

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF URBAN COLLECTIVE MEMORY: THE NARRATIVE OF GIZA ZOO, EGYPT

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### Abstract

Urban space acts as a dynamic backdrop for diverse activities and interactions - that helps in shaping the experiences and memories of its users. However, limited studies specifically explore how urban spaces act as sites for urban collective memory construction and how those memories can be preserved. This study aims to explore the construction and preservation of urban collective memory within the Giza Zoo, examining the roles of physical settings, mental images, and historical narratives. The objective of this study is to elucidate elements related to urban collective memory associations that promote the construction of memory in urban spaces. This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing thematic analysis to understand participants' memories and experiences related to the Giza Zoo. Data were collected through in-depth semi structured interviews across different age groups, focusing on their recollections of spatial elements, historical narratives, and visual imagery within the zoo. The analysis was guided by the exploratory frame work. The study identifies three key conceptual associations in constructing urban collective memory: place, image, and history. 'Place' encompasses the zoo's physical attributes, such as animal habitats, landscapes, and architecture, which influence visitors' experiences. 'Image' includes visual and symbolic representations, sensorial experience, social interactions, and cultural significance, showing the zoo's role as social and cultural hub. 'History' involves historical narratives and architectural elements that provide continuity between past and present experiences. This study bridges a gap in understanding how urban spaces like the Giza Zoo contribute to urban collective memory and offers implications for urban planning and design, emphasizing the value of incorporating elements that promote memory into urban spaces.

**Keywords:** Urban Collective Memory; Urban Space; Memory Construction; Space Narrative; Giza Zoological Garden.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a significant urban transformation to satisfy the increasing demands of the population, leading to remarkable transformation in urban spaces in terms of physical setting, function, activities, perception, and spatial experiences. This rapid transformation has accidentally resulted in the erosion of urban memory – the collective and individual recollections associated with specific places and spaces (Nora 1989). Cairo as one of the fastest developing metropolises, the city's physical fabric is undergoing some dramatic transformations. New high-rises, sprawling suburbs, and infrastructural overhauls are reshaping the urban landscape, altering the city's skyline, spatial organization, and functional dynamics. However, this rapid transformation has led to concerns about the erosion of collective urban memory of some iconic urban spaces such as Merryland Park, Montazah Garden, Giza Zoo, and etc. There is a tension between modernization and preservation as some residents grieve the loss of these spaces' historical and cultural significance (Badawy, Khalifa, and Elshater 2024).

In light of these developments, Contemporary urban design is gradually shifting towards a model that prioritizes continuity over disruption. This approach acknowledges that cities are dynamic and evolving entities that should preserve their historical context while adapting to contemporary needs (Rossi 1982). The aim is to create urban spaces that are capable of facing change, embracing the future, and adapting to the present without breaking the continuity with the past, thereby enhancing both the livability of these spaces and their capacity to foster collective memory (Carmona et al. 2012). Considering the ongoing debates and studies on collective urban memory and its construction in urban spaces, theoretical approach is not enough to understand such phenomenon. However, limited studies specifically explore how urban spaces act as sites for urban collective memory construction.

This study aims to explore the mechanism by which urban collective memory is constructed and preserved in urban spaces. To address the limitations of previous research, the study relies on an exploratory framework, developed from prior researches. The objective is to understand the urban collective of such urban spaces by examining roles of physical settings, mental images, and historical narratives. This paper constructs of four sections. The first section provides explores urban collective memory, its meaning, construction, and conceptual associations. Second, it introduces the methodology employed in this study. The third section discusses the construction of memory in urban spaces, drawing on the case study of Giza Zoo. Fourth, it aims to elucidate the themes of elements the promote the construction of urban collective memory in urban spaces in relation to Place, Image and History.

## 2. UNDERSTANDING COLLECTIVE URBAN MEMORY

Urban spaces are more than just physical settings; they are dynamic theaters of individuals experience, loaded with historical, cultural, and social significance (Lynch 1960). As individuals traverse these spaces, it becomes obvious that they play a vital role in shaping our identities and urban collective memories. City parks, streets, and public areas are filled with layers of meaning, reflecting past events and cultural practices. As they interact with these

spaces, they interact with the narratives and histories they represent, thereby constructing an urban collective memory within the city (Tuan 1977).

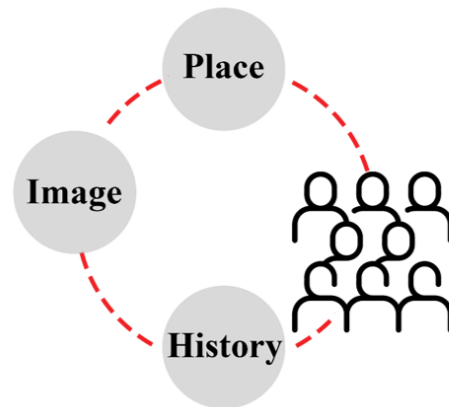
At the heart of this connection between memory and urban space lies the concept of Urban collective memory, which is defined as shared memories and experiences of a group of individuals in limited space and time (Halbwachs 1992). Scholars like Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora have emphasized the role of place in the formation of collective memory, arguing that physical spaces serve as anchors for collective identity and cultural continuity. It is the basis of social knowledge through experiencing space or by sharing collective Urban collective memory is shaped within the life time of groups, as impression of a city's formation, change, and development, encompassing recollections of the past contained in its physical setting and historical traces (Wang and Prominski 2015).

