

# Architectural Memorialization at Turkey's ›Witness Sites‹: The Case of the Madimak Hotel

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## Background and Context

In Turkey, the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a series of military interventions in politics. This period, which also witnessed several atrocious events or phenomena, has had a long lasting political and sociopsychological impact in the country. Dubbed by many ›the coup era‹, the period is a major reference point for present-day political discourses and social struggles pursued by various actors. Among these actors is the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) who, in their decade old rule, have adopted a discourse of post-coup democratization<sup>1</sup> and of ›coming to terms with‹ the ›coup era‹. But the ruling party has not been unchallenged, as their discourse has been highly contested by rights-seeking communities who identify strongly with the victims of the coup era's atrocities. Representatives of these communities have called for the government to publicly acknowledge the state's responsibility in the atrocities. Moreover, they call for the law to hold perpetrators legally accountable, in order to enable a redress of what they regard as the »continuing injustice« (Çandar 2012). A number of judicial and legal shortcomings suggest, however, that their demands are far from being met. These include unresolved court cases, cases that ›lapsed‹ due to the statute of limitations, limited investigations that failed to account for offi-

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1 A case in point epitomizing the government's discourse is an op-ed article written in 2011 for the *Guardian* by the government spokesman Bülent Arınç. In this article, the spokesman suggests, »Turkey has now left the coup era behind« and »democracy and democratic institutions in Turkey are firmly established.« Entitled »Mandate for a new Turkey,« Arınç's article was published the morning after Turkey's June 12<sup>th</sup> general elections, in which his AKP received 50 percent of the popular vote. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jun/13/mandate-for-a-new-turkey>

cial authorities' role in the atrocities, and numerous perpetrators who have managed to flee justice.<sup>2</sup>

These vast judicial and legal shortcomings have, in a way, caused the site of contestation over the past to move from courts of law to ›witness sites‹ – a term I will develop and use in this paper to refer to Turkey's sites of atrocity.<sup>3</sup> Today, each of these sites is inseparably associated with a particular atrocity, whose victims' legacy is claimed by a specific community. What is more, each community has demanded that ›their‹ witness site be turned into a museum in memory of victims. Although the majority of these demands are yet to be met, and most witness sites continue to serve their original purposes, they have recently become subject to projects of architectural transformation. But, in the case of those projects which have in fact been realized, the overall function resulting from the transformation has not always been overtly commemorative.

A prime example of Turkey's witness sites is the Madımak Hotel in the city of Sivas. On July 2nd, 1993, the hotel witnessed the event known today as the ›Sivas Massacre‹, when a rioting mob set fire to the hotel while individuals invited to the city for a culture festival were still inside. As a result, 37 civilians, 33 of whom were festival guests, perished. The festival was organized by an association representing Turkey's Alevi, a religious cum spiritual community whose practices and rituals differ fundamentally from those followed by the Sunni – the demographically predominant sect of Islam in Turkey. Members of the Alevi community are also the ones today to identify strongly with the victims of the atrocity. Although the 1993 arson attack is believed to have been the work of what seemed to be a Sunni Islamist fundamentalist mob, the then state authorities have also been blamed by associations representing the community for failing to prevent the events despite their presence at the scene of crime. But these authorities remain yet to be tried and sentenced, as the aforementioned judicial and legal shortcomings have also been brought to bear in the case of the Sivas atrocity.

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2 Each of these legal shortcomings pertains also to the court case on the Sivas Massacre. See Euronews. 14 March 2012. Turkey judge drops case against Sivas hotel fire suspects. Available online at <http://www.euronews.com/2012/03/14/turkey-judge-drops-case-against-sivas-hotel-fire-suspects> Last accessed 30 September 2012.

3 Such sites include the Madımak Hotel where 37 were killed by arson on July 2nd, 1993; the Diyarbakır Prison where tens of Kurdish political inmates were tortured *en masse* over the years that followed the 1980 coup; the recently museumified Ulucanlar Prison where key revolutionary figures from the 1970s leftist student movement were hanged; and Yassiada, the island off Istanbul where the trials of then-ruling *Demokrat Parti* members took place after the 1960 coup (three of those tried therein, including the then prime minister Adnan Menderes, were later sentenced to death and executed). All of these sites are subject to current museumification demands, debates and/or projects.

