

HAKİKAT ADALET HAFIZA MERKEZİ
TRUTH JUSTICE MEMORY CENTER



memory and youth

CONFRONTING THE PAST, BUILDING THE FUTURE:
MEMORY STUDIES WITH THE YOUTH

December 13-14, 2024

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CONFRONTING THE PAST, BUILDING THE FUTURE:
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December 13, Friday

9.00 – 9.30

Registration and Opening Speech

9.30 – 11.00

Memorializing Violence

- Ruken Ay Adın, *Confronting the Past: The Digital Memory Site of the 1930 Zilan Massacre*
- Şilan Es, *Xo Vira Meke (Do Not Forget): The Memory of Dersim '38*
- Ayliz Onaylı, *How Is a City Recognized? Urban Memory and Everyday Life Narratives in Maraş*

Discussants: Eviya Hovhannisyan and Serhat Arslan

11.00 – 11.15

Coffee Break

11.15 – 12.45

Memory Studies at the Intersection of Migration and Gender

- Burak Keşanlıoğlu, *Pride in the Rural: Invisible Colors*
- Berfin Hanalp, *The Gender of Migration – Memory of Truth*
- Serhat Vejîn Alan and Aybars Karahan, *Out of Sight: Earthquake and the Migration Experiences of LGBTQ+ People*

Discussants: Ameda Karakuzu, Müzeyyen Araç

12.45 – 13.30

Lunch

December 13, Friday

13.30 – 14.45 Roundtable: Oral History and Difficult Fieldwork Experiences

- Esengül Ayyıldız
- Eviya Hovhannisyan
- Mert Koçak

Moderators: Ruken Ay Adın and Şilan Es

14.45 – 15.55 Visual Testimonies: Documenting Exclusion and Discrimination through Documentaries

- Caner Dara, *Hey Hawar- Unmourned Grief (In Memory of Süleyman Aksu)*
- Mehmet Kuyumcu, *Missed Lives – The Dom People*

Discussants: Berke Baş and Nesrin Uçarlar

15.55 – 16.15 Coffee Break

16.15 – 18.00 Interactive Memory Workshops

- Damla Sandal: *Embroidering Memory*
- Roza Erdem: *Those Who Remain: Storytelling*
- Zeynep Kılıç: *Tracing Rituals and Tables: Making Halva with Takuhi Tovmasyan*

(The workshops will run concurrently, with participation limited to 20 persons per workshop.)

December 14, Saturday

Spatial Memories 10.00 – 11.30

- Jiyān Andıç and Francesco Pasta, *There are Orchards around Diyarbakır: Retracing Forced Urbanisation in the 1980s-90s*
- Ezgi Ceylan and Fatih Aydın, *Gionis Memory Map (Imbros)*
- Yiğit Göktuğ Torun and Ronî Battê, *Tari2na/Tariqna – The Memory Route (Antakya)*

Discussants: Arsen Abrahamyan and Fırat Genç

Coffee Break 11.30 – 11.45

Roundtable: Where Are Memory Walks Headed? 11.45 – 13.30

- Damla Barin
- Umut Azak
- Arsen Abrahamyan

Moderators: Ezgi Ceylan and Yiğit Göktuğ Torun

Lunch 13.15 – 14.00

Closing Session 14.00 – 15.15

15.30 Departure for the Balat Memory Walk

Confronting the Past: The Digital Memory Site of the 1930 Zilan Massacre

Ruken Ay Adin

July 13, 1930 | 47 Thousand People | 44 Villages

The Zilan Digital Memory Site has been designed to commemorate those who lost their lives in the Zilan Massacre, which occurred as part of military operations in 1930, resulting in the destruction of 44 villages and the deaths of thousands of people. It aims to preserve their memory, highlight the massacre in collective memory, and create a space for confronting the past. Following the massacre, the Zilan Valley became a site of atrocity, declared a "forbidden zone," and its local population was forcibly displaced. This digital memory site is built upon archival research, parliamentary records, and official newspapers of the era, and it serves as a call to confront the politics of forgetting. This platform, now accessible online, seeks to honor the memory of thousands who were lost and to bring the truth about Zilan and its victims to a broader audience. Presented as an accessible monument for all to see, it aspires to contribute to confronting the past and building a more just and peaceful future. This initiative, shaped at the intersection of possibilities and impossibilities, represents a step toward addressing severe human rights violations and embedding them into collective memory.

