



the auschwitz institute  
for the prevention of genocide  
and mass atrocities

# Beyond Remembering

An Atrocity Prevention Toolkit for Memory Spaces

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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
IDENTIFYING RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES	10
EXERCISE 1	11
EXERCISE 2	14
EXERCISE 3	16
EXERCISE 4	20
RESPONDING TO RISK	22
GOVERNANCE RISK FACTORS	27
CONFLICT HISTORY RISK FACTORS	37
ECONOMIC CONDITION RISK FACTORS	49
SOCIAL FRAGMENTATION RISK FACTORS	53
TOOLS	70
EXHIBITIONS	81
CONCLUSION	93
NEXT STEPS	94
SPECIAL THANKS	94
PROJECT TEAM	95

## INTRODUCTION

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  Not all memory spaces contribute to the prevention of identity-based violence, but they can when we work for them to do so.
-  Even if memory spaces do not contribute to prevention, they can do other important things, like acknowledging the harm that victims have experienced and educating the public about the past.
-  Memory spaces have an important role to play in upstream and downstream prevention—the kind of prevention work that comes before and after all-out violence erupts.
-  Memory spaces can contribute to prevention by assessing the risk factors that exist in their society and designing programs and exhibitions that respond to those risks.

“Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” This sentiment from philosopher George Santayana is frequently used to highlight an inherent link between remembering past violence and preventing its recurrence. It implies that memory is essentially good and that it always makes positive and preventive contributions in societies dealing with the legacies of large-scale violence.

Sadly, this is not always the case.<sup>1</sup> Although engagement with the past can indeed build societal resilience in the present, nationalist leaders can just as easily use the past as a tool to justify violence, extremism, and exclusionary ideologies.<sup>2</sup> Because of this, those who want memory to contribute to the prevention of violence, rather than an increase in risk, have to approach memory initiatives purposefully and thoughtfully, designing them with prevention in mind.<sup>3</sup> This involves using what Alex Bellamy has called an “atrocities prevention lens,” which requires us to view the decisions we make from the perspective of whether they will increase, decisions we make from

<sup>1</sup> Leah David, *The Past Can't Heal Us: The Dangers of Mandating Memory in the Name of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Sarah Gensburger and Sandrine Lefranc, *Beyond Memory: Can We Really Learn from the Past?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); David Rieff, *In Praise of Forgetting: Historical Memory and Its Ironies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Scott Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Kerry Whigham, “Remembering to Prevent: The Preventive Capacity of Public Memory,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 11, 2 (2017): 53-71, <http://doi.org/10.5038/1911-9933.11.2.1447>.



the perspective of whether they will increase, decrease, or have no impact at all on the risk for identity-based violence.<sup>4</sup>

*Beyond Remembering: An Atrocity Prevention Toolkit for Memory Spaces* is a guide designed by the [Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities](#), an international NGO that works with public institutions and civil society actors around the world on the prevention of identity-based violence. This toolkit builds on years of experience working with governments, civil society organizations, and memory sites. It focuses on spaces of memory and the role they can play in the prevention of mass atrocities. Mass atrocity is a term that encompasses three categories of international crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.<sup>5</sup> This toolkit focuses specifically on the first two of these crimes, along with all other instances of large-scale violence and/or human rights abuses through which individuals are targeted because of who they are—because of their identities. We focus on the prevention of such violence because spaces of memory often emerge in contexts where identity-based conflict has occurred and/or continues to shape daily life. The extreme sense of loss, indignation, confusion, frustration, and grief that characterize societies that have experienced atrocity have time and again led individuals and groups to seek solace, along with social and political change, through the construction of memory spaces. Just as these spaces mark the mourning of tragic loss, they also represent hope for a better, less violent future.

Of all the forms that public memory takes, spaces of memory—the term we use to refer to former sites of violence, memorials, monuments, museums, and other places and institutions that engage with a violent past—are perhaps the most visible and recognizable. Spaces of memory can accomplish many functions. They can serve as a form of [public acknowledgment and symbolic reparations](#) to victims of past violence—and a commitment to a different kind of future. They can educate children and adults about the complexities of what happened.<sup>6</sup> They can [host ceremonies](#) and [public gatherings](#) that bring the public together around shared memorial efforts. But they can also stoke resentment and division, widening the rifts of identity-based tensions and increasing the risk for the recurrence of violence.<sup>7</sup>

A memory space cannot be everything to everyone. It may be enough for a memorial to acknowledge publicly the harm a group has suffered or to list the names of victims. Not every space has to assume the burden of also preventing large-scale, identity-based violence in the form of genocide, crimes against humanity, and grave human rights abuses.<sup>8</sup> But, if this is a goal for a

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<sup>4</sup> Alex J. Bellamy, "Operationalizing the 'Atrocity Prevention Lens': Making Prevention a Living Reality," in *Reconstructing Atrocity Prevention*, eds. Sheri P. Rosenberg, Tibi Galis, and Alex Zucker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 61-80.

<sup>5</sup> Scott Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention* (Washington, DC: US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Amy Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2021); Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Ron Adams and Hariz Halilovich, "Mass Myths to Mass Graves: Politicizing Memory in Serbia as a Prelude to Genocide in Bosnia," in *Nationalism and the Politicization of History in the Former Yugoslavia*, eds. Gorana Ognjenovic and Jasna Jozelic (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 279-296.

<sup>8</sup> That said, particularly in deeply divided societies the ways in which a memory space engages with the past can unwittingly contribute to elevating the risks for atrocity violence, just as it may unintentionally play a role in prevention.

given memory space, we cannot take for granted that it will happen without effort. This, then, leads to two questions that you must ask. First, do you want prevention to be part of the mission of your space? Second, How, then, can you strengthen the potential for your memory space to contribute to making “never again” a reality?



*Beyond Remembering* is designed to answer exactly these questions. It is a resource for those working at all kinds of spaces of memory—including sites of memory, memorials, museums, research institutes, peace parks, and community centers—all over the world who want to increase the potential of their space to contribute to the non-recurrence of identity-based violence. Although directors, program officers, and curators may specifically benefit from the toolkit, it can also serve as a tool for tour guides, educators, volunteers, board members, funders, and other staff.

***Beyond Remembering* takes as its premise two fundamental ideas:**

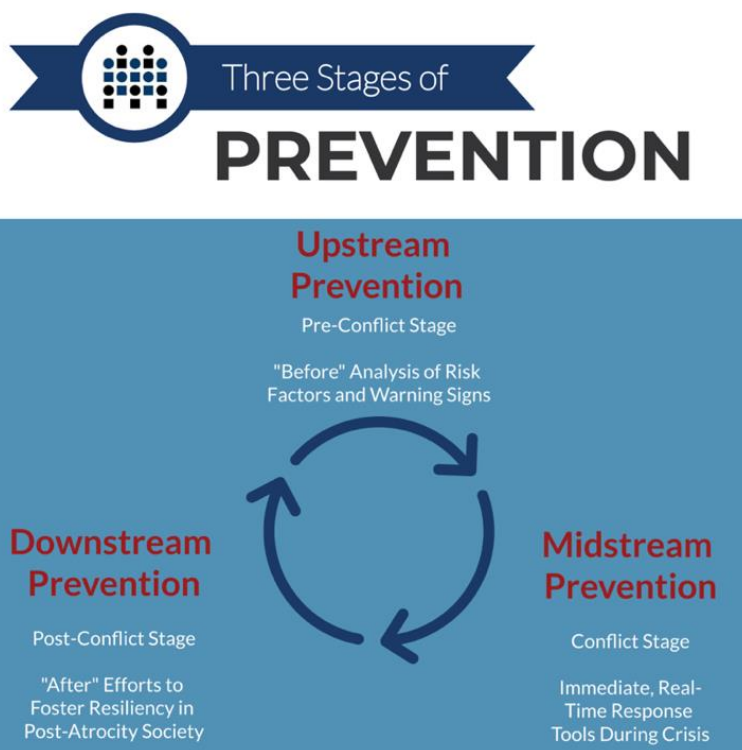
1. Preventing large-scale, identity-based violence is an achievable goal that can be measured by assessing how a program or initiative reduces the risk that marginalized populations will be the targets of discrimination and violence.
2. Spaces of memory can—but do not always—play a role in our efforts to prevent such violence.

Generally, the public views the prevention of mass atrocities in a very limited way: intervention in the midst of mass killing. If this is our understanding of prevention, then it becomes difficult to imagine how a memory site or memorial could contribute at all. *Beyond Remembering*, however, takes a much broader view of prevention, incorporating elements of *upstream prevention*—the actions we can take long before crisis breaks out to prevent a situation from escalating—and *downstream prevention*—the actions

we can take in the aftermath of violence to rebuild our societies in a way that makes recurrence of violence less likely.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, this toolkit approaches prevention as a process that requires varied contributions from multiple stakeholders. When it comes to preventing a complex social and political process like genocide, there is no single answer or intervention that will solve everything. Complex problems require complex solutions, and spaces of memory can be one of a variety of elements contributing to the collective and collaborative work of prevention.

Contrary to what many may believe, mass atrocities are not necessarily difficult to predict. The risk factors that pave the way for genocide, crimes against humanity, and other forms of large-scale, identity-based violence are well known. Scholars, practitioners, and policymakers have studied them and collected them into a series of *risk assessment models*, which clearly lay out these risk factors.<sup>10</sup> If we can identify the risk factors that increase the likelihood that a society will experience atrocity, and if we understand mass atrocities as complex processes that require many little solutions rather than one big solution, then we have a concrete way to contribute to prevention: we can take actions that help to diminish, rather than increase, the risks for identity-based violence. The lessons learned and shared in this toolkit are the result of an intensive, multi-year research process that



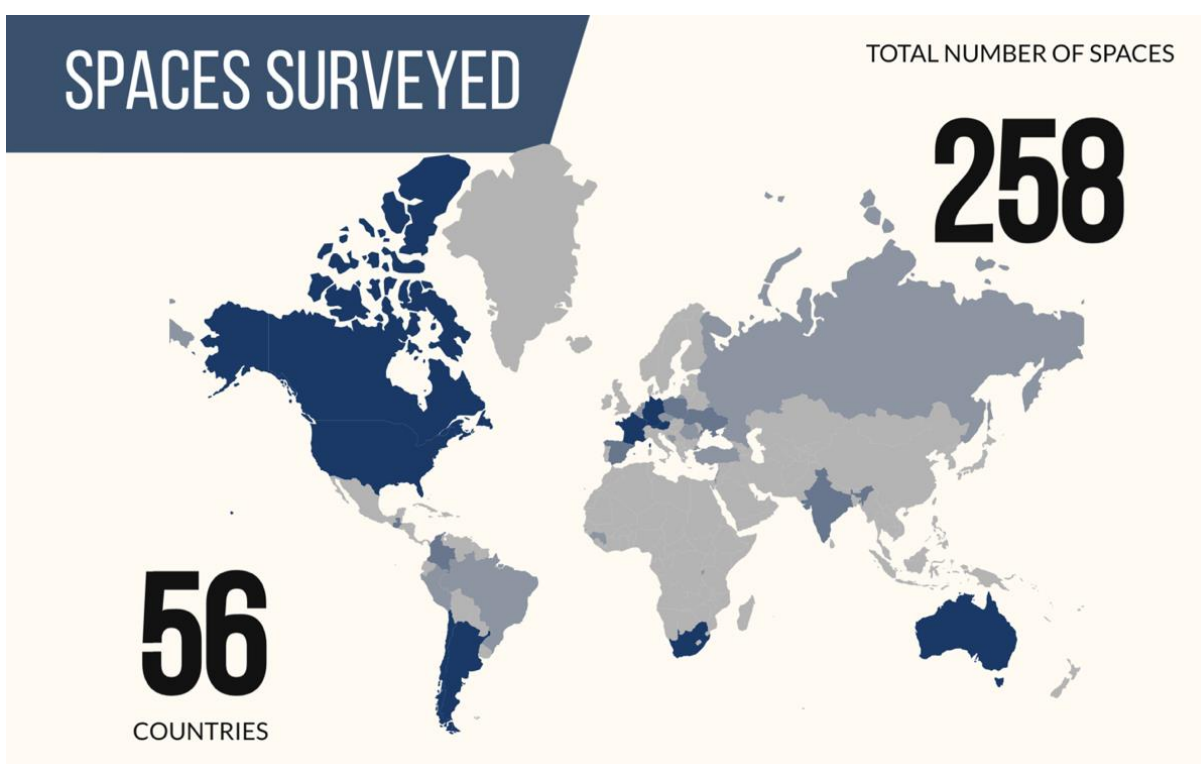
<sup>9</sup> James Waller, *Confronting Evil: Engaging Our Responsibility to Prevent Genocide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin E. Goldsmith, Charles R. Butcher, Dimitri Semenovitch, and Arcot Sowmya, "Forecasting the Onset of Genocide and Politicide: Annual Out-of-Sample Forecasts on a Global Dataset, 1988-2003," *Journal of Peace Research* 50,4 (2013), 437-52; Jack A. Goldstone, Robert H. Bates, David L. Epstein, Ted Robert Gurr, Michael B. Lustik, Monty G. Marshall, Jay Ulfelder, and Mark Woodward, "A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability," *American Journal of Political Science* 54, 1 (2010), 190-208; Barbara Harff, "Assessing Risk of Genocide and Politicide," in *Peace and Conflict: A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy*, eds. Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr (College Park: University of Maryland Press, 2005), 57-61; University of Maryland, "All Minorities at Risk Project," Accessed March 24, 2023, <https://cidcm.umd.edu/research/all-minorities-risk-project>; United Nations, "Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention," UN Office of the Special Advisers on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (2014); United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Early Warning Project — United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," Accessed March 24, 2023, <https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/>; Waller, *Confronting Evil: Engaging Our Responsibility to Prevent Genocide*.



involved two different components. First, the AIPG team compiled a database of over 1500 memory spaces around the world that commemorate in some way histories of identity-based violence.

Many of these spaces are community-based, with some located in the most remote corners of their respective communities. Others are simply monuments or statues that do not offer programming or have a full- or part-time staff. The 746 sites in this database that did have contact information received a long-form questionnaire about the kinds of exhibitions, programs, and activities conducted at the site. We received responses from 258 sites representing 56 countries around the world, each of which provided information about how they approach memory at their site and the kinds of programming they offer.



To add to this trove of information, the AIPG project team visited a selection of memory spaces and organizations working on memory in seven countries: Argentina, Cambodia, Colombia, Morocco, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, and South Africa. These seven countries were chosen because they represent distinct global regions that have experienced various forms of atrocity and identity-based violence and have developed different strategies for confronting those histories of violence. Across these seven trips, the team visited 109 memory spaces and organizations and spoke with 164 stakeholders who worked at these spaces. These in-depth interviews provided an opportunity to gather much more detailed information on a variety of sites and the work that they are doing.

As this toolkit demonstrates, while the work of responding to risk can occur on the national scale, memory spaces also exhibit a huge potential to intervene in a preventive mode at the local level by attending to the communities in which they exist. National and international sites of memory can be powerful spaces for education and collective remembrance and often benefit from high visitorship, but most visitors attend these sites only once or twice in a lifetime, leaving little space for long-term engagement. Meanwhile, local memory spaces may not welcome as many visitors, but they have an opportunity to develop long-term relationships with their audiences, opening opportunities for deeper engagement over time. Whether the average visitor comes to a memory space once a week or once in a lifetime, there is always some space for applying an atrocity prevention lens to that encounter.

*Beyond Remembering* is not intended to be a universal template or checklist that tells memory spaces what to do differently. Rather, it provides a series of guiding questions that memory spaces can ask themselves if they are interested in strengthening their contributions to the prevention of identity-based violence. Moreover, it provides examples from all over the world of creative solutions that other memory spaces have found to do just that.

To contribute to the mitigation of atrocity risk, however, one must start with an honest assessment of what risks exist and how a space could contribute to reducing those risks. Every society on this planet features some risk factors for identity-based violence and mass atrocity. Every country in this world has some groups of people who are marginalized because of who they are. To aid the prevention of identity-based violence, we must identify the shortfalls in our societies and question what contributions we can make to respond to them.

To help you in this process, the next section of this toolkit, “Identifying Risks and Opportunities,” provides four interactive exercises that will help you assess the risk factors present in your society and the capacity of your memory space to address them. Take some time to reflect on these questions and answer them as honestly as you can. Based on your answers, you will be referred to specific sections of the toolkit that may be most relevant to the risks in your society.

The “Responding to Risk” section addresses the various risk factors associated with atrocity and identity-based violence, providing examples of how memory spaces can respond to risks related to four categories: governance, conflict history, economic conditions, and social fragmentation. In this section, you will learn how to approach these risks from a perspective of atrocity prevention, and you will also find examples of good ideas that other memory spaces around the world are using to respond to similar realities. Of course, the experience of every society is unique, and there are some ideas and approaches that will not transfer from one memory space to another. It is the hope of this toolkit that seeing the creative ways that some spaces have confronted the challenging realities they are facing in their societies can inspire equal levels of creativity to respond in other cases that, while related, are never exactly the same.

The “Tools” section focuses on creative tools that some memory sites are using to do their work. These tools do not respond to any single risk factor specifically, but can potentially be used to respond to any number of risk factors.

The “Exhibitions” section is aimed specifically at museums and other memory spaces that have permanent and/or temporary exhibitions. It offers suggestions for integrating an atrocity prevention lens in an exhibition’s design.

Each section of the toolkit also begins with a list of key takeaways for easy reference and ends with a series of questions you can ask yourself to evaluate how you are using the tools available to contribute to prevention.

Spaces of memory exist because of painful and difficult histories. Out of that pain, however, can emerge a strong potential for transformation at the individual and collective levels. Many of you have already been working toward this goal for a long time. Our hope is that this toolkit can provide further inspiration and support for the memory work you are already doing.

## IDENTIFYING RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following four exercises will help frame the way you use this toolkit. They are designed to provide a foundation for thinking about the role your space can play in the prevention of mass atrocities and large-scale identity-based violence. You can start by completing these exercises on your own, but it may also be useful to do these exercises as a team with the entire staff of your memory space. The answers you give here will direct you to relevant areas of the toolkit and provide guidance for how to apply what you find there.



## EXERCISE 1

### WHO IS AT RISK?

One reality lies at the core of the mass atrocities we are trying to prevent with the lessons in this toolkit: identity. Genocide, most crimes against humanity, and many large-scale human rights abuses are the outcomes of a group of people being targeted because of who they are—or, rather, because of who a perpetrator group perceives them to be. Memory spaces that contribute to prevention must know first and foremost which groups are at risk. Who is the most marginalized? Whose rights need protection?

Identity is complex. We all have multiple identities. You are defined partly by your personal identities. These are the characteristics that are central to the way you define yourself as an individual. For example, you may be a parent, a great cook, or a football player.

