates | |

⚠️ Figure 9.6
The third category, a war, and loss memorial response.
Source: Author’s photos and layout.
9.3.1 Material

Material is defined as the physical components of the site, including elements such as water and native plants, that bring a unique character to the place. For instance, in the case of the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation, in Bogotá, Colombia, the victims of the conflict brought soil from their home towns as a symbol of recognition of the victims, murders, and disappearances. The soil was used in the walls of the building, developing a vernacular architecture where the designer expressed the past and the hidden voices of the victims.

The Columbine Memorial in Colorado, USA, was developed with Colorado native stone, reducing significant environmental impact enhancing sustainability. This local distinctiveness contributed to the memorial sense of place and identity. Moreover, the White Shoe Memorial, through the use of fifty-one pairs of shoes from the local Christian community, evokes empathy for the local Muslim community and recognises the victims as individuals rather than as numbers.

The materials used in the Memorial to Victims of Violence, in Mexico City, and the Oasis of Dignity in Abu Dhabi are large panels of aluminium, bringing different colours, textures, composition, and scale to the memorials. Within both memorials, water is one of the main links to nature and to involve water elements that can shape spaces. Both the Aztecs (the indigenous people dominant in Mexico before the Spanish conquest), and the early Middle Eastern culture used canals and channels of water as irrigation systems, highlighting the role of water as an essential part of their lives. In addition, the Aztecs built canals and aligned the city with canals to supply all the parts of the city that they could reach with water. The *falaj* is a traditional irrigation system of the Gulf’s oases, to make the land suitable for agriculture, building a complex network of tunnels, vertical and shafts.

The role of water in each memorial is significant in the composition, creating spaces of diverse character or shaping unique microclimates. In addition, part of water’s role in the four of the five case studies was to create emotional or experiential effects that inspire quiet reflection and contemplation.

9.3.2 Form

The second layer of symbols I have identified as part of the memorial language is form. The Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation and the Memorial to Victims of Violence are based on structured forms from the Spanish Colonial period. The checkerboard layout originated from the design pattern of towns in which the main activities of the city were focused on the town square area, and this form is repeated in these two memorials.

The circular form of the Memorial Park in Columbine is used to represent equality, unity, commitment, and empathy as a symbol of fragility and life cycle. Because a circle does not have a distinct beginning or end, it implies movement, eternity, and timelessness which sends positive emotional messages of harmony and protection to the visitors.
The Shoe Memorial was laid in front of the church in a straight line. A few days later the white shoes were moved inside the church because they were being damaged due to the weather. The shoes were laid in a circle inside the chapel, creating an emotional and powerful sense of belonging that represents unity, commitment, love, and community.

One of the most complex case studies of the five in terms of the form is the Oasis of Dignity. This memorial is characterised by pure lines and geometric forms, where rounded shapes and straight-lined forms structure the pools and the Pavilion of Honour.

### 9.3.3 Local Narrative

The third layer encompassed by this study is the local narrative that varies according to the cultural, ritual and social values in each memorial. This layer focuses on the role of faith in peace, reconciliation, hope, and homage to the victims. For instance, the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation is an open space for dialogue around experiences, situations, and testimonies of the victims. The process of collective memories about war violence under transitional settings and peacebuilding processes can bring hope to the victims.

The Memorial to Victims of Violence, in Mexico City, is a space of celebration and special rituals. Every November 2, family and friends gather to pray and remember those who have died and support their journey to the world of the dead by attending a mass celebration. Also, the families build private altars called ofrendas, honouring the victims with flowers, candles, and images of the victims as a reflection of the local ritual practices of the Mexican Catholic rituals.

The different local narratives strengthen and empower rituals that become a part of the daily routine of the Oasis of Dignity. Every day a dozen servicemen in uniform visit the memorial to greet the UAE’s heroes as a recognition of the sons of a young nation who have given their lives in the UAE and abroad through military and humanitarian service. Every December 1 the sacrifices and dedication of Emirati martyrs are celebrated as a Commemoration Day or Martyrs’ Day.

The role of local narratives shapes what (and who) is remembered in each memorial. The narrative developed in the case studies of the Bogotá, Colombia and the Mexico City memorials allow social interactions of the survivor victims’ through symbolic rituals and personal tributes. Conversely, at the Columbine, and Abu Dhabi memorials, the victims are identified by their names. In the case of the White Shoe Memorial, each pair of shoes represents a victim.

The power of a name is in its ability to reveal identity. It allows us to establish a connection with who we are and how we are perceived in this world. The personal recognition registered with the names of the victims who have lost their lives in a tragedy such as mass shootings or a war battle can lead to a more intimate relationship between place and visitors. In addition, objects such as shoes symbolize the footprint of an absent person, as the case of the White Shoe Memorial, as each of the fifty-one pairs of shoes came from someone in the church’s community who had passed away. This linked the victims to the absence of another body that had already departed.
### 9.4 The Value of the Landscape Character and Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Character</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation</strong></td>
<td>Located on a historical site next to a cemetery - Constructed in the capital city of the country, Bogota D.C.</td>
<td>Sacred burial site - Historical context - Surrounded by hills and buildings - Very active urban city - Enclosed secured area - Annual temperatures range from 16°C to 20°C</td>
<td>4,000 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memorial of the Victims of the Violence</strong></td>
<td>Located inside of the most important park in Mexico - Built in the capital city of the country, Mexico City D.F. - Built on a site formerly administered by the Ministry of Defense but now run by the Federalment Government</td>
<td>Green site - Historical context - Urban forest - Very active urban city - Open, secured area - Annual temperatures range from 6°C to 22°C</td>
<td>15,000 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Columbine Memorial</strong></td>
<td>Located in Clement Park, which is behind Columbine High School, about 970 mts from the site of the massacre</td>
<td>Suburban park - Surrounded by hills - Open area - Annual temperatures range from -9°C to 32°C</td>
<td>25,080 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White Shoe Memorial</strong></td>
<td>Located in front of an Anglican Church, about 3 km from one of the site of the massacre</td>
<td>Local church - Open to public - Annual temperatures range from 10°C to 28°C</td>
<td>20 linear meters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Oasis of Dignity Memorial</strong></td>
<td>Located between the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and the General Headquarters of UAE Armed Forces - Developed in the capital city of the country, Abu Dhabi</td>
<td>Active urban city - Strong Muslim traditions present in the surroundings - Open, secured area - Annual temperatures range from 18°C to 48°C</td>
<td>46,000 m²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How were Colombians victimised?** Alsema reports 7,358,248 Displacement victims, 380,952 Death threat victims, 267,297 Assassination victims leaving, 728,096 Forced disappearance family members, 47,052 Forced disappearance victims leaving 122,149 Forced disappearance family members, 112,868 Property theft victims, 83,290 victims Terrorism / combat, 32,537 Kidnapping victims and 4,041 Kidnapping family members, 24,786 Sexual violence victims, 21,444 Assault victims, 11,382 Landmines victims, 10,787 Torture victims, 8,831 Confinement victims, 7,431 Recruitment of minor’s victims, 6,069 Land theft victims, 380 Psychological violence victims (Alsema, 2018).

▲ Figure 9.7
The five case studies and the analysis of the landscape characteristics trough location, place and scale. Source: Author’s analysis.
Landscape character in this research provides the essences, unique qualities and aesthetic aspects of the landscape such as appearance, enclosure, diversity, form, line, scale, colour, movement, pattern, balance, and texture which bring identity or personality to the place. In each of the five case studies, the landscape character consists of location, place, and scale (Figure 9.7).

### 9.4.1 Location

Location refers to where the memorial is situated in terms of its landscape setting. The setting of the memorials draws together the threads of landscape character, personal memorials associated with the location, general knowledge of the tragic events, and value judgments of the place.

The Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Colombia and the Memorial to Victims of Violence in Mexico are located in the heart of the capital cities of their respective countries. The victims of these two nations have experienced generations of mistreatment through social inequality, poverty, lack of opportunities increasing violent conflict. Often, violent conflict is linked to organized crime, especially in the most marginal areas of the cities; the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation has become part of the urban landscape at the historical funerary area in one of the marginal areas of the city. For two centuries, this location was the site of remembrance in which more than 3,600 individuals were buried, forming part of the narrative of the place. After the exhumation of the bodies, the area left by these burial places became the setting for the memorial building at the central cemetery in Bogotá.