Concurrent with these shortcomings, the years that followed the atrocity saw the Madımak Hotel emerge as a site of contestation. The site first underwent repair to be relaunched as a hotel. A few years later a charcoal grill restaurant opened in its ground floor. Over the years, it was subjected to Alevi associations' unmet demands for museumification – namely for a ›Museum of Shame‹ – and their onsite demonstrations of this demand. In the face of accumulating pressure, state authorities decided in 2010 to expropriate and transform the building. After a very secretive process in which the wider public was completely uninformed about the site's upcoming function, the transformation was completed in the spring of 2011, and the building was inaugurated as a ›Science and Culture Center‹. The intended audience for the new center is elementary school children, as it hosts a children's library, audiovisual rooms, and labs for simple science experiments.

The state's unwillingness to accede to the demand for Madımak's museumification, along with the aforementioned judicial and legal shortcomings, has foregrounded the commemorative demonstrations held in Sivas on the atrocity's anniversary as »the arena where the court case is being held.«<sup>4</sup> In addition to being the platform where the demand for museumification has been promulgated, these demonstrations have also seen the raising of other Alevi demands for ›equal citizenship rights‹.<sup>5</sup> As part of my fieldwork over the past year and a half, I attended the 2011 and 2012 demonstrations in Sivas to study both the recent transformation of the Madımak Hotel into a ›Science and Culture Center,‹ and its impact on the way in which the demonstrators related to the atrocity through the site where it took place. I have studied the ›Science and Culture Center‹ also outside anniversa-

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4 This is how Kemal Bülbül referred to the Madımak Hotel and its vicinity when he addressed demonstrators during the on-site mass commemoration held on July 2nd, 2012 in Sivas. Bulbul is the current president of the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association, the main Alevi organization pursuing the Sivas case on both social and legal platforms. Members of this association include families of the Sivas Massacre victims.

5 These demands include the abolition of The Presidency of Religious Affairs (in Turkish: *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), the state institution representing the highest Islamic religious authority in Turkey, established in 1924 following the abolition of the caliphate), the official recognition of Alevi places of ritual as religious facilities, and the removal of mandatory religion lessons in secondary school curriculum. See Karabat, Ayşe. 8 November 2008. Rallies across Turkey highlight Alevi demands. *Today's Zaman*. Available online at <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-158159-rallies-across-turkey-highlight-alevi-demands.html> Last accessed 30 September 2012. For further discussions of the atrocity's role in identity formation among members of the Alevi community, see Şahin, Şehriban. 2005. The Rise of Alevism as a Public Religion. *Current Sociology* 53,3: 465–485 (in the case of community members in Turkey), and Yıldız, Ali Aslan and Maykel Verkuyten. 2011. Inclusive victimhood: Social identity and the politicization of collective trauma among Turkey's Alevis in Western Europe. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 17,3: 243–269. (in the case of community members abroad).

ries and conducted participant observation and semi structured interviews at the site, as well as at other relevant memorials and commemorative events in different settings in Turkey (in the cities of Sivas, Izmir, Ankara, Hacıbektaş, etc.) and abroad (in London). My initial findings from the field raise significant challenges for discussions around Turkey's sites of atrocity. Although my fieldwork has encompassed a range of events and sites, in this paper I will discuss these challenges only in light of my work during the last two onsite commemorations in Sivas.

The challenges presented by my case concern both the public debate on Turkey's sites of atrocity and their scholarly discussions. The former challenge calls for a problematization of the demand for ›museumification‹, and for a nuanced understanding of this notion which would better relate to the particularities of the current situation in present-day Turkey. The latter challenge concerns established theories on materiality and memory, which are often uncritically deployed whilst attempting to discuss, what I call, Turkey's witness sites. But first a brief theoretical discussion is needed in order to explain why and how these challenges are worth addressing.