You are also defined by your social identities. These are the ways you define yourself based on the groups that you are a part of. For instance, you may be a Muslim, a woman, or a German speaker.

No person is defined by only one identity characteristic. And yet, in any given society, belonging to some identity groups may help make someone safer, more likely to obtain employment and other resources, and more likely to hold positions of authority. Likewise, belonging to another identity group may make someone less safe, less likely to have a good job or education, and more likely to face discrimination or outright violence. Furthermore, people who belong to multiple identity groups that face marginalization or violence can experience even higher levels of risk as these identity categories intersect. In other words, some social identities confer more power and privilege than others.

For our purposes, **power** is “the ability to influence and make decisions that impact others.” **Privilege** is “the advantages and benefits that individuals receive because of social groups they are perceived to be a part of.” \*

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\* These definitions come from Dartmouth College's Office of Pluralism and Leadership's "Introduction to Power, Privilege, and Social Justice": <https://students.dartmouth.edu/opal/education/introduction-power-privilege-and-social-justice>.

1. Think about your society. Which of the following identity categories are most associated with power and privilege? That is, which of these categories can make a difference when it comes to things like safety, employment, access to housing and education, and political power.

- ☐ Race
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Ethnicity/Language/Culture/Tribe
- ☐ Sex and Gender Identity
- ☐ Sexual Orientation
- ☐ Ability/Disability
- ☐ Socioeconomic Status/Class
- ☐ Political Identity
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. For each of the boxes you checked, answer the following questions:

- When it comes to [identity category], the people in my society with the most power and privilege are \_\_\_\_\_.
- When it comes to [identity category], the people in my society with the least power and privilege are \_\_\_\_\_.

Identity Category	People in this category with the most power and privilege	People in this category with the least power and privilege


As you go through this toolkit and consider how to contribute to the prevention of identity-based violence in your memory space, consider first and foremost those in your society with the least power and privilege. Think also about your memory space's mission, which you'll engage with further in Exercise 4. How can you design program choices and exhibitions that will improve the situation for those who have been marginalized?



## EXERCISE 2

## WHICH RISK FACTORS ARE PRESENT?

Scholars and practitioners have identified a variety of factors that correlate with societies that are more likely to experience large-scale identity-based violence. Think about the community and the country where you live, then put a check mark next to all the boxes that describe your situation. Each risk factor will direct you to a section of this toolkit where you can learn about some strategies that memory spaces are using to respond to that risk factor.

Which of the following describes the context in which your memory space operates? *(Check all that apply)*

- ☐ It is dangerous or risky for people in my society to criticize the government or political leaders publicly. *(See "Political Context" on page 24)*
- ☐ The way a person understands the past is directly related to the identity group to which a person belongs. *(See "Social Environment" on page 24)*
- ☐ There are not really many spaces of memory or memorials at all. *(See "Social Environment" on page 24)*
- ☐ There are certain cultural practices or languages that face the direct threat of extinction. *(See "Preserving Cultures at Risk" on page 41)*
- ☐ Memory spaces are often co-opted or politicized. *(See "Reducing the Capacity of Violent Actors" on page 60)*
- ☐ Few employment and/or social opportunities for young people have led to their increased involvement in violent and/or illegal activities. *(See "Reducing the Capacity of Violent Actors" on page 60)*
- ☐ Some groups of people do not feel as though the government has their best interests at heart. *(See "State Legitimacy Deficit" on page 27)*
- ☐ High levels of corruption by government officials have led to a lack of trust in the government. *(See "State Legitimacy Deficit" on page 27)*
- ☐ Perpetrators of past crimes and human rights abuses have yet to be brought to justice or have been pardoned for their crimes. *(See "Culture of Impunity" on page 34)*

- ❑ Weapons and landmines used in past armed conflicts remain a threat to civilians. (See *“Physical Legacies of Violence”* on page 37)
- ❑ Long-standing tensions exist between various identity groups. (See *“History of Identity-Related Tensions”* on page 44)
- ❑ Groups that have suffered in the past and their descendants continue to deal with the impacts of trauma, including cultural trauma, PTSD, domestic violence, suicide, and/or other mental health issues. (See *“Past Cultural Trauma”* on page 46)
- ❑ Few economic opportunities exist for certain identity groups. (See *“Low Levels of Economic Opportunity”* on page 49)
- ❑ Some people cannot easily access basic goods and services, like education, healthcare, or cultural opportunities. (See *“Unequal Access to Resources”* on page 51)
- ❑ Certain groups of people do not associate with other groups or have limited opportunities to interact with other groups because of past and/or current conflict. (See *“Identity-Based Social Divisions”* on page 54)
- ❑ There is a growing or continued presence of hate speech toward certain groups. (See *“Presence of Dangerous Speech”* on page 58)
- ❑ Media propaganda promotes disinformation or unflattering/dangerous stereotypes about certain groups. (See *“Presence of Dangerous Speech”* on page 58)
- ❑ Human rights activists have difficulty organizing because of a lack of resources or because of state repression. (See *“Lack of Strong Civil Society”* on page 62)
- ❑ There is a rising migrant or refugee population. (See *“Demographic Pressures”* on page 65)
- ❑ Women do not have the same legal, political, or social rights as men, in law or in practice. (See *“Gender Inequality”* on page 66)
- ❑ Transgender or gender non-conforming individuals face persecution, socially or politically. (See *“Gender Inequality”* on page 66)

After going through this list, if you feel unsure about any of these risk factors in your context, take a bit of time to do some research. Speak to friends and colleagues—especially those who may belong to a marginalized group. Check some reliable sources online. You may even see where your country falls on some early warning lists. Some of that you may try include the US Holocaust Memorial Museum’s [Early Warning Project](#), Australian National [University’s Atrocity Forecasting Project](#), or Freedom House’s [Global Freedom Status Map](#).

## EXERCISE 3

## BRIDGING PAST AND FUTURE

Most memory spaces are committed to encouraging their audiences to connect the past with the present. For memory spaces to play a role in prevention, they must also be concerned with contributing to the transformation of their societies to make identity-based violence less likely in the future. But determining exactly how to accomplish this goal on a practical level can be difficult. Think about the following questions and answer them to the best of your ability to get a better idea of the role your memory space may play in making such a future real.

1. How did the violence you commemorate at your site look in the past? How did the violence impact social relationships, politics, economic conditions, and institutions?

How did the violence impact social relationships?	
How did the violence impact politics?	
How did the violence impact the economy?	
How did the violence impact institutions?	



2. How does the violence against at-risk identity groups look today? How does it manifest socially, politically, economically, and institutionally?

How does the violence impact social relationships?	
How does the violence impact politics?	
How does the violence impact the economy?	
How does the violence impact institutions?	

3. Consider your answers to questions 1 and 2 as you fill out the following grid:

- a. First, think of five concrete steps that would need to be taken to achieve a violence-free future in which no identity groups experience discrimination or harm? What would need to change in the ways that people and institutions behave? Think beyond your memory space itself, considering how all actors within your society may need to change. What would government actors need to do? What about businesses and corporations? Religious leaders? Educators? Health care workers? Ordinary people in their daily lives? List your five steps in the top rows of the middle column.
- b. Next, for each of these steps, is there anything that your memory space can do to contribute? What specific expertise does your team have that may be important for other groups to know about? Can you offer training or resources? Can you

offer a space for people to come together? List your answers in the bottom rows of the middle column.

- c. Finally, for each of these steps, which of the following roles is your team best positioned to play? Could you play more than one of these roles? List the roles you can play in the right-most column.

- ☞ Could your space be a **leader**, taking the first step to make this a reality?
- ☞ Could your space be an **ally**, playing an active supporting role to initiatives that are being led by other individuals or groups?
- ☞ Could your space be a **convener**, bringing together relevant actors and providing them with the space and tools they need to work together?
- ☞ Could your space be a **teacher**, offering knowledge and expertise that can contribute to the transformation of other stakeholders?

Steps	Actions to Take	Roles You Can Play
1	What must change?	
	What can your space contribute?	
2	What must change?	
	What can your space contribute?	

3	What must change?	
	What can your space contribute?	
4	What must change?	
	What can your space contribute?	
5	What must change?	
	What can your space contribute?	

## EXERCISE 4

### BUILDING ON YOUR MISSION

Many memory spaces, especially museums, have ambitious mission statements that include some element of prevention or human rights promotion. Often, however, memory spaces end up focusing on increasing visitor numbers and tours, assuming that their mission is being fulfilled simply by having people visit their space. Such a practice can lead to missed opportunities for prevention. This exercise asks you to reflect upon your mission statement and think about programs or initiatives that may help you better achieve the vision you've already set for yourself as an institution.

1. What is your mission statement?

2. How is your mission statement connected to protecting marginalized groups and/or preventing identity-based violence? If it is not, do you want it to be more connected to these goals?





3. Which aspects of your mission statement are you actively fulfilling? Are there areas of your mission in which you are falling short?

4. What programs, events, or exhibitions could you initiate to fulfill a part of your mission that you may be neglecting? Here, think about the risk assessment you completed in Exercise 2 and the relevant sections of this toolkit where you were directed.

## RESPONDING TO RISK

### THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  To determine how a memory space can contribute to prevention, memory spaces first need to determine how frequently and on what level they can engage with their audiences.
-  The political openness of a society, the social environment in which memory spaces operate, and the resources they have to fulfill their missions all have a huge impact on what is possible.

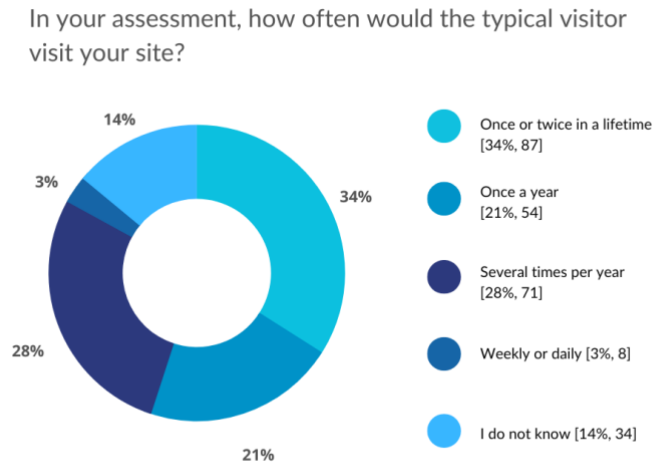
When it comes to memory spaces, context matters. To think about how memory spaces can contribute to prevention, those leading the site need to have a clear understanding of several contextual factors that will impact what is possible. Let's look at five contextual factors that can have a big impact on what a memory space is able to accomplish and how: audience, political context, social environment, resources, and accessibility.

#### AUDIENCE

It goes without saying that a memory space's audience is of primary importance if that space wants to contribute to the prevention of identity-based violence. To begin, it is essential to be honest about who your audience is—which may be different from who you want your audience to be. The visitors to a memory space are the principal point of intervention through which the memory space can have an impact outside of the space itself. How memory spaces contribute to prevention, however, depends on variables like *who* visits their spaces, *how frequently* they visit, *why* they visit, and *what* they do when they visit.

Traditionally, the “mechanism” whereby memory spaces have a preventive impact has been understood as the potential transformation that individuals undergo by visiting the space. According to this narrative, if curators and educators do their jobs well, visitors will not only learn new information through their visit, but will also be moved to change their behavior going forward

in life.<sup>11</sup> Accomplishing such a transformation, however, can be difficult depending on how and when visitors come to the memory spaces. According to the memory spaces we surveyed, most visitors to the memory spaces (56%) visit the respective spaces once per year or less. 34% of all visitors only visit the memory spaces once or twice in a lifetime. It is not impossible for a memory space to achieve such transformative change with such fleeting opportunities to engage with their audiences, but it is certainly a tall order and requires multiple strategies.



There are some memory spaces, however, that have more sustained engagement with visitors. 30% of the spaces we surveyed report that the average visitor comes at least several times per year, and 3% report that visitors come weekly or daily. Although this may be an impossible (or even undesirable) goal for some memory spaces, those that do have more sustained engagement with visitors certainly have more opportunities to produce the changes they hope to catalyze.

A number of other factors related to the audience of a memory site will affect the kind of impact a site can have. Are the visitors to your site mostly local community members or international tourists? What languages can they speak and read, and what is their level of literacy? What are their cultural norms surrounding trauma and mourning? Audience may require different approaches depending on the ways you answer these questions.

Memory spaces that want to contribute to reducing the risk for mass atrocities and other large-scale identity-based violence should be honest with themselves about their opportunities to engage with their audiences, understanding their specific needs and desires, and designing their exhibitions and programming around these realities.

<sup>11</sup> Louis Bickford, "Memoryworks/Memory Works," in *Transitional Justice, Culture, and Society: Beyond Outreach*, ed. Clara Ramírez-Barat (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2014), 491–528.

## POLITICAL CONTEXT

Memory spaces do not operate in a vacuum. The political context in which they function matters. Many of the sites that responded to our survey have at least some relationship with a government entity. For example, 42% of respondents reported that their national government plays some role in decision making at their site; in 13% of cases, the national government has full authority to approve or veto decisions made by the site. For these spaces, in particular, political context is important, though it certainly has an impact even for spaces that are not directly connected to the government.

Memory spaces operating in countries that are not democratic face particular challenges. Research tells us that countries that are not democratic already exhibit heightened risk for mass atrocities and identity-based violence when compared to democratic countries.<sup>12</sup> They are also more likely to control which narratives are permissible and which are not. For this reason, memory spaces in non-democratic contexts are often used as tools for propagating a narrative that is favorable to the current regime, even if it is not a complete or accurate representation of the past. Some memory workers at these spaces may fully support these narratives for any number of reasons. Others may privately object to them but would face dangerous consequences if they objected publicly. In such cases, memory workers are forced to walk a very delicate tightrope. Perhaps there may be room for these individuals to subtly integrate counter-narratives,<sup>13</sup> though finding ways to do so safely may be difficult.

## SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Social environment and context play important roles in how memory spaces function in any given society. For instance, not all societies with a history of large-scale identity-based violence have come to a consensus on how to understand and relate to that violent past. This is particularly the case in places that are often described as “deeply divided societies.”<sup>14</sup> In deeply divided societies, identity-based divisions define most or all aspects of the daily lives of those living within them: where people live, where they go to school, who they work with, who they talk to, and who they marry. Such divisions can have a large impact in the way memory spaces function. In fact, in such contexts, memory spaces can run of the risk of elevating the divisions, rather than improving them.

<sup>12</sup> James Waller, *Confronting Evil: Engaging Our Responsibility to Prevent Genocide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); United Nations, “Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention” (UN Office of the Special Advisers on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Scott Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Adrian Guelke, *Politics in Deeply Divided Societies* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012).

As an example, Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina are two countries that fall into this category. Generally speaking, people live, associate, and talk only with members of their own community. Relations between identity communities can be rare and, at times, hostile. Furthermore, in both societies, the conflict has a territorial component, where certain spaces or territories are perceived as “belonging” to one community or another. In situations like this, where space itself is so deeply contested, constructing a memory space can actually exacerbate tensions. This elevation of risk is even more evident when a given memory space conveys a message that is seen as “biased” or “one-sided.” In these sorts of scenarios, memory spaces like monuments, memorials, and museums may cause too much conflict to be a source of prevention. (For more, see the subsection on “Building a Narrative.”) Still, there are options in these scenarios. Creating spaces that do not represent the past but serve instead as a shared space for members of different communities to come together may be one strategy for contributing to the mitigation of risk.

In other scenarios, memory spaces may not seem as relevant as they do in other societies. For example, Morocco does not have many memorials or monuments, even to the more glorious or celebratory moments of Morocco’s past. In a society that does not celebrate its happy moments through the creation of memory spaces or museums, it may be difficult to imagine creating memory spaces for the more difficult moments.<sup>15</sup>

In different ways, these examples demonstrate how the social context plays an essential role in shaping how and if memory spaces function.

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## RESOURCES AND CAPACITY

A common thread across many of the spaces studied as part of this project is a struggle with resources and capacity. Offering the kinds of preventive programming that this toolkit advocates requires various resources in terms of money, staff, and other forms of support that some memory spaces simply do not have. For example, when asked if their site offers any form of exhibitions or programming intended to reduce the likelihood of discrimination or violence against an identity group in the present, 25.4% of respondents said that they do not. When asked why they do not, 46.8% of responses referenced either a lack of capacity or money.

Many spaces continue to develop creative solutions to accomplish their work, despite a lack of resources or support. But governments and other funding entities would be wise to take seriously the good that could come from supporting such initiatives in a more intentional way. In the meantime, many of the examples featured in this toolkit come from sites that are doing incredible

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<sup>15</sup> This observation comes directly from a conversation with Abdelhay Moudden, former commissioner on Morocco’s Equity and Reconciliation Commission.







work with very few resources, which demonstrate that, even when limited resources are a reality, it need not be an excuse for not doing the work.

## ACCESSIBILITY






A final contextual factor that impacts the work of memory spaces is their accessibility. Some sites, and particularly former killing sites that have been transformed into memory spaces, are located in remote areas that are difficult to access. The Bisesero Genocide Memorial, a compelling memory space in Rwanda, is located in an area with poor roads that require four-wheel drive vehicles to access. In Morocco, there are supposed plans to transform the notorious clandestine prison Tazmamart into a memory space, but Tazmamart sits in the middle of one of the least developed areas of the country—a roughly five-hour drive from the closest major city. Spending time and resources to transform this site may be meaningful to some, but it is unlikely that it will welcome many visitors. Even the Museo Sitio de Memoria-ESMA, the largest memory site in Buenos Aires, Argentina, which is located at the edge of the capital city, has a difficult time finding funding to hire school buses to bring school children to the site. If memory spaces exist, but are not visited, there is little that they can contribute to the work of atrocity prevention. For this reason, considering how memory spaces can increase access to their programming is a pressing concern.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

-  Who is your audience? Are they mostly locals or visitors from abroad? How familiar are they with the violence you commemorate? Which languages do they speak? What are their literacy levels? Do they visit once in a lifetime or once in a month? Based on your answers to these questions, how is your memory space serving the specific needs of your audience?
-  How open is your political environment? If it is closed, are there ways of creating an open space that does not put you, your team, or your visitors in danger? Where are the limits and how close to those limits are you willing to go?
-  How divided is your society? How willing are people to speak to those who are different than they are? How can the programs you offer at your memory space help to promote cohesion, rather than increase division?
-  How accessible is your space? Is there a way to make it more accessible so that it benefits a larger audience? If not, are there ways of doing more with the audience you currently attract?

