Chapter 1. Repositioning the Homeland

> "It is normal to find an event of great loss at the foundation of a nation."
> *(Feuchtwang 2007:17)*

In this chapter, I highlight the issue of multiple homeland geographies that may lead to ambiguous relations between the diaspora and the homeland. This includes the recent shift in relations between two poles. For a long period over the twentieth century, Western diasporic Armenians did not view the territory of the former Soviet Armenia as the object of their homeland desires. After Armenia's independence in 1991, this situation has changed and many diasporic activists with roots in Turkey now view the territory of the Republic of Armenia as the site of their 'ancestral homeland'. As a result, with the onset of the twenty-first century, an abstract notion of the homeland associated with a 'cultural heritage' has been transformed into a more tangible homeland, one conceived as a destination. Razmik Panossian, a Canadian political scientist is rather sceptical about the euphoric shift in diasporic perceptions of the self and space, and identified this new quality of the diaspora's attitude to the independent Armenian Republic as related to the "drunkenness of statehood" (Panossian 2015).

In this context, I begin by briefly describing the historical background of the formation of diasporic communities in North America and the notion of multiple geographies of the homeland. The second part of the chapter highlights the shift in self-representations of Armenian loss (*yeghern*) and globalization of memory on Armenian genocide. As a result, this turn offered a unique opportunity for diasporic people to participate in a new field of transnational activities. The chapter addresses this issue and examines the ways diasporic activists re-conceptualise the former 'stepmother' homeland into a new diaspora space. As a result of the memorialisation of the Armenian loss in Yerevan, the capital city has become the focal point for Armenian identifications, lead-

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ing to the creation of one uniting force for global Armenians (Ter-Ghazaryan 2013; Kasbarian 2015). By focusing on the central 'iconic place' of Armenian loss and pain manifested at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan, I show how, in the 2000s, the unspoken idea of loss and pain was transformed into a powerful material world of museum artefacts. The most striking feature of this interaction is that the representation is empowered by the incorporation of international actors.

Formation of Armenian Diasporic Communities

Figure 1.1: The Image of the Homeland

Source: Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA), Watertown, US, Darieva 2009.

The formation of Armenian diasporic communities worldwide has a long history and there is extensive research and literature on representations and identity formation in multiple Armenian communities in the United States, Canada, France, Russia and the Middle East. The establishment and evolution of each of these communities was inevitably shaped by specific social and political contexts in which they found themselves. My discussion in this chapter

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is limited to English- and Russian-speaking literatures and does not pretend to be exhaustive in the field of Armenian diaspora activities and self-representations. Below, I provide a general overview of different pathways of migration, experiences of integration into societies where Armenian migrants and their decedents reside, and a complexity of homeland geographies.

Exile and dispersion, forced and voluntary, have shaped de-territorialised identities and led to a multiplicity of Armenian self-representations. Along with Jews and Greeks, Armenians are associated with the 'paradigmatic diaspora' (Cohen 1997; Tölölyan 1991). The Armenian diaspora called *spyurk* emerged in Western countries over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through forced and voluntary migration to a number of destinations, resulting in the creation of a multiplicity of diasporic communities across a range of countries –especially in the United States, Canada, Brazil, France, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Bakalian 1993; Panossian 2006; Siekierski/Trobst 2016). The term *spyurk* (diaspora), which is largely used by Western diasporic Armenians, was adopted from the Greek *speirein* (to scatter) as well as the Hebrew word *galut;* in Armenian *gaghut* (colony) (Suny 1993b: 214; Dyatlov/Melkonyan 2009).

Dispersed Armenian migrants usually articulate own collective claims and hopes around the Apostolic Church, cultural festivals, commemorative practices regarding the violent past (the Armenian genocide of 1915); the erection of memorial stones at community centres (*khachkar*); and the recent trend to create voluntary associations on the level of NGOs that led to the building of religious and secular diasporic institutions in different cities in the United States, Canada, South America and Europe.[1]

With their different stories of migration, forced or voluntary, diasporic Armenians make up relatively small ethnic minorities worldwide, however they seem to be building a vivid part of contemporary multi-ethnic urban populations in America and Europe. Second, many scholars highlight internal diversity that Armenians demonstrate in the diasporic context. They are usually divided into two or three different groups characterised by various political narratives, different histories of exodus, different strategies of integration, and different constructions of 'we' identities in regard to the host society.

According to Armenian American discourses, more than 1.2 million diasporic Armenians reside in North America. A larger group of Armenian diasporic communities live in Russia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe with different levels of self-organisations (Dyatlov/Melkonian 2009; Siekierski/ Trobst 2016; Ter-Matevosyan et al. 2017). The Armenian migration to Central and East-

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ern Europe in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries is considered to be a voluntary migration as it emerged as a result of trade and labour migration. Konrad Siekierski and Stefan Trobst (2016) noted a visible rise in Armenian communities across post-socialist Eastern Europe, who now make up a new vivid part of the contemporary urban population in Eastern Europe. Armenians in Russia and Eastern Europe make up the largest group (Dyatlov/Melkonian 2009), around two million. In contrast to Western diasporic Armenians, they show strong links to the homeland in the Republic of Armenia.

Second, internal diversity is a primary concern among scholars of Armenian diasporic studies (Payaslian 2010; Panossian 2015; Gorman/Kasbarian 2015). As Hakob Matevosyan (2016) highlights, for instance, Armenians in Hungary are divided into two different groups characterised by two different ethnic narratives, at least two histories of exodus, different strategies of integration, and different constructions of 'we and they' images in regard to the host society. The fundamental difference between *Hayastantsi* (Armenians who live in Armenia or recently migrated from the country) and *Spyurkahay* (Diaspora Armenians) is crucial leading to the creation of two main modes of 'Armenianness' (Payaslian 2008, 2010).

The organisation and specific features of Armenian diasporic associations in Western countries and in the former socialist world seem to differ from each other in terms of how they mobilise cultural and social capitals to achieve status within host and home societies. The Armenian Apostolic Church and related community institutions do not play a crucial role in Russia and Eastern Europe, which is in contrast to the role of religious organisations in the preservation and mobilisation of diasporic identities in the United States, Canada and in the Middle East (Ter-Matevosyan et al. 2017). Konrad Siekierski rightly observed the weak presence of pan-Armenian social and cultural charity culture in post-socialist Europe, especially in comparison to the North American case, where Armenian diasporic organisations have developed strong ethnic and philanthropic infrastructures.

Armenian migrants in Europe and in North America have often been quick to drop their language, leading to high levels of cultural assimilation and integration into the host society. Consequently, the dominance of individual choice in ethnic belonging marks the identity of diasporic Armenians, in particular American Armenians (Suny 1993b: 216; Dyatlov 2016: 37).

Generally, Armenian homeland-diaspora relations are characterised by a relatively low level of political engagement with the homeland and a weak direct collaboration between diasporic organisations and governmental struc-

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tures of the Republic of Armenia (Panossian 2015; Payaslian 2008). For Western diasporic Armenians, the remote homeland was never a crucial source of power, either in political or economic terms. As Suny (1993b) outlined, except for a small group of leftist sympathisers, a large part of the diaspora in North America and in Europe maintained a political and cultural distance from Soviet Armenia.

