

## RECASTING THE URBAN MEMORY OF AL- TAHRIR SQUARE, BAGHDAD, IRAQ

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### ABSTRACT

*Al-Tahrir Square is the most effective Square in Baghdad, has many cultural and urban landmarks, and the most famous is the Freedom Memorial. As a valuable public space, this Square has faced urban transformation and dilution of social identity due to the collective memory and the built environment changing its meaning. This research aims at uncovering recent urban memory and reproducing collective memory in urban public spaces. Qualitative research was applied through a field study and interviews with 40 participants aged 18 and 75. Most of the people we interviewed thought that their part in the research helped them to understand how urban memory works now. This study shows that events and political activities created the memory of the place in the urban public space under study and that the place's transformation into a place of attraction and conflict between the forces of its original use led to the creation of a kind of new memory place.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

These days, prompt urban memory, especially in the capital, has led to new transformations in the built environment, events, users' defined spaces, and placemaking. Consequently, there has been an alteration of meaning and social memory. Public spaces such as squares in the capital city have become unattractive places for people and occupy spaces just for cars without memory and sense. (Barnett 2013). Today's public spaces are not for people to gather. They are just paths for vehicles and empty social spaces. Public spaces are now a locus for travel exchange. It changes places' urban and social memory because physical environments and social meaning change (Popović, Marić, and Vaništa Lazarević 2021).

Al Tahrir Square, the case of this study, is one of Baghdad's more critical practical squares and memorial places. It suffers neglect in social life, placing meaning and making arrangements for cars, separated from the Genius loci. Regardless of its place values and intentions, it has become a place to pass through. Before 2019, Al-Tahrir Square was merely a movement connecting various city parts. Since Al-Tahrir Square was built in 1953, It has suffered numerous urban challenges, including sporadic markets, street sellers, traffic congestion, and the deterioration of the physical environment. It necessitates a thorough examination of the critical characteristics

of this historic urban place, which serves as a repository for urban memory.

The area surrounding Tahrir Square is called the Bab Al-Sharqi. The old city center of Baghdad, Bab Al-Sharqi, consists of a well-organized network of streets and lanes. On the east bank of the Tigris is the Al-Rusafa area, often known as the Rasafa zone. Both Al Rusafa and Karkh, located on the western bank of the Tigris River, are accessible by some bridges. The Jumariyah bridge directly connects the Bab Al-Sharqi district to the Karkh district. Changes were made to the site's physical environment and appearance, including alterations to its structure and form connected to its place identity and visual memory. Due to its location in the heart of Baghdad, Bab Al-Sharqi is predominantly a business district. It also attracts both local and international tourists and visitors. In the 1990s, the creation of public spaces, roads, facilities, and transit lines affected the district's image and sense of place. (Hajiyat, Kozlowski, and Abu Bakar 2021). Bab Al-Sharqi is one of the ancient districts of Baghdad on the Rusafa side of central Baghdad. The shape of a tower, a church, was taken after the British occupation of Baghdad in 1917 and demolished in 1937. The Bab Sharqi area is considered one of the most densely populated areas in Baghdad, as it includes

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markets, ancient buildings, mosques, and churches, such as the Armenian Gregor Church, which is one of the most beautiful churches in Baghdad. The Armenian Orthodox It also includes the Freedom Monument, one of the works of the famous Iraqi sculptor Jawad Selim. Bab Al Sharqi is a meeting point and distribution point for transportation and buses coming from and to most of the outskirts of Baghdad (Al-Tameemi, 2019)

Tahrir Square has seen major social, political, and urban upheavals in recent Iraqi history. From 1948 through 2021, various events took place in this location. Al-Tahrir Square is an urban area for freedom, a place where people may gather to protest and demonstrate before the proclamation of the Iraqi Republic in 1958. It also witnessed significant urban and architectural transformations in the history of contemporary Iraqi architecture, combining the political, urban, and social memories of residents of the capital, particularly the Bab al-Sharqi district.

The visual distortion surrounding the Square caused by the spread of slums, street vendors, and Friday markets distorted urban memory due to the distortion of the Square's architectural context, as well as the overlap of many activities, causing the Square to lose its original identity, especially between 1980 and 2003.