Xo Vira Meke (Do Not Forget): The Memory of Dersim '38

Şilan Es

The events that took place in Dersim during 1937-1938 and their intergenerational transmission are the central topics of my project. Extensive research has been conducted and continues to be carried out in this field in Dersim. These studies have led to diverse productions across various fields and styles. My aim is to examine these forms of production, analyze intergenerational modes of expression, levels of influence, and motivations behind the work. My primary motivation is to understand the factors that inspire individuals to engage in these productions, the methods they use to narrate their own stories, the challenges they face during their work, their memories related to the genocide, and the outcomes or processes they have reached as a result of these efforts. Additionally, one of my primary goals is to evaluate the effects of these processes on intergenerational transmission. As a method, a semi-structured interview process was designed to engage with individuals involved in any form of production related to this topic, as described above. A draft set of questions was developed through consultations with my project advisor, Esengül Ayyıldız. The interviews were conducted in a conversational format, guided by these questions, and were recorded on video.

How Is a City Recognized? Urban Memory and Everyday Life Narratives in Maraş

Ayliz Onaylı

This study, which examines the relationship between urban memory and everyday life narratives through the lens of the city of Maraş, is shaped by two fundamental dynamics. The first is the reality that the ways we remember the past shape our daily lives, and in turn, our daily lives shape the ways we remember the past. Memory and life are not two separate concepts with a sequential relationship but are instead deeply embedded within one another, continuously giving rise to each other. The second is the necessity of looking at the people who live in or have a connection to a "city" in order to understand it. A place can only be defined by the capacity of the lives we are able to build within it and the boundaries of the lives we are unable to establish in our minds. These capacities and boundaries are determined by how the physical world interacts with our collective and individual internal worlds. Within the framework of these two dynamics, my aim is to propose a method for understanding a city. It is essential to investigate how the duality of memory and life collide and intertwine, drawing on ethnography, psychology, and politics. By addressing pivotal turning points such as the destruction of Armenians, the 1978 massacre, and the 2023 earthquakes, I will explore how we perceive the "world before our eyes"—our sense of self, points of divergence and reconciliation, belongings and emotions, symbols and fragments, and, most significantly, where "the death of death" stands in this city.

Pride in the Rural: Invisible Colors

Burak Keşanlıoğlu

This project aims to shed light on the lives of LGBTQI+ individuals living in rural and provincial regions of Turkey, while examining the impacts of social pressure and invisibility. At the same time, it seeks to draw the attention of civil society to these remote areas and their outskirts. The countryside often emerges as a place where overlooked lives remain hidden and where silence reverberates. Yet this silence does not prevent the discussion of topics that cannot be spoken of behind closed doors for hours, days, or even years. Silence almost always has much to convey. In Turkey, with rapid urbanization, many people yearn to return to their villages and towns. However, this project aims to delve deeper into what the countryside means for LGBTQI+ individuals and women. For some, the countryside represents nature, fresh air, and freedom; for minorities, it can become an open-air prison from which escape is impossible. By documenting the life experiences of LGBTQI+ people living in rural settings, this project intends to give visibility to invisible lives that echo in the midst of very loud silences. One-on-one Zoom interviews were conducted with 10 participants from 10 different provinces in Turkey, paying close attention to geographical distribution as well as diversity in gender identity and sexual orientation. These interviews were then transformed into a podcast series to highlight the participants' stories. The first two episodes focus on being a trans man in Kocaeli and a bisexual woman in Van. A total of 10 episodes will be shared, and if the project receives the necessary support and attention, it is planned to continue with participants from other cities. The "Honor in the Countryside – Unseen Colors" project is a call to listen to stories that echo in the middle of nowhere. It invites us to rethink what the countryside means for women and LGBTQI+ individuals, and to discover its invisible colors.