## Theory

To be sure, issues surrounding sites of atrocity and their memorialization have long been of interest to scholars. But these issues are believed to have recently – in the postwar years – become a topic of much larger sociocultural relevance. Seeking to capture the essence of this increasing relevance, scholars have come up with terms such as »obsession with memory« (Huyssen 1995: 1–9), »the global rush to commemorate atrocities« (Williams 2007) and »the memory boom« (Winter 2006). Postwar years have indeed seen a ›boom in production,‹ as much more has been written on the topic and much more built, for that matter, in the form of monuments, memorials and museums. The question arises, however, as to whether and how the scholarly understanding of materiality's role has evolved to cope with this increase in the sociocultural relevance of memory – especially the nuanced form it takes in different contexts. In order to address this question briefly, in this paper I will discuss two seminal examples: first, Alois Riegl's »The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Origin,« (Riegl 1982 [1903]) dates back to the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is therefore meant to represent a pre-World Wars approach. The second work, Pierre Nora's *Realms of Memory* (1996a), on the other hand, is a postwar text which has had immense scholarly influence over the last two decades.

In his essay, Alois Riegl distinguishes between intentional and unintentional monuments. Among the two categories, the latter seems fit for Turkey's witness sites as it is meant to comprise sites that owe their memorial significance not to

the intentions of their designers and builders, but to the events they witnessed during their post construction lifetime. Riegl then discusses the significance of unintentional monuments via the notion of ›value‹, where he distinguishes between »present-day value« and »commemorative value« (Riegl 1982 [1903]). He suggests that the present-day values of monuments have to do with purposes different from commemoration as they deny the memorial function of the monument. An example of present-day value, for Riegl, is use-value, in other words the practical functional performance of the object. For commemorative value, on the other hand, Riegl gives the example of age-value which »manifests itself . . . in the corrosion of surfaces, in their patina, in the wear and tear of buildings and objects« (Ibid: 32). In brief, Riegl argues that while use-value requires the upkeep of the unintentional monument against the traces of time, those very traces in fact also give the monument its commemorative value.

In his 1996 work *Realms of Memory*, Pierre Nora suggests a distinction between *lieux de mémoire* (places of memory) and *milieux de mémoire* (realms of memory) (1996a). For Nora, *lieux de mémoire* are places »where memory is crystallized« and they exist »because there are no longer any *milieux de mémoire*, settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience« (1996b: 1). According to Nora, the latter term refers to a proto-modern era when memory was much more a part of everyday life, whereas the former indicates the modern condition when society's relationship with the past started evolving into a spatially and temporally bound experience. Monuments, memorials, and commemorations are among Nora's prime examples for this shift with which the task of remembering, according to him, began to be delegated to artefacts, and therefore became institutionalized, sanitized and rid of its potential to transform the present.

Although these two influential works were written in different periods of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – respectively before and after the so called »memory boom« (Winter 2006) – and seem to have a different take on issues surrounding memorialization, a comparative analysis suggests that both work from a particular understanding of temporality. Considering time only as linear progression, they assume that the relationship between materiality and memory is marked, almost unconditionally, by a fundamental contradiction between ›the past‹ and ›the present‹. For Riegl, this contradiction is more of a physical nature: how effectively the built environment connects the present to the past depends on the material traces it bears of the chronological progression of time. Put bluntly, the more ruinous the better, where the ›ruinousness‹ is measured in terms of *chronos* – of time as a quantitative factor.

In Nora's theory, the presence of the understanding of temporality as linear progression is of a methodological nature. He argues that there is a fundamental contradiction between »the commemoration of the national type« and that of »the patrimonial type« (1996b: 632). For Nora, the former type belongs to a by-

gone era – namely, to proto modern times – when commemoration was a much more pervasive part of everyday life. But today’s sites of memory, according to Nora, are merely patrimonial artefacts. ›Embodying‹ the past and, in that, effectively sealing it from the present, these artefacts are devoid of any possible potential of transforming the everyday. As such, their significance in the present, for Nora, is only as static and deadlocked objects – as ›heritage‹. This dichotomization of ›the old paradigm‹ versus ›the new‹ is itself symptomatic of Nora’s particular understanding of temporality which he shares with Riegl. In short, both scholars work from an understanding of temporality only as linear and irreversible progression, which results in their presumption that the act of memorialization is complicated by an irreconcilable gap between the two binary temporalities of ›the past‹ and ›the present‹. This shared understanding points to a legacy that has survived the 20<sup>th</sup> century in which the attitude toward the concept of memory is believed to have undergone immense change as the concept acquired much larger sociocultural influence.