Recasting urban memories has left an indelible mark on cities. The ability to reshape people's recollections of places is often overlooked and underrated as valuable to cities. We work to create urban environments that are pleasant, profitable, and human-friendly regularly. (Cheshmehzangi, 2021). Besides, cultural, political, and social events that attempt to refer to the importance of memory in social and political culture have brought numerous conflicts about remembering and forgetting the past. Thus, when historical amnesia appears to be at an all-time high, visualizing alternate futures aids in the valorization of individual and collective memory (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu 2008a). Recasting urban memories can comprehensively view the past (memory and history) without losing the historical identities of different eras as the principal method of capital restoration in current urban areas and an interventionist strategy. As a result, a new identity emerges in line with people's present living conditions (Hwang, 2014). Given the historic nature of Al Tahrir Square, recasting urban memories can aid in the site's rehabilitation by strengthening the identity of such historical sites to build a sense of belonging to the city, foster social unity, and boost people's involvement (Uğuz, 2008).

The issue is the lack of a cognitive framework for the impact of political and social events on Recasting the urban memory of the city's public spaces. This study looks at how urban memory is recast based on the types of events in urban space. In particular, the political and protest events that reimagined the mental image of Al Tahrir Square, which caused us to build a new urban memory for the place and history, led to an impact on the physical environs. Based on prior studies on collective memory, this paper explicitly explores urban memory, not just a mental image but also a recent human creation,

such as gathering places, spaces, and monuments. It allows people to feel more connected to their surroundings. Even a specific idea's view of urban space can have a significant impact. Depending on the features and events of the city, urban memory recasting can be developed or done. It improves and enriches a city's urban quality. Although planning and architectural aspects are essential in an urban setting, events are also important. As a result, a location's landmarks influence how it is seen and remembered.

To achieve this goal, adopting distinct community experiences for many types of users' residents, visitors, and protesters in urban space, the study explores the features of urban memory in a metropolitan area at Al-Tahrir Square. The process of forming a mental image of a specific urban memory.

This paper studies a new understanding of collective memory for Al-Tahrir Square landmarks. We interviewed three sorts of people from Al-Tahrir Square, the first type of residents, the second type of visitors, and the third type of protesters. We documented their shifting knowledge of urban memory in this study, primarily through qualitative research. This research looks at how people define and interpret the recasting memory of the place and what aspects of the area compel them to recall the past and associated memories.

This approach allows the researcher to shed light on urban features that enable memory visualization in spaces with accumulated events. That creates a shift in the perception of place, activities, values, and relationships with each other and allows for objective analyses of the personal stories and narratives of the community using Tahrir Square.

## 2. RECASTING URBAN MEMORIES

In Greek mythology, Clio is the muse of history. Memory and history are considered synonymous, but nowadays, the research finds them as fundamentally opposite. The name Clio derives from the Greek verb kleo (Greek: "recount," "narrate," and "make famous" (Ringas, Christopoulou, and Stefanidakis 2011).

Through numerous events, the objective of recasting memory is to re-understand the built environment around public space. Collective awareness is affected by time, place, nature of use, and events that occupy urban space, generating a new collective perception (Othman, Nishimura, and Kubota 2013). The event is the primary generator of urban space memory. It is linked to the type of event, such as a political, sporting, or economic event, allowing us to connect urban memory to urban space (Lak and Hakimian 2019). The work of Bergson offers critical insights into how this division occurred and a sense of temporality that may lose in spatial metaphors, argue the researchers. They suggest a sense of time-space as both fragmented and dynamic; a sense of instability and displacement in collective memory (Crang and Travlou 2001).

Public areas in cities provide a diverse range of experiences and opportunities for action. The event is a significant yet largely overlooked component of people's urban experiences. The research

examines what happens in Al-Tahrir Square and how people use public places. It demonstrates the possibilities of public areas (Stevens, 2007). For that, the observer's relationship with the city and the aspects of the environment influence the city's imaginability and the ability to create a strong image (Ringas et al. 2011). These events play a significant role in the construction of urban memory. As more of these images are created, the city's imaginability diminishes. While the current environment shapes public space, the event aids the city's imaginability with elements rememberable on urban and architectural scales (Postalci, 2001).

Many theories attempt to define identity. Some of those linked to place-identity are the following:

The first theory (Place-Identity): Proshansky and Fabian divide how people see their environment into two groups. The first group is about feelings, values, memories, and settings. The second is how these places (home, school, neighborhood, etc.) are connected. This theory says that the way people see a place is affected by how they see it. (Proshansky and Fabian, 1987). The second theory is that a place is often associated with a particular group of people, a certain lifestyle, and social status. This can be shown in many regions with specific dominant characteristics, such as the Islamic character of the Middle Eastern countries. The Social-Identity Theory posits that individuals can be affected by the general traits of their group. (Harwood 2020).