## GOVERNANCE RISK FACTORS

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  The creation of memory spaces can be a tool in rebuilding trust between the government and the people.
-  Memory spaces can serve as a form of acknowledgement—a first step in repairing the harm done to a formerly targeted group.
-  Transforming former sites of violence into sites of memory—or even into new state institutions—can symbolically mark a change from the past, the re-establishment of the rule of law, and a commitment to build a more inclusive future.
-  Designing beautiful memory spaces can be powerful, but if people do not visit, they are unlikely to have an impact when it comes to prevention.
-  Governments can also build trust through supporting memory spaces that are administered by civil society groups.

The first category of risk factors to which memory spaces can respond relate to how a society is governed and the way that people relate to government structures. At first thought, it may not seem as though memory spaces have much to contribute when it comes to governance-related risk factors. How can a memory space impact the structures of government? But if we look a little deeper, there are some ways that memory spaces can positively respond to some of these risk factors.

### STATE LEGITIMACY DEFICIT

Many risk factors related to governance fall outside of the purview of memory spaces, but they may play a big role in mitigating one factor in particular. A state legitimacy deficit occurs when members of a society do not trust the government to act justly and to have their best interests at heart. In some cases, high levels of corruption may be at the core of a state legitimacy deficit: when a government succumbs to corruption or is seen as corrupt, it becomes difficult for the population to trust it. Other times, the levels of trust one has in the government may depend on which identity

groups they belong to, as the government is seen to favor certain groups and discount others.<sup>16</sup> It is in this latter case where memory spaces have a role to play.

In the aftermath of large-scale, identity-based violence, high levels of distrust in the government are typically present, especially in the groups of people who were directly targeted by violence. Oftentimes, the state itself was the perpetrator of this violence. To mitigate this risk factor, the new, post-atrocity government must reestablish the rule of law and show the groups of people who were marginalized in the past that they can now trust that their rights will be respected and protected equally. Rebuilding trust in such an environment is difficult, to say the least.

Memory spaces are one tool that governments can use to rebuild trust. First and foremost, when the government establishes or permits the establishment of an official memory space, it serves as an act of acknowledgement—the first step in a longer process of repairing the harms that have been done to victimized groups. Second, governments can signal systemic change by transforming certain spaces into memory sites, thus symbolically marking a return of the rule of law and a new age for groups that have formerly been targeted. Let's look at a few examples of this.



Former prison facilities at Constitutional Hill. Photo by flowcomm. Licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

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<sup>16</sup> Waller, *Confronting Evil*.

[Constitution Hill](#) is a memory space in Johannesburg, South Africa. During Apartheid, the site was a prison complex that housed anti-establishment activists and, later, those who violated the laws of Apartheid, which strictly regulated the rights of all individuals based on the racial category the regime put them in. Some of the most well-known prisoners at the site included Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi.

When Apartheid ended in 1994, the prison grounds were transformed into Constitution Hill. The prison cells were converted into a memory site and museum, opened to educate visitors about the crimes of the Apartheid system and the torturous conditions under which prisoners existed within these walls. Most importantly, however, Constitution Hill became the site of the country's new [Constitutional Court](#), which determines the constitutionality of all laws and policies in the new democratic South Africa.

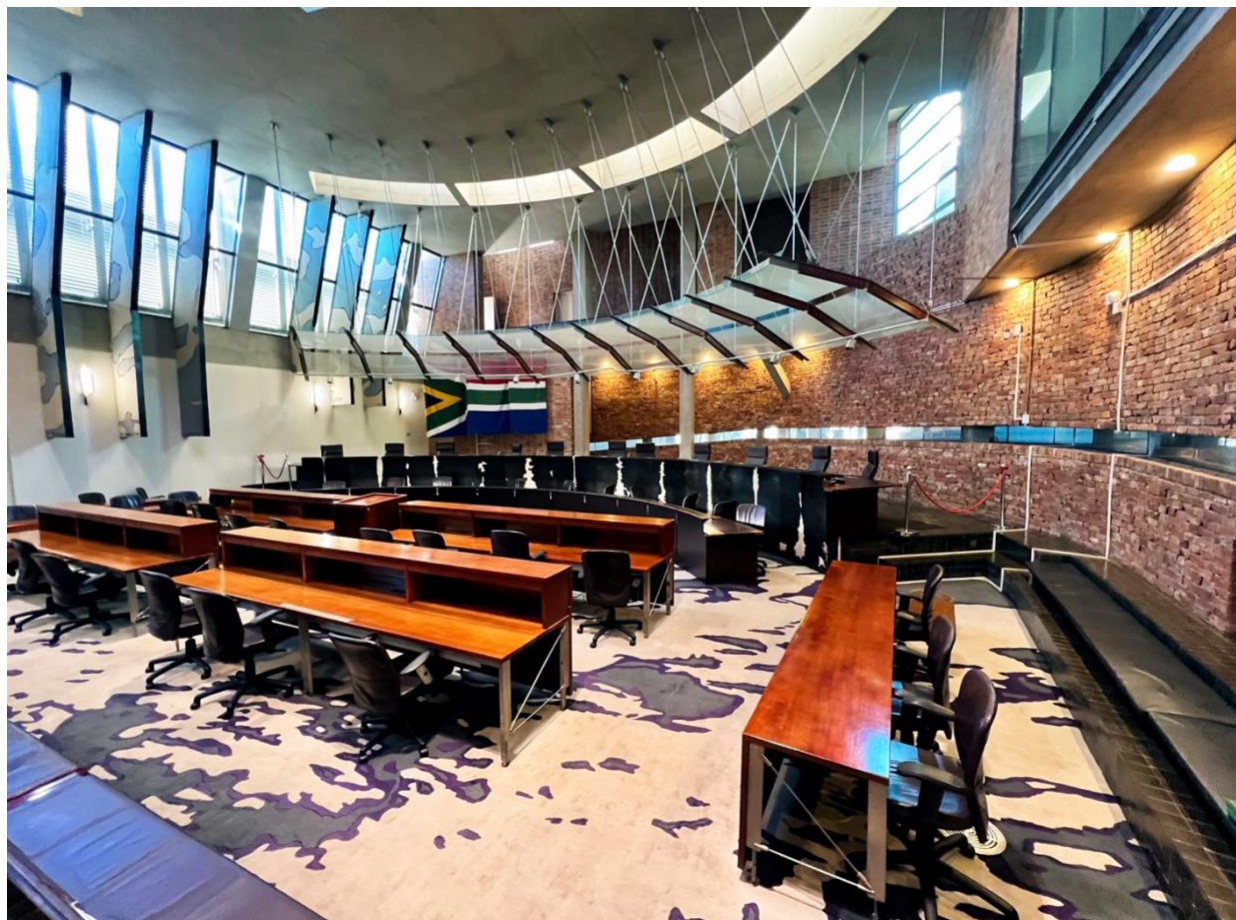


*Facade of South Africa's Constitutional Court, with its name written in the 11 official languages of South Africa. Photo by Ashraf Hendricks. Licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).*

The court building itself is full of symbolic elements to mark the transition from Apartheid to democracy. For instance, the facade of the court is adorned with its name in all 11 official languages of South Africa, 9 of which are Indigenous languages. The lobby, which includes an art exhibition, is designed to look like a glade of trees, with tree-like columns stretching above to the tall ceiling, representing the traditional concept of “justice under a tree.” The Court is open to the public; any individual is welcome to enter and witness the cases being heard in its chamber. The



symbolic power of transforming a closed site that was formerly designed to imprison those who fought for human rights into an open space where those rights are protected cannot be understated. Such an initiative demonstrates how memory spaces can play a role in reducing the state legitimacy deficit that exists in the aftermath of long-term identity-based violence.



*Interior of Constitutional Court. Photo by Kerry Whigham.*

In addition to the symbolic power of opening the space, however, the team at Constitution Hill is also consistently working to expand its programming and, consequently, its impact. The oldest part of the complex—the ramparts of an old, white fortress that resides at the top of the hill—has now become a space for human rights education and promotion across all sectors of society. According to Lauren Segal, the curator of the space, they are now designing programming that targets the “six C’s” of any society: 1) cradle (infants and parents), 2) primary school children, 3) secondary school children, 4) civil society and unions, 5) creatives, and 6) corporations. The ramparts now house a music recording studio, a restaurant and gathering space, and a training facility so that all these communities can be served. By creating programming and spaces aimed to bring in the whole of society, Constitution Hill is working toward building a more inclusive society predicated on trust and openness.



Building memory spaces that contribute to building trust in the government is not easy, however. In order for memory spaces to reduce a state legitimacy deficit, there are a few guiding principles that should be followed. For a state-led space to build trust, civil society must be involved. When governments establish memory spaces without consulting with civil society, they can easily be seen as biased, denialist, or outright tools for propaganda. For example, the Colombian government is working to establish the [Museo de Memoria de Colombia](#) (Museum of Memory of Colombia) to memorialize and educate about the decades of armed conflict in Colombia. When former president Iván Duque (2018-2022) appointed as the head of this project a man seen by victim groups as a denier of atrocity crimes, however, many civil society groups severed ties with this institution, even requesting the return of archival materials for fear that they would be destroyed. Under the new presidency of Gustavo Petro, which started in August 2022, the government is working to rebuild these relationships. If a memory space is to build trust, it must develop meaningful relationships with civil society groups, and most especially those groups representing the people most directly affected by past violence. Not doing so risks increasing the state legitimacy deficit, rather than decreasing it.

In some cases, governments spend a great deal of resources in the creation of stunning memory spaces, but if these spaces remain largely empty of people and programs, it may be all for naught. Beautiful, symbolic spaces are powerful, but only when they are actively used. As an example, [Freedom Park](#) in Pretoria, South Africa, is a massive complex that includes a museum to the history of violence that has shaped South Africa (including colonization, slavery, war, and Apartheid) and a large and thoughtfully designed public park and memorial. Former President Thabo Mbeki made the construction of Freedom Park the cornerstone memory project to emerge in the aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The museum exhibition is state-of-the-art, engaging with immersive and interactive museum technologies, particularly in its earlier sections. The memorial park is remarkable, in that it has largely eschewed global norms in memorialization,<sup>17</sup> relying much more on local South African imagery to create a memory space that is deeply tied to nature and the hilltop on which it is constructed.

Nevertheless, although the complex is impressive and filled with potential, it seems largely unused. Our group spent around four hours at the site and never encountered a single other visitor. A college professor we spoke with brings her students to the site but has to pay for them out of her own pocket to do so, as the site does not offer a subsidized rate for student visitors. Additionally, few people seem to know where the park is or that it exists at all, which may be due to a failure in public outreach. As such, Freedom Park seems to be a site with a great deal of potential that is not being fully utilized—a fact that is especially disappointing given the amount of money spent to construct the site. (For more, see above sections on “Audience” and “Accessibility.”)

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<sup>17</sup> James E. Young, *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018).



*Isivivane at Freedom Park, a memorial featuring nine rocks, each from the different provinces of South Africa. Photo by Kerry Whigham.*

The design and creation of beautiful memory spaces can certainly contribute to engaging the past to transform the present. To fulfill that potential, however, equal attention must be paid to the continued management of the sites, the programming they offer, and outreach to communities to make sure that people benefit from them. For state-led memory spaces to contribute to rebuilding trust in governance structures, it is not enough for them simply to exist. They must also be living spaces that people visit.

Finally, it is essential to remember that the government does not have to build every memory space for it to contribute to the mitigation of a state legitimacy deficit. They can also provide resources to local spaces. Many of the examples in this section illustrate memory spaces that have been constructed by the national government, at least partly to acknowledge past wrongs and rebuild trust. But building a fully state-run space is not the only way to confront this legitimacy deficit. Governments at both the national and local levels can also build trust by offering support and resources to smaller, civil society-led memory spaces.



*Youth for Peace paints a commemorative mural at the Kraing Ta Chan killing site. Photo courtesy of Youth for Peace.*

[Youth for Peace](#), a Cambodian NGO that works on memory and human rights education for young people, has developed an interesting relationship with local governments across Cambodia, whereby they petition these entities to administer various killing sites from the Khmer Rouge period of the 1970s. As managers of the site, the NGO transforms the spaces into community education centers for local youth. They now maintain five sites across the country. Each site now has a “community peace learning center,” which offers various programs. Young leaders receive training on peacebuilding and human rights, and local children can come to get additional assistance with schoolwork and access computers and the library. Through initiatives like this, the government can build trust through supporting local actors, rather than only funding government-led initiatives.

When the government does offer support, however, it is important that this be a lasting and sustainable commitment. For many years, Argentina was at the forefront of a strong, national, holistic approach to transitional justice, with a focus on truth, justice, and memory. That process was traditionally led by a vibrant set of civil society organizations. Increasingly, however, the demands of civil society (and many civil society actors themselves) have been subsumed within state structures. In many cases, the institutionalization of civil society’s demands for dealing with the past seems like exactly what many activists would want. Present-day Argentina offers a different picture, however. At this point, memory initiatives and narratives have become so institutionalized that they have stagnated. The state has assumed control of many of the best



known memory sites, putting them under [government direction](#), but without the benefits of healthy funding. The result at the national level has been a decrease in creativity and vision; at the local level of the memory spaces themselves, it has resulted in a constrained management structure that does not allow these spaces the freedom to program and run their sites as they wish. In situations like this, for memory spaces to contribute to building trust, the national government should allow spaces the freedom to develop creative, responsive programming...even if that means less control for and increased criticism of the state and its agenda. Finding the proper balance between institutionalization and a free and expressive civil society is key to a vibrant memory culture.

## CULTURE OF IMPUNITY



A student group visiting Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Photo by Kerry Whigham.

A second governance-related risk factor for mass atrocity crimes is impunity for past violations. Societies with a culture of impunity—that is, societies that do not hold accountable perpetrators of past crimes—face elevated risk for recurrence.<sup>18</sup> Certain memory spaces, and in particular those memory sites that reside in former sites of violence, are playing an active role in justice proceedings in their given contexts.

The former secret prison Tuol Sleng in Cambodia preserved photo and written documentation of the crimes committed within its walls during the reign of the Khmer Rouge. These photos of victims and the forced confessions they were made to write all served as evidence when Comrade Duch, the former leader of Tuol Sleng, was brought before the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), where he was convicted of crimes against humanity and war crimes. Today, this evidence is on display to the public who visits Tuol Sleng.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations, “Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes.”






Entrance to Museo Sitio de Memoria ESMA, featuring the images of individuals disappeared and tortured in this space during the military dictatorship of 1976-83. Photo courtesy of Museo Sitio de Memoria ESMA.

Similarly, the seven memory spaces under national management in Argentina are all serving dual purposes. First, they are former clandestine detention centers where hundreds or thousands of individuals were imprisoned, tortured, and killed during the military dictatorship of 1976-83, that have now been transformed into memory sites with a mission to educate the public about the crimes that occurred there. Second, they serve as crucial physical evidence in the ongoing trials against the perpetrators who committed crimes in these facilities. When someone visits, for example, the [Museo Sitio de Memoria ESMA](#) (The Memory Site Museum ESMA), the largest former clandestine detention center, they are reminded by tour guides and by the exhibition that the site must be preserved as evidence for these trials. By highlighting the active role that the site is playing in judicial proceedings, the memory space is both contributing to the end of impunity for past human rights abuses and educating the public about the role that transitional justice measures are playing to redress past harms and prevent future ones. (For more, see Memory in Complementary with TJ on page x.)






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## GUIDING QUESTIONS

-  Do people generally trust their government in your society? How do victim groups relate to the government?
-  If your space is affiliated in some way with the government, is there potential to improve trust between the government and your audience? If your space is unaffiliated with the government, is there any potential for collaboration with the government as a means of restoring trust?
-  How does your site engage with the idea of justice—both justice for perpetrators and restorative forms of justice for victims?

## CONFLICT HISTORY RISK FACTORS

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  Memory spaces are well positioned to engage with the legacies of past conflict in all its forms: physical, psychological, and social.
-  Memory spaces can be community hubs for bringing together groups of people who have been separated by deep divisions within a society.
-  Understanding and confronting the individual and collective trauma that groups experience because of atrocity violence is key in preventing the recurrence of such violence.

One factor that most risk assessment models agree places a society at elevated risk for atrocity violence is a recent history of genocide, politicide, or other large-scale, identity-based violence.<sup>19</sup> But it is important to emphasize that having a history of atrocity does not doom a society to experience recurrence. Rather, when violence recurs, it is often because post-atrocity societies have not adequately addressed the factors that contributed to the violence to begin with. Because memory spaces exist to acknowledge and deal with a painful past, they offer a special opportunity to address the legacies and root causes of past violence in the present.

### PHYSICAL LEGACIES OF VIOLENCE

Sometimes, the legacies of past conflict are not only structural and social in nature; they can be physical. The ousting of the Khmer Rouge dictatorship in 1979 and the years of civil war that followed it left literally millions of unexploded landmines spread across Cambodia. According to the demining NGO the [Halo Trust](#), these landmines have led to [over 64,000 casualties](#). More than 40,000 Cambodians are now amputees because of landmines, giving Cambodia the [highest ratio](#)

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin E. Goldsmith et al., "Forecasting the Onset of Genocide and Politicide: Annual Out-of-Sample Forecasts on a Global Dataset, 1988-2003," *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 4 (2013): 437–52; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Early Warning Project — United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," accessed December 7, 2020, <https://www.ushmm.org/https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/-genocide/how-to-prevent-genocide/early-warning-project>; Waller, *Confronting Evil*; Barbara Harff, "Assessing Risk of Genocide and Politicide," in *Peace and Conflict: A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy*, ed. Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr (College Park: University of Maryland Press, 2005), 57–61.

[of amputees per capita in the world](#). In this case, the physical remnants of past conflict continue to have a very real impact on the present.



One of APOPO's "hero rats." Photo by Stephanie Wright.

Considering this reality, two spaces in Cambodia are at once marking the violence of the past and working to eliminate this risk in the present. [APOPO](#) is a Belgian NGO that uses a particularly skilled species of rat to detect and disarm landmines. APOPO has a physical visitor center in the busy tourist hub of Siem Reap, where they introduce visitors to their organization, discuss the history of landmines in the country, and then allow visitors to meet and engage with their "hero rats." The end of the guided tour also informs visitors about other countries in the world that suffer from landmines. There is an admission fee for the tour, the proceeds of which fund APOPO's work. The APOPO Visitor Center is a wonderful example of a memory space that does preventive work without necessarily seeking long-term engagement with visitors.

Each visit generates funds to do the preventive work of demining, but it also presents an opportunity to build a global constituency of more informed individuals devoted to the issue.