The interplay between individual and collective memory is a dynamic process that play a crucial role in the construction of urban collective memory. While urban collective memory is shared by a group, Individual memories, rooted in personal experiences contribute to the broader tapestry of the collective one (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995). As individuals experience an urban space, they perceive it differently reflecting different backgrounds, ages, and experiences. This interplay is evident in urban spaces, where there diverse of individuals experiences often transferred through social interactions and community events, constructing the urban collective memory. This relationship highlights how individual memories can reinforce or challenge the urban collective memory; individual memories add depth and diversity to it (Wang 2016).

Controversially, the design of urban spaces can selectively reinforce certain memories, histories, and events, while potentially undermining or weakening others. The construction of urban collective memory in contemporary urban design involves two approaches: conserving existing memorable urban space, and representing collective memory through creating a new memorable space (Jahanbakhsh, Koumleh, and Alambaz 2015). The first refers to maintaining, conserving and emphasizing on a pre-defined memory. The second approach represents collective memory in urban spaces through markers serve as signs conveying messages to users and mediate their experiences, marks their memory and shaping their interactions with urban spaces (Appleyard 1979). This approach emphasizes the role of the urban designer to understand the influence of those representations on urban collective memory. Designers must thoughtfully integrate these elements into spatial design to enrich the meaningfulness of urban spaces and enhance their capacity to evoke collective memories. Urban design thus emerges as a powerful mediator of urban collective memory, influencing how individuals and groups interact with urban spaces and recall shared experiences.

Simultaneously, Effective urban design incorporates features that trigger memory and foster a sense of connection to the past. This can involve the use of symbolic architecture, the integration of historical motifs in modern structures, and the creation of spaces that encourage recollection and remembrance (Appleyard, 1979). These design strategies not only preserve historical and cultural continuity but also engage the public in an ongoing dialogue with urban spaces thereby reinforcing the urban collective memory and identity of the shared groups.

Several scholars have focused only on the impact of physical setting —such as buildings, streets, commemorative artifacts, and open spaces—on urban collective memory. However, urban spaces also embody historical events, memorable images, cultural practices, and societal values that significantly shape collective urban memory. The physical setting provides a tangible dimension that allows individuals to experience and connect to the past, while these other elements help to shape their present identity and future perceptions. From these theories, the study proposes a framework to investigate the complex interplay between place, image, and history in constructing and sustaining urban collective memory as shown in Figure 1. By examining how these elements intersect within urban settings, we aim to illuminate the dynamic processes through which urban spaces become repositories of shared experiences and urban collective memory.



**Figure 1: The Framework of Urban Collective Memory Construction**

Source: Author.

## 2.1. Place:

The concept of “Place” is fundamental in the construction of urban collective memory, acting as a physical setting where memories can be anchored (Halbwachs 1992). Urban spaces, with their architectural features and design elements, play an important role in the construction of urban collective memory. In particular, architectural features such as buildings, monuments, and facades serve as focal points for urban collective memory (Seifert 2017; Wang 2016). These architectural elements, through their materials, scale, and stylistic details, enhance the memorability and cultural significance of urban spaces (Boyer 1996; Seifert 2017; Wang 2016). Furthermore, the memorability of urban spaces is also shaped by their physical attributes, including their layout, spatial organization, and functional relationships (Lynch 1960; Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith 1991)

Aldo Rossi (1982), argues that the continuity and consistency of these physical structures are essential for maintaining urban collective memory. Therefore, changes or disruptions in the physical environment can lead to ruptures and distortion of urban collective memory, affecting how they are collectively experienced and remembered. In conclusion, these interconnected

elements create a rich tapestry of collective urban memory, closely tied to the physicality of space, where the tangible characteristics of architecture, layout, and landscape foster a lasting memories and a vivid mental image (Rapoport 2016).

## **2.2. Image:**

The concept of "image" in urban collective memory can be identified as the subjective socio-mental understanding of urban spaces, in which individuals experience spaces in relation to their own context and social group (Carmona et al. 2012). The construction of individuals and collective image is influenced by the visual, symbolic, and experiential attributes of a space, as well as, the sensory experiences such as sights, sounds, and smells that identify an urban space's character (Lynch 1960; Cullen 2012; Lahiri 2011). Social interactions taking place within urban spaces facilitate the construction of urban collective memory through the expansion of shared experiences among individuals engaged in social life (Halbwachs 1992).

Demographic factors such as education, ethnic group, gender, occupation, and age can influence how individuals construct their personal perceived image within social groups (Kansteiner 2002). Emotional experiences in urban spaces can influence the formation of collective memories among shared groups. Emotional responses can intensify individuals' interactions within urban spaces influencing personal narratives (Uğuz 2008).

However, the image of urban collective memory is dynamic; it evolves over time, may fade, distort, or be selectively remembered as societal contexts change and new generations reinterpret historical narratives (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995). This dynamic interplay between individuals' images, narratives, and the march of time highlights the fluid nature of urban collective memory, reflecting its influence by history and events.

## **2.3. History:**

History provides a temporal dimension to urban collective memory, which connects past events to present experiences (Wang 2016). It is essential to differentiate between Memory and History: while memory can be seen as the present, history is the construction of the past. Historical narratives and commemorative artifacts play a significant role in the construction of urban collective memory. Urban spaces are filled with historical significance through the presence of historical structures, commemorative artifacts, cultural heritage landmarks, and embedded historical narratives (Nora 1989). Urban spaces often act as stages for historical events, thereby embedding these occurrences into the urban collective memory of the city. Consequently, this process adds layers of spatial inscriptions that symbolize or commemorate past events (Wang 2016). Furthermore, these historical inscriptions are transmitted and sustained through generational narratives, that enrich historical understanding within urban spaces (Lewicka 2008). Ultimately, the preservation and interpretation of these historical elements in urban spaces, with their experiential, symbolic, and commemorative qualities contribute to a deeper understanding of the past, fostering a sense of continuity and connection among urban space users. Thus, the interplay between history and urban collective memory, supported by physical historical elements and ongoing narratives, weaves a rich tapestry that shapes and defines communities.