As Lappegard (2007) described, the third theory is the identity process theory, a dynamic, social product of the interaction of memory, consciousness, and organized construal. This comes along with Correa's (1983) definition of identity, as he says, "Identity is a process and not a found object." This theory combines the ideas of a place's identity as a process implicit in people's perceptions (memory, consciousness, etc.) of the place. (Grey and O'Toole, 2018).

In this regard, Individual or collective memory is possible. The recollections of our particular or personal experiences of spaces shape our memory-images of space. A series of experiences collectively remembered by a group of people who share it and participate in molding it is known as collective memory. The more people recall the event, the more the memory takes on a collective quality (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu 2008b).

In addition to scientifically assessing urban morphology, urban direction, and its changes and trends, the spatial-temporal dimension of urban design can also reveal the long-term consequences of the economy and urban planning on urban morphology (Cai et al. 2007). This analysis provides the foundation for capturing large-scale collective activities and expanding our perception of urban structure from the spatial to the spatial-temporal dimension. It will be helpful for planners to understand how individuals utilize time and interact with urban space in metropolitan areas. (Jiang, Ferreira, and Gonzalez 2012) For all that, the recasting of urban memory takes place over a brief time. For the first time, the residents of urban

space will be orientated by political events, social events, and urban memories rather than by the built environment, which does not have any memories or images from the past. Three factors may influence one's recasting urban memory and perception of the environment, as shown in Figure 1.

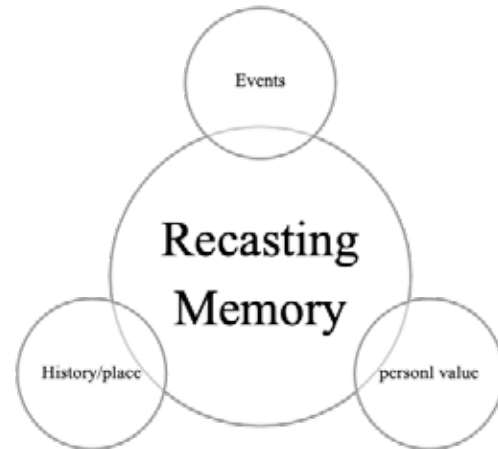


Figure 1: Framework Source: The authors.

### 3. MATERIAL

#### 3.1 Al-Tahrir Square History

Al-Tahrir Square is one of the most important squares in Baghdad, Iraq's capital. In 1953, it was located in the Bab al-Sharqi neighborhood. On the east side, the Freedom Monument is opposite the east side, and the fence on the right side has changed. The King Faisal II Bridge is rebuilding on the right side. Ummah Park sits on the eastern side of Al-Jumhuriya Street, once known as King Ghazi Street, and runs parallel to Al-Rasheed Street. There is a former Turkish restaurant building and several libraries in the Square, notably the Al-Nahda Library.

Al-Tahrir Square is considered one of the largest squares in Baghdad on the side of Rusafa and is located in the main center of modern Baghdad (see Figure 2). It is also called Bab al-Sharqi or Bab al-Sharji in the local dialect, about one of the old Baghdad gates called (Kalwadhī Gate) or (Bab al-Basaliyah) or (Bab al-Khaleej) and mentioned on the map drawn by Felix Jones and Mr. Collinkwood in 1854 AD (Ahmed. Sousa 1953).



Figure 2: The map drawn by Felix Jones and Mr. Collinkwood in 1854 AD Source: (Ahmed. Sousa 1953) p.15

The entrance to Al-Khayyam Street comes from Al-Saadoun Street. Al-Tahrir Square is remarkable by its location, close to Abi Nawas Street, famous for night-lovers, where modern cafes are spread, including red, yellow, green, and blue. These names are because neon lights distinguish them from others, and there was the famous Al-Baghdadi Cafe. Al-Tahrir Square is significant for its location. It is the intersection of Al-Saadoun Street, Al-Gomhouria Street, Al-Khayyam Street, Al-Rasheed Street, and Al-Bab Al-Sharqi Street, which is one of the most important streets in terms of tourism, entertainment, and commercial crowded with visitors, pedestrians, cars, and beautifully unforgettable meetings, as well as the spread of restaurants and cafes scattered throughout the city (Al-Chalabi, 2016).

A bazaar in Tahrir Square offers rare coins and small, rare antiquities that are not on show. The seller uses his intuition to determine the genuine buyer, as he knows their past value. Their pricing was low compared to their actual value, which is incalculable. Roman, Umayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman coins are the most well-known items they deal with. There is a big market for selling military uniforms and all accouterments, such as head coverings, bands, military shoes, ranks, decorations, and anything else that comes to mind, and the market is displaying to this day even foreign military attire.