The Gender of Migration – Memory of Truth

Berfin Hanalp

For various reasons in the Middle East (such as totalitarian regimes, internal unrest, economic conditions, war, etc.), people are being displaced or forced to relocate. As a result, migration routes in the Middle East constitute something akin to a collective memory and a compulsory record of these journeys. In my work, I sought to convey, through illustrations and from a gender perspective, the experience of a woman who was compelled to travel along the Afghanistan–Iran–Van migration route, one of the many that form part of this collective memory. My research comprised four stages. In the first stage, I visited Van to conduct field research and interviewed individuals directly involved in this migration process. In the second stage, I expanded these interviews in a way that supports the contribution of oral history to memory studies, thereby forming the core framework of my work. In the third stage, I compiled the interviews I had conducted and organized the story into sections. Finally, in the fourth stage, with my interviewee's permission, I presented the resulting migration narrative through drawings.

Out of Sight: Earthquake and the Migration Experiences of LGBTQ+ People

Serhat Vejîn Alan and Aybars Karahan

The project aims to shed light on the migration experiences of LGBTI+ individuals who relocated to other cities in Turkey following the February 6–20, 2023 earthquakes. The study focuses on participants' experiences before, during, and after the earthquakes, highlighting the rights violations they faced and the challenges they encountered in accessing basic needs. Information gathered from interviews and fieldwork will be compiled into a report format based on personal narratives, offering an inclusive perspective to amplify the voices of these individuals.

There are Orchards around Diyarbakır: Retracing Forced Urbanisation in the 1980s-90s

Jiyan Andiç and Francesco Pasta

This study aims to trace and document the collective experience of forced displacement and urbanization in Bağlar (Orchards), one of Diyarbakır's densely populated districts, by drawing on oral history interviews with local residents. Like other similar districts predominantly inhabited by the Kurds, Bağlar is either overlooked or often analyzed through traditional lenses such as rural-to-urban migration, informal settlements (gecekondu), or "irregular urbanization." These perspectives reduce the district to an example of urban degradation and failed planning, flattening its multilayered fabric and erasing its role as a site of resilience and political mobilization. Furthermore, they feed into the urban transformation narrative underpinning state-supported "from-scratch" redevelopment projects targeting Bağlar in recent years. This research seeks to move beyond portraying Bağlar merely as a space of complicatedness and poverty, offering an alternative understanding that contributes to developing urban improvement approaches other than "from-scratch" reconstruction—a strategy preferred by both the government and local administrations despite their political differences. Additionally, the study aims to shed light on the unique dynamics of Kurdish urban contexts in Turkey during the 1980s and 1990s, contributing to ongoing debates in the field.

Hey Hawar – Unmourned Grief (In Memory of Süleyman Aksu)

Caner Dara

This documentary focuses on Süleyman Aksu, an English teacher who was one of the 33 individuals killed in the suicide bombing that occurred at the Amara Cultural Center in Suruç, Urfa, on July 20, 2015. These young people, members of the Socialist Youth Associations Federation (SGDF), were preparing to travel to Kobani to aid in its reconstruction after its destruction by ISIS attacks. The documentary highlights the severe human rights violations faced by Süleyman Aksu's family after his death, particularly the desecration of his grave and attacks on his memory. Since 2015, Süleyman Aksu's grave in Yüksekova has been completely destroyed seven times. Each time, his family and friends have rebuilt it, enduring repeated violations. The documentary sheds light on these experiences and situates them within a broader investigation of graves destroyed by Turkish state forces in Kurdistan between 2015 and 2024. Interviews with civil society organizations such as the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) and Mebya-DER, along with lawyers, striking visuals of desecrated cemeteries, and archival research are integrated into the film.