The natural landscape contrasts with a series of steel walls of different heights and widths, as well as rusted and reflective texture. They combined to create a memorial to the drug-related violence. The Memorial to Victims of Violence in Mexico City was built to bring awareness to the violence that has occurred in the country. Located in the Chapultepec Forest, the most important green space in the city, the Memorial plays a dual role. One is a symbolic reparation that honours the faceless victims of violence and conflict. The other is public space that frames the languages of memorialisation, engaging present and past.

The location of the memorials can also aid the process of community engagement. The Memorial Park in Colorado was developed just behind the Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado because the victim’s families wanted it to be as close as possible to the site of the tragedy.

The Oasis of Dignity in Abu Dhabi is in a powerful location between the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and the General Headquarters of UAE Armed Forces. Its location near these key landmarks emphasises the role of the country’s religion and the military nature of the memorial. This sense that the memorial is located at a special location is reinforced by the fact that there is a sign at the main entrance with a code of conduct that requires visitors to respect Muslim traditions of dress and behavior and to refrain from taking photos of the military site.
9.4.2 Place

A second landscape characteristic is place, which is defined as a portion of space or physical environment designated that might contribute to individual and collective identity. Each case study reveals how people discover, experience, and respond to their surroundings. Individual and collective memories that are related to our childhood or background are important since they affect our construction of the sense of place.

The Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Bogotá is part of a historical section of the city. The memorial is in a place that represents a sacred burial ground, evoking mourning, grief, and loss. The background of the building is a chain of the Eastern Hills of Bogotá, framing a physical and natural boundary of the view. The Memorial to Victims of Violence is located in the Forest of Chapultepec, which is near the bustling business district of Reforma Avenue in Mexico City. The remembrance of the victims of violence in this park brings together a very strong presence of trees, water and nature, characterised by absences and voids. Undetermined forms and the open geometry of the place reminds people that the issue of violence is still open to multiple narratives.

A place can add attributes to the landscape character and highlight the significance of the relationship between people and memory. The visual, physical, spiritual and emotional dimensions reinforce the meaning of experiences, perception, and responses towards their surroundings. The Memorial Park in Columbine, the White Shoe Memorial in Christchurch, and the Oasis of Dignity in Abu Dhabi provide rich meanings in a different social and cultural context that relates to people’s relationship with place.

Tragedy, place, and identity influence the memorial responses. For instance, the Columbine Memorial is based just behind where the tragedy took place. Columbine High School remains the site of the tragedy, but the tranquillity and quietness of the nearby landscape offer reflection, protection, and comfort.

The temporary White Shoe Memorial in Christchurch existed in two different places. The location outside of the church represented the victims and their absence by placing a pair of shoes in an open space. On the other hand, inside the church the circular pattern of the shoes transforms the space into an uncrossable boundary, making us aware of the separation from the bodies that would have worn them.

Place becomes a very subjective form for people to perceive the natural environments and the contrast between buildings. In the Abu Dhabi Memorial, the setting of places is reflected in the strong cultural symbol of the falaj (traditional irrigation system), the quotes from the Quran and local traditions focusing on spiritual matters, the extremely hot temperatures and humid climate characteristics mark unique attributes of the place that affect the responses through the material, form, texture, and colour used to minimise the effects of the heat.
Temperature and seasonality might affect our perceptions and experiences of the landscape. These temporal effects should be considered as part of the analysis of each case study. However, it would have been difficult for me to develop a clear description of these effects because my site visits were necessarily limited by time and cost, I was not able to experience the variations that come through changes in temperature and seasons.

Furthermore, in figure 9. 7, an analysis of the landscape characteristics displays the temperature ranges of each place. This incorporates seasonal effects into the characteristics of the each landscape.

### 9.4.3 Scale

Scale is the third landscape characteristic. It allows for a comparison between the size of the five case studies. In the five memorials, the number of victims is not related size of the memorial. For instance, the most prominent memorial is the Oasis of Dignity with 46,000 m² and only 234 named victims at present. The extensive scale of the memorial shows a powerful statement to the supremacy and pride.

The second biggest is the Columbine Memorial Park with 25,080 m² and thirteen named victims, (twelve students and one teacher killed in the Columbine High School tragedy). The setting of the Memorial is large, but the Memorial walls and development are medium-size which offers a human scale evoking senses of security, enclosure, scenic beauty, balance, and proportion.

The third-largest memorial in terms of scale is the Memorial to Victims of Violence, which covers 15,000 m² with an unknown number of victims. The park encompasses the visitors in a healing natural environment.

The Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation is 4,000 m² and recognises 8,650,169 victims from the armed conflict. Finally, the White Shoe Memorial in Christchurch, New Zealand is the smallest of the five cases at approximately 20 linear meters, honouring 51 victims.

### 9.5 Illustration of the Process and Design Engagement of the Responses

Memorials can act as drivers for reflection, healing, restoring and reconciliation, empowering a community to develop responses to tragedy. Alternatively, they might exclude the victims from the process. In grief, mourning, funerals, and personal rituals are the performance of overcoming feelings of loss and emptiness that death leaves us with. Thus, memorials and the languages of memorisation are one way to embed grief into a place, object or something else that is tangible so that it might endure for futures generations.
There is no right formula or one way to construct memorials and response to individual expectations. For instance, who exactly are the victims of the conflict? Spontaneous and personal responses become a modern reply to tragedies where flowers, candles, personal objects, notes, and personal statements of faith mark the sites of untimely deaths. How have acts of human-induced violence transformed the responses in the landscape languages of the memorialisation? Memorials might offer spaces of engagement where a design endures as a process of memorialisation.

Analysing the process of development of each case study, I develop some mechanisms that offer a broader understanding of the design process, engagement with survivors, and responses. Figure 9.8 shows what roles time and the nature of the conflict play on shaping the form and impact of memorial activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>SPATIAL DESIGN</th>
<th>ENGAGEMENT</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CENTER FOR MEMORY, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION</td>
<td>2012 - Auditorium, Large exhibition hall, Multi-purpose rooms, Classrooms, Library, Offices</td>
<td>Recognition of victims and human rights of an ongoing conflict, Promotion of peace, historical and collective memory</td>
<td>Permanent, Educational, Reconciliation through a process of participation, Dynamic, Restorative, Reflective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMORIAL OF THE VICTIMS OF THE VIOLENCE</td>
<td>2013 - Panels of metal, A park for contemplation and reflection</td>
<td>The seventy metallic walls are spaces for people to write the name of the victims and to express their pain</td>
<td>Permanent, Dynamic, Repurposing site, Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLUMBINE MEMORIAL</td>
<td>2007 - Ring of remembrance, Ring of healing, Site is in a park of contemplation and reflection</td>
<td>Local community response</td>
<td>Permanent, Dynamic, Place of peace, comfort and reflection, Remembering, Healing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHITE SHOE MEMORIAL</td>
<td>2019 - Anglican church</td>
<td>Local community response</td>
<td>Temporal, Healing through a process of community participation, Dynamic, Evoked absence, Contemplation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9.8
Layout arrangement and phenomenological interpretations.
Source: Own elaboration.
9.5.1 Spatial Design

Spatial design is a simultaneous performance between people and space, focusing on the perception and identity of the place and *genius loci*. Spatial design embraces scale, form, construction details, interior and large spaces creating narratives and building memory.

Developed into the ground, the spatial design of the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Bogotá represents a vernacular architecture, including an auditorium, exhibit halls, classrooms, a library and offices surrounded by the cemetery, native plants, and open space embedded in the city. The memorial is a place to teach people about the conflict and what happened during the armed conflict through art exhibitions and workshops. The memorialising actions promote a healing process by sharing individual and collective stories as peacebuilders.

Conversely, spatial design might carve places in multiple forms. For instance, the open space set in the Chapultepec Forest in Mexico City allows contemplation and reflection for the victims of violence, the victims’ families and the community. The steel walls, the water elements, and pedestrian areas combine to create a space for memory that contrasts with the natural surroundings and the city. In addition, a similar setting in a wide-open space provides a place to grieve, contemplate, reflect and heal for those that were touched by the tragedy on April 20, 1999. The Memorial Park in Columbine provides a peaceful outdoor setting. The Ring of Remembrance provides a unique and personal reflection in the text relating to each of the victims. Furthermore, the Wall of Healing consists of many engraved stones with quotes from students, teachers, and community members.