#### **2.4. Representation and Preservation of Urban Collective Memory through urban developments:**

The permanence of urban collective memory lies in its ability to adapt and sustain through urban transformations. Even if physical settings and structures are changed or replaced, the memories associated with these spaces can continue, providing a sense of continuity and belonging. This is particularly when it comes to urban transformations, since there is a great chance that historical sites and cultural icons may be lost. Therefore, integrating new developments in a way that respects and maintains the urban collective memory embedded in the urban fabric presents a challenge.

It requires an active participation of Various participants in defining the process of constructing and shaping of urban collective memory, with designers as memory makers. While prior research has mostly discussed the role of memory consumers, there is a gap in understanding the interrelations between different memory participants. According to Kansteiner (2002), urban collective memory is constructed and experienced within a social setting, involving memory markers, memory consumers, and cultural traditions and representations. Moreover, memory makers such as designers and planners, construct memory within the city, while memory consumers experience and change spaces. Cultural traditions and representations, acting as memory markers, frame our perception of the past and are manipulated by both memory makers and consumers (Kansteiner 2002).

Therefore, Designers and planners play participate significantly as memory makers in the process of representing and conserving urban collective memory. They promote the construction of urban collective memory in urban spaces by designing memorials, monuments, and commemorative artifacts, providing tangible connections to historical events and shared experiences. Subsequently, individuals engage with these urban spaces, reshaping and reinterpreting them according to their individual and collective experiences (Lewicka 2008). This dynamic demonstrates how actively connecting with the past is just as important to urban collective memory as conserving it. In order to promote a more inclusive approach to urban memory conservation and representation and enable urban space to change while preserving their historical significance, it is important to understand the roles played by different memory participants. Thus, the preservation and sustainability of urban spaces during urban development depends on urban collective memory, as it creates a strong connection between individuals and spaces, ensuring that the significance of historical and cultural elements sustain over time. Recent studies indicate that incorporating urban collective memory into urban design not only preserves a city's distinct identity but also supports sustainable conservation efforts. Furthermore, it highlights that collective memory plays a crucial role in sustainable urban conservation by aligning development with the historical and cultural context of a place, thereby promoting lasting community involvement. This approach not only enhances urban spaces for current individuals but also ensures that future generations can connect with their city's history (Ardakani and Oloonabadi 2011). Therefore, it is crucial to use urban collective memory in urban planning to create environments that are durable and culturally significant in addition to being functionally effective.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Research Design:**

This study aims to explore the processes by which urban collective memory is constructed and preserved in the context of urban transformations. The study adopts a qualitative research approach, combining literature review, case study, and empirical data collection through semi-structured interviews. The methodology is structured into several phases, each designed to address the research questions and objectives properly.

#### **3.2. Study Setting:**

With a considerably large number of urban parks in Egypt, the study needed to set a criterion for selection. The criteria for selecting a site for an urban park include its physical structure and role within the urban context, the park's designation as a national urban park to accommodate diverse groups, its accessibility to a wide range of people for varied social interactions, and its ability to reflect historical changes and events, contributing to a robust urban collective memory. This study is intended to use one in-depth case study national urban park, with the Giza Zoological Garden in Egypt being selected. It was selected by elimination, with the Giza Zoo is supposed to set the most appropriate medium in which all the site selection criteria are fulfilled, and also, in terms of physical setting, mental image and historical characteristics.

#### **3.3. Data Collection:**

##### **3.3.1. Phase I: Desk Study:**

The initial phase involves a comprehensive desk study aimed at investigating different literature review about urban collective memory and memory theories. This phase is to understand the construction process of urban collective memory. The preliminary review set an exploratory framework, which guides the subsequent in empirical work. This framework is developed by examining the interplay between place, image, and history.

##### **3.3.2. Phase II: Empirical Study:**

During the second phase, face-to-face Semi structured interviews were conducted to collect empirical data. The data collection method was first tested through a pilot study, leading to minor adjustments in the instrument. Participants were asked demographic questions concerning their age and occupation. Subsequently, they were invited to narrate their experiences and memories, particularly focusing on the reasons behind their visits to the Giza Zoo. Through the interviews some questions were posed to evoke detailed memories, particularly concerning landscaping and greenery, interactive elements, architectural features, and any changes and upgrades to the zoo.

This phase is to understand how urban collective memory is preserved in urban space and to elucidate elements related to urban collective memory associations that participants recall during their visit to urban spaces.

### 3.4. Study Participants:

Initially, the interviews were conducted with a group of friends and acquaintances, who then referred the researcher to their own acquaintances for further interviews. A total of 15 participants took part in the study. Two participants were excluded from the study: one due to prior familiarity with the topic as part of their academic study, and another due to the vagueness and lack of informativeness of their responses. Ultimately, 13 participants' data were included in the analysis. The main characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Main Characteristics of participants**

Characteristics		Percentage
Gender	Male	38.50%
	Female	61.50%
Age	18-30	38.50%
	31-45	30.80%
	45+	30.80%

### 3.5. Data Analysis:

Interviews were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. First Transcripts of the interviews were created and read multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding. Data analysis was conducted to elucidate elements related to urban collective memory associations identified in the literature:

- (1) Image.
- (2) History, and
- (3) Space.

Each interview was individually analyzed and coded, these codes were subsequently combined into themes that resemble the extracted memory conceptual associations.