Undoubtedly, these oft-cited ideas are of help when it comes to understanding certain social, geographical and cultural contexts. But can they be applied indiscriminately to all contexts? In fact, Nora’s ideas have been frequently employed by scholars discussing what I call Turkey’s witness sites. The most recent case in point is an article by Firat and Topaloğlu (2012) where the authors discuss as a *lieu de mémoire* the Diyarbakır Prison which, very similarly to the Madımak Hotel, is a site associated with atrocious phenomena dating to the so called ›coup era‹, and has been subject to unmet demands for museumification (see endnote 3). I would like to argue that such uncritical application of Nora’s ideas (and those of many other historians who work from a similar premise regarding their understanding of temporality) does not suffice to account for the wide range of ways in which different social and political actors with a stake in the discussion around Turkey’s witness sites experience temporality. This insufficiency is most evident in the annual onsite commemorations of the Sivas atrocity.

## Case study

Commemorations held in Sivas on the massacre’s anniversary are the prime platform where the multifaceted nature of the relationship between materiality and temporality surfaces. Organized annually by Alevi associations, these events have, over the years, become something of a tradition and grown into a mass demonstration type of event. They have served as the main venue where the demand for the former Madımak Hotel’s museumification has been visibly and intensively raised. But since the redesign of the site as Science and Culture Center, the criti-

cal focus of these demonstrations has not been limited only to the state's refusal to meet the demand for a ›Museum of Shame‹. It has expanded to include also the site's redesign and its particularly controversial aspects, such as the ›list of victims‹ which includes the names of the two perpetrators who died during the 1993 arson.

A typical July 2<sup>nd</sup> demonstration in Sivas begins in the morning with participants arriving in Alibaba, which is reputedly ›the Alevi neighborhood‹ of central Sivas. Characterized by large scale domestic and international migration (Sokefeld 2008), members of the Alevi community see the annual demonstrations in Sivas as something of a reunion. The first venue of this reunion, Alibaba, is the meeting point where community members coming from different parts of Turkey and Europe congregate each year at the local *cemevi* (the Alevi place of worship and ritual – literally, ›house of gathering‹), prior to their march toward the former hotel. The demonstration proceeds along a two kilometer route stretching from the neighborhood down to the site where the atrocity took place, and it ends therein with the laying of flowers. This route is striking in the way it cuts across the city center while also marking the continuing presence of the local Alevi community in central Sivas.

At their outset, commemorations in 2011 and 2012, which were held after the site of the 1993 atrocity underwent transformation, were not very different from their earlier counterparts. However, as they progressed, both bore remarkable particularities. These had to do with a precaution taken by state authorities, namely their setting up of barricades en route to the former hotel. The reason for this precaution, state authorities argued, was the risk that demonstrators could resort to vandalism in protest against the site's redesign. In 2011, such a barricade was set up a few hundred meters in front of the building, which had sparked immense dispute amongst the demonstrators. The following year, a barricade was first placed a kilometer ahead of the building, preventing demonstrators from approaching not only the former hotel but also the central square in Sivas. After a negotiation between the organizers and the then governor of Sivas, the barricade was moved back to the front of the Science and Culture Center where it had been set up a year ago. While this move was presented by the organizers as a gain, it in fact normalized the barricade as part and parcel of the built environment in and around the Science and Culture Center, making a significant impact on the ways in which demonstrators experience the site.

For many of the individuals who identify with the victims of the Sivas atrocity, the law enforcement's setting up of barricades on commemoration day bears a bitter resemblance to the events of July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1993. This resemblance was most evident in the confrontation which took place at the barricade in 2011. While state authorities argued for the risk of demonstrators wanting to approach the building in or-

der to vandalize it, Alevi associations had already decided that they would refrain from entering the Science and Culture Center. Representatives of these associations put this forth as a symbolic performance of their refusal to confer legitimacy to the site's recent redesign. However, they still wanted to reach the building's entrance, not only to repeat the flower laying ritual, but also to hang a sign they had especially made for this demonstration, which bore the phrase ›Madımak Museum of Shame‹. As this sign was carried forward from hand to hand in turn to ›trespass‹ the barricade, the police reacted first by pushing back the front row and then by using teargas. Despite its excessiveness, the police's use of force did not incite much backlash, except the very brief reaction of a few young activists. At this moment, leading figures of the community were addressing the crowd from atop the demonstration bus. Stressing the importance of peacefulness and non-violence in their culture with explicit references to historic events and personas, they cautioned the demonstrators to remain calm regardless of the police's attitude. The already minor physical confrontation was thus brought to an end. After final speeches by leading figures of the community, most of whom commented on the law enforcement's attitude as »a continuation of previous massacres and of the centuries long tyranny of hegemonic powers,« the demonstration ended.