*Cambodian Landmine Museum. Photo by Kerry Whigham*

Not far away, the [Cambodian Landmine Museum](#) (CLM) is a local counterpart to the international APOPO Visitor Center. Started by former Khmer Rouge child soldier Aki Ra, who later left the Khmer Rouge to work with the United Nations' Mine Action Service, the CLM focuses on the legacies of conflict in Cambodia, with a focus on demining. The museum is outfitted with thousands of decommissioned landmines that the founder and his team have uncovered throughout the years. But its exhibition also discusses other facets of the CLM, for example, its initiative to provide homes for many child victims of landmines. The CLM is geographically difficult to access and is mostly designed for tourists, rather than locals, as most of the exhibition is in English only. But, like the APOPO Visitor Center, it demonstrates how local museums can simultaneously raise money for the preventive work of demining and educate a new generation of demining advocates in the process. Furthermore, through their associated NGO, Cambodia Self-Help Demining, the CLM works with rural communities to teach them how to recognize undetonated landmines and who to contact to have them removed.



*A passageway in Fragmentos, built around the ruins of a 17<sup>th</sup> century colonial building. Photo by Kerry Whigham.*



*One exhibition space in Fragmentos, where visitors play an interactive game while sitting on tiles made from the melted down weapons of decades of armed conflict. Photo by Kerry Whigham.*

Colombia provides another example of a memory space constructed as part of the process of dealing with the physical legacies of conflict—in this case, the massive store of weapons taken from guerilla fighters during the state’s [demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration \(DDR\)](#) processes. [Fragmentos](#) is an exhibition and meeting space in the city center of Bogotá conceived by renowned Colombian artist Doris Salcedo and built as part of the DDR processes detailed in the 2016 Peace Accords between the Colombian government and the FARC paramilitary group. The space consists of three large rooms, which are currently used primarily for art exhibitions. The foundations and floors of the entire complex are constructed from metal tiles forged from the melted down guns collected from the FARC during the DDR process. In this way, this countermonument (as Salcedo calls it) is literally built from the detritus of the armed conflict. Moreover, the molds for the floor tiles were crafted by women who were victims of rape and sexual assault by soldiers and guerilla fighters—a beautiful example of directly involving affected groups in the very construction of the memory space.

The space and the story of its creation are impressive examples of how memory spaces can be created through the physical remnants of war. Similarly, it is a fantastic example of a memory space emerging in complementarity with other transitional justice processes. Unfortunately, the symbolic power of the space is mitigated somewhat by low levels of engagement. According to the interviews we conducted in the space, the site is not frequently visited, receiving on average around 100 visitors per day on weekends and around 30-50 on weekdays. According to a tour guide with whom we spoke, most visitors are university students, foreign tourists, and people involved in the peace process. The space opened in 2018, and use of the space was stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. That said, although Salcedo speaks about designing the space to be a meeting place to discuss the conflicted memories of the armed conflict, it is managed by the national art museum of Colombia and is thus used primarily as an art exhibition space. There seems to be a great deal of potential in this space. The “power of place” is strong, given the symbolism of its construction.<sup>20</sup> To date, however, it does not seem to be used to its full potential as a convening space for dialogue and peacebuilding.

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## PRESERVING CULTURES AT RISK

When Raphael Lemkin coined the word “genocide,” he specified that it refers not only to a group’s physical destruction through murder. Groups can also be destroyed through the destruction of culture and language.<sup>21</sup> Because of this, when dealing with histories of identity-based conflict, it is essential to address the harms caused by physical destruction, but also those that result from the destruction of cultures. Several memory spaces have developed programming specifically

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<sup>20</sup> Waller, *Confronting Evil*.

<sup>21</sup> Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, Second Edition (Clark, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2008).



designed to preserve and protect cultures that are at risk of extinction because of past and present violence.

Among the people most at risk for genocide in the past and today are the world's 5,000+ Indigenous groups. [According to the UN](#), 90 countries around the world have Indigenous populations, who, due to ever-increasing development and cultural assimilation processes, face the threat of cultural and physical destruction on a daily basis. In light of this reality, the [Bophana Audiovisual Arts Center](#) in Cambodia developed a program called [Visualizing the Mekong: Stimulating Youth's Participation and Engagement through Documentary Films](#).



*The project team meets with leaders of the Casa de los Hombres y las Mujeres de Triana in Colombia. Photo by Kerry Whigham.*

Each year, the Center selects a cohort of Indigenous youth from the Mekong River region and trains them in all the components of documentary filmmaking, including cinematography, editing, sound recording and directing. Each young person is given the resources to make a documentary film about their own Indigenous culture, documented in their Indigenous language. The filmmakers are then tasked with transcribing their films, often transliterating their Indigenous tongue into writing for the first time. They then translate the films into Khmer and English so that they can be shown in an annual film festival. In this way, this program not only amplifies Indigenous voices, making them present in the public sphere in a way they are normally not, but it also preserves the Indigenous languages and cultures that are at risk of destruction.

In the small Afro-Colombian village of Triana in Colombia's Valle de Cauca, the women of the [Casa de los Hombres y las Mujeres de Triana](#) (House of the Men and Women of Triana) host the Universidad Intercultural de los Pueblos (Intercultural University of the Peoples). Community members gather at the Casa de los Hombres y las Mujeres to learn about traditional Indigenous and Afro-Colombian cultural practices, including traditional medicine and handicrafts. This program contributes both to community resilience by bringing people together to work for shared goals and to the preservation and proliferation of cultural practices that are disappearing.



*A shadow puppet show produced by Cambodia Living Arts. Photo by Austin Adventures, Inc. Licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).*

Of course, not only Indigenous cultures can be threatened by cultural destruction. For example, in Cambodia in the 1970s, the Khmer Rouge made it part of its genocidal project to eliminate all traditional Cambodian artistic practices, like dance and music, in order to create their new order. As a result of this violence and the subsequent years of civil war that engulfed the country, many of these practices were nearly lost as an entire generation was unable to learn them. Enter [Cambodia Living Arts](#), a memory organization focused on the preservation and restoration of artistic culture in Cambodia. The organization began by supporting artistic masters in teaching the younger generations of Cambodians their crafts. Today, Cambodia Living Arts promotes more contemporary artistic expressions, as well, helping young Cambodian artists grow in their respective fields.

If we understand genocide as more than just physical destruction, but also the annihilation of groups through the elimination of cultural practices, then we can see each of these examples as a clear case of prevention in action.



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## HISTORY OF IDENTITY-RELATED TENSIONS

Particularly in deeply divided societies, the identity-based divisions that suffuse all aspects of daily life are rooted in historical conflict or histories of identity-related tensions.<sup>22</sup> Understanding the root causes of these historical tensions and the ways in which they continue to manifest in the present can be key steps in dismantling them.



*Corrymeela Community in Ballycastle. Photo by Kerry Whigham.*

Northern Ireland is a country that has long been marked by identity-related tensions between the roughly half of the population that wishes to unite with the Republic of Ireland and the other half that desires to remain a part of the United Kingdom. Depending on where a person falls on this spectrum can determine where one lives, works, goes to school, and basically every other aspect of one's life. In the face of this extreme division, [Corrymeela](#) was founded to address these tensions and create a more peaceful and reconciled society in the present. The organization, which

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<sup>22</sup> Waller, *Confronting Evil*.

has an office in Belfast and a site in the town of Ballycastle on the northern coast, builds its work around four issues: sectarianism, marginalization, legacies of conflict, and public theology. Importantly, their [marginalization](#) work focuses not only on the communities that are typically the focus of peacebuilding work in Northern Ireland but also on the promotion of rights for refugees, asylum seekers, and other voices that are unheard because they are not part of the central conflict.



*Dunluce Castle, one of the sites visited as part of Corrymeela's Our Places, Our Pasts, Our Perspectives program. Photo by Kerry Whigham.*

As mentioned earlier in the section on Social Environment, the conflict in Northern Ireland is essentially a territorial one. For this reason, building public memory spaces can often heighten tensions because most public space is connected to sectarian divisions. In response, Corrymeela developed a program that deals directly with how to transform the way that public space and public heritage are used to sustain divisions. The program—entitled [Our Places, Our Pasts, Our Perspectives](#)—brings together community groups responsible for maintaining or managing public heritage spaces across the country. In the first phase of the program, participants were invited on a tour of heritage sites across the country, all of which were in some way tied to histories of conflict. At each site participants (who represented both principal communities in Northern Ireland) discussed their own perspectives about the site and also heard the perspectives of others. Experts then compared these personal perspectives with historical and archaeological evidence to



reveal the complexity behind each site. In the second phase of the project, the participants worked together over a six-month period on a heritage practice course, which offered tools and strategies for developing and managing heritage sites in a way that can contribute to peacebuilding and unity rather than stoking sectarian divisions. Subsequently, these community leaders would go forward not only with a new commitment to use public space to reduce identity-based tensions, but also with the tools and resources to do just that.

## PAST CULTURAL TRAUMA

Trauma is present in multiple ways in post-atrocity societies. There is the individual psychological trauma, which victims can face after having experienced or witnessed violence and which can be passed down through subsequent generations.<sup>23</sup> In addition to the psychological impacts that this trauma can have, it can also have ramifications on the physical health of traumatized people.<sup>24</sup> But there is also the cultural trauma that entire groups



A memorial quilt to innocent victims, created by the South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF). Courtesy of SEFF.

can experience based on histories of identity-based violence. Cultural trauma can shape relationships among groups and even reinforce dangerous social hierarchies.<sup>25</sup> When cultural or collective trauma remains unaddressed, it can contribute to grievances among groups, and may even trigger actions or policies meant to exact revenge.<sup>26</sup> For these reasons, it is important for societies to attend both to individual and cultural trauma in the work of prevention.

As memory spaces are directly concerned with commemorating a traumatic past, they are especially well positioned to do this work.

<sup>23</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 1995th ed. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Avril Alba, "Set in Stone? The Intergenerational and Institutional Transmission of Holocaust Memory," in *Remembering Genocide*, ed. Nigel Eltringham and Pam Maclean (New York: Routledge, 2014), 92–111.

<sup>24</sup> JP Gone et al., "The Impact of Historical Trauma on Health Outcomes for Indigenous Populations in the USA and Canada: A Systematic Review," *American Psychologist* 74, no. 1 (2019): 20–35.

<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1–30; Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Waller, *Confronting Evil*.

In Fermanagh County of Northern Ireland, the [South East Fermanagh Foundation \(SEFF\)](#) was established to honor and serve the “innocent victims” of “the Troubles”—that is, those who died or lost loved ones, but were not actively involved in armed conflict. Among their various programs, SEFF offers broad-based support services for direct and indirect victims, including counseling, peer support groups, and other health and wellbeing services, including reflexology and aromatherapy. This range of offerings opens the door for many people who would not otherwise engage in therapy to address underlying trauma and find solutions for healing in their daily lives.







Visitors at the District Six Museum in Cape Town. Photo by Kerry Whigham.

In Cape Town, South Africa, the community founders of the [District Six Museum](#)—a space that tells the story of the forced expulsion of the residents of Cape Town’s District Six neighborhood during the Apartheid regime—started the [Seven Steps Club](#), named for a hub of social life in pre-removal District Six. The Seven Steps Club is a space for former residents of District Six to come together and rebuild the community that was lost by forced displacement. The roughly 800 members are invited to meet monthly, when they not only reminisce about the past, but develop initiatives to deal with current issues. For example, in the wake of the [“Rhodes Must Fall”](#) movement, the District Six Museum became a hub for younger South African activists seeking projects and programs to transform modern South Africa. In the process, they have now teamed up with Seven Steps Club members,

creating transgenerational alliances for contemporary activism and new commitments in the younger generations to carry on the work of the aging Seven Steps Club members.

As both examples demonstrate, responding to trauma can be an important process in its own right, but it also opens the door to deal with other contemporary issues in the process. Confronting past cultural trauma, then, can be directly related with mitigating other risk factors, as well.




## GUIDING QUESTIONS

-  What are the legacies of violent conflict that still exist in your society? Are they physical in nature? Structural? Psychological? Social? Which of these legacies is your memory space best positioned to address?
-  Are there certain languages, cultural practices, or rituals that are endangered in your society? Are there any programs or projects your space could implement to help preserve and protect these cultural practices?
-  Are people in your society divided based on which social identity categories they belong to? Could your memory space provide a means for bringing these groups together to promote cohesion and a bridging of divides? What actions could you take to make interactions between divided groups less volatile or less hostile?
-  How are people in your society impacted by past violence? Do they experience psychological trauma? Physical ailments? Cultural trauma? What are ways that your site can provide resources to affected communities to improve this situation?



## ECONOMIC CONDITION RISK FACTORS

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  The economic legacies of past violence are often the most enduring and most difficult to transform in a post-atrocity context.
-  Even with few resources, memory spaces can respond to economic risk factors by providing opportunities for marginalized groups and working to close gaps in terms of access to resources and services.
-  Through training and education, memory spaces can help connect under-resourced communities with resources that exist but that they may not know about or to which they do not have access.

Atrocity risk factors related to economic conditions are some of the most under-researched components of atrocity prevention.<sup>27</sup> Many of these risk factors have to do with the larger macroeconomic environment, and it is unlikely that a memory space could have an economic impact on that scale. Still, the economic aspects of identity-based violence can be devastating, and they often remain unaddressed. Groups that have, in the past, been targeted because of their identity many times continue to experience broad economic hardships relative to other groups.<sup>28</sup> Certain memory spaces are working to mitigate the risk factors related to economic disparities that lead to low levels of economic opportunity.

### LOW LEVELS OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

The [Casa de los Hombres y las Mujeres de Triana](#) (House of the Men and Women of Triana) in the small village of Triana in Colombia offers one example of a memory space responding to economic risk factors. Triana is a mostly Afro-Colombian community that suffered immensely from guerilla violence during the armed conflict. Today, the inhabitants of this village live in relative poverty with little economic opportunity. In response, the leaders of the Casa de los Hombres y las Mujeres began offering training workshops for local women on how to make various handicrafts that they can sell at markets in neighboring towns. These workshops not only provide economic opportunity

<sup>27</sup> Charles Anderton and Jurgen Brauer, eds., *Economic Aspects of Genocides, Other Mass Atrocities, and Their Prevention* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> Paul Gready and Simon Robins, "From Transitional to Transformative Justice: A New Agenda for Practice," in *From Transitional to Transformative Justice*, ed. Paul Gready and Simon Robins (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 31–56.

and an occupation to participants. They also serve as a space for building community and collectively processing local problems, along with a method for preserving cultural practices.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, the [Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum](#) (LMLM), which is located in the township of Lwandle about an hour's drive from Cape Town, South Africa, is also addressing economic risks. The LMLM was established to tell the story of Lwandle, which began as a series of hostels for Black migrant workers during Apartheid. In the 1980s the workers started bringing their families with them, and Lwandle expanded as they built makeshift housing around the hostels. Today, Lwandle has around 20,000 residents, all within an area of 1.2 square kilometers—a population density one-and-a-half times greater than New York City. Many of these residents live below the poverty line, with little economic opportunity.



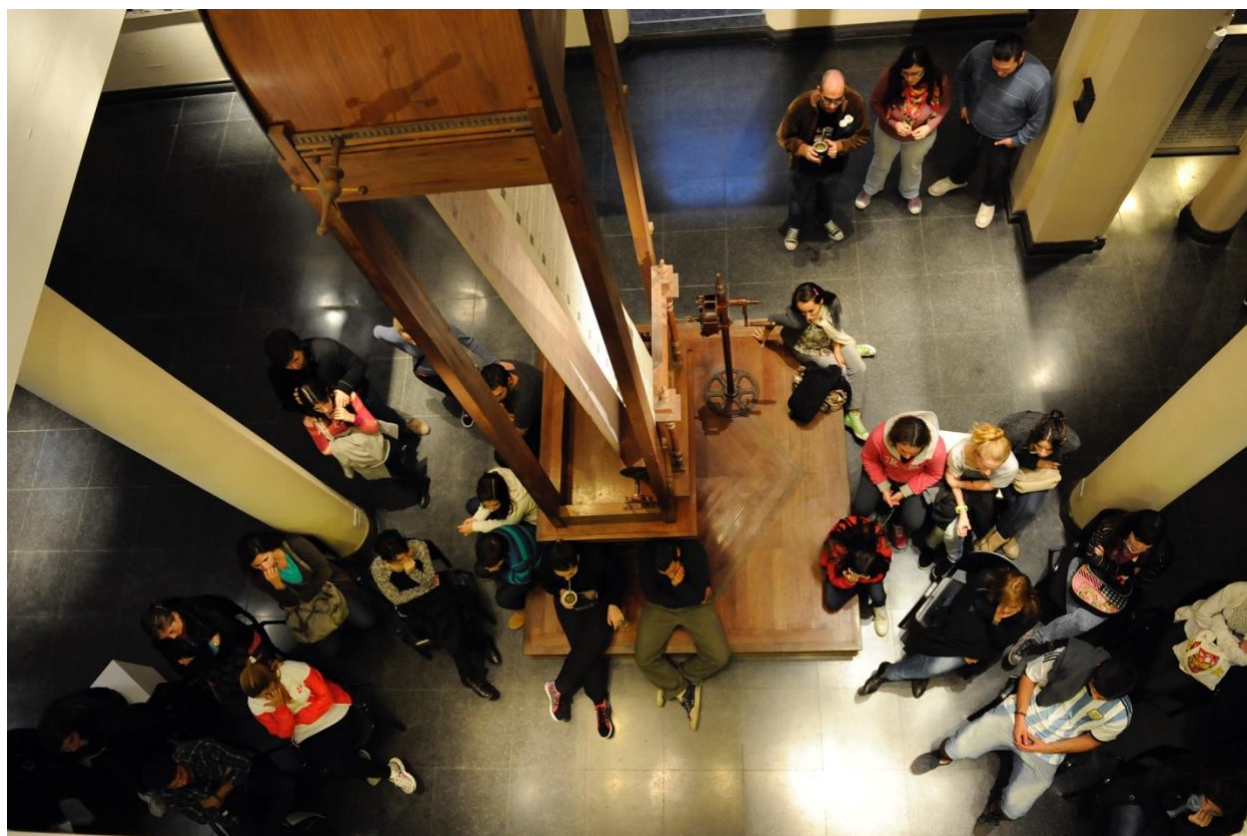
*The main exhibition of the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum outside of Cape Town. Photo by Kerry Whigham.*

Consequently, the LMLM developed several programs. For some time, locals would go to the local library to print resumes to take to job interviews, but they would often find the printer broken. As a result, they came to the neighboring LMLM to use their printer. Now, the LMLM is more than a hub for getting one's resume printed. The site has started to offer career development services and workshops to help people improve their resumes, better their interviewing skills, and find job opportunities. Additionally, like the Casa de los Hombres y las Mujeres in Triana, the LMLM offers workshops on making traditional handicrafts, including crocheting and beadwork. The workshops

convene twice a week for several months, and at the end of the period, there is a showcase for the entire community where participants can sell their wares. These workshops have become so popular that there is a long list to join. They have become a mode both for responding to economic hardship and for empowering local women.