## 4. READING THE URBAN COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE ZOO AS A CASE STUDY

### 4.1. Study Setting:

Built by Khedive Ismail (1830-1895), Giza zoological garden, known as Giza Zoo, presents one of the oldest and most iconic zoological gardens in Africa and the Middle East, situated in the heart of Giza, Greater Cairo, Egypt. Its design is inspired by the European gardens and parks, as a part of Giza gardens. It was designed by Deschamps and executed by Delchevalerie, European assistance and Ibrahim Hamooda. Initially, in 1890, approximately 50 feddans of the Giza Gardens were allocated to form the zoo. In 1938, and to construct Cairo University and its street, around 29 Feddan of Orman garden was dedicated to the zoo and Cairo University, creating the zoo as it is known today as presented in Figure 2 and 3. The Giza Zoo serves multiple functions, including education, conservation, and recreation, providing a habitat for various rare species of plants and a wide variety of animals and birds (Abdel-Rahman 2016).



The zoo's layout is in a form of irregular shape, due to the multiple expansion and division. It combines natural landscapes with man-made structures, creating a harmonious environment for both animals and visitors. Within the zoo premises, there are five grottoes, with the largest known as the Citadel grotto, built in 1867. The Citadel Grotto is covered with Egyptian coral reefs and rocks, topped with rare cactus plants, and includes a waterfall that flows into a pelican lake. The zoo also features winding paths covered in various materials, from colored pebbles to interlocking tiles and asphalt. Additionally, there is a significant amount of fixed furniture, water fountains, and green areas, making up 70% of the zoo's space.

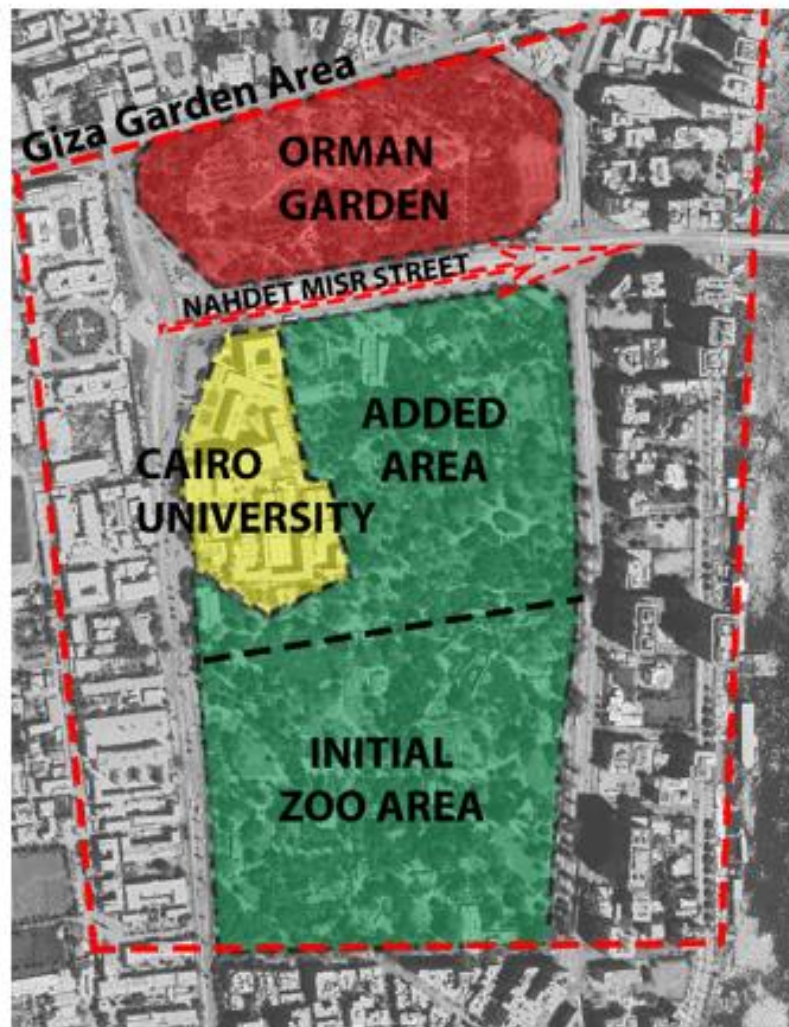


Figure 2: The current division of Giza Gardens. Adapted from Google Maps (2024)



**Figure 3: Map of Initial area of Giza gardens. Source: Survey of Egypt 1929**

The design of the Giza Zoo reflects a blend of different architectural styles that dates back to a bygone era, creating a nostalgic atmosphere, as illustrated at figure 4. Starting with, The Animals habitats were designed according to animals' requirements. It mainly encompasses two designs; cages and open range habitat.

The open range habitat usually provides a more natural setting for both animals and visitors while the cages were designed according to the Victorian style. Moreover, the zoo constitutes of other 30 permanent structures in addition to the grand entrance gate, adorned with remarkable artwork. Those buildings were inspired by different styles, for example, The Japanese kiosks designed in honor of a Japanese prince’s visit to Egypt. The suspended bridge inspired by Parisian style especially Eiffel tower. Those buildings serve different functions, from restrooms, rest houses, administrative, Museum, entertainment, Animals habitats to historical designed structures.

The Zoo was once considered one of the best zoological gardens in the world but recently no funding was allocated to it. Currently, the Giza Zoo is undergoing extensive renovations to transform it into an open-range zoo. These renovations aim to introduce new and rare animal species to enhance the diversity of the zoo's inhabitants. The final design plans to divide the zoo into several zones representing different regions while preserving its historical character, including its rare plants, trees, and historical buildings.

Overall, the Giza Zoological Garden stands as a symbol of Egypt's rich cultural heritage and commitment to wildlife conservation. Its unique blend of history, design, and activities makes it a cherished urban space that continues to captivate and inspire visitors from around the world.