The history of Al-Tahrir Square is convoluted. In the 1950s, it served as a parking lot, but in 1961, it transformed into the Freedom Monument. These moves established Al-Tahrir Square as a symbol of the Iraqi people's fight and triumph, establishing it as a symbol of a new liberation era. The central location of Al-Tahrir Square in Baghdad caused has consistently been chosen as a protest venue, especially when it was the center point for social meetings. The Square has a long history of political demonstrations and has become a symbol of liberation, as reflected by the Freedom Monument, and is accessible from both Al-Karkh and Al-Rusafa, Baghdad's two sides, via motorways and bridges that decrease the distance (Al-Tameemi, 2019).

### 3.2 Landmarks surrounding Al-Tahrir Square

Al-Tahrir Square is surrounded by many landmarks with architectural and urban characteristics, as shown in figure 3. That significantly impacted the alteration and development of the area's urban memory. Al-Tahrir Square is surrounded by many landmarks with architectural and urban characteristics, as shown in figure 3. That significantly impacted the alteration and development of the area's urban memory. The impact has two main parts; The first part is at the level of the physical urban environment through the accumulation of urban additions over multiple periods, such as the Marjan Building, the Al-Khayyam building, and the Freedom Monument. They were in changing periods, which affected urban memory. The second part is related to the change in the designations of the urban landmarks surrounding the Square due to the political

and social events that turned into multiple symbols that recasting the collective urban memory of Al-Tahrir Square, as described by Chalabi in his encyclopedia. (Al-Chalabi 2016)

It can the following essential features can describe based on its historical appearance:

- Ummah Park, with its founding year of 1936 and completion year of 1953. Figure 4.
- Architect Muhammad Jaafar Allawi designed the Marjan Building in 1941. Figure 5.
- In 1961, the Freedom Monument Baghdad's most important memorial. Figure 6.
- In the 1970s, the Al-Khayyam building.
- The Turkish restaurant building towards the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. Figure 7.

Because of the mental images associated with events, especially political ones, from 1961 to the present, these landmarks represented a significant recasting of urban memory at different times.

Perhaps the most prominent of these signs is the Freedom Monument, which was created to express the people's interaction with political events and their struggle during the ownership period. This monument continues to carry the symbols of the urban memory of the Square so far, in addition to its artistic value because it was created by one of the greatest Iraqi sculptors, Jawad Selim. The idea was a protest banner raised on concrete supports, embodying the architect who designed this banner, Professor Rifa'a Chadirji, an idea rooted in the memory of the Square that carried Jawad Selim's sculptures, and both the gesture and the sculptures became the basis of the memory surrounding the Square, being the first protest square in the capital, Baghdad.

## 4. METHOD

This study used a qualitative method to examine the perspectives of participants and users of urban space (Tahrir Square) and its surroundings to understand better the dimensions of the idea of recasting urban memory at ages ranging from 18 to 75 years. According to the information gathered during the research process in the previous literature, the general geopolitical situation, particularly at the level of political events, and the resulting changes in urban space concepts and the production of new indicators for Al-Tahrir Square and the area surrounding it.

The research methodology is based on the interviews which were recorded. Their content was transcribed into written form, re-read, and categorized according to the background generated by the participants, which included three classifications. The first classification includes residents, visitors ( general users), and protesters; the second classification includes the age group of the participants; and the third classification includes the scientific and

cultural background of the participants. They arrived at relevant concepts in the arena (public places) that helped build a theoretical model to reformulate urban memory according to their answers through analyzing and exploring information using Excel and Word. It took about three months of analyzing and reviewing the data to come up with the final results of this data.

The events of 2019 formed Al-Tahrir Square symbol of its launch, and the protesters' expression of their demands, as well as the considerable social repercussions, it is a continuous event in the transformation of society's memory and a different narrative between generations in the process of recasting the urban memory.

The requirement to comprehend mental image alterations and recasting urban memory. The end product was a set of questions for the interview:

1. What does Tahrir Square represent?
2. From the surroundings of the Square, what is the most influential of the surrounding landmarks
  - A. Freedom Monument
  - B. Murjan Building
  - C. Turkish restaurant building
  - D. Ummah park.