## UNEQUAL ACCESS TO RESOURCES

One economic risk factor that is also deeply tied to issues of identity relates to an unequal access to basic goods and services. Often groups who have faced persecution in the past continue to experience relative inequality when it comes to accessing resources like food, water, education, health services, and cultural programming. Some memory spaces play a role in addressing these disparities, making specific efforts to improve access for communities that have otherwise been ignored.





*A group of young people visiting the Museo de la Memoria in Rosario. Photo courtesy of Museo de la Memoria de Rosario.*

One example comes from the [Museo de la Memoria](#) (Museum of Memory) in Rosario, Argentina. While the museum itself is located in the city center of Rosario, which is the third largest city in Argentina, those who live on the periphery of the city are rarely able to access the museum due to financial constraints and lack of access to easy and affordable transportation. In response, the

museum developed its department of [Territorial Outreach](#) (Articulación Territorial), which is designed to engage communities, and most especially young people, who live at the edges of the metropolitan area and have much less access to resources than those in the city center.

Their programming focuses on human rights education, using the story of the past to talk about continuing issues in the present. In this program, young people (late teens and early twenties) are first brought to the museum to learn about the history of state violence in Argentina. They are then asked to think about what state violence looks like today. The museum trains them on understanding human rights and identifying violations. The youth are then sent back to their communities to conduct surveys of community members of human rights violations they have experienced. In addition to documenting these violations, however, the young people are subsequently trained to connect the members of their communities with the proper resources to file complaints for the violations they have experienced and to receive redress. Programs like this simultaneously train young people to be human rights advocates and leaders in their communities and connect community members with the resources that they either did not know existed or to which they did not have access. By teaching young people about what state violence has looked like in the past, this memory museum is working directly to help communities identify and respond to new instances of violence in the present.









## GUIDING QUESTIONS

-  What are the economic legacies of the violence your space commemorates? Do certain identity groups struggle to obtain equal access to jobs, housing, food, clothing, or other basic needs?
-  What can your memory space do to respond to these inequalities? Can you offer any training that would help affected communities obtain work or develop skills? Can you create work opportunities at your memory space for members of affected communities?



## SOCIAL FRAGMENTATION RISK FACTORS

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  Memory spaces can respond to identity-based social divisions by focusing on creating and celebrating unifying identities that bridge divides.
-  They can also serve as a space for bringing into contact groups that do not typically associate with each other in a deeply divided context.
-  An important way to prevent identity-based violence in the present is to help visitors make connections between historic and contemporary marginalization.
-  Amplifying the voices of marginalized communities can help to humanize individuals and groups that are often misunderstood or outright ignored.
-  Through programming and exhibitions, memory spaces can combat dangerous speech and provide tools for countering disinformation.
-  Memory spaces can serve as hubs for strengthening civil society—a key mitigating factor for atrocity violence.
-  Memory spaces have a capacity to respond to demographic pressures, like an influx of migrants and refugees, by educating the public and modeling acceptance.
-  Telling the stories of women, transgender, and non-binary individuals and designing programming specifically for these groups can help combat gender inequalities present in many societies.

The category of risk that memory spaces may be the most well positioned to address are those related to social fragmentation. Given that memory spaces are places where people come together in public, there is a great deal of opportunity for them to contribute to bringing together people who have been divided or persecuted by identity-based violence. There are several different kinds of social fragmentation risk factors. Below is a selection of strategies that memory spaces have developed to respond to and mitigate some of them.

## IDENTITY-BASED SOCIAL DIVISIONS

Identity-based social divisions are a risk factor when social relationships within a society are predetermined by the identity group to which someone belongs.<sup>29</sup> In these cases, who a person speaks with, works with, goes to school with, or supports politically are based on whatever social identity categories are most salient in that context, whether it be a person's race, religion, ethnicity, gender, citizenship status, or any other identity category. As mentioned earlier, in deeply divided societies, identity-based social divisions determine every aspect of a person's life.<sup>30</sup> In these cases, there is often little to no meaningful contact between people who belong to different identity groups. Such divisions frequently lead to social and political conflict. How can memory spaces help to mitigate this risk factor?



A mural in the community room of Derry's Rainbow Project that details the recent history of LGBTQ+ activism. Photo by Kerry Whigham.

One strategy that some memory spaces use is to create or highlight new identity categories to supersede the ones that create such division. For instance, the [South East Fermanagh Foundation \(SEFF\)](#) in Northern Ireland creates a space for remembering “innocent victims.” This category includes people from “both sides” of the conflict in Northern Ireland who have suffered violence and loss without having participated in the violence themselves. Similarly, Northern Ireland's [Rainbow Project](#), which

has spaces in Derry/Londonderry and Belfast, provides a community space for LGBTQ+ youth and adults from both nationalist and unionist communities, who, despite being from different sides of the country's traditional divide, face similar forms of marginalization because of their LGBTQ+ status. Highlighting these new identity categories can help to diminish the power of the more salient identity categories, while simultaneously creating unity across division and strengthening the bonds within this new identity group.

Another strategy that some memory spaces use is to serve as a space of contact between identity groups that may not otherwise develop relationships with each other. These programs are based on an idea developed by Gordon Allport in the 1950s called the Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT).<sup>31</sup> According to ICT, identity-based divisions among groups can be diminished by creating opportunities for meaningful contact among the groups. Allport says that four conditions are

<sup>29</sup> Waller, *Confronting Evil*.

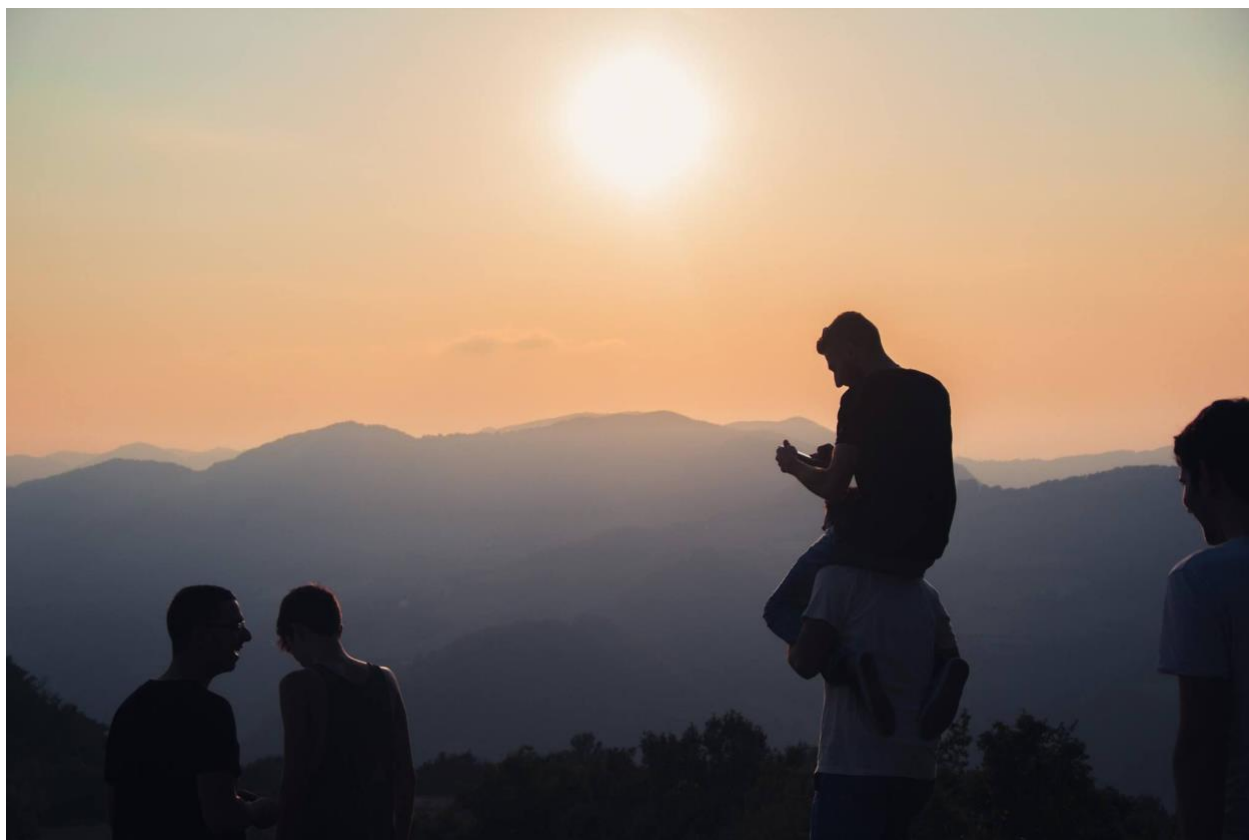
<sup>30</sup> Guelke, *Politics in Deeply Divided Societies*.

<sup>31</sup> G. W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954).



necessary for intergroup contact to have a positive impact in breaking down prejudices and barriers between groups:

1. Within the space of contact, there needs to be equal status between the groups.
2. The participants should be coming together to accomplish a shared goal, for example, a shared desire to break down barriers.
3. Participants should work together toward that goal in a non-competitive way.
4. Relevant “authorities, laws, and customs” should support this contact.<sup>32</sup>



*Participants in the Scuola di Pace's Peace in Four Voices program. Photo from the Fondazione Scuola di Pace di Monte Sole archive*

Many memory spaces engage in intergroup contact-related exercises. One example comes from the [Scuola di Pace Monte Sole](#) (Monte Sole Peace School) outside of Bologna, Italy. Monte Sole is the site of the largest war crime in contemporary Italian history. As Nazi troops withdrew from

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<sup>32</sup> Saul Mcleod, “Allport’s Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence,” *Simply Psychology* (blog), February 8, 2023, <https://simplypsychology.org/contact-hypothesis.html>.

Italy toward the end of World War II, they murdered 770 civilians in Monte Sole under the guise of an attack on Italian partisan fighters. Today, the Scuola di Pace uses this historical site of atrocity to build peace and prevent identity-based violence.

One of their flagship programs is called [Peace in Four Voices](#). These youth camps bring together forty young people from four different countries (with ten from each country). Half of the participants come from Italy and Germany—two countries that were once in conflict but now coexist peacefully. The other half come from groups that have been divided historically and remain divided today—for example, Israelis and Palestinians or Serbians and Kosovo-Albanians. Throughout their week at Monte Sole, participants interact with each other as individuals rather than as representatives of their respective countries and cultures. Workshops and small group discussions push the young people to cooperate and develop bonds that, according to the space's directors, last long beyond their week together. Particularly for the young people coming from divided societies, this model opens opportunities for interaction and cross-cultural understanding in a space that does not “belong” to either group. While participants can certainly draw connections between the destruction of Monte Sole and their home contexts, the convening space is not part of their conflict, which allows participants to move away from territorial debates that may characterize similar exercises in their home contexts. The Peace in Four Voices youth camps are a compelling example of a memory space developing opportunities for engagement and preventive thinking beyond even their local communities. In fact, the site's programming is intended to have a broader, more global impact.

Intergroup contact theory can be a useful tool for memory spaces that are interested in responding to risks related to identity-based social divisions. Those who engage with these programs should also recognize, however, that recent research shows that even more is required for intergroup contact to have long-lasting effects. Too often, people participate in intergroup contact programs for a short period, then return to their homes and communities, where they are again segregated from members of other groups and where old negative stereotypes and biases are reinforced. For intergroup contact to provide sustainable solutions to identity-based social divisions, it seems more long-term efforts are required.<sup>33</sup> In fact, one recent study shows that the most effective way for intergroup contact to dismantle discriminatory behavior may be to bring groups together for a shared activity that has nothing at all to do with memory and peacebuilding per se. This study, which was conducted in central Nigeria, found that computer programming courses that partnered Muslim and Christian participants on shared computers succeeded at reducing outgroup discrimination during and after the training period.<sup>34</sup> Memory spaces that are interested in

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<sup>33</sup> John Dixon, Kevin Durrheim, and Colin Tredoux, “Beyond the Optimal Contact Strategy: A Reality Check for the Contact Hypothesis,” *American Psychologist* 60, no. 7 (2005), 697–711; Elizabeth L. Paluck and Donald P. Green, “Prejudice Reduction: What Works? A Review and Assessment of Research and Practice,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 60 (2009), 339–367; Ifat Maoz, “Contact and Social Change in an Ongoing Asymmetrical Conflict: Four Social-Psychological Models of Reconciliation-Aimed Planned Encounters between Israeli Jews and Palestinians,” in *Beyond the Prejudice Problematic*, ed. John Dixon and Mark Levine (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 269–285.

<sup>34</sup> Alexandra Scacco and Shana S. Warren, “Can Social Contact Reduce Prejudice and Discrimination? Evidence from a Field Experiment in Nigeria,” *American Political Science Review* 112, no. 3 (August 2018): 654–77.

engaging in intergroup contact programs should strive to foster continuing engagement with participants, rather than hosting one-off workshops or events. They may even seek to find ways of bringing participants that do not have to do directly with memory work, but may help respond to other risk factors, like economic risks, through job training. (For more, see the section on Economic Condition Risk Factors.)



Visitors in Liverpool's International Slavery Museum. Photo by Adam Jones. Licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/).

Memory spaces can also respond to identity-based social divisions by spotlighting the identity groups that face marginalization within their context. Sometimes, these groups are directly related to the historical violence commemorated by a memory space. For instance, many Holocaust memory spaces focus on highlighting and combating antisemitism in the present. But memory spaces can also draw connections between groups that were marginalized in the past and other groups facing marginalization in the present. For example, the [International Slavery Museum](https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/visiting-the-museum) in Liverpool, United Kingdom, begins by telling the story of historic instances of enslavement, like the transatlantic slave trade, but then also educates visitors about conditions of contemporary slavery.



*The Peace Tree memorial in Derry/Londonderry. The leaves feature children's pledges to preserve and promote peace in Northern Ireland. Photo by Kerry Whigham.*

Memory spaces can also contribute to mitigating marginalization by amplifying the voices of members of marginalized groups. Northern Ireland is a country where so much focus is placed on the conflict between two identity groups that those who do not fit within those groups are often marginalized.

In Derry/Londonderry, the [Holywell Trust](#) created its Human Library Project to respond to this marginalization by making sure that people meet and learn from members of other communities with whom they would not otherwise interact. Each “book” in the Human Library is a person representing a community that faces some form of marginalization. Some of these “books” are related to the central identity-based conflict that pervades life in Northern Ireland. For example, the Library includes one ex-member of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and one ex-

member of the Ulster Defense Association (UDA), two paramilitary groups that perpetrated violence during “the Troubles.” But the Library also highlights groups that face marginalization and erasure, including a trans person, a recovering drug addict, and a gay poet. During Human Library events—which are held at schools for children or at auditoriums and theaters for adults—the feature “book” presents themselves to the audience, but then a moderator and the audience are invited to ask questions. Through open dialogue, audience members begin to see these “others” as human beings who are also parts of their community. Programs like this combat the objectification of marginalized groups by helping people see them as individuals with the same essential need for love, happiness, and equal dignity.

## PRESENCE OF DANGEROUS SPEECH AND IDEOLOGY

Multiple risk factors for mass atrocity can be present in a given society, but without a divisive ideology that motivates one group to turn completely against another, it is unlikely that a genocide



or other form of large-scale identity-based violence will break out.<sup>35</sup> One way that these divisive ideologies spread is through hate speech or dangerous speech.<sup>36</sup> [Hate speech](#) is a broad term that, according to the United Nations, “refers to offensive discourse targeting a group or an individual based on inherent characteristics (such as race, religion, or gender) and that may threaten social peace.”<sup>37</sup> [Dangerous speech](#), on the other hand, relates to speech that directly incites violence in some form. Memory spaces can contribute to mitigating risks relating to hate speech and dangerous speech both by highlighting the role they played in the past and by offering tools to identify and combat this speech in the present.



*The Wall of Faces at Kazerne Dossin in Mechelen, Belgium. Photo by Romaine. Licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).*

An example of this comes from [Kazerne Dossin](#), a memory site and museum in Mechelen, Belgium, where over 25,000 Jewish victims were deported to death camps in the east of Europe. In 2021, Kazerne Dossin opened a temporary exhibition entitled [#Fakelimages: Unmask the Dangers of Stereotypes](#), which features archival material of anti-Jewish propaganda produced before and

<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Leader Maynard, *Ideology and Mass Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

<sup>36</sup> Jonathan Leader Maynard and Susan Benesch, “Dangerous Speech and Dangerous Ideology: An Integrated Model for Monitoring and Prevention,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 9, no. 3 (2016): 70–95.

<sup>37</sup> United Nations, “What Is Hate Speech?,” United Nations (United Nations), accessed June 14, 2023, [https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech?gclid=Cj0KCQiA6fafBhC1ARIsAIJjL8nhHZn6D2Yeb7B\\_-kFsx75VTZkXuHy3zC-aAWPT2pLigEfb2d2\\_zi8aAgW7EALw\\_wcB](https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech?gclid=Cj0KCQiA6fafBhC1ARIsAIJjL8nhHZn6D2Yeb7B_-kFsx75VTZkXuHy3zC-aAWPT2pLigEfb2d2_zi8aAgW7EALw_wcB).



during the Holocaust, demonstrating how these media contributed to antisemitic stereotypes used to justify the genocide. Importantly, the exhibition not only focuses on historical antisemitism. It also educates visitors about contemporary identity-based propaganda and the mechanisms it uses, such as social media, to misinform or disinform publics in an effort to marginalize groups. This exhibition is now traveling to other museums around the world to spread this message as widely as possible.

## REDUCING THE CAPACITY OF VIOLENT ACTORS

One direct approach to preventing atrocities involves taking actions to decrease the capacity of perpetrators to carry out violent acts.<sup>38</sup> The following programs demonstrate creative actions by memory spaces to take away from perpetrators the resources they need to commit violence.



*A concert by the children of AFAVIT in Trujillo, Colombia. Photo by Kerry Whigham.*

One factor that can put a country at risk of atrocity violence is what is known as a “youth bulge,” which describes a scenario where a particularly large percentage of the population is composed of

<sup>38</sup> United Nations, “Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes.”

young people.<sup>39</sup> Lack of employment or other opportunities for these young people can sometimes lead them to join armed groups. In Colombia, where guerilla fighters and the armed forces have roiled the country in decades of armed conflict, one constant threat for the conflict to persevere is the continued recruitment of young people into joining armed groups because of a lack of other opportunities. Several memory spaces in Colombia have developed strategies to mitigate this risk. The [Asociación de Familiares de Víctimas de Trujillo](#) (Association of Relatives of Victims of Trujillo, or AFAVIT), which is headquartered in the [Parque Monumento](#) (Monument Park) in the small town of Trujillo, noticed that many young people were recruited because there was little keeping them in Trujillo. Given this, they started an after-school music program, where young people are given an instrument of their choice and taught to play. This ever-growing band meets multiple times a week, giving the young people both a passion and a community to which they are accountable. Regular concerts at the memory space, which are open to the public, provide them with a sense of achievement and belonging, making it ever less likely that they will be recruited to fight.