**Figure 2: Different architectural styles at Giza Zoo (a) Giza Zoo Main entrance (b) “Shamaadan” Grottos (c)Lions house (d)Hanging bridge (e) Japanese kiosk**

All photos by Hatem Moshir. Source: Wikimedia.

#### **4.2 Construction of Giza Zoo narrative by its users:**

Research participants presented different features of urban collective memory in their interviews about Giza zoological garden. Having analyzed interviews, it can be clearly understandable that Giza Zoological is distinct and distinguished place in Greater Cairo among people's mind both in location and content. Accordingly, their interviews were analyzed with thematic analysis methodology to extract major categories related to the analytical frame work of memory construction

- (1) Place,
- (2) Image and
- (3) History.

##### **4.2.1 Reading the concept of "Place" through Giza Zoo:**

The concept of place reflects the physical environment of Giza Zoo, which was the most noted association for participants of the study. The physical environment of the zoo, including animal habitats, landscape, commemorative artifacts such as historical grottos, Japanese house with their distinctive architectural style and design were full of significant aspects. These physical features not only provided a setting for diverse activities but also played a crucial role in shaping visitors' experiences and memories of the zoo.

As visitors approach the zoo, they are greeted by the imposing entrance—a large scaled gate adorned with a concrete frame, steel fences, and intricate art on the walls. The entrance itself speaks of grandeur and history, setting the tone for what lies beyond. The "huge gates with green fences and old ticket windows" (Ahmed, 46) reinforce this impression, marking the transition from the bustling city to a space filled with historical charm.

Upon entering, the scene is immediately vibrant with life and activity. The journey of the participants usually starts with navigating the zoo, from where they should start to where they should go. This journey is influenced by the layout and legibility of the paths. Many participants mentioned challenges in navigating the zoo, indicating that the spatial organization of the zoo could be complex or confusing. This lack of clarity affected how participants remembered the zoo, leading them to rely on cues such as the sounds of animals, signages, smells, and following other visitors. Despite these challenges, the spatial design and legibility of Giza Zoo were crucial elements that shaped visitors' experiences and memories.

Wandering through the zoo and as the first thing users see is the landscape around them, it can be asserted that their memories were influenced by landscape. They recalled the march of time through the old, huge historical trees. As the design of Giza Zoo offered around 70% landscape areas, participants recalled the softscape by relating to specific functions and activities, including family picnics, eating, social interactions and resting, which facilitated recalling special events within the space. They would recall a specific place for its Functions or activity for example, "Gizeret al shay," was remembered as a place to sit and relax, reminiscent of a romantic setting from a film.



**Figure 3: Journey map of Elements associated with the concept of Place. Adapted from Cad Mapper and Official Zoo website**

Furnishing elements also played a role in participants' memories. Water fountains, often serving as nodes or stops, provided practical functions for visitors to drink from. Signage in front of each animal cage provided information about the animals, though some participants noted a lack of clear directional signage, complicating navigation. Benches scattered around the zoo, made from various materials, were also mentioned, though finding an empty one was often challenging due to the crowds.

In common with many other zoos, the main design element is the animal habitat. For Giza Zoo participants they saw them as containers of memory rather than just an enclosure for animals. Participants mentioned that they remembered animals' habitats because of how some of them replicate natural habitat of animals. And others mentioned that the design of the cages themselves are related to a bygone era. But most of them insured that those habitats were like a communicative platform with animals there. As those habitats served as the setting for a variety of human activities, influencing users' experiences and memories.

The architectural design and style of Giza Zoo left a lasting memory for participants, reflecting a blend of historical artifacts and functional elements. Participants recalled several physical structures that acted as commemorative artifacts. The grand entrance gate, with its remarkable ancient Egyptian artwork and imposing presence, was a recurring motif. Unique designs of animal habitats, such as the triangular-shaped elephant house and rustic, green cages, evoked a sense of a bygone era. The grottos, with their grand scale and textured surfaces, transported visitors to a different time, enhancing their sense of wonder and nostalgia. Additionally, the bridge, often likened to a Parisian structure, contributed to the overall vision of the late Egyptian kingdom within the city.

The scale and texture of the physical environment were particularly memorable. The massive size of the gate and other buildings added to the zoo's imposing presence. Some participants added that as children, the scale of the gate was particularly imposing, adding to their sense of astonishment. Textures of existing structures, such as the rustic fences, historical bridges and floor pebbles making it feel like a place frozen in time. Overall, the scale and textures of the zoo's environment played a significant role in defining their memories and interactions along their journey.

#### **4.2.2 Reading the concept of “Image” through Giza Zoo**

For the participants, Giza Zoo is not just a physical space; it is a reservoir of collective memories where individual subjective experiences intertwine to construct a collective narrative. Participants' recollections reveal the zoo as a hub of cultural exchange and social interaction, enriched by sensory experiences that evoke vivid images of the past. Emotional attachments, particularly those tied to childhood and family traditions, enhance its significance. Despite its historical and emotional value, there's a noted contrast between its past grandeur and current state of decay, adding layers to its complex narrative.

As seen from participant's narratives across different age's groups, they developed micro narrative related to their inherited and lived experiences across different family generations. Children, parents, and grandparents recounted their visits to the zoo, with each generation building upon the memories of the previous one. Their narratives are different, influenced by time, emotions and constructed images from inherited narratives. This intergenerational sharing creates a cohesive and holistic narrative of the Giza Zoo that spans across different members of a special group, effectively expanding and sustaining urban collective memory over time.