Figure 5: Marjan Building 1941-2022, Source: Encyclopedia of Iraqi Architecture



Figure 3: Al-Tahrir square, Source: ArcGIS Earth 1.3 map



Figure 6. the Freedom Monument 1961-2022, Source: Encyclopedia of Iraqi Architecture



Figure 4: Ummah Park



**Figure 7:** The Turkish restaurant 1970 -2022 , Source: google image

3. What was the most significant transformation in Al-Tahrir Square in 1961, 2003, or 2019?
4. When you arrive at Tahrir Square, what memories are recalled in your mind?
5. What are the most indicative symbols of Tahrir Square?

Residents and visitors in the Al-Tahrir Square urban space and the protesters and general users participated in the study. They ranged in age from 18 to 75 years old and would choose through random sampling. Interviews have been done under the Freedom memorial and area surrounding Al-Tahrir Square; the stay in the Square is approximately 4 hours per day between 10 am and 2 pm. All attendees participated in cultural and recreational events in the Al-Tahrir Square urban environment. Face-to-face in-depth interviews with the participants, with the questions above asked. They were asked to explain their memories of the Square (past and present). As Morse explains, 40 people were surveyed for information, which was chosen using simple random sampling when qualitative research aims to comprehend the essence of an experience (Morse 1994) I begin with the stage of reflection, in which the project is merely a good idea, and proceed to the stage of planning (including writing the proposal).

**Table 1:** Characteristics of interviewees (Authors).

Age	residents	protesters	general users	percentage
18 - 25	0	3	2	12.5%
25 - 35	0	10	5	37.5%
35 - 45	2	5	3	25%
45 - 55	4	0	1	12.5%
55 - 75	3	0	2	12.5%

**The total number of participants:** 40 people.

All the data was collected in the winter and spring of 2021. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the participants. Each respondent completed all open-ended and semi-structured questions; each interview lasted 30–40 minutes and focused on people’s backgrounds, memories of the place, how they remember Al-Tahrir Square’s past and present, their experiences as users of the space, and their perspectives on the meaning and memory of the urban space and Square.

All interviewees were asked if they agreed to record and transcribe the interview. They were also provided with a signed, informed permission document to ensure they would not be recognized again.

To analyze the data, a qualitative content analysis was performed. The significance of essential concepts and themes was handled after reading the interview transcripts numerous times and noting phrases and concepts. Researchers first jotted down their findings to identify broad thematic variables and separate meaning segments for coding purposes.

Finally, researchers used “prolonged engagement” between the researcher and the participants in order for the former to gain an adequate understanding of the organization and to establish a trusting relationship between the parties through the exchange of contact information and clear messages (Sozialforschung/Forum and Undefined 2001).

## 5. FINDINGS

Table 2 summarize the results from the 40 participants. The participants in the research interviews in Al-Tahrir Square revealed various features of collective memory, particularly at the level of transformations in understanding the mental image of Tahrir Square over time. The research identified the main categories related to the proposed concepts for recasting urban memory through several approaches based on these responses.

- The first way is the nature of urban space/events/personal values.
- The second way is to understand the overlap between previous urban memory (experience memory) and current urban memory (event memory) before switching to recasting urban memory.
- The third way refers to physical urban features such as the nature of use for events in the Al-Tahrir Square urban space, the age of buildings and architectural styles, accessibility, and road network.
- The fourth way is the change in symbolic connotations in Al-Tahrir Square because of its impact on the participants’ understanding of the nature of memory related to the Square and its features.

### 5.1 Tahrir Square’s spatial memory

As shown in Figure 8, The physical environment of Al-Tahrir Square and the events are the most important things for the research participants. The urban memory of the place is through the landmarks, buildings, and streets surrounding the urban space. In addition to the Al-Tahrir Square tunnel, which was associated with the memories of

the eighties and nineties generation (participants aged 40-55), it was a marketplace and promenade spot for this generation.

The participants, aged 18-35, most protesters, described the Tahrir Square tunnel as becoming a landmark and an artistic monument for the protests and an art museum for the drawings of young protesters in 2019 and called it the Homeland Art Tunnel, as shown in Figure 9.

For all participants of various generations and users, the Freedom Monument had absolute mental power. It is the emblem of the Square, the capital, and Iraq in general. It is a memorial dedicated to the memory of free generations.