As an empathetic response from the Anglican church to the Muslim community after the mosque shootings in Christchurch, the temporary White Shoe Memorial was an emotional exercise of mourning for the church community, where the lining up of 51 pairs of shoes made up the spatial design in two temporary settings (first outside and later inside the church).

The spatial design of the Oasis of Dignity in Abu Dhabi includes geometric forms, light colours, and shapes and textures that provide a wide-open space where Muslim traditions come alive through the shadows and water that move through the landscape.

9.5.2 Engagement

The five case studies demonstrate a range of engagements between surviving victims, family members and community. Memory sites have increasingly become more inclusive, allowing for dynamic forms of participation instead of serving merely as political tools that contain memories.
Personal contributions of soil brought from the victim’s home towns embedded in the walls of the memorial building in Bogotá become part of the process of memorialisation, recognition, and engagement as a testimony and statement of the ongoing conflict. The Colombian Memorial focuses on the healing process by displaying, collecting, and investigating individual and collective narratives. Sharing these narratives from the open wounds of the conflict can bring positive outcomes for the survivors who share their stories and those who hear them. The thousands of personal stories, scars and open wounds of the victims and survivors reflect the effects of the Colombian conflict on an individual level.

The Memorial in Mexico City conversely adopted different mechanisms of engagement with the victims, victim’s families, and visitors by allowing people to write and express their feelings on the metallic walls that are part of the memorial. But who are the victims in the Mexican Memorial? The faceless memorial has not begun the process to determine the victimisation of the drug war victims, enforced disappearances and thousands of other victims.

Inclusion and recognition of the victims, whether they are the dead, the injured, or relatives, is a valuable response of empathy and engagement. Memory places are structures and tools for individual and collective participation that share references between the past and the present. The Memorial Park in Columbine remains a significant community commitment distinguished by the personal touches from the victims’ families, who provided a personal reflective text that was dedicated to the memory and honour of each victim.

At the White Shoe Memorial, the Anglican church did not involve connecting with the Muslim community directly but did enlist the Christian community through their contribution of shoes, creating a communal space for members of the community to deal with their sorrow. Finally, the Oasis of Dignity engages the community in contemporary memorialisation framed by traditional Muslim rituals. The Memorial is a timeless tribute that embraces context, place, and victims, symbolising the unified nation. As a part of the commemorative practices where every day a dozen servicemen in uniform visit the Abu Dhabi Memorial to raise the UAE flag and salute the UAE’s heroes.

### 9.5.3 Responses

Design projects typically include a mechanism of decision making via a design competition or a participatory design process in which members of the community and victims actively share roles and responsibilities in decision making. The five case studies all involved participatory design processes through a commission or design competition.
The responses to places of trauma and victims can be represented by memorial languages. Consequently, the relationship between violence, memory, and place affects how people define their experiences and responses in a memorial. For instance, the Memorial in Bogotá is a powerful place of collective memory that is more than a link to the scars from the conflict including the local and regional testimony of thousands of survivors. It is a place that provides a diverse set of spaces such as classrooms (used for the memory sewing group), a library, an auditorium, and exhibit halls that promote temporary exhibitions. The Memorial is less concerned with recounting the facts and details of the conflict, leaving that work up to official archives and museums. It is focused on generating restorative narratives to promote the healing process of the victims.

The Mexican memorial response allows visitors to contemplate and reflect on the ongoing drug war. However, the process of identifying the victims, and the truth behind the many human rights cases of abuse such as torture and murder as well as the ongoing war leave an open narrative of the memorial site.

The Colombine Memorial represents the reversal of the tragic context allowing for new narratives that are personal responses to victims, survivors, community and history. The Memorial transforms the sense of the place from one that reflects a site of tragedy and trauma to one that reflects peace, tranquility, and reflection.

After the mass shooting in Christchurch, the mosques involved in the attacks, as well as others around the country and the world became the focus of vigils, minutes of silence, messages, and floral tributes. The temporary response of the White Shoe Memorial at the Anglican church ‘All Souls in Christchurch’ became a symbol of trauma with testimonial dialogues as absences, void, and grief as part of the languages of memorialisation.

Apart from the temporary and spontaneous responses of a place of memory, the spatial design allows for the development of physical responses across the scales in the landscape. The Abu Dhabi Memorial responses promote educational and commemorative acts, such as rituals and cultural events, that respect the Muslim traditions.

### 9.6 Summary of Key Aspects

The role of memory spaces can contribute to the recognition of the victims and strengthen our understanding of trauma and conflict in a particular context. Memorial sites allow channels for individual and collective reflection, developing consciousness of our actions and sharing information. They can even serve as proposals for action. Figure 9.9 summarises the context and the main features developed in the response of the case studies. The five cases are shown within the broad, horizontal sites of memory wide and horizontal sites of memory. Each site has generated its own memorial languages and a unique narrative.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN FEATURES ELEVATION &amp; SECTIONS</th>
<th>CONTEXT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CENTER FOR MEMORY, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION</strong></td>
<td>The Memorial context endures within the dominant narratives of the place, where the remains of dead people are buried.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEMORIAL OF THE VICTIMS OF THE VIOLENCE</strong></td>
<td>The green context ensures a clean, healthy and safe environment in one of the most polluted cities in the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COLUMBINE MEMORIAL</strong></td>
<td>The Memorial appears in a wide-open space surrounding by hills that fall under symbolic protection of the distant Colorado Rocky Mountains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHITE SHOES MEMORIAL</strong></td>
<td>The context is a church in a residential landscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE OASIS OF DIGNITY MEMORIAL</strong></td>
<td>The Memorial sits within the powerful context between the mosque and the General Headquarters of UAE Armed forces.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

▲ Figure 9.9
Context and main futures of each memorial or case study.
Source: Author’s analysis.
Since memory is a transitory and transformative activity, the following categories and interpretations are never absolute: Remembrance, Recognition, Healing, Peace, Spirituality, Comfort, Learning, Empathy, Nostalgia, Temporality, Melancholy, Emotions, Fragments, Reflection, and a minute of silence are some of the language of memorialisation that are connected with conflict, violence, mass shooting, war, place, and tragedy.

Each memorial draws people into it, engaging individuals in emotional and physical experience and opening opportunities to commemorate, share, and build memories over time. In terms of the contextual attributes, my analysis highlights the visual comparison between the five memorials. For instance, the context of the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation exists within the dominant narratives of the cemetery. In contrast, the Memorial to Victims of Violence is in a green context that ensures a clean, healthy and safe environment in one of the most polluted cities in the world.

The Memorial Park in Columbine is set in a wide-open space surrounded by hills that fall under the symbolic protection of the distant Colorado Rocky Mountains in a park close to where the tragedy occurred. The White Shoe Memorial is a church in a residential neighborhood where the shoes were left for a few days in an open space and at the site of a sacred space (a church in Christchurch). And finally, the Oasis of Dignity sits within a powerful setting between the mosque and the General Headquarters of UAE Armed forces.

The recognition of the context of the place and its cultural values provide tools that help to develop responses that promote social recovery after violent conflict. Each tragedy has left its own unique set of wounds and scars that raise some questions such as: how might the memorialisation of sorrow caused by the conflict be expressed? And can this expression heal the wounds of tragedy?

### 9.7 Reflections on the Findings and Results

Physical and sensory experiences in each setting allow a range of dominant possible attributes. Figure 9.10 sets out the findings and results through the following categories which form the basis of understanding the memorial languages: impression, the involvement of the victims, surrounding context, surrounding site memorial, time, scale, representation, and perceptive with phenomenological lenses.