Moreover, Participants recalled that as they moved through the zoo, they engaged with different forms of social interactions and elements that affected their experiences. They attributed this to the multiplicity of functions within the zoo and exposure to people from diverse demographic backgrounds, which led to a rich tapestry of experiences and perspectives.

Sensory experiences played a significant role in participants' memories of the zoo. The sights, sounds, and smells of the zoo converged to create lasting impressions. For instance, the strong, often unpleasant odors around certain animal habitats, such as the hippo habitat, left a lasting impact. The echoes of lion roars resonating through semi-closed areas evoked a sense of wonder and sometimes fear. Textures, like the old, rusted cages and unique flooring patterns, further enriched their sensory experiences, making visits to the zoo multi-dimensional memories filled with sensory imprints. These details enhance the richness of their collective memory, painting a vivid, multi-sensory image of their experiences at the zoo.

Many participants express a deep emotional attachment to the zoo, often tied to childhood memories and the unique experiences it provided. They described a mix of emotions such as: fear, excitement, curiosity, comfort, loss and belonging. Those emotions were evoked by the architecture of the space and users' experiences through space. Participants mostly recalled memories during their childhood, with many recalling feeding and interacting with animals as well as exploring the zoo's diverse habitats. This nostalgic feeling is closely related to family, as the zoo holds special place in their shared traditions and experiences across generations.

Recalling their visits to the Giza Zoo, most of the participants expressed feelings of being lost. The zoo's vastness and lack of clear directions often evoked feelings of fear and uncertainty, especially in children. Despite any initial fears from feeling lost, crowd and huge noises, the zoo also provided a comforting familiar escape and a place to relax. The curiosity evoked by the unique architecture and exotic wildlife created a sense of excitement and wonder.

“I remember that there is a stone forest where there a grotto and stones where you can have images and sit. It looked so mysterious that we went through it to explore and have pictures”

A recurring theme in participants' narratives is the change in the zoo's condition over time. Many express a sense of disappointment, pointing the contrast between the zoo's past and its perceived current deterioration. Participants commented on changes in the zoo's cleanliness, crowd levels, and animal populations over the years. In addition to the zoo's maintenance, resembled in, the old, rusted cages, the worn-out pathways. Some expressed nostalgia for the zoo's past state and regret its current condition. These observations highlight the duality of their memories, juxtaposing the zoo's historical and emotional value with its present-day challenges.

#### **4.2.3 Reading the concept of “History” through Giza Zoo**

As participants recounted their experiences and memories of the Giza Zoo, it became evident that the zoo holds a significant historical and nostalgic value for many. For these users, Giza Zoo serves as a gateway to the past, echoing royal eras and late kingdom architectural styles and even passing down family traditions. Participants' memories reflect a blend of historical

imagery and cultural references underscoring the zoo's role in their collective memory. Most of Participants related the design of Giza Zoo to a bygone era, the royal era, with references to royal designs and its historic aesthetics. It is a form an intriguing expansion of historical narratives through the space. Participants recall some structures within the zoo, particularly the cages and standing out architectural buildings, are often perceived as reflective of late kingdom architectural styles. A quote talk from one of the participants” “I remember the cages were huge and green and rusted and decaying. It looked like it was from a different historic area”. These architectural elements serve as tangible links to a historical past, expanding the zoo's narrative beyond its immediate context. This blending of architectural design with historical imagery contributes to a richer understanding of the zoo's place in the urban collective memory, highlighting how physical structures can evoke a sense of historical continuity and expansion of memories.

For senior participants, certain architectural features held additional cultural significance and were linked to famous events or media. One senior visitor associated "Gizeret al Shay" with a film or song by well-known Egyptian artists. "I remember I always linked it to a film by AbdAlHalim or Abdalwahab. There was a song or a film filmed there. For me, I have always perceived it as a romantic area" he shared. These cultural references added depth to their memories of the zoo's architecture, illustrating how these spaces became embedded in the historical narrative of the area. Participants also reflected on various events they had witnessed at the zoo, noting how these occurrences became integral parts of its historical narrative. These events not only added to the charm of the zoo but also became integral parts of its historical identity, shaping the urban collective memory of its users over generations.

Through participant’s narrative, it becomes clear that the Giza Zoo is not just a physical space but a repository of urban collective memory, rich with historical and cultural significance. These narratives highlight the dual role of the zoo as both a historical and a living space that evolves with time, reflecting changes in societal values and urban development through time.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Urban collective memory is essential for preservation and continuation of urban space in the face of rapid urban developments. However, the construction and preservation of urban collective memory in urban spaces requires more than maintaining the physical setting.

The paper explored Giza Zoo as a theater of urban collective memory, preserved for almost nine decades and actively used on a daily basis that is facing current urban development. In this paper and through the process of narrative inquiry, participants recalled their memories by relating past and present to Giza Zoo. While the research attempts to understand the construction of urban collective memory within urban space and how it is preserved, elements that promote its construction were elucidated. In addition, it has been demonstrated urban collective memory is a reliable phenomenon. By exploring the urban collective memory of Giza Zoo visitors through an exploratory framework derived from prior research, this study underscores the significance of associations such as place, image, and history in the construction of urban collective memory.



The study offers valuable insights that both align with and expand upon the existing literature on this research. However, the study primarily relies on the insights of Giza Zoo users to identify the key elements that construct and preserve urban collective memory within urban space. It explores how users experience the space differently yet collectively contribute to the overall urban collective memory, enhancing the memorability of the urban space.

The study indicated that the first thing individuals recall and strongly affect the construction and preservation of urban collective memory is usually related to the concept of place. Participants used the space as a referral point and to localize their memories inside the zoo, referring to the spatial elements constituting the overall physical setting (Table 02). This approach supports the prior studies which indicates that the concept of “place” involves a spatial space embracing the occurrence of events, meaning, and the formation and persistence of memory (Halbwachs 1992).