The participants indicate that the Freedom Monument and the extension of the Uammh park to the Al-Tahrir square provide a kind of mental storage and timeline for the urban memory of the Iraqi architectural context. The Uammh park's buildings include the Al-Tyran Square, the Armenian Church, the Marjan building, the Kayam building to the Freedom Monument, and the Turkish restaurant building opposite the Square. With the transformations of the architectural context and the change of nomenclature associated with the events, such as changing the name of King Ghazi Park to Uammh Park in 1958, and the King Ghazi Bridge to the Jumhuriya Bridge, in addition to the transfer of the statue of the former Prime Minister of Iraq, Abdul Mohsen Al-Saadoun, from Nation Park to Victory Square in Baghdad. It was rooted in the participants' memories from the old ages (55-75) and long memories of all the arena's events.

The participants, primarily (18-75) from different groups, indicate the size of transformation of the concept of the Square for them and its impact on their mental image after the recent protests. Perhaps the most prominent landmark is the building of the Turkish restaurant, which was a giant barrier in the urban area, according to their description, into a flame of memories.

Table 2: Summary of Results from the Interview (Authors)

The number of participants per 40	Motives	Keywords	Subthemes	Thema
mentioned by 26	Physical urban features include the nature of use for events in the Al-Tahrir Square urban space, the age of buildings and architectural styles, accessibility, and road network.	-Tahrir Square's spatial memory -Turkish restaurant building -Freedom Monument -Ummah park.	-Landmark meaning -Street names -Building's indication	Place
mentioned by 40	Understand the overlap between previous urban memory (experience memory) and current urban memory (event memory) before switching to recasting urban memory	Tahrir Square's efficacy and memory of events	-Political - Social -Cultural -Art	Events

The number of participants per 40	Motives	Keywords	Subthemes	Thema
mentioned by 18	The change in symbolic connotations in Al-Tahrir Square because of its impact on the participant's understanding of the memory nature related to the Square and its features.	History in the Square	Urban experience -National celebrations -Landmark build-up	History
mentioned by 32	The nature of urban space/events/personal values	Individual values and the value of memories	-Cultural qualifications -Experience memory	Individual values
			-Resident -Visitors -Protesting	User activity

The protests and a monument comparable to the Freedom Monument to Jawad Salim, especially with the change of its name to (Mount Uhud) as shown in figure 11, were an indication of the steadfastness of the protesters. It was the most significant sign for them, especially after the government's recent decision to turn it into a museum called the October Revolution Museum 2019, which is under design and final approval for transforming the building to suit the event.



Figure 8: The physical environment of Al Tahrir Square 1961-2022 Source: Google image

A quote talk from a 71-year-old participant. “The Square represented the days of the monarchy and the beginning of the Republic when I was a child, and I still remember those days of the Iran war. It was a place we met before heading to our military units. Now it has changed and has become more and more crowded. It has become a center for demonstrations and gatherings for different generations. However, I still visit the Square, visit a traditional coffee shop see the Freedom Monument, the days of the Republic, and the monument’s opening in the sixties. However, it is neglected now! The Turkish restaurant used to be a restaurant overlooking all of Baghdad at its height. Since 2003, we have been turning into a neglected place; now, it symbolizes the people’s strength and demands for their rights”. but A quote from a 19-year-old participant, “The Square represents the place of protest and the place of expressing the people’s will. I see the Turkish restaurant building as the most important (Mount Uhud) because it symbolized the demonstrations in 2019, and I still remember them as an act of social participation and meeting new friends. It is not only a place to regulate traffic”. That shows the difference in urban memory between the two generations.



**Figure 9:** Al-Tahrir Square Tunnel, Source: Taken by the authors



**Figure 10:** The physical environment of Al-Tahrir Square ( Jummhuria street ) , Source: Taken by the authors

## 5.2 Tahrir Square’s efficacy and memory of events

Interviews with residents, shop owners, visitors, and protesters in Al-Tahrir Square and its surroundings showed that commercial activities contradict the events of the recent protests, as sellers or residents preferred that the protests take place on certain days of the week, such as Friday, which is the holiday of most shops in the urban area. The participants agreed that the government measures accompanying the protests, such as blocking roads and others, had a significant impact on the ease of access to the area and the movement of goods and customers simultaneously. One of the participants indicated that he comes to the electronics market adjacent to Tahrir Square every time he faces difficulty accessing it due to the political and protest events in the Square and cutting off most of the access roads to the market.

Some participants said that cultural and artistic events related to political events have significantly flourished, especially among the protesting youth group and some Iraqi intellectuals who go to the



arena to create a state of sustainability for the event, as described by one of the participants. Especially in the Ummah Park, its establishment has hosted many cultural and social activities, with many artworks, most notably the monument to motherhood by the great Iraqi artist Muhammad Ghani Hikmat. The events of the first protests in 2014.