It is important to note that, in the geography that hosts today's Turkey, the relationship between the Sunni and the Alevi have been marked by frequent contestation and periodic episodes of violence targeting the latter (Neyzi 2002). As seen in the speeches mentioned above, this troubled history, in turn, makes many members of the Alevi community talk of the Sivas Massacre as not the first of its kind, but rather the most recent one in a long chain of atrocities. One of those previous atrocities is indeed considered as more directly related to the Sivas Massacre – the execution of Pir Sultan Abdal. He was a 16<sup>th</sup> century minstrel who is known to have been critical of the Ottoman state administration and is believed to have later been hanged in Sivas by the governor. The 1993 culture festival in Sivas, whose guests were targeted by the arsonist mob, was named after Pir Sultan, while also a state sponsored sculpture reputedly depicting him was erected in a public square in Sivas the night before the festival. On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, prior to setting the hotel on fire, the arsonist mob defaced this monument and demanded its toppling. This is known as something of a threshold moment when the mob's fury translated, for the first time that day, into physical violence. Arguably trying to reduce the escalating tension which would later result in the arson, the local municipal and state authorities decided collectively to meet the mob's request and brought them the toppled monument as proof. This is believed to have further encouraged the perpetrators, instead of pacifying them. Today, Pir Sultan continues to be a prominent sacred figure for Alevis, and to denominate events organized and associations established by the community.



The confrontation which took place around the barricade in 2011 thus involved the evocation of a particular theme in Alevi religious narratives. The evocation was possible thanks to the community leaders' explicit reference to historic personas as they addressed the demonstrators, to their comparison of the law enforcement's attitude with previous atrocities in history, and finally to the resonance their efforts found with the demonstrators. The theme in question pertains to the concept of ›passive‹ or ›nonviolent martyrdom‹ which, according to scholars of Alevism such as Reinhard Hess (2007), is one of the most significant motifs in Alevi narratives. As Hess demonstrates, in Alevi culture it is possible to speak of a martyrology – a lineage of sanctity whose links consist not of birth, but of tragic death during acts of dissidence against the perceived oppressor (Ibid). While the 16<sup>th</sup> century minstrel Pir Sultan is considered a prominent martyr – in Turkish, a *şehit* – victims of the Sivas Massacre, regardless of whether they were Alevi or not, are also spoken of as martyrs within the community (Ibid: 281).

There are various elements of the built environment where this martyrology can be traced. Foremost among these is a group of ›Sivas martyrs memorials‹ dedicated to individual Alevi victims of the Sivas Massacre, and built by associations in the respective village from which each victim hails. Also among these elements is an example from outside Turkey: the London memorial to the Sivas Massacre. Situated in Stoke Newington Common in the Borough of Hackney, which also hosts a significant Alevi population, this memorial was built in 1997 but fell into neglect for many years only to be discovered in September 2011. Upon their discovery, directors of the London Alevi Cultural Centre immediately reinaugurated the memorial under the new name ›The Memorial to Pir Sultan Abdal and the Sivas Martyrs‹. It is not only this new name which bears the lineage of martyrs and incorporates the massacre victims into that lineage, but also the London Alevi Cultural Centre's proposed extensions to the memorial, which include a sculpture depicting Pir Sultan, the prominent figure of Alevi martyrology.

In his book *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Giorgio Agamben argues that most attempts of relating the past in the present are complicated by what he calls »a lacuna« between the idea of testimony as narration and that of testimony as witnessing (Agamben 1999: 33–6). Considering the concept of martyrdom an attempt to remove this lacuna, he reminds that in Greek the word *martis* refers both to ›witness‹ and ›martyr‹ (Ibid: 26). Agamben suggests two ways in which the concept of the ›martyr‹ bridges this lacuna. The first has to do with the root verb of *martis*, which means ›to remember‹ (Ibid). According to Agamben, this refers to a person who has witnessed an event, and is ›cursed‹ with its memory and thus with the imperative to narrate it. The second has to do with the idea of testimony as past tense experience, to a person's complete witnessing of a deadly event such as the Holocaust. Here, the use of the concept of martyrdom helps to give mean-