**Table 2: Elements of Place**

<b>Place</b>		
<b>Animals Habitat</b>		
– Interactive display	– Style	– Design
<b>Commemorative artifacts</b>		
– Historical structures	– Symbolic artifacts	– Cultural heritage
– Landmarks		
<b>Architectural design and style</b>		
– Architectural style	– Scale	– Texture
– Artistic details	– Architectural design	– Uniqueness
<b>Landscape</b>		
– vegetation	– Furniture	– Function
– Activities	– Node	
– <b>Spatial design and legibility</b>		
– Space Legibility	– spatial organization	– Signages and maps

“Place” as the most notable association of constructing urban collective memory consists mainly of physical setting. According to participants’ narratives, spatial aspects of the physical setting and its elements facilitate the construction and preservation of urban collective memory: these include monuments and historic buildings, as many early researchers, such as Rossi and Boyer, have mentioned (Rossi 1982; Boyer 1996).

Those elements physical qualities had strongly affected their memories. Those qualities can be seen in the design, scale style, texture and details. This aligns with the idea of “Architecture being the constitutional element of the urban space” (Seifert 2017; Wang 2016).

In addition, landscape acted as a marker for individuals’ memory inside the urban space. The function of spaces, vegetation, furniture and nodes all were recalled and reinforced their narratives. It is argued that landscape keeps the traces of time and embodies different memories through transformations overtime showing continuity as it might act as a part of historical context containing the spirit of the place (Wang 2016).

It should be noted that participants were concerned with challenges of navigation within the zoo due to the spatial organization and legibility. These challenges led to disorientation among users, suggesting that while the zoo's design promotes exploration, it can also frustrate the visitor experience and lead to some ruptures. This aligns with Lynch 1960 ideas that the organization of such elements in space allows the structuring of space which constructs urban collective memory

**Table 3: Elements of Image**

1. <b>Image</b>		
1.1. <b>Collective Attending</b>		
- Family traditions	- Social interactions	- Rituals
- Memory expansion	- Cultures exchange	- Experiences exchange
- Demographic background	- Functions	- Activities
1.2. <b>Sensorial</b>		
- Auditorial	- Olfactorily	
1.3. <b>Cultural Significance:</b>		
- Cultural Activities	- Perception of Identity	- Attachment and Nostalgia
1.4. <b>Emotional Significances</b>		
1.5. <b>Decay and Deterioration</b>		
- Physical Decay	- Loss of Attractions	- Perception of change

The Giza zoo’s image, as recalled by participants, illustrates how mental images of individuals within specific urban spaces contribute to urban collective memory. The zoo as an urban space acts as a mediator for memory transmission within social group or across generations maintaining the collective and individual images through time. This idea demonstrates the significance of social interactions and cultural exchanges through different functions and activities in shaping urban collective memories within urban spaces. Assuring that People with different demographical statuses have their own distinct values and norms but still contributing to the collective remembering. This resonates with prior studies that that memory may start from different scales starting from family to neighborhood to the public sphere. To put it differently, memory is passed through the social group is thus memory can be seen as the expansion of different experiences of a specific group in space (Halbwachs 1992; Nora 1989; Kansteiner 2002)

Furthermore, it was noticed that participant’s memories were shaped by their sensorial experiences such as the sights and sounds of animals, the smells from various habitats within Giza Zoo. Those experiences created a vivid mental image of their time spent at the zoo. The study's exploration of sensory experiences at the zoo aligns to Lahiri’s work, as he approached collective urban memory through a sensorial approach. He found that trans local urban memories are influenced by different senses and can connect and disconnect cities and lives across time and space (Lahiri 2011).

According to prior studies, cultural and personal emotions influence the continuity of urban spaces (Chavoshi et al. 2024). This aligns with the analysis of participants narratives that highlighted those emotions perceived in urban spaces and how it contributes to the construction and preservation of Giza zoo’s urban collective. Those emotions can be stimulated by cultural

significance of the space evoking sense of identity and belonging, or by evoking different emotions while experiencing the space.

The participants revealed that the decay and deterioration in the zoo image over time, has made them eager to preserve its past image, by recalling the past image instead of the current image. This idea can align with the idea maintaining the past image can help in preserving urban collective memory and urban spaces through march of time (Carmona et al. 2012).

On the other hand, Nora 1989, argued that societies try to memorize by representing the history in sites of memory. After the exploration of the Giza Zoo's historical narrative, as a reflection of urban collective memory. The zoo's historical significance and identity are deeply embedded in the urban collective memory of its users, with historical continuity being a recurring theme in their recollections. Participants' recollections of the zoo's historical narratives, imagery, and personal memories highlight how the zoo serves as a repository of urban collective memory. These historical elements create a sense of continuity and connection to the past, reinforcing the idea that urban spaces are vital in preserving and transmitting historical narratives. When comparing these theoretical perspectives with the results of the study on urban collective memory, several parallels shown in (Table 04) can be drawn.