### 5.3 History in the Square

Almost all the participants in the meetings considered that Tahrir Square is a witness to the contemporary history of Iraq. It is associated with the extension of political life in the modern Iraqi state and its transformations in the monarchy. A quote talk from a 38-year-old participant "A square is a place I visit every Friday for shopping and to teach my children about the meaning of the Freedom Monument to make them feel their patriotism. I see the Freedom Monument as a symbol for all of Baghdad and Iraq, not just for Tahrir Square". It witnessed the royal era through the designations surrounding the urban arena, such as King Ghazi Park and King Ghazi Bridge, the establishment of the Republic in 1958, and the transformation of urban labels into the Ummah Park and the Jumhuriya Bridge. The accompanying transformation in the participants' memories and the mental image's nature to the establishment of the Iraqi Republic in 1958.

In 1963, 1968, and 2003, Al-Tahrir Square witnessed political coups and the regime's demise. All of these historical events were mentioned by the participants. However, they all agreed that the most painful historical era was the period following 2003, when urban space and surrounding markets were subjected to numerous terrorist acts and bombings, killing many shop owners, residents, and visitors to urban space. Finally, the participants agreed that the restoration of the Square's position represents a historical turning point because it was the start of the demonstrations that resulted in a significant contemporary historical event that is rememberable.

### 5.4 Individual values and the value of memories

Given the social and demographic status of the participants, the views of the different groups differed. Participants with higher education, especially younger men from 18-45, believed that the Square was an emblem of freedom and a symbol of democracy or a place of bloodshed for freedom. A quote from a 27-year-old participant "I am a protester. I want to find a job, this Square is my life, and I will come every day until they hear my voice".

At the same time, others considered Al-Tahrir Square a suitable space for daily needs and shopping, especially for the older age group between 55-75. Others also referred to selling different products and considered Al-Tahrir Square the middle gathering of different markets.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study explores the features contributing to the recasting of urban memory to help urban renewal policies in Al-Tahrir Square. The study indicates that events are the main engine for expressing

the place's values, activities, events, and personal values. The study Expression of urban memory places a multi-way through the memory of the experience, the memory of the event (effectiveness).

The study is based on the experience of urban space users and identified the most critical factors influencing the formation and recasting of collective memory through the overlap of experience and events in the expression of subjective and objective aspects.

The results show that factors such as the event and place referred to the objective aspect, and the activity's history and nature referred to the subjective aspect. Those are very important in recasting the urban memory of urban space. The concept of transformation can also confirm as an essential part of recasting memory and cultural and social transformation.

The paper showed that one of the most important mechanisms for recasting urban memory is the event and the making event. Change is the main feature in generating transformations and creating collective memories. However, this event must be within a specific environment full of connotations through urban landmarks such as historical architectural elements and the architectural context surrounding the event-generating environment and access roads within the master planning of urban space and the city.

The changing of names for architectural and urban elements within the study area and the shift's ineffectiveness within the different buildings resulted from the change of the events. The participants also pointed out that they considered some elements, such as the building of the Turkish restaurant (Mount Uhud now), to be the essential element in the place, and the Freedom Monument was considered an objective and subjective value for the participants.

This research has revealed that urban values exist. They are the primary collective memory connotations in recasting urban memory by recasting the mental and conceptual images due to the nature of the events and transformations through the spatial-temporal history of urban space.

To generate for us a collective memory of the image of urban landmarks. This memory is considered the key to the development and urban renewal of the area around Al-Tahrir Square. The participants believe that another feature contributing to the reformulation and continuity of the urban memory of Tahrir Square is the identity of freedom and the fight against corruption, which the Square carries and its connection to urban stories, narratives, and events since the establishment of Tahrir Square till now. The collective awareness of Baghdadi and the Iraqi citizens, in general, is established that Tahrir Square is linked to a set of concepts such as justice, fighting corruption, and protest, which is the people's space, and their voices increase the decline of values.

The physical and spatial dimensions carry direct connotations, especially in the Freedom Monument at the history level. The Uhud Mountain building has now joined it through the event in 2019. The power of feelings belonging to all citizens in the capital because

it became stuck in their urban memory as a gathering place. Their connection to the images of the event from the stories and events within Tahrir Square.

Second: The vital issue in the minds of people in history. The important historical events that Tahrir Square went through and the social and political transformations found their way into the users' minds and became entrenched in their urban and visual memories. Al-Tahrir Square has witnessed many celebrations, national holidays, and various political events reviewed in the study. The qualitative study and the meetings with people showed that the collective memory is directly related to the contemporary history of Iraq and the revolutions and political protests that the Square witnessed.