After arriving in the United States and Canada at the beginning of the twentieth century, Armenian migrant communities shared many features with other immigrant groups in North America. Initially, assimilation into mainstream society was prioritised – a process considered unavoidable and irreversible. However, this did not entail the erosion of cultural identity or of the ties to one's ethnic community; from the 1960s onwards it meant carving out a legitimate place for Armenians in the host country, ensuring the community's political recognition in American and Canadian society. Consequently, the original Armenian diasporic organisations devoted themselves principally to strengthening local communities – in Boston, Washington, Fresno, Montreal and elsewhere. This involved the establishment of cultural centres, museums, churches and schools, all of which served not only as vehicles for the preservation and promotion of Armenian culture, but also as platforms for political lobbying and participation in the public life of the mainstream society. From the 1960s to the 1990s, for instance, much political activity was invested in seeking and eventually achieving the official recognition of the 1915 Ottoman genocide of Armenians, which has become the main marker of identity and status for the Armenian community in the host societies both in North America and in Western Europe.[2]

From the early 1980s until the end of the 1990s, 'multiculturalism' in North America became the dominant ideological and policy framework through which liberal democracies started to negotiate identity politics, especially in relation to race and ethnicities. Paradoxically, the multicultural turn led to a considerable rise in significance of the folk concept of ethno-cultural heritage, resulting in an almost industrial-scale boom in both individual and collective quests for 'roots' and genealogy among North Americans more generally (Glick Schiller 2005; Reed 2014). The 'transnational turn' in migration studies in the mid-1990s and new technologies again strengthened paradigmatic diasporic communities in their consolidation and provided a new platform for diasporic elites to 'come back' to their roots via travel to the 'ancestral homeland'. One of the consequences of this has been that the original emphasis that immigrant communities placed on securing and strengthening their position

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within the host society now shifted towards efforts to reconnect with their homelands, which are idealised as repositories of ethno-cultural origins. It was this 'heritage turn' that began to re-orient significant parts of Armenian diasporic activism and local charity culture into mobile transnational forms of engagement with the 'ancestral homeland' in Armenia.

Multiple Geographies of the Homeland

One feature that is often overlooked in the studies of diaspora and homeland relations is the idea of the 'ancestral homeland' can consist of more than one specific territory and one nation-state. For instance, those 'paradigmatic' global diasporas (Jews, Armenians and Greeks), which emerged after the decline of multi-ethnic imperial formations such as the former Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia can refer to more than one nation-state and territorial landscapes. The unravelling of two Empires (Ottoman and Russian) and the growing nationalism in the Balkans, the Caucasus and in the Middle East were both cause and consequence of World War I and resulted in multiple relocations and the death of millions (Reynolds 2011). Armenians have been scatted throughout the world. As a result, at least three geographical areas can be delineated as the Armenian 'ancestral homelands' relevant for diasporic Armenian identity today. Among them: the territory of the former Ottoman Empire (mostly Eastern Anatolia, today Turkey), the Middle Eastern states of Iran, Lebanon and Egypt where Armenians still make up visible religious minorities, and the Republic of Armenia, the post-socialist nation-state in the South Caucasus.

Over the course of the twentieth century, as part of their diasporic imaginaries, diasporic Armenians have developed a complex, ambiguous and controversial geography of these 'homelands'. In her study of these imaginaries among first- and second-generation Armenians living in the United States, Greece, and Cyprus, Susan Pattie has identified at least three parallel constructs of the Armenian homeland (Pattie 2005: 55). A sketch of these complex imaginations are important as they shed light on the dynamics of diasporic identifications and the changing metaphorical diasporic space that produces the notion of 'distinctive spatiality' (Knott 2010).

The first notion of the Armenian homeland, termed *hayrenik* (fatherland), refers to the emotional image of a grandparent's birthplace, and tends to be identified mostly with the villages and towns of the 'Western Armenian'

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provinces (*Kharput, Mush, Kessab, Antep* and others) – areas, which were once part of the Ottoman Empire and are today located in Turkey. In practice, however, the notion of *hayrenik* tends to extend beyond the Anatolian Plateau to the Ottoman Empire more generally, which becomes in itself conceptualised as the Armenian's diaspora's 'exodus land' as well as 'fatherland'. Consequently, *hayrenik* is often made to include other areas in the former Ottoman Empire, such as parts of Syria or Egypt, where Armenians used to be a prominent Christian minority. This homeland is predominantly associated with the past and rarely considered as a place of modern diasporic desire and travel destination. The second and third imaginaries of the Armenian 'homeland' are both called *Hayastan*, but refer to very different constructs.

The second homeland imaginary is an assemblage of mythical landscapes and romantic narratives about the past glories of an ancient land – *Mets Hayk* (Greater Armenia or Armenian Highlands). The term Greater Armenia mentioned in the ancient Latin historiography is used to refer to Armenian kingdoms throughout the classical, late antique and medieval periods. The Kingdom of Cilicia, is considered to be a separate Lesser Armenia, especially since the Armenians from the Eastern provinces were displaced in the seventeenth century by the Persians and the Ottomans, before returning after the Russian conquest. The mythical kingdom *Mets Hayk*, which dates back to 585–200 BC is supposed to have stretched from the Black to the Caspian Sea. More specifically, the kingdom's boundaries were located between the Kura River, the Pontic mountain range, the Euphrates River, and the Taurus Mountain (Panossian 2006: 34). However, neither this medieval *Hayastan*, associated with ancient history, nor the more intimate *hayrenik*, associated with Ottoman violence and expulsion, have clear-cut political borders in the present. The amorphous nature of these two 'homelands' means that they partially overlap and fuse with one another in the diaspora's cultural self-representations and collective memory.

The third construct of 'homeland', also dubbed *Hayastan*, contrasts the above two in that it refers to a territory with concrete political boundaries – namely, the present-day Republic of Armenia, although it usually includes the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, or *Artsakh* in Armenian, which, while technically still part of Azerbaijan, is currently an unrecognised quasi-independent state. According to Pattie (2005), the relationship of Western Armenians in the diaspora towards this Eastern *Hayastan* has historically been quite ambivalent. The Armenian Republic has been viewed as at best a 'small corner' of the greater *Hayastan*. It is certainly never identified with the glories

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of the ancient Armenian Highlands nor with the heartland of the country, known as *Yerkir* in Armenian (country), which was mainly in the Ottoman Armenian provinces. In fact, it is usually marked off as separate from the diaspora (*spuyrk*), and is often relegated to being merely a 'backyard' and 'stepmother' of the Armenian World (Payaslian 2010: 132; Gorman/Kasbarian 2015). This goes hand in hand with a somewhat condescending attitude that many diasporic Armenians based in Western countries display towards the *hayastantsy*, the population of Armenia itself (Pattie 2005). Aside from bearing the taint of ideological otherness during Soviet times, this *Hayastan* is also identified as the land of the 'Eastern Armenians', who speak a different dialect to the diaspora and who have had a very different history to that of the 'Western Armenians' (Mouradian 1979; Suny 1996; Payaslian 2010). Having said that, the main nationalist political organisation in the Armenian diaspora, the *Dashnaks*[3] have long campaigned for the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh to join Eastern Anatolia in Turkey in order to create a new Armenian nation-state where the diaspora could start to resettle, just like the Jews had done in Israel (Phillips 1989; Suny 1993b).

As a result, connections between the Soviet Republic of Armenia and the Armenian diasporic communities in North America and Western Europe were weak and irregular until the late 1980s.[4] Politically, there was little interest among diasporic members in the Armenian nation building that went on in the Soviet republic within the distinctive framework of the Soviet nationalities policy (Suny 1993a; Suny/Martin 2001). A major turning point then took place in the wake of the 1988 earthquake, which prompted an emotional outpour among North American diasporic communities. This was perfectly in line with the perestroika era rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the West under Mikhail Gorbachev. During the 1990s, after the Republic of Armenia gained its independence, many diasporic Armenians continued to donate money to this new country's impoverished economy (Dudwick 2003). A few even undertook individually organised tourist trips to Armenia, which included a visit to the Armenian Genocide Memorial complex in Yerevan, an iconic place for the Armenian world.

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An Iconic Place in Yerevan

The memorialisation of the Armenian genocide is central to contemporary global Armenian identity. During my first field trips to Armenia in 2005–2006, many local experts and ordinary people emphasised that in Soviet times, there was very little verbal and visual representations of the Armenian trauma and expulsion in public spaces. Until the beginning of the 1980s, it was scarcely communicated in school books and included only some lines with complicated numbers and dates. In contrast, according to diasporic writers and historians, the memory of the genocide was an integral and continuous part of diasporic identification and everyday life (Kasbarian 2018).