![Figure 9.10](Layout arrangement and phenomenological interpretations. Source: Own elaboration)
MEMORIAL LANGUAGES

Symbolic
Detached
Enclosed
Included
Permanent
Large
Absent

Involvement of the Victims
Surrounding Context
Surrounding Site Memorial
Time
Scale
Representation

Impression
Abstract
Incorporated
Open
Excluded
Temporary
Small
Present

Tangible
Comtemplative
Unique
Sonorous
Apathetic

Touch
Sight
Smell
Sound
Taste

Tangible
Invisible
Bland
Inaudible
Emotional

Memorial of the Victims of the Violence
White Shoes Memorial
Columbine Memorial
The Oasis of Dignity Memorial

Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation
9.7.1 Impression: Symbolic + Abstract

Symbolism and abstraction relate to memorials in different ways. The use of symbols in the case studies to represent ideas or qualities help to identify in each the universal languages of memorialisation. Recognizable items such as flowers, shoes, empty chairs are symbolic phenomenological representations of a language of memory. Likewise, abstract forms such as pure geometric structures also suggest concepts such as unity, absence, connection. While abstract, they can be interpreted in ways that can provide support to survivors who are dealing with sorrow and loss.

The abstract and symbolic forms and the individual experience of each of the five memorial case studies vary, allowing feelings, senses, and experiences to prompt emotional engagement with the commemorative messages. Symbolic elements are those that are a recognisable part of the language of memorial ritual and are thus shared or collective sets of forms. Conversely, abstract elements are not clearly identifiable and do not deliver a single, defined message. Instead, their ‘openness’ means that they are open to interpretation. They may mean different things to different people.

In the case of Mexico City and Abu Dhabi, the steel plates are tangible representations of enduring memory. The symbolic elements are set across the landscape in the form of sculptures or walls made from discarded weapons. Likewise, abstract forms of art (panel of metal, slabs of aluminum tablets) allow for different interpretations and spatial engagement relationships.

Further, symbols can take the form of words and objects that convey memory of the beliefs and feelings of family and friends as a response to commemoration. The personal reflections, in the Columbine Memorial and quotes from the Quran in the Abu Dhabi memorial, are symbolic expressions. Reading and touching the names of the victims inscribed on the Columbine and Abu Dhabi case studies attach each victim with absences in a tangible way.

Shoes represent victims as a symbol of absences marking loss. The memorial in Christchurch is a testimonial to the human-induced violence where the presence of shoes can evoke abstract qualities of experiences and memory.

The Memorial in Bogotá is an anchoring emblem of peace that symbolises more than 40,000 recorded victims of murder and disappearance and thousands of stories of conflict and violence. The rituals and emotional practices of mourning at the Memorial symbolise the peace process, recognition, and reconciliation of the victims. Abstract forms used in the process of the building reflect what is remembered and what is forgotten in a nation where conflict is part of everyday reality.
9.7.2 Involvement of the Victims: Detached + Incorporated

The engagement of survivors in the process of memorialisation can be analysed through two terms, detached or incorporated. The term detached represents the act of disconnection or disengagement of the victims, survivors, and families from the process of supporting memorialisation initiatives. On the other hand, the definition of incorporated means that victims, survivors, and families are involved in stimulating dialogues about the past, raising their voices in the process of commemoration.

The process of involvement of the Mexico City and Christchurch memorials induce a detachment of the victims in comparison with the Colombian, Columbine and Abu Dhabi memorials. The Memorial to Victims of Violence in Mexico was detached from the process of development and there was little victim participation during the memorial building.

The Muslim community was detached from the planning of the White Shoe Memorial. And the individual victims were left slightly detached because although each pair of shoes represents a victim that lost his or her life in the attack, we do not know which specific individual is being remembered.

Conversely, the Abu Dhabi, Columbine, and Colombian Memorials allow for a high level of involvement of the victims and survivors, as they incorporate the personal thoughts, quotes, and names of the victim, as well as the soil of their hometown, as part of the process of creating the narratives of the conflict and generating memorialisation responses.

9.7.3 Surrounding Context: Enclosed + Open

The character of the surrounding context determines enclosed and open spaces. This character is also dictated by the building forms, materials, natural or humanmade boundaries. Surrounding context captures how much the memorial is accessible and integrated with and from the surrounding area. I found that the Colombian case is quite enclosed, as it has a boundary that is locked at night.

Likewise, the second location of the White Shoes, after the shoes were taken inside the chapel, meant that the memorial went from being very open to being enclosed, accessible only during opening hours. The surrounding context inside the chapel appears to be slightly more enclosed than when the shoes were outside in front of the church in a wide green area. The lineal open outline was connected to their open landscape of the residential area. On the other hand, the circular form allows a space for contemplation and helps to exclude external distractions.
9.7.4 Memorial Site Surroundings: Included + Excluded

The interpretation of the surrounding site shows the degree of involvement and engagement that each memorial offers, and how people feel included or excluded.

The variable of the surrounding site for each memorial captures whether people feel included or excluded. All five memorial cases are in relatively quiet wide-open spaces, with the Abu Dhabi Memorial being the most open of them all. The surrounding site in each memorial adds a value that promotes identity. The Oasis of Dignity is next to The Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, the most prominent structure in Abu Dhabi. The Memorial for the Victims of the Violence in Mexico City is set amidst a large green park area. The Columbine Memorial is set next to the high school where the shooting occurred. Finally, the White Shoe Memorial in Christchurch and the Peace and Reconciliation Memorial are both set in sacred places that are good settings for the creation of narratives of tragedy and sorrow.

9.7.5 Time: Permanent + Temporary

Time is a relevant and fundamental measure of how memorial responses can be defined as temporary or permanent places that encode memories. Gathering flowers, candles, written messages, and other objects to create a shrine or altar are forms of spontaneous responses that can transform the site from a place of tragedy to a place of memory. Permanent memorials are enduring design statements of commemoration, providing a constant point of reference that connects the community through collective mourning.

Physical memorials make statements about the ideas, values, or individuals that society should remember and memorialise. Time captures the degree to which memorials are intended to be permanent as opposed to having a short-term presence. However, in some places memorialising is a process which involves continuous ephemeral responses such as burning effigies in many Asian countries, or creating memorials that are expected to decay. Four of the five cases are rather permanent responses. The exception is the White Shoe Memorial, which was begun within hours of the tragedy and only lasted a few weeks.

9.7.6 Scale: Large + Small

Scale is an aspect of the landscape character that describes memorial sizes allowing comparisons between them (large or small). Memorials can exist on scales of only a few meters or they can take up many hectares. In the case of the five case studies, there is a very wide range. The Oasis of Dignity is structured to be seen against the backdrop of the magnificent Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. The viewer is clearly immediately aware of the grand scale of this location.

The Mexican, Colombian, and Abu Dhabi memorials are also on the large side of the size continuum. Conversely, while the Columbine Memorial is part of an extensive open landscape, the memorial itself is quite small compared with the other three permanent cases. The White Shoe Memorial was much smaller than the other three, although it no longer exists.
9.7.7 Representation: Absent + Present

Memorials can evoke either the absence or presence of the victims through objects, forms and elements in the landscape responses (such as chairs, clothes, shoes, personal objects) widely recognised as languages of memorialisation.

The White Shoe Memorial used the shoes as a symbolic form of generic markers for individuals rather than specific persons. The shoes act symbolically, marking the absence of 51 individuals, and manifesting human loss.

A part of the act of representation is the use of signs that stand in for and take the place of something else. For instance, the Abu Dhabi Memorial that lists the names of the martyrs on the aluminium walls is made from the melted-down vehicles from armed conflicts. In this case, the objects that were part of the war and caused so much sorrow are transformed into materials that are part of the memorial, providing a physical connection with the past.

The Mexico City Memorial is a statement that recognises the drug war in Mexico. However, it has significant social and political implications because the structures used at the memorial space evoke a symbolic justice but also a sense of absence because the victims are not named in the narratives of memorialisation.

The Columbine and Colombian Memorials are marked by tragedy and narratives of sorrow and loss. The Columbine walls reflect the presence of the thirteen victims in the solemn language of memorialisation, with the sound of cascading water making the pools a place of tranquillity and contemplation. On the other hand, thousands of glass tubes are embedded in the walls of the building of the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation as part of thousands of testimonies evoking the presence of victims from the conflict.

9.7.8 Phenomenological: Touch, Sight, Smell, Sound, and Taste

Phenomenological experience is a direct process of interpretation through a familiar set of perceptive lenses as touch, sight, smell, sound, and taste. These common human senses help to define how each memorial site is marked as a place of memory.