<sup>39</sup> J. Y. Lin, "Youth Bulge: A Demographic Dividend or a Demographic Bomb in Developing Countries?," January 5, 2015, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/youth-bulge-a-demographic-dividend-or-a-demographic-bomb-in-developing-countries>.



In Medellín, Colombia, young people in the notorious Comuna 13—once the most violent neighborhood in the entire world—risk recruitment not only by armed groups, but also by local gangs. For this reason, [Casa Kolacho](#) (Kolacho House, named for a deceased community leader and street artist) teaches young people three street art practices that, while traditionally associated with gang violence, now serve as a tool for beautifying the neighborhood and transforming it into a tourist destination. The young people can choose between learning street art and graffiti, hip hop, and breakdancing. They perform for the many tourists who now frequent Comuna 13 to see the vibrant street murals and watch the incredible hip hop and dance performances. For the young people, Casa Kolacho itself becomes a second home for them—a space for them to work, study, and be with friends. (For further ideas on engaging youth in situations of risk, see the subsection on “Unequal Access to Resources.”)

Practices like these demonstrate how memory spaces can directly contribute to mitigating violent conflict by taking space and resources from those who wish for it to continue.

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## LACK OF STRONG CIVIL SOCIETY AND/OR MEDIA

According to the UN’s Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, a strong civil society and media can serve as a mitigating factor in the face of elevating risk for atrocity crimes.<sup>40</sup> Memory spaces contribute to building a strong civil society in two clear ways: 1) providing a space for civil society groups to come together and 2) developing programming to strengthen new civil society leaders.

Colombia’s [Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación](#) (Center of Memory, Peace and Reconciliation) in the capital city of Bogotá is a collaborative space administered by the city government but sustained through civil society activity. In addition to a library and exhibition space, the Center features many different rooms of various sizes designed as meeting spaces for civil society groups. One space, for instance, has served as a workshop for a group of women who lost their loved ones as part of the armed conflict. In response, these women began gathering at the Center to sew long pieces of colorful fabric together—vibrant textiles to remember the beautiful lives lost. The group collectively [sewed together 540 meters of fabric into a tapestry](#), which was then draped over first the Center, where it was constructed, and then the building of Colombia’s Truth Commission. It dominated the building’s facade on April 9, 2021, the National Day of Memory and Solidarity with the Victims. This group of women is only one of numerous civil society groups who use the Center of Memory, Peace and Reconciliation as a convening space.

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<sup>40</sup> United Nations, “Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes.”



*The Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación in Bogotá, Colombia. Photo by Kerry Whigham.*

Some memory spaces take this initiative one step further, not only providing a space for civil society, but actively working to train a new generation of civil society leaders. One example of this comes from [Youth for Peace](#) (YfP), a Cambodian NGO that administers five different former memory sites across the country. YfP began its Young Leaders for Peace program as a way of equipping young Cambodians with the tools they need to be local leaders and human rights defenders in their communities. Each year, 20 high school and university students are selected from over 100 applicants to participate in the year-long program. In the first part of the program, the young leaders take part in a seven-module course that trains them on personal development, creating a culture of peace, leadership skills, conducting community assessments, community organizing skills, and grant proposal and report writing. The participants are then divided into groups, and each group goes into a community to speak with community members and conduct an assessment of the community's needs. Based on the assessment, each team creates a proposal for how they will intervene and improve community life, developing a logic model and evaluation framework in the process. YfP provides each group with some funding and technical assistance to make their projects a reality. At the end of the project, each team also conducts stakeholder evaluations to see the impact of their work.

Through this program, YfP is giving young people the skills they need to become successful community leaders in the future, along with the tools required to apply for grants and resources to make their vision a reality.



Young leaders participate in the Change Makers Program in Zambia. Photo courtesy of the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre.

Another program designed to empower young civil society leaders is a partnership between the [Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre](#) in South Africa and the [Kigali Genocide Memorial](#) in Rwanda. Together, these two memory spaces developed the Change Makers Program, a multi-day training and workshop for secondary school students that uses the historical cases of the Holocaust, the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, and Apartheid in South Africa to teach participants how to identify and counter extremism and exclusion in their societies today. The organizations have offered this program in several countries across Africa, including Nigeria, Mozambique, and Zambia. Those who participate in this initial training are then given the tools and resources to conduct leadership training in their home institutions. This training of trainers model helps to vastly multiply the audience and impacts for the program.



## DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES



As mentioned above in relation to youth bulge, one thing that can elevate the risk for mass atrocities relates to demographic pressures, which include any number of factors that put additional burdens on an already fragile system. One demographic pressure that is particularly important today relates to sudden influxes of forcibly displaced populations. We are currently in the midst of the largest displacement crisis in history. According to the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees, as of mid-2022 over 103 million people are currently forcibly displaced.<sup>41</sup> These populations, who have often been displaced by mass atrocities, create pressures for host countries. Frequently, identity-based tensions can arise when host populations perceive displaced groups as a threat to their territory or resources. Some memory spaces, however, have made

positive contributions to mitigating the risks brought about by these demographic pressures.

Since 2012, over 7 million Venezuelans have been forcibly displaced from their home country. Many of them have fled to neighboring Colombia. As with all displaced populations, Venezuelans have faced difficulty accessing food, work, and healthcare throughout the last decade. Some memory spaces in Colombia have made efforts to counter the risks that Venezuelans face in the host country, however. For instance, in light of this refugee crisis, the Museo Casa de la Memoria (House of Memory Museum) in Medellín included a special section in its permanent exhibition called "Medellín en Movimiento," or "Medellín on the Move." This exhibition frames Medellín as always having been a city of migrants from its very founding. By promoting a narrative in which the acceptance of migrant populations lies at the heart of the city's identity, this memory space is contributing toward the inclusion of displaced populations today.

<sup>41</sup> "Figures at a Glance," UNHCR US, accessed June 14, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/who-we-are/figures-glance>.

In the small town of Trujillo, the [Association of Relatives of the Victims of Trujillo](#) (AFAVIT) has taken a more direct approach to protecting Venezuelan migrants by making a concerted effort to hire Venezuelan refugees to work in and maintain their Monument Park. Not only does AFAVIT provide jobs for the local displaced population, but they also integrate them within the activities and programming of the memory space. In doing so, they make them a part of the local community, modeling for the rest of Trujillo a practice of acceptance and inclusion.

As the international crisis of displacement is only growing and set to grow further with the worsening conditions of climate change, these two examples demonstrate the role that memory spaces can play in ensuring that displaced populations fleeing from risks at home do not face continued risks of persecution and violence in their host communities.



A memorial overlooking Trujillo in AFAVIT's Monument Park. Photo by Kerry Whigham.

## GENDER INEQUALITY

In almost all cases, [women, trans people, and gender non-conforming individuals face heightened risk for identity-based violence](#). This reality is elevated even further in cases of mass atrocity. Likewise, societies that struggle with gender equality are also at heightened risk for mass atrocities and other forms of identity-based violence.<sup>42</sup> Many memory spaces focus on gender in some way, whether it be through the inclusion of a section in an exhibition that highlights the role of women in a given atrocity or through instituting groups or programming designed specifically for women.

According to our survey, 58% of responding memory spaces offer at least some form of event or programming that is specifically designed for women. Women also make up a majority of those who work at the memory spaces we surveyed, where, on average, 57% of all staff are women.

<sup>42</sup> Waller, *Confronting Evil*.








Setting up for a mobile cinema event in rural Cambodia. Photo courtesy of the Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center.

Some spaces stood out in their focus on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence (GBSV), calling for its end and, in some cases, offering concrete paths to making that call a reality. The [Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center](#) in Cambodia is one memory space that is engaging with the realities of GBSV in a particularly compelling way. Their mobile cinema program travels across the country, especially to remote villages that do not often benefit from such resources. Bophana invites the villagers to an evening of film in a public space, where they have set up the projector. Each evening lasts for three hours. The first hour features programming for children. These typically animated films feature important information while they entertain the children, educating them, for instance, about the importance of clean drinking water. The second hour is for adults, and shows a film relating to specific issues that Cambodians face today, frequently as a legacy of past violence and often related to gender inequalities and GBSV. For instance, these programs may focus on the reduction of domestic violence, which has often occurred in couples that are the victims of forced marriage during the Khmer Rouge regime. They may focus also on recognizing past trauma and providing tools for processing it. The third hour of the program is pure entertainment, playing a nostalgic film from pre-Khmer Rouge Cambodia. Importantly, the mobile cinema evenings always include moderated discussions where the villagers are asked to speak about their experiences, problem solve, and ask questions of each other. These conversations often become a place for people to share their own traumatic experiences with the community, which in turn opens a space for communal healing.




Our research found far fewer spaces that engage with the risks faced by those who fall outside of the traditional gender binary, so there is much work left to be done in this arena. A notable exception was the [District Six Museum](#) in Cape Town, South Africa, which developed a temporary exhibition called [Kewpie: Daughter of District Six](#), which told the story of a beloved former resident of District Six. While Kewpie lived in District Six from the 1950s to the 1980s, she was often referred to as a “drag queen,” though today she would almost certainly identify as a trans woman. The exhibition was designed to tell the story of Kewpie and the inclusive home she found in District Six as a way to promote similar inclusion to trans and non-binary individuals today. In addition to the exhibition, the museum hosted several workshops, including with former residents of District Six who are now senior citizens. These workshops focused on open discussions about gender and LGBTQ+ rights and their connection to the broader fight for human rights. Younger members of the local LGBTQ+ community were invited as active participants in these workshops, which helped to build relationships of solidarity between the older residents of District Six and the young people advocating for a more inclusive community when it comes to gender and sexual orientation today.

Finally, when addressing issues of gender in cases of mass atrocity, there can often be a tendency to focus exclusively on gender-based violence and the disenfranchisement of women. In some contexts, however, this may only serve to reinforce inequalities, rather than reduce them. Finding ways to highlight stories that depict women and gender non-conforming individuals as people with agency who are actively defending their rights may better serve to empower these groups, rather than contributing to their further discouragement.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS





-  What identity-based divisions exist in your society and how can your space help to reduce those divisions? Are there any initiatives you can develop to create unity across division? Can you bring people together to speak who would not otherwise do so? Can you get people to work toward some shared goal in a way that downplays the things that tear them apart?
-  Who is “the other” in your society? In what ways can your memory space help people to see “the other” as part of their community—as someone that deserves equal dignity and respect?
-  Is hate speech or dangerous speech a problem in your context? What programs can you develop to counter such speech?



-  How can your memory space help make civil society stronger in your society? Can you provide space for a group of human rights activists to meet regularly? Do you have expertise and the capacity to train human rights actors to better achieve their goals? How can you help actively shape the next generation of human rights defenders?
-  Is your community facing demographic pressures, like a large influx of migrants or high youth unemployment? What are some ways that your memory space can help alleviate some of those pressures?
-  Take a moment to see where your country falls on Georgetown University's [Global Women, Peace, and Security Index](#). Where does your country fall when it comes to inclusion, justice, and security for women? What actions can your space take to help increase inclusion of women and gender non-conforming individuals? How can you promote better gender justice? What about making women and gender non-confirming individuals more secure through violence and promote community safety?

## TOOLS

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  The arts provide a powerful tool for educating and engaging audiences in a way that is accessible and exciting to many.
-  Memory spaces are often an aspect of broader transitional justice processes in a society, and they can be used in a way that helps to complement other processes of truth, justice, reparations, and reform.
-  Developing educational resources and tools can help expand the mission of the memory space beyond the site itself, providing materials that educators can take into the classroom.
-  Educational activities that actively engage audiences can highlight their own agency, pushing them to understand their personal responsibilities to prevent identity-based violence.

The previous sections have focused on specific risk factors to which memory sites have responded—sometimes knowingly, sometimes not—through their programs and exhibitions. Responding to these risk factors and contributing to atrocity prevention is no easy task, and it requires a varied set of tools, along with great creativity, flexibility, and intentionality in how to use them. Rather than focusing on mitigating specific risk factors, this section of the toolkit highlights certain principles and tools that memory sites use in their prevention efforts.

### THE ARTS

All too often, the difficult work of dealing with a violent past gets swept up by the language of policy and governance. When this happens, however, there is a risk that ordinary individuals—most especially those who have been directly impacted by past violence—feel left out and unable to connect with these processes.<sup>43</sup> To connect with and impact their audiences considering this reality, some memory spaces are successfully engaging with the arts as a tool. The arts can serve several purposes in these contexts. They can be a medium for bringing people together and building community. They can be a form for artists and artistically minded individuals to

<sup>43</sup> Clara Ramírez-Barat, ed., *Transitional Justice, Culture, and Society: Beyond Outreach* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2014).

therapeutically process their experiences with violence or the ways intergenerational trauma has impacted them. They can be a means of preserving cultural practices at risk of destruction. And sometimes the arts can serve all these purposes at once.



“Algo Misterioso, Algo Común,” a performance at the Centro Cultural de la Memoria Haroldo Conti. Photo by Ministerio de Cultura de la Nación. Licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).

Almost all memory spaces in Argentina visited as part of this project have integrated the arts in some form. [ESMA](#), the largest former clandestine detention and torture center in operation during the 1976-83 military dictatorship, includes within its premises the [Centro Cultural de la Memoria Haroldo Conti](#) (Haroldo Conti Cultural Center of Memory), which hosts art exhibitions, film screenings, theatrical and dance performances, and concerts. All programming at the site pertains to memory and human rights in some way, but not all of it focuses specifically on Argentina, making connections with other contexts, as well. (See “Making Productive Comparisons.”) The center also includes a café and a bookstore with relevant books for sale. All events and programs at the space are completely free. The result is that this former space of violence has been completely transformed into a vibrant hub of social life that uses the arts as a tool for promoting human rights in the present.

Countless other memory spaces in Argentina take advantage of the arts as a way of communicating with the broader public. The former clandestine detention center [Olimpo](#) now offers an array of

workshops to local communities on radio production, dance, and visual art, all with a focus on the promotion of human rights.



*A mural in the Museo de la Memoria in Rosario, used as a tool for teaching visitors about various aspects of the last military dictatorship. Photo by Kerry Whigham.*

The [Museo de la Memoria](#) (Museum of Memory) in Rosario, Argentina, takes this focus on the arts a step further, using it as the primary mode for educating visitors. Rather than a traditional museum exhibition that features long texts on the walls and displays of various artifacts and objects, the Museo de la Memoria commissioned local artists to create art installations based on various themes of Argentinian history. For instance, one room features an installation inspired by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, Argentina's most famous human rights organization, which was established by the mothers of those disappeared during the dictatorship. Another recalls the 500+ children taken from disappeared women and given to families who supported the dictatorship. Rather than wall texts that tell visitors what to know, museum guides use the art installations as tools to start conversations with visitors about the past and the present. The invitation to engage with the art highlights for visitors their own agency in the museum-going experience. Similarly, visitor interpretations of the art objects open the space for more in-depth engagement between them and the museum educators.





*Silent Testimony exhibition at the Ulster Museum in Belfast. Photo by Stephanie Wright.*

Art can also be a powerful unifying force. One of the most beautiful examples of this comes from a temporary exhibition at the [Ulster Museum](#) in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Although the Ulster Museum features a full exhibition on “the Troubles,” a temporary exhibition [entitled \*Silent Testimony\*](#) uses art to develop empathic connections between audiences and the victims of this identity-based violence. The show by Northern Irish visual artist Colin Davidson includes a series of 18 large portraits, each featuring one individual who was injured or who lost a loved one during the Troubles. Next to each portrait is a small text that tells the story of the person and the violence they experienced. Importantly, none of the texts label the victims or the perpetrators using the traditional labels that divide Northern Irish society (e.g. Protestant/Catholic, nationalist/unionist, etc). Instead, these individuals are tied together through their shared suffering. The raw humanity of the portraits seeks to create connections among these 18 individuals and, in doing so, among the audience, as well.



ŠTO TE NEMA's installation in Venice, Italy, on 11 July 2019. Photo by Kerry Whigham.

A final example of the arts as a tool in constructing preventive memory comes from a less traditional memory space. [ŠTO TE NEMA](#) (Bosnian for “Why Are You Not Here?”) is, according to its creator, a “nomadic monument”—a memory space that travels. Bosnian-American artist Aida Šehović developed this memory space to commemorate the 1995 Srebrenica Genocide, as well as her own experience as a refugee of the armed conflict that rocked her native Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992-1995. In 2005, Šehović began collecting small Bosnian coffee cups with the goal of collecting one for each of the 8,372 Bosnian Muslim men and boys killed in July 1995 during the genocide. Coffee is an incredibly important aspect of Bosnian culture, and many of the women who lost loved ones in the genocide reported to Šehović that they most missed their husbands or sons when they were having coffee without them. Each year on July 11, she traveled to a different city around the world with a diaspora Bosnian population, set up in a public square, and made coffee, inviting passersby to pour a cup and leave it, undrunk, in memory of those who can no longer drink coffee with their families because they were murdered. For fifteen years, these public constructions of the nomadic monument would draw massive crowds, both of Bosnian refugees and their families and locals with no real knowledge of the genocide at all. As the monument was built, new communities of healing and solidarity were created that demonstrated the power of art to bring people together in the face of outrageous destruction. ŠTO TE NEMA traveled to fifteen different cities between 2005 and 2020, when it was built for the last time in Srebrenica, the site of the genocide.



## MEMORY IN COMPLEMENTARITY WITH TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

As transitional justice processes have spread over the last several decades, some principles have emerged that many now recognize as important. One of those is the notion of complementarity, which describes the idea that various mechanisms for dealing with the past can and should complement and support, rather than replicate, each other.<sup>44</sup> More and more, we are seeing memory spaces being used not only as a tool of transitional justice themselves, but also as a mechanism for supporting and amplifying the work of other transitional justice mechanisms. As a result, these memory spaces are playing a role in the larger-scale social and political transformations that can make the recurrence of violence less likely.

One example comes from Colombia in the memory space [Fragmentos](#), which was literally constructed out of the remnants of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes of the Colombian peace process. (For more, see the section on “Physical Legacies of Violence.”)



Entrance to the Museum of Free Derry in Northern Ireland.  
Photo by Kerry Whigham.

In its main exhibition, the [Museum of Free Derry](#) frames its historical timeline around the pursuit for truth relating to the Bloody Sunday Massacre, which took place on 30 January 1972. The literal and figurative endpoint of the exhibition is the 2010 release of the results of the second official inquiry into the massacre. In this way, the museum stresses the importance of truth processes in the longer-term goal of seeking justice and repair.