The Soviet Union promoted another dominant, powerful collective memory of violent loss: commemoration of the victory and remembrance of the fallen soldiers in World War II, called the Great Patriotic War. One particular feature this central element of Soviet collective memory was the way it was homogenised and perpetuated through numerous monuments, texts, memorialising practices, the latter of which saw a shift to the notion of struggle with geopolitical rivals.[5] As a result, according to Tumarkin (1994: 121), the political theatre of glorifying the unknown fallen hero of the Soviet Union left little space for individual, local and ethnic expressions of pain and loss.[6] In my view, however, this statement needs to be discussed more carefully as it seems that alternative ideas of commemorating the past on the periphery of Soviet Empire remained hidden and have been overlooked by historians.

At first glance, an Armenian collective desire to mark a particular historical memory and reinforce cultural belonging did not conflict with socialist cosmology. It seems that the Armenian memory of loss encapsulated in the socialist order had produced specific de-contextualised and quite paradoxical forms of memory. Until 1965, in Soviet Armenia the memory of the violent loss and expulsion of Armenians was almost a political taboo. Publicly, the knowledge about death and loss was restricted to a very limited space hidden between the lines of exclusive departments of the National Academy of Sciences and state archives with highly restricted access. As a result, the art of remembering the Armenian loss in Armenia took a fragmented and formulaic form in the production of academic books filled with official documents, which were far removed from popular practices of remembering.

Dissent with Soviet versions is, however, recognisable through social acts of mourning the wounded history. If one looks at existing 'silent disagreements', so-called small acts of private remembrance of loss in Soviet Armenia

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are mostly encoded through social practices of knowing about descent, which tended to find their origins in the territories beyond the Armenian-Turkish border, in 'Western Armenia'. This could include private acts, such as singing songs half in Armenian and half in Turkish, or the possession of a few household objects recalling the expulsion after 1915, most of which existed in the Soviet past predominantly in hidden spaces that were suppressed and merged with the Soviet cult of the struggle against fascism. Thus, in spite of the political silence during the Soviet period, the memory of violent loss (*yeghern*) was a part of Armenian social identity that found its first public articulation in Yerevan in the mid-1960s during Khrushchev's political thaw. Anti-authoritarian demonstrations in 1965 in Yerevan are seen by local historians not only as the expression of sentiment against forgetting the Armenian tragedy, but also as marking a claim for territories in Turkey (Abrahamian 2006, Kaufman 2001; Suny 1993b).[7] Just shortly after this event, in December 1967, a Communist Party resolution led to the erection of a genocide memorial on the hill of Tsitsernakaberd, close to central Yerevan. From the moment the monument was built, hidden remembrance practices became publicly staged and controlled by the Soviet authorities in Yerevan. From the mid-80s onwards, an annual mourning ceremony on 24 April has become a commemorative event. On that day, a mourning community, including officials, local residents and tourists, gather at the bottom of the hill and slowly move to the top towards the Genocide Memorial, pilgrim-like, carrying red tulips and white carnations to lay down at the eternal flame typical for the official socialist commemoration culture.

After 1965, the remembering of the catastrophic event was thus officially allowed in Armenia, although it was converted into a commemorative ceremony of a very specific kind. The construction of a monument brought a new sacred site into the iconography of Soviet Armenians and the urban memorial landscape, but did not signal a radical change in the politics of memory, as the commemoration of the Armenian loss became strongly incorporated into the Soviet model of national remembrance and the Soviet Union's foundation myth of World War II. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia set out to incorporate the atrocities of the Ottoman Turks toward the Armenians into the framework of the antifascist struggle of the Soviet people against Hitler's aggression and expansion. Thus, the Armenian pain suffered during World War I was merged with the common suffering in the course of the Great Patriotic War against Hitler. The inclusive interpretation of the struggle against fascism easily combined Hitler's Germany with Turkey into a com-

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mon image of the enemy, since Germany had built a political alliance with the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Explicit ethnic connotations of the loss were quite invisible during that time, with the sole exception of the presence of Armenian Christian mourning music by Komitas[8], which was played at the top of the hill during the ceremonies. In this way, the site was invisibly and implicitly 'filled' with a specific sound that converted it into a sacral place with a deep emotional resonance.

Promoted by Hakob Zarobian, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Armenia, the Armenian Genocide Memorial complex was erected in 1967, to the 47th anniversary of the Soviet Socialist Armenian Republic. Over the years, political Orthodoxy demanded one historical interpretation of the Genocide Memorial as a symbol of the Soviet struggle against fascism and a symbol of the regeneration through the 'rising from the ashes'. As for the design of the Genocide Memorial, it was influenced by the monumental architecture of Soviet war memorials. Visual forms of the Soviet representation of sacred World War II memories can be traced on many levels. These include: 1) the memorial's location on a grassy hill at a distance from the city centre and beyond everyday life infrastructure; 2) typical monumental stone design including a triumphal obelisk; 3) an enormous mourning avenue without any signs or inscriptions; 4) the Soviet tradition of mourning and remembrance of the dead by having officials and soldiers place memorial garlands around the tomb of Unknown Soldier during a minute of silence. The massive grey stone mausoleum, composed of twelve slabs with the eternal flame inside of a round construction, took on the meaning of a collective grave. Another part of the monument, a separate needle-shaped stone obelisk located next to the tomb officially symbolised the rise of Armenian people from the dead and their regeneration within the Soviet space. The monument did not show death as such, and, until the Karabakh war at the beginning of 1991, had never played a role of a place for burials and tombs.[9]

The most striking feature of the whole design of the monument was the absence of any ethnic Armenian signs or traditional inscriptions in the Armenian alphabet on the slabs, which are otherwise omnipresent in Soviet Armenian and post-Soviet architecture in Armenia. Indeed, working on this project in the 1960s during the thaw period, the architect Sashur Kalashyan followed a constructivist style and cosmopolitan dimensions in architectural and visual forms. In an October 2007 interview, he emphasised that the monument was no longer "monumental" nor "socialist" in its content nor "national" in its form. The Soviet authorities rejected Kalashyan's first draft of the memorial with an

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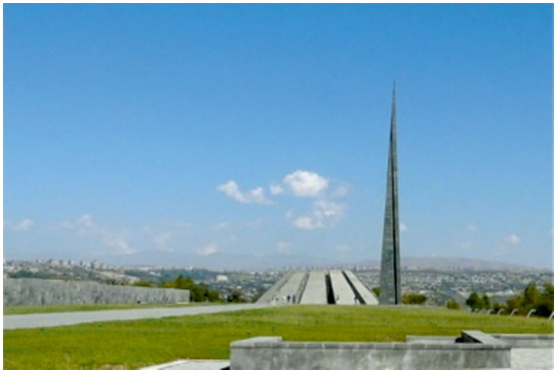
Armenian chapel on the hill, an explicit ethnic religious sign. Unlike post-Soviet modifications and museum representations, Armenian pain in the Soviet period was represented in a cosmopolitan language of death and regeneration. More precisely, the architectonic cosmopolitan language of the memorial site in Yerevan was articulated in a specific code of 'modernism'. In the words of Kalashyan: "The memorial taken as a whole must be understandable for every visitor, irrespective of his or her nationality or religion." One interesting point here is the international character of the architecture, which was very much influenced by the modernist architecture of the twentieth century, in particular by Kenzo Tange, the Japanese architect known for his new architecture of structuralism and modernistic style.[10] It produced a kind of 'secular sanctity' in the national landscape. As Eric Hirsch (1995: 8) outlined in his studies on landscapes, "it is interesting that sacred sites and places are sometimes physically empty or largely uninhabited, and situated at some distance from populations for which they hold significance."