Moreover, individual interpretations lead to infinite possibilities of understanding place and surroundings through the senses to help them recognise the environment and evoke past experiences. This leads to the question of how can phenomenology accommodate and mediate forces between the present experiences of the place with the ones rooted in the past?
9.7.8.1 **Touch: Tangible + Intangible**

Memorials vary in the degree to which they allow visitors to touch the names or other reminders of the victims. All five cases are examples that offer high degrees of potential for connecting through the sense of touch. The Columbine Memorial offers the greatest ability to connect through this sense. Individuals can touch a flat, table-like stone that allows them to make contact with names, family thoughts, and other items lefts by visitors. The least tangible example is the White Shoe Memorial, which is really about contemplation more than touch. But it is still accessible to the sense of touch.

9.7.8.2 **Sight: Contemplative + Invisible**

The connection of nature with sites of memorialisation provides places of peace, retreat, solitude, and reflection as a result of a set of elements of the landscape that evoke contemplative meaning. Sight involves the ability to interpret the surrounding environment using light, colours, textures, shapes and specific objects, sites or contexts. Physical interpretations through sight depend on previous experiences to be able to have meaning. For instance, the presence of trees and water on the site of the Mexico City memorial allows people to reflect on and contemplate nature. Trees and water are powerful symbols of life and strength that are part of four permanent memorial landscape sites and on very different scales.

Objects and architectural forms are also part of the narrative of memorialisation that can easily be captured by our eyes. The shoes at the memorial in Christchurch mark a space of inclusion that connects the observer with the deceased at a deep contemplative level.

9.7.8.3 **Smell: Unique-Bland**

While we rarely think of smells when we contemplate how people interact with memorials, it must be remembered that the sense of smell can have strong impacts on our feelings about a site, and it is strongly linked to memory.

There is great variation in the way that the five sites allow the visitor to connect to the memorial to the sense of smell. Both the Memorial of the Victims of the Violence in City and the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation offer strong possibilities for the visitor to sense the smells and fragrances from native plants and flowers. The Columbine Memorial is set next to native pine trees which can also emit a noticeable scent.

The White Shoe Memorial is also in an outdoor setting close to a busy road, and the smell reflects the everyday urban setting. In the outdoor context the smell was less significant but when the shoes were moved inside, the smells of the church, including the candles, imparted a much more sacred experience. The memorial that offers the least accessibility to this sense is the Oasis of Dignity because one experiences a mixture of the smell of asphalt from the nearby road and the exhaust from gasoline-fueled vehicles. The wind blows the sand and dust from the nearby city into the open spaces of the memorial.
9.7.8.4 Sound: Sonorous + Inaudible

Sound is important because it can tell us about character, place, and time. Without a memory of past experiences, it will not have a special meaning. Four of the memorial sites are in broad, open landscape environments where the sonorous rhythms of the surroundings can inform us about the atmosphere, place, and time of day. A full and deep richness of sounds can reveal subtle details about the character of a place. Apart from the noise that the cities can produce, the birds, wind, and water are the greatest sources of sound that can attach the meaning to each case study. In addition, ritual practices such as the Muslim prayer performed five times each day at the Abu Dhabi Memorial add a unique and special meaning.

Conversely, because the Center for Memory in Bogotá is primarily underground, it can be approached through walking at a subterranean level and finding oneself in an isolated, powerful silence punctuated by the echo of stories of the victims embedded in the building walls. Likewise, after a few weeks outside of the church, the White Shoe Memorial was moved inside the chapel, a tranquil location that is suitable for contemplation and reflection.

9.7.8.5 Taste: Apathy + Emotion

Unlike the other four senses, it is difficult to ascertain the role that place plays in rooting the memorial experience with memory at these five sites. No food or drink (aside from water) is offered at any of the memorials. It can be noted here that the closest sense to taste is that of smell, so perhaps a few items that people smell at the memorial may stimulate some sort of test sensation. However, it is best to conclude that the sense of taste has a limited sensory impact as regards any of the cases covered in this thesis.

To summarise, the five case studies are dynamic places of memory because visitors often bring flowers and objects and place them at the sites. In its own language of memorialisation, each memorial inscribes and evokes recognition, reflection, peace, comfort, contemplation, reconciliation, and healing through architectural forms, objects and natural soft elements such as trees, water, colours, textures, and sounds. Tragic events create opportunities for encouraging communities to develop diverse narratives that will be reflected in the collective memory of the sites for future generations.
9.8 Conclusion

Languages of memorialisation and memorial landscapes can play important social, political and cultural roles. People experience a sense of place, allowing them to interpret a unique design language that can enrich both individual and collective memories.

The five case studies presented are examples and responses to conflict, violence, mass shooting, and war through landscape interventions in a wide range of settings. They are testimony to the witnesses, survivors, victims, perpetrators, and places of tragedy. Memorials express physical and emotional meanings that inspire design narratives, inspiring a unique memorial language.

Figure 9.11 displays a grouping of contents and interpretations through two axes in three Cartesian graphs. These variables are included as a first step to investigate or probe the relationship between variables that may combine to create memorial languages. Of course, there is potential to create a vast number of combinations, so I limit them to those that appear to relate most closely to the key points of investigation in the thesis. The fieldwork interpretation locates the five case studies on each graph with a circle that represents each memorial case.

The first set of axes locates each memorial across two key sets of attributes—the temporary vs permanent axis and the symbolic vs abstract axis. The White Shoe Memorial can be categorized as a temporary and abstract response to tragedy and unexpected death. The memorial strongly marks the absence of the victims in an abstract manner, but it also offers a less overpowering, symbolic and tangible testimonial to the human-induced violence.

On the other hand, the Mexican, Columbine, and Colombian cases are essentially symbolic and permanent responses to conflict, violence, and tragedy. However, the man-made pure geometric structures and the natural landscape elements such as water, trees, and the soil serve as abstract representations of the open wounds from the tragedies and the ongoing struggles.

The Abu Dhabi memorial highlights the difference between the abstract and the symbolic. It is a strong, permanent memorial response that can be read as both. It primarily uses abstract forms to memorialize the victims. For instance, the leaning iron-clad tablets are abstract in their form but can be interpreted as a sense of support and unity. Likewise, the falaj irrigation system contains culturally specific symbolic and abstract elements that can help to develop a powerful place of memory.
**CONTENT:** TEMPORARY VS. PERMANENT  
**INTERPRETATIONS:** SYMBOLIC VS. ABSTRACT

**CONTENT:** LARGE SCALE VS. SMALL SCALE  
**INTERPRETATIONS:** DYNAMIC VS. STATIC

**CONTENT:** DYNAMIC VS. STATIC  
**INTERPRETATIONS:** TEMPORARY VS. PERMANENT

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- Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation
- Memorial of the Victims of the Violence
- White Shoes Memorial
- Columbine Memorial
- The Oasis of Dignity Memorial
The second set of axes represents the tangible and essential characteristics that embody large scale vs small scale content and dynamic vs static interpretations. The Mexican and Abu Dhabi Memorials are developed on a large scale and are comprised of static components such as metal panels that function much like sculptures, creating a more-or-less immovable narrative.

The Colombian Memorial is built on a small site, but the building and area of occupancy are experienced on a large scale because there are no boundaries with the cemetery. Therefore, it feels as if the site and its surroundings are actually a single place for mourning. Moreover, the site has a rather dynamic context, as it offers a wide variety of workshops and exhibits that allow for the active generation of commemorative narratives by both visitors and survivors.

The Columbine and White Shoe Memorials can both be classified as being on small scales. However, although the Columbine Memorial is technically a small one, it is connected to a large park and set on a grand scale with the front range of the Rocky Mountains in the background. That being said, the fact that the memorial itself is located primarily on an enclosed space, the circular shape of the memorial evokes an intimate connection between the visitor and the memorial. The White Shoe Memorial is clearly set on a decidedly small scale. Both memorials can offer dynamic connections between people and places. The White Shoe Memorial was spontaneous in its creation and its movement to the indoor chapel, while the Columbine memorial invites spontaneous tributes from visitors such as flowers or personal items.

The third set of axes condenses the previous two axes into a final interpretation of the five memorials. The dynamic vs static content and the temporary vs permanent distinctions help to define to each site, offering a strong context for how people are involved in creating places of memory and memories of places. For instance, the practices of memorialisation and social workshops at the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Bogotá guide the survivors through a series of fine art performances and educational workshops that combine pieces of memory from the conflict with the local narratives to create more permanent forms of memory of place. This creation of memory can enhance the significance of the Colombian Memorial as an anchor place of memory in the network of violence memorialisation that is occurring across the country.