In 2022 the [Kwigira Museum](#) opened in Nyanza, Rwanda. “Kwigira” is a Kinyarwanda word that is alternately translated as “homegrown solutions” or “self-reliance.” The museum displays the innovative solutions that Rwanda has developed regarding transitional justice through adapting traditional cultural practices, including the system of gacaca courts, a community-based justice process implemented to try perpetrators after the 1994 genocide.

Although the museum may be interpreted by many as a form of pro-government propaganda, it still provides a fascinating example of how museums offer an opportunity to educate local and international publics about transitional justice processes.

<sup>44</sup> International Center for Transitional Justice, “What Is Transitional Justice?,” International Center for Transitional Justice, n.d., <http://www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice>.

Finally, [Museo Sitio de Memoria ESMA](#) has complemented transitional justice measures in Argentina by including materials from other justice processes in the memory space itself. Although many memorial museums include audio and/or video testimony of survivors telling their stories, ESMA is one of the first to include testimony from the actual and ongoing trials against perpetrators. By including witness testimony from trials within the exhibition space, the public can witness these judicial processes while standing within the site where the crimes occurred—a site that remains an active source of evidence for prosecutors in the present.

These are just a few of the ways that memory spaces have gone beyond the simple acknowledgment of transitional justice processes to play a role in complementing and proliferating them.

## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

A tool that memory spaces frequently use to expand their sphere of impact is the development of educational resources for local and international educators to use in their classrooms. Such resources provide another opportunity for integrating an atrocity prevention lens and drawing connections between the past and the present.



*The entrance to the Apartheid Museum in South Africa, where visitors are randomly assorted into different Apartheid-era racial categories.  
Photo by Kerry Whigham.*



The [Apartheid Museum](#) in Johannesburg, South Africa, is one of many spaces that have developed such resources. They provide [resource guides](#) for learners and teachers on understanding Apartheid; these guides can be a tool for preparing students for their visit to the museum, or can be used independently of a visit. But they also use more creative educational tools for engaging young audiences, including a comic book series that tells the story of important moments in the struggle for democracy in graphic novel form. Educational resources like this can help teachers prepare students before their trip and debrief them after. In this way, the site visit becomes more than just a “day off” for students and teachers; it can be one component of a larger educational journey.



Some memory spaces have even developed long-term partnerships with ministries of education, which allows for an even greater opportunity to spread their message across an entire country. The [Kigali Genocide Memorial](#), for instance, has partnered with the Rwandan Ministry of Education to integrate their peace and values education into all grades of public education. Their peace and values education model is structured to teach three essential concepts in the prevention of the recurrence of identity-based violence: empathy, critical thinking, and personal responsibility. To communicate these ideas, they rely on the stories of individuals who, even during the height of the 1994 genocide, exemplified these three characteristics.

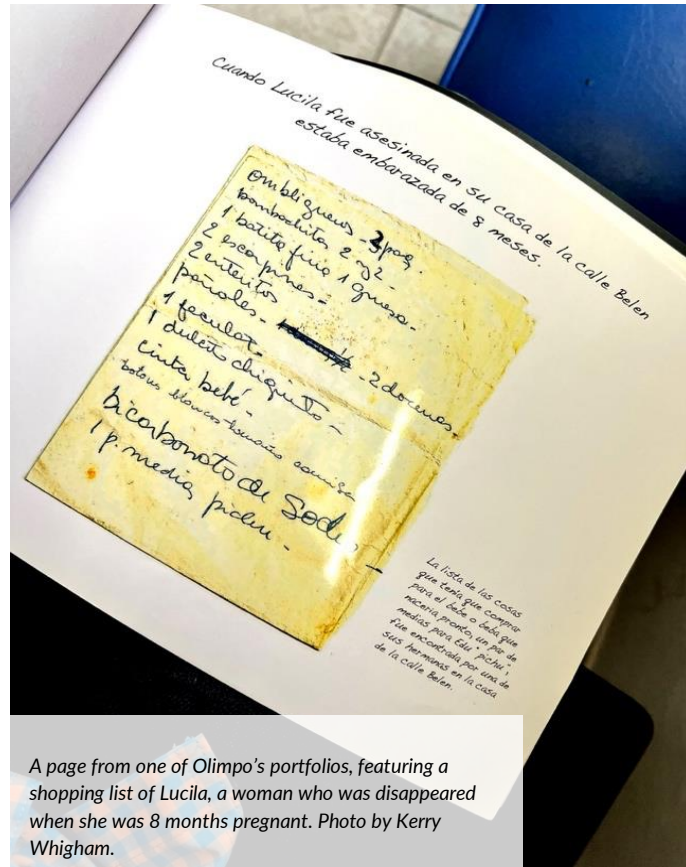
In addition to these resources that can be used outside of the memory space, program directors and educational directors within memory spaces are also coming up with innovative tools for connecting young people to the stories of the past and, most importantly, framing them as agents of action and change.

The [Cape Town Holocaust and Genocide Centre](#), for example, uses an innovative tool that introduces students to the center’s impressive archive of materials relating to the Holocaust. Students who visit the site are presented with a box that contains objects from their archive, including letters, photographs, and clothing. The student groups are then asked to act as historians

or anthropologists by crafting a story of this person's experience based on the evidence they discover.

[Olimpo](#) in Buenos Aires takes this idea a step further. In this former clandestine detention center, the space's staff and the local community work with the family members of those who were formerly detained at Olimpo and remain disappeared to this day. Using stories, photographs, and objects provided by the victim's loved ones, the team works to create portfolios ("carpetas") for each of the space's former detainees. Each reads like a mini-biography of the disappeared, telling the story of their whole lives. In doing so, the disappeared are framed as more than mere victims of state violence. They are shown as whole human beings with full lives that were cut short by their disappearances.

One particularly memorable portfolio contains, for instance, a shopping list of the things the disappeared woman was going to buy from the store had she not been abducted later that day. Creative endeavors like this benefit those who work on the creation of the objects, but then subsequently serve as educational resources for those who visit the site later.



A page from one of Olimpo's portfolios, featuring a shopping list of Lucila, a woman who was disappeared when she was 8 months pregnant. Photo by Kerry Whigham.

Finally, the memorial at [Ravensbrück](#), a former women's concentration camp during the Holocaust located in Fürstenberg, Germany, features an array of innovative educational programs that activate audiences. One strategy their educational team uses is to ask visitors to craft their own tours of the space. When a group comes for a guided tour, rather than being taken to the same spaces and following the same script as every other group, the guide first sends the visitors out on their own to explore. The group then reconvenes, and the guide asks the visitors to take the group to places that interested them. The guide is then able to fill in the blanks of what the visitors did not know. Constructing the tour in this way stresses the agency of the visitors, putting them in the driver's seat of their own experience. By highlighting their own agency within the space, educators can also stress to visitors that they are also in positions of control to remember and prevent when



they leave the space.<sup>45</sup> The act of remembering the past is no longer something that experts lead them through. Rather, it becomes a responsibility that they can undertake themselves.

Memory spaces around the world continue to come up with innovative ways to engage audiences through their educational programs. These are only a few examples. Typically, these resources focus on telling a story of the past, but they also open up many opportunities for engaging with the present and future, and thus playing a role in the work of prevention.






*A statue at Ravensbrück Memorial. Photo by ho visto nina volare. Licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).*

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<sup>45</sup> For more, see Kerry Whigham, "Reading the Traces: Embodied Engagement with the Past at Three Former Nazi Concentration Camps," *Holocaust Studies* 26, no. 2 (2020): 221–40.





## GUIDING QUESTIONS

-  Which of the following artistic tools are your memory space currently using? If you are not using them, is there any potential in doing so? How could these tools help you address the risk factors in the previous section?
  - Film and Television
  - Music
  - Theater and Dance
  - Visual Arts
  - Radio and Podcasts
  - Other Artistic Practices
-  Is your country undergoing processes of truth-seeking, justice, reparations, or institutional reform? How could your memory space support these measures? If your country has not yet undergone one or more of these processes, how could your memory space help encourage them?
-  Is your memory space developing educational resources to help teachers who visit your space continue these lessons with their students? What can you do to make these resources as attractive and interactive as possible?



## EXHIBITIONS

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  Finding useful comparisons between cases can help visitors understand that, while each case has its own unique aspects, identity-based violence and atrocities remain a risk today.
-  Visitors may not make connections between the past and the present unless they are encouraged to do so by the memory space itself.
-  Genocide and other mass atrocities do not just happen overnight. Exhibitions present an opportunity to educate audiences about this process so that they can recognize its earlier stages and take measures to stop them from escalating.
-  While memory spaces primarily focus on remembering and honoring victims, there are also important lessons to be learned by examining the stories of bystanders, upstanders, and perpetrators when it comes to prevention.

Although a large portion of this toolkit has focused on the variety of programming that memory spaces can initiate, the principal way that many visitors engage with some memory spaces is through exhibitions. Not all memory spaces contain permanent exhibitions, but many use curatorial strategies and museum displays to engage their audiences. For memory spaces that have an exhibition component, there are some lessons learned on how to integrate a prevention lens within exhibition design.

### BUILDING A NARRATIVE

Memory spaces with exhibitions tell stories about the past. In doing so, they construct a narrative and contribute to building social memory—that is, the way that people understand the past and its impacts on the present. Exhibition curators have developed a plethora of strategies for crafting a story of the past and relating it to audiences in a compelling way. It is beyond the scope and expertise of this project to detail all the steps that go into this process, but it is essential to discuss briefly the theme of building a narrative where it intersects with atrocity prevention.

In telling a story about the past, one must first consider whose story is being told. As with all transitional justice mechanisms, if public memory spaces are intended to serve the purpose of offering redress for past harms, the narratives crafted for these spaces must be generated with

the direct involvement of affected populations. Consultation with victim groups is essential for memory spaces to help in the healing process and to have credibility. (For more, see the section on “State Legitimacy Deficit.”)

Furthermore, one must ask who is telling the story. The Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center in Cambodia noticed that the story of the Khmer Rouge was predominantly being told around the world by Western scholars doing research in Cambodia. In response, they developed an app called [Khmer Rouge History](#), in which Cambodian scholars provide an overview of the period. The app is available in both Khmer and English so that it can benefit local populations, as well as international individuals who are interested in learning about the period through the eyes of Cambodians. Projects like this center the voices of local communities in telling their own story.

Finally, building a narrative becomes a particularly difficult process in deeply divided societies. As mentioned earlier in this toolkit in the section on “The Importance of Context,” these are places where more than one narrative exists relating to the past. Typically, each of these narratives is mutually exclusive: one cannot believe in multiple ways of looking at the past; only one is seen as acceptable. In these cases, opening a memory space that displays only one narrative can be divisive, as it will alienate anyone who supports an opposing narrative.

In some cases, where one narrative is supported by evidence and facts while the other is an attempt to deny those facts altogether, this is a risk worth taking. Here, memory spaces can be a way of combatting denialism by providing evidence to counter it.

In other cases, however, only depicting one version of the past may be a way to intentionally erase or delegitimize other narratives simply because they disagree. Here, memory spaces are hardly diminishing the risks of atrocities. Indeed, they are likely to elevate them.

In these scenarios, one possible strategy is to develop spaces that acknowledge the different understandings of the past and allow them to coexist peacefully. One exhibition that attempts to do this is the Ulster Museum’s exhibition on “the Troubles” in Belfast, Northern Ireland. This exhibition is about an essentially contested history in which people’s understanding of the past is completely dependent on their social identity. In this exhibition, rather than depicting one version of the past as wholly true and the other as wholly false, the curators include a box in the exhibition labeled “Collecting the Troubles and Beyond.” Visitors are invited to write comments, donate objects, and tell stories that reflect their understandings of the past. These objects and stories are archived and put on display for others to see. In this way, the exhibition makes the public active participants in the museum’s curation while simultaneously providing opportunities for visitors to see the truth of the past through the multiple lenses of other visitors.

Needless to say, this is not an easy or a perfect process. Any solution will have to emerge from the very specific context in which each memory space exists. The key in all cases, however, is constantly asking yourself if the narrative you are building is going to contribute to more cohesion or more division. This question will always be at the heart of designing a preventive memory space.

## FOCUSING ON PROCESS

<div>10</div> <div>Stages of Genocide</div> <div>Gregory Stanton, Genocide Watch</div>	
01	 <b>Classification</b> People are divided into "us" and "them"
02	 <b>Symbolization</b> Visible symbols name and signify classifications
03	 <b>Discrimination</b> Dominant groups deny or restrict the rights of less dominant groups
04	 <b>Dehumanization</b> Out-groups are compared to non-human beings, stripping away their humanity
05	 <b>Organization</b> Structures begin to emerge expressly to persecute the out-group
06	 <b>Polarization</b> Moderates are eliminated so only the extremes remain
07	 <b>Preparation</b> Lists are made and plans are set to begin mass killing
08	 <b>Persecution</b> Victims are identified and separated out from the rest of society
09	 <b>Extermination</b> Out-group members are killed en masse
10	 <b>Denial</b> Perpetrators deny and diminish the crimes they committed

Genocide and other mass atrocities are long-term social and political processes. They do not happen overnight. Still, many—especially those in societies that are removed from the most visible atrocities—see this violence as spectacularly sudden. This may be because news media often fail to report on atrocity violence before it reaches its most critical and brutal stages.

Memory spaces that feature exhibitions can help re-educate the public about the ways atrocity violence unfolds by focusing on explaining the process that led to them. Models like Gregory Stanton's 10 Stages of Genocide, for instance, can provide an easily understood framework for understanding how small initial steps can ultimately result in mass killing. (Arizona's [Tucson Jewish Museum and Holocaust Center](#) in the United States does this to great effect.)

The Holocaust, for instance, did not start with extermination camps. Its origins lie in the antisemitism that existed for many centuries in Europe, which was mobilized by the Nazis to scapegoat the Jewish people for Germany's defeat in World War I and resulting economic problems. The Nazis capitalized on this deep-rooted antisemitism to justify their horrific policies of societal exclusion, detainment in concentration camps, and, finally, extermination. Even when Hitler was appointed chancellor in 1933, it took years of gradually restricting the rights of European Jews before the first death camps were erected. Likewise, the 1994

genocide in Rwanda was preceded by the divide-and-rule policies of colonialism, that largely disenfranchised the Hutu majority, followed by decades of discrimination and pogroms against the Tutsi minority in the post-independence period.

Focusing on process opens the potential to intervene in crisis at earlier stages, before things escalate to all-out genocide. By educating visitors about the process of atrocity violence, they can gain the drive and the tools to analyze their own societies and others around the world, asking at what stage of this process they may fall. Most importantly, a process-focused approach to memory helps make these instances of mass violence, which so often are described as incomprehensible, more understandable and, therefore, more preventable.

## MAKING PRODUCTIVE COMPARISONS

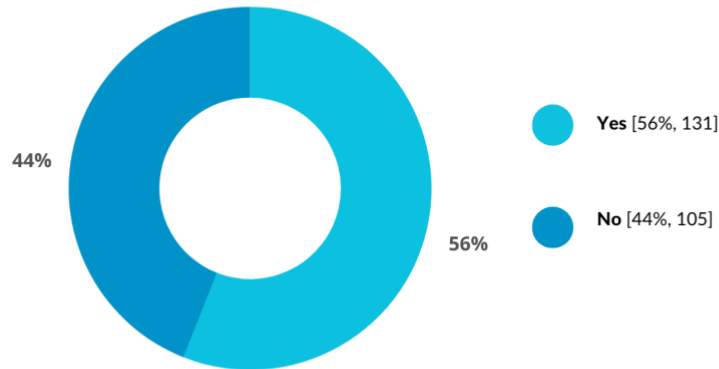
One important and simple thing that memory spaces can do that is essential for the spaces to contribute to prevention is to draw comparisons or make connections between the violence that the space remembers directly and other instances of atrocity violence elsewhere. Memory spaces that focus exclusively on the particularities of the single case they are commemorating may certainly be contributing to the reparative work that comes with acknowledgment and recognition. But visitors may also risk leaving the space seeing that violence as unique and, consequently, unrepeatable in the present or future.

Of course, there are aspects of every genocide or other mass atrocity that are indeed unique. Particularly for victims and survivors, the act of comparison can at times feel like a new act of violence that in some form takes away from the horror they have experienced. Drawing connections with other cases, then, must often be done delicately and with sensitivity to the needs of victims and survivors.

According to our survey, about 55% of responding memory spaces reference atrocities or acts of violence other than the ones being directly commemorated, while about 45% only focus on the specific case they were established to remember. When thinking about the preventive capacity of memory spaces, memory spaces that do not make connections with other acts of violence that share similar features with those being commemorated may be missing a huge opportunity. By drawing connections between multiple cases, exhibitions can attune visitors to the risks of violence in the present and provide them with tools to respond when they see some of these patterns of violence being reproduced today, whether in their own country or in other societies around the world.



Does your memory site reference past or present genocides, atrocities, or instances of violence other than the violence that your site commemorates?



236 Responses

Furthermore, making these connections explicitly contributes to creating international communities of solidarity. Although making comparisons between cases of violence can at times create scenarios of competitive victimhood,<sup>46</sup> they can equally benefit victimized groups who feel perhaps that the violence they have suffered has received less attention or less redress than others.<sup>47</sup> When done with sensitivity and thoughtfulness, comparisons and connections can be a key tool in integrating a prevention lens into memory spaces.

## CALLS TO THE PRESENT

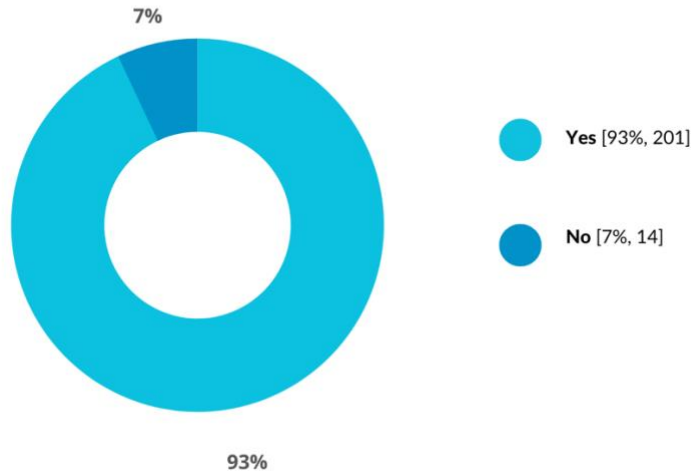
Just as it can be important for memory spaces to make connections across cases of atrocity to give visitors a sense that past violence can be and has been repeated, it is equally essential to ensure visitors understand that large-scale violence is not only a phenomenon of the past. They need to see that it can happen again in the present.