Missed Lives – The Dom People

Mehmet Kuyumcu

This documentary explores the cultural heritage and living conditions of the Dom community in Hatay, both before and after the earthquake. It aims to raise awareness from a human rights perspective by focusing on the discrimination, social exclusion, cultural assimilation, and economic hardships faced by the community. Prior to the earthquake, the Dom people practiced traditional crafts such as tinning, jewelry making, and dentistry; however, these professions have largely disappeared due to modernization and mechanization. Those who lost their livelihoods turned to jobs like scrap collecting and waste scavenging, with many families living in homes without title deeds. After the earthquake, the community underwent forced migration, losing their culture of communal living and entering a process of assimilation. Their means of livelihood were further eroded by state regulations, and employment opportunities dwindled. Rising discrimination and hate speech led to community members being excluded from shelter centers and deprived of basic aid. Financial constraints and social exclusion also resulted in many children being unable to continue their education. Families living in homes without title deeds were ineligible to apply for legal entitlements, further exacerbating the community's vulnerability. Missed Lives - The Dom People is not just a narrative but a call to action advocating for the Dom community's right to live, preserve their cultural heritage, and build a future on equal terms.

Gionis Memory Map (Imbros)

Ezgi Ceylan and Fatih Aydın

The aim of the project is to create a digital memory map documenting elements of Imbros' (Gökçeada in Turkish) memory, including its spaces, people, language, music, architecture, and rituals. Named after the scops owl—a bird associated with Imbros and symbolizing a witness to the dark shadows of the past—the project draws inspiration from this bird's emblematic role. Imbros, Turkey's largest island located in its westernmost region, was granted a form of autonomous governance under the Treaty of Lausanne but has since been shaped by various political processes. Particularly after 1960, increasing economic, cultural, and political pressures during the Cyprus crisis culminated in the 1964 "de-Hellenization" policies, leading to the forced displacement of the island's Greek residents. Today, the island faces challenges from unsustainable tourism activities and the processes of "Gökçeadalaşma" (Gökçeada-ization). Greek-owned properties have been unlawfully confiscated, and religious and natural heritage has suffered significant damage. Furthermore, a new wave of migration triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has intensified real estate speculation, posing additional threats to the island's cultural heritage. In this context, the project seeks to preserve Imbros' cultural memory and contribute to mitigating the negative effects of these transformations. The initiative plans to create a map featuring the island's significant historical and cultural landmarks, oral narratives, notable figures, and natural sites, supported by visual materials. This map will not only help sustain the island's ancient culture but also aim to develop a memory route in the long term.

Ultimately, the project aspires to shed light on the past of Imbros' Greek population, making this memory—marginalized by the nation-state narrative—visible. It also aims to contribute to memory studies in Turkey and serves as an essential step toward rediscovering Anatolia's multicultural identity.

Tari2na/Tariqna – The Memory Route (Antakya)

Yiğit Göktuğ Torun and Ronî Battê

This project is an archival and awareness initiative aimed at making Antakya's destroyed historical fabric and cultural identity visible through memory routes, audio narratives, and visual arts. The project incorporates conversations recorded during walks through the streets of Antakya, the hometown of Yiğit Göktuğ, blending these memories with drawings and visual stories inspired by them. Roni Batte creates drawings that merge what is heard with what is seen, with the drawing process being recorded on video. These videos will feature animated GIFs of Yiğit and Roni's conversations (as drawings) along with audio recordings. The curated content will be pinned to relevant memory points on Nehna's Beledna-hafizaharitasi.com. The project seeks to convey the essence of Antakya's streets to someone who has never seen them, presenting these spaces through the eyes and stories of a native Antakyan. It emphasizes that the structures are not merely physical entities but also hold cultural and social significance. Additionally, the project provides a robust archival resource aimed at preserving Antakya's historical fabric for future generations and advocating for its faithful reconstruction.