Next, according to the events and activities, the results define the concept of recasting urban memory between the two ends of the memory. By recasting a dynamic memory of the events,

variable in significance according to the generation of the participants, a collective memory establishes the story of the Al-Tahrir square. The urban space is the scene of events, social, political, and commercial events. Moreover, Al-Tahrir Square has become the primary urban space focus within the city.

This strengthened new values for Tahrir Square, including increased social and cultural activities and a protest center for everyone with a political or social issue. The Square has become the primary communication between the people and the government. All of this has increased the value of the urban focus of Al-Tahrir Square and its role in transformations in our understanding of the spatial environment through recasting urban memory and recasting the semantics of urban and architectural elements through experimental memory and event memory figure 11.



Figure 11: Process of recasting the urban memory Source: The authors.

Finally, the study explores other aspects that may affect the formulation of urban memory: subjective value and image memory value, self, and its effect on the collective consciousness. Some consider it an urban value and a highly symbolic significance because of the political event that it embraces from one stage to another, the impact of this event on urban and architectural transformations, and its impact on recasting the urban memory of the community. Others consider it the value of a commercial urban focus because it mediates a group of markets in central Baghdad. In terms of artistic and cultural production, the Freedom Monument and the Motherhood Monument near the Square, various activities, especially painting activities and celebrations in Tahrir Square and the Tahrir Square tunnel.

In short, the practical result of the study is the formation of a theoretical model not only for specialists in urban design but also for the directors of municipalities and service departments in Baghdad and urban planners to enhance urban management through the process of participating in understanding urban memory and recasting it through the process of urban renewal as shown in Figure 12.

This study identifies a practical approach to understanding how recasting urban memory assists urban development and renewal projects by creating its conceptual framework. Therefore, this study gave officials the ability to understand the vision of society in urban transformations by studying urban memory and identifying the most prominent features that help recast it. Through transformations in understanding of urban, architectural symbols in Al-Tahrir Square, urban space surrounding, the transformations of use resulting from recent protests, and the actual value of users, which have accumulated through successive political events since the establishment of the Al-Tahrir square, which regenerates a renewed and effective collective memory in the urban space-making, the recasting of urban and architectural features in the study area.

Recasting urban memory helps to integrate generations by achieving a common ground for understanding the characteristics of collective urban memory. It is possible to recasting urban memory by renovating the architectural facades of the buildings overlooking the urban space of Tahrir Square and even the ways of accessing them, in addition to stimulating the renewed memory by finding mechanisms for naming streets and buildings in line with the events in people's memories.

The identity of the Square is the identity of the young people protesting against corruption and demanding their rights. Therefore, Al-Tahrir square must be an urban space where people can express their concerns and aspirations. It is achieved through the use of urban space. And architectural interaction with new trends in the memories of young people. It determines the mechanisms for recasting urban memory through urban renewal and development policies. Leaving space for them to express their ideas, as happened with the Tahrir Square tunnel, which became an art exhibition documenting the youth protest movement in 2019.

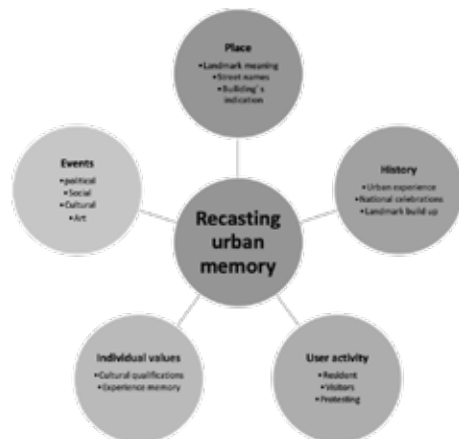


Figure 12: Theoretical model for recasting urban memory Source: The authors

The concept of urban recasting in Al-Tahrir Square was linked to an emphasis on the development and renovation of the Turkish restaurant building to suit the changing events in the Square. It was a museum documenting the events of all the protest movements since the establishment of Al-Tahrir square.

The proposed framework is just a starting point for future studies that aim to improve the quality of the place by understanding the mechanisms of recasting urban memory, including in urban renewal and development policies.

Discover other values for different squares, such as Paradise Square, the symbol of the fall of the dictatorship in Iraq in 2003, Al-Wathba Square in central Baghdad, or Other historical squares in any urban renewal and development project.

Adopting citizen participation in urban decision-making since it is their city and their memories, and thus, they are the foundation for every urban renaissance.

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