In Mexico City, the Memorial to Victims of Violence is a permanent reminder of the country’s violence, with drug conflict the most critical and current issue for Mexican society. However, by not recognizing the victims and survivors by name, the Mexican Memorial focuses on void of the missing memory and the victims rather than on their memory.

The permanent Columbine Memorial in Colorado, USA, exhibits large, public scale displays of emotion that involve people making personal statements about time, memory and place. The significance of the memorial as a permanent witness of the mass shooting is a catalyst for spontaneous tributes at the memorial.
Languages of memorialisation can begin as temporary responses to tragedies, but then become permanent responses at a later time. This is true in the case of the White Shoe Memorial. The representation of absence is a powerful way of marking loss which records and maintains the presence of an individual.

Temporary memorials are frequently set up following tragic events, providing spaces for grieving and marking these events in time. Today, marks and wounds are viewed differently than they were the past when they usually celebrated survival, resistance, victories, and heroes. The Oasis of Dignity in the UAE marks the country’s sense of loss as a war memorial response that involves the transformation of armed vehicles from the conflict by melting them down and putting them into the surface of the aluminum wall as a way of honouring the 234 people who died in served of the country.

To conclude, the narrative in each of the five case studies is a response to violence and conflict, mass shootings, and war through landscape interventions in a wide range of site settings, recognising victims and places of tragedies. In these cases, the languages of memorialisation are testimonies of survivors, victims, perpetrators, and places of tragedy. The languages can symbolise anchors, absence or void, witnesses, or in some cases transformation of materials in order to provoke acts of mourning. Memorial languages embody many layers of individual and collective memories. Chapter 10 will explore the relationship between these findings and the academic literature on memory and place and sense of place.
10.1 Introduction

This chapter will conduct a discussion between two theoretical frameworks developed in Chapter 2, *memory and place* and *sense of place*, and the final results of the case studies presented in Chapter 9. In subsequent sections, I highlight how each of the five cases is particularly effective at identifying one specific theme of memorial language. In Section 10.2, I explain how the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Bogotá, Colombia became a symbol of *anchoring* into the network of victims across the country. In Section 10.3, I describe how the Memorial to Victims of Violence in Mexico City, is a symbolic representation of the *void* left by the absence of the victims. In Section 10.4, I refer to the Columbine Memorial, in Colorado USA, as a *witness* to tragedy. In Section 10.5, I illustrate how the White Shoe Memorial is a symbolic representation of *absence* in the context of a spontaneous memorial. In Section 10.6, I outline how the Oasis of Dignity in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, melted down armed vehicles from conflicts to *transform* this material into part of the memorial language of the place. Finally, in Section 10.7, I conclude by addressing how these different approaches to memorial languages can represent potential responses of place to future tragedies.

The recognition of the context of the place and its cultural values provide tools that help to develop responses that promote social recovery after violent conflict. This leads to the main questions of this thesis: *How might the memorialisation of sorrow caused by the conflict be expressed? And can this expression heal the wounds of tragedy?*
10.2 Anchoring

Precisely in its thickness, memory’s positive autonomy cannot help but reflect its tie to past actualities, whether this tie occurs as rootedness in perception, origination in the past, or involvement in the quest for truth about the past itself. Perception, the past, and truth all act as anchors for remembering, settling it into the dense impasto of human experiencing. This anchoring gives to memory its very materiality, along with a grounding in something at once recalcitrant and substantial. From such grounding, remembering gains not only its ultimate validity-its being well-founded as well as well-funded-but also its value in everyday life. Just because memory is so massively grounded in the past, it can be of inestimable importance in the present, illuminating it with a light not otherwise available, professing insight that cannot be acquired in any other way-insight ‘from within,’ from within our own experience-as-remembered. (Casey, 2009, p. 284)

In order to appreciate the relationship between memory and place, it is necessary to identify how history, culture, and social interactions affect the context of each tragedy. It is this connection to context that is a form of anchoring. Open wounds from violence are often experienced through collective and individual memories of trauma, melancholy, and stigma. This certainly seems to be the case for many Latin American countries. Though the individual components of historical events can be extracted and analyzed, the collective scars of a society of history left as a result of these events are often difficult to heal and perhaps impossible to forget.

People interpret landscapes as a result of experiences that encode meaning and ideologies. Donald Meinig (1979, p. 1) posits that “Landscape is an attractive, important, and ambiguous term [that] encompasses an ensemble of ordinary features which constitute an extraordinarily rich exhibit of the course and character of any society” and that “Landscape is defined by our vision and interpreted by our minds” (in Taylor, 2008, p. 2).

Our relationship with place is expressed in different dimensions of human life: “A sense of place in itself enhances every human activity that occurs there, and encourages the deposit of a memory trace” (Lynch, 1960, p. 119). An excellent example of a memory place that anchors individual and collective narratives of tragedy into a single site is the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation in Bogotá, Colombia. Before construction of the memorial began, people affected by the conflict and violence in Colombia were invited to contribute handfuls of soil. The soil was brought to the site to be incorporated into the structure of the building as cultural and symbolic expression of a complex existential space. Ballesteros adds, “When the Center for Memory opened in 2012, it joined a slow but steady movement across the world for spaces that deal with conflict—or, more specifically, moving on after conflict—in innovative ways” (Ballesteros, 2017). This type of individual involvement is, according to Relph, “essential to our experience and sense of place” (Relph, 1976, p. 29).
The use of soil in the memorial is an attempt to anchor places of tragedy. This is a strategy intended to heal and contribute to the reconstruction of collective material memory. While the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation is a strong example of the theme of anchoring, this is only one of many dimensions of how the memorial works within place and memory. The dynamics of the language of memorialisation at the memorial imply a conscious awareness of mourning, sorrow and tangible tragedy that recollect the past in order to heal the present. The exhibits and workshops at the Memorial also serve educational and healing purposes. This is consistent with Jencks (1973, pp. 302-328), who suggests that “there is something akin to a ‘place’ movement in modern architecture, in which a deliberate effort is made to capture ‘multi-meaning’, to provide a sense of the identity and reality of place” (in Relph, 1976, p. 24).

To conclude, the open dialogue of remembering and commemoration enables an individual reconstruction in which “memory is nothing more in fact than sifted and sorted historical traces” (Nora, 1989, p. 8). The conception of memory has always been anchored in the context of the time, involving senses, experiences, people, actions, and different scenarios: “What we call memory today is therefore not memory but already history” (Nora, 1989, p. 13).

**10.3 Void**

I need not to be afraid of the void. The void is part of my person. I need to enter consciously into it. To try to escape from it is to try to live a lie. It is also to cease to be. My acceptance of despair and emptiness constitutes my being; to have the courage to accept despair is to be. (Novak, 1970, p. 56)

While “void” can mean an empty space, one definition offered by Cambridge is “a feeling of unhappiness because someone or something is missing.” In *Melancholy and the Landscape*, Bowring (2016) focuses on this second sense of the term:

Rather than vicariously feasting upon the tragic, the void replace the particular with the abstract, and therefore turns emotion back onto the beholder themselves, grounding it within their own subjectivity. (Bowring, 2016, p. 71).

The Memorial to Victims of Violence, in Mexico City, is a response to the thousands of faceless victims of conflict in the country, and its design reflects that fact that no one knows exactly how many people died. The empty steel walls arise in a tranquil and natural landscape, allowing visitors to write the name of victims whom they know or to express their pain or anger. This writing process can be interpreted, then, as a way for those who interact with the memorial to focus on the void left within themselves as much as on remembering the victims.

The Mexican Memorial is designed to lead visitors to focus on the “no-presences” of the people to remember: “The void proposed in the project is the space created between the steel walls and the trees…and the surfaces of the steel walls, rusty or mirroring, show that we can lose ourselves, add ourselves, or multiply ourselves” (ArchDaily, 2013).
Bowring (2016, 65) clarifies the role of **void** in promoting self-reflection:

Through confronting the void, there is a challenge to connect with the subjective, and confront the depth of existence. The void is constituted through a bypassing of the symbolic. As opposed to a landscape providing a ‘readable’ script, or what Kevin Robins calls a ‘protective illusion’, the melancholy of the void aspires towards providing the conditions for contemplation.