Figure 1.2: Construction of Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex;
Figure 1.3: The Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex in Yerevan



Sources: http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/Description_and_history.php. Last accessed on 15.09.2022 (Figure 1.2); Rita Willaert 2008. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Armenian_Genocide_Memorial_-_Yerevan_(2903020364).jpg. Last accessed on 29.11.2022 (Figure 1.3).

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The spatial and aesthetic orders of the monument, as conceptualised and designed by the Soviet authorities, aimed not only at the creation of a memorial place, but also at maintaining political control over protests by the local population. In this way, the 'bad', unnatural, unrecognised death of the victims was converted into a performed ritual of generally remembering the vicissitudes of the past, drawing upon the martyr-like symbolism of 'good' death through regeneration in the Soviet style.[11] Furthermore, the absence of visualised death or dead bodies is conspicuous for visitors of the memorial. Inside the mausoleum, which looks like a tomb of the Unknown Soldier, there are no visible signs of victims as such, dead bodies or bones, or other traces of dead individuals or families. Instead, we find only the sky and the eternal flame in a circle reminiscent of the Soviet five-cornered star, an image that powerfully produced a local notion of secular sanctity.

The pureness and the emptiness of the Soviet Memorial for the Armenian Genocide in Yerevan allowed for an easy 'appropriation' and proper 'filling' of it in the post-socialist period. In the 1990s, after toppling down the Lenin monument at the central Republic square, the Genocide Memorial has been turned into a central terrain for Armenia's new moral history on the scale of world history. As an example, popular views have immediately transformed the Soviet symbol of the eternal flame, which played a significant role in Soviet political culture as the memory of the unknown hero, into a traditional sacred symbol of 'Armenianness'. Today, the presence of the eternal flame is often associated with the ancient religious tradition of fire worship among Armenians—a tradition based on the memory of pagan Zoroastrian beliefs rooted in ancient times, before Armenians were baptised.

Instead of Loss: the Museum

Considering Armenia's unstable post-1991 position and the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, it is not surprising that after the independence, we can observe an increasing activity to forge a new moral and victimised past. Similar to Katherine Verdery's post-socialist "reorganisation on cosmic scale" (Verdery 1999: 33), or the German way of coming to terms with the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*), I use the term 'moral past' to refer to the process of reinterpreting the past in ways that form not only discourses and public metaphors, but also shape the materiality and emotionality of places. In Armenia, the frames of reference to the past are less marked by concern or critique of the communist

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era or the post-Soviet 'return of the repressed,' accompanied by a respective anti-Kremlin critique (Watson 1994). Soviet past and Soviet Russia are not viewed in Armenia as an imperial or colonial past (Shirinian 2017). Instead, the focus is on a pre-Soviet event related to Armenian massacres during World War I. In the 2000s, rhetoric in efforts to restore 'justice' and to reveal the political dimension of Armenian pain was conceptualised in terms of demands for a global recognition of forgotten pain. More precisely, popular narratives and memory work toward a proper memorialisation of a 'forgotten genocide' presented the Armenian loss as human suffering in terms of global morality. Similar to the concept of global morality discussed by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider (2002) in their work on the cosmopolitisation of the memory of the Holocaust, the Armenian reference to the violent past became part of a global concern over the last decade. One of the principles of global morality, as a result of the universalisation of the memory of the Holocaust in the world, is the real or symbolic expectation of moral and economic compensation of former victims by the perpetrators. This process includes the efforts to keep the past 'alive', different modes of accountability, the ways of making somebody responsible. The term 'global morality' here is helpful not only in the sense of understanding the moral universalisation of local and ethnic sufferings, but also in the sense of the iconographic formation of memory of loss as a symbolic value. The representation of the abstract Soviet style loss has been transformed into a new sacred icon becoming a source of creative refashioning the relationship between the diaspora and the homeland. This period constitutes a turning point in the institutionalisation of the term *tsagaspanutyun* (genocide) memory unifying local and diasporic Armenians. The local term *yeghern* (grief and mourning) have been largely replaced by the new Armenian term *tsaghaspanutyun*, which is a literal translation of the English word 'genocide' (Darieva 2008).[12]

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, one can trace a dynamic revival of the remembrance of the Armenian tragedy. The new politics of memory of Armenian loss came into play with the second post-Soviet president of Armenia, Robert Kocharian, born in Nagorno-Karabakh. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the principal change in the politics of the memory of loss in Armenia was that it is shifted from silent, abstract mourning to voiced and visible practices of representing injustice and violence, which over the time reached a high level of standardisation. Annually, numerous memorial artefacts and events were and are produced by official institutions, by individuals and, in particular, by artists in the city. This includes traditional Armenian

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stone monuments (*khachkars*), posters, texts, books, souvenirs, rituals at pre-schools, schools and universities, vivid museum exhibitions, internet websites, concerts, films, and new public gatherings of remembrance. The spectrum of standardisation spans from tropes used in academic conferences to aestheticised forms of consumer objects such as T-shirts, tourist souvenirs, and 'genocide music' CDs.

Figure 1.4: The Entrance to the Museum of the Armenian Genocide in Yerevan

Source: http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/museum_info.php. Last accessed on 15.09.2022.

Figures 1.5-6: Permanent Exhibition in the Museum of Armenian Genocide

Source: http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/permanent_exhibition-old.php. Last accessed on 15.09.2022.

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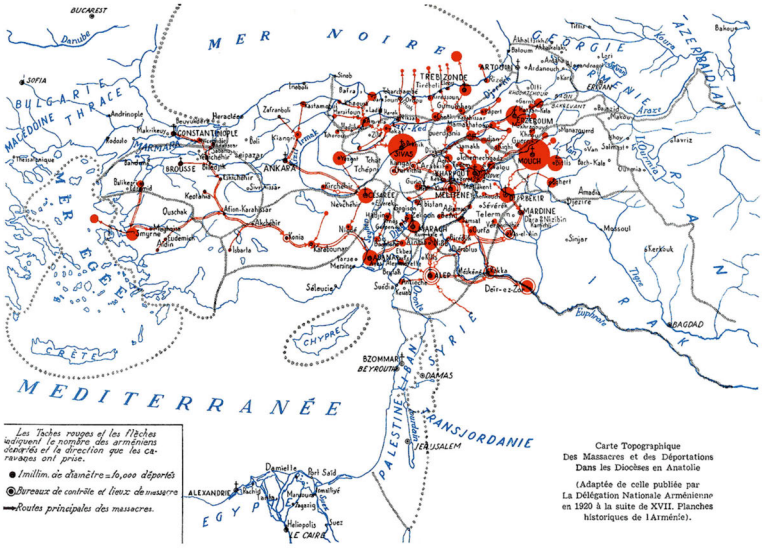
Figure 1.7: Mapping Deportation in Anatolia



Source: http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/mapping_armenian_genocide.php. Last accessed on 15.09.2022.