ing to the incomprehensible, and explain the inexplicable (Ibid: 27). Similarly, in Turkish, the word *şehadet*, a loanword from Arabic, refers all at once to the concept of testimony as narration, to that of martyrdom, and to the condition of bearing witness. In the case of the onsite commemorations of the Sivas Massacre, then, the evocation of *şehadet* has a twofold effect. First, it helps narrate the atrocity – in other words, give meaning to the incomprehensible. Second, it helps reconcile the lacuna between this present day narration and testimony as past witnessing.

## Concluding Remarks

Having drawn attention to the intricate ways in which the theme of *şehadet* affects the demonstrators' experiences in and around the former Madımak Hotel, I would like to conclude by raising two points. The first has to do with museumification as a particular strategy of relating to the past. Focusing narrowly and often solely on this strategy, the public debate around sites like the former Madımak Hotel considers museumification as something of a *sine qua non* for memorialization. But the debate lacks a nuanced understanding of how museumification can function vis-à-vis the particularities of the context of Turkey. These particularities demand attention to the wide range of meanings the site conveys for different actors – pedagogic, legal, political, redemptive, spiritual, to name a few. Furthermore, I would like to suggest that a discussion of architectural memorialization with respect to the case of the former hotel cannot be confined only to the desiderated museumification of the site. For demonstrations such as the one in Sivas are not only venues for demanding architectural memorialization, but also function in and of themselves as a distinct form – a tactics<sup>6</sup> – of such memorialization. By theorizing these tactical interventions as a particular form of architectural memo-

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6 Here when I speak of ›strategies‹ and ›tactics‹, I build on Michel de Certeau's understanding of these two notions as the two distinct ways in which a subject acts in relation to an object (Certeau 1984: 34–9). Certeau's distinction between the two notions has to do with the dynamics between time and space. For Certeau, »strategies are actions ... [that] ... privilege spatial relationships,« and they »attempt to reduce temporal relations to spatial ones« (Ibid: 38). Tactics, on the other hand, »are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time« (Ibid). Which of Certeau's two lines of action serves better to explain museumification, or, any permanent architectural transformation, for that matter? Such transformation entails the delimiting of space and separating that site's territory from its exteriority. A permanent spatial rearrangement, it favors space over time. These characteristics demonstrate that, whether in the form of a museum or a ›Science and Culture Center‹, permanent architectural transformations, especially when they are implemented in a top-down manner, are to be called, in Certeau's terms, a strategy. Which of Certeau's two lines of action, then, could help understand the commemorative demonstrations that take

rialization, I aim to expand the focus of the ›public‹ debate on museumification. In contexts characterized by judicial and legal shortcomings and ongoing rights seeking processes, adhering to such a narrow focus runs the risk of paradoxically victimizing the very individuals who identify with the victims. This in turn creates a further unfair presentation of these individuals, who in fact very actively participate in commemorative demonstrations, as deprived of agency.

Secondly, the case of the former Madımak Hotel problematizes the direct application of established theories on the relationship between materiality and memory onto the context of Turkey's witness sites. The case suggests that the boundaries between what is spoken of binarily as ›the past‹ and ›the present‹ can be far more blurred than those suggested by scholars like Riegl and Nora. This blurriness is all the more evident in the nonlinear, often even cyclical, way in which actors who identify strongly with the massacre's victims experience temporality at witness sites. These sites enable such experiences due to their ability to effectively help overlap different temporalities – which, in the case I discussed, are ›Sivas Massacre time‹, the historical ›Alevi martyrdom time‹ and the time of the ›here and now‹, to name a few. The word ›witness‹ in the notion of ›witness site‹, then, does not only refer to the site's own quality of past witnessing. In a context characterized by judicial and legal shortcomings, the word refers also to the site's present-day quality as a quasi-legal forum where evidence is elicited and testimonies are performed as narratives.

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place each year in Sivas? These demonstrations are modes of action which appropriate space in order to link different temporalities, such as ›Massacre-time‹, ›martyrdom-time‹, the time of the ›here-and-now‹, etc. To link the everyday to the past in such manner is – similarly to Certeau's notion of ›tactics‹ – to prioritize time over space.

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