(Massey, 1995, p.45)

The Memorial to the Victims of Violence thus interacts with visitors not only at a symbolic level, but allows them to express their emotions using a rawer language of emptiness by writing or drawing on the rusty walls. The site is in a public, open space surrounded by trees and contains channels of water, which creates an atmosphere that is conducive to contemplation—even though it is located in the centre of one of the busiest cities in the world.

10.4 Witness

Bradford Vivian (2017) writes of the seemingly ubiquitous manner in which modern societies focus on using **witness** to tragedy as a way of never forgetting and always remembering. He argues, “Rhetorical mediums of witnessing in our times [encompass] literature, public speech, political ceremony, atrocity memorials or museums, social media, and even video games” (p. 1). Vivian claims that the imperative for bearing witness in modern society is so strong that its importance is rarely questioned, despite the fact that it is unclear exactly which individuals should be performing it or what forms it should take (ibid, p. 1).

This infusion of **witnessing** into public discourse is readily apparent in the case of memorials. In fact, Vivian argues, there is so much overlap between witnessing and memorialisation in late modernity that they are nearly indistinguishable. Rather than occurring in a special context and being performed by special types of individuals, witnessing has become a commonplace. He points out that the power of bearing witness in the case of the Holocaust is “being applied to any number of historical atrocities and tragedies” (p.2). He argues that this is because society has moved from a period of “celebrations of national exceptionalism or commemoration of historical figures” or preserving “the past via oral history, faithful record-keeping, or the founding of historical archives.” Instead, societies focus on preserving memories of “heinous modern crimes against humanity or …the most calamitous human tragedies” (ibid, p.3).

Aslam (2016) argues that the reason **witnessing** is so important to modern architecture is that it plays a key role in cementing historical events in our memories:

We need to establish the influence of culture, society, and historically significant events that are silently witnessed and recorded by architecture and are transmuted towards individuals or society as collective memories of trauma, melancholy as well as the connection with history.

(Aslam, 2016, p. 20)
The Columbine Memorial is a permanent witness to the event in order to make sure that we do not forget the historical event or the victims—it will always remain alive in our collective memory. The fact that it overlooks the school where the shooting occurred makes this even more evident. The memorial serves as a witness not only that the tragedy happened, but that it occurred in that place. This serves to further ground the event in the collective reality of visitors.

The memorial allows for multiple types of witnesses. The inner part, the Ring of Remembrance, focuses on individuals. It includes testimonies from the mothers, fathers, and siblings of the victims, as well as from survivors.

However, the memorial witnesses more broadly to the shootings as a historical event in the USA. The outer ring, the Wall of Healing, marks the tragedy itself and invites visitors to personally reflect on the events. One of the tribute plates at the Wall of Healing at the memorial expresses a personal thought from a parent: “I hope people come here to this place to think about how they themselves can be better people rather than come here to reflect on death.”

The Columbine Memorial is a vivid example of modern witnessing at a memorial site. Yet perhaps it should avoid most of Vivian’s criticism of such sites; rather than being formulaic or mundane, it offers a unique form of testimonies from the victims and families that do not attempt to fit into some sort of mass-produced, formulaic mold. There is a serious attempt to communicate the essence of the victims themselves as well as the inner thoughts of the survivors.

10.5 Absence

The word imago designated the effigy of the absent, the dead, and, more precisely, the ancestors: the dead from whom we come, the links of the lineage in which each of us is a stitch. The imago hooks into the cloth. It does not repair the rip of their death: it does less and more than that. It weaves, it images absence. It does not represent this absence, it does not evoke it, it does not symbolize it, even though all this is there too. But, essentially, it presents absence. The absent are not there, are not “in images.” But they are imaged: their absence is woven into our presence. The empty place of the absent as a place that is not empty, that is the image. A place that is not empty does not mean a place that has been filled: it means the place of the image, that is, in the end, the image as place, and a singular place for what has no place here: the place of a displacement, a metaphor . . .

(Nancy, 2005, p. 67)
While memorial places can be explored through the discourse of language of memorialisation and materiality, interpretations of places of memory in individual experiences remain ambiguous. According to Adan, the work of Doris Salcedo, a Colombian artist, “explores the way in which, as a result of [violence and terror], victims vanish, leaving a profound absence and sense of instability in the world” (in Salcedo et al., 2000, p. 29). Salcedo makes absence the centerpiece of many of her works in order to address trauma, pain, and loss in the context of human-induced tragedy, creating a space for collective mourning:

[Salcedo] Embraces the abstract as an essential tool for art making. This is another crucial element of the artist’s work—her decision not to address violence through depictions of battle scenes, victims, or gore, but instead to plumb the emotional and psychological textures of loss, grief, and other aftereffects of violence. The work, by the artist’s own admission, is like a funeral oration. (Salcedo et al., 2000, p. 18)

Doris Salcedo’s work on absence offers a powerful lens for the White Shoe Memorial in Christchurch, which offers both visual and metaphorical forms of presence and absence. The immediate response by one of the local Anglican churches to the Christchurch shootings was to create a temporary memorial. Each of the fifty-one pairs of shoes of the memorial was a powerful tool for marking loss. The memorial evokes what Salcedo describes as “the paradox of an absent body that makes its presence felt…specifically the notion of agency for those who are socially or politically ‘invisible’—the refugee, the immigrant, the widow, the person…” (Salcedo et al., 2000, p. 19). This sense of providing agency for victims is reflected in the White Shoe Memorial. Not only were the dead and wounded in the mosque shootings victims of a mass killing, but most of them were immigrants, and several were refugees as well.

Personal objects (shoes, in this case) mark both the identity of victims as well as a sense of profound loss. A connection between absence and mourning is created with personal elements used in everyday life which become spectres of the familiar, signifying the presence of the victims. To see an empty chair, piece of clothing, or personal objects reminds us of individuals by evoking a powerful sense of emptiness. One such example of this is the Oklahoma City Memorial, which features 168 empty chairs—one for each victim of the tragedy that occurred in the United States in 1995.
10.6 Transformation

I believe war is the main event of our time. War is what defines our lives . . . it creates its own laws. War forces us to generate ethical codes which exclude whole parts of the population; once this happens, we can attack and destroy them because they are no longer viewed as human, and we have used these false ethics as a tool to expel people from humankind. We see civil wars happening everywhere, every day. We read about these terrible events that shape the way we live. What I am trying to show in my work is that war is part of our everyday life. (Salcedo et al., 2000, p. 18)

The Oasis of Dignity (Wahat al Karama), a war memorial in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, is a response that embraces context, place and peoples’ daily interactions. According to Savage (2011, p. 10), traditionally war memorial undress complexities and “condense the subject’s” forms of memorialization as an event of historical significance or a “patriotic lesson frozen for all time.”

The history and meaning of commemoration where places of memory can provide social practices, meaningful materiality, individual experiences, and collective imaginations as a constituent of localised memory. Kevin Lynch (1960) defines the identity of a place as the fact that it can be distinguished from other places, “which implies its distinction from other things, its recognition as a separable entity” (p. 8).

The new dialogues between the languages of memorialisation and the physical form propose a constant reflection on the effects and rupture the concepts of surface, silence, nothingness, emptiness, time and ruin goes well beyond the traditional idea of a monument that seeks to expose and transform a meaningful version of our recent history.

The meaning of “transformation” is related to conversion, metamorphosis, shift or change. Its meaning changes depending on the context one is using. The definition offered by the Cambridge dictionary is “the process of changing the physical or chemical properties of a substance in order to make or produce something else.” It is the one that I will refer to explain the characteristics of this theme in the Abu Dhabi Memorial.

The distinctive response to loss and honoring the victims of the war occurs by transforming physical elements that were part of the conflict into a part of the physical memorial languages. The armed vehicles from conflicts are transformed into the surface of the aluminum walls that honour 234 fallen soldiers at the Oasis of Dignity.