The most visible transformation of the post-Soviet Armenian representations regarding the massacres took place with the construction of the Museum of the Armenian Genocide in 1995. The Museum of the Armenian Genocide was created as an exhibit hall that doubled as a research centre, both of which were explicitly engaged in visual and documentary representations of the violent past and providing material evidence of Armenian death, all of which was in marked contrast to the abstract and silent Soviet-designed monument. The museum contributed significantly to the construction of a 'tangible' landscape of violence as a distinct inscription of memory in the detailed language of ethnic history and political claim. Like a sanctuary, the Museum of the Armenian Genocide is, on the one hand, essentially timeless in its ways of addressing the dead, and its dedication to the preservation of history. On the other hand, it hosts functioning archives and serves to re-enact public memory. Like a granite tomb inside of the hill, the museum also looks out to Mount Ararat. The memory work is focused on the documentation of the ways vio-

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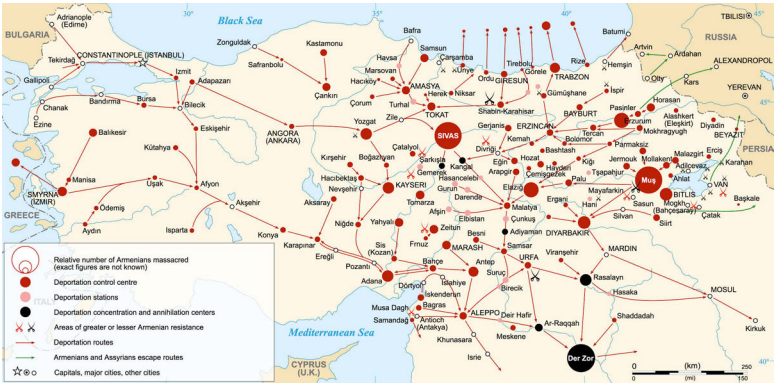
lence was experienced, organised, and remembered, but also of Armenian life 'before' on the territory of the lost provinces in Turkey and thus, lies in the process of reordering landmarks, photographs, street architecture, and names of places. At the same time, the inscription of memory is integrated into the social production of a new 'iconic place'. The ideological and material involvement of the Armenian diaspora in the work of the Museum of the Armenian Genocide was essential in many different domains of 'filling the empty space', such as co-shaping the museum's collection, creating the museum's web site, or producing and funding museum leaflets, deliveries of objects and documentations. In 2002, the incorporation of diasporic Armenians into the national sacred landscape was marked by a small monument erected on the territory of the memorial complex on Tsitsernakaberd hill. A medium-sized sculpture, titled 'Mother Arising Out of the Ashes', depicting a scared woman running, yet at the same protecting a small child, symbolises Armenian victimhood *per se*. Stationed somewhat apart from the museum and the monument, in an open space, the sculpture is a copy of the original statue located in Los Angeles in the Ararat Eskijian Museum.

Figure 1.8: Mapping the Genocide



Source: Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5c/Armenian_Genocide_Map-en.svg. Last accessed on 07.02.2023.

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One important aspect of the changing memorialisation in Yerevan is the explicit sacralisation of the site, which had a strong secular Soviet-style mode of commemoration. The sacralisation of victims is manifested using explicitly Christian symbols in the architecture of the museum. A significant part of the museum is barely illuminated; the daylight from outside penetrates through museum's small, narrow windows, which are shaped in the form of a Christian cross. The exhibited articles, mostly oversized photographs representing a cult of death and Armenian martyrdom in the Ottoman Empire, have become a part of worship with a strong emphasis on the exclusivity of the Armenian pain. The voices of other ethnic groups who suffered during World War I, such as the Kurdish minority in Eastern Anatolia, who also identify themselves as victims of the Ottoman and Turkish nationalism at the beginning of the twentieth century, are hardly heard in the national politics and practices of memorialisation.[13] As a museum guestbook entry reads:

> "I, as a researcher of Assyrian folklore, would like to see in this museum also materials devoted to the genocide of the Assyrian people being destroyed along with the Armenians. By doing this, the world will know that the Turkish state committed genocide also against the Assyrians, who together with the Armenians, were fighting the nefarious Turkish policy." (Nina Vasilian 07.09.2000)[14]

The 50 Grams of the Homeland. Social Production of Moral Past

In the spring of 1997, a Bostonian Armenian, acting on behalf of Florence Tayian, an Armenian American from Arlington (Massachusetts, United States), brought a glass jar with 50 gram of soil to Yerevan and donated it to the Museum of the Armenian Genocide. An accompanying letter, written by Tayian in the 1990s, tells the story of the migrating clump of soil and its long and complex journey from an Anatolian village to an American town in New England (MA, United States). In 1908, the "dirt scooped up in a small cloth bag"[15], was collected in the yard of the maternal house in Kharped (present-day Turkish Elazig) and transferred to the United States by Tayian's mother, Elmas Kavookjan (born in 1883). For about 80 years of Turkish-Armenian immigrant life in the United States, "dirt scooped up in a cloth bag" was serving as a family relic. In 1995, the piece of soil was transferred to Armenia, donated to the local museum and placed under a vacuum glass of an exhibition stand, which were

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constructed to show a lived memory of Armenian homeland regions in Eastern Anatolia: Van, Erzerum, Mamuretülaziz (Kharperd), Bitlis, Diyarbekir and Sivas.[16] By exhibiting six transparent plexus-glass containers with a handful of soil inside, the museum has inscribed significant markers of the Armenian landscape of loss. The homeland regions in Eastern Anatolia are known in Armenian discourses as "six Armenian vilayets", a widely used term among diasporic Armenians to identify the Armenian lands on the territory of former Ottoman Empire claimed by diasporic Armenians, six provinces where the bulk of the Armenian population lived during the Ottoman period.

The 50 grams of transported soil, upon arrival, were poured by museum workers into a glass container and added to a row of five other containers with soil. As one tour guide in the museum explained to me in April 2006: "This homeland soil has been taken by survivors and guarded by them like relics. When they learned about the opening of the museum, people from all over the world sent their relics here."

The arrival of the small bag of soil in the 'ancestral homeland' and its place in the Museum for Genocide in Yerevan marked a new era of relationships between Western diaspora and the Republic of Armenia. Moreover, with this emotional transfer, we observe how a private piece of memory has been transformed into an 'affective energy' symbolizing a collective property of the global Armenian community of mourning. With 'affective energy', I refer to what Yael Navaro-Yashin (2012: 133) identified as "affective interactions" – the transmission of emotions that allow the private realm of the individual to enter public and political domains. Within this transfer story, the soil loses its utilitarian meaning, becoming instead a museum treasure as an evocative object and as tangible, material evidence of the collective pain and geography of expulsion. In this way, the soil gained a new sacred meaning: once serving as a relic of a family's migration history in a small-scale private domain, it has been transformed into a larger context of a public place as a common representation of the lost homeland and the violent past.[17]

In an interview in May 2006, the former museum's director Lavrenty Barseghyan, emphasised how the soil came to be exhibited in sealed containers. Until the late 1990s, the soil was exhibited without the protection of glass containers, simply placed in six bowls without any glass covering. The reason why the soil was transferred into containers was that many museum visitors would take a pinch of soil with them. Moreover, while viewing the museum exhibit, some visitors would covertly eat a pinch of dirt from the bowl. This physical act of eating is an illustration of individual sentiment toward a visible

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manifestation of a common lost homeland. It concerns a symbolic incorporation of the past that effects the personal identification of a visitor with the common past, demonstrating how powerful the symbol of earth can be in establishing a community of suffering. The later form of presenting places of expulsion by sealing the dirt in containers serves to establish an untouchable sacred site.

At the same time, the symbolic act of individual 'return' to the 'ancestral homeland' can also be read in terms of the sacred sense of pilgrimage, since within the process of passing through the museum halls we observe a kind of the 'immediate contact' between sacred pieces and people that turn the museum visitors into pilgrims. Below, a museum guestbook entry outlines the sacral dimension of a material piece:

> "My ancestors were from Van, and I saw here the first time the soil brought from my fatherland's lands. I am very touched and swear I will never forget the year 1915 till the end of my life." (Robert Khachatryan, sixth-year student, Agricultural Academy)[18]

In the field of cultural anthropology and mythology, profound explanations can be offered for the meaning of soil. Albrecht Dieterich showed in his book "Mutter Erde" that the universal meaning of soil is an eschatological notion of elementary power and is presented as the symbol of the origin of life in many religions and cultures (Dieterich/Wünsch 1905). Simon Schama's study of landscape and its meaning for memory analysed three grand categories based on the very materials of its subject: wood, water, rock (Schama 1996). Ina-Maria Greverus, a German folklorist, in her study of the rituals and memory culture among German expellees from Eastern Europe who resettled in Western Germany, focused on various functions of the powerful symbol of soil or earth in political sentiment and the popularisation of new rites and identities (Greverus 1972). Similarly, Reinhart Koselleck (Koselleck/Jeismann 1994) emphasised in his studies of war memorials that the earth is symbolically related to both the religious and profane domains as part of monuments and memorial sites.[19] Anthony Smith theorised that the central meaning of nature and earth in nationalist ideologies was as a symbol of national homeland and of the nation as possessor of a particular land (Smith 2003). Commemorative practices and the custom of transporting soil from a remote land and introducing a specific dynamic of 'treasuring soil' and visualising violence is closely related to the social production of historical evidence of a 'moral past'. The treasured soil symbolises not only a familial past and previous history of dispersion; but also a rela-

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tionship with the present. A public ceremony, organised by the state sponsored Yerevan's Museum of the Armenian Genocide in 1997, celebrated this event not only as a transfer of objects from one place to another, but also as a day of a symbolic repatriation of 'forgotten children' into the holy homeland of Armenia. The arrival of external private objects and their adaptation into local collective narratives at the end of the 1990s revealed much about changing identity boundaries and memory politics in post-socialist Armenia.