**Table 3: Elements of History**

<b>History</b>	
<b>Expansion of History</b>	
- Historical narratives	- Historical imagery
<b>Space events:</b>	
- Historical Significance	- Historical Identity

Moreover, Participants' memories often included references to significant historical events and periods associated with the zoo, emphasizing its role in the broader historical context of the urban space. This aligns with theoretical backgrounds which argues that events are identifiers of space (Mowla 2004; Wang 2016; Sak and Senyapili 2019)

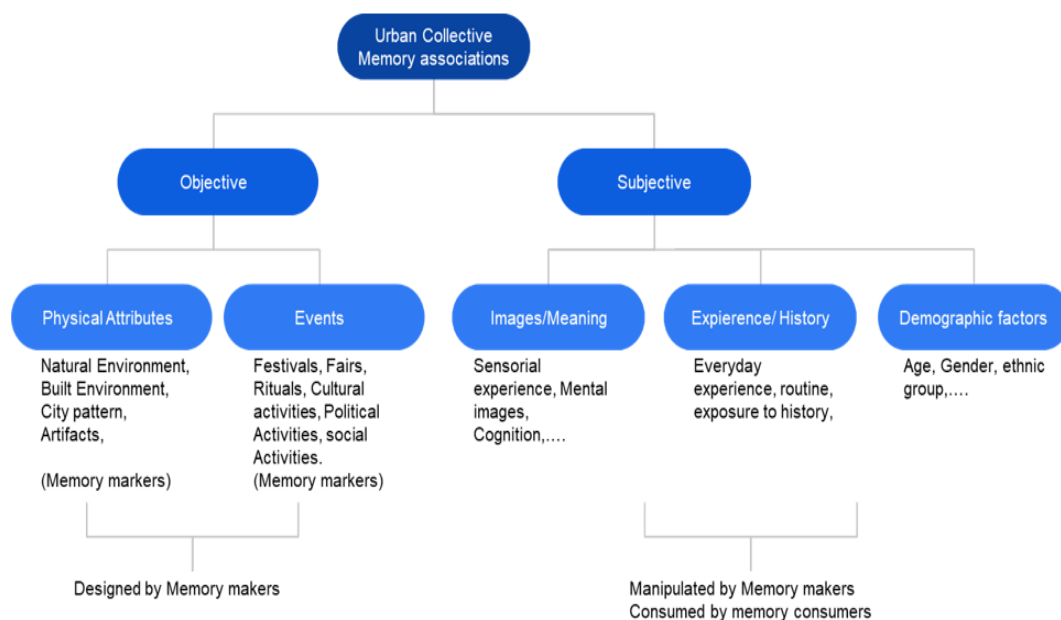
In the process of designing using collective memory, it is crucial to understand the complex relation between memory markers, makers and consumers. To depend on the three main association in designing memorable space, it is important to understand how consumers “individuals or users” can perceive them. Through the study, those associations were perceived both objectively and subjectively. Objective markers, designed by memory markers, hold direct messages or meanings. They can be in the form of physical elements, landscape, commemorative artifacts, labeled events and activities. On the other hand, subjective markers are perceived differently from individual to another, but still promotes the construction of collective memory. These elements can be used by memory makers to manipulate the experiences of consumers. In the Giza Zoo, consumers changed some design-intended elements, such as the function of landscape areas and new types of activities and social interactions, changing their role into makers. This aligns with Kansteiner's writings about memory participants, which emphasize the dynamic interaction between memory participants (Kansteiner 2002). Kansteiner argues that memory construction is a collaborative process

involving memory markers, makers, and consumers, ensuring collective memory remains dynamic and subject to reinterpretation. In Giza Zoo, this interplay is evident as visitors repurpose and reinterpret spaces, blending objective markers with subjective experiences, thus contributing to an evolving collective memory.

To sum up, the research shows that urban spaces are not just physical setting but repositories of urban collective memory with rich experiential qualities. Through an emphasis on of place, image, and history, the research illustrates how urban spaces contribute to a city's unique character and urban collective memory. It emphasizes how crucial it is to maintain historical and cultural narratives in the face of urban change, highlighting the necessity of careful urban planning that takes these memory constructs into account.

Overall, the comparison between theoretical concepts and empirical findings highlights the dynamic relationship between space and memory in urban spaces. This research provides a framework that urban planners and designers can utilize to create and maintain spaces that support and enhance urban collective memory.

This research focuses on understanding the urban collective memory in Giza Zoo aiming to enhances our understanding of its construction and preservation in urban spaces, The study highlights the fundamental conceptual associations—place, image, and history—that support urban collective memory by highlighting the complexities of memory construction. The study's themes and framework, which recommend that memorable urban spaces incorporate these links to construct urban collective memory, provide insightful recommendations for urban planners and designers.



**Figure 6: perception of urban collective memory associations**

Source: Author.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Concluded from the research and participants' narratives, several key recommendations for preserving urban collective memory within urban spaces can be addressed. First, the importance of maintaining and enhancing physical structures, such as historical buildings, commemorative artifacts, to sustain individuals' connection with the past. Second, improving spatial legibility is another critical aspect, which may be achieved by enhancing wayfinding and signage that can help visitors navigate more easily, leading to more coherent and enduring memories.

Third, promoting sensory engagement by preserving and emphasizing of elements like sounds, smells, and textures in urban design can create memorable multi-dimensional experiences. Fourth, encouraging social interactions between different groups of people through designing an urban space for family activities, picnics, and cultural exchanges, and etc., to ensure that the space remains a vibrant part of the urban collective memory.

Moreover, integrating historical Narratives into the design and interpretation of urban spaces, so these spaces can serve as living repositories of urban collective memory that will continue to have an impact on present and future generations. In addition, balancing between modern Needs while preserving historical elements, to ensure that these urban spaces remain relevant and continue to contribute to the urban collective memory in meaningful ways. Finally, encouraging Emotional Connections, through designing urban spaces that evoke emotional responses.

## 7. STUDY VALUE AND ORIGINALITY

This study bridges a gap in understanding how urban spaces like the Giza Zoo contribute to urban collective memory and offers implications for urban planning and design, emphasizing the value of incorporating elements that promote memory into urban spaces.

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### **Declaration of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### **Data Availability**

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author (Rola Ashraf) upon request.

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