Interestingly, the memorial’s website prominently refers to a form of “transformation” that it intends to achieve:
In keeping with contemporary memorials, it has transformed the singular ceremonial monument into a placemaking experience. Embedded within the everyday of civic life this new urban destination is infused by the meaningful inclusion of Sheik Zayed’s poetry in Arabic calligraphy...It contains a central plaza with a reflection pool that is emptied when hosting commemorative events of up to 1,200 people. As a tapestry of interwoven meanings, symbols, emotions, memories and narratives, it is ultimately the creation of a new urban place with an authentic, distinct place identity. As a civic landmark, it successfully positions unity as a key principle in a highly complex society undergoing rapid development. (Andary, 2017)

By this, it is possible to surmise that one of the key goals of the memorial’s designer, British artist Idris Khan, was to contribute to our understanding of memorials by transforming their essence from static monuments into dynamic places of social interaction where the art and culture of the country can be celebrated. Moreover, this is occurring as the country is transforming itself from a sleepy, traditional, nomadic locale into a cosmopolitan center of culture and business.

10.7 Conclusion

The awareness of ‘human conditions’ and the relationship between objects and void, place and absence, representation and violence, words and materiality, and memory and forgetting are all factors that we as designers must address when creating spaces that memorialize and respond to human-induced tragedy. It is also important to bridge the gap between the witnesses offering testimony (the victims) and the ones who receive it (the visitors). To address the aftermath of violence, how one goes about living after an experience that irrevocably transforms the meaning of the ordinary, after which everything or anything—a simple chair, a shoe, clothes or a name—can be reminiscent of unbearable violence and loss.

Places and landscapes allow memory to be witnessed and in a way that elicits alternative experiences and responses to violence, trauma, and sorrow, transforming them into languages that are attached to memory. James Young argues that:

Memory is not ‘monolithic,’ each memory site depends on the vast array of forces, “material, aesthetic spatial, ideological, - converging in one memory site.” The memory of violence meticulously shifts memorial languages to a narrative, context, form, and material on different scales of contemplation.

(Young, 1993, p. 10)

If memory and memorials in a landscape are holders of individual and collective memories and experiences, then how might design combine with a place to create a framework for remembering? Moreover, how can memorial languages generate an awareness of the victims of the conflict?
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Chapter 11
Conclusion

"I think every violent event generates disorientation...if your son is killed, your town is destroyed or you’ve been tortured, how do you relate to the world after that?"

(Doris Salcedo in Finkel, 2015).

This sense of grief is the cruel reality of many of the victims and survivors of the Colombian conflict. Growing up in a culture where violent and tragic events are regularly imposed on everyday life defines our identity and dominates our memories. My experience of the Colombian conflict provided the foundation for exploring other case studies in my research. The palpable reality of places of tragedy, trauma, sorrow, violence, and impunity is deeply embedded in the social contexts of each of the five memorial sites used in this study.

Bowring says, “Sites of memory are often conceived of as needing to be places to deal with the event, to find some means of ‘moving on’ and recovering from sadness” (Bowring, 2016, p. 32). This research has studied five contemporary cases of memorialisation, each one responding to victims and places of trauma.

I have studied this phenomenon in the context of three categories of human induced tragedy—conflict and violence, mass shootings, and war. The main questions of this research are: How might the memorialisation of sorrow caused by conflict, violence, mass shooting, or a war be expressed? Moreover, how can existing responses and memorial languages be useful to memorialise the open wounds of the conflict?
First, memorials intended as a response to conflict and violence are designed to acknowledge both victims and the conflict itself by linking them to a particular place. The two case studies focused on Anchoring and the Void as the key responses. In this context, it is important to use a language of memorialisation that can help include victims into the collective memory of a society when many of them are unidentified or anonymous. The need for Anchoring is met in this case by strategies providing a sense of insideness. Local materials, local symbols and vernacular help to bridge this gap. Creating a powerful sense of the place grounds the events into reality and helps to give the victims (even anonymous ones) an identity.

The concept of the Void is another critical element that can be used in memorial languages that respond to conflict and violence. Through removing specific and ‘easy’ interpretations of a tragedy, the Void leaves a gap that must be filled with the visitor’s own emotional response, thus creating a strong sense of reflection on his or her own emotional feelings about the events. The Void makes us focus as much on ourselves as on the victims because memorial languages are ultimately subjective; what matters is not as much the objective reality behind tragic events, but our own interpretations of those events and our feelings about these interpretations.

Second, with regard to the category of mass shootings, it is challenging to create a memorial language response because of the varying attitudes of individuals to this type of tragedy. Some people respond to shootings as if they were natural disasters—acts of God. Others believe that the failure of governments to prevent their root causes is to blame. What both sides can relate to, however, is that allowing victims and survivors of mass shootings to participate in the construction of memory can provide comfort and healing. Witnessing and Absence are both key elements in the case of response to mass shootings. In modern times, bearing Witness is one of the most widely recognised forms of discourse when responding to “calamitous tragedies” (Vivian 2017, p.3). Landscape architecture can be a powerful form of testimony to commemorate mass shootings. Places of trauma not only mark the location by providing evidence of events that occurred, but in many cases can promote healing by providing a site where victims and survivors can provide their own expressions and personal thoughts. My research suggests that creating the possibility for open responses to tragedy is important because mass shootings may result in many different types of responses. Some people wish merely to commemorate loved ones or express spontaneous empathetic responses, while others may wish to comment on the broader social or political questions of how and why these tragedies occur in the first place.
Absence is a memorial language approach that has a strong presence in all of the five case studies because they are designed to help victims and survivors to deal with pain and loss. However, the theme of absence is perhaps more clearly illustrated in the memorial language of mass shootings than in the other two types of responses, reflecting the fact that victims of this form of tragedy are usually connected to the place where the event happened, and their absence is more keenly noticed. How can memorials respond to this type of man-made human induced tragedy? One strategy that emerges from this thesis is the use of both personal and everyday objects to provide an individual identity for each victim. In addition, both cases I studied were created with strong input from the local community, and from the ways in which the sites were used it was clear that this had helped create a meaningful place. Consulting the families and victims about how they would like to be involved in the design process is important in developing a deep and enduring memorial response.

Third, memorials dedicated to war dead are a much older form of response to tragedy than are the other two types studied in this thesis. The goal is often not as much about testifying to the tragic events themselves and more about creating solidarity among survivors and patriotism in the broader society. The key form of response here is that of Transformation. Incorporating materials or objects that were used in the conflict into the physical structure of the memorial can help to promote the healing process, as objects that were involved in creating pain and suffering are transformed into useful elements that can promote memory and recovery.

These five forms of response—anchoring, void, absence, witness, and transformation—are only five of many that may provide important clues to understanding how memorial languages can enhance the relationship between memorials and visitors by generating powerful phenomenological experiences that can promote healing and memory.

From a landscape architecture perspective, there may be some useful research questions generated from this thesis. One possible direction is to focus on other types of memorial responses to human induced tragedies. The cases I examine in this thesis respond only to three categories of tragic events. There are many other categories of memory places that might be considered. Other possible responses might include genocide, forced displacement, and sexual violence, to name a few. The memorial language responses to these types of tragedies may differ significantly from the three types that I study here, as they may need to generate different emotional responses to the victims and survivors, visitors, and the society at large.
It might also be productive to examine responses to tragedy at the regional level. My research has focused on a broad cross-section of cases, which helps to identify general patterns of landscape memorial language. However, understanding the regional context may also be useful. For instance, Latin American memorials have particular historical and cultural elements, materials, and symbols that can enhance the sense of insideness. It may be that regional languages of memorialisation can resist generalising global influences, thus evoking a more powerful response to human induced tragedy through speaking to local identities. The five case studies illustrate that memorial responses are strongly influenced by local cultural factors. Thus, a cross-national comparison of case studies of memorial languages drawn from different continents or regions might be a fruitful way to understand the roles that regional factors play in determining the precise way that these languages are expressed.

The findings of this thesis will hopefully be useful to designers who hope to understand how memorial languages can be used in creating spaces that memorialise and respond to human induced tragedy. The responses made by memorials to violence and conflict, mass shootings, and war focus on such themes as suffering, transcendence, remembrance, absence, and healing. Nevertheless, importantly, they have not (or have only rarely) focused on how to prevent such tragedies in the first place. Should we, therefore, view memorials as merely a way to respond to tragedy? Or, alternatively, can they be designed as tools for preventing tragic events in the future as well?

“What matters in life is not what happens to you but what you remember and how you remember it.”

(Gabriel Garcia Marquez, LIVING TO TELL THE TALE in Estrade, 2008, p. 14)
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