Symbolic (Re)Possession of the Homeland

"I want to stand on the top of Mount Ararat
I want to shout, I want to be heard
I want the world to condemn the barbarous crime
Against the nation called Armenian."[20]

These anonymous poetic lines are part of guestbook entries at the Museum of the Armenian Genocide in Yerevan. In contrast to numerous other entries, which are rarely left anonymous but rather extensively identify the author by family name, place of origin, gender, and age, this entry brings to the fore collective grief and Mount Ararat as a particular moment of the embodied memory of loss and as a natural feature related to the ethic past.

An interesting element of social production of moral past can be traced in guest book entries. These small narratives should not be underestimated or understood only in the context of individual experience. An analysis of more than 420 museum guestbook entries in the period between 1996 and 2000 shows another layer of social production of moral past. The majority of the entries left in guest books reflect a sense of a sacred tour to the ancestral past made by visiting the museum as a 'pilgrim'. A few contributors identified themselves as direct descendants of expellees. Here is one example, which can be identified as a standardised narrative of a duty to remember and to 'return':

> "We have made a pilgrimage to Armenia to restore our souls, to get spiritual strength from it with the aim of confronting the bitterness of a foreign country. One can have such a cast of mind only if a strong and well-organised motherland exists. Respect to our martyrs." [21]

Museum guestbook entries written by local and diasporic guests reveal private rites of commemoration that articulate the relation of younger generations

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to the collective past, thus filling 'emptiness' and 'silence' on the past. Functionally, museum guestbook entries represent a kind of establishing of a social landscape of loss, because in contrast to an abstract monument official rituals, or collective images of death in the museum, they reveal a polyphonic medium for the construction of social memory. They create a space for the expression of popular visions and sentiments that set up not only a dialectic between past and present, but also a dialectic between past and future. It is in these particular moments that both local and diasporic Armenians, in their longing, find their routes to Armenia and the holy Mount Ararat by making unapproachable places temporarily accessible, imaginary approachable, or indicative of a purpose of (political) orientation. Indeed, Mount Ararat, the highest peak of the Armenian Highland, a dormant volcanic cone located in the eastern part of Turkey, plays an enormous role in the production of the Armenian narratives of longing (Abrahamian 2006; Herzig/Kurkchiyan 2004).

Looking at mnemonic culture among diasporic visitors, it becomes obvious that Mount Ararat has a larger meaning as a strong emotional image than as an actual landmark on a map. Mount Ararat itself, located outside of Armenia at a distance of 50 kilometres from the capital city of Yerevan, is clearly visible from many residential windows in Yerevan.[22] Like a natural silent guarantee of the permanence of a memory, it appears as an active immobile figure in popular narratives. During my first fieldwork in Yerevan in March-June of 2005 and 2006, a local colleague of mine told me that "...its height of 5.165m makes Mount Ararat the highest mountain in the world". To my sceptical reply, he continued that Mount Ararat is the only mountain in the world that, being located in a valley, is separated from other mountain ranges and can be visually grasped as a whole piece from the very foot to the peak of the mountain (March 2005).

Indeed, Mount Ararat, the main symbol of the Armenian 'territorial loss', is continuously present on a much larger scale as one could expect. Considering the closed border between Armenia and Turkey, striking is not only the notorious visibility of the mountain in the everyday life of the city dwellers, but also its omnipresence in many images and pictures displayed in private, public spaces and touristic guidebooks. This memorial culture was paradoxically institutionalised in the Soviet period. The image of Mount Ararat had been successfully incorporated into the legal Armenian iconography, such as the depiction of the mountain on the Soviet Armenian coat of arms[23], the name of the Soviet Armenian soccer team, or the brand name of Armenia's best known liquor Ararat Cognac. In the Soviet period, Armenians established a rich sense of symbolic possession of lost homeland by turning the Mount Ararat into a

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holy public marker of the Armenian national landscape. Following Nora Dudwick (1999), I term these relations between a geographical icon and the sense of commodity as acts of 'symbolic possession' towards the lost landscape.

Mount Ararat, as a natural mark in the iconographic formation of memory of the Armenian loss has been turned by Armenians into a symbol of the Armenian cultural property. This quality can also be traced in the continued presence of the image of Mount Ararat on everyday consumer goods. In spite of the post-socialist privatisation of the Cognac factory, which was sold to a French corporation, the same liquor continues to be produced under the same trademark. Additional to the existing Ararat Cognac brand name, the trademark repertoire has been expanded by the inclusion of new Armenian brands referring to geographical points of the memorial landscape in 'Western Armenia'. The names of Armenian places beyond the Armenian-Turkish border like Ani, the old Armenian capital located in Eastern Anatolia, and the mythical Isle of *Akhtamar* in the Lake Van (Eastern Anatolia), are incorporated into the business of cultural commodities similar to the process described by John and Jean Comaroff (2009) in their recent volume on ethnicity and commodity. The inscription of lost territories in the Armenian consumer's everyday life includes cookbooks published among diasporic members (Petrosian/Underwood 2006). In this way, Mount Ararat, as depicted on calendars, cook books, and consumer goods, has been symbolically (re)turned to the cultural landscape of Armenian identity.

Individuals of younger generations seem to express their relation to the violent past in relatively formulaic forms. As an example, fifth-grade students state that they "are sure that [they] shall hold parties on the slopes of Mount Ararat and shall light candles in [...] Ani".[24]

> "[...] a sacred day is to come /
> And this procession will take up arms /
> And will enter Van, Kars and the fortress of Dvin."[25]

Beyond Mount Ararat, other natural and geographical points come to the fore of diasporic and local memorialisation. It becomes clear that representatives of the older generations, both among locals and diasporics, express their notion of memory by displaying attachment to certain places and localities in Eastern Anatolia.

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"I did not see my father, I saw him a bit
I was a child when we reached the gorge of grief,
From Moush to the fortress of Kars lay our way
On which the old enemy spread its massacres like thunder out of a blue sky."
(Ashkhen Sogh 24.04.2001, p. 34)

> "It is obvious that a great and accurate work has been done which helps to completely understand the genocide. However, as a son of an Armenian from Mush, I am angry because the massacres of Mush are not reflected in the exhibition. I hope that my remark will be worth your attention." (H. Yekhiazarian 24.04.2000, p. 289)

This indicates that many of the museum visitors not only keep in memory an abstract loss expressed in the centrality of the mythical Mount Ararat, but also keep a geographical scope of original homeland alive by fashioning it into a tragic landscape. This particularly applies to villages and towns in Eastern Anatolia, which became Turkish territory after the treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed in March 1918 by Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and the Central Powers (Entente), marking Russia's exit from World War I. The inscription of memory into the museum guestbook stimulates a new frame across time and leads to demands for acts of commemoration focused on future accountability. In this way, we see that the landscape of loss can be turned into a landscape of accountability and empowerment. Sokrat Khanian, a poet from the region of Karabakh, claimed in his entry that "[t]he responsibility for the Armenian genocide is not only on Turkey's shoulders but also on the shoulders of world's all big states" (11.10.1996, p. 88).