To get a sense of how much memory spaces consider the present realities of their societies when designing their programming and exhibitions, we asked two questions in our survey.

<sup>46</sup> Masi Noor et al., "When Suffering Begets Suffering: The Psychology of Competitive Victimhood Between Adversarial Groups in Violent Conflict," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 16, no. 4 (2012): 351–74.

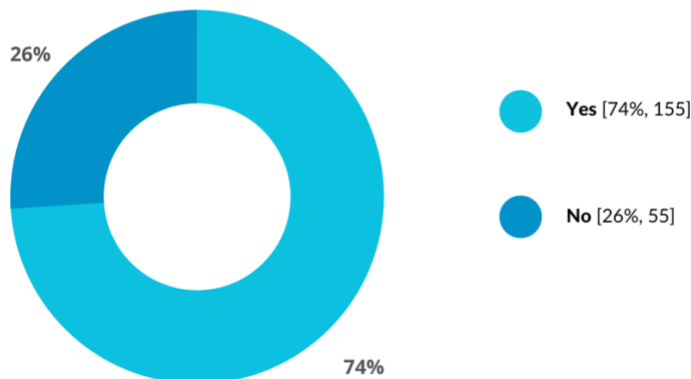
<sup>47</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

In your opinion, is there a group of people in your country today who are more likely than others to experience discrimination and/or violence because of their race, religion, ethnicity, language, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, and/or citizenship status?



First, we asked the representatives of memory spaces if, in their opinion, there exists today in their country a group of people who are more likely than others to experience discrimination and/or violence because of their race, religion, ethnicity, language, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, and/or citizenship status. 93.5% of respondents answered in the affirmative

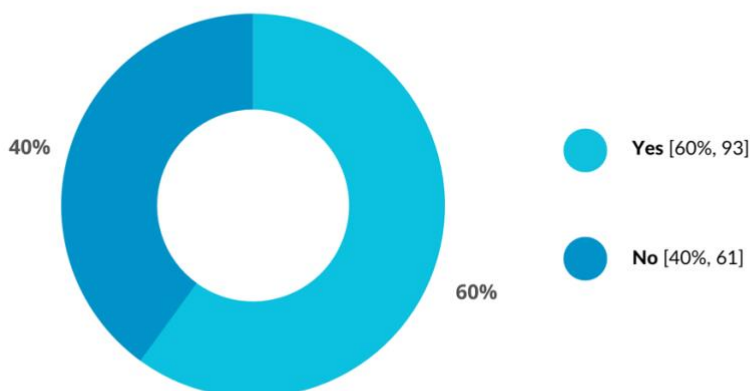
In some countries, historical divisions make it difficult for people from different groups (racial, religious, ethnic, linguistic, political, etc.) to live together in peace and mutual respect today. Are there any such groups in your country?



Second, we asked the following questions: “In some countries, historical divisions make it difficult for people from different groups (racial, religious, ethnic, linguistic, political, etc.) to live together in peace and mutual respect today. Are there any such groups in your country?” 73.8% responded that there are groups living in this deeply divided status today in their respective countries.

When we asked those same spaces if their site offers exhibits, programs, or events intended to respond to these realities, however, the numbers dropped. 74.6% of memory spaces who answered “yes” to the first question said that they are attempting to reduce the risk of violence for targeted groups through their programming and exhibits. Only 60.4% of those who signaled deep divisions in their society reported programs intended to make connections among groups that are divided. While it is heartening to hear that a majority of memory spaces in both cases are considering how to respond to these contemporary realities within their spaces, these numbers still show that not all sites are considering the preventive impact they may be able to have through their programming.

Does your memory site offer exhibits, programs, or events intended to bring together people from these different groups in dialog?



## FOCUSING ON OTHER ACTORS

Memory spaces tend to focus on telling the stories of victims—those who suffered most directly from the violence depicted in the space. And they do so for good reason. Memory spaces are, perhaps first and foremost, a component of symbolic reparations to victims. By acknowledging the harm they have suffered, memory spaces can provide a sense of redress to victim groups, and by focusing on the stories of victims, they can give voice to a population that has been literally and figuratively silenced. Of the memory spaces that responded to our survey, 88% reported that the experience of victims was an in-depth or principal focus on their site.

When thinking about introducing an atrocity prevention lens, however, it may also be important to tell the stories of other groups, as well, including the stories of bystanders, upstanders, and even perpetrators.

In any mass atrocity, by far the largest group of people are bystanders: those who are not directly targeted themselves but do nothing to stop perpetrators from targeting victim groups. Genocide studies scholar Ervin Staub writes, “The behavior of bystanders is crucial in allowing mass violence to evolve or inhibiting its evolution.”<sup>48</sup> By and large, bystanders opt to remain passive, and their passivity “affirms the perpetrators and facilitates the evolution of doing harm.”<sup>49</sup> A key goal of prevention, then, involves transforming bystanders into [upstanders](#): people who will take an active stand to defend targeted individuals or groups.

Memory spaces can contribute to this process by first educating visitors about the dynamics that push people to remain bystanders, then providing stories and tools of people who defied the bystander logic to stand up in defense of targeted groups. The [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#) developed one in-person and online exhibition that tells exactly this story. [Some Were Neighbors](#) is an exhibition that details the passivity, complicity, and, in some cases, action of ordinary people in the face of Nazi crimes. While much of the exhibition focuses on the role of neighbors, workers, teachers, and police in allowing the Holocaust to occur through their direct and indirect actions, it also offers examples of people who disrupted this norm and resisted. Concentrating on the factors that, in the curators’ words, “drove the rare few to risk helping the victims” could provide key tools for visitors to use were they to find themselves in similar circumstances.

Another example comes from the [Centre for Public History](#) in Serbia, a space that promotes historical education as a way of promoting critical thinking in the present. They report using the story of the Sajmiste concentration camp, which was located in the center of Belgrade and saw the death and imprisonment of around 6500 Jews during WWII. They highlight the complicity of bystanders during this period, who clearly saw the camp in operation, to ask their audience to reflect on their position as bystanders today concerning the treatment of migrants and the Roma community in Serbia. In this way, we see both the use of bystander stories and direct calls to make connections between the past and the present.

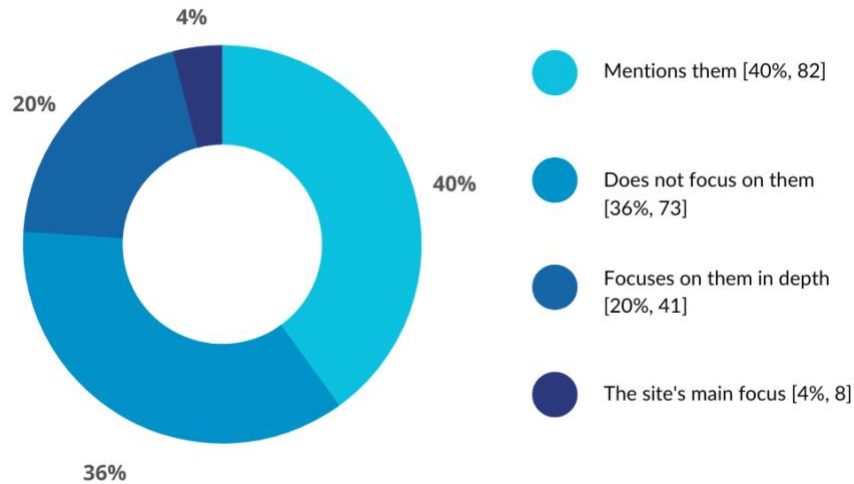
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<sup>48</sup> Ervin Staub. 2011. *Overcoming Evil: Genocide, Violent Conflict, and Terrorism*. New York: Oxford UP, 195.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.



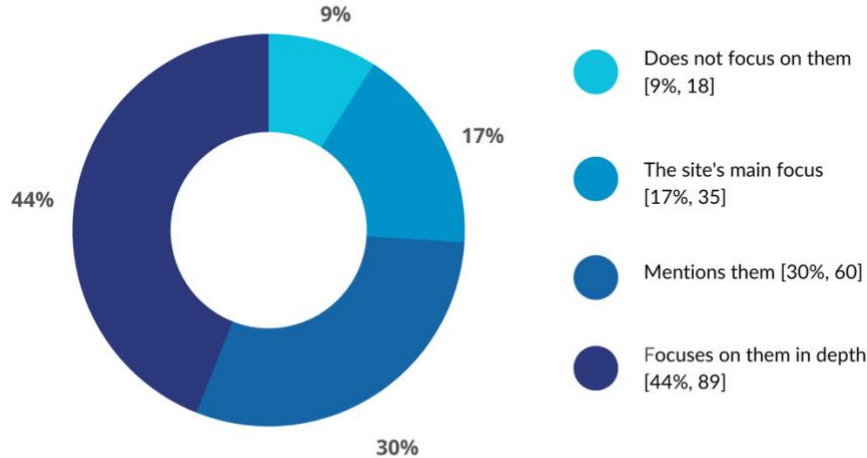
Bystanders (individuals and groups who did nothing to help the victims)



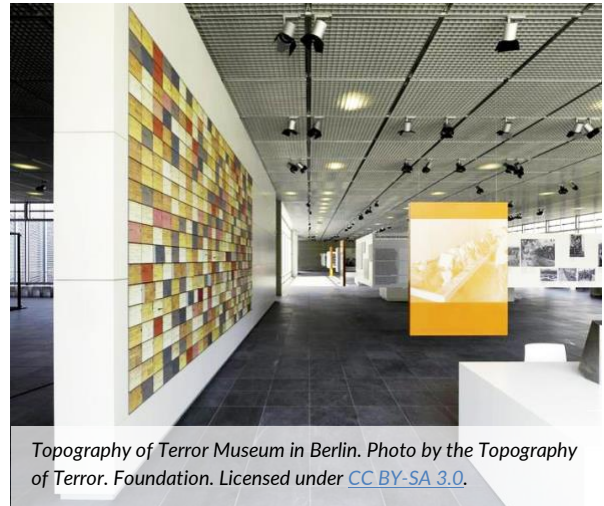
According to our survey, the vast majority of memory spaces do not focus on bystanders and their behavior beyond mentioning them, with 24% of respondents reporting that they focus on bystander behavior in-depth or that it is the main focus on their site. 40% of respondents say that their memory space mentions bystanders, but 36% report that their space does not focus on them at all. By not focusing on bystanders and how to transform them into upstanders, memory spaces may be missing an opportunity to contribute to prevention, given that most of their visitors will, given the circumstances, fall into the bystander category themselves.

Spaces report focusing greater attention on upstanders and those who resist or stand up to violence, with 61% of respondents saying that the stories of upstanders and resisters are an in-depth focus of their site. Still, 30% of respondents only mention them in passing, and 9% do not focus on them at all, presenting a missed opportunity to model for visitors the kind of behavior that is most likely to contribute to disrupting the processes of identity-based violence.

### Resisters/Upstanders (individuals and groups who tried to help the victims and/or stop the perpetrators)



Perhaps even more difficult than telling the stories of bystanders and upstanders is telling the stories of perpetrators. A key aspect of prevention work, however, involves seeing perpetrators not as insane monsters, but as ordinary human beings who, step by step, were transformed into killers.<sup>50</sup> One museum that demonstrates the power of focusing on perpetrators is the [Topography of Terror](#) in Berlin, which depicts the incremental process by which the Nazis used the SS and police to establish their reign of terror in Germany. Such a focus on perpetrators and their mechanisms of violence is the exception, however. According to our survey, about 14% of memory spaces opt not to focus on perpetrators at all, while 50% simply mention them. Only 36% of spaces focus on them in an in-depth fashion. The reasons for this may be very justifiable. Focusing on perpetrators in spaces that are meant to honor and redress the harms of victim groups can be perceived by

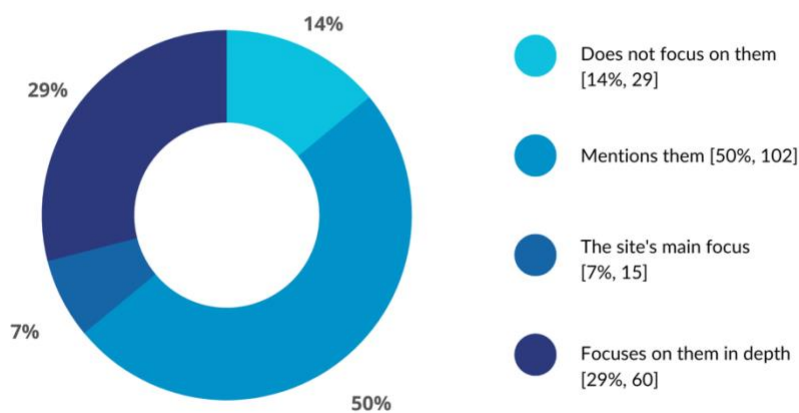


Topography of Terror Museum in Berlin. Photo by the Topography of Terror. Foundation. Licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#).

<sup>50</sup> Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

victimized populations as insensitive at best or, at worst, a retraumatization. Still, not focusing at all on perpetrators can allow visitors to distance themselves from them; consequently, visitors fail to think critically about their own behavior and instances in their lives where they might participate in exclusionary practices. Telling perpetrator stories in addition to honoring the experiences of victims may open avenues for interrupting the processes of hateful ideologies that allow identity-based violence to occur.






Perpetrators (individuals and groups who carried out the violence)



Accomplishing such a project is easier said than done. In 2022 the [Resistance Museum](#) in Amsterdam opened a new permanent exhibition. Rather than telling only the stories of the Dutch resistance fighters, the museum curators now feature those stories alongside the stories of perpetrators, framing these two paths as the result of choices made by individuals. [Many have criticized this decision](#), stating that it is an affront to the memory of the resistance to tell their story alongside that of the perpetrators. Others say that it makes them seem less heroic. But presenting the story of resistance in this way may push visitors to ask themselves what *they* would have done, presented with these different options. Rather than simply allowing visitors to celebrate the heroism of those who made good choices, the new exhibition pushes visitors to think critically about themselves and the decisions they want to make.

Genocides and other mass atrocities involve entire societies. There are many actors necessary for these atrocities to take place, and the lines between victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and upstanders is sometimes not so clear. Applying an atrocity prevention lens to exhibition design, however, requires that visitors learn about the complexities of these different roles and, most importantly, begin to ask themselves how they would behave in these scenarios.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

-  What narrative are you building through your exhibition? Is it one that is intended to bring people together? Or is it one that will incite further division?
-  How much are you focusing on process? Will a person who visits your museum have a clear step of the steps that led to the atrocity your site is commemorating? Will they know what took place afterwards? Or will they only know about the moment of violence itself?
-  Does your space make connection to other cases so that visitors can see that atrocities are not isolated incidents?
-  Does your space actively push the visitor to connect the past with what is going on in the present? Or do you rely on the visitor to do that work themselves? What happens if they do not make the connection?
-  How does your space explain the roles of bystanders, upstanders, and perpetrators? How do you push visitors to consider themselves and which roles they would play in a similar scenario? Does your space allow visitors to distance themselves fully from perpetrators, or does it encourage them to consider the ways their own circumstances and choices could potentially lead them to do cruel things?



## CONCLUSION

It is clear that the old adage telling us that simply remembering the past will prevent its recurrence is unfortunately an overstatement. Memory can certainly play a role in prevention, but it can equally be a tool for creating great social and political divisions. Ensuring that memory contributes to building societal resilience, then, requires work and intention.

Of course, we cannot put all the burden of prevention on memory. Avoiding the pitfalls of the recurrence of atrocity violence requires a holistic approach. Political and civil society leaders must focus on shoring up state institutions, building social and economic resilience measures, and providing redress to the groups of people who have been targeted in the past. Memory spaces are only one component of what needs to be a

society-wide approach to responding to past harms. And many of these processes that are necessary for building more resilient societies cannot be accomplished by memory spaces at all.

Our hope, however, is that this toolkit has shown that memory spaces do have several roles to play. Beyond their essential role in honoring victims and educating publics, there exists an opportunity for memory spaces to have a broader and more active part in collective efforts to prevent future violence. By understanding which groups face marginalization and what known risk factors exist in the present, the directors and teams at memory spaces can design programming and exhibitions that respond directly to these realities.

Ultimately, true prevention requires a whole-of-society approach. It requires international, national, and local governments, but it also requires business leaders, teachers, doctors and medical professionals, bureaucrats, activists, journalists, students, and all other members of a society—including those who work at memory spaces. This includes, of course, those of you who are devoting your lives in some form to keeping alive the memory of past violence.

Responding to the reality that, all too often, the statues and plaques commemorating the past that fill our cities or towns go unnoticed by many, Austrian philosopher Robert Musil famously wrote, “There is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument.” And yet the stories and examples outlined in this toolkit demonstrate that this is not always the case. With intention and drive, memory spaces can be more than just visible. They can be true bastions of preventive action, honoring those who have died by working to ensure no others today ever face their same fate.

## NEXT STEPS



Do you work at a memory space that is interested in developing new programs or exhibitions or altering existing programs or exhibitions to incorporate more fully an

atrocity prevention lens? Would you like assistance in developing these programs and material? Do you need resources to make this a reality?

The Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities has experience assisting institutions and people in over 90 countries around the world to put into place atrocity prevention policy and programs. We are ready to assist you and your colleagues, as well. To discuss this further, please send a message to [info@auschwitzinstitute.org](mailto:info@auschwitzinstitute.org) and let us know that you would like to connect.

## SPECIAL THANKS

This guide is the result of a collective effort of hundreds of individuals over a three-year period. The Auschwitz Institute and I would like to thank those who helped bring this project to life.

First and foremost, we offer our sincere thanks to the 258 memory spaces in 56 countries around the world who took the time to respond to our questionnaire telling us about the amazing work you are doing. Thank you all the more to the 109 memory spaces and organizations that hosted the project team during our site visits to Argentina, Cambodia, Colombia, Morocco, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, and South Africa. All the information and ideas contained in this guide came directly from the creativity and passion of those of you working in memory spaces around the world.

Thank you to the Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention (I-GMAP) at Binghamton University, one of our sister organizations who worked to develop the global database of memory sites. Thank you to Max Pensky and the late Nadia Rubaii, the founding co-directors of I-GMAP, for their partnership in this project. Thanks especially goes to the undergraduate and graduate students who did the bulk of the work creating the database: Muhammet Akkus, Anthony Ivanov, Trevis Lipnickey, Madeleine MacLean, John Patrick Mancusi, Morgan Moseley, Cole Parker, Benjamin Peterfreund, Gena Rising, Matthew Rozansky, Julia Saltzman, Daniela Santamaria, and Jane Van Alstyne.

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## PROJECT TEAM

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