Guardians of the Moral Past, Ancestral Protectors

On the territory of the memorial complex, between the monument and the museum, stands a 100-meter-long basalt mourning wall, referred to by Armenians as the 'Road to Golgotha'. Engraved on one side are the names of geographical places of Armenian expulsion, inscribed on the wall in 1997 after the opening of the museum, and corresponding to the names on the six glass containers with soil. On the other side of the wall are eleven small containers with urns, symbolising miniature graves of dead prominent persons who have made historical contributions to revealing the Armenian genocide. Their names are inscribed

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on the stone containers in Armenian and English. According to the museum's administration, handfuls of earth were taken by museum employees from different graves all over the world and transferred to the Yerevan Museum of the Armenian Genocide. Among those reburied persons, we find a row of prominent international names, like the Austrian writer Franz Werfel, the German soldier and photographer Armin Wegner, the British scholar and ambassador James Bryce, and the American politician Henry Morgenthau. In April 2006, the director of the Yerevan museum explained to me:

> "Armin Wegner was in Yerevan in 1987. He said that after his death he wanted to be buried here on the hill. In 1997, his son Misha brought the urn with the earth from his grave. Have you seen our mourning wall? We buried the urn of Wegner inside of this wall [...] Similarly, we took the earth from the cemeteries of Johannes Lepsius, Anatole France, and Lord James Bryce and brought it here, because they belong to the eleven friends of the Armenian people. The last reburial was of an Arab lawyer, who in 1916 wrote a book about Armenian pogroms in Aleppo and in doing so helped the Armenian people to survive."

This aspect of memorializing loss in post-Soviet Armenia has a meaning similar to the case of 'repatriated' dead bodies in Eastern Europe in terms of returning 'cultural treasures' to their proper national homeland (Verderey 1999). Yet, at the same, the practice of transferring earth from the graves of non-Armenians with significant symbolic capital indicates a global turn in the Armenian politics of memory. In another interview, on 3 May 2006, Lavrenty Barseghyan, the then museum's director emphasised:

> "Among the friends of the Armenian people we have an Estonian Mother Boel, who organized an orphanage for Armenian children expelled from Western Armenia in Aleppo. Once I visited Aleppo and met a person who introduced himself as a pupil of Mother Boel. For a long time, we could not find her grave in Aleppo. Later we discovered that she was buried in Germany, so we sent our colleague to Germany and he brought the earth from her grave to Tsitsernakaberd."

The notion of a shared memory of collective death is articulated less in terms of local revival, but rather on a broader scale, signalling the global embeddedness of memory through the inclusion of international names into the national pantheon. There is obviously a parallel to the Israel's experiences, where Oskar Schindler was buried and honoured as a 'righteous Gentile' at the Yad Vashem

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Memorial. This change creates strong links to a global morality by bestowing a new social status of 'friend' and 'protector' upon certain non-Armenians and creates a new genealogy and politic of Armenian suffering. Like displaced and lost ancestors, they are worshipped and relocated to the proper site of remembering; in this sense, we observe how Armenians convert an ethnic notion of loss and death into a global memory of forgotten human loss. I argue that these practices, which began in 1996, have enabled a ritual departure from the past, creating a means for a creative conversion of the dead into cosmopolitan ancestors of a single violent event. In this sense, the soil from remote cemeteries in Europe contributes to the extraterritorial quality and to a globalization of the Armenian loss and memory of violence.

The act of bringing soil from the graves of non-Armenians, persons of a different religion, nationality, and ethnicity, constructs a global genealogy of Armenian loss. This process of converting the local and ethnic notion of tragedy into global issue through the transfer of soil from remote cemeteries in Europe, the United States, or the Middle East, involved ceremonies of domestication at the arrival of the newly discovered ancestors. Once again, the soil and the reburials are given an explicitly sacred character by being incorporated into a religious liturgy. The representatives of the Armenian Church were invited to each reburial ceremony. In the course of the ceremony, the head (*catholicos*) of the Armenian Apostolic Church consecrated the newly arrived earth in the miniature graves inside the mourning wall according to traditional Armenian funeral rites; the Jewish, Catholic, and even Muslim religious backgrounds of the dead persons played no role in their new, displaced memorial life. What is striking here is that non-Armenians are given the status of 'Armenian treasure,' adding significant symbolic capital to national narratives. The symbolic capital provides these domains with the crucial power for constructing a (trans)national community of loss beyond ethnocentric boundaries and a tool for establishing a new moral order in relation to the whole world. The reburial of prominent 'outsiders' is a way in which the new politics of loss is articulated, demonstrating the universal significance of a suffering that might otherwise be minimised and forgotten.

With the transfer of private sacred objects into a public place such as a museum, latent and hidden representations of the memory of Armenian loss and trauma have received their material and visual manifestation. In this act, the meaning of soil receives a powerful 'affective' energy for combining both ethnonational naturalised symbols of belonging and a political sense of responsibility. We observe a process that could be called as a 'filling loss', organised into

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moral duty politics: the imaginary rights of possessing lost objects and people as they relate to names, places and localities. It is a particular quality of the relationship between different victims who attempt to make the memory of violent loss public, not only in their adopted homeland societies such as the United States, but also in Armenia, by claiming responsibility through refreshing and reframing losses on a transnational level.

Thus, the main point in the politics of remembering the violent past in Armenia was the 'proper' representation of a big loss through the inclusion of transnational actors, the mobilisation of social memory and the expression in a cultural production of material evidence that includes various acts, signs and performative sites across national borders. Instead of a relatively silenced mode of remembrance and the 'emptiness' of the Soviet-style memorial, in the 1990s an explicitly victimised and 'voiced' memory of the *ethnic* loss and suffering come to the fore of politics bringing together scattered diasporic members and the Republic of Armenia. This process included visualisation and popularisation of metaphors of loss, death and expulsion used in the production of a new meaning at existing commemorative sites. They modified local sites and their meaning into a new, shared sacred site. Simone Gigliotti's comparative study of the memorialisation of different genocides (Jewish, Ruanda, Cambodia) emphasises the centrality of inclusion of external protectors into the Armenian pantheon of loss. This act functions as evidence aimed at convincing the International Community and creating an obligation to recognise the violence and loss among Armenians during World War I as genocide (Gigliotti 2016).

Over the 2000s, political debates about defining the meaning of loss and political crime experienced by Armenians during World War I have intensified far beyond Armenian borders, in Europe and the United States. Starting in autumn 2006 with the French parliament passing a bill criminalising the denial of the Armenian genocide, the global political scale of the debate around the Armenian loss culminated in 2015. The centennial commemoration 'boom' in 2015 was widely discussed in diasporic media and literature as a culmination of cultural production (Kasbarian 2018) on a transnational scale. Pop referred to this event as the 'first' genocide in the twentieth century, the European Parliament adopted a resolution to urge Turkey to recognise that event, and the Eiffel Tower in Paris went dark on 24 April 2015 in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

Similar to the Holocaust Memorials in Israel and the United States, or to the Warsaw Ghetto Monument in Poland (Young 1989), Yerevan's Memorial

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for the Armenian Genocide became a distinct Armenian martyrised icon on a global level. The pre-existing abstract Soviet-style Armenian Genocide Memorial complex, erected in 1967 on Tsitsernakaberd hill, has been successfully turned into a visualised place of symbolic consolidation, a new site of diasporic belonging.

In this sense, the mnemonic culture unfolds as a process of incorporation of the hallowed, 'uninhabited' and silenced past into a new moral presence with materialised and voiced evidences and a geographical framework. Different to the fate of the memorials dedicated to other Soviet heroes and individuals, which have been questioned because of their communist past (Abrahamian et al. 2001; Shagoyan 2016), the Memorial at Tsitsernakaberd provides a continuous contact zone between diasporic and local Armenians.

Conclusion

The remembrance of loss, once located in fragmented diasporic family stories dispersed all over the world and suppressed by the Soviet authorities, has been transformed into public recording on a global level. In the process of creating a new 'iconic place', we observe the active involvement of diasporic members and the appropriation of international names. They all contribute to the creation of a tangible space of the 'sacred homeland' for diasporic members. Overlapping with modern national representations of the independent Republic of Armenia, these imaginaries provide moral frameworks and legitimation for engaging with the homeland. Referring to the appropriation of the design and functions of the monument in Soviet times as a secular sacred site, I bridge it to the context of contemporary changes in its visual and physical aspects. For this purpose, I referred to the Museum of the Armenian Genocide, which plays a significant role in repositioning Armenia as the 'ancestral homeland' on symbolic geography of multiple homelands among diasporic people. Gaining independence in 1991 and the Armenian diaspora lobbying in the United States for the global recognition of the Armenian loss and expulsion as genocide correlated with the process of symbolic repositioning the homeland to the independent Republic of Armenia. I argue that the political and affective meaning of natural landmarks and objects such as 'soil' have empowered the iconography of commemorative practices among Armenians in the twenty-first century.

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Notes

1 More recently a number of ethnic Armenians originating from Syria and Iraq were among the one million individuals who journeyed along the Balkan migration route in 2015, but recent refugees are not the focal point of this book.

2 Armenian Assembly of America (Washington D.C.) is the leading diasporic organisation promoting public awareness of Armenian issues and seeks "universal affirmation of the Armenian Genocide" via "research, education and advocacy". See in https://armenian-assembly.org/. Last accessed on 24.03.2018.

3 The term *Dashnaks* dates back to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation *Dashnaktsutyun,* the Armenian national-socialist party, founded in 1890 in Tiflis, now Tbilisi, Georgia.

4 It should be mentioned that there were some Western diasporic Armenians who were repatriated to Soviet Armenia in the 1940s after Stalin's call to repopulate territories reclaimed from Turkey (Mouradian 1979; Suny 1993a; Stepanyan 2010; Pattie 2004a; Ter Minassian 2007; Melkonian 2010; Lehmann 2012). Actually, the Soviet repatriation campaigns started as soon as the early 1920's and were carried on during the inter-war period, and after Stalin's call around 100.000 Western Armenians arrived in Armenia from 1946–48, which is around 10% of the population of Armenia. During the thaw period and the 1970s, Western communists of Armenian descent organised visits to Armenia for the younger generations. In this sense, the emergence of diasporic homecoming was observable already before the end of the Soviet Union.

5 Compared to the Baltic, South Caucasian and Central Asian post-Soviet societies, in contemporary Russia there is striking continuity of the Soviet style commemorations of the World War II. See in Gabowitsch 2017 and Oushakine 2009.

6 The heroic dimension of remembering the World War II was dominant during the Soviet period even among citizens with Jewish background who were soldiers in the Soviet Army. Many of them lost relatives during the large-scale massacres of the Jewish population in Belarus and Ukraine had not explicitly developed any 'traumatic memory' of the Holocaust, an explicitly victim identity; in contrast, many Soviet Jews perceive themselves as a part of the big nation-state that defeated fascist Germany. In the Soviet Union, the Jewish genocide and suffering was

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not particularised as the ultimate suffering of a specific group. For a long time, the official discourse refused to memorialise Jewish Holocaust victims. During my fieldwork in Berlin, which was conducted within the research project on transmission of grievance led by Stephan Feuchtwang (LSE, London), one of the interviewees complained about his 'ignorance' of the Jewish suffering during World War II. Nina Tumarkin noticed that in "Khruchshev's cosmology, to admit the reality of the Holocaust – the Nazi genocide of the Jewish people – meant to deprive the larger Soviet polity of its status as super victim, par excellence, which was touted as a major source of legitimacy".

7 With the slogan "Lands, Lands!" the demonstrators demanded the recognition of the Armenian massacres by the central authorities in Moscow, in this way reminding of Stalin's promise to 'return' the eastern territories in Turkey and Azerbaijan (Mountainous Karabakh) to Armenia. See also Kaufman 2001 and Suny 1993a.

8 Komitas Vardapet is a composer and musicologist of Armenian Christian music. He was born in 1869 in Kutahya, Ottoman Empire (now Turkey) and he died in 1935 in Paris, France. Arshile Gorky is an Armenian American painter who was born in 1902 in Van (now Turkey) and who committed suicide in Connecticut, United States, in 1948.

9 In my article "The road to Golgotha", I describe and analyse the place of remembrance in more detail. See in Darieva 2008.

10 The abstract design of the Armenian Genocide Memorial complex is reminiscent of the final design of the Holocaust Monument in Berlin, which remained controversial because of its very abstractness, which seemed open to a different restaging of the past.

11 The anthropological approach in identifying the death as 'bad' or 'good', see also in Bloch/Parry 1982 and Tumarkin 1994.

12 The official Day of Remembrance on 24 April created a fixed point in time and space in the public order of Yerevan but at the same time became a basis for the development of new commemorative culture. I have written elsewhere about the establishment of a new public procession, a youth march in Yerevan that has brought forth a loud rhetoric of dissent and politicised demands for the recognition of the cataclysmic event on a global level. See in Darieva 2008: 92–108.

13 At the conference that took place in Yerevan in April 2005 and was dedicated to the commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, the leader of the Kurdish-Yezidi community in Yerevan tried

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to attract public attention to his claims. His intention was to articulate a concern about the exclusion of non-Armenian victims from the contemporary mnemonic culture in Yerevan by omitting the cruelties inflicted upon other ethnic and religious groups, such as like Kurds and Yezides, by the Ottoman authorities. His claims for the inclusion of Kurdish victims living on the territory of the Armenian Republic into the national memorial pantheon are still hardly heard by Armenian intellectuals, politicians, and museum workers in Yerevan.

14 Assyrians belong to an ancient Christian population in the Middle East (Upper Mesopotamia, modern Irak, Iran, Caucasus, Turkey) and in terms of congregation are known as Nestorian and Chaldean Assyrians.

15 This quotation is from my e-mail communication with the Bostonian Armenian American in autumn 2007. She brought the earth from Boston to Yerevan, 17.09.2007.

16 The homeland regions in Eastern Anatolia are known in Armenian discourses as "six Armenian vilayets", a widely used term among diasporic Armenians to identify the 'Armenian territories' on the territory of former Ottoman Empire where the bulk of the Armenian population lived during the Ottoman period.

17 According to archival documentation, more than half of these handfuls of earth were gathered by the former director Lavrenty Barsegian, who travelled to these places himself. Some of them have been brought by members of the Armenian diaspora.

18 The museum guest book entry is from 09.06.1996, p. 49.

19 For a profound insight in the studies of symbolic meaning of earth and soil in national rituals see also Alzheimer-Haller (2005).

20 This museum guestbook entry has no name, no signature, from 26.04.2000, p. 317.

21 Zepyur and Simon Mahtesian from Paris, 22.04.2000, p. 284.

22 The view of the mountain is an important factor in the Yerevan real estate business; along with its meaning as a 'mythological map', it served as an orientation for prize making at the private real estate market. The value of apartments with a view on the mountain is higher than without it and they are better marketed, in particular among diasporics.

23 The independence in 1991 led to a slight reordering of the image of Mount Ararat on the coat of arms of the Republic. The explicit depiction of the Mount Ararat has been replaced by a small image of Noah's Ark on

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Mount Ararat in reference to the symbols of the First Armenian Republic 1918–1920.

24 An entry in the museum guest book from 25.04.2005. For similar entries see 23.06.2005. More about Yerevan's museum entries see in Lehmann 2006.

25 An anonymous entry in the museum guest book from 24.04.2001, p. 159.

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